



Barzilai

University Medical Center

People First

Operation Protective Edge

July – August 2014



ברזילאי

המרכז הרפואי האוניברסיטאי
Barzilai Medical Center

אנשים לפני הכל



Operation Protective Edge
July – August 2014

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Barzilai Medical Center

Dr. Chezy Levy

Medical Director and CEO
- Barzilai Medical Center

Operation Protective Edge was the third round of fighting between Israel and Hamas since 2008. Each round of fighting requires, Barzilai Medical Center (MC), to find creative solutions to protect its patients, its medical and administrative staff and maintain its position as a strong pillar of the Ashkelon region community.



During the summer of 2014, a daily average of some 86 rockets and mortar bombs were fired from the Gaza strip towards Israel and about half of them hit the areas around the Barzilai MC. Under constant fire, we had to be able to keep providing the best medical care instantly, 24/7, to civilians, IDF soldiers and even treat some injured Palestinians

Barzilai MC team feels very fortunate to have some dedicated supporters of our hospital, who are exceptionally committed to take on all sorts of activities to fundraise for us, so we can have a cutting edge equipment, fortified facilities and maintain a safe-haven to our community. We are extremely grateful to all those, who raise money for us during Operation Protective Edge and I dedicate this book to them. I want to say a special thank you to those amazing people. We really appreciate your efforts no matter how big or small!

I want to take this opportunity to also thank the Barzilai MC staff who had left their families and their homes, which most of them are located in the fire zone, and did not miss a shift, some even volunteered, at the hospital. They stayed calm and professional, even when the sirens went off, rockets were landing all over and they knew their families are out there in danger. They stayed efficient when relatives, media, and well-wishers stormed the hospital's ground looking for some information about the wounded. And most important they stayed human.

Yashar Koach!

*Dr. Chezy Levy
Medical Director & CEO*

Ayelet Kedar -
Public Affairs Director
- Barzilai Medical Center



My name is Ayelet and I am the spokesperson for the medical center. During the days of fighting my main concern was to communicate to our patients, stake holders, and the people of Israel the strong spirit and determination to complete our mission to the best of our ability with the tools that we have. I also helped to host many visitors that came during those days including senior members of the Israeli government, and delegations from around the world. For me the hardest thing was to see and deal with all the many injured people brought in to the medical center. At the same time, I was very impressed and encouraged to see the many visitors, of all ages, ethnic background and socioeconomic status, who flocked the hospital wishing to support the families of the wounded. Masses of people came to support, show their love, and bring gifts and donations, in order to cheer those who had been injured and their anxious families.

I was moved by the many delegations that came from around the world, especially from the United States. Jews and non-Jews supporters of Israel came to encourage and bring their love and donations, for the wounded and for the hospital. They embraced our hard work, which warmed our heart, knowing that we were not alone.

Thank you everyone. My feeling is that with such a strong nation, with the domestic and international support - no one can defeat us.

My pray for peace and health.



"Our daily work and duties must be kept and maintained at all time"





Dr. Shmuel Zangan

Director of Pediatrics and Neonatology Intensive Care
- Barzilai Medical Center



For 39 days, the newborns and premature infants at Barzilai Medical Center were treated in improvised protected spaces, which can densely accommodate about half the usual number of premature infants and newborns. This reality requires efficient management of the treatment sites, hard work, taking calculated risks and plenty of creativity. During the campaign, the premature infants and newborns from the designated departments were moved to the protected sites several times, professionally and quickly by enlisting all the relevant entities at our center (transport, computer, engineering, medical, gas supply personnel, etc).

The medical staff, nurses and physicians, who were all present in full force on a daily basis, deserves full appreciation for their devotion and sense of calling that flowed through them and calmed down the worried parents. During Protective Edge, the Pediatrics and Neonatology Department treated 372 newborns and 29 premature infants, including twins, some of whom were born at week 25 weighing only 600 grams.



A nurse cares for a newborn in a shelter at Barzilai Medical Center as a warning siren sounds for possible incoming rockets in Ashkelon.
(Uri Lenz/FLASH90)

Keeping newborns safe under bombardment from Gaza is no easy matter

• By ABIGAIL KLEIN LEITCHMAN/ISRAEL21c

Booming missile fire and wailing air-raid sirens are the "lullabies" reaching the tender ears of newborns at Ashkelon's Barzilai Medical Center these days. Rockets are falling on the Ashkelon area at a furious pace, up to 200 every day.

"We hear bombs all the time," says Dr. Shmuel Zangan, head of pediatrics and neonatology at Barzilai, moments after yet another bombardment.

The infants are out of harm's way, in the hospital's protected rooms.

Zangan says the newborn nursery and neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) have been moved seven times since 2006 in response to intensified bombardments from Hamas terrorists in Gaza. The most recent transfer took place on July 8.

Zangan explains that transporting fragile newborns carries great risk for brain injury, so the decision is not made lightly. Furthermore, because Barzilai has limited sheltered spaces, he is forced to discharge many newborns earlier than he normally would.

"Our hospital serves more than half a million civilians, and we do 4,500 deliveries per year," he says.

Like in any other modern hospital, about 10 percent of newborns at Barzilai are born prematurely. The medical center has a 22-bed NICU and a 40-bed newborn nursery. Only a fraction of these babies can be accommodated in the protected rooms.

"As a result, the capacity for treating babies here has shrunk 40-50%. To be able to treat those babies who really need it, I have to discharge pre-term babies

a few days early and full-term babies after 36 hours," says Zangan.

"The other problem is that the remaining babies are very crowded in the sheltered areas, and that's a risk factor for cross infection. We urgently need more sheltered spaces, and we're working on that," he says.

The doctor points out that in Gaza hospital shelters are expropriated by Hamas operatives for their own safety.

"While we are doing all we can to use our shelters to give life, we know our neighbors are using shelters to protect leaders of Hamas," says Zangan. "If you want to figure out who are the good guys and who are the bad guys, look at how they use their sheltered areas in hospitals. That is the litmus test."

On the morning of the interview, Zangan's staff was caring for a full complement of 15 pre-term babies and about 25 full-term babies. Among them were two-day-old twins born nine weeks prematurely, one weighing 1,100 grams and the other 1,300 grams.

"The smaller twin had to be medicated and intubated because his lungs were immature. Luckily, he is now doing much better, and I hope he can be extubated within a couple of hours," says Zangan, recalling that in 2010 two Gazan preemies were being treated in the protected NICU, along with the Israeli babies.

The NICU is staffed with five senior neonatologists, two pediatricians and 30 nurses; the nursery has two physicians and 20 nurses.

"I'm proud that our staff know they are needed here to treat those pre-term babies to give them the best chance to fulfill their potential," says Zan-

gan. "They do that with a lot of dedication, despite their worries for their own families. When we have a siren, they find opportunities to call home and check on their children."

He is relieved to know that the infants in the bomb shelter will not remember those first sounds of war. The effects on the adults are more long-lasting.

"A lot of research on small or pre-term babies and morbidities during delivery proves that staying for a long time in stressful situations, like those among mothers in Sderot or Ashkelon, is a risk factor for prematurity and low birth rate," says the neonatologist.

In several previous times of conflict, Barzilai directed many patients to hospitals farther north. Now Barzilai is functioning normally due to the Iron Dome antimissile system in place just above the medical center and because the need is so great in its catchment area of Ashkelon, Ashdod, Kiryat Malachi, Kiryat Gat, Sderot and the smaller towns around Gaza. Nevertheless, the ground outside the hospital is strewn with shrapnel.

As of July 22, a total of 451 patients had come to Barzilai's emergency department from the beginning of Operation Protective Edge, including 330 for minor injuries, 121 for acute anxiety and two dead on arrival. Of those, 32 patients (28 soldiers) were admitted for further observation and treatment, including a 17-year-old boy severely wounded in a bombing attack from Gaza on July 13 and a wounded Palestinian brought in by the Israeli army.

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Evacuating the departments and moving patients to Protected Spaces







"Times of determination," Dr. Levy visits teenager Yarín Levy, who was wounded by a Qassam rocket.

Barzilai Dome

They treat the missile casualties and wounded soldiers under an endless shower of rockets when there are only 15 seconds between the siren and the fall • The staff of Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon will not allow any war to prevent it from operating, dressing wounds and encouraging • Even the center's director, Dr. Hezi Levy, finds time to joke with his patients • "At such times," he explains, "we must give plenty of affection."

Eyal Levy | Photography: Aloni Mor

Dr. Chezy Levy, Director of Barzilai Medical Center in Ashkelon, walked quickly from the boardroom to the bedside of 16 year old Yarin Levy, who was about to undergo surgery to remove part of his lung. Yarin was one of the first casualties of Protective Edge, even before the ground incursion, when a missile exploded near him, injuring him seriously. After being discharged, complications developed and he returned to the operating room yesterday.

His worried parents were at his bedside. Dr. Levy reached them smiling. Before undergoing surgery, Yarin asked whether the cap on his head was necessary and the doctor answered: "Here, it's called Barzilai Commando Unit. Now you're a combat soldier and you know what they say: anyone who doesn't jump..." Yarin replied: "Is red," and reminded everyone that he was and remains a Maccabi Tel Aviv fan.

