Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

The Time to Rebuild - Support BGU's Path to Recovery Following Operation Rising Lion

July 8, 2025

Summary

The recent missile impacts in Beer-Sheva significantly affected Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU), particularly the barrage of missiles that struck Soroka University Medical Center (SUMC) on June 19. This missile strike caused extensive damage to the medical center, as well as the BGU Faculty of Health Science (FOHS) facilities located there, and the surrounding area, including the adjacent BGU's Marcus Family Campus.

Despite the challenges we've been faced with since October 7, 2023, BGU's commitment to its community has remained steadfast. In the aftermath of Operation Rising Lion, we are more determined than ever to meet the needs of our community and turn our current challenges into advancement opportunities.

Rebuilding Funding Needs

Our ability to rebuild and mitigate the effects of this attack on intellectual and scientific progress relies heavily on donor support. While the State of Israel's Compensation Fund (Mas Rechush) will provide compensation for some of the repairs, the level of reimbursement will not cover the full cost of replacement materials and equipment. To address these needs, we have identified four emergency funds (detailed information below):

1. **Marcus Family Campus Fund**: This fund aims to repair the 30 buildings on the Marcus Family Campus that were damaged by missile shockwaves. The estimated funding needed is at least $1 million to cover the full cost of repairs.
2. **Laboratory Equipment Fund**: This fund will support the re-establishment and re-equipping of 9 research labs destroyed in the war, as well as the relocation of other FOHS facilities located at SUMC. The fundraising goal for this fund is $25 million.
3. **Medical Education Fund**: This fund is dedicated to relocating essential FOHS teaching facilities located at SUMC, including classrooms and the medical library. The fundraising goal for this fund is $10.6 million.
4. **Sports Arena Fund**: This fund will be used to repair and upgrade the basketball and multi-sport gymnasium at the Sylvan Adams Sports Center, which was severely damaged by a missile. The estimated funding needed is $3 million.

Through these funds, we aim to turn adversity into renewal, rebuilding what has been lost and paving the way for a stronger future for the BGU community and the Negev. Your support will make a significant difference in our ability to rebuild and continue our vital work—allowing our students and researchers to pursue their education and research and empowering them

for future impact, and enabling the University to fulfill its founding mandate to serve as a catalyst for the Negev's growth. Together, we can ensure that Ben-Gurion University of the Negev remains a beacon of education, innovation, and resilience.

BGU Under Fire: The Immediate Aftermath

The missile impacts in Beer-Sheva took a significant toll on BGU, particularly the missile barrage on Thursday, June 19, in which a missile impacted at SUMC, slamming into an older building which housed surgical wards and other units, including FOHS research labs. Miraculously there were no deaths and a relatively limited number of injured, since all of the patients and staff had moved to shelters. There was, however, extensive damage to the entire medical center campus, particularly to the building struck directly by the ballistic missile and nearby buildings. The missile's shockwaves also wreaked havoc on the surrounding area, including BGU's Marcus Family Campus.

Over the next few days, additional missiles impacted in Beer-Sheva, causing damage in other areas of the city. For example, the day after the missile struck SUMC, another missile impacted our community, landing directly in front of the apartment buildings across from the Advanced Technologies Park (ATP) where President Chamovitz and many other BGU employees live. This missile damaged several apartment buildings and resulted in the evacuation of all occupants from their homes. Many BGU students and alumni work at the high-tech park; this missile strike threatened the ecosystem of innovation we've been nurturing there. Fortunately, there were no deaths, as the residents made it to their shelters in time.

In yet another incident, a missile penetrated the roof of the basketball and multi-sport gymnasium at the Sylvan Adams Sports Center, causing a fire at the site. No deaths or injuries occurred, since the building was unoccupied at the time. And on the day before the ceasefire, tragedy struck Beer-Sheva, when a missile slammed in between two shelters in an apartment building in the city, killing four people who took refuge in their protective spaces and causing major damage to the building, requiring the residents of that building and nearby buildings to evacuate. BGU immediately did what it could to accommodate those forced to leave their homes, providing temporary housing in the U-Tel and student dormitories for some evacuated BGU faculty and staff members and 40 Beer-Sheva families whose homes were damaged.

As we've demonstrated since October 7, BGU is committed to meeting the needs of our community as they evolve. With each day of the war, its impact on the University grew, and we now are faced with a new set of challenges. These challenges, while significant, are not insurmountable, and with the assistance of our extended family of friends and supporters around the world we can turn these obstacles into steppingstones and catalysts for growth and rise to even greater heights in the future.

