

Fake Charity Scams While Travelling in Israel

By Tal Toubiana

In this common scenario, scammers impersonate genuine charities and ask for donations or contact you claiming to collect money after natural disasters or major events. How does this scam work? Fake charities try to take advantage of your generosity and compassion for others in need. Not only do these scams cost you money, they also divert much-needed donations away from legitimate charities and causes. Charity scams occur all year round and often take advantage of a response to natural disasters or emergencies.

Israel is a colorful country packed with an amazing variety of attractions, culture, amazing people and steeped in history, religious interest, contemporary lifestyles, and is an economically developed society. Recently, I was approached by a community member who had noticed a few bad apples while travelling in Israel. During his visit he was approached by a gentleman pretending to represent a charity, asking for a donation. The agent then asked for a cash-only donation in order to purchase a fridge for a Lone Soldier. While he claimed to be representing a known foundation, it didn't feel right. Our alert community member suggested going and purchasing a new fridge from a nearby appliance store, but the agent insisted he'd rather have the cash instead. Our friend then decided to leave and research the purported charity's methods of accepting donations and found that cash is not one of their options.

Scammers will pose as either agents of legitimate, well-known charities or create their own charity. In Israel, this may include charities that support the IDF, patients and their families, Yeshiva students, etc. They may also pose as individuals needing donations for health or other reasons. Scammers may also play on your emotions by claiming to help children who are ill.

Fake charities operate in a number of different ways. You may be approached at Ben Gurion Airport, on the street or outside your hotel by people collecting money. Scammers may also set up fake websites which look similar to those operated by real charities and will urge you to look them up.

Warning signs:

- You have never heard of the charity before.
- The person collecting donations on behalf of the charity does not have any identification.
- You are put under pressure or made to feel guilty or selfish if you don't want to donate.
- You are asked to provide a cash donation as they don't accept credit cards, if they accept checks, they request that it be made out to them personally rather than to the charity.
- You are not given a receipt.
- You receive a receipt that does not have the charity's details on it.

While there are many causes, charities and organizations in both Israel and Canada, I strongly encourage you to consider donating to [UJA](#) and support our [Partnership together](#) (P2G) and our other charities in Israel run by JAFI and approved by CRA. By doing so you will provide a safety net for our most vulnerable, strengthen our community and have the opportunity to promote sustainable projects in

Israel, and know that your donation is getting to those who need it. You will also receive a Canadian Tax Receipt.

For more information or feedback, please contact the Federation's Head of security, Tal Toubiana at talt@edjfed.org or (780) 487-0585 ext.204