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A Message from MDA Global President, Gilad Erdan



As Magen David Adom's new Global President, I am proud to be a part of Israel's National Rescue Service, helping the organization both in the international and national arenas.

I recently completed my tenure as Israel's ambassador to the United Nations and the United States, but I remain a part of the international scene in a new, vital role – as MDA's Global President.

In my role as Israel's ambassador to the UN and USA, I actively advanced the State of Israel internationally. As the Interior Minister and Home Front Minister, I ensured the safety of Israel's residents. I am convinced that my vast knowledge and experience acquired in these and multiple other roles will help me promote Israel's national rescue organization on the international stage, and to represent the organization in international forums and high-level events around the world.

I have started the new role with a sense of sanctity and with a drive for action, to promote, strengthen and reinforce Magen David Adom's standing and its preparedness for the security challenges faced by the State of Israel, for the benefit of all of Israel's residents.

Magen David Adom is a central and critical component

of Israel's national resilience, as it is responsible for saving lives during both routine times, and times of crisis. Israel is dealing with unprecedented challenges, which have turned the home front into the front line. In this reality, as well as during routine times, MDA saves the lives of many on a daily basis by being prepared; through having dedicated, professional staff; by being present across the entire country; and through our advanced blood services and groundbreaking technologies. Since October 7, dozens of MDA staff and volunteers have paid the ultimate price with their lives while fighting to save other. These are the MDA values: Selflessness for the sake of others. The story of Amit Man, an MDA paramedic murdered in Kibbutz Be'eri while treating multiple casualties, for this very reason, became a symbol of bravery among those in the organization.

MDA's abilities to save lives is thanks to the generosity of donors from Israel and across the world, to whom the lives of Israelis are of supreme importance. I will do all I can to continue strengthening MDA and its abilities, thus strengthening the field of emergency medicine in Israel.

Gilad Erdan



A Message from the Director-General of MDA, Eli Bin

On October 7, 2023, a day that will live in infamy, Hamas launched a murderous terrorist attack on the State of Israel. The enormous number of casualties, the types of injuries, the number of locations where attacks occurred, and the continued presence of terrorists in Israeli territory presented security and emergency agencies with an enormous challenge, perhaps the most significant they have ever had to deal with.

In one of the most difficult hours for Israel, out of the great darkness, a ray of light shone from the first moment — the work of Magen David Adom, which saved lives in kibbutzim, cities, towns, hospitals, and individual homes throughout the country.

The key to Magen David Adom's ability to respond amid the chaos was the organization's men and women — on-call volunteers and team members, operating within their communities and from ambulances, Mobile Intensive Care Units (MICUs)

and Medevac helicopters; EMTs who serve as dispatchers; phlebotomists and laboratory technicians who collect and process blood; and supporters of MDA in Israel and around the world.

Each and every one of them played a role in saving countless lives on that terrible day, and the ability to mobilize and work together for the benefit of others is an unparalleled human virtue.

In his essay "Paths of Heroism," Yitzhak Sadeh, a Palmach commander and one of the founders of the IDF, wrote:

"The foundation of heroism is not courage, but the willingness to sacrifice oneself. Heroism is first and foremost a moral virtue...This is the highest form of service. At its core, it is a love of others... Heroism, like any talent, is not private property. It is a virtue that enriches everyone."

In the terrible reality of that Simchat Torah morning, the heroism of the men and women of MDA was



evident. The willingness to sacrifice one's self, sometimes under fire and with the knowledge that ambulances and MDA teams were targets, the perseverance to respond to tens of thousands of calls while coping with unimaginable situations, and the commitment to provide thousands of units of blood each day for the injured serves to illustrate Magen David Adom's role as fighters for life.

Since the beginning of the war, the Magen David Adom family lost 37 heroes, beloved and devoted staff, and volunteers who fell defending the lives of others. Some MDA personnel fell while treating patients, others were abducted to Gaza and murdered, and one was killed and another critically injured as their ambulances came under fire. Each of those deaths represents an indescribable loss to their families and to Magen David Adom. All that remains is to grieve and take comfort in the good memories.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the fallen and of the abductees, including the families of MDA volunteers whose bodies are still being held in Gaza.

We commemorate our fallen heroes and pray for the safety of the IDF soldiers, the speedy recovery of all the wounded, and the immediate and safe return of the hostages to their families. We hope we can be a source of strength for our friends, MDA team members injured in the line of duty, and we wish them a full and speedy recovery.

The attacks on October 7 and the war that followed created countless stories of heroism. Undoubtedly, the mobilization of women and men from Magen David Adom — and their sense of mission, professionalism, creativity, resourcefulness, and compassion for their fellow Israelis — saved tens of thousands of lives. These heroic stories will be recounted by many.

For 94 years, Magen David Adom has been fighting. We are fighting to protect life, liberty, and the values that serve as the foundation for the State of Israel.

Even now, as the attacks against us continue, the

people of Magen David Adom will continue to remain vigilant, fight for life, and instill hope in the hearts of the people.

Because saving lives is in our blood.

Eli Bin





Independent of the People of Straight of the People of Kibbutz Be'eri

By

The 613 Foundation
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USA, 2018

Pren Benita

Oren Benita is a veteran MDA staff member and a well-respected paramedic at the Sderot MDA station. His wife, Merav Benita, has been a team leader at the Lachish MDA dispatch center for many years. Oren, Merav, and their three children live in Kibbutz Mefalsim in the Gaza Envelope area.

On the Shabbat of October 7, the Benita family was awoken early in the morning to the sudden sound of the 'Code Red' sirens warning of an incoming rocket attack. "It was different from what we're used to," recalls Oren. "It was long and intense. Immediately afterward, we heard gunfire inside the kibbutz and a loud explosion. I heard screaming from outside, cries for help. Someone called my name. Two soldiers who had sustained gunshot wounds were brought into my house. My wife Merav and I started treating them in the living room."

Merav and Oren, who are first responders and had MDA medical supplies in their home, spent a long time treating the soldiers. But as the day wore on, time began to run out for their patients, and their medical supplies were also running low. Oren realized that the injured soldiers needed to be taken to an operating room if they were to have any chance of surviving, but the kibbutz was besieged. The terrorists were still inside the kibbutz; there was constant gunfire, and there was no way of leaving or entering. "It was a battleground," Oren recalls. "A real war zone."

MDA paramedics are used to making difficult and life-changing decisions, but Oren had never been in a situation like this – having to decide whether or not to try to evacuate the patients, which would mean putting their patients and their own lives in danger. Not only might they fail to save them, but they could also become even more of a burden on the military forces and other MDA personnel. It was an incredibly difficult decision to make.

Oren decided to try to get the patients to the entrance of the kibbutz, with the help and cover of the combat soldiers, and from there for them to be rescued and evacuated by an MDA armored ambulance. Oren recalls what he witnessed outside his house: "It was a horrific scene; many murdered civilians, their bodies strewn about." It was only upon his return to the kibbutz that Oren could think about his own children, who had been locked all of these hours in the safe room alone – since both of their parents had been busy treating the wounded in their living room.

"I got to meet the soldiers I had treated. It made everything worthwhile."



When the family was eventually evacuated from the kibbutz, Oren stayed. "This work is what gives me the strength to go on in spite of everything. I had the great privilege of being able to meet the soldiers whom we treated in our home. They were able to walk. It made everything worthwhile."

Z•har Hubara

"I did everything I could."

On October 7, dozens of terrorists stormed Kibbutz Sufa in the Eshkol district. Six members of the kibbutz's emergency response team defended their homes and families, including Ido. the son of MDA



Zohar Hubara

volunteer Zohar Hubara. "That Shabbat morning, we woke up, like so many others, at 6:30 AM to the sound of the 'Code Red' sirens, which was different from what we were used to: it was longer and more frequent than usual. After that, we heard the sound of gunshots, something that had never happened before. It was clear that terrorists had infiltrated our kibbutz. They murdered a kibbutz member who was in his car on his way out of the kibbutz, and they shot and killed another member in his own living room. Once the situation became clear, my son Ido, a major in the IDF reserves, joined the emergency response team to protect our community. They identified the location where the terrorists had tried to infiltrate the kibbutz; the team managed to prevent them from entering."

Zohar has been an MDA volunteer for the last 35 years. In this capacity, he trains other medics, is himself a senior EMT, and serves as the kibbutz ambulance driver. He's used to being involved in difficult situations, including terror attacks and providing treatment under fire. "I was the one who arrived on the scene with the ambulance during most of the terrorist attacks in Gush Katif," he says. "One memory that stands out was an attack in which a car packed with explosives drew up alongside a bus. It was a very severe attack with dozens of casualties."

That morning, Zohar received a phone call. Although he's used to giving medical treatment under fire,

and as the kibbutz's MDA ambulance driver, he has treated friends and acquaintances, this call was of a different nature. "Someone from the emergency response team told me that my son, Ido, had been hit. I took my first aid kit and ran under fire. I reached him and immediately saw that he had sustained a severe head injury."

With bullets flying overhead, Zohar dragged his wounded and unconscious son to shelter in one of the nearby houses and ran to – 'his' ambulance, in which he'd treated so many others in the past. "I loaded him into the ambulance and began evacuating him when I realized I was driving with a flat tire. The terrorists had shot at the tires of the ambulance to stop us from saving lives."

Zohar treated his son as best he could, with the years of experience and knowledge he had gained as an MDA volunteer medic. At that point, there was no one else who needed emergency treatment in the kibbutz, but Ido's injury was very serious, and he didn't survive. Zohar staved with him for several more hours in the immobile ambulance. "In retrospect, I realized that this was my own private mourning period with him, my own shiva," Zohar says, his voice cracking for the first time. "I know I did everything I could. In hindsight, had I managed to transport him, I would probably have been shot, because the terrorists were everywhere. Any other ambulance that would have tried to approach us would have been hit. I am terribly sad that I was able to save so many people in the past, but I wasn't able to save my own son. Once, I successfully resuscitated someone, and later had the privilege of sitting down with him for a cup of coffee. On the other hand, I have immense pride in what Ido and his friends did. They saved the kibbutz. They fought like the heroes of our heritage – the few versus the many, six members of the emergency response team against dozens of terrorists armed with a huge amount of weaponry."

When asked if he will continue to volunteer, Zohar doesn't hesitate. "My family and I were evacuated to Eilat, and I immediately went to the MDA station to help. They took me in with warmth and love. MDA is my home. It's my commitment and something I love. I'll never stop volunteering," he concludes.

Naveh Synagegue



MDA teams who responded to the emergency calls in the Gaza Envelope district found that they were unable to evacuate the wounded to hospitals immediately as they usually would, since many of the main roads were blocked off by terrorists. With great resourcefulness, they set up a makeshift clinic inside the synagogue in the community of Naveh. They brought patients there and treated their wounds, while remaining in close contact with the MDA dispatch center, with whom they worked to transfer the patients for further treatment elsewhere.

Menachem Blumenthal, a paramedic at the Tzochar MDA station, and Hananya Elmakiyas, a senior EMT, had worked together on the night shift between Friday and that fateful Saturday, when at 6:30 AM, the barrage of rocket fire towards the Gaza Envelope began. Minutes later, the pair was called on to treat

a severely wounded patient near the Gaza border. Their shift would be a lot longer than usual.

"While we were treating the patient, we started hearing about terrorists infiltrating into the nearby towns and villages. We understood that we wouldn't be able to evacuate the patient to the nearby hospital, since there were terrorists on the highways all around us; we decided to take him to Naveh, a nearby moshay," recalls paramedic Blumenthal. "We arrived at the community synagogue, brought the patient who had been with us in the Mobile Intensive Care Unit inside, and decided to convert the synagogue into a makeshift field hospital and to prepare to take in other casualties if necessary."

At the same time, in the *Beit Midrash* (religious library) of Naveh, another MDA team from Har Hevron also got to work. Chaim Rubin tells their story:

"On Simchat Torah, our team, Negev 72, the MDA intensive care team for Har Hevron, was on duty. In the morning, we received an emergency call telling us there was a rocket attack and that we were needed in Beersheba. Aviah Goldstein, Ariel Hacohen, and I organized our equipment and went on our way. We were in Beersheba and were soon sent to the Gaza Envelope."

On the way, at Revivim Junction, they treated civilians with severe gunshot wounds who were in unstable condition. "We administered lifesaving treatment, stopped their bleeding, applied tourniquets, and drove them to where they could be picked up by MDA helicopters," says Chaim. MDA personnel were at work at Tze'elim Junction, too, giving lifesaving treatment to severely wounded patients and transferring them to air ambulances operated by the IDF's Unit 669.

EMT Ariel Hacohen recalls: "We drove back to the Beersheba area, and when we were at Tze'elim Junction, we heard Menachem Blumenthal over the internal radio. He had just finished a 24-hour shift in Tzochar and was requesting assistance from a senior paramedic to help out in Naveh. I did the calculations and realized that we were the team closest to him. I contacted the dispatch center, and they approved our request to join our colleagues in Naveh. Hananya Elmakiyas gave us directions and asked us to drive through the fields, and not on Route 232, since the road was crawling with terrorists who had already murdered dozens of civilians.

"We reached the synagogue in Naveh; everything was prepared for the Simchat Torah festivities. Menachem and I moved all of the seats aside and set up a treatment site, with signs indicating separate areas for people who had been injured lightly, moderately, and severely. We set up tables In the middle with medical supplies and equipment. We began to receive a steady flow of cars carrying wounded people."

The MDA staff realized that the treatment site they'd set up was perhaps the only place able to provide medical treatment in the area, so they prepared

themselves to receive the wounded. They contacted residents of the area and requested that anyone with medical training come to the synagogue. They went to the local clinic and asked for all of their medical equipment, and they also turned to the pre-military academy located on the moshav and requested their stretchers. And so, with the help of the residents, a makeshift treatment site was established in the synagogue.

In order to protect their patients, Menachem asked for the local emergency response security team to guard the site. He also contacted the MDA dispatch center to ask them to redirect ambulances with patients to the synagogue, where they were hard at work.

Hananya recalls: "Menachem told us, 'I know that this isn't a simple request, but I need you to go out with your ambulances and bring the wounded here."

Several more MDA personnel arrived at the treatment site, including Akiva Shabbat. Akiva was the MDA ambulance driver for the village of Shlomit, and his house had been hit in the first barrage of rockets. Akiva contacted Menachem and retrieved casualties from the nearby towns in his MDA ambulance. "In the very first round of rockets that morning, my house took a direct hit, which caused significant damage. I made sure that all of my family, who were with me in the safe room, were okay, and I immediately understood that this was going to be a very unusual and difficult situation. As a member of the emergency response security team, I put on my bulletproof vest, took my rifle, and went out to fight. In between the gunshots to neutralize the terrorists, I administered first aid to those who were wounded and dispersed throughout the area, and in coordination with Menachem and Hananya, I evacuated them to the synagogue and then continued fighting."