Rebuilding Funding Needs

Our ability to rebuild and mitigate the effects of this assault on education, science, and innovation relies on philanthropic support.

While we will be reimbursed for some of the repairs by the State of Israel's Compensation Fund, which compensates citizens for direct and indirect damage caused by acts of hostility or war, the level of reimbursement is less than desirable. The reimbursement value is based on several factors, including the age of the building and the scale of the damage. We will not receive the funds needed to purchase and install replacement materials at their current cost, but rather at the cost of the material at the time of the building's construction. In addition, only the damaged item will be covered, meaning that in the case of a window, where both the glass and frame need to be replaced, we will be reimbursed for just the glass that was shattered.

For damaged equipment, the replacement value will be the amount required to purchase equipment of the same age, rather than current, state-of-the-art equipment. We will be purchasing new and durable items and materials, and in each case, we will be required to make up the difference, whether it be to purchase a specimen refrigerator for a lab or an advanced microscope. The new labs established, although not in their permanent homes, will be equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, enabling our displaced researchers to continue their cutting-edge research.

Our understanding of the University's needs, the extent of the damage, and the cost to repair the damage continues to grow, and the scope and scale of the funds may change as we gather more information. Updates will be provided as additional information is obtained.

While the war has left its mark on our university, through these funds we will transform destruction into opportunity. With every repaired classroom, lecture hall, laboratory, and window, we will move forward, creating a brighter future for the BGU community, the Negev, and the State of Israel.

Marcus Family Campus Fund

Overview

The damage caused by the missile strike on SUMC was not limited to the FOHS facilities at the hospital. The resulting shockwaves from the missile were felt on the Marcus Family Campus in Beer-Sheva. The physical damage there, although largely superficial, was extensive, with 30 buildings affected. Older buildings suffered the most damage, losing many windows and dislodging doors, window frames, and siding.

Challenge

Hundreds of repairs, large and small, need to be made on the Marcus Family Campus.

Rationale/Importance

In order to return to operation and allow staff to return to the University as quickly as possible, an assessment of all of the buildings was performed, allowing us to determine what repairs were required and what was needed to enable people to safely be in and around the buildings. Temporary measures were put in place as needed.

Israelis pride themselves on their ability to return to routine almost immediately after a security event. This will be facilitated at BGU with the rapid repair of everything damaged. Although the war with Iran has ended, each broken window and piece of glass found on the ground is a reminder of the events of those 12 days and can be triggering.

Recovery Efforts

The glass and debris have been cleaned up, and the repair work has begun.

Amount Needed and Timeframe

Thirty buildings on the Marcus Family Campus were damaged by the missile shockwaves. The widespread damage mainly consists of shattered and blown out windows. However, through the Marcus Family Campus Fund, we are rebuilding more than windows, we are restoring the heart of the University. By repairing the buildings damaged by war, we are reviving the spaces where knowledge is acquired and shared, futures are shaped, and community is built.

We anticipate that the government reimbursement for this will be around 40-50% of the current cost to perform the required repairs and that funding in the amount of up to $1 million will be needed to cover the full cost.

These funds are needed immediately, to enable the recovery efforts at the Marcus Family Campus to be completed in time for the start of the 2025-2026 academic year this fall.

Laboratory Equipment Fund and Medical Education Fund

Overview

The surgical building, located at the center of the SUMC campus, was completely destroyed, and wreckage from the blast and debris from other damaged buildings nearby now covers the medical center campus. The upper floors of the six-floor surgical building suffered the most—the top floor was crushed and went up in flames. Glass and dust flew everywhere as the missile left massive amounts of destruction in its wake. While the entire surrounding area felt the impact from the powerful blast, SUMC, of course, suffered the worst, with many other buildings left uninhabitable and unstable, with blown out windows and crumbling facades, and heavy internal damage. The hospital's patients were evacuated to other hospitals, and currently it is only providing emergency services, as the hospital assesses the damage and determines which of its facilities are usable. As the region's largest hospital, SUMC is anxious to return to full operation and wishes to maximize all of its existing space to serve its patients.

Challenge

The labs of six BGU Faculty of Health Science researchers located in the surgical building took a direct hit in the attack and were destroyed. The surgical building is irreparable and must be reconstructed. New homes for these labs, which must be reestablished and reequipped, need to be found.

