



Watchman's Prayer Letter



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The wounds we cannot see

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This month, October 7, will mark 3 years since the most horrendous day in modern day Israel's history, when the hatred towards the people of Israel was put on display – for all the world to see. Last year, on the 2 year commemoration, there were still hostages in Gaza, so people couldn't move on. This year, for the first time in 12 years, since 2014, there are no more Israeli hostages being held in Gaza.



You would think that moving on must be easier this year, but there is an under-lying threat in Israel, that continues to torment many – whether they are waking or asleep. **The wounds of this war are not only physical. Thousands of Israelis are now in long-term rehabilitation for psychological injuries. To put October 7 into perspective: proportionally, the number of people murdered in Israel that day was equivalent to roughly 40,000 Americans being killed in a single day – about 13–14 times the per-capita impact of 9/11. But the death toll tells only part of the story.** The people who survived carried the experience home with them.

October 7 was not simply a tragedy that happened “in Israel”. It touched an entire nation. Families were shattered, communities were devastated and thousands continue to live with grief, trauma and uncertainty. In the years following October 7, Israel has faced an enormous **mental-health challenge**. Hundreds of Israelis die by suicide each year and thousands more reach hospital emergency departments following suicide attempts. Alongside this, tens of thousands of Israelis are receiving treatment or rehabilitation for trauma and PTSD. The effects of October 7 and the prolonged war will not disappear simply because the immediate crisis has passed. In one nationwide study, the proportion of Israelis showing symptoms consistent with probable **PTSD** nearly doubled following October 7 – from 16.2% before the attacks to 29.8% just five weeks afterwards; and the trauma has not been limited to those who were physically present that day. Families of those murdered or taken hostage, residents of communities near Gaza, evacuees, first responders, soldiers and their families have all been affected by the prolonged trauma of October 7 and the war that followed.



There are annually **7,000 hospital-treated suicide attempts**— which is part of the broader mental-health burden, *not necessarily attributed directly to October 7*. Sadly, some of these deaths occur among soldiers who are struggling to cope with the psychological impact of war and prolonged service.

The need is enormous, but so is the effort to bring healing.

Israel isn't simply recognising the enormous psychological need — **the health system is actively expanding its capacity to respond to it.**

Following October 7, Israel has responded by expanding trauma services, **establishing 16 specialised trauma-focused intervention and coping centres** around the country, and providing psychological and rehabilitation support through the health and welfare systems. They provide acute trauma treatment, individual and family support, services for children and young people, evacuee clinics and professional training.

Israel is also strengthening its mental-health response. Health Minister Uriel Buso announced plans to significantly increase government investment in mental-health services, including:

1. Doubling the Ministry of Health's assistance to the HMOs to approximately NIS 600 million in 2025.
2. The government has also expanded trauma and resilience services, crisis teams and the recruitment and training of mental-health professionals.
3. Israel's mental-health system works alongside hospitals, HMOs, resilience centres, community organisations and NGOs to reach those struggling with trauma and emotional distress.

Those who are suffering will not suffer alone.

How is CFI responding?

Among the many approaches being used to help Israelis recover from trauma are **specialised trained assistance and therapy dogs**. These dogs are a beautiful example of how rehabilitation can help people rebuild their ordinary lives by providing companionship, grounding and a sense of security for people living with trauma.

With that said, CFI has our own specialised trauma dog story unfolding: **Tali** is currently being trained and will soon join the CFI family, where she will have the opportunity to bring comfort and support to people who have experienced trauma. We are excited to see what has been called “healing has four paws.”

So, as we commemorate October 7 this month, we remember all those who lost their lives in such brutal ways and we pray for those who survived and are still learning how to live with what they experienced. We pray for those who lost loved ones, for survivors, for families still carrying the wounds of that day and for a nation longing for peace and security.

- **Pray for healing** for wounded hearts and minds, **wisdom** for those providing care and rehabilitation, **strength** for families walking alongside loved ones and **hope** for those whose wounds are not visible, for them to know they are not alone.
- **Pray** especially for those whose trauma has brought them to a place of **deep despair**, that they would be surrounded by people who recognise their need, receive appropriate care and discover hope.
- **Pray for the different rehab options.** Israel is having to care for tens of thousands of people whose wounds aren't necessarily visible.
- **Let's pray for more believers** who are educated and experienced therapists to answer the call to come and help with trauma counselling and healing
- **Pray for survivors, soldiers, first responders and families** who are struggling with grief, trauma, anxiety or despair.
- **Pray for hope, healing and restoration** for Israel's people.
- **Pray for CFI's Under His Wings** team who focus specifically on trauma victims and their families.
- **Pray for Tali**, her training in the United States and the process of getting her here to Israel.

