

Thousands of Jews Plan to Flee France After Nice Attack

The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (The Fellowship), the main organization helping Jews of France immigrate to Israel (make aliyah), has received thousands of recent inquiries from French Jews seeking to go to Israel and expects that number to climb following Thursday's terror attack in Nice.

The Fellowship in June brought 82 Jews from across France to Israel, and, additionally, is preparing to bring more than 150 to Israel this month, including several Nice families. French Jews in this seaside city were attending a Fellowship aliyah meeting Thursday evening one block from where a terrorist rammed a truck filled with munitions into a large crowd celebrating Bastille Day, in one of the country's worst terrorist attacks. An estimated 84 men, women and children were killed and many more were injured. According to media reports, two French-Jewish women, Clara Bensimon, 80, and her sister Raymonde Mamane, 77, were among five Jews wounded in the Nice attack.

The Fellowship says it has received more than 5,100 calls and hundreds of emails from French Jews inquiring about aliyah in recent months, and now Fellowship officials expect that number to climb amid the attack in Nice, the latest to strike France over the past year.

"We mourn for the victims of this despicable attack and pray for a speedy recovery for those who were hurt," said Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, founder and president of The Fellowship. "Sadly, this horrific attack underscores the pressing need to help bring as many Jews who wish to leave France to their homeland in Israel, and this is what we will continue to do."

The French-Jewish aliyah is part of The Fellowship's global aliyah initiative to bring Jews facing economic and security threats to Israel. In recent months The Fellowship has helped over 2,000 Jews make aliyah, not only from France but also from other countries where Jews face economic and security challenges including Bolivia, Brazil, Uruguay, Venezuela, Turkey and Ukraine. The Fellowship has also been funding security upgrades at French-Jewish communal institutions, including schools and synagogues, in the wake of terror attacks over the past year.

Several of the Jews leaving France with The Fellowship say they are escaping what has become an intolerable situation for the Jewish community. Some describe being afraid to wear yarmulkes outdoors or to display any other visible signs of being Jews, while others say they are growing increasingly concerned about radical Islamic anti-Semitism.