Dr. Levy has seen many tough sights in his life. In the First Lebanon War he was a Nahal brigade physician, during the withdrawal from Lebanon, he was the medical commander of the North Command, and in the Second Lebanon War he already served as Chief Medical Officer of the IDF. He personally treated the most serious case in the history of the IDF of injury by friendly fire. It was in the First Lebanon War, when an air force phantom jet mistook a Nahal battalion, reinforced by the Tank Corps, for a Syrian force. 24 soldiers died that dark day, which went down in the history books. So, the difficult sights we have been witnessing in recent weeks are not new to him. He also tells it as it is, "there won't be the same kind of war here as on Yom Kippur, but it is a war. The hospital is prepared differently, functions differently and its occupancy is different."

Do you function "on auto pilot" in such times?

"After what I've been through, I still have compassion and affection for people. I can't be indifferent to suffering and the concern of the parents, and I've also got enough experience and emotional maturity to sometimes be the bearer of bad news. There were two cases here during the campaign where I broke the news to families of the death of their loved ones. If you want to remain a relevant physician, you must feel, because if you harden, you lose a lot of the beauty and responsibility of the profession."



From Tile Roofs to Reinforcement

Barzilai Medical Center in Ashkelon was established in 1961 and currently serves about half a million residents. When it was built with red tile roofs nobody thought that 53 years later it would be bombed from the Gaza Strip next door. But now Barzilai is already seasoned at war following the experience accumulated in past years. Patients not requiring emergency treatment are discharged home. The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and Emergency Room are moved to protected spaces and the occupancy is slightly more than half, because here we plan for the worst scenario in which, heaven forbid, the hospital fills up with casualties in a second.

Dr. Levy: "After what I've been through, I still have compassion and affection for people. I can't be indifferent to suffering and the concern of the parents, and I also have enough experience and emotional maturity to sometimes be the bearer of bad news. There were two cases here during the campaign where I broke the news to families of the death of their dear ones. If you want to remain a relevant physician, you must feel, because if you harden, you lose a lot of the beauty and responsibility of the profession."

"At such times, you must be a father to the staff," explains Dr. Levy. "Everybody looks up to you and if you don't function and are hysterical, if you don't calm down and lead, there won't be anyone else. Therefore, as with all my commander positions, also here I must set an example, the one who constantly relays information, makes sure to give plenty of affection. There's tension, you're tired, you don't sleep and you make decision all the time. These are times of determination."

Yesterday morning, a hospital staff meeting was held as part of the daily briefing. Dr. Levy, director of the medical center, said there that four casualties wounded by the fatal mortar shell in the assembly areas at the entrance to the Gaza Strip had arrived. One of the wounded sustained a serious foot injury, another is lucky that his eye wound is only superficial. At the meeting, he asked to prepare a greeting in Arabic for the staff who celebrate Eid al-Fitr and in almost the same breath told the team that there's no knowing how the military campaign will pan out. It will most likely expand, so the duty rotation is continuing as usual, including on-call duties. He ended his words with "heaven alone knows."

The signs of war are evident when moving between the departments. 448 soldiers have been treated at Barzilai since the campaign began, 32 are still hospitalized and family and friends are always at their bedside. Dr. Levy drifts through the rooms. "Everything will be okay," he says to whoever wants to hear good news. I told him he already sounds like a psychologist. He laughed. "I really believe everything will be okay. Somebody must accept this role, to speak to the parents, calm the soldiers. It's what's expected of you. You know the family, you know its needs."

Is it different from a military physician?

"When you're a military physician, you treat people who, when wounded, consider you their entire world. The feeling of affection there is very strong. The living together, the understanding that sometimes the soldier allows himself to go on an ambush because he knows you're with him and will do everything for him. He knows you from daily life. When we went to the First Lebanon War and I wasn't with them, because I'd just returned from a course, I chased after the battalion and found it right at the border post, at Egel gate. I felt I was chasing it for the same affection. I couldn't consider not being with them, because that's how we grew up."

The Weird Reality

Ayelet, the hospital spokesperson, informed Dr. Levy that he must go to the conference hall, because a group from the UJA Federation of New York had arrived to visit and he was supposed to give them a brief review and a token tour. The US group alighted the buses laden with gift bags for the wounded soldiers. Generally, the bedside of every soldier resembles a minimarket, overloaded with goods. While we were there, members of the Organization of French Immigrants visited and other people arrived from Tel Aviv. A sign bearing the words "Thanks for the Warmth and Affection" even hangs in one of the rooms, but the wounded also want rest.

Dr. Levy spoke to the federation members, while a presentation ran in the background. He talked about life under a barrage of rockets. Five missiles have landed in the greater area where Barzilai Hospital is located, but they take cover and continue treating, even casualties from the Gaza Strip.

"It's undoubtedly a weird reality," he agrees. "During Operation Cast Lead, there were two premature infants from Gaza in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit that we've now moved to the protected space. Their mother didn't want to return, because she understood the treatment she receives here and its quality. It was funny to see her running to the protected area when rockets were launched from a near her home. A week ago, we treated a 17 year old teenager who, according to those who brought him, emerged from a tunnel and open fire on soldiers. What do you do? Treat him, because there's no choice. It's what you learned and what you know and it must be done. Weird."

Despite all the anger and rage?

"Those are the values. Also, I often initiated meetings in the army among the younger generation physicians, battalion and division physicians. I told them 'you're under fire, a wounded enemy is lying before you, do you crawl to save him?' It's a very difficult ethical and moral question. There's no 'school' solution. On one hand, there's a solution of IDF and medical values. On the other hand, you must protect the physician's survivability.

These are questions that undoubtedly arise. Here it's easier, when you're at a protected hospital, and there's absolutely no doubt - you treat, period."

The scientific journal Lancet recently published a letter signed by 24 European physicians, most from Italy and the others from the UK and Norway. Among other things, it states: "We, physicians and scientists, ask our colleagues, old and young professionals, to denounce this Israeli aggression. We challenge the perversity of a propaganda that justifies the creation of an emergency to masquerade a massacre. In reality it is a ruthless assault of unlimited duration, extent, and intensity."

Dr. Levy heard of the letter. "They're known for their love of Israel," he states ironically, "and don't miss an opportunity to find fault with our physicians unilaterally, non-factually and unjustly. They believe what they write and the facts apparent don't bother them. Here, we must respond sharply. I know what we do and what they represent. It's a shame and disgrace for a scientific journal that thinks it's scientific to write baseless things, but we mustn't think that this is medicine in Israel and those are its physicians."

A hug and a check. Jews from New York visiting wounded Givati Brigade soldiers



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A group of New York Jews wanted to visit the wounded soldiers and shower them with plenty of affection. A tank crew member, who was wounded by a mortar shell yesterday, smiled at the visitors and said that thank goodness everything was fine with him. A Givati fighter described to the visitors how a house next to which he was standing exploded, costing him a leg injury. Never mind, it will be okay again.

Many family members stood at the bedside of the master sergeant of the 7th Division. He is a 46 year old Druse from Beit Jann in the Galilee. This is the serious leg injury that Dr. Levy previously told his staff about. Dr. Levy informed the relatives that when the master sergeant's condition improves slightly, he will try to transfer him to a hospital in the north to make it easier for them and shorten the long journey from the Galilee.

"My brother's condition isn't good," says Amal, the master sergeant's brother, who himself was wounded in the past in an encounter in the Jordan Valley. "The doctor said he can forget about standing on his legs for the next four months. My brother's very sorry the injury's in the leg and not elsewhere, because if he could walk, he'd return to the division and his soldiers immediately. He's like their father, so if all goes well, two hundred percent he'll return to the army."

Incorrigible Optimism

Barzilai Hospital is 14 kilometers from Gaza (9 miles), 15 seconds from the moment the siren sounds until the rocket falls. The hospital has the practice to shift from routine operation to a state of emergency within half a day, including building new departments in the bombshelter. "Lessons are constantly learned, on the hospital, Ministry of Health and integration with the army level," relates Dr. Levy. "Part of the standing operation procedure is lessons learned from experience we've accumulated."

While still touring with the American guests, a siren cuts through the air, forcing everybody to move to the protected space. Somebody who heard the explosions in the background said it was an interception. The Americans bid the hospital farewell, leaving a check of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, their

contribution to the war effort. Dr. Levy took leave of them with a smile. That's what he can give now.

The construction of the new Barzilai hospital building is in the advanced stages and already contains the required means of protection. We wonder if the current campaign in Gaza will be the last one, or whether the Barzilai Medical Center staff will be forced to use the services of the new, reinforced building in another year or two? "I'm an optimist by nature," testifies Dr. Levy. "But I'm slightly less optimistic now than in the past regarding the conflict and the possibility of any solution. You know what? I'm still optimistic. Optimism doesn't lead anywhere bad, as long as you're not delusional. I believe in people and their reason, and hope something will happen and in the end reason will prevail."

Many family members stood at the bedside of the master sergeant of the 7th Division. "The doctor said he can forget about standing on his legs in the forthcoming months. My brother's sorry, because if he could, he'd return to his division and soldiers immediately. He's like their father. If all goes well, two hundred percent he'll return to the army."



