

Israel Remembers Her Fallen on Yom HaZikaron



IDF honor guard during Yom HaZikaron Israel's Remembrance Day

Source: Israel Hayom/ Yehoshua Yosef

A one minute siren sounded throughout Israel at 8:00 p.m. Israel time, Tuesday beginning a day long observance of Yom HaZikaron, Israel's Memorial Day for more than 23,320 fallen IDF soldiers and civilian victims of terrorism. To gain some perspective of the sacrifice that Israel has sustained in maintaining its security, 23,320 fallen would be equivalent to more 115,000 US military personnel fallen based on the percentage of the more than six million Jews in Israel.

Israel lost more than 6,373 in its War of Independence in 1948 to 1949, more than one percent of the 600,000 Jews in the country at the time. The IDF toll in the October War of 1973 with Egypt and Syria was more than 2,656 dead and more than 11,656 injured.

The toll of dead and injured rose with several subsequent conflicts and terrorist operations against Israel perpetrated by both Arab countries and jihadi terrorists. The 23,020 casualties, includes both military and civilians from 2014 IDF Operation Protective Edge, the third rocket war with Hamas in Gaza, and recent terror attacks, most notably in Jerusalem.

Israel continues to pay a price for its eternal vigilance against threats to its survival. Those threats include an Iran whose leaders call for "death to Israel", on the cusp of becoming a nuclear threshold state. An Iran whose proxies Hezbollah and Hamas have been equipped by it with more than

150,000 rockets and missiles poised to rain death and destruction on the Jewish nation. . Add to that the looming menace of Al Qaeda and ISIS ranging on Israel's Golan frontier with Syria.

An Israel that increasingly finds itself standing alone, the subject of an [op-ed](#) by Pulitzer-prize winning *Wall Street Journal* columnist, Bret Stephens. He suggested that the Jewish nation return to the "rogue" status of its first 19 years when it had few allies, including America. An America whose people and many elected officials have consistently and overwhelmingly supported Israel. An America consternated by the actions of a President who endeavors to isolate the only democratic ally in the troubled Middle East.

Israel Hayom in an article, ['Meaning of independence is the ability to defend yourself'](#), conveyed the meaning of this unique memorial:

In the past year, 116 Israeli soldiers were added to the list of the fallen, including 67 who were killed in Operation Protective Edge last summer and 35 disabled IDF veterans.

There are 553 Israeli soldiers whose places of burial are unknown, including most recently Staff Sgt. Oron Shaul, whose body was seized by Hamas last July.

On Tuesday night, the traditional Memorial Day opening ceremony will be held at the Western Wall, with President Reuven Rivlin and IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot in attendance.

On Wednesday, around 1.5 million Israelis are expected to visit military cemeteries across the country, from Kiryat Shmona in the north to Eilat in the south. At 11 a.m. on Wednesday, a two-minute siren will sound throughout the country.



Israeli PM Netanyahu at Yad Labanim Ceremony

Source: Reuters

Tuesday afternoon Israeli PM Netanyahu spoke at a Yad Labanim ceremony prior to Yom HaZikaron honoring the bereaved. He took note of Israel's sacrifice as the bastion for the Jewish people, including that of his late brother, Yonatan, who fell on July 4, 1976 in the rescue of Jewish hostages aboard an Air France flight diverted by Palestinian terrorist and members of the German Bader Meinhof gang to Kampala Airport in Entebbe Uganda. *The Jerusalem Post* [reported](#) his remarks:

"The soil is soaked with the blood of our loved ones," Netanyahu said at the at Yad Labanim ceremony, but added that "we can be comforted by the fact that these boys and girls fell as they engaged in a noble mission to ensure the existence of the State of Israel."

Netanyahu said he was using the words "the nation's existence" because "there is no future for the Jewish people without the State of Israel."

To the bereaved families, he said, "On this day, the nation shares your grief." He spoke of his brother Yonatan, who was killed in the IDF's daring 1976 hostage rescue mission in Entebbe.

"I share your pain," Netanyahu said. "It has been 39 years since my brother fell, and the grief has not gone away."

But the sorrow, he went on, did not weaken the determination to defend the Land of Israel.

This determination could be seen in those soldiers who fought in Gaza in Operation Protective Edge over the summer, and in the spirit of those soldiers who left comfortable homes in the Diaspora to fight for the State of Israel, he said.

It was this courage, he added, that helped the people of Israel break the laws of history by returning to their land and rebuilding the Jewish state after thousands of years.

In a video message, he declared that “on this day, the people of Israel bow their heads in respect and gratitude. The poet Shlomo Sokolsky well expressed the heavy price. In his poem ‘Rosh Pina,’ he wrote: ‘There is no conquering the top of the rock – if there is no grave on the slope.’ This is the reality of our life in the past 67 years since the establishment of the State of Israel and even before.”