

On the Ground in Ukraine: Michael Evans Delivers Comfort to Frightened Jewish Seniors Amid the Horrors of War

The care and protection for Jewish people in Ukraine—especially seniors who have been full of fear during the Russian invasion of their country—have become a heartfelt quest for Michael Evans.

The son of Mike Evans, founder of the Friends of Zion Heritage Center in Jerusalem, wants Jewish seniors to know that the world has not forgotten them—and neither has God. Evans recently returned from a trip to Ukraine after delivering supplies and comfort to Jews in that worn-torn country. With no regard for his own safety while in country, he brought back heartbreaking stories of the desperation and devastation that the Russians have inflicted upon all Ukrainians, including Jews in Kiev and surrounding towns.

“Many of these seniors are alone,” Evans says. “Some of them are bedridden with fear. The community leaders told me those in the area who could leave did—the people we served were either too sick or too old to evacuate.

“My personal goal was to visit the Jewish seniors we’ve been supporting in Ukraine and make sure they got the food they needed,” he adds. “We delivered 20 tons of food to churches and the Jewish community.”

Because of the perils of the war, Evans says once he arrived in Ukraine, it was a “challenge” to find anyone who would take him to the places where the Jewish seniors lived.

"Igor, the Ukrainian pastor who was helping me, was understandably scared," Evans says.

One synagogue Evans visited has housed Jews in its basement, and Evans says one can see the toll and stress the war has caused them.

"Many of them are on antidepressants trying to cope with what they are going through. I can't blame them for that," Evans says. "I brought them food, listened to their stories, prayed for them and shared an encouraging word.

Evans says the daily atmosphere around Kiev is what one might expect from a war zone—terrifying.

"Ukraine isn't reporting on civilian casualties," he says. "Every 100 feet there is a military bunker made of sandbags, and there are soldiers everywhere. Photography isn't allowed in many places because there are traps everywhere. There are land mines in the streets and camouflaged trenches in the medians. The Ukrainians are super dug in. They keep winning the ground battles, but the Russians are bombing the heck out of them."

Evans says he met a girl staying at one of the local churches who told him horror stories of what the Russians are doing to the Ukrainian people.

"She's from a village in the north," Evans says. "She told me that the Slavic Russian troops were bad, and then other troops came in. They started killing people in the streets for no reason. Then they started raping the girls. Her mother hid her. Then they started taking the girls out of their homes completely and tearing up their passports and documents, saying, 'You don't need them anymore.' The other girls in her village weren't seen again. She walked for seven hours at night in the dark to escape without even using a flashlight because it would give her away."

Evans said he had a close call himself.

“I was right behind the defense line when a battle broke out,” he says. “You could hear the gunshots and explosions right in front of me and then shots from my left, and I could feel a bullet on my face as it zipped by. I backed into cover.”

Evans wants Christians worldwide to know the horrors the Ukrainian people—especially Jewish seniors—have faced every day since the war broke out in February.

“I prayed with each one I visited and told them that we have not forgotten about them—and neither has the Lord,” Evans says. {eo}

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