"Close to 9:30 AM, we received a report from Akiva that he had managed to reach the casualties who had been wounded during the terrorist infiltration at the nearby moshav of Pri Gan, where a difficult battle was underway and that he was bringing them to us at the field hospital in the synagogue. We administered

first aid treatment and tried to coordinate with the MDA dispatch center and the IDF to have a Medevac helicopter come to evacuate them. One chilling moment came when, unfortunately, one of the patients passed away, and those who were present with them in the synagogue took a moment to say the *Kaddish* prayer," Menachem recalls.

At one point, the MDA staff was called on to treat a patient in serious condition in Bnei Netzarim. Chaim Rubin and his team from Har Hevron went out to try to save him under fire. When they reached the clinic at Bnei Netzarim, they found a man lying on the bed, murmuring to himself and bleeding, his limbs blown off. Chaim administered lifesaving treatment and, at the same time, inquired about having him evacuated by helicopter, but was told by the dispatch center that it would not be possible to land a helicopter there at the time. The team brought the patient to the treatment site at the synagogue in Naveh. "While we were dealing with this complex case, we received other casualties. He was very seriously wounded, and he was unstable; I knew that if I gave him too many painkillers, he would deteriorate, but if I anesthetized him, he would probably die. He was one of the most difficult cases I've ever encountered in all my years as a paramedic," Chaim recalls. Ultimately, a Medevac helicopter landed in the area, and the MDA team in the Beit Midrash transferred him by ambulance to the landing site.

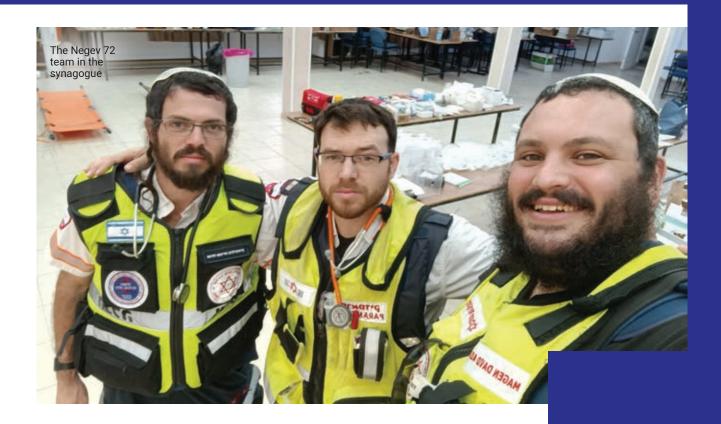
Women in labor also arrived at the *Beit Midrash*, and the MDA team stationed there treated them and made the arrangements to get them to the maternity wards.

"The situation we were in was extreme. It was a never-ending nightmare. We heard about more and more casualties being sent to us whose conditions were still undetermined. We were using up all the supplies we had. We were forced to improvise. I saw some amazing teamwork and generosity. We treated many patients. We were besieged. I think we made good decisions overall – the decision to open the treatment site was a very good one, but the synagogue wasn't protected from rocket fire.

There was a constant sense of danger; we made sure not to be in open spaces for too long. At a certain point, we also ran out of gas. We spoke to people from the village, and they got us a container of gas from the tractors."

Chaim describes the sense of danger that hung over them: "I was sure I was going to die. That's how I felt when we were in Naveh, and every time I closed my eyes, I imagined that the terrorists were going to get me. I thought of writing something. In the end, I decided to call my wife, to talk to her, to make sure that she was okay. You have to understand - I'm a paramedic in the Southern Har Hevron region. I was present at the scene of almost all of the terrorist attacks that took place there, and I'm very much used to treating people while under fire. But the feeling here was different. I felt a sense of helplessness. It simply didn't end. I've been in this profession for years. I've dealt with many incidents. Usually, when you come to the scene, some people have been shot. You treat them, evacuate them, and then it's over. Here, there was an unbelievable amount of victims who just kept coming in, and so much uncertainty.

"I remember the woman from the dispatch center reporting over the internal radio about more terrorists and more victims, and then she sighed and said to herself, 'It's never-ending...' without noticing that she could be heard over the radio. It was really difficult – there's no other way of describing it. When we were there, there was a sense that everyone was working together and helping each other for a common goal. The residents of Naveh made us feel amazing. I was encouraged and strengthened by the MDA Medevac teams. We came and went, and again and again brought them more and more patients - they allowed us to breathe because they provided the only way for us to evacuate our patients, so ultimately, everything was funneled their way. Everyone who was involved that day is a hero, but in the end, it was them, the helicopter teams, who changed the course of things for me, because we didn't always have the military helicopters from Unit 669 to rely on. MDA did unbelievable things to manage to reach us. I don't think I can put into words



my feelings about them and the extent to which they changed things for us," Chaim concludes.

Some weeks later, Menachem and Akiva had the privilege of being able to pay a hospital visit to two of the patients they had treated – Boaz Biran and Michael Gottesman.

Michael Gottesman says: "In those first moments after I was injured and taken for initial treatment, I didn't know where I was. I didn't understand that I was in the synagogue. I saw Menachem who began treating me, and I said to myself – 'God sent me an angel to help me.'"

Boaz Biran, who had gunshot wounds and was treated at the makeshift treatment site, recalls: "I remember that from the moment I was shot in the chest and arm until I arrived at the synagogue, I fought for every breath. The moment they brought me into the synagogue on a stretcher, I remember laying on my side when they brought me into the synagogue on a stretcher. I didn't quite understand where I was, but I saw the MDA staff, and I immediately felt better; I knew that I was now

going to receive medical care and my condition would stabilize. They put me on a helicopter that took me to the hospital in stable condition. It was all thanks to you. Thank you for saving my life," Boaz concludes.

Ariel wanted to note his MDA colleagues' inspirational performance in the situation that was forced upon them: "Menachem was amazing. He headed the medical team and all the patients in an outstanding and inspiring manner. In addition. Menachem is a resident of the area, from Kibbutz Sa'ad, so it was his friends who he was forced to treat - and he did so with the utmost professionalism. He's an exemplary human being, and I was proud to be by his side and work with him. I was amazed by his abilities and those of Hananya and Akiva, who went out on a rescue mission to bring in the casualties from Pri Gan. It's an honor to work with them. In my opinion, we did everything that could be expected of us as a medical team - it's important for me to say that. With God's help, we will come out of this situation stronger and better off."

Rafi Samet

"I quickly bandaged myself up and got back to work."

MDA ambulance driver and EMT Rafi Samet was at his home on Kibbutz Kissufim when the events of that Black Shabbat began. "On Friday night, I was on call, and I parked the ambulance outside my house. At 6:30 AM on Saturday, the 'Code Red' sirens sounded; I



Rafi Samet on Kibbutz Kissufim

dressed quickly and prepared myself to go out in case a missile fell somewhere inside the kibbutz."

"We began hearing falling missiles and the explosions of what we later found out were grenades and bombs," Rafi recalls. "My grandson is a soldier, and he was home that weekend. While the 'Code Red' continued.

he sheltered in a nearby bomb found safety; when he came out, he saw people dressed as soldiers and approached them to ask if they needed help. But these were terrorists dressed in IDF uniforms. They shot him, and he was wounded in the arm and the thigh. Despite his wounds, he was able to make his way to my house and shout to me that he'd been shot. I brought him into our safe room and ran to the ambulance to bring medical equipment. On my way out, they shot me too. I sustained a bullet wound in my right hand, but I continued to run home. I bandaged myself up quickly and continued treating my grandson. I would have evacuated myself to the hospital using the ambulance I usually drive, but I saw that it had been completely destroyed. They shot all four tires, as well as the side of the ambulance and the windows."

For several long hours, Rafi put into practice the knowledge and experience he had gained as an MDA medic to treat himself and his injured grandson so that both of them could hold on until a military rescue team arrived on the scene.

Zvi Reider

"I decided to focus on saving lives."

Zvi Reider is a devoted MDA volunteer who lives on Kibbutz Sa'ad. "On that cursed Shabbat, I awoke to the sounds of barrages of rockets. I have an observation deck on my roof, and when I looked with my binoculars in the direction of Gaza. I saw the



Zvi Reider in his MDA ambulance

terrorists' trucks penetrating the fence and entering Israel. I immediately alerted the kibbutz's emergency response team, of which I'm also a member, but because I'm an MDA medic and the kibbutz ambulance driver, I decided to focus on saving lives."

At 7 AM, injured people began to arrive at the gate of the kibbutz, mostly survivors of the atrocities at the Nova festival in Re'im who had managed to escape. Zvi provided life saving emergency treatment and evacuated them to Soroka Hospital in Beersheba. "I updated the MDA dispatch center and told them to ask the hospital to prepare for the arrival of patients with gunshot wounds. In hindsight, I understood that the road I'd driven on was full of terrorists. It was only once I got to the hospital that I realized I hadn't been in contact with my son Dor, who lives on Kibbutz Be'eri where he was helping a child with special needs. At 11 AM, he wrote to us that he couldn't talk, that there was noise outside. An hour later, his brother called him, and a terrorist answered the phone in Arabic."

The Reider family didn't know what had happened to Dor until they received the devastating news that he had been murdered. Despite the horrific situation, Zvi is still optimistic: "When I completed the Shiva (the seven-day Jewish mourning period), I went to the funeral of an MDA volunteer, Yarin Peled. It was important for me to be at her funeral. I knew Yarin as an MDA volunteer, but also as part of the Military Intensive Care Unit. Yarin and the Military Intensive Care Unit were guests at our home many times. At the funeral, I understood what a wonderful, big, and supportive family MDA is. I ask everyone to stand tall – we are the spirit behind the soldiers fighting on the front lines. Am Yisrael Chai."

Adir Bitan

As someone who grew up in the Gaza Envelope, Adir feels committed to the protection of residents of the area as if they were his own family. Many of the security coordinators of the various towns and villages in the area have become close friends, including Assaf Hamami, the IDF's Gaza Division Commander at

the time. Adir and Assaf often worked together when there were threats to the area, ensuring that the local population was protected as best as possible.

Just hours after the Hamas attacks began, Adir was informed that Hamas terrorists had murdered his friend Hamami and that his body had been kidnapped and was being held in Gaza; he would also soon find himself facing a terrorist who would shoot an antitank missile at him in the heart of Sderot.

"As soon as the sirens started wailing on the Saturday morning of Simchat Torah, I was already prepared to go out and deal with what was happening. I left my wife and kids in the safe room; they cried and begged me not to go, but I felt that I must, that I had to be there for my people. I tried calling Hamami, but he didn't answer. I had an awful feeling in my gut. We started getting calls from the security centers in the kibbutzim, who reported widespread shooting. Our EMTs and paramedics, who were kibbutz residents, began reporting that they were treating casualties in their homes, turning their living rooms into emergency treatment centers.

"Suddenly, I saw, right in front of me, a Hamas vehicle. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. Here inside Sderot, in broad daylight, a truck full of terrorists with green headbands and weapons in their hands. Before I could understand what was going on, one of them stood next to the road and shot an anti-missile rocket straight at my car. I have no idea how I managed to





drive past it without being hurt, but I'll never forget what I saw in my rearview mirror: the rocket hit the car of a family driving on the road, and the car went up in flames. The whole family was killed and there was nothing I could do to help. A few minutes later, I returned to my car and continued to the Ofakim MDA station, where a treatment site had been opened, and dozens of casualties were being treated.

"After helping out there, I drove to Kibbutz Re'im and the site of the Nova music festival. I was shocked to see the bodies flung by the wayside, dozens of corpses, covered in blood, burnt. I joined an MDA team, and we worked under terrorist gunfire and incoming rockets for more than 24 hours.

"I don't remember when I stopped to rest, but it wasn't that same day. I also didn't pause to process the fact that Hamami and other friends of mine in the police were now gone, or that friends in the kibbutzim were murdered and kidnapped. I was focused on the wounded, on the situation at hand, and on helping as best I could in a place where there was so much helplessness. I sent information over the radio, I helped manage this multi-scene disaster, and I promised myself – 'when this is all over, I'll deal with it. But for now, there's no time. Right now, I need to keep treating my patients.""

Gilad Henwald

The residents of Kibbutz Alumim in the Gaza Envelope also awoke at 6:30 AM that Shabbat to the sound of 'Code Red' sirens alerting them of incoming missiles. Gilad Honwald, an MDA ambulance driver and EMT, left his home together with his son to comb the area in search of people in need of treatment. They then heard the sound of gunshots from the direction of Nahal Oz. Very soon, the picture became clear: this wasn't just a missile attack; terrorists had infiltrated the kibbutz. Gilad didn't hesitate. He and other members of the emergency response team battled the terrorists for over four hours to defend their kibbutz. The wounded were all brought to one location where the kibbutz nurse could look after them, but at a certain point, she updated Gilad that their condition was deteriorating. They would need to be evacuated to a hospital if they were to have any chance of surviving. He immediately began evacuating the

wounded under fire, one after the other, with his fellow emergency response team members covering for him. Gilad evacuated 10 casualties in total.



From his point of view, his actions weren't in any way unusual: "It was clear to us all that we were fighting for our homes; anyone else would have done exactly the same."



"O" (name withheld for security reasons), an MDA employee in the Lachish region, lives in Kibbutz Kfar Azza, which came under heavy attack that Saturday. "At 6:28 AM, I awoke to a heavy barrage of rockets. After some time, it became clear that this was a much more serious situation than we'd thought. At one point, I went outside and saw combat soldiers fighting to save my home, the kibbutz. I shouted to them: 'I'm an EMT. If there are any casualties, bring them to me.' Terrorists managed to enter the home of family friends of ours. The family hid in the safe room; the father held firmly onto the door handle. The terrorists placed explosives on the other side of the door, and the father was severely injured in his hands and chest. The family made an improvised tourniquet using a phone charger cord. Later, soldiers arrived and gave them proper medical equipment. When it became possible, they brought him to me. I treated him, and from that moment, my house turned into an emergency room."

The MDA motorcycle which O had used as an emergency response medic was damaged by terrorists. "They took it apart and stole all of the medical equipment," he says. O recalls how a squad

from a military special forces unit brought their commander, who had been shot and was critically injured, to his house. One soldier applied pressure to the wound to stop the bleeding, while O gave him a tourniquet and other life saving treatment, and together, they loaded the patients into a car that was sent out to meet a rescue helicopter. On the way, terrorists shot at them from a truck. Both the injured commander and the soldier who had applied pressure to his wound were killed.