Receiving the wounded soldiers from the battle field



Our Staff

Our doctors don't forget to smile even when they are under pressure



The hospital's management with the IDF Staff



President and Prime Minister's visits



CEO, Ministry of Health, with the Chief Rabbi of Israel



Rabbi Amar blesses the wounded soldiers

"The battle in the field is harder because the soldiers are young"

The harsh experiences from the battlefield in Gaza, the wounded who could not be saved, the soldier whose life was saved on the way to hospital and the phone call he received from his wife after the rocket fell. Major Dr. Guy, Commander of the Nahal Front Medical Company, reached 50 consecutive reserve duty days this month. Interview

By David Levy 22/08/2014

On Monday evening, several hours before the end of the ceasefire, Major Dr. Guy of Ashkelon, Commander of the Nahal Brigade's Front Medical Company, was awaiting the order to return to the field. Dr. Guy (it is forbidden to publish his last name due to field security provisions; understandably) knew that if the ceasefire collapsed, he would return to the field immediately together with the medical company under his command. Until now, he reached 50 consecutive reserve duty days. Normally, Dr. Guy can be met in the Department of Orthopedics at Barzilai Hospital, but in now he changes his clothes to uniforms. Although he is a war veteran and already bears the rank of Major, he has never served in such a long and intensive operation as Protective Edge. In practice, he already donned

his uniform before Protective Edge. At the onset of Operation Shuvu Achim (Bring Back Our Brothers) following the kidnapping of the three teenagers, he was enlisted and stayed in the Hebron region. When the operation ended, he went home to freshen up and then the escalation began in the south, so he was remobilized together with the Front Medical Company under his command.

According to Dr. Guy, the beginning of the campaign was not actually easy for him and the company. "The first casualty arrived without any pulse and, in practice, it was impossible to save him", relates Dr. Guy, "it was a very difficult experience; I saw the battle start differently. You want so much to be there and help them, for everyone to know they have somebody to depend on, but when the first casualty arrives and he

can't be saved, it's very frustrating. It isn't someone who died in hospital, but very young soldiers and they shouldn't have to die. When we were sent to battle, we knew we must do our utmost to fight for life of each one. The battle in

But the differences between treatment in the field during battle and treatment in the sterile hospital room are huge. "As a physician, treating casualties, seeing blood and smelling odors is a job that you're used to, but nevertheless, when it's in a war atmosphere, it develops a different facet. Even the smell of blood is harder than in ER. Any simple medical procedure becomes complicated, like inserting an IV, which takes me five seconds in ER, takes much longer in the field it. Also, in ER you know what you'll get - when the ambulance is on the way to hospital, you already receive a report of the injury and you prepare for it, but in the field you don't actually know what you'll get and each time it's a new surprise", says Dr. Guy.

"You already know them before the injury"

What makes it more difficult from the emotional aspect is Dr. Guy's previous acquaintance with the casualties. "Generally, you get to know the patient and a physician-patient relationship develops between you, but in the field you know them even before the injury and there are friendships and when he becomes a patient it's hard, because

the field is harder because the soldiers are young and that's something which stays with those people's friends. Therefore, you try do the maximum and even more."

There's an emotional involvement here and it's something very difficult. But what really hurts is when a soldier is killed. I haven't managed to go and see the families of the fallen soldiers yet, but I intend to do so when I'm released. I think they deserve to know that they didn't suffer or how their child died, it's my duty to go and tell them. There are people that I knew even before. There's a guy who worked with us in the previous reserve duty and helped us a lot, and we had his phone number in the memory of the company members' phones, and when his name was published and we saw it, this was very hard for the members of our company".

Were there soldiers who asked to send something to their family?

"It isn't usually a situation where they can speak; it isn't like in the movies that they utter the last word with their last breath. They can't usually speak, the injuries are traumatic and very severe and most people are killed very quickly. Therefore, with the savable casualties, you act very quickly to evacuate them, because as soon as you manage to transfer them to hospital, their chances of being saved are very big."



Gaza. "I'm still waiting for there to be a solution for this threat"

Photography: Moti Milrod



Dr. Guy, arrived in Ashkelon from Ra'anana
Photography: IDF Spokesperson's Unit

I haven't managed to go and see the families of the fallen soldiers yet, but I intend to do so when I'm released. I think they deserve to know that they didn't suffer or how their child died, it's my duty to go and tell them.

I wouldn't do anything differently. I'd choose to be a physician, and choose orthopedics and move to Ashkelon and do everything exactly like I've done until now. The situation in Ashkelon is part of my life."

He tells about a soldier who was injured by an anti-tank missile while he was manning the ambulance station in the Erez Crossing area. Thanks to Dr. Guy's resourcefulness, the soldier's life was saved. "He arrived with ruptures in his entire lower jaw and I knew he must be taken to hospital as quickly as possible to provide a solution for his airways. I held his chin the whole way so as not to block his airways and we drove him to hospital as quickly as possible." During the journey, while holding the soldier's jaw, he reported to the hospital that it would be necessary to insert a tracheal tube through the soldier's nose. Consequently, he never performed artificial respiration, but exercised his discretion and extensive know-how in the field and saved the soldier's life. In such cases, artificial respiration through the mouth could have injured the soldier.

The soldier's lower jaw was reconstructed at Barzilai Hospital and he was left with only two scars in the chin area. "He looks amazing," relates Dr. Guy, "I met him at Barzilai Hospital. He was very appreciative and expressed his thanks, his family also thanked us a lot, but his smile was worth everything."

It is important for Dr. Guy to stress that he is just the medical company's commander and that his soldiers deserve no less respect. "I'm very proud of each and every Nahal soldier and every Nahal Medical Company soldier. They made me so proud, it's impossible to explain in words, of every rescue under fire and their conduct under fire. Each of them down to the last soldier. It's something they've never heard me say."

How is their attitude towards you?

"People grab their heads and say 'you're double my age, you're my father's age' or tell me 'when

you were in regular service, I wasn't born yet'. There's a lot of admiration and fondness from the soldiers and on the other hand, a lot of expectation that you'll help them when needed. It's a function that you fulfill as both a physician who treats them and as someone who fights alongside them."

"It's a cliché, but we have no other country"

He is 41 years old, lives in Ashkelon with his wife and four children, the oldest of whom is eight and the smallest are twin boys of two and a half. One day during the war, he was about to return to the Gaza Strip when a siren sounded in Ashkelon and his wife notified him that they were in the protected space and the missile had fallen at their home. "I'm there with all the gear on me, knowing that in a few minutes I'm going in and I'm not sure and don't know whether to enter or leave, because my wife and kids are in the protected space and can't come out because they're afraid something will collapse on them. I decided to go home. We took one of the vehicles, drove there and when we were already in the neighborhood, my wife called to tell me they opened the door and went outside and apparently it fell on the house across the road, at Dr. Suisa, and all the emergency vehicles were parked next to our home."

Your work requires maximum concentration. How do you manage to concentrate when you know that your family at home is under sirens?

"I know that I'm there so that this will stop, to give my children security, so that they'll live in a safer place. That's why I do it. We don't have any choice. It's a cliché, but we have no other country."

You feel you must be in peak concentration when you think what could come and where you'll be needed and what you'll have to do and you try to be highly concentrated." His action in the field provides plenty of special moments, but the special moment of this war he actually takes from home: "As soon as I return home and my two and a half year old boy hugs me and asks if I'm going to the army, I understand things could've been different, that perhaps I wouldn't see him anymore. This moves me enormously. The thought that I might not return home is one that passes through my mind. On of the soldiers told me something very beautiful 'you're allow to be afraid, you can't let it take control of you', and that's the thought that I adopted throughout the war", says Dr. Guy.

When it's in a war atmosphere, it develops a different facet. Even the smell of blood is harder than in ER. Any simple medical procedure becomes complicated, like inserting an IV, which takes me five seconds in ER, takes much longer in the field it.

You want so much to be there and help them, for everyone to know they have somebody to depend on, but when the first casualty arrives and he can't be saved, it's very frustrating. It isn't someone who died in hospital, but very young soldiers and they shouldn't have to die.

"I don't regret for even a second."

As an Ashkelon resident threatened by Hamas rockets, he had mixed feelings and even slight disappointment during the week. "I'm still waiting for a solution for this threat. It's unpleasant to feel second-class. It isn't the first time there are rockets in the south, but only when it reaches the center of Tel Aviv people "wakes up" and voice their opinion. It's disappointing and frustrating. I also hope there would be an end to the hostility and I am disappointed that there is none. As we

speaking, I put the children to sleep in the bombshelter, because I don't know what might happen tonight."

Dr. Guy was not born and raised in Ashkelon, but in Ra'anana. He arrived to Ashkelon in 2007, seeking specialization after completing his medical studies. He heard that the Barzilai Medical Center was searching for a physician in his field and moved to the city more or less when the first grad reached the city.

Do you regret choosing to come and live in Ashkelon?

"No. Not even for a second. I wouldn't do anything differently. I'd choose to be a physician and choose orthopedics and move to Ashkelon and do everything exactly like I've done until now. The situation in Ashkelon is part of my life, part of all of our lives."

Dr. Guy was single when arrived in Ashkelon, and here he met his wife, here he built his home and here his four children, who he hasn't seen for almost for two months and who his wife raised alone during the entire war, were born. "She deserves all the credit; you should have interviewed her and not me. She's the real hero in this story", he states.

What are you planning for the day after?

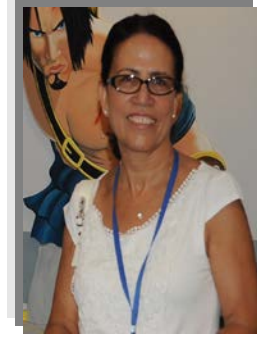
"I'm planning to return to the yacht skipper's course that I started just before the reserve duty called me. My wife bought me a birthday present and no sooner had I started the first trip when the war broke out and I haven't managed to enjoy it yet. It's one of the things I want to go back to, because I want to continue my daily routine."



Nitza Cohen

HR Manager

- Barzilai Medical Center



I would like to share with you what happened behind the scenes at Barzilai Hospital during Operation Protective Edge.

