



# WOUNDED ISRAEL

## The Tension-Field - Part 2

by Brigitte B. Nussbächer

*How we experience Israel's battle with Hamas and the Iranian attack at first hand and the mission with which we finally return to Germany.*

*Our impressions, encounters and experiences in Israel in April 2024.*

Part 1 of the article "The Tension Field" with the experiences of the first days of our trip you will [here](#).



*Jerusalem after the Iranian attack. Private Photo*

### Harbingers of the Iranian Attack

In the five days, since we have been in Israel, the threats of an Iranian attack have been getting louder and louder. On **Friday, April 12**, things become very concrete. We are contacted by the German Foreign Office. We are advised, to stay close to the shelter and prepare water, food and medicine. The headlines in the Israeli media read: "Israel is preparing for a direct rocket attack from Iran within 24 to 48 hours!" Washington is instructing its employees and diplomats not to leave their domiciles. No matter which media you look at, the warnings are screaming at you everywhere.

We have planned visits on Friday to families affected by the war, who want to show us the village from which they were evacuated six months ago: [Kerem Shalom](#), in the very south of Israel - more than a two hour drive away. They want to meet, despite the threatening situation. A very practical example of how to defy danger and not give in to violence. The inhabitants of the border region in particular have long experience of this. But only after hearing the powerful story of Roni and Ofer's efforts as medical first responders during the Hamas attack, (which I will soon report on in detail in



the article "[The Legacy of October 7](#)"), we truly understand, how particularly brave and undaunted they actually are.

For us, a situation like this is an absolute novelty. When in the last 70 years in Western Europe have you been advised not to leave your house because of the danger of a military attack? But we are not here as tourists. We have come with the aim of [making ourselves one with Israel](#), to lend a hand and [help](#) where we can; to be [contemporary witnesses](#). So, we decide to drive there anyway.



*Rony and Ofer saved people's lives in Kerem Shalom. Photo private*

In fact, on April 12 there are "only" attacks from Lebanon on Galilee with over 40 rockets and in Samaria (West Bank) an Israeli shepherd boy is kidnapped by Arabs and stoned to death. This leads to violent clashes between Palestinians and the IDF, as they search for the boy.

## The Countdown is On - Close to the Battlefield

If it is possible at all, the threats become even more violent the next day, Saturday, April 13. Acquaintances from Israel also write to us, to say, that they are no longer departing from near their shelters. We asked at our hotel, what we could do. We were shown a storage room with reinforced walls and a metal door. Of course, we couldn't prepare anything here or store anything for emergencies.

That day we were supposed to go to [Kfar Azza](#), one of the most destroyed kibbutzim next to the Gaza Strip. Ralph wanted to tell us the tragic story of the place, where he and his family had lived for the last 44 years. We ask, if we should come anyway, because we definitely don't want to put him in any danger - it's a several hour drive for him, too. His answer is a clear yes, he doesn't want to give in to the terror. So we set off south again. There is little traffic on Shabbat anyway, but now there are hardly any cars on the roads. We have asked, what we should do, if we are surprised by an attack on the road: leave the vehicle, lie on the ground and protect your head with your hands. There are no other means of protection on highways and interurban roads.

In Kfar Azza, we can clearly hear machine gun fire, bombs and drones from nearby Gaza. Sometimes it gets so loud, that it is hard to understand Ralph. He doesn't bat an eyelid - we find it harder to be so calm. We are now surrounded by things, we've only seen in reports and films. We walk over scorched ground and stand in front of ruins - accompanied by the gloomy symphony of fate of the fighting nearby. From now on, we speak as eyewitnesses.



*Ralf shows us the destruction and rocket remains in Kfar Azza. Photos private*

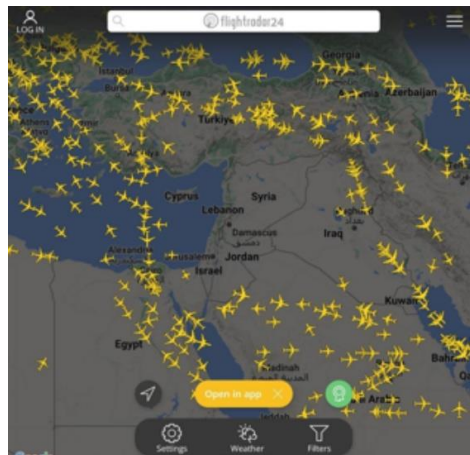
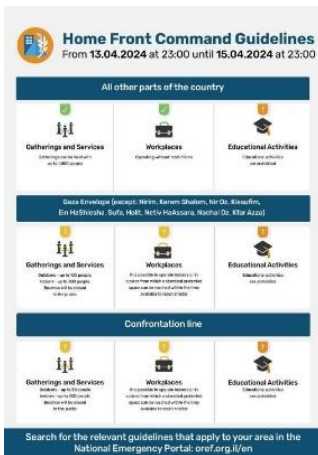
The visits of these two days (see next article: "[The Legacy of October 7](#)") are invaluable experiences for us. In the midst of this highly charged field of tension - between the consequences of the massacre in October and the imminent attack from Iran - meeting those affected, facing the pain, the danger, the fears together with them, changes our perception and ourselves!

