

Commentary

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When the sirens sound in Israel, Jewish Americans feel it twice

By **Audra Berg**
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As Jewish Americans, we wake up to breaking headlines as the U.S.-Israel war with Iran continues to unfold. We go to sleep after one last update, and we toggle between our daily lives and real-time briefings from our loved ones in Israel.

We stand in two places at once. We are rooted in the United States, deeply grateful for the freedoms and protections of this country and emotionally tethered to Israel, where missiles fall and soldiers move into action.

The United States and Israel have taken extraordinary action in response to escalating threats from Iran.

In the wake of these events, Israel is facing retaliatory missile fire and civilians across the region are paying the price, with families displaced, communities shaken and innocent lives lost.

Here in Broward County, we are praying for all those in harm's way and for wisdom among leaders navigating perilous terrain.

But prayer alone is not the Jewish response.

When conflict intensifies in the Middle East, Jewish communities in America often feel the ripple effects: heightened anxiety, polarization and, at times, increased antisemitism. We cannot ignore that reality. At the same time, we must not allow fear to define us.

Our tradition teaches collective responsibility: we are accountable for one another. In moments of crisis, Jewish communities do what we have always done. We organize, we mobilize and we care for those in need.

This is also where Federations matter, especially when the world feels unstable. As the central address for accurate information, coordinated action and rapid response, we are in close contact with our network on the ground in Israel. Because of decades of investment and partnership, the



An Israeli soldier stands near a truck carrying an Israeli tank near the border with Lebanon on March 5 in northern Israel. Hezbollah launched missiles at Israel in what it said was retaliation for the joint U.S.-Israeli war on Iran. **AMIR LEVY/GETTY IMAGES/COURTESY**

infrastructure and relationships are already in place to move aid quickly and effectively where it is needed most.

Emergency response protocols are already activated. Immediate relief is underway, including emergency grants, assistance for injured and bereaved families and expanded trauma and resilience services for children, seniors and other vulnerable populations.

As in past crises, we are not starting from scratch. We are built for moments like this. And we will continue scaling our response as needs evolve, providing clear guidance should additional communal support be required.

Here at home, our community security team immediately reached out to synagogues, schools and agencies across Broward to heighten alertness, reinforce protocols and affirm that we stand ready to support them as needed. At this time, there are no specific or credible threats to our local community. But preparedness is part of our responsibility.

So, what do we do now, while the news keeps moving?

First, show up. Isolation magnifies fear. Community reduces it. Go to services. Participate in a gathering. Be in the room with your people and your neighbors.

Presence is a form of strength.

Second, check on people. Call the friend whose child is studying in Israel. Text the neighbor who has family near Tel Aviv. Ask how other families in your life are doing. Pay attention to seniors who may be watching the news alone. If someone is struggling, help connect them to support. Right now, simple care is powerful.

Third, stay informed responsibly. In a crisis, misinformation spreads faster than truth. Rely on verified sources. Follow credible updates from trusted community organizations. Pause before sharing something that inflames

fear or confusion. Responsible information is part of communal security.

Moments like this test not only Israel's resilience, but our own. Jewish Broward will continue to lead with strength and unity. We stand with the United States and Israel, resolute in defending innocent life and prepared, as we always have been, to help repair what war leaves broken.

Am Yisrael Chai.

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