

The Israel Trauma & Resiliency Center NATAL

Israel is affected by terror and war quite unlike other countries. Due to these experiences, this country has been forced for a very long time to deal with the treatment and with prevention of psychological trauma as it occurs in extreme situations. An Israeli NGO called NATAL has been doing just this for 20 years in a quite extraordinary manner. Until 2016, NATAL's full name included "Israel Trauma Center for Victims of Terror and War". However, since then the organisation has expanded on the fields in which it operates, and it is now appropriately named the "Israel Trauma & Resiliency Center."

In the summer of 2016, the writer and his wife had the opportunity to visit the office of the organisation, located in Tel Aviv. We had a chance to study the different approaches and therapies for victims of terrorism, and we discussed these issues with NATAL's well-versed staff. Impressed with their vast knowledge, we decided to check what DIG (German-Israeli Association) can do to spread the word about NATAL in Germany. The idea was to have a series of lectures in the work groups, which would begin in Bremen.

The directors of NATAL, particularly Executive Director

Orly Gal, plan to expand their activities in Europe with the help of Orna Peleg, the Director of Strategic Partnerships in Europe. Together, she and the writer organised an initial meeting in February 2017 at the head office of DIG in Berlin. One of the outcomes of this meeting was a follow-up meeting in Tel Aviv, during which Dr. Hermann Kuhn and his colleagues from the board in Bremen met with NATAL's staff. It was clear that the meaning of effective preparation is much more prevalent in the Israeli consciousness than in Germany. Part of the reason for this is that the horrific and violent acts of

terror and conflict occur more often in Israel than they do here in Germany. However, the sudden increase in severe crises occurring in Europe, be they terror attacks or other calamities, goes to show that we must think about professional preparedness, just like in Israel.

The idea was to present the specialized, practical knowledge acquired by NATAL to the local individuals and institutions concerned that need to deal with such crises effectively. Basically, this should be about the transition from chaos to life as normal, and enabling institutions to continue to function during such periods. With the great support of the president of the German police force and the



DIG Visit the Head Office in Berlin

(from left to right): Yotam Dagan, Clinical Psychologist and head of the NATAL contact Group, Gudi Wittekindt, Orly Gal, CEO of NATAL, Dr. Widu Wittekindt and Orna Peleg, Strategic Director Partnerships Europe

head of the fire brigade, a short seminar was held in May 2017 for 30 selected attendees. The speakers were Yotam Dagan and Dr. Ruvie Rogel, the Deputy Chairman of the Community Stress Prevention Center in Kiryat Shmona. These two experienced psychologists informed the group of first responders in an impressive manner.

An NGO offering its unique experience in Germany

Orna Peleg and the experts from Bremen are now looking into how their cooperation can be intensified. For example, the head of the fire brigade who doubles as Vice-President of the German Association of the Fire Brigade has made a number of specific suggestions as to how joint Israeli-German workshops can be implemented in the framework of best practices.

Dealing with the impact of terror attacks requires more than repairing the damage. What is even more important is dealing with the psychological consequences of such events – and this includes more than the victims and their families. The focus must be on the people who were at the scene of a terror attack or those who were first responders at a scene with a large number of dead and injured people. The former two are the people who are exposed to psychologically straining situations. The long-term impact of their presence at such events, more often than not, does not show until much later. When this happens, the impact can no

longer be linked to the event that triggered it. We have a lot of work to do in Germany.

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