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Former IDF chief-of-staff Benny Gantz (Photo: Eli Mandelbaum)
Photo: Eli Mandelbaum

Israeli trauma center Natal overworked, asks government for assistance

The organization, which offers psychosocial services to victims of terror attacks and war, is struggling to offer support to those who need it as an influx in acts of terror create trauma for more and more Israelis.

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The wave of terror attacks over the past year has greatly increased traumatic symptoms among the Israeli public, causing more and more Israelis to seek mental health support. Many are turning to Natal—Israel's Trauma Center for Victims of Terror and War. As Natal attempts to offer assistance to those in need, it must provide its services under the same budget, something those involved in the organization are finding more and more difficult to do. For this reason, the organization has come out with a campaign to increase the financial support it receives from the Israeli government.

Natal's main focus is to offer psychosocial services to victims of terror attacks, battle and war. Natal states that it has treated over 210 thousand people over the years, and that the number of those seeking their services during the last few months has increased by over 50%, from 25,000 in 2014 to over 27,000 over the first half of 2016 alone.



Students at Sderot hiding (Photo: Yonatan Tzur)

The overall benefits of Natal's work are hard to assess on a national scale, but economically speaking the organization's efforts are estimated to save Israel 75 million NIS per year. Natal's yearly budget currently stands at 15 million NIS.



Former IDF chief-of-staff Benny Gantz (Photo: Motti Kimchi)

Natal representatives spoke in front of the Knesset's Labor, Welfare and Health Committee, asking for the government to increase its annual support to 5 million NIS. Speaking on the matter, Natal CEO Orly Gal stated that the organization received 64 new cases from last month's terror attack in Sarona Market alone. "Numbers such as this mean something," said Gal. "73% of our budget comes from donations, with the Israeli government covering 2% of our budget, amounting to 80,000 NIS out of a yearly budget of 14 million NIS. We're happy to do our job, but there really is a limit to how much we

can carry on our shoulders. The government must increase its support of Natal, otherwise we won't be able to continue for very much longer."

Former IDF chief-of-staff Benny Gantz, who serves as chairperson on Natal's board, voiced his support of the organization's current fight to increase its budget. Describing Natal's services, Gantz said that "Natal is obligated and dedicated to respond to the needs of Israeli citizens dealing with the mental ramifications of war and terror." He stressed that "The organization acts as one of the most substantial resources in this field, and the financial support it receives from the government is crucial to the continued support of its patients, as Natal helps them as they work to return their lives to normal."