

Lifegate in June 2025

Dear friends and supporters, the war in which we have been living for more than 20 months has once again intensified significantly. The regime in Iran has been announcing the destruction of the Jewish state for years and has been financing, training and equipping Israel's enemies (Hamas, Hezbollah, militias in Iraq and Syria, as well as the Houthi militias in Yemen). But it has now been directly attacked and its nuclear program has been severely set back, perhaps even substantially destroyed. The leadership of the Al Quds Brigades, Iranian nuclear scientists, weapons factories and missile launching bases were targets of Israeli attacks. As a result, our days were repeatedly interrupted by missile and drone attacks from Iran and we had to seek shelter. The many interruptions by sirens during the night meant that many of us suffered from lack of sleep. We are grateful for the two shelters in the Lifegate building that we had to go to several times a day!



Lifegate shelters

at home in Jerusalem

above our apartment

Israeli media reported that 540 rockets were fired at Israel, killing 28 people, injuring 3238 and destroying more than 15,000 homes.

Our children and young people have no protection on their way to us and back home. Their routes are too long and they are in considerable danger from falling rocket parts. As a consequence Lifegate had to work without them for 10 days. We hope that the ceasefire announced by America will be implemented and adhered to in the long term and that the unspeakable war in Gaza will come to an end with the release of the hostages and hopefully a moderate local government.

The workshops are producing for the annual order of Lifegate articles for Germany and the service departments laundry, shoe repair and aid department are continuing to work. The carpentry and textile departments are also active, as well as our food project for needy people. Bread and hot meals are still delivered daily.

In the Lifegate Garden guest house, we are using the time to carry out repairs and do alteration work with our team. Our therapy department, the early intervention and school team took part in a training course which we were able to organize at short notice. Even now, a daily routine helps to distract us from what is going on around us and focus on pursuing meaningful tasks. God holds His hand over our center, our team and our children and young people. By His grace and preservation, many beautiful things happened in June too!



Annual delivery of Lifegate gift products ready for shipment in Beit Jala

Olive oil has arrived safely at the German warehouse and can be ordered!

0,5 liter 2 liter and 5 liter



Yusif was born in Hebron with only one arm and a shortened leg. He was discovered many years ago by reporters from Weltspiegel (A German TV program that covers foreign affairs) and, as a result of the report on his life, people in Germany became involved in his future. Lifegate was given the task of looking after him locally. We took him to one of the best prosthesis specialists in Israel and he received a functional prosthesis. At first he was very grateful, but then he was increasingly ridiculed by his friends because of the "plastic arm" and he rejected the prosthesis. Yusif is now a young man of 19, we have kept in touch all these years and have always tried to help.

He and his deaf mother are a team, he is her hearing and she is his anchor. A few months ago, we were able to get him to come to our therapy department regularly again. He received a shoe lift for his shortened leg to prevent further damage to his hip. Yusif does heavy physical work for a metal company, literally lifting fridges onto his shoulder with one arm and carrying them to vehicles. We are doing our best to help him find a (much) less strenuous job, perhaps to get him interested in our workshop.

Yusif will need a new hip in the future and as a young man he would now like to give a prosthetic arm another chance. We are delighted and would like to continue to support him. Yusif should one day live without pain and be able to care for his mother for a long time to come. He has a very strong will, which we are increasingly directing in our team of therapists in ways that are good for his body. Yusif doesn't seek sympathy, he always looks for challenges. With a strong arm, the kind heart of his mother and the Lifegate team who support him with love, he will hopefully soon no longer be lifting fridges but will have a bright and hopeful future.



Yusif received a prosthetic arm at the age of 12 through our initiative in Israel



At the age of 21, Yusif performs heavy physical labor with one arm and a painful hip



"High time"

We didn't necessarily have this "on our radar" when we built Lifegate's "Bier Garten". We are all the more pleased now! A wedding took place on this beautiful little piece of land with our cozy wine barrels (seating areas). The son of a former Lifegate physiotherapist said "I do" to his German bride in the Lifegate (beer) garden. Placing their trust in God, they "defied" the exceptional circumstances in which we all find ourselves and celebrated a wonderful wedding.

More and more local church communities are using this garden for gatherings, quiet days and times of fellowship. This is precisely why we launched the Lifegate Garden project in 2017. To offer local people and guests from abroad a beautiful oasis of peace, recharging, tranquillity, joy and fellowship with each other and with God.



"Construction site neighboring property ... Others destroy - We build up!..."



Progress is being made and the safe pick-up area is taking shape. The toilet block to the sensory garden and the boundary walls are being erected. A program of woodworking awaits the registered volunteers in September. We are grateful that this project can continue well, that the workers appear daily and that we can report on constant progress.



Our "sensory garden" is being created here



Left: Wheelchair path and boundary walls



New doors in Hydro Therapy

After 13 years, our wooden doors have become very unsightly. The constant humidity was taking its toll. We are delighted to have been able to replace them with much better looking aluminum doors. Further necessary renovation work in this important therapy area will be carried out during the summer vacations.



