

One of World Travel, Inc.'s valued clients, found herself in Israel in one of the most devastating times.

Amanda Gergich, Travel Manager from First Solar, was amidst chaos as she was stranded in Israel when the attacks broke out on Saturday, October 7th.

Laura King, World Travel, Inc.'s Vice President of Business Development, became close friends with Amanda over the past five years, and immediately became determined to use her industry network to get Amanda home quickly and safely.

Amanda's brother has been tirelessly working with his fiancé Olga, a Russian citizen, to receive a K1 Visa and bring her to the United States. Due to the Embassy shut down in Russia, she has been unable to interview in her home country. With many countries not accepting Russian passports, Amanda's family felt stuck. After searching for interviews to help grant her a Visa, she was able to find an interview in Israel due to open borders with religious purposes. Thus, Amanda and her brother flew to Israel to meet his fiancé, Olga, and planned to travel back to the states together as a family.

Unfortunately, their plan unraveled into chaos as attacks unexpectedly broke out in Israel. Olga was approved for her Visa, but unfortunately was not given back her paperwork and passport, as it was held to be processed by the Embassy with little guidance as to when it would be ready. As the war began on Saturday, the Embassy was closed for the weekend and for the observation of US holiday, Columbus Day on Monday. While other Americans were able to receive flights home to evacuate, Amanda, Zach, and Olga could not leave due to Olga's passport being held. Bombing held no mercy as Amanda and her family spent hours in a bomb shelter unable to make plans to escape. Amanda frantically sought out assistance from her friends, family and industry network.

Amanda was able to recruit support from others with an abundance of pleading calls and emails to congress men and women, hoping the squeaky wheel would degrease. However, the government spared no help in assisting Amanda and her family with their escape to safety.

Tuesday morning, the Embassy finally opened up again and Olga was able to pick up her passport in Jerusalem. Relieved, they began to plan their trip home to the US. But to their disappointment, another hurdle. With the US Airlines not flying in and out of Israel, most flights home would be require a connection through another country where Olga's Russian passport would be denied. This limited the safe and viable options to return home. And all while trying to plan, there were more bombing raids, banishing the three to the hotel's bomb shelter for hours.

During this horrific time Amanda and Laura kept in constant contact. Laura, working tirelessly along with World Travel's CEO and President, Liz Mandarino, to research and find options to return home. Miraculously, Liz was able to secure a flight to Abu Dhabi, where Olga's passport would be accepted – but most importantly - to safety! An hour and a half after Amanda, Zach and Olga were able to take off from the Tel Aviv airport, the airport was bombed by Hamas. A Dangerously close window of time from their escape to safety.

Thankfully, Amanda, Zach and Olga have since, with the help of World Travel, landed safely in Chicago the morning of October 12th, where Amanda and Zach's parents were anxiously awaiting their arrival. Timing could not have been better, as Middle eastern airlines are now canceling all flights out of Tel Aviv.

Thanks to a network of inspiring and empathetic individuals, World Travel, Inc. was able to reunite a family this morning. Although a story that will never be comforting, Amanda is forever grateful for her connections, Travel Management Company, and most importantly her friends during these unprecedented times.

“World Travel, Inc. was there for my family in the darkest time I could have imagined. Thanks to their diligence, industry knowledge and dedication, I am able to write this safely from my home in the US. I will be eternally grateful to World Travel, specifically Laura King & Liz Mandarino, for their partnership, friendship and persistence in helping my family and I get out of Israel in the midst of war. Thank you will never be enough.” - Amanda Gergich

Note: This post and article have been approved by Amanda Gergich.