## A Surreal Night of Destiny

We arrive back in [Jerusalem](#) unscathed in the evening and meet up for dinner with Werner Hartstock from Germany, who is leading a solidarity trip here. We are back at our hotel at around 22:00 o'clock.

What happens next, is surreal from today's perspective.

The home front command tightens the security instructions. At 22:00 we hear that the GPS in Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon are no longer working.



*Safety instructions & radar image of the airspace over Israel.*

At 23:00 the first reports come in, that Iran has begun its attack on Israel and that Israel is closing its airspace. At 23:30, the Israeli military spokesman confirms the attack on television. The hope, that it was just Arab fake news, is gone. With the first wave of "kamikaze" drone attacks, Israel's Iron Dome and David's Sling air defense systems were to be overloaded so that waves of dozens of ballistic missiles could later penetrate the system.



A radar image shows that there is no longer any air traffic in the Middle East and that the Iranian missiles and drones can reach Israel unhindered. At midnight, it is announced, that the third wave of unmanned drones, has been launched into Israel from Iran. These drones weigh 200 kg, carry up to 60 kg of explosives and have a range of up to 2,000 km. You can calculate when these missiles will reach Israel.



*When will the missiles reach Jerusalem?*

In Jerusalem, you can hear many fighter planes taking off. The humming in the sky gets more and more intense.

We have packed a bag with our essentials and water. We will take these with us to the so-called shelter, when the sirens start to wail. There is a small hope, that Jerusalem will not be the focus of the attack, because there would be a great danger of hitting the Al Aksa Mosque.

This is the moment, when we are overcome by a strange sense of calm. When we planned this trip, we were aware of the potential danger and accepted it, because it was important for us, to show the people of Israel, how much we love them and that we stand by them, regardless of the circumstances. We updated our last will and finalized everything that was open. My [articles](#) for [Passover](#) and [Independence Day](#) have been published already on our [ARC to Israel](#) website and submitted to other platforms for publication, as well as the material for the planned Israel event on May 14. I have updated my report here from Israel every day and sent it to my good friend Ardelle, with the request to ensure posthumous publication in the worst case scenario. So we are prepared.

We consciously put our lives in God's hands once again - and then go to bed. It's 00:21 o'clock and there's nothing more, we can do, that makes sense. We don't want to sit there, as a bundle of nerves, waiting for the drones and missiles to arrive - which could happen at any time, even hours later. However, we remain fully clothed. I can't get the images of October 7<sup>th</sup> out of my head: how Hamas kidnapped the poor people in pajamas. Whatever happens, I want to try to retain some dignity.

Unbelievable but true: we manage to fall asleep. At 01:45 we hear three loud, hard explosions. The Iron Dome intercepts missiles over Jerusalem. The sirens begin to wail. We have a few seconds to reach the makeshift shelter - in which we are the only ones.



*The Iranian attack. In the hotel shelter & siren warnings in Jerusalem. Private photo.*

But not alone! The international prayer group, that we founded on October 8<sup>th</sup>, stands faithfully by our side - we communicate intensively for over an hour via WhatsApp.

## The Miracle

What happened that night, is a miracle. Israel's air defenses fought like lions to protect the country and managed to intercept almost every one of the more than 300 incoming enemy drones and missiles. This is incredible and unprecedented. Only one child was injured by falling shrapnel and one military base was slightly damaged.

This night will go down in the history books and will probably be taught in military academies. But the lesson remains incomplete if the work of God is not mentioned...

We actually manage to fall asleep again in the early hours of the morning. But when we get up, we feel the aftereffects of the night: as the tension subsides, we are completely exhausted.