From 2 AM to 6 AM, O remained at the gas station next to the kibbutz to continue saving lives. At a certain point, he heard a call that no MDA team member could possibly ignore: "I heard someone calling, 'Medic! Medic!' as special forces units arrived with soldiers who had been injured. Of course, I treated them."

The family friend whom he had treated in his living room survived and is currently rehabilitating. "He didn't think he'd make it," says 0. "I told him at the time: 'You mustn't die; you still need to help me clean up all the bloodstains you've left in my home..."

Dedicated in memory of Eily Adani and Amichai Yaakov Vanino.

Hadas Ehrlich

Hadas Ehrlich joined MDA following in the footsteps of her father, a paramedic. In her role, she had dealt with the fallout of many terrorist attacks and had provided life saving treatment to the wounded on a number of occasions. Being based in the Jerusalem District meant she was used to working under pressure, making the sudden switch from routine to emergency mode, and saving lives when the threat was still present on the scene. But none of this prepared her for the events of October 7 and the chaosof that day.

That Saturday, Hadas was on a Mobile Intensive Care Unit (MICU) shift in Jerusalem and was soon to finish when, at 6:30 AM, the sirens sounded – first in the South but soon afterward in Jerusalem. Hadas received a phone call from the MDA dispatch center asking her to go down South with her MICU driver and EMT Eliel to help with the life saving efforts.

Hadas arrived under heavy missile fire and, even before reaching the MDA station, was sent to treat injured casualties. Vehicles carrying severely wounded people came to meet and transfer the patients to her on the roadside and then went on to collect more casualties. Within moments, Hadas found herself alone, treating two people who were in severe condition in the back of the bulletproof MICU vehicle while urging the driver to get to the hospital as quickly as possible. Hadas did everything she could to treat both patients concurrently.

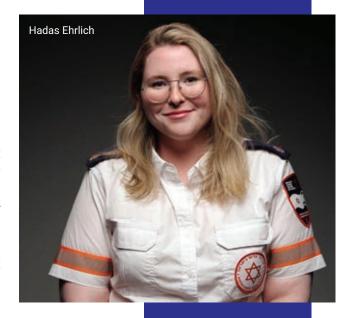
She applied tourniquets and bandages and gave the patients the necessary medication, monitored their breathing and heart rate, calmed the patients, and sedated them while the MICU sped towards the hospital with incoming rocket sirens blasting in the background.

At one point, the team drove directly into the terrorist snipers' line of fire. The MICU driver, Eliel, told of how a terrorist stood so close to him that he could look him in the eye. He pushed the accelerator pedal to the floor and sped away, praying they wouldn't be shot. Hadas, in the rear part of the vehicle, was treating the patients and wasn't aware of the drama that had unfolded just meters away from her.

"One of the patients, who was in very bad condition, was a combat soldier - one of the first to encounter the terrorists in the Sderot police station. He was bleeding heavily and didn't think he was going to make it. With tears in his eyes, he asked me to pray with him and to tell his family that he loved them. I refused to give up on him, and I refused to let him give up. I held his hand and said to him, 'Let's make a deal: I'll do everything I can to treat you, and you do everything you can to stay awake and hold on.' A few weeks later, I heard that he'd survived and was in rehabilitation. I was so happy because, during those moments in the MICU, I feared he wouldn't make it, but I had to give him the strength to make him believe that everything would be okay. If he had given up hope, he wouldn't have survived."

Hadas made numerous high-stakes medical decisions that day, including deciding which of the casualties should be evacuated by air ambulance and which should be transferred to the hospital in the MICU, with the risk of encountering a terrorist ambush. She saw some extremely disturbing sights, but at no point did she allow her fear to affect her. Her professionalism in the work she carried out that

day is inspiring.



The Sderet MDA Station

אדום בישראל

The story of Sderot's MDA station on that dark Saturday is a story of teamwork, resourcefulness, and self-sacrifice. Generally speaking, by 6:30 AM, the night shift is almost over, and the morning shift is about to begin. That morning, one of the Mobile Intensive Care Unit vehicles was being operated by Netanel Dahbash and David (Dado) Azriel, one of the longest-serving drivers on the Sderot team. During

the ambulance, they're shooting at the station, they're shooting everywhere."

"They shot at

the night, the team had dealt with a patient and returned to the station at 6 AM. Everything was quiet; there was a gentle morning breeze. The partners were beginning to plan the day ahead and the Simchat Torah festivities with their families.

Suddenly, the sound of sirens tore through the still air. Even for the Sderot MDA team, who have grown used to sirens over the years, this was out of the ordinary: the fact that there hadn't been any warning signs, the early hour of the strikes, and the intensity of the never-ending barrage. After 15 minutes, they left the safe rooms and heard gunfire. "We didn't understand exactly what it was, but we knew something very unusual was happening."

Dahbash and Dado's team, together with the other night shift teams and those who had arrived to take the morning shift, quickly understood that they were operating in what was now a battleground. Everything moved fast: a speeding car pulled up at the station with a screech of the brakes; someone shouted: "There are terrorists in Sderot!"; and there were calls for help and injured people crying in pain. The memories have since blurred into each other. The speeding car that pulled up carried a man who was critically injured, having sustained

gunshot wounds in all parts of his body: chest, abdomen, and limbs. By that point, the MDA staff members realized this wasn't just a case of missile fire; gunmen were inside the city. They closed the entrance gate of the MDA station and started treating the gunshot victim. Meanwhile, other residents of Sderot who had been shot began to arrive at the MDA station, a place that symbolized healing and care. One car after the other, more and more casualties arrived at the station, all with serious injuries.

At this point, paramedic Amit Hananya arrived at the station. He left his home in Ashkelon and miraculously did not cross paths with the terrorists, just like another paramedic, Georgi Guliak. They were joined by paramedics Ariel Elbaz and Hillel Holodenko and EMTs Odelia Suisa, Yaniv Tayer, and Meir. They quickly understood that this time, the situation was different from anything they were used to, and so they opened a treatment center inside the station. They turned the kitchen into a treatment area for walking wounded, while the safe room was designated for treating those unable to walk. They stopped patients' bleeding, bandaged the wounded, and gave fluids and plasma to those in need.



Aviv Shneer: Treating an Injured Colleague in the Living Room

One incident that will remain etched into the memories of all the Sderot MDA caregivers from that day was treating their friend and colleague Hananel Jerfi, a volunteer EMT and ambulance driver. Early that morning, he and his colleague Eliasaf Bar Haim responded to an emergency call.

While driving through Sderot, they encountered a terrorist squad in a truck. Although the terrorists were clearly able to see that this was an ambulance, they opened fire nonetheless. Hananel, the driver, was shot in the back and was seriously injured. Despite his injury, he continued driving an additional few hundred meters, and only then did his colleague, Eliasaf, replace him in the driver's seat. Everyone heard the hair-raising report of Hananel's injury over the MDA radio system. Eliasaf understood that he could not transport his friend to the hospital due to the number of terrorists in the city and made an on-the-spot decision to take him to the home of paramedic Aviv Shneor, who had taught the EMT course in which they had received their certification.



Aviv Shneor

Aviv recalls: "When the sirens sounded that morning, I understood that on that day I would be putting on my uniform rather than my festive Shabbat clothes, and that I'd be going to the MDA station rather than the synagogue. I was preparing to leave the

house when suddenly I received a phone call from the MDA Lachish control room with unimaginable news: 'An ambulance is on its way to your house with a gunshot victim. They shot at the ambulance; they shot at the station. They're shooting everywhere!' At first, I couldn't make sense of what I was hearing. They explained to me what was going on, but there was no time to think. I went into auto-pilot mode. The ambulance immediately arrived on my street; I went downstairs to meet them. We brought Hananel up to my living room and started treating him. At the same time, my wife, Bat El, and my three daughters were taking cover in the bomb shelter. Hananel was in serious condition. We treated him, spoke to him, and all the while, I was thinking what I should be doing in order to get him to the hospital as soon as possible."



Aviv with Hananel Jerfi, ambulance driver and MDA volunteer, whose life he saved

Just as Aviv was considering going to the MDA station to pick up the bulletproof ambulance, it turned up outside his house, driven by his colleague Elor Tawil. Hananel was quickly driven to a meeting point where another MDA team was able to transfer him to the hospital. His life was saved, and he was later able to return home.

One of Aviv's neighbors later told him that while they were downstairs transferring Hananel from the ambulance into the building, she noticed a terrorist truck arriving on their street. She didn't know whether to call out to the medics and warn them – if she called out, there was a greater chance of drawing attention to themselves, yet if she remained quiet, the medics wouldn't know they were in danger. She decided not to shout to them; in retrospect, they were horrified at the thought of what a close call they had.

Eler Tawil

Elor Tawil, a longstanding volunteer at the Sderot MDA station, is a father of five. That morning, he made his way to the MDA station in Sderot, a city that has been in the line of fire for years. Elor expected to help his colleagues treat those injured by falling missiles; no one yet knew that this situation would be entirely different. When Elor arrived at the station, despite being an observant Jew who refrains from using his phone on the Sabbath, he called his wife and told her: "There are terrorists inside the city. Stay inside the safe room. Spread the word as widely as you can." Elor started the bulletproof ambulance and prepared it for evacuating the wounded. It was then that paramedics Netanel Dahbash and Amit Hananya transferred the gunshot victim they had been treating to the ambulance and transported him to the hospital, despite the presence of terrorists inside the city.

The team operating the bullet-proof intensive care ambulance began evacuating the wounded. At a certain point, Amit Hananya moved to a separate ambulance, and Hadar Koltaker, another paramedic, took his place. At first, they evacuated those who were being treated at the MDA station, and then they moved on to everyone else in need of urgent treatment in Sderot, which had turned into a battlefield. While the terrorists continued their fire, the MDA teams scrambled to reach the victims, provided life saving emergency care, and got them to the hospital as quickly as possible, all while risking their own lives.

The paramedic who worked with Hadar during the night shift, Naor Sabag, continued treating the wounded throughout the day. "During our first evacuation, we understood how serious this was," he recalls. "We saw bodies lying on the streets, bodies inside cars... dozens of people killed. We treated our patient, who was in serious condition, during the journey to the hospital and felt like we were on our way into the unknown. This was such a familiar route to all of us, from the city to the hospital – as if the wheels of the ambulance could take us there without our help – and suddenly, it felt like something



straight out of a horror movie. At a certain point, we were called to the Sderot police station. We treated brave combat soldiers who had sustained serious injuries all over their bodies. We treated them as best we could and evacuated them for further treatment. On our way back, we were stopped by another group of soldiers, one of whom had sustained a severe head injury which had to be treated on the spot if there was to be any chance of saving him. We stopped on the side of the road, gave him lifesaving emergency treatment and then continued to transport him."

When they returned to the Sderot police station, they heard gunfire and explosions and understood that the attack wasn't close to being over. More and more soldiers were injured. Despite the indiscriminate killing in the streets, the team didn't lose sight of the task at hand. At a certain point, the team was called to the home of an elderly couple. A senior citizen had been shot, and his wife sat with him. It soon became clear that the man hadn't survived the attack. "What do we do now?" they recall asking themselves. "It's Shabbat. There are terrorists throughout the city. Is this elderly woman supposed to stay here the entire day with the corpse of her murdered husband? "We took her to the bulletproof ambulance and drove her to her daughter's home."

Claudio Meirowitz

Claudio fought for the lives of people wounded in the attack while his family was locked in a safe room, and his son, a member of Kibbutz Mefalsim's emergency response team, fought face-to-face with Hamas terrorists. He tells us about that dramatic day:

"By 6:30 AM, I was called upon to operate the kibbutz operations room. At first, I didn't understand the enormity of the situation, but the many sirens and the sounds of gunshots made it clear that what we were now seeing was something bigger and more awful than ever."

As a result of the Hamas attack, the kibbutz's electricity supply was damaged, and the residents were cut off completely – precisely at a time when they were most in need of electricity and information via the internet.

"It took some time to get the system back on its feet, and during that time, casualties started being brought to the control room. The first people to arrive were two soldiers who had sustained gunshot wounds, one of them already treated with a tourniquet. We began giving them lifesaving treatment, and I realized that it could take guite some time to evacuate them to the hospital, given the heavy gunfire on the kibbutz and the battle that was underway there. I immediately contacted MDA paramedic Oren Benita, who was in his home on the kibbutz and had a mobile intensive care unit vehicle as well as plenty of medical supplies, and I asked him to receive the casualties at his house. That's what we did. We evacuated them to his home. where he opened a makeshift treatment site and provided advanced medical treatment using the supplies and equipment he had."

The uncertainty and the disconnect from the outside world made everything more difficult for Claudio. He understood that if he wanted to get an accurate picture of what was happening on the kibbutz, he would have to venture outside himself, despite the danger. He donned an MDA vest and started in the direction of where he could hear the gunshots.

"I went outside, and I reached the area just in front



of the fence. I could hear gunshots the entire time, and I did my best to protect myself. I wanted to get an idea of what exactly was happening, and I needed to know if anyone was injured to the extent that they couldn't get themselves to us for treatment. I didn't really care about the danger. What I cared about was the situation of the wounded, getting a better idea of what was going on, and knowing how my son, who was in the emergency response team, was doing. I later found out that my son had managed to narrowly escape a Hamas RPG strike."

Claudio constantly worried about his family. "My 25-year-old daughter was with me the entire time in the operations room and was very helpful. My wife was in our house together with my eldest daughter, who was in the advanced stages of pregnancy, her husband, and their two-year-old son. They were locked in the safe room for nine hours. I fought to get them out of the kibbutz. Ultimately, after nine hours, I managed to get them out, and only then was I able to feel calmer."

By afternoon, the kibbutz gate was brought back under Israeli control, and Claudio went out again to see if he could retrieve anyone who was wounded. To his great despair, he discovered how bad it was: no fewer than nine people were killed. "Near the bodies, there was



a soldier who was severely injured. We administered lifesaving emergency medical treatment, and we managed to transfer him to an ambulance that was able to evacuate him to the hospital. At every stage, I could hear the battle around me - especially when I was outside, exposed and carrying the wounded to the operations room. The bullets whistled past above my head. I was in real danger, but I couldn't leave the wounded out there, knowing that they weren't getting the treatment they needed. While my son was fighting on the front line with the emergency response team, I was fighting for the lives of the wounded. I'm happy that both of us succeeded in our missions."

Dani Shtarkman

"Since when do people shoot at ambulances?"



