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64221 - יאיר פרגון ראש מועצת חוף אשקלון					

# Peres celebrates a late Purim in the South

• By GREER FAY CASHMAN  
 and Jerusalem Post staff

The future depends on peace not violence, President Shimon Peres said Tuesday in a message to Hamas and other terrorist organizations.

"I remind Hamas leaders and other terrorist organizations that the future depends on peace, not on rocket firing that leads to escalation and bloodshed," Peres said on a visit to the southern Kibbutz Yad Mordechai to compensate some 100 first- and second-grade students from the kibbutz and surrounding areas for the Purim party which they missed out on last week due to rocket attacks from Gaza.

"I came here to tell you that I am very proud of you. You are brave children, there are not many children in Israel and the world that deal with missile threats and at the same time,



PRESIDENT SHIMON PERES helps children celebrate Purim belatedly yesterday at Kibbutz Yad Mordechai (Mark Neiman/GPO)

maintain good spirits and optimism," Peres told the group.

The president was accompanied by Yair Farjun, the head of the Ashkelon Beach Regional Council. Peres had approached the heads of settlements in the Ashkelon Beach area and asked if some kind of arrangement

could be made that would enable children who spent recent days in bomb shelters to have some fun. Most of the settlements, for reasons of security, canceled their Purim celebrations and were appreciative of the president's initiative.

Working together with the

staff of the President's Bureau, they organized clowns and workshop activities that would give the children an opportunity to cast their fears aside and to thrust themselves into the spirit of Purim. Under the circumstances, this festival, which commemorates the delivery of the Jewish people from annihilation, was symbolically the best medicine that Peres could give them.

Kibbutz Yad Mordechai was named for Warsaw Ghetto hero Mordechai Anielewicz, but the fact that Mordechai, no less than Esther, is the hero of the Purim story, was not lost on some of those present. In the War of Independence, Yad Mordechai withstood a two-day series of attacks by the Egyptian army, which failed to capture the kibbutz.