The Human Resources (HR) department, the department whose activities are usually unseen and receive no official recognition, was revealed during the last operation in all of its glory: from concern to the staff members, most of whom live in areas under rocket threat, through the masses of volunteers who took over handling the hospital switchboard, and preparing the hospital facilities to receive the wounded, families, and public figures in the course of the 50 days of fighting.

Barzilai Medical Center is responsible for a population of about half a million people, living in the communities of Ashkelon district and the regional councils. All are part of the Gaza Strip's periphery.

The hospital's surrounding area has been under rocket attack for an extended period of time, and came under intensive attack during the period of fighting in the Gaza Strip known as "Operation Protected Edge".

The medical center employs some 2,000 people including doctors, nurses, paramedics, administration and others. Our employees need all kinds of attention, on one hand we are required to attend the needs of specific group of employees, and on the other hand, we need to remember that also individual attention is required for each employee. Unfortunately, we have become accustomed to states of emergency as a result of previous incidents of rocket attack, whether sporadic or intensive fighting in the Gaza Strip. This extreme situation brings more complex problems and stress that the hospital's employees have to deal with.

Undoubtedly the challenges that we face during fighting and under rocket attack are complex and tough. One should remember that the majority of the staff of the medical center live in Ashkelon region: they work at a hospital that comes under rocket attack and is not protected, they live in areas that are come under constant threat of rocket attack, some have family members who serve in the IDF, mainly in the areas of combat in and around the Gaza Strip and some have children that stay at home and needed to be taken care of.

Due to our experience during previous events in our region, and our readiness for emergency, we managed to organize our human resources and the support to the medical center's employees in a quick and effective manner.

As a standing order in the department, as soon as we receive the announcement of an increased state of alert, we immediately get organized to open a daycare framework for children of employees, so that the employees can be available to the hospital without worrying about their children.

We have to remember that the operation took place during the summer break and our HR department took upon itself to take care of the employees' children well-being, so we can deliberate the hospital's crews to do their work. We created our own "summer camp" which offered the children as much as possible: entertainment, creative work, meals and games provided in an airy and liberating

atmosphere. The children care was done by members of the hospital, who fill other roles in peacetime: social workers, nurses, secretaries, occupational therapists, librarian, and so on. None of them came from a background of teaching or childcare. As part of the IDF standing orders and policy, we were assisted by soldiers from the Education Corps, Home Front Command, and Military Hospital Unit.

Our "camp" activities were supported by teachers and educational counselors (from Shaked School in Ashkelon) who held adventure activities, petting corners, a magician (a hospital pensioner), artists, clowns, make-up and cake decorating workshops, and a wide range of other special activities. The activities were held in protected rooms in the Holiday Inn Hotel, and the children did not hear the sirens and were able to enjoy themselves without anxiety, at least for eight hours of the day.



The Volunteer Network

The hospital was lucky to have a flood of volunteers, and it was necessary to allocate two staff members just to answer the telephone speaking with volunteers who wished to contribute to the hospital. The HR department was also responsible to manage and coordinate the flood of volunteers that attended our facilities.

A well-to-do 65 year old Jewish Canadian lawyer said: "I have to contribute, I'm strong, I'm even prepared to wash the floors", and indeed he volunteered as a stretcher bearer for several days. Later we found that this Canadian-born Jew had a son in an elite army unit fighting in Gaza.

Another story that I remember is of a young woman from New York, the mother of three small children, who worked in a blood bank who called us one day asking if she can arrive to the hospital immediately to volunteer in our blood bank, leaving her three small children at home. Her request touched our heart but we explained to her that we were coping, and that it would be better for her to stay with her children.

In another case, an orthopedic surgeon from England who wanted to volunteer had arrived independently to Israel, and came to help at the hospital. Only later we realized that this person, who had no reservations to help in any work that we gave him, was the department head in a hospital back in England, where Israeli doctors used to specialize.

A French anesthesiologist came to volunteer. Spending some time with us, witnessing the situation and life in Israel, decided to immigrate to Israel, and there are many, many more stories.

270 volunteers came to help us during the Protective Edge Operation, most of them stayed with us for a number of days.

In summary, I would like to note the spirit of the commander - the hospital director, who is a determined leader that his spirit encouraged the medical center staff. All of our employees showed their dedication, cooperation and participation in all the wide range of activities, regardless of their regular positions, and at all hours.

This is where the strength of the organization lies.



Yehuda Avitzur

Deputy administrative manager and safety supervisor at Barzilai Medical Center, and chair of the Israel Professional Safety Association



From the diary of a safety supervisor - under fire

Good morning, this is already the third alert this morning.

It seems that the doctors and nurses at Barzilai Hospital are not really concerned by it, as they are busy at the moment with helping a woman to give birth. The fact that the delivery room is not protected does not seem important. Alert or no alert, missile or no missile, the baby is already on its way and there are things that cannot be stopped in order to run to the protected space .

"Run" - all day long people are running here, from the office, from the ward or from the corridor, everybody runs to the protected spaces. These dashes have already cost us two work accidents: "falling while running to the protected space."

Outside the window, the scaffolding for construction of the new, sophisticated and protected emergency room looks in on us. The crane operator continues to operate the crane at a height of 30 m, while an average of some 60 missiles of various kinds fly overhead every day. I called the senior work foreman and asked him "Are there no instructions for crane operators and contractors not to operate the cranes these days "...And the answer was "we have received no such instructions from the Home Front Command."

Announcement of Operation Protective Edge in being broadcasted the background on the television news. At the entrance to the hospital are soldiers and officers from the special units which provide assistance to the hospital. The soldiers' tasks are many, from evacuating the wards to protected spaces, moving equipment, helping in the dining room, operating daycare facilities for the children of employees, and so on... "Did anyone explain to the soldiers what are the risks involved in the tasks they have been given?" I asked the military liaison, innocently, and the answer, which was provided without hesitation was – it should be you!

The alerts rend the air; in the emergency room and delivery room the helpless doctors and nurses pray that no expectant mothers or injured people will arrive. For years they have been promising to reinforce Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon, but in our country everything moves slowly... The voice of Yonit Levy breaks in from the television screen, announcing: "A direct hit on a house in Ashkelon, there are reports of a number of injured people evacuated to the emergency room at Barzilai", and the emergency room begins to prepare to receive them. The ambulances are already

wailing outside, speeding into the hospital, into my operational area, where the maximum speed may not exceed 30 km/h ...and out of the corner of my eye I see a nurse sitting in the corner of the room crying. I asked how is she doing, and she leans on me, crying bitterly, and tells me that the missile landed just a few meters from her home, where her mother and children are staying. How much emotional strength do the nurses have, how do they cope with these sights day in and day out?

Psychologists had volunteered, to hold workshops to treat the medical staff, and for a moment I decided that I too, simply, had to be there.

In the morning I received an SMS from the hospital director, announcing that a team of psychologists had been formed, to hold workshops to treat the medical staff, and for a moment I decided that I too, simply, had to be there.



"For me, Barzilai hospital is a family"



When Nira Tetro, Deputy Chief of Eye, Ear and Throat Department received a phone call that her son is injured she rushed to Barzilai hospital. Only few days later did she understand that this injury had actually saved her son, Tzachi, who was originally stationed in the armored personnel carrier where 13 of our soldiers had died.

"That Friday morning marked two weeks since my son had entered Gaza, with the 13th battalion of Golani. He was a signaler of its company's commander, which were in the North of Israel and now they were moved to Gaza Strip. All that period I had not heard from him, but a WhatsApp message" Don't worry about me "every two days or so .He didn't tell us they were entering Gaza but a mother's heart feels and I knew he was there. He wrote me that they are only training at the border, waiting to go in, only to calm me.

On 2 a.m. Saturday, the phone rang, I looked at the screen and I saw" Tzachi calling , " I answered quickly asking" :Tzachi, what happened?" I think that I spoke in a calm voice to hide my pressure, nearly exploding, while in my head I see all sorts of gloomy scenarios. He answered" :everything is alright, Mom. I decided to surprise you; I'm coming to visit you at home."

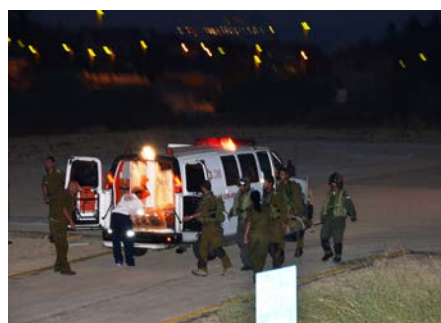
"For 20 years I was a nurse in the ER, and only seven months ago I was promoted to my current position. No one knows, as well as me, that such a phone call really means that something has happened., in few seconds I woke my husband, who did not understand what happened in the middle of the night. I told him " :Our son, our son quickly ."He understood something happened we rushed towards the hospital. We drove carelessly, to say the least ,luckily we live close to the hospital so we got there within few minutes, however the ride seemed longer than ever. Honestly, on the way all sorts of bad images and bad assumptions run through my head. I prayed all the way that he will be in one piece. What comforted me was that fact that Tzachi spoke to me on the phone, which means he was conscious and not severely or God forbid terminally wounded. But this was my SON and until I saw my baby, I am far from being calm. When we got to the hospital, we parked at the first spot that we saw available running inside with shaking legs - all we wanted to do was to see our son, Tzachi, and hold him tight."

