

Jewish Federation of Ocean County Impact

Venezuela Earthquake Response



From Jewish Federations of North America

By Gary Torgow,
Chair, Board of Trustees;
Sara Gottlieb, Chair,
Israel and Overseas; and
Eric Fingerhut, Senior Vice President,
Israel and Overseas
June 25, 2026

Two powerful earthquakes struck Venezuela in the evening of June 24, causing widespread destruction and sending residents into the streets as emergency crews searched for survivors. The twin quakes, measuring magnitudes 7.2 and 7.5, occurred less than a minute apart and were among the strongest to hit in the country's history. Authorities declared a nationwide state of emergency, closed the country's main international airport, suspended public transportation, and deployed medical personnel and rescue teams. Dozens of deaths and hundreds of injuries have been confirmed, though the toll is expected to rise.

Our hearts are with the people of Venezuela as they face the aftermath of these earthquakes. We mourn the lives lost and pray for the recovery of those who have been injured.

Early reports from Venezuela's Jewish community, which numbers several thousand, indicate that there have been no injuries or fatalities among community members. However, some members' homes sustained significant damage and are currently uninhabitable. The Jewish

community is providing safe temporary shelter for many community members, including those whose homes were damaged or who are without electricity, running water, or adequate supplies.

Our partners, the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and The Jewish Agency for Israel, are working to support the Venezuelan Jewish community and concerned family members in Israel. JDC is assisting the community on the ground and has authorized the distribution of non-perishable food supplies that were pre-positioned for emergencies. The Jewish Agency has activated its overseas emergency response table and established a dedicated hotline through its Global Center for Venezuelan immigrants in Israel and for those seeking information about immigrating to Israel. We will closely monitor the situation alongside our partners to assess evolving needs and determine any additional response that may be required.

It is at moments like this that every Federation and every Federation donor can – and should – be rightfully proud of the emergency response network that we have helped build and maintain for the benefit of the Jewish people worldwide. It is because of our annual core support for this critical work that we can assure our communities that the Jews of North America showed up immediately in this crisis with help and support and will continue to be there for the Jewish community of Venezuela as we are needed.

Thank you for all you do to ensure that we can once again fulfill the Jewish principle of Kol Yisrael Arevim Zeh Bazeh – all Jews are responsible for one another.

(Editor's Note: To help, you can donate through the Jewish Federation of Ocean County at this website, www.jewishoceancounty.org/disaster.)

Let's Build the Jewish Future

As One

- We open doors to Jewish life.
- We stand strong against rising hate.
- We help Israel rebuild and restore hope.

 Jewish Federation of Ocean County

 Scan the QR code or visit jewishoceancounty.org to learn more

Ah Yes, We Remember it Well

Do you have historical recollections or reflections from fifty or more years ago about the Jewish Federation of Ocean County or the Jewish Community that you want to share as we approach JFOC's 50th anniversary? Send them to: jewishocean@gmail.com. Submissions will be reviewed for possible publication by the Jewish Journal Editorial Committee.

**Advertise in
The Jewish Journal**
732-534-5959



Jewish Federation of Ocean County Impact



Personal story of Yoav

Yoav, a fifth grader in Afula's Youth Futures program, is a bright and curious child who loves soccer and spending time with his extended family. His grandparents live in Moshav Yakhini, a small village near the Gaza Strip, and Yoav often visits them during school holidays. For him, these visits are a cherished time of togetherness and celebration.

In 2023, Yoav and his family traveled to Yakhini for Simchat Torah. His mother, Hadar, shared their plans with Gali, Yoav's Mentor, during a phone call on Thursday, expressing her excitement for the time they would spend with loved ones. Neither of them could have imagined that in just two days – on October 7 – their world would be turned upside down.

On Shabbat morning, as the family rested together, sirens began blaring across the village. Such alarms had become a grim routine in their lives, but this time was different. Reports of a mass terrorist infiltration spread quickly, and the family scrambled to seek shelter. Hadar, her father, and her 18-year-old nephew climbed to the roof of their house to assess the situation. From there, they saw a car racing toward their property, filled with armed terrorists. The attackers spotted them, hurled a grenade that miraculously didn't detonate, and began shooting. Hadar's nephew was hit.

The family retreated inside, desperately trying to stop the bleeding and keep the door shut as the attackers attempted to force their way in. Amid the chaos, Hadar contacted Gali, seeking advice on how to comfort Yoav and the other children, who were terrified and huddled together. Hours passed, filled with fear and uncertainty, before the terrorists finally withdrew. Tragically, Hadar's nephew succumbed to his injuries. Roads were blocked, making evacuation nearly impossible, but with Gali's support and coordination with local authorities, the family was eventually rescued and transported to safety in Afula.

Recognizing Yoav's resilience and need for hope, Gali and the Youth Futures team wanted to give him a moment to smile again – a memory to hold onto in difficult times. Through a collaboration with the football team of Beitar Jerusalem, Yoav was invited to meet the players of his favorite soccer team. The experience was nothing short of magical. The players greeted him warmly, posed for photos, signed jerseys, and shared words of encouragement. For Yoav, this was more than a dream come true; it was a moment of light in the midst of darkness, reminding him that he is seen, supported, and cared for.

This small but meaningful gesture was a powerful reminder of the impact we can have when we come together to support children like Yoav. At Youth Futures, we believe in the transformative power of community, resilience, and hope.

Thanks to the unwavering dedication of Mentors like Gali and the generosity of Beitar Jerusalem, we are able to turn moments of despair into opportunities for healing and joy. Yoav's story is a testament to the strength of the human spirit and the difference we can make when we show up for one another.

