

Unexpected Surge in Aliyah During COVID-19 as Christians Offer Support

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem is currently supporting The Jewish Agency for Israel and Keren HaYesod with bringing an unexpected wave in aliyah even amid the coronavirus crisis, as the ICEJ has already sponsored flights for 601 Jewish immigrants since February and will bring another 160 Jews to Israel this week.

The newest arrivals include a group of 41 Jews from the former Soviet Union flying on Tuesday, May 19, from Moscow, with an additional 119 Jews scheduled to land at Ben-Gurion Airport on ICEJ-sponsored flights by week's end.

This will raise the total to 761 Jewish immigrants the ICEJ has brought on flights to Israel since corona travel bans were first imposed worldwide in February. For many of these recent arrivals, the ICEJ also is covering part of the added costs of their post-flight quarantine, which are the responsibility of The Jewish Agency.

As global travel has ground to a halt over recent months, many in Israel were expecting a pause in Jewish immigration due to the COVID-19 threat. But the nation is currently experiencing a surprising uptick in aliyah, as many Jewish families worldwide are moving up plans to immigrate to a country they view as safer and better positioned for economic recovery. This is in line with Israel's history as a state always open to Jewish immigration.

The present influx of Jewish immigrants is expected from around the world, including Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union among other regions. With most regular international flights still suspended at this time, Israeli and Jewish

Agency officials have been working to arrange emergency charter flights, which are bringing back stranded Israeli citizens as well as Jews from abroad who are approved for immigration to Israel.

Many of these recent Jewish arrivals are coming from regions of the former Soviet Union, where the local economies are struggling and the coronavirus threat is just peaking. Even travel within these countries is difficult and in some areas not even allowed. Yet we are hearing stories of Jewish families making incredible efforts to board flights for Israel. In several recent instances, pregnant mothers nearing term were determined to reach Israel in time to give birth in the Jewish homeland. And Israeli and Jewish Agency officials are exploring all avenues to safely funnel these people through airports even when most people are not allowed to fly.

On Tuesday, a flight will arrive from the former Soviet Union with 41 Jewish immigrants sponsored by the ICEJ. One Jewish couple on board has sped up their move here to be with their daughter, an Israeli mother of two who has been diagnosed with advanced brain cancer and will undergo emergency surgery in coming days.

At the request of the Jewish Agency, the ICEJ is currently raising funds from its global constituency to cover the flight costs for another 150 Jews from the former Soviet Union they hope to bring to Israel by early June.

“Despite all the bad news we hear about the corona crisis, one of the positive stories is the surprising number of Jews looking for a way to come to Israel as soon as they can,” said ICEJ President Dr. Jürgen Bühler. “We are privileged to play a key part in this unique wave of aliyah, when a pandemic brought the world to a standstill but could not stop the Jews from coming home to Israel.”

For more information about the ICEJ’s aliyah program, visit