

Israel Fires Spawn International Prayer Response

The largest fire in the nation's modern history was still raging out of control Friday afternoon near the port city of Hafia. The forest fire has already killed at least 42 people and forced more than 30,000 evacuations.

International firefighters are on the scene to help contain the deadly flames. The United States, Bulgaria, Russia, Egypt and Turkey are among the nations rushing to help Israel in its time of need. The international emergency aid to a country that rarely accepts or receives foreign help may be a result of international prayer for the safety of Israel.

John Hagee, founder and national chairman of Christians United for Israel (CUFI), is among many leaders who have issued a prayer alert for the nation. His prayer asks God to "comfort those who mourn for their precious loved ones who are injured or have lost their lives in the midst of the raging fires" and to "protect Your land which You have given to Your people as their inheritance." (You can read the rest of Hagee's prayer on the CUFI Facebook page.)

Martin and Norma Sarvis, Christian artists and intercessors who live in Israel, have also issued a prayer alert about the fire on Mount Carmel. The couple recounts the horror of a busload of young prison guard cadets on their way to evacuate a prison in the Carmel Forest. The cadets were trapped by a fallen tree. Forty burned to death.

"The Prime Minister has called a day of mourning in Israel, and requested assistance from a number of Mediterranean nations, several of which are sending planes to help battle the blaze, which is still totally out of control in this drought-stricken land," the Sarvises wrote. "Please pray that

this be brought under control, for the relatives and loved ones of the dead and wounded, and for Israel to draw near to [God].”

The significance of Turkey’s aid should not be underestimated. Israel and Turkey have recently butted heads over diplomatic issues in recent months. Specifically, Turkish activists lost their lives on May 9 in the wake of Israeli commando action near the Gaza Strip. Turkey’s response may also be an answer to prayer. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is optimistic.

“I think this symbolizes an unprecedented response to our request for international help,” Reuters reported Netanyahu as saying after he chaired an emergency meeting of his cabinet in Tel Aviv. “I told [Turkey Prime Minister Recep Tayyip] Erdogan that we appreciate the major efforts during this time and I am sure that this will be a gateway to improving relations between the two countries.”