

## RAF Completes Humanitarian Airlift of Over 220 British Nationals from Conflict-Hit Israel

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The Royal Air Force (RAF) has completed the evacuation of more than 220 British nationals and their dependents from Tel Aviv to Cyprus, amid the escalating conflict in Israel. The airlift, led by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), was conducted over three days using RAF Atlas aircraft.

The operation involved aircraft flying from RAF Brize Norton and Cyprus to Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv. To accommodate the large number of evacuees, the Atlas aircraft were temporarily modified with additional seating, enabling each plane to carry over 100 passengers per flight. Once in Cyprus, consular staff from the FCDO greeted the evacuees at Larnaca Airport, offering support and assistance as they prepared for onward travel to the UK.

Among those evacuated were young families, pensioners, including two individuals celebrating their 91st birthdays, and a three-month-old infant. The mission was praised for its swift execution and care extended to vulnerable individuals amid ongoing instability in the region.

One member of the RAF aircrew described the experience as a poignant reminder of the humanitarian side of military service, saying, “This is the day job, but it is one of the most rewarding elements of the job when you become involved in any humanitarian activity.”

An evacuee named Jeff, who had travelled to Israel with his family for a wedding, shared his account of how the celebratory trip rapidly transformed into a life-threatening situation. “My family and I were caught in a situation that quickly escalated from a joyous celebration to navigating a war zone. My wife, elderly parents, and I were terrified, running to bomb shelters in the middle of the night and facing the uncertainty of how we would get home,” he said in an update issued by the RAF.

The successful evacuation was a coordinated effort involving the Ministry of Defence’s Operational Liaison and Reconnaissance Team, which

handled ground logistics, and the FCDO's Rapid Deployment Team, which provided immediate assistance to evacuees.

This mission underscores the UK's commitment to safeguarding its citizens abroad during times of crisis and highlights the RAF's operational readiness and humanitarian capabilities in high-risk scenarios.