In addition to the research labs in the destroyed surgical building, BGU's FOHS has numerous other facilities at SUMC, including additional research labs, classrooms, lecture halls, teaching labs, pathology and anatomy labs, a dissection room, and a medical library. Many of our FOHS faculty members are clinicians at SUMC, and the hospital is BGU's main teaching hospital. The integration of educational and research facilities on the hospital campus allows instruction, research, and practice to go hand in hand, enhancing each significantly. These FOHS facilities are spread across the medical center campus in several buildings, some of which were damaged when the missile struck. Two examples of the way in which the missile attack causing widespread damage to buildings harmed both education and research at the FOHS are provided below.

- In one nearby building primarily dedicated to patient wards, there was extension damage, particularly to the sixth floor which contained numerous FOHS research labs, as well as many classrooms and lecture halls serving the entire faculty. Everything was lost in three of the research labs, some of which contained specialized facilities for animals who unfortunately did not survive the attack. All FOHS facilities in the building must be relocated.
- The FOHS pathology building was also devastated. In one floor alone, five teaching labs containing significant pieces of equipment were destroyed. This building also contains pathology and anatomy labs and a dissection room, as well as the labs of many FOHS researchers, all of which must be relocated.

While some of these facilities and the equipment they contain are useable, BGU must vacate all of them immediately to free up space for SUMC, which now needs 100% of its available space for hospital wards, units, clinics, and everything it lost when the buildings were destroyed by the missile. And so, in addition to finding homes for the wrecked research and teaching labs BGU, the University must find space for each of these specialized facilities and replace any equipment damaged in the attack, in time for the upcoming academic year to begin.

Rationale/Importance

There is great urgency in finding a solution to ensure that these FOHS facilities are up and running by the start of the school year, if not sooner. As a research university, BGU's primary activities are education and research, and both have been compromised given the loss of the FOHS facilities at SUMC.

Education: The instruction and training of FOHS students is critical, and any interruption in the flow of graduates directly affects the standard of healthcare in Israel. Israel currently faces a great shortage of physicians, and new medical school graduates replace those retiring and add to the country's pool of physicians. Since October 7 and the ongoing war in Gaza, the need for physiotherapists and occupational therapists to treat wounded soldiers has grown, and each member of each graduating makes a difference in meeting the country's healthcare needs.

- Students at the FOHS must have the ability to work in anatomy labs and dissection rooms where they study human structure, the foundation of all medical education, and in pathology labs where they study how diseases affect tissues and organs. Similarly, they must have the ability to practice and perfect their skills in teaching labs. Their work in these instructional labs is a vital component of their education.
- Learning across the FOHS also takes place in classrooms, lecture halls, and the medical library, and these facilities are central to the education of our students. These classrooms are typically occupied from 8:00 am until 8:00 pm, educating Israel's future physicians, nurses, physiotherapists, EMTs, and more. Classroom space is critical, ensuring that students have the proper facilities in which to acquire the requisite knowledge and skills needed to care for patients by the time they graduate and enter the workforce.

Research: Research excellence is a cornerstone of the FOHS. Its researchers have diverse expertise across various fields positions, and they perform both basic and applied medical research, contributing to advancements in their respective fields. As President Chamovitz said when he addressed the Knesset Finance Committee, "Our labs aren't just places of inquiry. They produce knowledge that could one day cure disease. This isn't about lost property. It's about lost time. Lost momentum. Lost breakthroughs."

- Nine state-of-the-art research labs were destroyed, along with their specialized and carefully calibrated equipment. The researchers working in these labs perform a wide range of studies and lost years of work and biological samples and other vital research specimens when their laboratories were destroyed. Each study and experiment

contributes to the knowledge base, increasing understanding and potentially playing a role in the future treatment, diagnosis, and prevention of disease. The research findings might be the key to unlocking an existing medical puzzle, with the potential to transform patient care. Biomedical research projects and experimentation that had been in full swing have ceased for the time being, and society's ability to benefit from them has now been put on hold. It is essential to relocate these labs and get them running again.

- Numerous other research labs, each of them staffed and equipped to perform specialized research, must be relocated to make space for SUMC. In many cases, while the equipment can be salvaged, space must be found to house these labs.