Dani today

Early in the morning, the Mobile Intensive Care Unit (MICU) team from the Ofakim MDA station team, led by Ofakim station manager Dani Shtarkman, received an emergency call. "In the early hours of the morning, we were called to treat five people who had been seriously injured in the Urim Junction area. It was still unclear what kind of injuries these were. On our way to Urim, a car stopped me, and the passengers asked me to help a 17-year-old boy who had been shot. I started treating him, and while doing so, I tried to understand the circumstances of the shooting. No one was aware at that point that terrorists had infiltrated and had launched a killing spree. The people in the car told us that 'soldiers' had fired on them. At that point, the MDA dispatch center contacted me and asked if I could reach other people who needed urgent medical attention. I understood that the wounds of the young man in the ambulance were not life-threatening, and I decided we could get on our way. We drove to where we were directed. As we approached,



Dani Shtarkman and Peter, the ambulance driver, whose life he saved

we suddenly heard bursts of gunfire. While we were still trying to understand where the blasts were coming from, one of the windows on the driver's side of the MICU shattered. I realized we'd been fired upon, but at this point, I took it to be a

mistake – that we'd accidentally driven ourselves into a gun battle and had mistakenly been shot at, because since when do people shoot at ambulances?"

But at that point, the ambulance driver, Peter Lasnik, in pain, reported that he had been shot in the leg. Dani treated the wounded, while Peter, who had sustained a significant gunshot wound in his leg, continued driving to distance them from the terrorists despite his injury. When they had gained enough distance, Danny applied a tourniquet to his friend's leg to stop the bleeding and then drove the MICU to the hospital.

Three days after he was shot, Peter's first daughter was born, Mi-El, a sister to Ziv. Peter met her for the first time while lying on his hospital bed. "If it weren't for Dani's resourcefulness, I wouldn't be here today, and my children wouldn't have a father. It is the greatest life saving gift I received."

Ofakim MDA Station

Saturday. Early morning. A Jewish holiday. Shimon Alkobi, director of MDA's Negev District, had been awake since 5:00 AM. When the first sirens sounded, he sensed that this was more than just another escalation. By 6:40 AM, he directed the station managers to switch from routine to emergency mode and check that all ambulances were manned. He donned his MDA uniform and set out toward the Beersheba MDA station. On the way, he called his contacts in the military and the emergency services to get a better picture of the unfolding situation.

Emergency calls started coming in, including reports of people who had sustained gunshot wounds in the Ofakim and Netivot areas. Ambulances from the Negev District set out to provide treatment. Over the internal radio system in his car, Shimon heard a chilling report from MDA paramedic Dani Shtarkman: his friend Peter Lasnik, an EMT and ambulance driver, was wounded after coming under gunfire while driving a Mobile Intensive Care Unit (MICU) near Ofakim. Shimon decided to drive toward Ofakim. At this point, nobody knew the extent of the atrocities taking place

in the South, and specifically in Ofakim, where terrorists had infiltrated and were carrying out a killing spree.

When Shimon arrived at the Ofakim MDA station, he saw that all of the station's ambulances were already in use by the medical teams that had been called up to treat the wounded. Suddenly, a police car pulled up, and two police officers emerged, carrying another officer who had been shot and was bleeding heavily.

Shimon, the regional director who is a paramedic by profession – like almost all of MDA's managerial staff – laid the patient down and administered lifesaving medical treatment. "More and more wounded people began to arrive, as well as our own staff members. We began evacuating them. Four lightly wounded party-goers arrived from the music festival in Re'im," Shimon recalls. "They told me that there were 30 more wounded people in Re'im. I remember thinking: 'Wow, 30 wounded people? That's a lot." More MDA teams



arrived at the station, prepared to do whatever was needed. In recalling the events of that day, Shimon gives special mention to Sima, a volunteer driver from Yeruham, and Linoi Weitzman, who were there and gave critical assistance.

As part of regular preparations for emergencies such as earthquakes, MDA stations hold a full stock of emergency medical supplies. That's one of the reasons MDA staff were able to easily set up a treatment center on site that day: they laid out the emergency supplies, set up treatment stations, opened up stretchers, divided the tasks between them, and at Shimon's request, ensured that a further Mobile Mass Casualty Unit was sent from Beersheba. More and more casualties with varying degrees of injury – soldiers, police officers, and citizens – arrived by ambulance and in private cars at the station. The MDA team treated them all with care.

They stopped people's bleeding, bandaged wounds, attached drips, and at times, gave more advanced treatment. Sadly, the police also brought the bodies of their colleagues

and of civilians who had been killed, which they laid out respectfully in one area of the station. Every time an ambulance arrived, the wounded were triaged, then loaded into the ambulances and evacuated to the

hospital in order of urgency.



"There was one patient who was taken out of the car he arrived in, a soldier, and I saw there was a tourniquet on his thigh. The thigh was swollen from the loss of blood. He was very pale but conscious. Usually, I didn't intervene in the treatment as there was no need, but as it happened, I saw him come out of the car, and I told the team: 'Put him straight in the ambulance and take him directly to the hospital.' Later, I found out that I knew his father."

"Everyone knew exactly what they needed to do."

During this time, ambulances and MICUs were sent continuously to Ofakim and the surrounding area to evacuate casualties, including armored ambulances sent from other MDA districts as backup. While this was happening, the regional director, who orchestrated the entire operation, started hearing about his own employees coming under terrorist fire: he heard about Aharon Chaimov, who went out to do his job and with whom the connection was lost; Aviya Hetzroni, who was shot on Kibbutz Be'eri where other MDA staff were unable to reach him; and Amit Man, who stopped responding to calls in the afternoon. All three were murdered.

At a certain point, Itzik (Bazuka) Buzokshvilli, the commander of the Segev Shalom Police Station, arrived at the Ofakim MDA station. At great personal risk, he brought his friend, who had been wounded by gunfire, the commander of the Rahat police station, J. R. Davidoff. "Unfortunately, it was already too late for the Rahat police commander," Shimon tells us. "Since Bazuka was around, I asked him to identify the many bodies of police officers that we were holding at the time. He went between them one by one and told me their names. He knew all of them personally. It was a very difficult moment. I wrote the names down, and then we closed the body bags. It was heartbreaking.

"Suddenly, we received an urgent report: terrorists had been seen at the entrance to the Ofakim

MDA station. The teams brought in the wounded and closed us inside the station. Bazuka went into a kneeling position, his weapon at the ready, and trained on the entrance to the station - ready to protect the MDA staff and the casualties: I stood beside him. After a short while, we were no longer under threat; Bazuka stood up and said to me: 'Okay, I'm going.' And he went. Thirty minutes later, we heard that he had been killed when he returned to the fighting. May his memory be a blessing. He was a hero," Shimon recounts sadly. "The whole time, I was in touch with the mayor because many bodies piled up at our station. Police officers arrived at the station asking for body bags; I handed them over, and I asked for more to be sent to me from other stations. When I arrived at Ofakim cemetery on Saturday night, there were more than 70 bodies there waiting for burial.

"Every one of our MDA staff in the Negev District demonstrated dedication and commitment. And during that time, their families were locked inside safe rooms. Their work was second nature to them - they jumped into action without giving it a second thought. Their readiness to tackle the situation headon was very impressive. Everyone knew exactly what they were supposed to be doing; there was no need to give instructions more than once. Everyone was fully on board - even those who had no home to return to, those who were called up for IDF reserve duty, and those who received terrible news about colleagues who were murdered, injured, or kidnapped – everyone put in whatever they had to give to save lives and adjusted themselves to the conditions they found themselves in. As their manager, I deeply appreciate what they do," said Shimon.

Yaakev Aviezri

Yaakov Aviezri, an EMT and ambulance driver who volunteers at MDA, lives in Netivot. On Simchat Torah morning, he awoke to the sounds of explosions. He didn't panic – he was used to explosions and to the security situation escalating.

"Suddenly, the phone rang," he remembers. "The screen showed that the number calling was 101. I'm a religious person, and I observe the Sabbath, but if Magen David Adom calls me, that usually means that someone's life is on the line. I answered the call. It was from an MDA dispatch center worker who told me there were a few unusual incidents in the district and that she'd like to go over the safety procedures with me in case I was called up. These pointers are discussed with MDA drivers every time there's an uptick in violence, a reminder of our procedures during emergencies." But the MDA worker on the other end of the line didn't manage to get to the end of her briefing before sending Yaakov to an emergency call: "She suddenly cut off in mid-sentence. She took a deep breath and said to me: 'There's an incident near Netivot Junction. Get going right now. Drive carefully to the junction to see what's happening there and report back to us.' I immediately jumped out of bed, put on my shoes, and went straight to the ambulance on my way to the address I was given. Once on my way, I was sent more information through our internal system: 'Terrorist activity - severe injury.' The dispatch center worker radioed me, begging

Yaakov at entrance to kibbutz in Gaza Envelope

Yaakov at entrance to kibbutz in Gaza Envelope

me to take extra safety precautions. When I arrived, I saw another ambulance that had arrived first, and several police cars next to it. On the inside, I was calm since the area looked protected, and it looked like everything was okay. I opened the door of the ambulance to help treat the wounded, took one step, and suddenly, we were met with a heavy burst of gunfire. I still hadn't realized at that point what all of the noise was about. I didn't understand how significant this incident had become. The medic in the other ambulance shouted and ordered me to take cover. While I was lying on the ground, the penny finally dropped - terrorists were shooting at us! – and all of this happened within a few seconds. Nothing will ever be the same after those moments. Many civilians who happened to be in the area were hit by the gunfire. The police officers who were there managed to neutralize the terrorists who had shot at us. When the terrorists were taken down, one of the police officers indicated that I could get up, grab the casualties, and rush them to the hospital."

Yaakov and the teams in the other MDA ambulances started to evacuate the wounded. "I immediately got inside the ambulance to get going, when suddenly, a military vehicle arrived and blocked me aggressively; a few soldiers came out and started shouting 'Help! Help!" Yaakov saw that they were taking two injured people out of the car - a young couple, both badly wounded, their legs missing. Yaakov checked to see that tourniquets had been applied properly and that their bleeding was under control. He transferred the man into his ambulance and the woman into the other ambulance on the scene, and both were driven as quickly as possible to the emergency room. Yaakov describes the dramatic journey there and the thoughts going through his mind at the time: "The view on the way was completely different from the way it normally looked: burning cars on the sides of the road; enormous amounts of black smoke rising from fields and orchards; I could barely see the road. And the smell? A smell I'll never forget, the smell of death, of burnt bodies. But there was no time to think. My mission was clear, and it was the only



"I'm proud of my country and MDA. I am proud to have saved lives."

thing I was concentrating on. In my mind, I could hear an internal voice screaming: 'Save them!'. The MDA dispatch center had already asked the hospital to prepare the trauma room. The entire way, I begged the patients not to fall asleep, not to close their eyes."

After Yaakov transferred the patients to the medical team at Soroka

Hospital, he returned to the Netivot MDA station to wash the bloodstains from the ambulance. He then called his colleagues and asked them to join him in the ambulance to help him with the rest of his shift. Suddenly, a siren sounded, and everyone in the MDA station rushed to take cover in the bomb shelter. Then, there was a massive explosion. Everyone understood that this wasn't just another successful interception by the Iron Dome missile defense system. Thirty seconds later, Yaakov and his team were rushed out to treat those wounded by the rocket that had fallen in the city. They arrived on the scene and found three members of a family: a young man who was already dead, and two other men who had been severely wounded. "We immediately started the resuscitation

procedure, stopped the bleeding, and sped back to the hospital, but they were in very bad condition. I shouted over the radio, asking the call center to send an intensive care team to meet us. They came to Gilat Junction with minimal delay. Unfortunately, those patients didn't make it," Yaakov tells us sadly.

"All in all, we evacuated dozens of wounded people to hospitals, mobile intensive care units, and MDA air ambulances that Black Shabbat - police officers, soldiers and civilians. For me, 'Black Shabbat' isn't just any old phrase. That Black Shabbat was the most blood-soaked day I've ever experienced—unbelievable amounts of blood, thick blood that had already lost its redness. When dealing with such a vast amount of blood, it appears black," he says. "In the days following Black Shabbat, I had to alternate between IDF reserve duty and MDA medical shifts - between fighting and saving lives. I try to contribute whatever I can, wherever I am and every moment I have. My heart goes out to those who lost their loved ones. I can only hope we'll see better days, and that our hostages will return home alive and well with God's help. Elhanan, Orian, and Golan - you're the best team I could've asked for. Thanks to you, we were able to save lives. I wouldn't have managed for a single minute without you. Don't ever forget: there's only one State of Israel; Am Yisrael Chai, and together we will win. I'm proud of my country and of Magen David Adom. I'm proud to be able to save lives."

Rahat MDA Station

On October 7, the holiday of Simchat Torah, paramedic and regional supervisor of the Negev region Anis Abu Dabes worked a double shift from Friday to Saturday, together with ambulance driver and EMT Amin Almalat and paramedic trainee Ro'i Bar-Or. The double shift at the station in Rahat -Israel's largest Bedouin community - was almost over when, suddenly, the sirens sounded. "The sirens were more intense and lasted longer than usual," Anis recalls. "We looked at each other and realized this wasn't just another siren - something was different this time. One ambulance was sent to help out in the Netivot area, and it was clear to all of us that although our shift was over, we would stay as long as necessary. A short while later, a minibus arrived at the entrance to the MDA station, and we immediately saw that it was covered in bullet holes and that its windows were shattered. We boarded the bus and started treating the wounded, and we soon found out that these were residents of Rahat and that the bus, which was taking them to work in the Gaza Envelope, had come under terrorist fire. That was the moment it dawned on us how bad the situation was. As MDA emergency responders, we are used to reacting quickly and working efficiently. We held a situation assessment with the teams from the morning shift, received instructions, and began preparing to treat a large number of casualties under fire," says Anis.

Part of the preparation involved managing the team's expectations. Anis spoke with Ro'i, a trainee paramedic who was soon to be certified. "Even though we'd been at the station for over 17 hours, I didn't see a flicker of hesitation in him. It was obvious that we were all here to save lives. I remember a chilling moment when we suddenly heard the voice of our colleague and friend, Dani Shtarkman, the Ofakim MDA station manager, over the internal radio. He reported that they had been caught in an ambush, that their ambulance

had been fired upon, and one of their team members was hurt. These were MDA teams, our friends, who had put on the same uniform as us and had gone out with their ambulance to save lives. Deep inside, we felt a rush of emotions: fear and concern, together with determination and a renewed commitment to carry out our life saving task as best as we possibly could."

The team was sent to the Ofakim area, where terrorists had carried out a killing spree, murdering, amongst others, Aharon Chaimov, who was killed in his ambulance while treating the wounded. "We reached some people who were severely wounded and began providing life saving treatment, applying tourniquets and so on – and then a siren sounded. There was a massive explosion. A rocket had fallen just a few meters away from us. And then another siren and more shooting. It was a war zone, and we were treating patients under fire."