Nira keeps telling us about that night: "We entered the hospital and I only asked : "where "???"The nurses, who are my colleagues and friends, recognized Tzachi when he got to the ER and didn't leave him for a moment, led me to the orthopedic ward, I remember myself running and barely breathing, the pressure was mounting in my head and I can't recall what I was saying at those moments and to whom, but I remember seeing him, all covered with dirt sitting on the bed surrounded by my friends from the ER. I ran to him, hugged him tightly and checked every part of his body to make sure that everything he is OK. I was shaking and flooded with happiness that you cannot describe. I looked at my husband at that moment and said to him" :thank God it's only that."

"After the emotional turmoil calmed down a little, I learned of what exactly happened to him: he has a hand injury and shrapnel had entered his body .We also found out that In that same event, four more Golani soldiers and three other Nahal soldiers were injured, all sitting together in that armored personnel carrier. They all arrived at Barzilai hospital and received instant treatment there.

After Tzachi had received a treatment, I asked him to come home with us, take a shower, eat a hot meal and rest, but he said to me ":I want to stay a bit longer with my friends, you head home and I'll come later ."Immediately I invited all the soldiers that were with him and able to leave the hospital to join us at house. My husband and I left the hospital and returned home; set up a table filled with food I sat there waiting for Tzachi and his friends .

An hour passed, two hours passed and he no one showed up. I called Tzachi's cell phone and reached his voice mailbox. I tried again and again and still no answer. I sent tons of messages and received no answer. Worried like hell I woke my husband and told him Tzachi doesn't answer his phone. In a quiet voice my husband explained to me" :Tzachi didn't want to worry you but he returned to Gaza with all his friends ." I didn't know how to digest this news but I kept cool and prayed that nothing will happen to him and he shall return home safe and sound and so will the rest of the soldiers in Gaza."



The following night he finally called and said that the pain was getting worse and the hand had bloated, he received treatment in the field but it did not help and his wound got infected ,so he had to return home. We picked him up from a point we were told to go to and since then he is at home.



Before dusk Tzachi's phone started ringing, lots of calls came in, and I understood that something major had happened, but he would not divulge any information. He stayed in his room and spoke on the phone. Only later we heard about the horrible incident where 13 soldiers were killed, all sitting in the armored carrier which Tzachi was supposed to be in if it weren't for his injury. Only later we understand what a great miracle had happened to us. The moment I understood that his hand injury, despite the pain, treatments, physiotherapy and the surgery he might need, this injury had saved his life! Our son was saved from dying!

It wasn't an easy day. We met his friends, they would come to our house, and we had fed them, we knew their faces and their names and it was with great shock and great pain that we learned about their death. All mixed with the happiness that our son is alive. Every night I would pray that God would keep them safe and return them all home, even at the Sabbath candle lighting I would stand and plead for all of them, and today I feel that God has heard my prayers and my son returned home and indeed a great miracle has happened to him. Out of the bad we saw the good. Tzahi is considered in the 'lightly injured' category, but he is dealing with loss of feeling in his hand and a ligament tear ,and he may need to undergo a surgery so that his hand can continue to function as usual .

At first he didn't want to share his feelings with us, he was very secluded and it stressed me. I turned to consultations at the hospital received a lot of help. The entire staff reached out to me, lent a shoulder to cry on, was with me along the way and what no. There are no words to describe the support I received from Dr. Chezi Levy, the hospital's chief of staff, from Limor, Ayelet the management and basically from all the employees and the amazing staff that was sensitive and caring, that gave us so much warmth and hugged us all the time. I have been working 21 years at Barzilai hospital and have always felt there at home, I felt everyone is good friends, but this time I simply understood what 'family' means ”.

"When Omer is released from the rehabilitation center, we will return to Barzilai to thank the amazing staff there"

Uri and Orit, the parents of soldier Omer Levi, talk about the nightmare every parent fears, "My wife, Orit ,heard someone knocking at the door and got up to open it, only to find military officers standing in front of her. Before they could say anything, she let out a scream which brought me to the door to see who was standing there. She was sure the worst had happened. The officers immediately yelled, "He's alive!!! He is badly wounded, but alive!!" We set out at once for Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon".

Five soldiers were killed by a single mortar bomb in the Eshkol district, near the border with the Gaza Strip .Fifteen other soldiers were wounded from bombs that hit the area where the soldiers, most of them belonged to the same force, were gathered. Among them was Omer Levi from Netanya, who was on three weeks reserve duty as an evacuation officer. Omer and his friend Liran Edrey had gone to evacuate the ground forces .

Omer's parents, still upset by the terrifying events, tell their story from the moment the officers knocked on their door.

"I will never forget the time, 11:15 p.m., when our nightmare began," says Uri Levi, Omer's father. "My wife, Orit ,heard knocking at the door and got up to open it, only to find military officers standing in front of her. Before they could say anything, she let out a scream which brought me to the door to see who was standing there. She was sure the worst had happened. The officers immediately yelled, "He's alive!!! He is badly wounded, but alive!!" We set out at once for Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon".

Omer was wounded in the incident and was flown by helicopter from the bombed area. Unfortunately, on the way to the hospital his situation deteriorated. He was immediately brought into the Trauma Operating Room in Barzilai Medial Center, suffering from hemorrhages in the stomach and chest and internal wounds. He was resuscitated and underwent blood drainage while receiving nine units of blood.

"I'll never forget the journey to the hospital," says his mother Orit. "The ride, which lasted just over an hour ,seemed eternal and the pressure in my chest was mounting.

Lots of terrible thoughts went through our minds. We tried to understand what he was going through, what he was feeling; it was horrible”.

“We tried to talk with the local liaison officer,” adds Uri, “to get some information about Omer's condition and understand what was going on, but the only answer we received was, ‘His situation is grave and we have no more information’. We arrived at the hospital just as Omer was being brought out of the operating room, anesthetized and on a respirator. The doctor who had operated on him, the deputy head of the surgical department, Prof. Alon Yellin, came to see us and gave us a full description of what Omer had gone through. He told us about the internal wounds, in the stomach, the esophagus, and the spleen – which had had to be removed – in the lungs, and about his broken ribs and shoulder because of the strong blast. He told us about the operations he had been through and his general condition”.

“As soon as I saw Omer being brought out from the operating room,” adds Uri, “the pressure decreased a bit, because we could see that his body was whole. In spite of all the machines surrounding him, we felt some sort of relief. We sat outside the intensive care unit day and night. We couldn’t eat a thing, and all we cared about was Omer’s condition. I must say that the doctors updated us all the time, without keeping a thing from us, just telling us the whole truth. This was something which I only learned to appreciate afterwards”.

“We are so thankful to the entire staff of Barzilai. I doubt there is another hospital that shows as much care as we witnessed there. The hospital’s chief of staff, Dr. Chezi Levi, visited the wounded as if they were his own sons, always coming to ask how they were doing and showing his concern. The Deputy Chief of the hospital showed up as well to ask how we were doing. He gave us his visiting card and told us we could call him at any hour if we needed anything. None of this is trivial and we never took it for granted. We had lots of visitors, an unusual amount, and we never heard a word of complaint from the staff about the noise or the mess. The intensive care unit staff went out of their way and was amazing in their attitude, care, patience, and caring. One nurse, named Avi, would care for us personally and would ask us to go into the room each time Omer woke up. The intensive care unit nurses were totally devoted ”.

Once Omer was out of the intensive care unit, he was transferred to Sheba Hospital at Tel Hashomer for treatment in the plastics ward. “Had we lived in the area,” says



Uri, "I'm sure we would have continued the treatments at Barzilai. But our daily life meant that we had to return to central Israel to be close to home and work. The Barzilai Hospital team tried to convince us to stay there, so they could follow up on

Omer's recovery. They offered us a separate room in the surgical ward, with a bed for the parents. They really cared for us all the time".

Omer has gone through major rehabilitation since the injury, thanks to the correct operations performed at Barzilai Hospital, say Uri and Orit. The internal injuries are healing right now. Prof. Alon Yellin made a courageous decision not to open his chest and to let it heal with time, while monitoring his progress.

"They saved our boy," says Orit emotionally, "We have no words to describe the thanks we owe the hospital and especially its director, Dr. Chezi Levi." "We were hugged all the time," Uri adds" ,The support and care we received was outstanding by any measure, compared with other hospitals we were in before. We will return together with Omer when he gets out of hospital. We'll come back especially to say
"THANK YOU to this amazing staff"



ד"ר חלמיץ
מנהל יחידת אלקטרו

יציאה ↑

חדר השהייה
סכנאית הולטר
סכנאית קוצבים



Signs of War in the Corridor

By: Eyal Levy | Ma'ariv Hashavua reporter



By: Eyal Levy | Ma'ariv Hashavua reporter

War Publication

Ma'ariv

Online article

"At Barzilai, they do not allow the war stop the patient care"

The physicians and nurses at the Ashkelon medical center treat the rocket casualties and wounded soldiers under an endless shower of rockets when there are only 15 seconds between the siren and the fall. The center's director, Dr. Chezi Levy, even finds time to joke with his patients. "At such times," he explains, "we must give plenty of affection."

Dr. Chezi Levy, Director of Barzilai Medical Center in Ashkelon, walked quickly from the boardroom to the bedside of 16 year old Yarin Levy, who was about to undergo surgery to remove part of his lung. Yarin was one of the first casualties of Protective Edge, even before the ground incursion, when a missile exploded near him, injuring him seriously. After being discharged, complications developed and he returned to the operating room yesterday.

His worried parents were at his bedside. Dr. Levy reached them smiling. Before undergoing surgery, Yarin asked whether the cap on his head was necessary and the doctor answered "here it's called Barzilai Commando Unit. Now you're a combat soldier and you know what they say: Anyone who doesn't jump..." Yarin replied: "Is red," and reminded everyone that he was and remains a Maccabi Tel Aviv fan.