Recovery Efforts

The University is considering the various options available for reestablishing the labs and relocating the facilities, both in the short and long term. Fortunately, there are a few good short-term solutions, with possible space in the Sir John and Lady Cohen Chemistry and Physics Building and the soon-to-be-completed André Cohen Deloro Medical Research Institute, a joint initiative of BGU and SUMC; space in these buildings could be retrofitted to accommodate the nine labs destroyed.

The Drahi Innovation and Entrepreneurship Building on the North Campus is another option, with the potential to house many of the FOHS facilities. The five-floor building is scheduled for completion at the end of 2025, and the contractor is examining whether the work can be finished before then. This is the first academic building to be completed on the North Campus, and we originally planned to open just three floors of the building (leaving the other two floors unoccupied and unfinished until more construction on the campus has been completed). When the Drahi building is complete, these three floors could immediately be used by the FOHS. Given the circumstances and need to house the displaced FOHS facilities, the other two floors can be built out for the faculty's use.

The Helmsley Computer Science Building, which is expected to be completed at the end of 2026, is also a temporary option, as its classrooms could be used by the FOHS. Other options being explored, particularly for classroom space, include BGU's smaller campuses in Beer-Sheva (e.g., the Tuviyahu Campus) where the University is exploring the possibility of renting and installing caravans to hold classes in. Of course, there are costs associated with all of these options, each of which has advantages and disadvantages that must also be evaluated.

These options will enable the researchers to pick up the pieces and get back to work as soon as possible and allow teaching to continue, uninterrupted, in the coming academic year. In the long term, these facilities will have to move to permanent homes, perhaps on the North Campus, where a building dedicated to medical education is in the planning stages, with construction dependent on donor support.

Amount Needed and Timeframe – **Laboratory Equipment Fund**

Both teaching and research laboratories were affected by the war. Nine research labs were totally destroyed, along with all of their contents, and other research and teaching labs must be relocated. In retrofitting existing spaces for the research labs, the proper infrastructure to support the work performed in each lab will need to be in place, along with all the necessary specialized equipment and instrumentation, with any damaged equipment replaced. The same is true for the teaching labs, pathology and anatomy labs, and dissection room.

The cost of replacing this equipment is certain to be much higher than the compensation received, since the price of the equipment is likely to be much higher today than at the time it was originally purchased. State-of-the-art equipment will be purchased to ensure that our students, many of whom have performed long stretches of reserve duty over the past two years, are educated in modern, properly equipped teaching, pathology, and anatomy labs, and that our researchers, who have lost so much already in the war, have the advanced tools needed to perform their research at the highest standard possible.

Based on our current understanding of the situation, the fundraising goal for the Laboratory Equipment Fund has been set at $25 million.

- In the short term, support is needed to reestablish and reequip the nine research labs destroyed in the war (up to $1 million per lab).
- In the medium term, $16 million is needed to relocate (adjust infrastructure and re-equip) the other FOHS facilities based at SUMC that need to be vacated in order to free up space for the medical center (details available upon request).

In the aftermath of the war, rebuilding BGU's laboratories is essential, not only to restore what was lost but to ignite a future of hope through medical education and research. The Laboratory Equipment Fund will be used to replace the damaged equipment and fully restore the relocated labs. This fund will empower our students and researchers to transform education and inquiry into innovation and impact, inspiring hope and helping heal communities and rebuild lives through advances in medicine and science.

Amount Needed and Timeframe – **Medical Education Fund**

In addition to the various labs that need new homes, many essential FOHS educational facilities located at SUMC need to be relocated, with classroom space topping the list.

Based on our current understanding of the situation, the fundraising goal for the Medical Education Fund has been set at $15.6 million.

- In the short term, $5 million is needed to relocate all of the other FOHS teaching and administrative facilities based at SUMC that need to be vacated, it is likely that there will be a need to place caravans at various locations, with classes taking place the caravans.
- In the medium term, $5.6 million ($2.8 million per floor) is needed to ensure that there are sufficient classrooms in which to teach our students in the coming year. The cost to design, sub-divide, and furnish/equip the two floors in the Drahi building on the North Campus is estimated at $5.5M.

The war has deeply impacted our campus and community, but our commitment to training the next generation of medical leaders remains unshaken. In the face of destruction, hope rises through education. The Medical Education Fund is dedicated to restoring the classrooms, lecture halls, and administrative and knowledge centers critical to preparing future medical professionals. In supporting this fund, donors will ensure that despite the challenges of war, the next generation receives the highest-quality education to heal our community and build a healthier tomorrow.

