WJC hosts fun day for children of the South

By DANIELLE ZIRI

The World Jewish Congress, in partnership with the Sha’ar Hanegev Regional Council, organized two trips to the Biblical Zoo in Jerusalem for children of southern Israel on Wednesday and Thursday.

WJC, an organization which represents Jewish communities within governments, parliaments and international organizations around the world, said it “saw fit to grant kids from the South a few hours of respite and fun activities in Jerusalem.”

The trip, which took place twice over the past week, included 600 children, most of whom are pupils in elementary schools.

While visiting the Biblical Zoo, the children also received a surprise visit from Subliminal, a popular Israeli rapper and record producer who signed autographs and took pictures with the attendees.

“The kids were super excited about him showing up, they jumped on him,” Julie Talesnik, who participated in organizing the event, told The Jerusalem Post. “It was such a change from their routine over the past week, and even over the past years.”

Talesnik, a senior coordinator in the Israeli branch of WJC, explained that the organization sponsored buses, lunches and other elements of the trip on pretty short notice.

“We weren’t sure what was going to go on, or how long it would take for the situation to calm down,” she said, “but what we did know, was that these kids were under tremendous anxiety and needed a break.”

Kadima MK Shai Hermesh, chairman of WJC-Israel and a resident of Kibbutz Kfar Aza near the Gaza Strip, said in a statement: “These children are the silent victims of the conflict. Some live under daily repressed tension and stress. It is our duty as parents to help them release this stress any way possible, including days outside the range of fire.”

He added: “On behalf of the members of the World Jewish Congress around the world, I am proud to take part in this important initiative and express the solidarity of the world Jewry with the children of Israel – all Jews are responsible for one another.”

Over the past week, during Operation Pillar of Defense, many initiatives across the country were undertaken to provide children of communities and towns in the vicinity of the Gaza Strip with trips and activities away from the rockets.

Amongst the initiatives, the children of ORT Ashdod Naval Youth Village had been evacuated to the Jewish Agency’s Neurim Youth village during the operation in order to rest and recover from the security situation.

The student union of the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya also hosted 350 children from southern towns on Monday for a day of performances, puppet shows, arts and crafts and other activities at community center close to the campus. Some 70 students with a background in education volunteered to conduct the event.