



## **St. Louisans caught up in U.S. bans on flights to Israel**

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ST. LOUIS (KPLR) – The move by the [Federal Aviation Administration](#) to temporarily ban flights by U.S. carriers to and from Israel is having an impact in St. Louis, where students, professors, and even circus performers are currently visiting the Jewish state, and now trying to get back.

Jennie Dodson, son Nick is a performer in Circus Harmony. They have a group in Israel performing with a unity group made up of Israelis and Arabs. She sees the irony in the fact that such a trip is being disrupted by war. Her son and her husband, a chaperone on the trip, are supposed to return to St. Louis Wednesday.

“I’ve been on edge just because I want them back here where it feels safe,” she said Tuesday as she was trying to reach the pair by phone. “I’m not worried about their personal safety. I’m just worried about their sense of being stuck there. And I want them back. I want to see them and touch them and hug them.”

At the Jewish Federation of St. Louis, they orchestrate travel to Israel for a variety of groups, including students going on what are known as birthright trips. A dozen such teens are due back home on Sunday. Federation President and CEO Andrew Rehfeld says he’s confident they’ll be safe until then, and returned home without a problem.

“I have no doubt about the security and safety of the people that are there. Our trips, our kids, our families. They know how to take care of their civilians and their citizens to make sure they’re safe and secure,” he said.

He returned from the country just a week ago, and while he says he felt safe, he doesn’t mince words about the tense conditions.

“We ran to bomb shelters. The fear and the terror over there when you see rockets flying in the sky is real. It’s palpable.”

As for the airlines, he points out there are alternatives to U.S. carriers.

“We also know that Ben Gurion Airport in Israel is still open and that El Al at the time of coming down here is still running flights. Israel has one of the strongest safest security operations.”

As for Dodson, she’s trying to remain patient.

“I trust what the Israeli authorities believe is safe, but I’m human and I’m a mother and a wife and I want them back,” she said.

The ban on flights by U.S. airlines expires Wednesday, though at least three American carriers, U.S. Air, Delta, and American, had already suspended flights in and out of Tel Aviv, “until further notice.” This all came after a missile struck within a mile of the airport.

Karen Rader at CAJE (Central Agency for Jewish Education) will have the most up to date information on groups traveling to Israel.

For those who have questions about families and children currently on trips in Israel, please contact Karen Rader at 314-442-3756.