



After the Earthquake: The Story of Israel's 2010 Aid Mission in Haiti

By Photojournalist Joe Shalmoni

StandWithUs

“If you save one life, it is as if you have saved the world.”

– The Talmud

On January 12, 2010, a devastating 7.0 magnitude earthquake rocked Haiti. Almost immediately, a team of doctors, nurses, and rescue workers arrived from Israel to save lives. Photojournalist Joe Shalmoni went to the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince to help and record the heroic work of Israel’s medical and rescue teams. This booklet is about what he saw.

With over 70 years of expertise in emergency response, Israel is always among the first on the scene at international disaster sites.

- Israel Defense Forces (IDF) rescue teams have responded to earthquakes in all corners of the globe, including Mexico (1985), Armenia (1988), Turkey (1991), El Salvador, India, and Peru (2001), Indonesia (2006), Japan (2011), Nepal (2015), Albania (2019), and Haiti (2021).
- Israel sent humanitarian and medical aid to the Philippines when it was devastated by Typhoon Haiyan in 2013 and to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria in 2017.
- Israel treated thousands of Syrians wounded in the civil war next door, despite Syria’s ongoing hostilities against Israel.
- Israel set up a field hospital to treat victims of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022.



“The proudest moment in my life to date as a photojournalist was the time that I spent with the state of Israel’s medical and rescue corps in Haiti.”

–Joe Shalmoni, Photojournalist

Left: Photojournalist Joe Shalmoni with the children of the Mais Gate neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Joe had just finished covering the child care activities, including games, songs, dance, and performance therapy conducted by the Israeli soldiers.

Image taken by: IDF Platoon Commander Captain Amit Even Paz of the IDF Home Front Rescue Brigade.

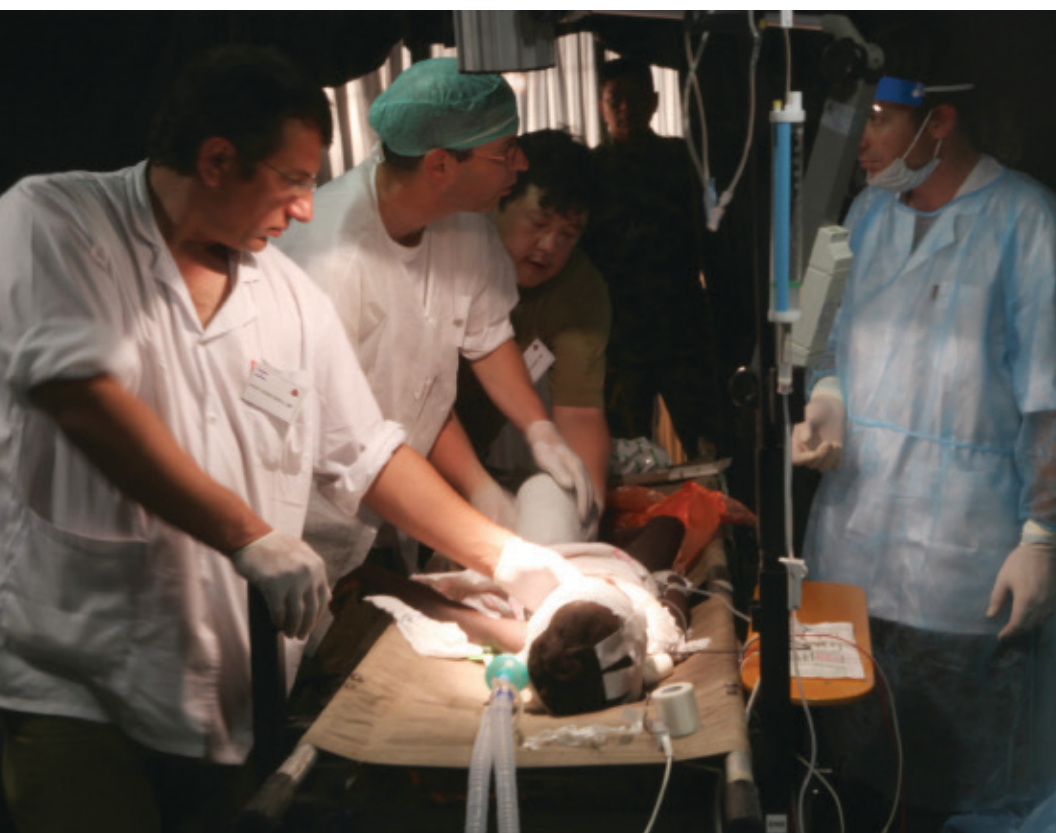
"Although its wards are no more than army tents with folding beds, the field hospital has advanced surgical facilities, X-ray and imagery machines, and a full staff of professional doctors and nurses from Israel's top military and civilian hospitals." –*Forward*



