

# Iron Swords War

SNAPSHOT

November  
2, 2023\*

## Mental Health, Trauma, and Resilience

\* The brief offers a current overview<sup>1</sup> based on the information accessible to us at this time.

**The Challenge:** There is a plethora of needs, across a large population, including government assistance as well as long-term solutions and perspectives.

- **Addressing Unprecedented Challenges:** Israeli society is grappling with new and extreme situations, such as citizen abductions, mass murder, mass murders at a party involving psychedelic substances, and entire communities in distress seeking refuge at hotels around the country. There is a significant lack of expertise in handling these extreme situations.
- **Magnitude and Scope:** This trauma is severe on a national scale as it is impacting every citizen – weakening the resilience on individual, family, community, and societal levels. The fundamental principle is that every affected citizen deserves support, making it a significant but elusive challenge. Caregivers of the traumatized also need appropriate support and guidance.
- **Longstanding Resource Shortages:** There has been a chronic shortage of resources in the mental health sector for many years, including a lack of caregivers and specialists. Now more than ever, it's crucial to ensure continuity in treatment.
- **Coordination and Collaboration:** Effective coordination and collaboration are needed among various stakeholders, including NGOs and the Ministry of Health (despite the Ministry's limited experience in cooperating with civil society organizations). In this context, civil society's role is significant, but the primary responsibility lies with the state.
- **Focus on Long-Term and Medium-Term Efforts:** Efforts in this context should be long-term, spanning decades. Yet it's also important to recognize that providing a robust response to immediate needs will significantly impact the medium and long-term realities.



1. This status report is based on the information presented during a joint meeting of JFN (Jewish Funders Network) and the Forum of Foundations in Israel on November 2, 2023. The following individuals participated in the meeting:

- **Efrat Shaprut**, CEO of Natal, and Chair of the Roundtable for the Psycho-Social Sector.
- **Dr. Gilad Bodenheimer**, Head of Mental Health at the Ministry of Health.

## Mental Health Terms in Context

- › “Building Resilience” and “Trauma Treatment” – two concepts that are intertwined with each other.
- › **Building Resilience:** This concept is mostly applied during routine days, providing tools to cope with trauma when an extreme event occurs.
- › **Resilience:** This refers to maintaining a stable way of functioning following exposure to a traumatic event; leadership, preparedness, connectedness, and purpose are all crucial aspects.
- › **Trauma:** A multifaceted injury, both physical and psychological, resulting from exposure to an extreme event that may impact functionality.
- › **Trauma Treatment:** Treatment provided during an extreme event.
- › **Post-Traumatic:** A colloquial term for a psychiatric disorder. The development and persistence of trauma-related symptoms occurring approximately one month after and beyond an extreme event (symptoms include abstention, heightened awareness, flashbacks, and trouble focusing).

## NATAL – An Example of an Experienced Organization in the Field

NATAL is an organization with 26 years of experience that operates on a national scale and collaborates across various sectors. It is characterized by its innovation and the provision of comprehensive technological solutions, including treatment and communication methods, training programs, and academic research. NATAL disseminates knowledge and tools both within Israel and internationally.

In its field of expertise, NATAL stands out due to its multifaceted approach and its value as a “one-stop-shop.” This approach covers everything from immediate crisis intervention (known as the “hotline”), through quality treatment, the rehabilitation process, returning to routine, and strengthening resilience.

NATAL’s working model is centered around completing a cycle of resilience, trauma, and post-trauma within various spheres of coping, including individuals, families, communities, and society as a whole.

### › Providing support within different timeframes:

- › **Immediate:** During the extreme event – starting from October 7, 2023, and during the initial weeks of the war.
- › **Medium-term:** Trauma treatment during the ongoing conflict. Today, one month into the conflict, Natal is managing the intricacies of the “war routine,” providing services for both the evacuee communities and the cities absorbing them. Questions of responsibility and collaboration arise between governmental bodies (Education, Health, and Welfare) and other various organizations.
- › **Long-term:** Treating post-traumatic symptoms. The potential timeframe for this treatment can extend to several decades (based on the organization’s experience following the Yom Kippur War).