## The Day After

Life goes on. For many, even surprisingly normal. When we make our way to the [Western Wall](#) the next morning, the streets are no emptier than in the days before. But of course there are also others, who haven't dared to leave the vicinity of their bunkers for days and have therefore also canceled appointments with us.



*Jerusalem is unscathed the morning after the attack. Private photos*



We are all the more excited about the meetings that take place as normal: for example, the next evening with Anat and Aviel Schneider from [Israel Today](#). Over the years, we have learned a lot from Aviel about the historical and political background of Israel. After the historic success in defending against Iranian missiles, in cooperation with regional partners, he now sees a unique opportunity to further expand this cooperation. But we also feel the scars, that this time has left in the souls of our friends. For months, they had to fear for the lives of their three sons and their son-in-law, who all served on the front line.



*Life goes on – despite everything. Private photos*

As we leave, a small band is singing on a corner. They are beautiful, melodic songs. A larger circle has formed around them, the young people are listening and clapping. All they really want, is to live in peace, without being disturbed by others. Despite all their painful experiences and although they are so tired of the war, they do not give up. Once again, we take our hats off to this courage to survive and this resilience. We have heard it from many these days: this young generation is the hope of Israel. They will manage to overcome war and suffering.

## For the Future

On our last day in Jerusalem, before we leave, our hearts are heavy, because we have to say goodbye. We think about how we can continue to be a blessing here. At that point of time, we have no idea what else this day will bring.

We learn about a project dedicated to **traumatized IDF soldiers**. They are to receive psychological support to help them overcome the terrible things, they have seen and experienced. Many of those who were responsible for recovering the wounded and corpses in the first days and weeks after the massacre, have still not gotten over the terrible impressions. You can only imagine, how horrific the images were, they were confronted with, when you consider that more than 50 of the visitors to the Nova Festival committed suicide after the massacre because they could not go on living with such memories.

Likewise, there are many, who are equally burdened by the murderous house-to-house fighting in Gaza, where the humanitarian facilities are misused by the terrorists and traps lurk everywhere.



*Spontaneous interview with soldiers. Private photo*

We will [support](#) this project in the future with our association [ARC to Israel](#). I will also try to write [articles](#) about the soldiers of the IDF in order to create more understanding of how special this army is and what it has to deal with.

The opportunity for a first interview arises spontaneously. These young men belong to the Golani Brigade, known as "the first brigade" (to deploy) and are very proud of it. I ask them, what is most important to them as soldiers in the IDF. The answer comes promptly and from all sides: ethical standards and morale. They fight for life, for peace, out of love and to protect their country, their people. I look into the eyes of these young men. I see no hatred in them, not even anger. But a quiet sadness, that this fight is necessary. I want to know, what the hardest thing is for them. They shrug their shoulders. They don't think about it. They have a task and they want to fulfill it, as best they can. And they emphasize: we are not fighting against civilians. We help children and women - even in enemy territory. Unfortunately, this is often abused. To my final question, about how we can support them, we get the same answer, as almost everywhere else: describe, how you experienced us. Remind the world, that this fight was forced upon us and that we have to finish it, in order to be able to live in peace afterwards.

And we also meet Sandy, the manager of **Be'ad Chaim**.



*Sandy helps expectant mothers from the destroyed places. Photo: Sandy Shoshani*

With their organization, they help evacuated women from Israel's destroyed villages, who are giving birth during this time, without a real home. Since October 7, they have visited over 600 such young mothers and supported them both financially and personally. This is another project, that we will support with [donations](#) in the future, to help these young mothers and the newborn babies to build a new life from the ashes.



These projects and the knowledge, that we can continue, to help carry burdens and alleviate suffering from afar, make it a little easier for us to say goodbye. Good friends say, that we will be back in Israel sooner than we expect. We do hope so - because our hearts are at home in Israel.



*We return with the mission to report our experiences. Private photo*

But we will definitely return to Germany with a clear mission: to report on what we have seen and experienced on our website [ARC to Israel](https://www.arc-to-israel.org), at Israel events and in cooperation with other organizations.

First I write the tragic story of the killed hostage Maya, about which we unexpectedly learn on the last evening: "[Bring Maya Home Now](#)"

This is the second article, that reflects the experiences of these days in April, from our perspective. And the tragic fate of the Gaza border region and the personal, harrowing experiences of its residents will receive their own memorial in words in the next article: "[The Legacy of October 7th](#)".



More articles from Brigitte B. Nussbächer under: [www.arc-to-israel.org/en/artikel](https://www.arc-to-israel.org/en/artikel)