

Overcoming Community Crisis

Why and How Jewish Communities Should Develop Crisis-Preparedness Systems

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Increasing global extremist Islamic terrorism against Western targets, the rising tide of anti-Semitism, the growth of radical Islamic elements who are hostile to the Jewish people and are in conflict with Israel, along with the real danger of increasing terrorism aimed at Jewish targets and the potential for exposure to unexpected multi-casualty disasters, taken together, require Jewish organizations and communities to prepare for crisis management and the protection of Jewish life and communal lifestyle. This article offers basic, concrete, and realistic blueprints on how to prepare for, manage during, and reconstruct after a crisis. It offers useful organizing principles, as well as a detailed range of specific options that may be adapted by communities and institutions, large and small, according to their needs and capabilities.

Current global and regional developments are exacerbating the danger of terrorist and acts against Jewish targets and anti-Semitic acts against Jews around the world. In addition, there is an increased danger of large-scale sudden disaster (LSSD), such as natural disasters, toxic or ecological crises, and so forth. The common denominator of all crises is their surprise and shock effect and the high possibility of resultant paralysis, possibly even on a mass scale involving millions. Even developed countries, in which sophisticated crisis management systems are in place, may find themselves taken by surprise and overwhelmed by acute crises and disasters, as was shown by 9/11 and, differently but no

less powerfully, by Hurricane Katrina. It is therefore imperative to establish systems for managing crises, preparing for them, and coping with their results.

Proper organization, prevention, and preparation increase the ability of communities to minimize crisis damage and the scale of disaster and to cope both during the crisis itself and in the no less important phases of recuperation and reconstruction. Even well-organized and well-intentioned governmental and other agencies can only do so much during crises; it is thus imperative for the Jewish community to improve community capabilities to function independently while cultivating ongoing cooperation with governmental and other agencies.

Investing material resources and attention in future emergency and crisis situations cannot be measured in simplistic cost-

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benefit terms, because such an investment is directed at situations and potentialities whose probability is unknown and unknowable and whose outcomes are unpredictable. Nevertheless, because these risks do have a real probability and carry the potential for severe and long-term damage, it is worthwhile to invest resources in attaining preparedness, adapted to the particular situation of each individual community.

In general, it can be safely assumed that every community faces the possibility of crisis or disaster of some kind, and with a relatively modest investment it is possible to substantially reduce the damage stemming from such situations. It is therefore recommended that every community allocate a dedicated budget for this purpose.

On a different and more optimistic note, crises often provide opportunities for bringing about required changes, achievements, and breakthroughs that could not be accomplished at other, calmer times. But this too depends on adequate forethought and preparation.

BCD: A FRAMEWORK FOR CRISIS PREPAREDNESS IN EVERY STAGE

The three basic stages of an emergency or disaster situation are **Before** the crisis, **Coping** with the crisis itself, and **Day After** (BCD; see Figure 1). Each stage requires its own deployment, at all levels—individual, family, community, and beyond.

Each stage also has its own distinctive challenges: before a crisis, increasing awareness and putting structures in place; in the crisis itself, swiftly reacting to save lives and

minimize damage to both hard and soft elements of communal well-being; and afterward, returning life to normal and incorporating lessons learned during the crisis. Every stage requires preparedness.

One of the most common difficulties in improving crisis preparedness, particularly for small communities, is determining where to begin and how to create a structured work plan and preparedness level well suited to the particular community. At the outset, it is strongly recommended that governmental crisis resources, parallel systems in neighboring Jewish and other communities, and the possibilities of getting external assistance be studied carefully.

There are four stages to formulating a work plan for improving community preparedness:

1. Preparatory stage—defining the goals and objectives of the community's crisis management system
2. Stage A—performing a preliminary exercise to map needs and define desired preparedness areas vis-à-vis the scenarios and threats relevant to the community
3. Stage B—performing a larger scale exercise to prepare action plans
4. Stage C—Implementing, assimilating, and updating the plan

It must be remembered that no action plan will ever perfectly fit a real crisis. However, they are essential for preparation and thinking through contingencies and thus constitute a basis for such improvisations as will be necessary during a crisis.