Dr. Levy has seen many tough sights in his life. In the First Lebanon War he was a Nahal brigade physician, during the withdrawal from Lebanon, he was the medical commander of the North Command, and in the Second Lebanon War he already served as Chief Medical Officer of the IDF. He personally treated the most serious case in the history of the IDF of injury by friendly fire. It was in the First Lebanon War, when an air force phantom jet mistook a Nahal battalion, reinforced by the Tank Corps, for a Syrian force.

244 soldiers died that dark day, which was written down in the history books. So, the difficult sights we have been witnessing in the recent weeks are not new to him. Dr. Levy tells us: "we won't have a war which is similar to what happened during Yom Kippur of 1973, but we are at war.

Nowadays the hospital is prepared differently, functions differently and its occupancy is different."

Do you function "on auto pilot" in such times?

"After what I've been through, I still have compassion and affection for people. I can't be indifferent to suffering and the concern of the parents, and I've also got enough experience and emotional maturity to sometimes be the bearer of bad news. There were two cases here during the campaign where I broke the news to families of the death of their loved ones. If you want to remain a relevant physician, you must feel, because if you harden, you lose a lot of the beauty and responsibility of the profession."

From Tile Roofs to Reinforcement

Barzilai Medical Center in Ashkelon was established in 1961 and currently serves about half a million residents. When it was built with red tile roofs nobody thought that 53 years later it would be bombed from the Gaza Strip next door. But now Barzilai is already seasoned at war, following the experience accumulated in past years. Patients not requiring emergency treatment are discharged home. The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and Emergency Room are moved to protected spaces and the occupancy is slightly more than half, because here they plan for the worst scenario in which, heaven forbid, the hospital fills up with casualties in a second.

"At such times, you must be a father to the staff," explains Dr. Levy. "Everybody looks up to you and if you don't function and are hysterical, if you don't calm down and lead, there won't be anyone else. Therefore, as with all my commander positions, also here I must set an example, the one who constantly relays information, makes sure to give plenty of affection. There's tension, you're tired, you don't sleep and you make decision all the time. These are times of determination."

Yesterday morning, a hospital staff meeting was held as part of the daily briefing. Dr. Levy, director of the medical center, said there that four casualties wounded by the fatal mortar shell in the assembly areas at the entrance to the Gaza Strip had arrived. One of the wounded sustained a serious foot injury, another is lucky that his eye wound is only superficial.

"At such times, you must be a father to the staff," explains Dr. Levy. "Everybody looks up to you and if you don't function and are hysterical, if you don't calm down and lead, there won't be anyone else."

At the meeting, he asked to prepare a greeting in Arabic for the staff that celebrate Eid al-Fitr and in almost the same breath told the team that there's no knowing how the military campaign will pan out. It will most likely expand, so the duty rotation is continuing as usual, including on-call duties. He ended his words with "heaven alone knows."

The signs of war are evident when moving between the departments. 448 soldiers have been treated at Barzilai since the campaign began, 32 are still hospitalized and family and friends are always at their bedside. Dr. Levy drifts through the rooms. "Everything will be okay," he says to whoever wants to hear good news. I told him he already sounds like a psychologist. He laughed. "I really believe everything will be okay. Somebody must accept this role, to speak to the parents, calm the soldiers. It's what's expected of you. You know the family, you know its needs."

Is it different from a military physician?

"When you're a military physician, you treat people who, when wounded, consider you their entire world. The feeling of affection there is very strong. The living together, the understandings that sometimes the soldier allows himself to go on an ambush because he knows you're with him and will do everything for him. He knows you from daily life. When we went to the First Lebanon War and I wasn't with them, because I'd just returned from a course, I chased after the battalion and found it right at the border post, at "Egel" gate. I felt I was chasing it for the same affection. I couldn't consider not being with them, because that's how we grew up."

The Weird Reality

Ayelet, the hospital spokesperson, informed Dr. Levy that he must go to the conference hall, because a group from the UJA Federation of New York had arrived to visit and he was supposed to give them a brief review and a token tour. The

US group alighted the buses laden with gift bags for the wounded soldiers. Generally, the bedside of every soldier resembles a minimarket, overloaded with goods. While we were there, members of the Organization of French Immigrants visited and other people arrived from Tel Aviv. A sign bearing the words "Thanks for the Warmth and Affection" even hangs in one of the rooms.

Dr. Levy spoke to the federation members, while a presentation ran in the background. He talked about life under a barrage of rockets. Five missiles have landed in the greater area where Barzilai Hospital is located, but they take cover and continue treating, even casualties from the Gaza Strip.



"It's undoubtedly a weird reality," he agrees. "During Operation Cast Lead, there were two premature infants from Gaza in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit that we've now moved to the protected space. Their mother didn't want to return, because she understood the treatment she receives here and its quality. It was funny to see her running to the protected area when rockets were launched from a near her home. A week ago, we treated a 17 year old teenager who, according to those who brought him, emerged from a tunnel and open fire on soldiers. What do you do? Treat him, because there's no choice. It's what you learned and what you know and it must be done. Weird."

Despite all the anger and rage?

"Those are the values. Also, I often initiated meetings in the army among the younger generation physicians, battalion and division physicians. I told them 'you're under fire, a wounded enemy is lying before you, do you crawl to save him?' It's a very difficult ethical and moral question. There's no 'school' solution. On one hand, there's a solution of IDF and medical values. On the other hand, you must protect the physician's survivability. These are questions that undoubtedly arise. Here it's easier, when you're at a protected hospital, and there's absolutely no doubt - you treat, period."

The scientific journal Lancet recently published a letter signed by 24 European physicians, most from Italy and the others from the UK and Norway. Among other things, it

states: "We, physicians and scientists, ask our colleagues, old and young professionals, to denounce this Israeli aggression. We challenge the perversity of a propaganda that justifies the creation of an emergency to masquerade a massacre. In reality it is a ruthless assault of unlimited duration, extent, and intensity."

Dr. Levy heard of the letter. "They're known for their love of Israel," he states ironically, "and don't miss an opportunity to find fault with our physicians unilaterally, non-factually and unjustly. They believe what they write and the facts apparent don't bother them. Here, we must respond sharply. I know what we do and what they represent. It's a shame and disgrace for a scientific journal that thinks it's scientific to write baseless things, but we mustn't think that this is medicine in Israel and those are its physicians."

A group of New York Jews wanted to visit the wounded soldiers and shower them with plenty of affection. A tank crew member, who was wounded by a mortar shell yesterday, smiled at the visitors and said that thank goodness everything was fine with him. A Givati fighter described to the tourists how a house next to which he was standing exploded, costing him a leg injury. Never mind, it will be okay again. Many family members stood at the bedside of the master sergeant of the 7th Division. He is a 46 year old Druse from Beit-Jann in the Galilee. This is the serious leg injury that Dr. Levy previously told his staff about. Dr. Levy informed the relatives that when the master sergeant's condition improves slightly, he will try to transfer him to a hospital in the north to make it easier for them and shorten the long journey from the Galilee.

"My brother's condition isn't good," says Amal, the master sergeant's brother, who himself was wounded in the past in an encounter in the Jordan Valley. "The doctor said he can forget about standing on his legs for the next four

months. My brother's very sorry the injury's in the leg and not elsewhere, because if he could walk, he'd return to the division and his soldiers immediately. He's like their father, therefore, if everything goes well, two hundred percent he'll return to the army."

Incorrigible Optimism

Barzilai Hospital is 14 kilometers (about 9 miles) from the Gaza Strip, which allow only 15 seconds from the moment the siren sounds until the rocket falls. The hospital medical, support and administrative teams are all trained to shift from routine operation to a state of emergency within few hours, including transferring entire departments to the bomb shelter. "Lessons are constantly learned, on the hospital, Ministry of Health and integration with the army level," relates Dr. Levy. "Part of the standing operation procedure is lessons learned from the experience we've accumulated."

While still touring with the American guests, a siren cuts through the air, forcing everybody to move to the protected space. Somebody who heard the explosions in the background said it was an interception. The Americans bid the hospital farewell, leaving a check of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, their contribution to the war effort. Dr. Levy took leave of them with a smile. That's what he can give now.

The construction of the new Barzilai hospital building is in the advanced stages and already contains the required means of protection. We wonder whether the current campaign in Gaza will be the last one, or whether the Barzilai Medical Center staff will be forced to use the services of the new, reinforced building in another year or two?! "I'm an optimist by nature," testifies Dr. Levy. "But I'm slightly less optimistic now than in the past regarding the conflict and the possibility of any solution. You know what? I'm still optimistic. Optimism doesn't lead anywhere bad, as long as you're not delusional.