At a certain point, Anis received a phone call from Dvir Ben Ze'ev, another paramedic from the Rahat MDA station, who happened to be on a family vacation that weekend in the North. "He had heard rumors and asked what was going on. I told him that the situation was very grim. He answered: 'I'm on my way.' Just like that – all the way from the North to Rahat in the South – without anyone asking him. He didn't have to come, but he simply turned up and took my place after more than 24 hours of work. I had a strong sense of our shared destiny. I felt my colleagues' support and their backing, and I'm sure that thanks to this spirit, we will win," Anis concludes.

"It was clear to me that I had to come and switch him so that he could get some rest after more





than 20 consecutive hours of work," Dvir explains. "I began the shift, and they sent us to the Urim military base, where there were dozens of wounded soldiers. I realized that I was the first paramedic to arrive on the scene. It was awful coming to a place where my objective was to save lives, only to find more and more casualties for whom it was too late. At a certain point, we were called to attend to a civilian

as we were

who had been shot in the head and whose condition was very severe. I think that was the first time I was really afraid. They were shooting right at us. I was scared to death, and you just have to switch off the part of you that's telling you to be afraid because the person you're treating needs you right now. While the shooting was going on, I sedated the patient, resuscitated him, gave him the drugs he needed, and fought to keep him alive. Five days later, I finally received the message that he opened his eyes. This was after almost 24 hours straight of work, which began when my best friend sent me a message that he needed me. The only silver lining in this entire situation was that incredible teamwork. Those who don the MDA uniform are like family to me, and I will always choose to come whenever I'm needed, no matter how far I have to travel," says Dvir.

shrit Hadad

"A severely wounded soldier asked me to say 'Shema Yisrael' with him."



Oshrit Hadad is a paramedic at the Ashdod MDA station and lives in Netivot. She was a close friend of Amit Man, who was murdered while treating the wounded on Kibbutz Be'eri. Oshrit and Amit began their journey at MDA as youth volunteers in the Netivot MDA station, and over time, they both finished the highly demanding training process and became certified paramedics.

Throughout the morning of October 7, Oshrit spoke with and messaged her friend Amit; she worried for her. "From the morning, I spoke with her throughout the day. She described what the situation was like where she was. I tried to help her as much as possible. Unfortunately, at 2 PM, she stopped responding to me. I understood that I'd lost contact with her. I hoped she was still alive." Oshrit wanted to be as helpful as possible, so she went to the Netivot MDA station to help out. When she arrived in Netivot, she was immediately called to provide treatment as part of the Mobile Intensive Care Unit team. "We saw many bodies lying at the roadside," she recalls. "We drove towards Be'eri, and there we treated the wounded. Afterward, in coordination with the Police and the IDF, we opened a makeshift treatment site and treated casualties from Be'eri, Sa'ad, and Re'im, all of which were under fire. We provided life saving treatment to soldiers and civilians. We laid out stretchers side by side; next to each stretcher, we placed medical equipment: a manual resuscitator, oxygen, an advanced resuscitation kit, bandages, tourniquets, and infusion equipment. We erected floodlights on either side to light up the area and set up a table on the side with extra supplies: bandages, medicine, anesthetic drugs, respiratory equipment, and more. Several soldiers guarded the treatment site."

Oshrit and the team treated numerous patients with the understanding that this was a race against time. "We worked quickly, stabilized them, and got them evacuated immediately to hospitals, primarily with helicopters, sometimes in ambulances too." They were operating in a warzone the entire time, with explosions and gunfire close by, but they didn't allow it to get in the way of their work. "We continued until they called us from the dispatch center, telling us to leave the area immediately, as there were terrorists on their way toward us on motorcycles. We packed everything up, loaded the wounded onto ambulances, and got out of there. Everyone felt like they needed to 'be there' Everyone wanted to help and treat people. We knew there were many wounded because we had been in touch with people involved in the fighting. Everyone was focused; we knew they needed us, so we came. We worked for almost 48 hours straight. There were many people in need of treatment who needed our help."

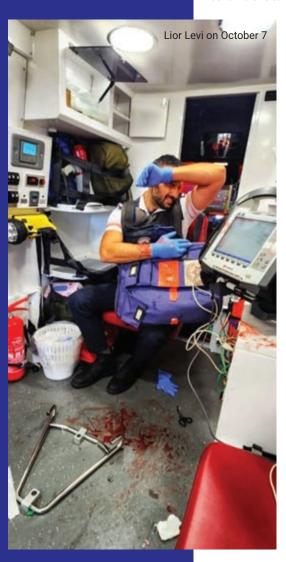
From Saturday morning until Sunday morning, Oshrit and her team treated the wounded at the temporary treatment site they had set up. On Sunday morning, they evacuated a patient to Soroka Hospital in Be'er Sheva for the first time. On their way back, they made a stop in Netivot, organized what they needed, and then drove straight back to the junction. Oshrit says she worked continuously treating those in need and didn't sleep from Saturday until Tuesday evening.

All of the cases they dealt with were heartbreaking, but there were two that stand out in her memory: "A soldier from a special forces unit, who had sustained gunshot wounds throughout his hand and leg, with tourniquets, wouldn't let us treat him. He said: 'Just give me something for the pain, I'm going back in to fight.' We were finally able to convince him, and he agreed to receive treatment. I also remember a soldier who was severely wounded, who asked me to say 'Shema Yisrael' with him and to tell his family that he loved and missed them, and that he'd done everything he could to protect them.

"It will take a long time to process it all," she concludes. "But I want to thank everyone who was there with me. Everyone there did truly amazing work."

Lier Levi

"What I saw and experienced there changed me and will stay with me forever."



Lior Levi, an MDA paramedic from Jerusalem, is married and a father of four. He arrived that Saturday morning for a routine shift at the Gush Etzion MDA station, but when he arrived, the team he led was instructed to go down South to provide assistance. "We prepared ourselves, got the bulletproof vests and helmets ready, and drove south. On our way, we heard on the MDA internal radio system from other medical teams who were already there treating the victims. Every second, there was a new report of yet another seriously injured person who needed evacuation. We began to understand the enormity of the

chaos and what we would be up against – something entirely different from anything we'd ever known."

When the team arrived, they were called to treat three seriously wounded gunshot victims. "We began to provide lifesaving treatment, and we evacuated them to Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon," Lior says. "We finished up in the hospital, cleaned the blood from our ambulance, and were immediately sent to Zikim Junction to treat more people who were in serious condition." Lior and his team arrived at an active battle zone amid unending

rocket and Kalashnikov fire. "They were shooting at us; we heard an explosion on one side and, a moment later, an explosion on the other side. Our ambulance was damaged by the shrapnel. We saw some horrifying things – bodies flung by the wayside, things I'll never forget for the rest of my life — a real battlefield. I was worried that I might die here. Between treatments, I called my wife and told her to kiss my kids for me and that I might not make it home.

"We made it to our patient at Zikim Junction: a severely wounded soldier whom we loaded into the ambulance. He had a bullet in his head, which had penetrated his helmet. As soon as we closed the doors, they began shooting at our ambulance. We wanted to get away from the area as fast as we could, but the soldier was seriously wounded, semi-conscious, and restless - we had to carry out some procedures to save his life; only then were we able to evacuate him to the hospital." The team fought to save the young soldier's life, even though his chances of surviving that type of injury were slim. "Since that Saturday, I thought about that soldier constantly; I didn't know what happened to him. Then I received a phone call from his mother. She told me he was alive and conscious, talking and even eating. He still has a long road to recovery, but the knowledge that I did everything I could to save his life, and I was successful... There's the Lior before October 7 and the Lior of afterwards. They are two different people entirely. What I saw and experienced there changed me and will stay with me forever."

Yarin Shitrit

Paramedic Yarin meets sixyear-•Id child he saved



MDA Paramedic Yarin Shitrit from the Jerusalem MDA station thought his night shift between Friday night and Saturday morning was about to end, but when the sirens began at 6:30 AM, he and his colleague Gali Shaya-Simon were asked to return to their Mobile Intensive Care Unit (MICU) vehicle to help out in the South.

Yarin and Gali were sent in their MICU to the Ofakim area – a city that had come under an intense attack by the terrorists. The team treated many patients there, one after the other - but one case stood out in Yarin's memory. At one point, the team was called to drive to an area very close to the Gaza border. "We treated a little girl, just six years old, who came to us on her own. She had been shot in the leg. Someone had placed a tourniquet above her wound and had written the time at which it was placed on her little forehead. We understood that each passing minute was crucial to prevent her from condition from worsening," Yarin says. "Her name was Ofek. She went through an unspeakable hell and lost a lot of blood, and yet she was very calm and didn't cry at all. We treated her quickly. We understood from the soldiers who were present that her parents had sustained gunshot wounds too; their condition was

unknown. We knew that more casualties were set to arrive at the junction we were at, which we reported to the MDA dispatch center so that they would send more helicopters and MICUs."

The team couldn't stop thinking about Ofek. After two weeks of uncertainty, Yarin managed to locate her family and learned that they had all survived: "We were able to get in touch with the family and understood that they had been shot while in the safe room in their home."

Yarin and Gali had the privilege of meeting Ofek and her family. Yarin and Gali brought a gift for Ofek – a unicorn doll, on which they'd written: "For Ofek, the hero, with lots of love from Gali and Yarin from MDA." "The thing that I remember most clearly from that dark Saturday, which really was a very dark day, was treating Ofek," Gali recalls. "Something about her calmness – a little girl who had been injured and was so calm – it's unusual. Being able to meet her and see her smiling, and walking, was very moving."

Alissa, the Her



Alissa on October 7, at a treatment site

Alissa is a young paramedic who faced an immense challenge on October 7 when she was asked to enter the battle zone unprotected and under fire to treat soldiers and civilians who had been wounded. She, along with a number of other MDA EMTs and paramedics, opened a treatment site as close as possible to where the shooting was taking place, where she received severely wounded patients.

Alissa and her team laid out stretchers and placed an advanced first aid kit next to each one. She prepared supplies to stop the patients' bleeding, splint broken bones, and ease their pain by providing medication. She did all of this with the sound of gunshots in the background, and although she was afraid, Alissa tells us that she didn't stop to think about the tremendous danger she was in; instead, she focused all of her energy on saving lives in battle.

When the IDF began rescuing kibbutz residents and others from the area, the soldiers brought the most severely wounded to the nearest treatment site – the one Alissa had set up. She provided lifesaving treatment, including complex medical procedures to assist those who had been shot to breathe more easily, sedating patients, reporting their situation to the hospitals where they were soon to be transferred, and more. Alissa had effectively set up and was running a field emergency room. If it weren't for the relentless gunfire and the countless

times she had to use her own body to shield her patients, one might mistakenly think this was just another MDA emergency preparation drill.

"I did everything that could be done in the field. I gave each patient a few minutes, all in order to transfer the patients to the hospital as quickly as possible. I had only a few minutes for each of them. I wrote down a quick medical history, stopped patients' bleeding, administered drugs, and gave instructions to the ambulance teams to ensure optimal continuity of care so that all of the soldiers and civilians who reached us would survive.

"One of the injured people had been ambushed by terrorists and was in critical condition. He had sustained several gunshot wounds, and he was pale and sweating. All of the signs indicated that he was in a bad state and was probably in the last few minutes of his life. But I refused to give up on him. I stopped his bleeding, gave him medication, carried out medical procedures, and did everything I possibly could to keep him alive. I'm delighted to say that he survived, and today we're close friends. I stayed in touch with him while he was hospitalized, and we even recited the Friday night prayers together. He's healthy, strong, and has no physical disabilities."

Alissa and her team worked a very long shift that day, which only ended after sunrise on October 8. She tells us that of all the things she saw and experienced that day, what touched her most was when the residents saw the treatment site she'd set up and brought her food and drink.

"That humanity, that compassion – that's what moved me. Part of the treatment we gave that day was compassion. People arrived very confused; many of them hadn't yet had time to understand what had happened, how suddenly they were wounded and in critical condition. They were in shock. I did everything I could to calm them. I spoke to them while treating them, encouraged them, I explained what I was doing, and made sure that they were as comfortable as possible amid all of the difficulty."

Neam Weisbuch and Nea Shimoni

Nova Festival

MDA paramedic Noam Weisbuch and EMT and Mobile Intensive Care Unit (MICU) driver Noa Shimoni spent a night shift together on the night between Friday, October 6 and Saturday, October 7. Toward the end of their shift, they received an emergency call to drive to the South to help treat people wounded in the attack. One of the patients they treated was Naama

Gal, who was shot by terrorists at the festival in Re'im. For hours, Naama hid in a garbage dumpster, but eventually, the terrorists found her and shot her at pointblank range. She was severely wounded.



Noam and Noa came

and treated her, evacuating her while she was in a severe and unstable condition. EMT Noa Shimoni recalls: "We met Naama on October 7 at the entrance to Sderot, just a few hours into the war. She had sustained several gunshot wounds, and she was in a very bad state. She managed to put together a few short sentences before collapsing. At that time, we had no idea what Naama had been through when we saw her. During the terrible massacre, Naama and her friends hid in a dumpster; some of them were murdered, and others were left wounded and bleeding. On the drive to the hospital, we did everything we could to save her life. I didn't take my foot off the pedal the entire time – otherwise, we would have lost her on the way."

"Naama's injuries were very serious," Noam Weisbuch, the paramedic, recalls. "When I looked at her, I knew that I would do everything I could to save her life. We told the MDA dispatch center to let the hospital know about the seriousness of her condition, so that the doctors would be ready, and we brought her there while giving her drugs to stabilize her."

"After transporting her, we returned to the area

of the attack and continued to treat other casualties. We

saw things we'll never forget." Noam and Noa recall. "But still, it was Naama who stole our hearts and minds that day – a young woman, more or less our age, whose only crime was to go out and have a good time. For a week after that, we couldn't stop thinking whether she had survived the awful attack. By coincidence, we came across a social media post she'd published in an attempt to find the people who treated her, and we immediately got in touch. Naama's story became a ray of light for us amid all of the darkness. We were deeply moved to hear that she was not only standing on her feet, but had also recovered and returned home. It was truly a miracle."

A few days after Naama was released from the hospital, Noam and Noa came for an emotional visit to Naama's home in Haifa. "Finally, we're able to meet, this time not in a war zone full of blood, sand, and smoke. It was a privilege for us to be there and to treat her." Naama was moved by the meeting with the MDA team and said: "You're my guardian angels. Even a thousand words wouldn't be enough to describe how grateful I am to you: thanks to you, I'm alive. Thank you for everything."

