



Dear Friends,

As we currently face tense days and a sense of unknown, I want to share with you some special words from orphan Alona Russo, who returned to Israel on Friday with nineteen other Bnei Mitzvah-aged orphans after three amazing weeks on IDF Widows and Orphan Organization's annual Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebration trip to North America.

Of the twenty children who participated in the delegation, fifteen were orphaned due to the Hamas attacks on October 7th and the ongoing Swords of Iron War.

From being embraced and celebrated by local Jewish communities in Chicago, Toronto, and Deal, enjoying major attractions like Niagara Falls, The Bean and Times Square, and making life-changing memories at Camp Chi, the trip was truly an opportunity for our orphans to build a sense of camaraderie, understanding, and personal growth. Of course, the safety and security of the participants was of the utmost importance, and all necessary measures were put into place to ensure a smooth trip.



Alona Russo at Camp Chi

Alona Russo, who lost her father Uri Russo z'l on October 7th while defending kibbutz Kfar Aza, shared:

"This trip has been so special because these kids experienced the same things I did. My highlight of the trip is when we sat in a circle and told our fathers' stories. It was

really great to hear other kids' stories, because I am always hearing and telling my own, and I want to hear those of others. I heard almost every kid's story; they spoke about their dads, how they died, what they were like, how much they miss them and love them. It was really nice.

I hope to take home with me lifelong memories and friends. With these kids, I felt connections because they understand me. We can joke around with each other. It's a connection I have never ever personally felt. As a Bat Mitzvah, I am a teenager now. I am growing and feel more like myself. I hope that nobody else has to go on this trip because it is for orphans, but if they do go, I know they will have so much fun and make lifelong memories."

We know that this memorable experience of community-building, healing, and adventure will help these incredible Bnei Mitzvah kids continue to foster resilience and independence as they embark on their new journey into adulthood. We want to extend our deepest thanks to the local communities who showed such love and support for our participants during this trip.

Hoping for quieter days ahead,

Shlomi Nahumson, CEO
IDF Widows & Orphans Organization