Each community should undertake a community capability assessment (CCA) of (1) the extent and range of its own authority, functions, and responsibilities vis-à-vis its own members and governmental and other authorities; (2) the resources and capabilities—financial, organizational, technical, and human—at its disposal; and (3) its needs, now, and in the near, middle, and long term. Taken together, this assessment provides a realistic, flexible basis for plan-

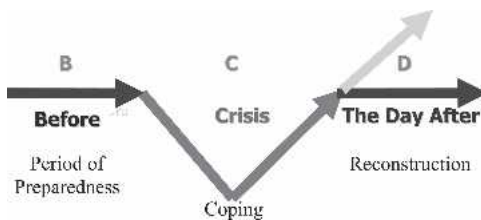


FIGURE 1. BCD System

ning and management for crisis coping (see Figure 2).

Developing a suitable communal infrastructure to address the response and services needed before crisis occurs, including the development of cooperation with governmental emergency agencies and with other Jewish communities and organizations, increases the chances for better coping with crisis and disaster and their results. When building this communal crisis management infrastructure, the required preparation level and scale of the plan depend on the individual characteristics of the Jewish community and its relationship to the broader community and government. Consider these key criteria in developing the crisis management infrastructure:

- Proximity to other Jewish communities
- Size of the Jewish community
- Presence or absence of governmental emergency services and mobilization mechanisms with high-level capabilities to ensure security and provide medical and rescue services
- Likelihood of crisis and fear level of terrorist attacks and disasters
- Level of cooperation with governmental authorities and nonprofit organizations
- Level of Jewish organizational infrastructure and economic and physical resilience
- Level and stability of components of communal social resilience, which directly affect the general physical resilience and the community's future; for example, quality and stable leadership and a strong sense of belonging, unity, voluntarism, and social cohesion and resistance

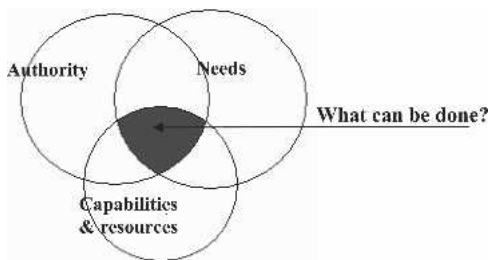


FIGURE 2

THE NATURE OF CRISES AND COMMON FAILURES IN MANAGEMENT

Developed countries are not immune to crises and in some respects are more exposed to them than less well-developed countries. Even those with crisis management systems in place with diverse warning and prevention capabilities and resources, along with advanced rescue systems, may be taken by surprise and nearly helpless to cope with the results of acute crises and disasters, as was amply and tragically shown by the experience of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina.

The main characteristic of crises is their unpredictability. We cannot know beforehand their timing or magnitude, which can range anywhere from manageable to vast, and may be beyond the resources of even national governments. Moreover, during “Day After” periods, affected communities or countries are regularly left to cope on their own with the posttraumatic aspects of the aftermath and with the most difficult challenge of all—reconstruction and getting life back to normal, or even improving on the previous routine.

A crisis is a situation in which the pressure of events, both external and internal, requires the leaders of relevant organizations to make urgent decisions in a relatively short time and under conditions of great uncertainty, so as to avoid graver outcomes. Acute disaster creates psychological pressure on the population, which exacerbates and intensifies the consequences of the disaster, unless counteracted by speedy ameliorating action, including communal self-help.

A crisis in the community is a time of distress, which may interrupt continuity or disrupt its normal routines while a new reality is emerging. The leaders' lack of understanding and inability to formulate a policy regarding their role and their key position in times of crisis are major reasons for failures in crisis management. After a crisis, the ongoing handling of routine situations

and short-term problems at the expense of long-term preparations and infrastructure-building is mainly the result of the leaders' insufficient awareness.