Israel Defense Force Commander Dror Trop, holding a make-believe microphone, encourages a young citizen of the Mais Gate neighborhood to sing her favorite song. IDF Platoon Commander Captain Amit Even Paz (IDF Home Front Rescue Brigade) looks on and shares a smile with many new Haitian friends, both young and old. On a magical afternoon, the love between the Israelis and Haitians was palpable. For a few hours, they were one family.



Israeli Heroes In Haiti



“I’m just amazed,” CNN reporter Elizabeth Cohen declared. “This is like another world compared to the other [makeshift] hospital.” Cohen also asked how it could be that the United States had not yet set up a hospital in Haiti while “the Israelis came from the other side of the world.”



Israeli Heroes In Haiti



According to CNN reporter Elizabeth Cohen, doctors from other missions were sending patients who needed surgery to Israel's makeshift hospital, particularly those who were in critical condition.



While on a humanitarian aid relief mission, American actor Sean Penn toured the Israel Defense Forces field hospital.



Israeli Heroes In Haiti



The IDF Search and Rescue Brigade installed a water cistern together with Haitian workers.



The Israeli army hospital in Haiti is the “Rolls-Royce” of medicine in Haiti. –CBS News



Israeli Heroes In Haiti



The Israeli hospital . . . is the paramount medical center operating in Haiti. . . It receives the cases that other hospitals find difficult and cannot manage. –*Time*



Israeli Emergency Assistance–Humanitarian Aid

1979–Israel aids refugees from Cambodia
1985–Israel aids earthquake victims in Mexico
1988–Israel aids earthquake victims in Armenia
1992–Israel aids victims of civil war in Bosnia
1994–Israel provides medical aid for refugees from Rwanda
1997–Israel helps extinguish a major fire in Turkey
1998–Israel sends search and rescue team to U.S. Embassy bombing site in Kenya
1998–Israel aids flood victims in Central America
1999–Israel aids refugees from Kosovo
1999–Israel aids earthquake victims in Turkey
2000–Israel provides emergency aid to Ethiopia
2001–Israel aids earthquake victims in El Salvador
2001–Israel aids earthquake victims in India
2001–Israel aids earthquake victims in Peru

2003–Israel aids flood victims in Sri Lanka
2004–Israel aids tsunami victims in Sri Lanka
2005–Israel aids Hurricane Katrina victims in the U.S.
2006–Israel aids earthquake victims in Indonesia
2006–Israel aids flood victims in Romania
2007–Israel aids firefighters in Macedonia
2007–Israel aids tropical storm victims in Mexico and the Dominican Republic
2010–Israel aids earthquake victims in Haiti
2011–Israel aids earthquake victims in Japan
2013–Israel aids typhoon victims in the Philippines
2015–Israel aids earthquake victims in Nepal
2017–Israel aids hurricane victims in Puerto Rico
2018–Israel aids tsunami victims in Indonesia
2019–Israel aids dam collapse victims in Brazil
2022–Israel sends aid and sets up a field hospital to aid Ukrainian war refugees

At Port-au-Prince Toussaint Louverture International Airport, an Israeli plane carrying the emergency medical and search and rescue teams from the IDF Medical Corps waits to return to Israel. Some of the soldiers gather, sharing emotional stories and tearful goodbyes, while others handle loading, flight prepping, and other logistics. Before leaving, the Israelis transferred all remaining patients to other hospitals, including the University of Miami Children's Hospital, whose base of operations was at the airport.



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