

HOW THE LOCAL COMMUNITY RAPID DEFENSE TEAMS SAVED HUNDREDS OF LIVES

The horrific terror attacks carried out by thousands of terrorists against Israeli communities in the south have led to numerous acts of heroism and sacrifice by Israelis who fended off the terrorists, saving many lives while often losing their own.

Some of these heroes were members of the local defense teams in communities in the vicinity of Israel's border with the Gaza Strip, courageous men and women – ordinary citizens turned warriors.

They were the first responders who fended off the terrorists as they attacked Israeli communities in the morning hours of October 7th, facing the evil face to face, protecting their families and community.



Photo by Chaim Goldberg, Flash 90

These local community defenders fought the terrorists for hours until the police or army arrived on the scene, mostly outnumbered, but with the clear understanding that they were the last line of defense, their lives the thin barrier between the terrorists and their intended victims. Many of them died doing so.

Saving the Entire Community

At Kibbutz Alumim, 10 members of the emergency team were successful in repelling some 40 terrorists. The terrorists first set fire to the barns and murdered some 20 foreign workers. They moved next toward the houses, and after a six-hour battle waged by the local community response team, were fended off.

In Kibbutz Kerem Shalom, eight members of the emergency unit saved the entire community from a cruel fate. They fought dozens of terrorists who crossed the border fence and attempted to enter the community .

They clashed with dozens of terrorists who had breached the border fence, enduring six relentless hours of combat with only minimal support from the IDF. The local community team killed at least 20 terrorists. Unfortunately, two of the defenders were killed in battle: Amichai Weitzen and Yedidya Raziell, both family members.



Photo by Yossi Zeliger

It wasn't until 13:00 that IDF reinforcements arrived to support the beleaguered unit, regaining control of the kibbutz from the terrorists' grip. The courage of these defenders turned the tide, preventing a horrific massacre that had befallen nearby kibbutzim.

"They saved us all," stated one of the members of the kibbutz. "This happened in many other communities when many of them paid with their lives and prevented a much heavier disaster".

Prepared to Face Any Threat

The members of these crucial rapid response units literally saved hundreds of lives during the first hours of the attacks .

In these challenging times, and as Israel possibly faces another front in the north and a relentless wave of attacks aimed at undermining its security and even its existence, Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael – Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF) has decided to purchase protective gear and equipment for members of the local community defense team in 85 communities in the vicinity of Israel's northern border with Lebanon and for 48 communities in the vicinity of the border with the Gaza Strip.

KKL-JNF Chairperson, **Yifat Ovadia-Luski**: "A week after KKL-JNF launched an aid operation for the residents of the south, today we are increasing the emergency basket for the protection of the surrounding communities and expanding it to communities located up to 7 km from the Gaza border. KKL will continue to take care of the residents of the south and accompany them and assist in the restoration of the affected communities. This is an important and significant national task, and we are fully committed to it".