Itai Amar

"With each evacuation, I searched for my father among the wounded."

Itai Amar has been an MDA volunteer in the Ashdod station since he was 15 years old. Currently, he is in the midst of the MDA paramedic course – a demanding course that requires skill, passion, and commitment.

On the morning of October 7, Itai was asleep at his home in Ashdod. "When the sirens sounded, I got into my MDA uniform and ran to the station. The regional deputy manager, paramedic Haim Levin, briefed those present on the situation and a few minutes later, they were in an ambulance on their way to the Gaza Envelope. Itai wrote in his family's WhatsApp group that he had been called in as a reinforcement in the South – which was when he found out that his father, Avi Amar, a commander in the National Counter-Terror Unit in Israel's Police force, had also been called up to the South.

When they reached Kohav Michael, they joined paramedic Alissa Krant and began treating the wounded who had been brought there by MDA's armored ambulances from the areas where the fighting was taking place. "The first patient we treated was a police officer. He sustained multi-system injuries from several bullets; Alissa carried out several complex procedures, which effectively saved his life. Then we evacuated him to Barzilai Hospital." Afterward, the team was sent to the site of a fallen missile in Ashkelon. "To our right, there were flames and smoke from a factory that had been hit, and to our left, more flames and smoke from

Father and son donate blood together before the war.

a field that had been hit and had ignited. The entire street was filled with heavy black smoke. It was awful."

Between patients, Itai texted his father to hear how he was doing. Once they returned to Kohav Michael, they saw many MDA personnel there. The team treated



Itai Amar tries to reach his father on the phone on October 7.

and evacuated more injured people and was sent to treat gunshot victims in Moshav Ge'a, Kibbutz Bror Hayil, and other places. They set up a reception point to receive the injured from Kibbutz Be'eri, and it was then that Itai overheard a conversation between the paramedics that their friend, Amit Man, was trapped in Be'eri and was treating patients there. "I heard the worry in their voices," Itai recalls.

Itai continued treating patients and hoped for the best, but every time they brought an injured person to the hospital, Itai searched for his father among the patients who had been brought to the ER. It was only a week later that they received the terrible news of this death. "From what I heard from his acquaintances, he insisted on going to the front lines and fighting inside the kibbutzim to save lives. While I was busy treating patients, my father was fighting the terrorists in various locations, until finally he fell in battle at Kibbutz Be'eri. I'm pleased that I managed to write to him that I loved him," says Itai.

Itai is immersed in his studies to complete the paramedic course and dreams of studying to be a doctor while continuing as an MDA volunteer. "I know that my dad is proud of me for the lives I saved on that terrible Saturday, and I'm as proud as can be about the lives he saved," says Itai. "I was very impressed by MDA's response to the events of that Saturday: the teams that arrived from around the country, the fact that everything was organized, everyone knew their task, the clear instructions. Everyone was ready and prepared. It was impressive and filled me with pride," Itai concludes.

Zvi Tiber

A team from Karnei Shomron arrives to reinforce the medics in the South

Zvi Tiber, a paramedic from the Alfei Menashe MDA station, lives far from the Gaza Envelope. But that day, he too, found himself in the South of Israel, treating and evacuating the wounded under fire as part of the response provided by Magen David Adom to the horrific events on October 7.

Zvi awoke early that morning to the sound of sirens and explosions. He immediately contacted the MDA ambulance driver who lived nearby, and together, they prepared the Mobile Intensive Care Unit (MICU) for the possibility that they would be called on to help. Their regional manager at MDA contacted them and asked them to go down to the South to support the medical teams on the ground with their armored ambulance. They were soon on their way. "I'm a paramedic," Zvi says. "Usually, when there's a terror attack or a shooting, within 15 minutes, the casualties are no longer on the scene. We get them out of there as soon as possible. On our long southbound ride, we thought that by the time we'd complete the journey from Karnei Shomron to Ofakim, the whole thing would be over.

We had no idea what was happening. At that point, no one realized the enormity of the horrors."

On the way, the team was confronted with ghastly sights from the battlefield. "The whole

of the South burned. Ofakim was a war zone, and we treated casualties there," he says. While treating their first casualty that day, a police officer who had been shot, the team began to understand that this was a much more complex situation than they had expected. "He was the most lightly injured person

casualt

we dealt with that day. He had two gunshot wounds. I took two bandages and applied pressure to stop the bleeding. Another officer who arrived with him experienced an anxiety attack. Both of them – two tough cops – embraced each other, broke down in tears, spoke about the desperate battle they'd been forced to fight against dozens of terrorists, about friends who had fallen, and said they were sure they wouldn't make it out of there alive. I began to get a sense of what was going on.

"We did a few such rounds of treatment and evacuation, and then I found myself treating civilians. The person I remember best was a young woman who had been at the Nova music festival," says Zvi. "She and her boyfriend had hidden inside a 'migunit' a small concrete structure to protect from rocket attacks. The terrorists hurled grenades at them and lit a fire at the entrance to the shelter. They had inhaled smoke, choked, and made the incredible decision to leave. On their way out of the migunit, she walked on ground that was ablaze. Her feet were scorched, and then she was shot. She sustained a gunshot wound in her knee. We treated both of them and evacuated them to Soroka Hospital. On our way back, I wrote the medical report - meaning, I wrote what I saw, what the circumstances were, and what treatment I gave. I remember thinking to myself - 'Is this a movie? What I'm writing here is a script. None of it feels real."

Zvi and his team treated many injured people that day, but there was one case that he will not easily forget:

"I treated a five-

"We fought tooth and nail to save each

Photo of Zvi Tiber from his filmed testimony of what took place.



year-old boy from Rahat; he was alone without a single family member. He had sustained serious gunshot wounds. He looked drained, he was weak, and he didn't stop crying out for his mother. As a father, I found it exceedingly difficult to put my emotions aside. It turned out that he had been working with his father in the greenhouses. The terrorists shot at them from close range: the father was killed, but his uncle was able to escape with him. I fought to save that kid. I fought for his life. We evacuated him in critical condition. Since then, I've constantly asked myself what happened to him. Recently, I read an account in the media that reported that he was alive. I was so happy; I had done everything I could for him, and I wasn't sure he would survive."

The team treated many severely injured people; Zvi remembers them all and can describe their wounds and the treatment they were each given. "Some of them we evacuated to the hospital ourselves; others were transferred to helicopters for rapid evacuation. That night, we came to Sderot. After a full day of treating war casualties, nothing prepared us for what we would see there. Corpses lying on the streets everywhere we went; horrific sights like nothing I'd seen before. We did everything we could," Zvi concludes. "We fought tooth and nail to save each and every person we encountered."

Nea Abitboul

Twenty-three-year-old Noa Abitboul, an MDA paramedic and instructor in the MDA paramedic school, works in the Lachish district. She went to work for a routine shift on the morning of October 7, but soon found herself on the most intense meaningful shift of her career, which only ended 16 hours later.



The shift began in Ashdod. Noa was in

the middle of treating a routine case when she received a call from the MDA dispatch center asking her to go immediately to the area of Netiv HaAsara, where a report had been received about soldiers who had been shot during a clash with Hamas terrorists. The IDF set a meeting point in the Zikim area, between the city of Ashkelon and Netiv HaAsara, which at that point was considered safe. Noa's team made its way to the meeting point.

At that point, the dispatch center contacted Noa again and told her two crucial things: first, the meeting point was exposed to gunfire, so she had to receive the casualties as quickly as possible and get out of the area to somewhere safe; and second, the dispatch center had arranged for two MDA Medevac helicopters to meet her five minutes away from the IDF meeting point to transfer the severely wounded soldiers, directly to the operating room at the hospital after receiving initial treatment from Noa.

Noa received six wounded soldiers. They had all sustained several gunshot wounds and were bleeding. Some of them cried out in anguish. She gave them lifesaving treatment to stop their bleeding, administered medication, and when required, sedated them to ease their pain.

The team transferred four of the wounded soldiers to the helicopter and decided to evacuate the other two themselves. Noa tells us that having to determine who would be taken to the hospital by helicopter and who they would take on their own was not an easy decision, but one that had to be made.

During those 16 hours, Noa made numerous difficult but essential decisions. There were seemingly endless cases of people who were severely wounded, in need of treatment or immediate evacuation, people who were on the brink of death – children and adults alike. Noa took charge of an entire team, was at several battleground sites, and dealt with many people in need of treatment, often in the dark and under fire. Despite the difficulty, she can honestly say that she did everything in her power, and at times even beyond that, to successfully save lives on that historic day.

Michael Der

The MDA National Command Center is the organization's central nervous system. From there, the National Dispatch Center, whose staff supervises the work of the local dispatch centers, receives reports, coordinates missions, and provides instructions about what needs to be done. The National Dispatch Center sees the big picture of what's happening across the country for all the events that MDA and the State of Israel must deal with. Through the dispatch center, the organization's management can understand the situation, make its decisions, and hand down instructions accordingly to manage the situation.

On October 7, MDA call centers around the country received over 21,000 emergency calls, compared to approximately 4,000 on a regular Shabbat. Minutes into the attack, the call centers were manned by additional staff who were called in from their homes. Even before 7:00 AM, while heavy barrages of rockets were being launched at Israel, MDA staff were already dispatched to treat people who had been injured at sites where rockets had fallen, some of whom were severely wounded or even killed - for example, in Rishon LeZion, Ashkelon, Kfar Aviv and the Bedouin region in the Negev desert. Soon, reports started flowing in on the infiltration of terrorists into towns, villages, and military bases. The MDA senior management team quickly understood this was an unusual event and came to the Joint National Information Center to manage the crisis from there, together with the National Dispatch Center staff. One of them was Ido Rosenblatt, head of MDA's IT and dispatch centers division. "Very quickly, we had a fairly good idea of what was happening. We sent regular updates to the IDF, the police, and the other relevant authorities. We held a situation assessment with our director general very early in the morning, after which we were able to hand down instructions to the National Dispatch Center, and from there to the rest of the organization."

The National Dispatch Center is staffed by highly experienced dispatch center operators, who must



be very professional, fast-thinking, and cool under pressure. All are qualified EMTs and paramedics. That's precisely how Michael Dor, a shift manager at the National Dispatch Center, could be described. He managed the morning shift that Shabbat. Michael had already managed major emergencies in the past, but, like many of his colleagues, he felt that the events of that day were on another level entirely. Michael was a youth volunteer from age 15 and has worked at MDA from a very young age. He served in a number of different positions in the dispatch centers and, for the last five years, has worked as a shift manager at the National Dispatch Center.

Michael describes his shift that Shabbat, which was meant to begin at 7 AM. "I left my house and heard the sirens. I heard everything over the internal communication system, and by 6:35 AM, I was already sitting at the shift manager's desk in the dispatch center. It was very strange. I've been through wars and escalations in the security situation, and I've seen some significant and difficult incidents. This time, it was different from the get-go. Tzofit Bartal, the shift manager who had taken the night shift, sat facing the screen, watching the IDF Homefront Command's instructions, and updated us about every siren going off around the country. It was crazy. Omri Levi, the manager of the National Dispatch Center, was also called in and told us that there were also terrorists infiltrating Israel from Gaza on gliders. Soon afterward, we received a call regarding two combat soldiers who had been shot at Yad Mordechai Junction, and at exactly the same time, the Home Front Command operations room called us from the Urim base, which is right next to the Gaza border."

Michael takes a deep breath before describing that phone call. "We have an open emergency line between us. Every day, we check that the emergency phone line to them works as part of our regular checklist at the beginning of each shift to ensure everything is in order. When we received that phone call from them, I assumed it was the regular checkup call. I answered and asked if we could do this later. The soldier on the other end of the line said, 'I have a soldier who's been shot in the stomach; our base has been breached."" Michael spoke with the soldier, guided her on what to do, and updated his senior managers. Throughout the morning, Michael received several more calls from the same soldier and spoke with two others. He later found out that, unfortunately, two of the three soldiers with whom he spoke were killed during the terrorist attack on the base. "I felt truly horrified," Michael says. "We understood that we were in a different situation." altogether, and that we needed to work differently."

This was also understood in the field, as well as by MDA management, whose members immediately realized the enormity of the moment. After holding a situation assessment, management instructed

the teams to keep the night shift workers there, which doubled the number of workers in the dispatch center and had a significant effect, especially since it was a Saturday shift. The decision was possible because it was made before 7 AM when the shifts were supposed to switch. "We told all night

shift workers around the country not to go home," Michael says. "But in truth, there was no need to do so – all of the MDA workers felt a distinct sense of purpose and understood the importance of the task. We all realized that we were in the midst of a historic event. The MDA management also instructed the workers to transfer to emergency mode: we raised the alert level to the highest possible degree, 'maximum capacity,' meaning that there was not a single ambulance in the country without a team assigned

to it. For that to happen, we sent out immediate messages to 30,000 MDA staff members, with the vast majority being MDA volunteers." MDA's ability to transfer from routine to emergency mode in a matter of moments is made possible due to its innovative use of technology, which is used by a highly trained, professional staff.

Following the situation assessment, COO Gil Moskowitz instructed that bulletproof ambulances be sent from MDA divisions around the country to the South. Michael recalls how this instruction was handed down as he heard what was happening around the shift manager's desk: "There were some very difficult conversations taking place around me. I could hear the dispatch operators talking, but I wasn't able to digest what they were saying. The dispatch center staff dealt with the horror of what was going on from the other end of the phone line; I could see them having unbearable conversations, going into all of the important details in order to get the best possible picture of where the emergencies were taking place and what exactly was happening there. I heard them giving life saving instructions – how to

The country was

was watching it

apply a tourniquet, to hide, to lie down flat on the floor in cases of fire, and so on. From those phone calls and reports coming

Michael Dor on shift



in over the internal radio system, we were able to piece together the bigger picture. While receiving phone calls about the shooting attacks, we also received reports informing us of several deaths due to rocket attacks on one of the Bedouin villages in the South."

The flow of information to the National Dispatch Center was

endless: it passed down the management's instructions to those in the field and, at the same time, received information that it transferred to the IDF, the hospitals, and other emergency services. "I received information from the dispatch operators: a call we received about six soldiers who had been shot at Zikim Military Base, a call about soldiers in Yad Mordechai, soldiers who had been injured at Re'im Military Base, more than 15 wounded people who were being treated at the Sderot MDA station. We quickly realized we were dealing with dozens of infiltrations into military bases, towns, and villages. The country was burning, and I could see it happening in front of my eyes. The MDA Command and Control Center started receiving photos and videos that were sent to us by wounded people and others who had called in. I saw them all - it was a difficult sight. I received and passed on an unfathomable amount of information that Shabbat. I wrote down everything."