The chief failures of communal and organizational crisis management are the following:

- Deficiencies in infrastructures and services designed to protect and assist civilians
- Leaders and policymakers' lack of relevant professional knowledge and inability to make decisions during a crisis situation; decisions are wrong and too late
- Inability to cope with multi-event crises
- Limited warning capability, insufficient predictive ability, and lack of telling signs in unexpected events
- Operational contingency plans that are insufficient and inadequate for unexpected and uncertain situations
- Lack of capability and prior preparation for coping with unfamiliar scenarios, which may lead to denial
- Low population resilience in coping with crisis events that paralyze daily routine for long periods and require massive resources for recovery
- Scarcity of professional experts in a wide range of knowledge and experience domains required for crisis management response
- Government and community systems' inefficiency and lack of integration, cooperation, and coordination between operational bodies
- Lack of common language and deficient knowledge regarding the powers and roles of crisis management systems
- Intensification of posttraumatic syndromes and after-effects of crisis, primarily due to the increased exposure to media
- Insufficient skills to properly cope with the media and its effects

At the same time, crises are opportunities. It is precisely during times of crisis that

one can bring about changes and accomplish achievements and breakthroughs that could not be attained in normal times. These include, for instance, improving information exchange, upgrading long-term relationships with authorities and other communities, erecting new facilities and institutions to replace old damaged ones, developing new independent capabilities, and of course the opportunity for enhancing communal resilience, cohesion, and sense of belonging.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY CRISIS MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Disaster or crisis affects a society's and community's standards and quality of living and its values, morale, and community resilience. A crisis in the community is a period of distress that could bring on a period of discontinuity or a punctuated phase of normality, to the point of creating a new and unfamiliar reality. Therefore, mental, psychological, behavioral, and social aspects must be integrated into the components of physical preparedness of organizations and communities. A multidisciplinary approach, which is not easy to develop, is required.

Key challenges for crisis managers, leaders, and policymakers are knowing how to discern in real time when a crisis is developing, how to predict it while handling the unpredictable, how to try and prevent it, and how to prepare for it and cope with it and its outcomes. Thorough familiarity with the existing response systems, both governmental and nongovernmental, and how local authorities and agencies are expected to respond and operate—how to approach them, when they are expected to arrive on the scene, and how they may be of assistance during times of crisis and emergency—is a crucial prerequisite to effective planning.

The checklists for preparedness evaluation and improvement may seem at first to be dauntingly demanding and highly complex, but in fact they can be adapted quite

easily to any community, including small ones, according to their specific needs and organizational and budgetary capabilities.

Preliminary Phase

Objectives: Gaining familiarity and analyzing the community's existing emergency infrastructures; gaining familiarity with the response mechanisms and resources of the state authorities responsible for protecting and assisting the population during disaster and crisis situations