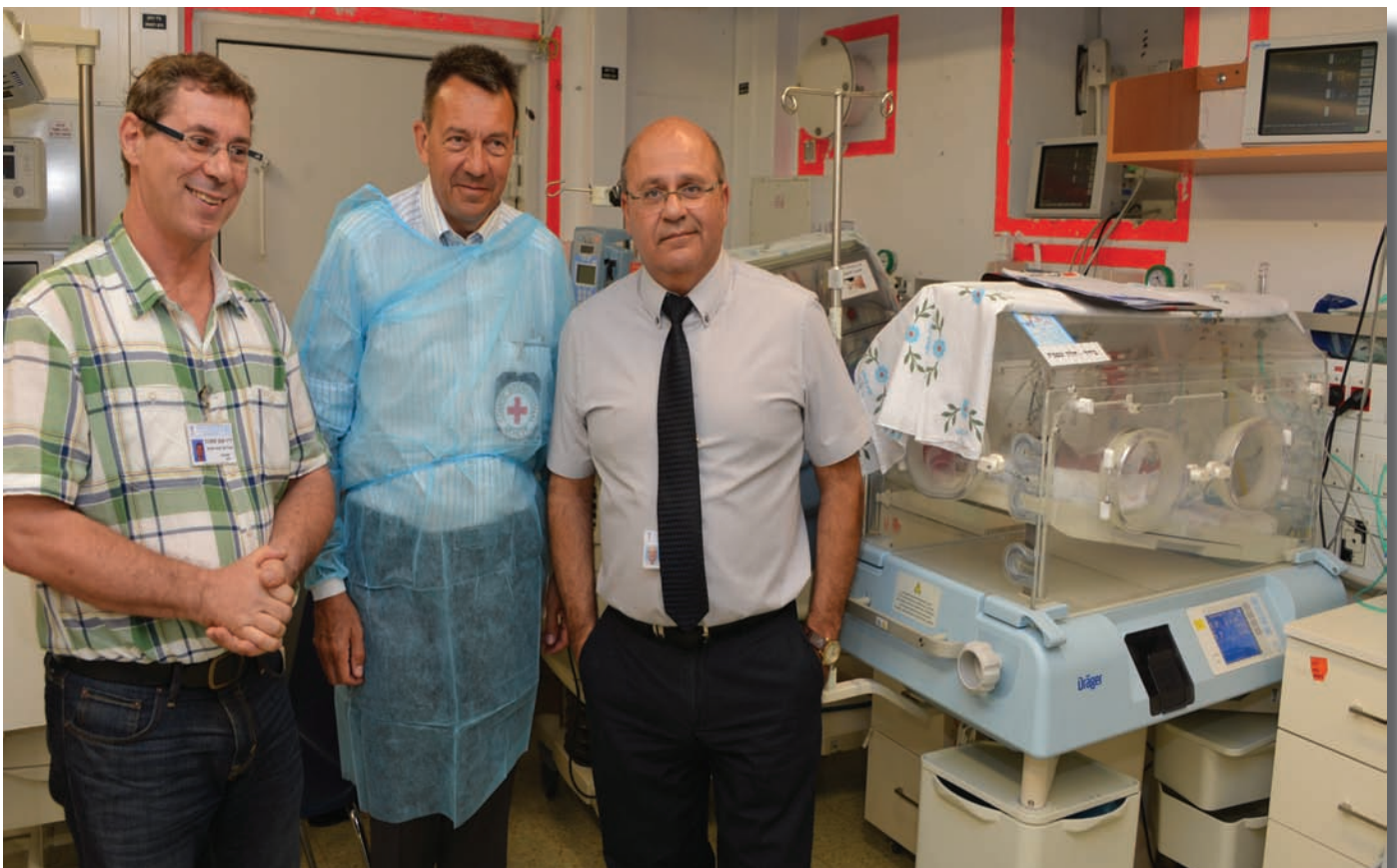
I believe in people and their reason, and hope something will happen and in the end reason will prevail."







Minister of Defense comforts the family members of an injured soldier



UN Delegation visits the Neonatal Department during the Operation

Visiteres & Partner Form all Over The World



SITUATION IN THE CITY NEWS

WAR DIARY

"IT WAS MUCH MORE DIFFICULT FOR ME TO TREAT THIS TERRORIST, MORE THAN OTHERS"

THIS WEEK AT BARZILAI HOSPITAL, DR. AVI WEINBERG OPERATED ON A TERRORIST WHO WAS WOUNDED IN AN ASSAULT BETWEEN IDF SOLDIERS AND TERRORISTS WHO INFILTRATED THROUGH A TUNNEL NEAR KIBBUTZ NIR AM, A BATTLE IN WHICH FOUR IDF SOLDIERS WERE KILLED. AN INTERVIEW WITH A SENIOR PHYSICIAN ABOUT ONE OF THE HARDEST MOMENTS OF HIS CAREER

By David Levy

On Monday afternoon, a terrorist who was wounded when infiltrating Israel through a tunnel arrived at Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon. He received medical care by Dr. Avi Weinberg, who operated on him. After the surgery, Dr. Weinberg said that even for him, someone who has operated on and treated many terrorists, this time it was not simple at all. "From a personal aspect, not the professional, it was much more difficult to treat him," said Dr. Weinberg in an interview with Kan Darom.

On Monday, at around six thirty in the morning, more than ten terrorists infiltrated Israel through a tunnel and split into two bands: one moving towards Kibbutz Erez and the other towards Kibbutz Nir Am. They emerged some 250 meters from the border post wearing IDF uniforms. Only when the images from the drones arrived the IDF noticed that they were terrorists and opened fire on them. The band members managed to launch an antitank missile at an army jeep, killing four soldiers - Dolev Keidar, Geffen Battalion Commander from the Officers School, aged 38, from Modi'in; Sergeant



Major Baynesain Kasahun, 39, from Netivot; Second Lieutenant Yuval Haiman, 21, from Efrat; and Sergeant Nadav Goldmacher, 23, from Beersheva.

One of the terrorists, who was wounded in the attack and survived, was sent to Barzilai hospital for medical treatment. He arrived at the Department of Surgery with several injuries and the person summoned to treat him was the Director of Plastic Surgery, Dr. Avi Weinberg, who does not hide the fact that it was difficult for him to treat a member of the group that entered Israel to attack and kill soldiers.

"I clearly felt what we all feel, a physician is also a human being and feels the same," says Dr. Weinberg, "but when I treat, I don't feel these things. It doesn't matter whether it's a soldier, an



Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Liberman, receives an update from Dr. Chezi Levy



Minister of Defense comforts the family members of an injured soldier

old man or a teenager, I want provide the best treatment and succeed in saving life, that's what guides me, it's something inside me. What happens before is something else. I'm already old, I operated in Jerusalem, at Hadassah Ein Kerem, in all the intefadas and also on the terrorist who forced the bus into a deep ravine at Neve Ilan. Everyone came to us and we treated terrorists. From a personal aspect, not the professional, it was much more difficult for me to treat this terrorist, more than others."

Why?

"Why? I don't know. Maybe because of the all the commotion from the missiles, I don't know, but it was hard for me. But as soon as he enters the operating room, I become a physician, it doesn't matter, I don't feel anything, only what I have to do and it doesn't bother me whether it's a terrorist or a soldier. I see treatment of the patient and his problem."

Do you have an urge to ask him any question? To ask him why he does this?

"No, they don't interest me. I see it as a therapeutic challenge. He got there for his own reasons and there's the Israel Security Agency for that."

But you speak to your customers and joke with them.

"Right, but I don't joke with one like this, we don't even have a common language, because he speaks only Arabic and not Hebrew. What he has to say doesn't interest me, I treat his injuries."

Did you hesitate slightly to treat him?

"No. Under no circumstances did I have any hesitation to treat any patient. But beforehand, until I started treating him, I clearly thought and felt the same as everyone else that it's a pity they didn't kill him. But as soon as I enter, I think like a physician."

Someone else in the department asks the guards to "let me replace you for just five minutes. Only five minutes and no more," and his hand movements clarify his intentions. Needless to say, the request is rejected and the soldiers understand the feelings sparked, but they also know they have a task.

People at the hospital described the terrorist as a short lean individual. "He actually looks like a very skinny teenager." They also said that he looks like someone who has been underground for ages, by

his hands and feet that were busy digging for a long time.

Upon the terrorist's admission to the Department of Surgery, many emotions were provoked in the department, and also with only a wall separating the room where he was hospitalized from the room where Golani soldiers wounded in battles in Gaza are hospitalized. "How do they put him here? How? With only a wall between him and a soldier? How can they do it? He should be placed in a field hospital," says the mother of a soldier lying in the adjacent room.

The questions are directed at soldiers guarding him in the room and they have no answer. Someone else in the department asks the guards to "let me replace you for just five minutes. Only five minutes and no more," and his hand movements clarify his intentions. Needless to say, the request is rejected and the soldiers understand the feelings sparked, but they also know that they have a task and they fulfill properly.

Dr. Weinberg, perhaps you also take more care in treating him because he can still provide information about tunnels?

"Look, I've treated one of the arch-terrorists nicknamed Neiman, who was returned in the Jibril Agreement. He sat at a hotel in Jerusalem and prepared a bomb, which exploded in his hands, and clearly all you want is to get the maximum out of him in order to know who sent him and you cooperate with the people dealing with it, it doesn't interest me personally, it interests the country as a country and I allow whoever needs to do the work to do it. Also in this case, I understand it's very important that he turns out okay, that there'll be something to ask him, that there'll be someone to talk to. But that doesn't guide the treatment. It isn't important to me. For me, I do what has to be done from the medical aspect, the same as I do for everyone else, and I try doing it in the best possible way."

He feels he has managed to disconnect even though rockets exploding in Ashlelon might sometimes be launched by the patient's comrades. "I have no difficulty in disconnecting. I've been in the field for so many years that when I'm in the operating room, and in every operation, I'm concentrated and focused on the surgery, doing the best I can and it doesn't matter who's lying there. I naturally don't forget that he's a person, but it doesn't matter to me who and what his religion is. We also treat

criminals; my objective is to save everyone. It's true that before entering the operating room, I feel like everyone else, think what everyone else thinks, what everyone else thinks and writes, I'm the same as everyone else. But as soon as I'm a physician, I treat the patient's problem, consolidate all my professional skills and experience to do the best."