Long-Term Needs Associated With Both the **Laboratory Equipment Fund and Medical Education Fund**

In addition to the short- and medium-term funding needs mentioned above, which provide a much-needed temporary solution enabling our students to continue learning and our researchers to continue their work, a permanent home for these critical FOHS functions is needed.

- In the long term, $50 million is needed to construct a new medical school building on the North Campus.

Sports Arena Fund

Overview

One missile penetrated the roof of the basketball and multi-sport gymnasium at the Sylvan Adams Sports Center and exploded on the wooden court, rendering this much-used facility unusable.

Challenge

The repairs required are significant. In addition to the damage to the court, a huge portion of the roof collapsed and a fire started. When rebuilding this facility, the University would like to create a state-of-the-art arena, bringing the facility up to modern standards.

Rationale/Importance

The Basketball and multi-sport gymnasium is extremely popular in Israel, and the court, which is used by BGU student teams as well as teams comprised of faculty and staff members, is usually in high demand. While the teams can still participate in their various leagues and compete against their peers across the country, until the arena is reconstructed, they have lost their ability to host games (and their home team advantage!) and practice in a convenient location.

Recovery Efforts

Examination of the full extent of the damage and an assessment of the repairs and improvements needed to ensure that the facility is fully operational and meets modern standards are underway.

Amount Needed and Timeframe

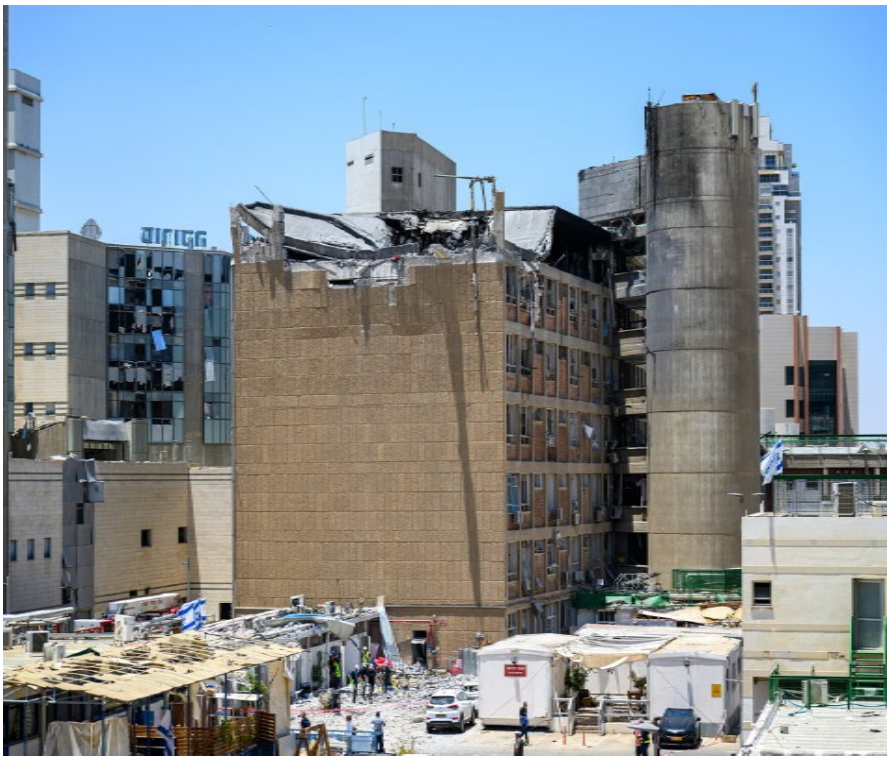
This fund will be used to repair the sports hall at the Sylvan Adams Sports Center housing the basketball and multi-sport gymnasium, including the roof which collapsed and has a large hole in it, and create a state-of-the-art sports arena there.

We anticipate that in addition to the compensation funds, this project will require an additional $3 million in philanthropic support.

These funds are needed so that the renovations can begin this year.

By rebuilding the this court, and making it better than before, we're not just restoring a place to play. We are creating a symbol of resilience, a space for community healing, and a reminder of the vital role joy and recreation play in rebuilding hope.

Direct hit on the surgery building at Soroka University Medical Center



Dissection room in BGU's pathology building at Soroka University Medical Center

Research laboratory in the surgery building at Soroka University Medical Center

Sports Arena