1. Risk evaluation
 - a. Classification and probability assessment of threat sources: natural disaster, accident, hazardous materials (HAZMAT), and terror
 - b. Analysis of combined and compounded threats and dangers
 - c. Low- and high-probability risk assessment
 - d. Mapping and analysis of targets, objectives, and facilities at risk and damage assessment of main threats
 - e. Analysis of risks bearing a major significance
 - f. Mapping hazardous sites containing dangerous materials
2. Formulation and analysis of various scenarios, including terrorist attacks, disasters, and other crises
3. Formulation of prevention plans
4. Formulation of protection and security policy and plans
 - a. Mapping needs for securing public facilities, sensitive community sites, and the required resources needed for protecting Jewish persons under threat
 - b. Recruiting a Crisis Management Team, security teams, auxiliary forces, and volunteers for all crisis stages
 - c. Setting alert and warning levels while adapting preparations and checklists required for each situation
 - d. Instructing the population and increasing community members' awareness of potential treats, without giving rise to unnecessary anxiety
5. Development of community crisis management infrastructure capabilities
 - a. Gaining familiarity with and analyzing existing emergency and crisis infrastructures in governmental authorities, NGOs, and other communities
 - b. Preparing actions plans for various situations
 - c. Mapping and creating contact lists of key community leaders and professionals as well as volunteers, who in time of crisis can undertake tasks of coping, recovery, and reconstruction
 - d. Preparing and internalizing operational contingency plans
 - e. Preparing work plans tailored to the community's specific needs
6. Setting up a community crisis management center (CMC) for emergency situations
7. Implementation of exercises/drills and simulation games for policymakers, staff, and field echelons
 - a. Joint exercises with official state, county, and municipal authorities
 - b. Executive exercises and simulations—both scheduled and surprise drills
 - c. Varied multistage drills, including all levels of community, especially field echelons
8. Developing cooperation with governmental and nongovernmental authorities
9. Improving capabilities for receiving and generating relevant information
10. Using the Internet to improve communication with community members
11. Creating a community information center that is preferably integrated with the community situation room
12. Developing a Geographical Information Structure (GIS) that will enable mapping of a community's locations, facilities, and infrastructure as a basis for

- planning and common language between multiple actors (e.g., via Google Earth)
13. Information exchange and intelligence cooperation with governmental and other agencies
 14. Improving leaders' and professionals' decision-making mechanisms' capability
 15. Improving in-house emergency management and performance capabilities
 - a. Scheduling periodical professional training sessions
 - b. Establishing intra-community resource allocation systems
 16. Enhancing reconstruction capability for 'the day after' in physical, social, and psychological terms
 - a. Cooperation and coordination with health, welfare, and aid agencies
 - b. Setting up a team for care and intervention of therapists, social workers, spiritual caregivers, and others in posttraumatic aspects of crisis aftermath
 - c. Care and rehabilitation response to populations with special needs—the elderly, the poor, and the disabled
 - d. Setting up child and youth recovery plans within educational institutions and communal centers
 17. Improving media relations capabilities
 - a. Setting up a communication center adjacent to the CMC
 - b. Building or using existing independent broadcast radio and TV studios according to state laws
 - c. Appointing a volunteer public relations and awareness team
 - d. Making a list of interviewees in different languages as needed
 - e. Preparing public services messages for use as needed by the public
 18. Improving the population's preparedness and knowledge for coping with crisis
 19. Improving reconstruction capabilities and formulating plans in the education sector
 20. Improving intercommunity logistic capabilities
 21. Legal regulation of community actions during emergencies
 22. Improving the community's economic capabilities and services during crisis
 23. Mapping required human capital and logistic resources for emergency situations
 24. Obtaining insurance policies, covering catastrophic loss, etc.
 25. Appointing a resource team for internal and external resource mobilization—finance, knowledge experts, and others
 26. Appointing a damage assessment team
 27. Appointing teams for lesson learning and implementation

This checklist provides a basic template that can be adapted to the specific needs and capabilities of any given community. For instance, in smaller communities, a small and effective team may be appointed to improve recovery abilities in the social, education, welfare, and economic aspects of the community, while relying on governmental institutions and services rendered by the local municipal or regional system and in cooperation with nearby Jewish communities. It is important to create the infrastructure for that beforehand, in times of calm.

Activity During and Immediately After Crisis

1. Open situation room and alert professionals based on contact list.
2. Mobilize the entire range of community resources based on contingency plans, while maintaining continuous and ongoing operation.
3. Disseminate information to the public through a known and official figure, using the Internet site as a central communal communication tool.
4. Appoint a team to provide psychological first-aid support on the phone or the Internet—hotline numbers should be publicized by phone or on the Internet.