Dr. Weinberg is one of the senior plastic surgeons in Israel with 30 years experience. He worked at Hadassah Ein Kerem Hospital in Jerusalem, where he established the Department of Plastic and Aesthetic Surgery. During his 16 years of employment there, he worked during the first and second intifadas and many terrorists went under his scalpel

Has it ever happened in your career that you ultimately never entered the operating room because of thoughts beforehand?

"It never happened. I want to say that I've treated many terrorists, but this one was hard for me. Maybe because it's wartime, maybe because of the dead and wounded soldiers, I don't know. But it was hard for me. I have right-wing political views, but as soon as I enter the operating room he's a patient like any others and I've got no control. I see only the medical problem and deal with it.

Which terrorist surgery do you remember most?

"I remember treating a terrorist who forced a bus into a deep ravine, I also remember Neiman, because he stayed in our department a long time, he had a work accident and was irreversibly blinded. It's a case where we did whatever was necessary surgically, everything necessary, but at least from the eye aspect he'll never see. These are things you think before and after, but while he's in the operating room he gets the same treatment as everyone else.

There's another one that I remember, but it wasn't a terrorist, it was a teenager from a village next to Jericho who entered an IDF minefield, both his legs were wounded and we saved one them. I remember it because the State President gave him a prosthesis and spoke about it in the media. But it wasn't a terrorist."

In 2008, Dr. Weinberg started working at Barzilai Hospital. Since then, he travels daily from his home in Tel Aviv to his workplace in Ashkelon.

People probably ask you why you endanger yourself by working at a place with daily rockets.

"I explain to everyone that I travel here throughout the year and statistically it's more risky to be on the roads than to be hit that I have to travel every day, because the road is by missiles. They should worry more dangerous than all the rockets."













“Gaza does not represent me”

Dr. Darawshe Rabiya rushes around the emergency room and surgical ward of Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon between Red Alerts, treating wounded soldiers and civilians injured in rocket attacks * "I'm a doctor, I take no interest in politics. I only deal with medicine"



"Even at the age of 18~19 the soldiers are still mommy's boys. At that age I had just begun travelling on the bus on my own from the village to Afula."
Dr. Darawshe Rabiya, this week

Photograph: Koby Kalmanovich

"Look at them, they are just kids", says the doctor. "I can't say I don't have different feelings about them than about regular patients. Most of them haven't seen their families for a month or even more, haven't showered in two weeks; they arrive covered in dust, scared - they are not used to war, and they don't know whether and how they will recover from their injuries. My heart goes out to them."

"I am not a robot, only treating medical problems. I keep thinking to myself, who knows what they have seen there? I can only imagine what a battlefield looks like, it is not an easy sight, and these soldiers are too young to see such things."

When these soldiers arrive in the emergency room of Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon, wounded, shocked, sometimes unconscious, they meet Dr. Darawshe Rabiya (31) - a Muslim Arab who grew up in the village of Iksal near Afula. In the normal course of things, he is a surgeon in the surgical department. Three years ago he married Mai (29), and a year later their son Muhammad was born.

At first, he worked in Ha'Sharon Hospital, and rented an apartment in Petach Tikva, which enabled him to return home every two or three days. After moving to Barzilai for his residency, he rented an apartment in Ashkelon. His wife works as a pharmacist in Pardes Hanna, and when she is at work their son stays with his grandparents in Iksal.

"Twice I was about to bring them here to live with me, but twice war broke out. The first time was at the end of 2012, when Operation Pillar of Defense broke out, and we said we would wait awhile. Two months ago we talked about it again, and then the shutting began here. I guess God doesn't want them to come to Ashkelon. They tried to arrange for me to work in a hospital in the north, but I like this department and this hospital."

He goes home once a week or once in 10 days, "but now with this war it is harder, because I do a lot of shifts". Last weekend

he took advantage of the relative quiet situation in order to go home, after two weeks without seeing his family. "My little boy knows my father better than me", he laughs. "I would love to see him more often".

In Ashkelon, he rushes around all the time between Red Alerts, but at his home in the north the war is scarcely felt. "When I arrive, they ask me how it feels and what do you do, and are they really firing on Ashkelon all the time. In my village they say it really doesn't matter if you are a Jew or an Arab, it's all the same in the end. My mother was scared, she said to me 'Perhaps you won't go to work? Stay here in the north, there are rockets in the south'. I said to her, 'What do you mean, don't go? It's my job. And I live there'. But my mother is just more anxious. I can't blame her, a mother is a mother."

Dr. Darawshe's father is an earthworks contractor. "He worked alongside Jews his entire life, and he brought me up, and my brothers and sisters, to be an Israeli above all. That's how we were educated, that's how we all behave. We are Israelis."

How do you feel when you see pictures of the dead and wounded in Gaza?

"Gaza doesn't represent me. I am an Arab and Israeli. My country is here, my family is here. I am against killing and against the rockets falling by my house. I don't get into politics and I don't understand politics. My heart aches for every injury, for everyone who is wounded."

Have you come up against any expressions of hostility in the past month?

"The truth is, I thought that patients might look at me a little differently because I am an Arab. Perhaps they wouldn't say anything, but they would look sideways, or something. But I have hardly noticed anything like that. Last week an 18-year-old girl came in for treatment, a chronic patient who comes in



every few weeks. She passed by me and spat on the floor. I asked why she spat, after all, this is a hospital, and she said to me 'Go to Gaza[hell, in the Hebrew expression]'.

"I was disgusted by her response. A girl soldier who was there said to her 'you should be ashamed, just see how he is treating us and caring for us'. I just walked away. They told me I could call the police, but I decided not to get into it."

"He is a good soul"

At the end of the corridor lies 16-year-old Yarin Levy of Ashkelon, seriously injured by rocket fire three weeks ago. "This is the best doctor", Yarin smiles when he sees Dr. Rabiya, and immediately invites him in. "He removed the drain for me twice, and did it without it even hurting. The next time, I should ask that only he should take the drain out, because he does it better than anyone else." The doctor smiles in embarrassment.

"He is a good soul", Yarin's father Avinoam says later "Yarin is very attached to him, and always asks for him for any surgical treatment. I brought my children up to like everyone, to love the good people. Dr. Rabiya is one of the good people. Whenever I meet him I embrace him, he saved our child."

"They are still mommy's boys, 18-19. At that age I had just begun travelling on the bus on my own from the village to Afula, a journey of maybe 20 minutes, and my mother was very worried. And these, at 18, go out to combat, and then arrive here terribly anxious, waiting to hear that they don't have some internal injury and that we will save their life."

From the start of fighting and until the middle of this week, over 1000 wounded people came to the hospital, 668 of them soldiers. The surgical department treated 52 soldiers.

"I have never seen so many shrapnel and blast injuries. There was a case of a soldier with shrapnel injuries to the abdomen that were endangering his life. His mother looked me in the eyes and said to me 'you have lovely eyes, I'm sure you will take care of my son'."

He put out his cellphone and shows me a photograph in which he is holding part of a rocket that fell in Ashkelon. "It is fascinating to see missile parts up close, I've never seen it

before. Don't forget, I wasn't in the Army, I'm not familiar with weapons, and I don't even know all the Army slang. Think about it, I ask a wounded soldier what happened to him, and he says 'I got into the APC, I was injured by the MAG', all kinds of words that I don't know. So I usually just nod, and then I ask the nurse what they said."

"I am not Aviv Geffen"

At the start of the IDF operation in the Gaza Strip, a case made headlines in which a doctor from Sha'arei Zedek Hospital, who published a post against the IDF's actions in the Gaza Strip on his Facebook page, was suspended on the grounds that this was crossing a line in the trust relationship between doctor and patient. Dr. Rabiya justifies the suspension.

"Medicine means that anyone who needs treatment will receive it. Even if I have finished my shift and I am on my way home, I will stop to help someone injured in the street, in a traffic accident, for example. Medicine cannot relate to differences of religion, sex, race, and so on. And so, he should not express himself on political matters. Doctors are lifesavers; people look at us differently from journalists, politicians, or even teachers.

"If, for example, I was a Jew shouting 'Death to the Arabs', an Arab patient would not trust me and would be afraid if I performed his surgery. It's the same if an Arab doctor says such a thing about Jews. It is not fair to the patients, who have to receive the best treatment regardless of their identity."

He also watches what is happening on the social networks from the side. "There is a Facebook war here, a war of opinions, and anyone can write whatever they want and say whatever they want. That's all right, we are a democratic country and everyone has the right to their own opinion. There are a lot of doctors, nurses and janitorial staff here at Barzilai, and I am friends with almost all of them. Everyone has their own political opinion, for or against the fighting, for or against Arabs, but personally speaking, attitudes towards me have not changed."

Doesn't it disturb you, the things that people write on Facebook against Arabs, against the left?

"In Israel there is a war of opinions, everyone writes whatever they feel like on Facebook, without thinking about the results, that perhaps they may have an Arab friend who will see these things. I have friends on Facebook - Arabs, Jews, and also Romanians and Hungarians.

"When Aviv Geffen spoke out against a violent response to the murder of the three kidnapped boys, all the talkbacks were

against him were attacking him. I don't usually listen to Aviv Geffen's songs, but the subject suddenly interested me. I read almost 1000 responses, one by one. I saw that they cursed him for not having served in the Army and for being left wing. And this is exactly the difference between us: he is a singer, who can express his opinion, and also be subjected to horrific responses. It is almost certain that this will not harm his professional ability. On the other hand, a doctor cannot declare his political opinions because his patients need to trust him."





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