Michael continues his story: "I was always taught at MDA that we fight for every patient – if a patient is in a barely accessible location, we'll send a helicopter; someone injured at sea will have a boat sent to them, and we'll get the Navy involved; the Rescue Unit will be involved where necessary. MDA even manages to reach victims of terror attacks in distant countries. And now, we weren't faced with a single such incident, but hundreds of them, and we were stretched to the very limits of our abilities with everything we had. Normally, MDA has two helicopters at its disposal; that Saturday, we operated three, and everyone worked non-stop. Moreover, throughout the day, the Air Force kept in constant, direct contact with us. Representatives



The dispatch center on October 7

from their control center and the Aviation Authority sat with us in the National Dispatch Center. It was incredible and gave me a lot of strength. Dozens of wounded people owe their lives to that decision. As I said, I sat down at my desk at 6:35 AM, and the first time I got up was at 4:30 PM."

Michael also reflects on his own personal loss. "Among all the updates we were receiving, I heard that we'd lost contact with MDA paramedic Amit Man, a close friend of mine. During that shift, the dispatch center received several phone calls from her. She was trapped in the kibbutz clinic and treated the wounded there. We were good friends, and I went through a very difficult period after her death. I kept myself busy with work so that I wouldn't have to deal with her loss. It's difficult to describe the mixed feelings I had. On the one hand, I'd have wanted to speak to her during her last moments, but on the other hand, I know that if I'd spoken to her, I wouldn't have been able to function. Amit wasn't the only one. I received horrifying reports about Peter Lasnik, who was shot at Urim Junction; Hananel Jerfy, who was shot in Sderot; Aviya Hetzroni from Be'eri who was bleeding and no one was able to reach him - all of these reports went through me, and I tried my best to stay professional, like being on auto-pilot.

"It was an extraordinary situation, so we had to act extraordinarily. We landed helicopters in places that weren't set up for it, we took crazy risks. We had to adjust ourselves to the circumstances, and many people were saved thanks to that approach. Dozens, if not hundreds. That Shabbat will stay with me for the rest of my life," concludes Michael.

Z•har Sarvinsky

Zohar Sarvinsky, a paramedic from the Arad MDA team, is used to working under pressure and making fateful decisions, but April 13, the night of the Iranian missile attack, forced her into unknown territory. The concern for the safety of her family, the many sirens, and the loud explosions – none of these stood in her way when she fought to save the life of a little girl from a village near Kuseife, who sustained serious injuries during the attack.

"It was a regular Saturday night shift," Zohar recalls. "My teammates for that shift were Mobile Intensive Care Unit driver Hussein Azberge and the regular ambulance team, Israel Katz and Dr Ziad. We heard warnings that something might be coming from Iran, so we were alert and prepared ourselves."

When the sirens began wailing on the streets of Arad, people were surprised. "I'm from Beersheba," says Zohar. "I'm used to sirens, and I know how they sound and what you're supposed to do. In Arad, people aren't used to it. There was talk of the fact that missiles were on their way, but I guess people didn't really believe it. When the siren began, we started in the direction of the bomb shelter, and then we heard screaming outside; it was the sound of helplessness. People who were in the streets didn't know what to do. We

quickly went out to them and brought them into the shelter with us."

Zohar tells us how there was a series of sirens. It lasted much longerthan she



was used to as a Beersheba resident who had been through her fair share of rocket attacks from Gaza.

"I tried calming the people who were there with me. But my head was somewhere else, thinking about



my daughter. She was with my mother-in-law in Arad. I knew she was in safe hands, but still, my heart pounded in my chest. When you know your home is protected, it helps you do your job in the best way possible."

And so, from the moment she was called to assist the girl who had been wounded by the missile, Zohar had only one thing on her mind – saving the girl's life – and she and her team were on their way.

"After several rounds of siren blasts, we received an emergency call with the message 'severe injury of a child from a fallen missile.' The details were still unclear. We immediately went to where we were directed. The only thing that interested me at that moment was getting to her as soon as I possibly could. We were met by a car at the entrance to Arad. Yisrael and Dr Ziad's ambulance arrived a minute before us. The patient was a little girl who had sustained a serious and significant head injury. The relative who had brought her said she had been injured during the missile attack. We quickly assessed her condition, administered initial treatment, and evacuated her to Soroka Hospital together with her brother; I continued treating her in the back of the ambulance throughout the journey."

When asked whether she had been afraid to venture outdoors during the Iranian missile attack into the darkness of the desert night, without knowing where she'd be able to take cover if another missile was to fall, Zohar doesn't hesitate before saying: "That's the job. That's why we're here – for each and every person who is sick or injured. When it comes to children, there's an even greater desire to help. We're all human, and a little girl who's been injured isn't something to which you can turn a blind eye. There's something about it that penetrates you and touches your soul. I wish her a full recovery from the bottom of my heart."

Liney El-Ezra

Linoy El-Ezra arrived for her morning shift that Saturday at the MDA dispatch center and immediately felt as if she had entered a battlefield. "The first call I took was from someone who shouted: 'Terrorists!' I heard screams and gunshots, and then the call cut off. I tried calling back, but there was no answer." That was when she realized they were dealing with a situation much bigger and more serious than anything they'd seen before. Linov es were all receiving very

noticed that her colleagues were all receiving very similar calls, with endless barrages of rocket fire in the background. Everyone was on high alert.

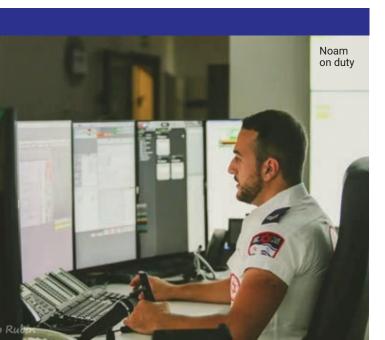
And then came another call. On the other side of the line was a small voice: Michael, nine years old, had called to ask for help. He told Linoy that the terrorists had shot his father and mother. Linoy tried to understand if it was possible to save the parents, asking Michael to talk to them. Michael called: "Abba? Ima?" but there was no answer. At Linoy's request, he described their wounds. She realized she had to do everything in her power to save the child. She instructed him to lock the door of the house and go inside the safe room. "And then I heard him say: 'Amalia, come!" Linoy's heart sank as she realized that there was another little child in the house, around six years old. A lump rose in her throat. But she had to save the children. She told them to shut the door of the safe room, but they weren't able to do so. So Linoy told them to find a cupboard, hide inside, and not come out until good people would arrive. "When I lifted my head," Linoy says, "I saw that everyone else in the room was having the same conversations. No one got up from their seats; everyone did their

utmost to save lives." Michael and Amalia, the children, hid in a cupboard for several hours until they were rescued. Their parents had been murdered. Their younger sister, Abigail, was taken hostage and released almost two months later from the claws of the Hamas terrorists.

In numerous conversations, the MDA dispatch teams guided those who called the hotline on where to hide or how to apply tourniquets to stop themselves or others from bleeding. Despite everything, every call was meticulously documented to provide help as soon as possible. In some cases, people called from inside the safe rooms in their homes, saying they couldn't breathe because terrorists had set their houses on fire. In this impossible situation, faced with total helplessness, the MDA staffers told them to place a piece of cloth on their nose and mouth and to lie down as low as possible; all the while, they did everything they could to get them help.

Neam Levi

Noam Levi, a senior EMT and staff member at the Jerusalem MDA Dispatch Center recounts: "One of the phone calls that affected me most was from a little girl who called to report that terrorists had broken into her home. She was in the safe room with her family in Kibbutz Be'eri when terrorists threw grenades inside. She said that she and her father had been shot. I tried to help by instructing her how to apply a tourniquet to stop the bleeding, but she hung up the phone because at that moment, more terrorists entered the house. The girl later reached out again, and we conducted a video call with her. I asked her to stay quiet and show me her father's wounds. At this point, I understood that her mother and brother had been murdered. The girl had sustained gunshot wounds in her legs and was unable to move. She told us that her father was wheezing. I could see on the screen that the entire room was full of shrapnel and that the father had been shot several times in the legs and was breathing, but unconscious. I asked her to crawl to the closet and try to bring an item of clothing to use as a tourniquet for her father, but she again hung up as the terrorists were now outside the safe room. She disappeared, and I didn't know if she'd been murdered or kidnapped. Over the next two days, I checked again and again to see if there was any sign of life from her. We couldn't find anything. To





our relief, a few days later, one of our shift managers said that her husband, an ambulance driver, drove to the South that day to treat the wounded and had said that he had evacuated the girl and her father to the hospital. A few weeks later, we met the girl in a rehabilitation ward at Tel HaShomer Hospital. She and her father had survived, but the father had lost a leg due to the number of gunshot wounds he had sustained. It was moving to see her walking after being unable to crawl due to her injury. She's a hero; she gave us so much strength amidst the hell she experienced. She conducted herself so calmly despite being beside her seriously wounded parents, kept her cool while calling us, doing exactly the right thing. If our young kids can act that way and be such heroes, I have no doubt we will get through this nightmare. Our nation has amazing strength, and it gives us hope. I'm proud of my friends and colleagues who operated the dispatch center. I saw colleagues taking breaks outside and breaking down in tears. The stress and anxiety on both a personal and national level were heartbreaking, but everyone got on board and worked professionally and diligently. That's the heroism of the dispatch center team: the fact that we were able to operate effectively and save lives amid all the chaos," says Noam.

Help From Above

The patient begged me: "Save me. I have children"

In normal times, MDA has two helicopters on call during every shift: the southern air ambulance based at Sde Teiman, outside of Beersheba, and the northern air ambulance based at Poriah Hospital in Tiberias. A third air ambulance is reserved for cases when the helicopter force needs a backup. That Saturday, all three helicopters operated non-stop in the Southern District, treating and evacuating 21 seriously and critically injured patients. Ambulances and Mobile Intensive Care Units awaited them at the hospital landing pads to transfer the casualties to emergency rooms. These ambulances also transported dozens of other casualties who had arrived in IDF helicopters to the emergency rooms.

The air ambulances are operated by senior and highly experienced paramedics who had undergone special training for this particular role. MDA air ambulance teams are sent to treat patients who were injured in traffic or work-related accidents that occurred in far-flung locations; in other cases, they might be sent to treat patients who suffered a heart attack or a stroke far from a medical center that can offer specialized treatment, when time is a critical factor to their chances of survival.

Dr Shafir Botner, who directs MDA's paramedic school, heard the many sirens that Saturday morning, left his home and headed to the MDA station to help out in the affected areas. At that early stage of the morning, he was still unaware of the terrorists' infiltration into Israel. He spoke with Shimon Alkobi, the District Manager, who asked him to go to Ofakim or Beersheba.

"We arrived at HaNassi Junction," Shafir recalls.

"To our right was Beersheba, and to the other side was Ofakim. I was unsure in which direction to turn. I decided that in the event of falling missiles in Ofakim, I wouldn't be able to help as much, so I turned towards Beersheba. That was the first time my life



was saved that day because, as it turned out at that time, the terrorists had already taken up positions at the entrance to Ofakim and were shooting at everyone passing by on the road. If I had continued in that direction, I would probably have been shot and perhaps killed."

Shafir arrived at the Beersheba MDA station and began to help the teams there, but after a short while, he received a phone call. "They asked me to go to the helicopter landing pad at Sde Teiman, to operate a third air ambulance with Rami Miller, the head of the Medical Division and MDA's Chief Paramedic. The two other air ambulances - one of them operated by our colleagues at the southern landing pad, Ziv Shapira and Moshe Salah were already working and treating the wounded non-stop, and by now, our help was needed. We left everything and headed straight for the landing pad. We entered the helicopter to prepare it. I arrived with Rami Miller and Dr Refael Strugo, MDA's Medical Deputy Director-General. Within minutes, we were ready and started receiving casualties, and from that point, we treated and evacuated



patients in one long shift that began on Saturday morning and only ended on Monday.

"There are a few memories that stand out. On one of the many occasions when evacuating the wounded to Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon, the siren sounded, and we couldn't get to a bomb shelter in time, so we lay on the ground in accordance with the instructions. Suddenly, a woman who was highly distressed ran to us with a baby in her arms; she was screaming. She had arrived at the emergency room with her son, who had been injured during one of the previous sirens when she hadn't managed to reach a bomb shelter in time. She was helpless. It was incredible to see how instinctively we all physically protected her."

During one of the evacuation flights, a piece of shrapnel from one of the missiles hit the helicopter's rotor. For a moment, the team was afraid they would die and reported over the radio – "We've been hit." But luckily – and thanks to the pilot's skill – the helicopter landed safely with limited damage. Moments later, Shafir discovered that the report

they had radioed in had been heard by hundreds of terrified MDA workers and had even reached his family. "We were supposed to transfer three wounded people from Barzilai to another hospital. We were in the air ambulance with the wounded who were strapped in and being treated; the motor was on full power, and we were taking off when suddenly we heard a siren and a huge explosion. It's difficult to explain how terrifying that moment was. I was sure we'd been hit - that's how it felt. I reported on the radio that we'd taken a hit." While trying to treat the casualties

in the helicopter, the pilot was able to carefully power down the motor. "We understood that we were not yet out of danger – we were worried that at any moment the helicopter could catch fire. We got out and evacuated the wounded to protect them. We later understood that the rotor had been hit by shrapnel. When I finally had a chance to look at my phone, I saw that my daughter had tried to reach me numerous times. She's an MDA volunteer and heard that a helicopter had been hit; she knew I was on an air ambulance shift and was, of course, alarmed.

"One of the casualties we treated was a police officer who had fought in a battle near the music festival, who had been shot in the abdomen. He was very severely wounded and had lost a great deal of blood and was close to losing consciousness. He asked me if he was already dead. I told him he was alive. I calmed him down. Then he said: "Save me, I have kids." Of course, I did everything I could for him, as I did for everyone I treated. I fought to save him with all the means I had at my disposal, and I hoped for the best. I didn't know what happened to him afterward. Recently, my brother-in-law, who is

also in the police force, told me about a colleague of his who had been severely wounded and was looking to make contact with the medical team who had treated him. I looked into it, and it was indeed the same person I'd treated. He had survived and I had the fortune of meeting him. There's no greater privilege."

Read more about this moving meeting below.

"The wounded we treated are a kind of microcosm of the disaster that occurred that day. We treated a young woman who was seriously injured at the music festival; a police officer who had been hit by an RPG; someone else who was shot in the stomach. One after the other, like in some sort of horror movie," Shafir says. "And all the while, missiles were flying over our heads.

"On the flight back, I looked around. I felt like I was in a war movie. The floor of the helicopter was covered in blood; we flew above plumes of smoke and explosions; the sirens wailed the entire time. It was a very strange experience.