5. Map hit and exposed groups and prepare specific action plans for each one: directly hit, relatives-friends involved, and people indirectly involved with the victims.
 6. Open a multidisciplinary public access center in convenient places such as schools and community centers.
 7. Appoint team and center for locating missing persons.
 8. Perform situation assessments and adapt operations to changing situations while planning short-term actions and deploying for the longer term.
 9. Appoint a "day after" planning and thinking team to plan reconstruction and normalization activities.
 10. Cooperate with governmental aid agencies and establish contacts with hospitals and social aid centers.
 11. Cooperate and communicate with other damaged communities and express solidarity with other hit populations.
 12. Document activities for lesson learning.
7. Decide on communal commemoration days and conduct memorial ceremonies for the victims.
 8. Conduct ceremonies and events to recognize the work done by crisis management teams.
 9. Reopen communal institutions to return activity back to normal as soon as possible.
 10. Renew cultural creation and activity in the community.
 11. Engage in documentation and lesson learning for the future.

**PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNAL
COPING WITH POSTTRAUMATIC
PHENOMENA
FOLLOWING DISASTER**

Crises inflict not only material damage but deep and genuine trauma. This dimension of crisis planning is crucial and complex and deserves elaboration. An event or an experience is transformed into a trauma when people feel under a threat of death or of acute harm to themselves or others and have an acute sense of fear and helplessness as a result of the event. The traumatic event is usually unexpected and uncontrolled, shatters one's basic sense of security, and leaves one vulnerable to negative emotions of loneliness, hopelessness, shock, and paralysis. The traumatic reaction affects not only individuals directly hit in real time during a disastrous event but also those exposed in wider circles, such as family members, friends, relatives, community members, leaders, and professionals directly or indirectly involved working with the affected population.

Posttrauma care and intervention are usually divided into two types: the first is care of individuals, called individual care, and the second is communal care, aimed at enhancing the resilience and resistance of an afflicted community as a whole.

It should be noted here that there is much controversy over the nature of posttrauma care and intervention. Some schools of

Aftermath and Reconstruction Period

Reconstruction and mental care may take many months. This must be taken into account when planning for the long term.

1. Determine the right time to announce the end of the crisis and switch to a reduced operation mode.
2. Formulate a policy and adapt action plans to the "day after" and the unfolding situation.
3. Continue to provide the critical services of the information center, psychological first aid, and communication center and decide on their future operational mode.
4. Provide personal escort to victims' families.
5. Continue to support victims and provide mental care to victims and their families.
6. Take care of bereaved families and handle mourning arrangements if necessary.

clinical psychology argue that communal psychological intervention is ineffective, and some even maintain that such care in itself may exacerbate trauma and disrupt the individual's natural healing processes. A contrary approach offers models for deployment, intervention, and care through social mechanisms and support circles designed to support both the community and its individual members. Communities are advised to consider which mix suits their needs best, in consultation with professionals and experts from within or outside the community.

Social-communal resilience is a multidimensional and highly dynamic area that changes in the course of time and varies vastly between individual communities. Enhancing such resilience calls for different design, thinking, and planning approaches, adapting the response to the needs of specific communities.

Resources for communal posttrauma care consist not only of psychology or mental health professionals. They also include the entire range of human and other resources at the community's disposal, with spiritual leaders being of much importance. The community's behavioral and social coping resources must be integrated with the physical and organizational resources as part of the communal coping activity, and constitute a major component of this preparation and coping effort.

Preparing resources and disseminating information to the public are vital for minimizing damage and facilitating efficient conduct in the case of disaster. Cognitive preparation, by disseminating information on coping on the personal and communal level and regarding the likely results of disaster, facilitates effective coping, increases a sense of control, minimizes anxiety, and avoids actions that might inadvertently increase trauma instead of decreasing it.

There are, however, certain situations in which dissemination of information in real time may actually aggravate trauma. The real challenge of preparedness is thus strik-

ing a balance between over-anxiety and over-complacency. For that purpose, consulting with quality professionals and integrating them into the communal deployment before, during and after crisis, are required.

