

NOTE: Make sure you edit all 3 of the highlighted sections before sharing.

Dear (Teacher/Administrator),

I'm sure you're following the news out of the Middle East: the terrorist group Hamas orchestrated an unprecedented, massive unprovoked attack on Israeli villages in sovereign Israeli territory near the Gaza envelope early Saturday morning -- on Shabbat and the eve of Simchat Torah. More than 1500 dead, thousands injured, and more than 200 Israeli children, women, elderly and men kidnapped and taken into Gaza. Israeli leadership declared a state of war as Israel struggles to defend itself against this onslaught. In addition to these attacks, thousands of rockets have been fired at Israel, some landing in Ashkelon, Tel Aviv and many other cities.

As a parent of a student in (this community/name of community), I wanted to make you aware of how much our children are hurting in this moment. The impact of this terrorist attack echoes far beyond Israel into our community, here. Many Jewish students, including ours, have spent the past weeks scrolling social media and seeing graphic images of the violence directed against civilians. Sadly, they've also seen support for this inexcusable violence across many platforms. Our children are scared for their friends, family, and others they care about. They are worried about backlash from their peers for expressing their feelings about Israel and Israelis. And they are scared about what will happen next after this shocking escalation in violence. They will be showing up in shock, full of trauma, and with heightened sensitivity to the reactions of their friends, teachers, and classmates.

We are writing to make you aware of what our students are bringing with them to school hoping to share some resources that might help you navigate this challenging moment and provide support for those struggling.

The Chicago Jewish community is rallying around supporting the Israeli people in their time of need. As you know, many of us have family and friends in Israel, and an affinity for the country is deeply tied into most American Jews' cultural and religious identity. We know Chicago families whose relatives have been called up to reserve duty or who are searching for their loved ones who've been missing since October 7th and are feared kidnapped or dead. Some students in your classrooms may have lost camp counselors, family members, or friends.

It will take a lot of effort for Jews (and especially Israeli-Americans) to deal with the trauma of the attack -- already exceeding the scale of 9/11 proportional to the Israeli population. We encourage the school to consider the socio-emotional needs of students, faculty and staff and offer processing space or counselor availability and resources for teachers to help them navigate these experiences.

I'm sure it's no surprise to you that we have already seen a serious escalation of tension among Jewish, Israeli, and pro-Israel students and those members of the larger community who have vilified the State of Israel as a colonial, oppressive, un-democratic regime, and/or identify as anti-Zionists. Jewish student clubs might need additional support or security, and emotions are running high. Teachers are likely still processing and may not have the words to explain their own trauma even as they will be required to deal with their students' trauma.

Our community organization, JUF- The Jewish United Fund, is available to facilitate conversations among Jewish students, faculty and staff. They can also provide resources explaining the current situation, its implications for the future of the region, the US-Israel relationship, and the peace process, and the repercussions for Israeli society. The JUF office in Israel has been providing updates to our community, and we'd be happy to share these.

Please let us know if you would like us to connect you to JUF and their resources. We appreciate the support and understanding of the school community.

With hope for a quick resolution,

(Your Name)