



## Happy Birthday??

**By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director**

On day 304 of the innocent Israeli, American, and other countries' civilians being held by the terrorists, the country of Israel commemorated Ariel Bibas's 5th birthday. I can't really bring myself to use the word "celebrated." How can a 5-year-old's birthday be celebrated while he is STILL being held hostage?

On day 304, thousands of people sent orange balloons into the sky in honor of Ariel and Kfir.

"Orange took on a new meaning this year as the lovely hair color of the Bibas children, Ariel and his little brother, Kfir, and now symbolizes the struggle for their release." ~ Leah Garber, JCCA.

"For 303 days, the iconic Chords Bridge in Jerusalem has been illuminated in blue and white, representing the Israeli flag. (On day 304 it) was lit up in orange in honor of Ariel's birthday."

Is it still a Happy Birthday if there are no friends to celebrate? Is it still a Happy Birthday if he is being held hostage?

And amid all of this, Iran is planning an attack, a retaliation because "Iran ... believes it needs to punish Israel to prevent further instability, following the killing of Hamas terror group leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran last week." ~ Times of Israel.

This all seems surreal. Am I really writing about a little boy turning 5 in captivity? Am I writing about, yet again, Arab countries planning to attack Israel like they did in 1948 when they rejected the offer of splitting what is now Israel into an Arab country and a Jewish country?



How they attacked during the Six-Day War in 1967? Or how they attacked on Yom Kippur in 1973? If only these Arab countries focused on building up their own economy, bettering the lives of their citizens. Like Israel has done.

And while the citizens in the Arab nations are almost completely Muslim, that isn't the case in Israel. Some are Jewish, some are Christian, some are Muslim, some identify as Palestinian, there are Bedoin, Druze, Atheist, Agnostic, I could go on. ALL of them are lifted up by the success of Israel. They are EQUAL citizens. Which Arab country can say the same?

When will I be able to write about Israel being safe again? When will I be able to write about the terrorists being destroyed and then stopping their campaign against Israel and the Jews? When will I be able to write about the birthday boy and his brother coming home?

Happy Birthday, Ariel. We are still here waiting for you.

Shabbat Shalom.