To enhance posttrauma care and intervention, take the following preparedness steps:

1. Set up a crisis management and intervention system manned by professionals utilizing human resources from within and outside the community, to ensure effective coping in surprise situations and minimize confusion and helplessness in real time.
2. Study and analyze disaster and crisis situations experienced by other communities, deriving lessons fitting local conditions.
3. Develop procedures, train personnel, and assign roles.
4. Coordinate and integrate communal welfare, social, and mental health services and enhance contacts with governmental welfare and aid institutions and support agencies.
5. Map aid and support organizations, and make contact lists of knowledge experts and professionals for an organized and systematic intervention that avoids random and intuitive responses.
6. Prepare contingency plans and review and revise them periodically.
7. Conduct simulation exercises and dedicated training for professionals and community leaders; such exercises provide conditions for learning through experience in times of calm, without exposure to actual outcomes in a real emergency situation.
8. Establish a specific trauma-related situation room next to the communal crisis management center.
9. Establish alternative communication channels with the community for disseminating information, including building and operating an Internet site.
10. Consolidate and strengthen ties be-

tween community leaders and members to create trust and enhance the status of the leadership as an authoritative power during crisis.

11. Build a communication and media center and a public information center dedicated to providing psychological help; the center should be activated in times of calm to facilitate access during crisis.
12. Prepare specific responses for special needs populations—such as the elderly, disabled, children, and professionals at the front.
13. Prepare school and youth club staff and teams for dealing with children and students, and formulate special educational programs for them.
14. Coordinate activity with the communal communication center and response team.

LESSONS FROM KATRINA AND TURKEY

Critical to the survivability and thriving of a community following crisis are the attainment of high levels of communal security and resilience, which enables a return to normalcy and even an improved routine during reconstruction. This is clearly shown in the crises that occurred in two Jewish communities in recent years—the Turkish community following the attacks on Istanbul synagogues in 2003 and the New Orleans community in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Analysis of the two cases points to four main conclusions:

1. Despite the high level of awareness in these communities of the expected dangers, it was impossible to prevent these events, which took them by surprise, and it was certainly impossible to predict the severe results and crisis that followed.
2. Improving readiness and proper deployment by the community will increase the chance of reducing the crisis and disaster scale.
3. Advance preparations by the community will significantly reduce the time needed

to return to normal and will help in coping with difficulties during reconstruction.

4. In a relatively large-scale crisis and its resulting damage, external support, solidarity, and assistance, especially from the global Jewish community, are required.

CONCLUSION

The threats and crises to which the Jewish people are exposed, either as part of the general population or as specific targets of attack, require Jewish communities the world over to attain and maintain high levels of communal security, resilience, and preparedness to meet catastrophe and crisis, cope with their results, and return to improved routines during reconstruction. Proper preparedness and independent deployment by the community of a crisis response cannot be guaranteed to prevent a crisis or eliminate its ill effects. They can, however, aid in prevention, and meaningfully reduce the scope and improve the outcomes of future crises that may arise. The value of investing in crisis preparedness is even more pronounced in view of changing trends in terrorism and in anti-Semitism targeting Jews specifically, as well as the increasing likelihood of large-scale attacks, hazardous material incidents, and natural disasters. In addition, global Jewish deployment is necessary for mutual assistance, financial support and solidarity. This was clearly shown in the terror attacks in Istanbul and after Hurricane Katrina.

Communities, large and small, can use the crisis preparedness framework described in this article in coordination with local and other security bodies to address the various crisis management issues that they face, prepare plans, and determine courses of action with time tables to address various situations. However, developing these capabilities and improving deployment require long-term investments and ongoing updating.

In a sense, crisis response and reconstruc-

tion has been a major theme of Jewish history over the centuries, and the work of thinking through these issues represents a further link in the long chain of Jewish learning from preparing for crisis. It is

hoped that the recommendations offered here will contribute to the well-being and thriving of Jewish communities the world over as they move into new and uncertain times.