### › The timeline regarding treatment issues starting on October 7, 2023:

1. Providing assistance and intervention during immediate danger and life-threatening situations.
2. Search for loved ones and missing persons.
3. Addressing the emotional and practical aspects related to mourning and funeral arrangements.

4. Providing support and assistance to individuals and families who have evacuated and been displaced.
5. Addressing the anxiety and concerns of the soldiers' parents.
6. Offering support for those experiencing ongoing anxiety due to the conflict.
7. Providing assistance and guidance for individuals experiencing symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress.
8. Responding to requests for professional clinical therapy and support.
9. Aggravation of issues related to at-risk youth, individuals with disabilities, and domestic violence due to the ongoing conflict.

### ➤ The specific target audiences and the need for prioritization:

1. Providing immediate support and assistance to those who have survived and experienced the trauma firsthand.
2. Extending support to the families and loved ones who are affected by the situation, including the families of hostages.
3. Recognizing the importance of supporting and caring for those who are on the front lines, such as first responders and rescue organizations (approx. 340 organizations).
4. Providing support to organizations in the medium term, including educational institutions, healthcare providers, youth villages, businesses, and government employees.
5. Offering assistance to the broader public, recognizing that the situation affects society as a whole.

In addition, addressing the **unique needs of specific groups** in the context of new and complex issues:

1. Providing specialized support for families dealing with the abduction of their loved ones.
2. Survivors of the party in Re'im.
3. Offering support and services to individuals and families who have been displaced from their homes and are temporarily residing in hotels.

## Civil Society Organizations and Additional Initiatives

### ➤ Civil Society Organizations

There are not many civil society organizations dedicated to trauma and resilience. Established organizations in this field include "NATAL," "ERAN" (which operates a support hotline and currently also serves as an intermediary through the National Resilience Center), "Mashabim" (focused on resilience), "Metiv," "The Trauma Coalition," and a few others.

It is important to emphasize that these organizations are part of Israel's mental health system and have been **grappling with a significant and growing resource shortage**. Many qualified professionals prefer to work privately and independently. Currently, there is a willingness to partially integrate into the public system.

Working alongside the government, there is still ambiguity regarding the responsibilities of the Ministries of Education, Health, and Welfare.

### ➤ Additional Initiatives:

- Private regional initiatives for survivors of the Nova party, evacuees, and those in transition.
- Various grassroots initiatives established after the outbreak of the conflict, also involved in the mental health field, (including field mapping).
- Resilience Centers established as a joint partnership between ministries. The Southern Resilience Center is operated by "The Trauma Coalition" in collaboration with various trauma organizations. The Northern Resilience Center is operated by the organization "Mashabim." Resilience Centers directly affected by the conflict are overwhelmed and require assistance.

- Business initiatives, such as “Our Children’s Resilience” led by a collaborative organization, and “Keren Or” by Discount Bank.
- Inter-sectoral forums, addressing children and youth, therapist support, psycho-social, and economic assistance.
- A new administration established to rehabilitate the Gaza border communities, focusing on a 0-7 km range from the border.

## The Ministry of Health – Main Responses

Background: A long-term shift from the public to private sector has caused a significant shortage of manpower, especially in the past year. Long-term plans for improving the situation were prepared before the war but have not yet been implemented.

- Activation of support lines through organizations, encouraging health maintenance organizations to open support lines, and establishing emergency lines in hospitals.
- Teams have been set up to accompany families required to identify bodies at the main base. This is a significant challenge, and it is necessary to create processes and support for the first responder teams (e.g., truck drivers).
- Assistance for families of the hostages and the missing individuals in collaboration with the Ministry of Welfare (assigning caregivers to families of the hostages jointly with the Alon command and the leadership of Gal Hirsh).
- A proactive telephone hotline for various victim groups.
- Assistance (and expansion) for resilience centers that are in contact with communities and will continue to provide rapid and long-term responses. The establishment of a national resilience center will also be supported.
- Hundreds of thousands of evacuees and displaced individuals have sought shelter in hotels – a situation that has the potential to produce potential worsening of the post-trauma. There is a shortage of staff in both the public sector (including health maintenance organizations, hospitals, and civil organizations) and the private sector. Consequently, many volunteers initially stepped in to help in hotels, but relying solely on volunteers over an extended period is not sustainable. Resilience centers require some time to properly organize themselves to offer support. Hospitals have been tasked with taking on the responsibility, and psychiatric hospitals, equipped with available and concentrated human resources, have been authorized to manage the operations in hotels. To provide a comprehensive response, it is essential to identify the specific needs through ongoing work, which is currently in the organizational phase. Furthermore, it is crucial to establish a clear direction, routines, and a service model within health maintenance organizations and resilience centers, rather than expecting these elements to be fully provided within the hotels.
- It is of paramount importance to establish a routine and occupation to ensure the success of therapeutic responses, which are an integral part of the treatment process.
- Actions should be flexible based on listening to the individuals and the communities, thus allowing to create tailored solutions rather than relying on fixed plans.