A visit to Tabgha on the Sea of Galilee

We are actually guests here with our young people and meet an Israeli group of people with special challenges every year. After almost two years of war, we hope that peace will soon return so that we can continue our programs. Paul, who has been running this important meeting place for many years, had once again collected used clothing from all over the Galilee. A Ford Transit, loaded to the roof, made its way back to Jerusalem and Beit Jala after a relaxing weekend. These clothes will help many families who only have the bare essentials to live on in these times. Thank you Paul, that we were able to take a time of refreshment and thanks also to the Benedictine Abbey in Tabgha!



Joni und Friends

Wheelchairs and aids for people from all over the country

In an initial campaign, wheelchairs delivered by Joni and Friends from the USA in the spring were distributed to children and elderly people at Lifegate. We had informed social workers and organizations and were quickly able to compile a list of over 80 people in need. We installed workstations in our courtyard and in Lifegate's workshops, where our therapists, technicians and volunteers from the Imanuel congregation in Bethlehem worked. Each wheelchair was individually adapted to the person in need. Along with the aid came a small booklet with the life story of Joni Erikson Tada in Arabic and, for Christians, an Arabic Bible. Our team and the volunteers shared with the visitors their own life story of faith in Jesus and the impact in our lives. Many happy and blessed people left Lifegate with a new wheelchair. We are organizing a second wheelchair distribution in the first week of July, once again up to 100 people will receive a new "mobility".



Wheelchair fitting and distribution in the Lifegate courtyard

A first meeting for staff from the USA, Armenia, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Lifegate planned for the second week of June with Joni and friends had to be canceled at short notice due to the closure of airports and national borders. We would have liked to welcome our Armenian friends to Beit Jala beforehand, but everything turned out differently. We will certainly make up for this important meeting, which was also supposed to be opportunity to get to know the Joni and Friends activities and coordination in these countries. It is so important that we Christians set a new and encouraging example of understanding and cooperation in our crisis-ridden region. **"To be on the road for the people and not against each other"** is the message of Lifegate, for which we have been commissioned by Joni and Friends for this entire region.

Lifegate bakery The pleasant smell of fresh bread and rolls welcomes us to the Lifegate center as early as 7.00 am. Our customers include 100 loaves for people who have literally lost "work and bread", as well as several stores in Bethlehem and the surrounding area. Our pretzels in particular are very popular.

At the beginning of May, my wife and I visited our first German pioneer baker at his vacation home in Migdal on the Sea of Galilee. Wilfried Schroth was the first German baker to teach our local employees and some volunteers how to bake spelt bread and pretzels. We drank coffee together and had a good time exchanging ideas and then Wilfried gave us a large tray of freshly baked poppy seed cake for the Lifegate team and two spelt loaves for us when we left. I remember that the next day I asked him to write down another recipe for pretzels, which he quickly sent me via WhatsApp.

A week later, we received the news from a mutual friend that Wilfried had probably suffered a stroke during the night and was in a very serious condition. After a few days in hospital in Israel, he was transferred to Germany, where he sadly died shortly afterwards. Wilfried loved the country of Israel and all its people. Years ago, his German wife died here and was buried in Tiberias. Wilfried's body was therefore also brought back to Israel for his final resting place next to his wife. Wilfried was a role model for us in his positive zest for life, his faith and his professionalism. We will miss him very much, but we will continue to honor his memory with good bread and pretzels every day!



"Will there be good spelt bread in heaven now?"

Lugo Fernando Torres came from Mexico and lived in France. He is obviously a man without fear, an excellent baker and a Mexican chef. Over the next few weeks we will be learning how to make original French croissants, baguettes and Mexican baking specialties with him. Our kitchen will also benefit from the knowledge of this nice and modest young man. A gift from heaven! Gracias Seniore!



Fernando with Awad our local baker

Strengthening for our team

During the time of conflict with Iran we used the time without our children and young people for a special three-day "team strengthening" with further training on the topic of "Leadership and responsibility in life and at work". With Elias Najjar we were able to gain an experienced coach in this area, who had already provided us with strong support at a family camp last year. Elias leads the youth work of an independent church in Bethlehem and uses the person, example and life of Jesus Christ as a model for successful leadership. The confident and cheerful faces of our committed Lifegate ladies and gentlemen testified to a successful mission, especially in these difficult times. Thank you Elias!



"Coming and going", hurray we are not alone!



Encouragement from Germany dear friends and supporters from left: Ingrid and Christoph Zehendner, Claudia and Michael Sachs, Ina and Torsten Sternberg

It does us all good when dear friends and supporters of Lifegate's work drop by even in these times of crisis! For these three couples, the "timing" was also really from "above". They all escaped the airport closure that began with the war with Iran. So we are doubly grateful for the encouraging encounters, the interest, the sympathy, the care, the prayers and for the safe return to Germany!

It is not easy to regularly go to the shelter in the basement in the middle of the night with small children when the rocket alarm goes off, and we also experienced more and more attacks during the day. So we are all happy and grateful that our "coworker" at the early childhood education center, Erik Praetorius, and his family were able to fly out to Germany via Jordan and start their summer vacation there a little earlier. We also survived the journey to the border and a three-hour wait safe and well and are now all relieved. We look forward to seeing you again after the summer vacation.



*Peace begins in the heart of every single person and
is the ever-ready gift of a Jewish man who was
and is also the Son of God!*

We wish you a good, relaxing and blessed summer.

Yours, Burghard Schunkert and the Lifegate team