



The Truth About Israel:

Israel Aids Turkey in Devastating Earthquake

On August 17, 1999, at 3:02 am, one of the most powerful earthquakes of the twentieth century rocked northwestern Turkey, registering 7.4 on the Richter scale. The seismic center was near the city of Izmit. Though the final statistics would not be known for days, it was immediately clear that the toll was devastating. The next day, the Turkish Minister of Public Works and Housing warned his government and the world that "We are facing the greatest natural disaster in the history of the Turkish Republic."

The earthquake struck in the country's industrial heartland. 75,000 concrete, multi-storied buildings are estimated to have collapsed in Izmit alone, trapping victims within the rubble. Ultimately, approximately 17,000 people died and tens of thousands more were left homeless, injured and bereaved.

Immediately, more than a dozen nations mounted rescue operations and contributed rescue teams to search for survivors. Among them, the government and people of Israel did their utmost to assist the people of Turkey.

Israeli firefighting aircraft were among those who were trying to douse the nearby fires that threatened to blow up Turkey's largest oil refinery. Within a day, a fully equipped search and rescue brigade with soldiers trained as medical and rescue

personnel, and dog handlers with sniffer dogs were airlifted to Turkey. Once they arrived the teams operated simultaneously in different staging areas. Others would soon follow.

Within two days, Israel sent a field hospital, complete with an operating room, x-ray and ultra-sound equipment, and one hundred beds. There were two treatment clinics, one for

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adults and one for children, an isolation room, a delivery room, a pathology lab, and storage facilities for medical equipment. With a staff of about one hundred people, there were doctors, nurses, paramedics, x-ray technicians and administrative support. The Israelis were assisted by local volunteers and members of the Istanbul Jewish community to perform administrative tasks and to be translators between the Israelis and the patients. They worked around the clock. Every patient was accepted without restrictions.

In an effort coordinated by the Israeli Minister of Trade and Industry, major Israeli manufacturing companies contributed necessary materials including medicines, orthopedic and medical equipment, tents, blankets, food, baby food and instruments for evacuating victims of the quake. Bread, batteries, tens of thousands of bottled water, and baked and canned food were also made available. As of August 20, there were three daily flights, full of supplies, leaving Israel for Turkey.

In addition, Israeli television broadcast a telethon on behalf of the Turkish victims and individual Israelis donated over a thousand tons of clothes, blankets, toys, medicines, and hygienic supplies to the cause.

By August 23, the Israeli Foreign Ministry significantly accelerated the flow of aid by transferring additional supplies and equipment by sea. They coordinated with Turkish officials to assist in the reconstruction of Turkey's communications network. Israeli advisors volunteered to help rehabilitate damaged rural areas.

Unfortunately, on November 12, 1999, many of the same areas in Turkey were stricken by another earthquake, measuring 7.2 on the Richter Scale. The cycle of rescue and recovery began once again.