## Partnerships and Philanthropic Initiatives

### ➤ An initiative to establish an interest group on the theme of mental resilience

is being created to dynamically assess needs and actions, facilitate mutual learning, and lay the foundation for a strategic partnership. The Edmond de Rothschild Foundation has established an emergency fund addressing trauma and resilience, with a significant emphasis on providing medium and long-term support. The Arison Foundation is experienced in supporting mental health in disaster scenarios and is now concentrating on resilience. Both foundations are looking to encourage the philanthropic community to strategically examine the realms of resilience and mental health in the short, medium, and long terms.

## ➤ An expedited investigation process into medium and long-term needs and strategies related to mental health and resilience

Efrat Dagani Tuforov (Yad Hanadiv Foundation), Meirav Dadia-Molad (Schusterman Foundation), along with partners including the Yated Foundation and private contributors, are promoting an accelerated research process to gain a comprehensive understanding of the primary avenues for the medium- and long-term solutions. The process is being supported by McKinsey, which conducts field mapping in Israel and identifies models, systems, and methods from abroad. Within 4-6 weeks, key insights and strategies will be shared.

## ➤ Ariel Core, from the Israeli Addiction Center

- The center has formed a coalition with Sharon Hospital in Shefayim to assist evacuees from Kfar Aza. They have also provided support to the clinical system at Havat Ronit, which supports survivors of the Nova party.
- Special emphasis has been placed on training, with numerous training materials published (receiving already 2.4 million views).
- In terms of emergency response, settlements around the Gaza Strip receive more efficient treatment compared to towns such as Sderot, Ofakim, and Netivot, where infrastructure challenges and lower utilization are observed (partially due to less usage of mental health services by the local population).
- The expectation is that most people who have experienced a traumatic event will eventually return to normal functioning, with no anticipation of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affecting the entire population.
- Currently, two-thirds of the emergency workforce comprises volunteers, and one-third consists of low-wage workers. Although the Ministry of Health pledged a stable solution within three months, this involves legal adjustments requiring wage corrections, which cannot be relied upon. Philanthropy is expected to step in to provide assistance.

## ➤ Ziv Kop, Tech Israel

A result of the high-tech protest. They have raised 25 million NIS and have assembled a professional team that operates based on high-tech models. They gather needs from organizations in the fields of mental health, education, and special populations.

They operate in four main areas:

1. Supporting small organizations;
2. Established the Hamal (operations room) "Otef Lev" for mental health support in Tel Aviv;
3. Promoting efforts in Eilat to address significant challenges in service delivery such as formulating a strategic treatment and patient access plan and ensuring proper care spaces (instead of makeshift facilities such as trailers, streets, or swimming pools, as is the current situation);
4. Establishing a training program under the guidance of Professor Mendlovitz. They see a significant value in short-term actions to reduce needs in the medium and long term.

Challenges include the pace of work, reliance on local volunteers, employment insurance when working with the government, and more.

## ➤ Sylvia Tessler, Tauber Foundation

The "starving" of the mental health system has existed for over a decade. Even before October 7, 2023, the foundation conducted a needs and gaps assessment and is preparing to release a report on the subject in the near future. In the OECD, 11%-12% of the health budget is allocated to mental health, whereas that figure stands at only 5.8% in Israel. Israel faced a deficit of 4 billion NIS even before October 7, 2023. The core understanding is that "what doesn't work in regular circumstances won't work in an emergency," emphasizing the need to build infrastructure.