# British woman stranded in Israel criticises unclear UK evacuation process amid conflict



Mali Smith, a 66-year-old British woman stranded in Israel, has expressed frustration and anxiety over the UK Government's evacuation efforts as she awaits repatriation flights amid the ongoing conflict in the region. Despite registering with the Foreign Office and paying a fee of £350 in hopes of securing a place on a government-chartered flight, Mrs Smith has received no direct communication or confirmation of her booking. She ultimately purchased a commercial flight ticket for $600 due to the prolonged uncertainty and stress surrounding the evacuation process.

The UK Government has been organising evacuation flights from Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv since mid-October, following the escalation of violence between Israel and Hamas. The first Royal Air Force (RAF) flight departed on 12 October, transporting 63 British passengers via Cyprus before arriving in Birmingham. Subsequent flights have been arranged to assist British nationals, prioritising the most vulnerable. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has also deployed Rapid Deployment Teams and British Red Cross responders to provide support on the ground. However, the scale of these operations has been limited, and many stranded Britons, including Mrs Smith, have experienced unclear communication and logistical challenges.

Mrs Smith describes an exhausting and nerve-wracking wait in Tel Aviv, exacerbated by the frequent alarms and the noise of the Iron Dome missile defence system. She criticises the limited capacity of the RAF flights, which she perceives as insufficient given the thousands of British nationals registered for evacuation assistance. Furthermore, she recounts confusing and last-minute calls from the Foreign Office, sometimes in the early hours, notifying people to arrive at the airport within hours, only for flights to be delayed without clear explanation.

The complex security situation and damage to the Israeli aviation infrastructure have contributed to difficulties in organising commercial and charter flights. Some planned routes, including a government-chartered flight intended to land at Gatwick Airport, were cancelled due to insurance issues, reflecting the unpredictable and fluid nature of the crisis. The UK Government advises British nationals not to travel to airports unless contacted directly and emphasises its commitment to the safety and security of its citizens, stating that multiple evacuation flights are being facilitated, and support measures near borders in Jordan and Egypt continue.

While the ceasefire holds for now, the uncertainty over ongoing flights has left many feeling stranded and unsure about their next steps. Mrs Smith’s experience underscores the challenges faced by British nationals in conflict zones and highlights widespread calls for clearer communication and more robust logistical planning from the authorities. She remains hopeful for a swift resolution but is prepared to take independent measures if necessary, reflecting a broader frustration shared by many awaiting repatriation.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/british-woman-stranded-in-israel-remains-in-dark-about-evacuation-flights-QXPVGU4YIJO5NHT5YGPME476DY/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/british-woman-stranded-in-israel-remains-in-dark-about-evacuation-flights-QXPVGU4YIJO5NHT5YGPME476DY/), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-to-arrange-flights-to-get-british-nationals-out-of-israel), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-continues-to-facilitate-british-nationals-leaving-israel-and-gaza), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/2023-10-14/uk-government-charter-flight-leaves-israel-with-more-expected-in-coming-days), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/oct/12/uk-announces-repatriation-flights-for-british-nationals-in-israel), [[7]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-67091170)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/british-woman-stranded-in-israel-remains-in-dark-about-evacuation-flights-QXPVGU4YIJO5NHT5YGPME476DY/), [[6]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/israel-uk-charter-flight-gaza-royal-air-force-a400m-b2429663.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/british-woman-stranded-in-israel-remains-in-dark-about-evacuation-flights-QXPVGU4YIJO5NHT5YGPME476DY/), [[6]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/israel-uk-charter-flight-gaza-royal-air-force-a400m-b2429663.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/british-woman-stranded-in-israel-remains-in-dark-about-evacuation-flights-QXPVGU4YIJO5NHT5YGPME476DY/), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-to-arrange-flights-to-get-british-nationals-out-of-israel), [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-continues-to-facilitate-british-nationals-leaving-israel-and-gaza), [[4]](https://www.itv.com/news/2023-10-14/uk-government-charter-flight-leaves-israel-with-more-expected-in-coming-days), [[7]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-67091170)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/british-woman-stranded-in-israel-remains-in-dark-about-evacuation-flights-QXPVGU4YIJO5NHT5YGPME476DY/), [[6]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/israel-uk-charter-flight-gaza-royal-air-force-a400m-b2429663.html)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/british-woman-stranded-in-israel-remains-in-dark-about-evacuation-flights-QXPVGU4YIJO5NHT5YGPME476DY/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/british-woman-stranded-in-israel-remains-in-dark-about-evacuation-flights-QXPVGU4YIJO5NHT5YGPME476DY/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-to-arrange-flights-to-get-british-nationals-out-of-israel> - On 12 October 2023, the UK government announced plans to facilitate flights for British nationals wishing to leave Israel following the Hamas attack. The first flight was scheduled to depart from Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv that day, with further flights planned, subject to the security situation. Vulnerable British nationals were prioritised for these flights, and the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) advised citizens not to go to the airport unless contacted directly. A Rapid Deployment Team was also sent to Israel to assist British citizens on the ground.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-continues-to-facilitate-british-nationals-leaving-israel-and-gaza> - By 14 October 2023, the UK government had facilitated multiple flights for British nationals from Israel to the UK and Cyprus. Two Rapid Deployment Teams and British Red Cross responders were deployed to support vulnerable British nationals. The UK worked with Israeli air controllers and the aviation industry to maintain commercial air links and considered various transport options. While commercial flights remained limited, a small number of routes between Israel and Europe, including the UK, were open.
4. <https://www.itv.com/news/2023-10-14/uk-government-charter-flight-leaves-israel-with-more-expected-in-coming-days> - On 13 October 2023, an RAF flight departed Israel as part of the UK government's effort to evacuate British nationals amid the escalating conflict. The flight carried passengers from Israel to Cyprus. The Royal Air Force A400M made two flights from Tel Aviv to Cyprus, with the first on Friday night and the second during the early hours of Saturday morning. The Foreign Office had previously announced that a UK government charter flight had left Israel, with further flights expected in the coming days while commercial options were limited.
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/oct/12/uk-announces-repatriation-flights-for-british-nationals-in-israel> - On 12 October 2023, the UK government announced the organisation of repatriation flights from Israel as countries worldwide scrambled to evacuate citizens amid the mounting crisis. The first flights were due to leave from Tel Aviv that day after a series of airlines suspended services due to the risk from rockets fired from the Gaza Strip by Hamas. Vulnerable British nationals were prioritised for these flights, and the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) advised citizens not to make their way to the airport unless contacted directly.
6. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/israel-uk-charter-flight-gaza-royal-air-force-a400m-b2429663.html> - On 13 October 2023, the UK government chartered a flight to evacuate British nationals from Israel amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict. The flight was initially planned to arrive at Gatwick Airport but was cancelled due to difficulties obtaining insurance. An attempt to arrange a flight landing at the West Sussex airport also failed. The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) stated that this was a fluid situation and they were working to ensure the flight could proceed as soon as possible.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-67091170> - On 12 October 2023, the UK government arranged flights to evacuate stranded British nationals from Israel. The first plane was expected to leave Tel Aviv that day, with more flights planned in the coming days, subject to security. Those eligible to leave were contacted directly, and British nationals were advised not to go to airports unless called. A team of diplomats was sent to Israel to assist people flying to the UK. The Foreign Office was working to ensure the flight could proceed as soon as possible.