"That night, we treated a very severely wounded soldier who was bleeding from everywhere; he was losing all his blood. Another two soldiers who had sustained gunshot wounds arrived with him: one had been shot in the leg and one in the arm. They lingered momentarily before we got to the helicopter; I urged them to hurry up so that we could get on with evacuating the other soldier as guickly as possible. Suddenly, the soldier with the bullet in his leg started running - faster than I could - and said to me: "If it's urgent, it's urgent." We landed at Hadassah Hospital, and in order to save time, the injured soldiers carried the stretcher with their injured friend on it together with us. I looked at them: one soldier with a tourniquet and a bullet in his leg, the other with a tourniquet and multiple bullets in his arm, and yet both of them were carrying their wounded friend so as not to waste a single moment, in such a clear show of camaraderie and dedication. It was extraordinary. I came out of the experience with the understanding that the soldiers who fought on that Saturday were super-human. Superheroes.

One just has to look at them to understand what the slogans "Am Yisrael Chai" (The people of Israel live.) and "Beyachad Nenatze'ach" (Together we will win.) are about – because all the cliches are true of these people," Shafir concludes.

"I was deeply moved; I didn't step thinking about you for a moment."

Two and a half months later, two of the injured people who were treated by a medical team from the Sharon District and later by Shafir and Rami from the air ambulance team, paid a visit to the



MDA helicopter landing pad to meet with the MDA personnel who saved their lives.

Two police officers from the Segev Shalom police station – Chief Inspector Or Yosef, the station's operations officer, and Chief Inspector Yoni Desklo, an intelligence officer – were severely wounded during the fighting on October 7.

They both arrived at the MDA's southern helicopter landing pad. "At the entrance to Kibbutz Re'im, we heard a very powerful explosion and immediately understood that we must have been hit by an RPG," Chief Inspector Yoni Desklo recalls. "We knew that if we stayed inside our vehicle, we would die, so we decided to get out and find shelter and fight the terrorists from there. During that battle, we were injured by gunshots and shrapnel. I sustained a gunshot wound to the stomach, and Or was injured in his limbs."

"We managed to get out of there and escape in the direction of Ofakim, where we stopped and flagged down the MICU passing by," says Chief Inspector Or Yosef. "It stopped next to us, and Nissim the paramedic ran towards us and immediately treated us and got us into the MICU."

MDA paramedic Nissim Sassi spoke about when he met Or and Yoni. "Soon after we began treating you, we brought you on board the MICU, and I immediately radioed the MDA dispatch center to update them about your situation. I knew that in the state you were in, you needed to be hospitalized as soon as possible, so I requested that an MDA air ambulance meet us at Kama Junction. During the evacuation, Yoni said to me that he was going to die. I held his hand and replied to him: 'You're not dying here. Not on my watch.' Seeing you both here today, both of you up on your feet, demonstrates to me how important it was to fight for your lives. I was worried about you at the time, and I'm deeply moved to meet you both now."

"We landed the helicopter in the Beit Kama area, and immediately after landing, we met up with the MICU. We quickly transferred you to the helicopter, knowing that every second counted, and that you needed to be flown as soon as possible to the hospital," says Dr Shafir Botner, Director of the MDA Paramedics' School. "Those moments were critical in the battle for your lives."



Air ambulance paramedic and MDA's Chief Paramedic Rami Miller concluded: "We fight for every patient. Any thoughts on who will or won't survive is outside of our calculations. In this case, it was a real fight for the lives of our patients, and today, months after that Black Saturday, when we fought to save Yoni and Or, I'm deeply moved to be here with you, brave police officers, who were severely injured and now are on your feet and smiling. It's touching. I haven't stopped thinking about you for a single moment."

The MDA Blood Services

Saving the wounded on their way to the hospital

By law, one of MDA's responsibilities is to operate Israel's national blood bank. Thus, MDA is responsible for providing 98% of the country's blood transfusions. This process begins with the generosity of the blood donors, who donate their blood



The family of a victim of the October 7 massacre gives blood in her honor.

and time for the sake of others. MDA Blood Services workers process donors' questionnaires and then draw the blood of those who are eligible. The blood is then collected and transferred to the labs, where it's carefully screened, processed (including categorizing it into separate blood types), and only then sent to hospitals and the IDF to be used to save lives.

The events of October 7, with its many wounded, led to a huge demand for life saving blood transfusions. MDA staff mobilized instantaneously to help the war effort, knowing that every blood unit could potentially save the lives of three individuals.

Professor Eilat Shinar, MDA's Deputy Director-General and Director of the Blood Services, was hosting her family for the festival of Simchat Torah, and like many others, the family was awoken in the morning to the terrifying sound of sirens. But unlike others, Professor Shinar's first thought was one of concern for the State of Israel's blood supply.

"From the very first siren, even before we knew what was going on, I understood that we had to take immediate action," says Professor Shinar. "The national blood supply was significantly lower than usual, because we were at the end of the Sukkot festival, and people naturally donated less during the holiday

period. During the situation assessment held with the director-general very early in the morning, we decided to prepare for large-scale blood donation drives to be ready for those injured in the attack. Wolfson and Ichilov Hospitals assisted us by giving us access to relatively safe sites, and we began working. By 10:00 AM, the donation sites were up and running. That day, we collected 3,800 units of blood – three times as much as on a regular day," she tells us.

The arguments, divisions, and polarization within Israel were set aside, and everyone got on board to donate blood.

As soon as we began to come to terms with the disaster that was taking place and the inconceivable number of casualties, the blood services staff began preparing to receive mass donations to deal with the hospitals' ever-increasing need for blood to be provided to the wounded. "Over the first 10 days of the war, all of Israel's residents - from all parts of society came to donate blood," Professor Shinar says. "They set aside all the disagreements, forgot about the polarization, ignored everything that separates us from each other, and simply showed up. In my opinion, it was an amazing public response. It was very moving to see. People stood in line in an orderly manner, and if there was a siren, they went to take cover in a safe place and then came back to stand in the same orderly line. I'd never seen anything like it. At a certain point, we had already reached a remarkable amount of blood donations, and we announced that there was no need to come and donate in such large numbers. People still insisted on coming. It was incredible."

In order to accommodate the large number of donors, the blood services staff had to work intensively around the clock. "Over the years, all of our emergency situation assessments warned that we need to be prepared for about 30% of our workforce to be absent during states of emergency. Beginning that Saturday morning, even without being called upon, we had a 100% staff attendance rate. Not a single person was absent. Everyone understood the enormity of the moment, the

need to collect blood to save lives, and the importance of their presence. Despite the pain, the price everyone had to pay, and the sirens, all our workers, including those living in the South, showed up."

During emergencies, the MDA Blood Services are assisted by a specialized IDF reservist battalion. "That Saturday, everyone was already enlisted," says Professor Shinar. "They underwent a quick review of the material, and since then, they've been with us, assisting with blood donations around the country."

After the blood is donated, it arrives at the blood services' labs for processing and screening and is then sent to hospitals across the country. The process relies on MDA's teamwork.

"It was clear that we wouldn't give up on the move."

Since its establishment, the Blood Services have been based at Tel HaShomer Hospital, but the security threat in the center of the country led MDA to decide to set up its own sheltered, bomb-proof building to ensure that the organization's Blood Services would be able to continue regardless of the circumstances and that life saving blood would always be available.

The date set for moving the blood services to the new building called the Marcus National Blood Srevices Center was October 9. "The urgency of moving was obvious," Professor Shinar tells us. "So we moved. Despite the enormous workload, the endless sirens, the large blood donation drives, the fighting - everything, including the blood components department and the deliveries - was transferred to the new, protected blood bank in Ramla, and everything found its new place exactly as we had envisioned. The next day, the staff began to work as if they had always worked there. Now, even when the sirens go off, the workers continue to process the blood, and that way, we're able to protect our staff as well as Israel's national blood supply that is so dear to us."

MDA provides blood to hospitals throughout the country and is also responsible for supplying blood to the IDF for those wounded on the battlefield. This is a truly groundbreaking development: Israel is one



of only three countries in the world, alongside Norway and the USA, where full blood transfusions can be completed on the battlefield itself. "By 2018, whole blood units were introduced to the IDF's Search and Rescue Unit 669," Professor Shinar says. "Today, whole blood units are supplied to every military helicopter, military Mobile Intensive Care Units, MDA air ambulances, and certain special units out in the field. Every injured person who has serious bleeding and is treated by one of these units receives whole blood. These are specific Type O blood units, especially suited for field transfusions. I saw a clip that was broadcast on TV of a rapid evacuation carried out by Unit 669; in a conversation between the field team and the helicopter crew, the military field medic reported: 'I have a severely wounded casualty; he's unconscious, and he has received blood.' I was moved. Lives are being saved in the truest sense of the word."

Saving lives

"Saving lives is MDA's motto, and that's our guiding light: whether by supplying blood to hospitals and military units, or by supplying breastmilk," Professor Shinar concludes, referring to the MDA's Sussman Human Milk Bank, which is also managed by blood services and housed at the Marcus Blood Center. "I'm proud of the Blood Services staff, who haven't stopped working for a single moment and haven't rested since the morning of October 7. They are devoted to what they do with every fiber of their being. I joined MDA as a 40-year-old, and what really struck me was the staff's deep connection, devotion, and understanding of the weight of responsibility on their shoulders. I always say that there isn't another workplace like it, where you go in to work every day and save lives."

MDA Sussman Human Milk Bank

The Sussman Human Milk Bank feeds babies whose mothers were murdered or kidnapped



The MDA Blood Service operates the The Sussman Family Foundation Human Milk Bank, managed by Dr Sharon Bransburg-Tzabari, which usually provides breastmilk for premature babies. Approximately 150 liters of milk are regularly provided to the various neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) in hospitals around the country each month.

Milk donors undergo various checks and fill out a questionnaire, similar to blood donors. "We need to be sure that the donors and the milk are healthy and safe for the babies, and just as importantly – to be certain that the donors' own babies aren't affected by the mothers' donations."

MDA collects the milk from the donor mothers and brings them to the milk bank. There, the milk is treated in a laboratory: it's checked, transferred to bottles, pasteurized, and only then can it be transferred to the hospital wards.

"On October 7, we received heartbreaking requests from the hospitals," recalls Professor Eilat Shinar, MDA Deputy Director-General and Director of Blood Services. "Babies whose mothers were murdered or kidnapped didn't have anyone to feed them.

On one of the kibbutzim in the Gaza Envelope, a pregnant woman went into labor, and one of the MDA paramedics went to her home while under fire. Eventually, she was transported to the hospital and was able to give birth in the delivery room, but she wasn't able to produce breastmilk, most likely because of the stress that she underwent. We've been providing her milk for several months, and her baby is thriving. We also received requests from two female IDF officers – one of whom is a combat navigator in the Air Force – who were called up to join the war effort and needed milk for their babies. On the one hand, they're fighting to protect the State of Israel, and on the other, the people of Israel are protecting their babies - including the mothers who donate the milk and the milk bank, which supplies it.



There are many ways to support Israel and its people, but none is more transformative than a gift to Magen David Adom, Israel's emergency services system. Your gift to MDA isn't just changing lives — it's literally saving them — providing critical care and hospital transport for everyone from victims of heart attacks to rocket attacks.

Support Israel's lifesavers at afmda.org/give or by calling 866.632.2763.





SERGEANT OSHER SIMCHA BARZILAY



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M.D. DANIEL LEVI LUDMIR



FIRSt SERGEANT (RES.) NERIA COHEN



SERGEANT MAJOR (RES.) SAAR MARGOLIS



SERGEANT REEF HARUSH



MAJOR (RES.) AMISHAR BEN DAVID



Staff Sergeant Yarin Mari Peled



LIOR RUDAEFF



MICHEL NISENBAUM



MOSHE OHAYON



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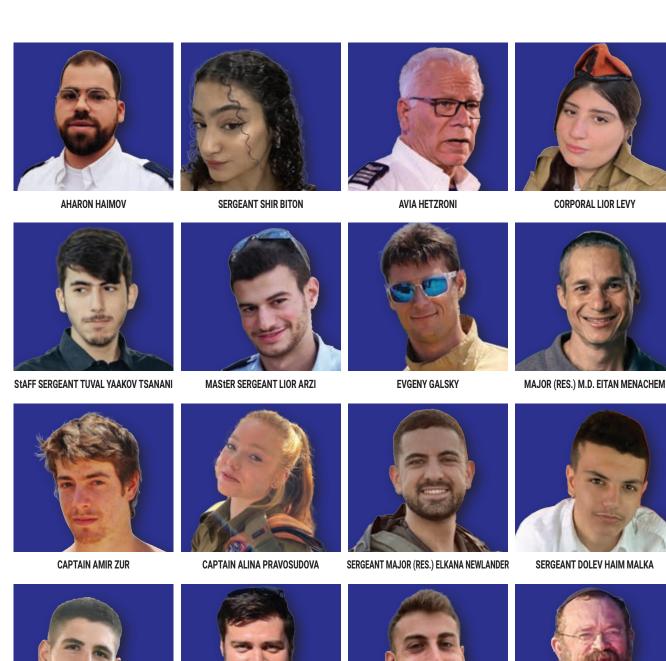
In Memeriam

Saluting MDA's Fallen Heroes from October 7 and the Iron Swords war May their memories be blessed For kinship such as this will never allow our hearts to forget

("Friendship" - Haim Guri)



Staff Sergeant Itamar Shemen





Staff Sergeant Rotem Doshi



MASTER SERGEANT (RES.) NITAI MEISELS MASTER SERGEANT (RES.) ROI AVRAHAM MAIMON





YITZHAK ZEIGER



MAJOR URIEL BIBI



FIRSt SERGEANT YAKIR LEVI



SERGEANT MAJOR (RES.) OMER SMADJA



CORPORAL (RES.) MOTI RAVEH

The Magen Project

Preparing a Nation for Localized Emergency Medical Response

The Magen Project — developed by Magen David Adom in partnership with the Ministry of Health — has been designed to prepare local communities for future emergency situations like October 7, where lifesaving care could be delayed or prevented from arriving.

Prioritizing areas where the threat is most imminent. the Magen Project establishes Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs), connects them with MDA's National Operations Center, equips them with vital medical supplies and emergency vehicles, and trains them in emergency medical care.

Magen David Adom's culture of preparedness means that even if the worst should happen. we have ensured lives can be saved.

405 **Magen Project Communities Magen Project Kits Provided** 4,190 **Individuals Trained by MDA** 7,552

Magen Project **Communities** per Region: Yarden Asher 79



Negev

Learn more about the Magen Project and the work of Magen David Adom:



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Israel's Emergency Services System

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