



Disaster

on Mount Meron



The Tragedy on the Mountain



Personal Stories



MDA Provides Psychological Assistance to MDA Teams from the Mount Meron Disaster



Meron. Lag b'omer. 2021



Picture of the week



Do you have an interesting story? An exciting news? Send us to: info@mda.org.il



The Tragedy on the Mountain

In the months leading up to the Lag B'Omer celebration, MDA prepared in advance for various scenarios during the event based on experience and accumulated knowledge from securing the event in previous years, field trips, planning the deployment of forces, raising alert in the Yarden region and preparing for the Multi Casualties Incident (MCI).

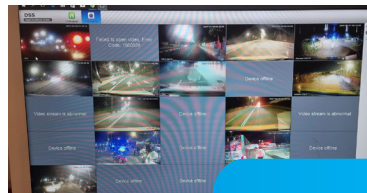
During the celebration in Meron, MDA throughout the north of the country was on high alert. The many Magen David Adom teams from all over the country who came to Meron in cooperation with dozens of rescue organizations operating under MDA throughout the year, medically secured the hundreds of thousands of celebrants who arrived. The deployment of forces on the ground began the day before (28.4). Magen David Adom, which works in full coordination with the Israel Police, conducted a field exercise on the morning of the event, led by the Israel Police in response to the MCI. In addition to ambulances and intensive care vehicles, MDA placed 2 new ATVs with evacuation

capabilities, 2 buses for evacuating casualties, a clinic caravan and a national command vehicle with command and control systems and wired communications. MDA helicopters were also put on standby.

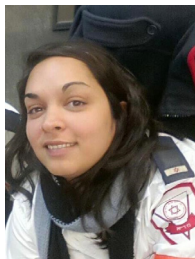
At 00:49, calls began to be received at MDA dispatch centers for injured due to overcrowding and with the receipt of a situation report of dozens of injured, at 01:01 the forces on the ground announced a multi-casualty incident. Dozens of ambulances and intensive care vehicles rushed to the scene to respond to the dozens injured.

The disaster claimed the lives of 45 people and hospitalized more than 150 injured, some in critical condition.

During the event, MDA's blood services provided 257 blood units and its products, and the day after the event, as part of a special blood drive, more than 2,000 blood units were donated.



The Dispatch Center is on the Frontline



Sagit Mordechai (38) from Mazkeret Batya has been working for MDA for 11 years at the organization's National Operation Center in Kiryat Ono. On the eve of Lag Ba Omer, Sagit arrived for the night shift - which turned out to be the most significant shift: "From the shift changing I felt ready for this night. I received

the instructions and highlights for exceptional cases and started a shift. Any shift of this kind around a multi-participant event is more tense. There were routine calls from Meron even before the event. Calls for fainting and minor bruises," she says.

"The first call received reported a collapse of the tribune and immediately at this point a connection was established between the dispatch center and the command post in Meron to understand exactly what the scenario was, what the data was on the ground. At the same time, we organized at the dispatch center for a multi-casualty event. A lot of scripts ran in my head at the same time. A few minutes after the first call, a clear picture was received of all our professional bodies in Meron and that this is a multi-casualties incident event in which many resuscitations are performed."

"Although it is a very emotionally complex event, with the announcement of the MCI we were working on an automaton. We, too, also the Galil Dispatch Center in the north of the country and all the factors

simply acted on an automaton in accordance with what we are always prepared for - there was less time for thoughts and understand the magnitude of the disaster. All that was before our eyes was to reach as many people as possible who needed help. "

There were no simple calls to paramedics at the hotline who answered calls 101. Some civilians and some MDA first responders who were on the mountain reported resuscitation and a large number of injured. The contact was also full of emotions from the crews in the field and could be heard.

At 5:30 it was possible to breathe for a moment and digest what had happened. Suddenly it was possible to get up and lift your head and see pictures, see news and suddenly, only then did I see everything with my eyes and it was significant because everything becomes more tangible. Now think about what happened to the guys who were there who encountered difficult scenes."

"We ended the night, despite the difficult event, with a sense of satisfaction because we acted in the most orderly and efficient manner. Using the most advanced technologies in the world at the MDA center that allowed us continuous communication with the staff in Meron, we responded as much as possible to the area. We were able to launch helicopters, we were able to talk to the hospitals and prepare them for the reception of the injured. Along with all the significant occurrence, it must be remembered that dispatch center provided a response to calls that arrived and were not related to the incident in Meron."

"I Have Not Yet Digested the Event"



MDA EMT at the Afula station, **Dor Keinan**, was stationed on the night of the celebration in Meron when he received the call - to arrive urgently at the scene of the incident "I arrived at the scene and saw a lot of resuscitations, injured children and shouting. In front of my eyes were eight unconscious civilians and here I realized that this was an unusual incident," Keinan recalls.

"I acted according to the procedure, calmly and without stopping. I treated the injured and the first

one I treated was a 17-year-old boy who fought for his life. We worked like a moving film, if I stopped I would break. The hardest part was that I counted each and every body, in order to give a situation report to the MDA dispatch center."

On the size of the incident and the tragedy, he added: "This is a different kind of event because of the size of the place, the density and the number of injured. The access was very limited and the terrain conditions were difficult. Even now, a few days later, I'm not entirely sure I digested. I still could not stop and think about what happened there on Friday night. On Saturday, I was already on duty at the dispatch center, because we must continue."

MDA Paramedic Yossi Halabi, One of the First at the Scene of the Disaster in Meron, Recalls: "The Music Continued in the Background, You Can't Move Right or Left - and People are Crushed to Death"



Magen David Adom paramedic, **Yossi Halabi**, a resident of Kfar Tavor, one of the first to arrive at the scene of the disaster on Mount Meron, recounted the tragic event: "Shortly before 01:00 at night, we received a call about a number of injured in need of assistance. I moved forward. And from step to step - the reporting intensified and

the number of injured increased. I led the team with seven EMTs and five paramedics and we realized we were entering a scene of disaster."

On the magnitude of the tragedy and the first moments, he added: "We were actually the first to arrive at the scene. The sights were very harsh, shouts and people were crushed, at first we

thought a grandstand had collapsed. We worked in unprecedented crowds. We screamed for people to step aside and just saw a pile of people lying on top of each other. I realized the magnitude of the matter within seconds, every moment of resuscitation and every moment of rescuing an injured man. "One by one and take care, while more and more forces arrived in the arena. The music was still playing in the background for the first few minutes and it was impossible to move right or left."

About the day after, he recounted: "Actually my shift continued into the disaster - when I was in the MDA helicopter. The feeling was very difficult, taking time to contain and understand. I keep reliving the event and wondering if I could have done something better. I talk to my team, making sure everyone is psychologically okay. It's very difficult to get back to normal after such a disaster."

Assaf Schmidt, 20-Year-Old MDA EMT: "I saw sights I will never forget in my life"



Assaf Schmidt, a Jerusalemite, a fellow of the Netivot Neria yeshiva in Shomria, came to Mount Meron on Thursday night for the celebration with his friends. "I have been to Meron about four times and I know the area, the congestion and the characteristics of the event well. When I arrived

this year I had the feeling that there was a certain congestion. Although there was always congestion but personally I felt there was more congestion in certain places."

That evening, Assaf arrived wearing an MDA shirt, a fact that encouraged people to ask him for help - which led to the scene of the disaster among the first to be there.

"Suddenly two children came to me and shout at me because urgent help is needed due to congestion. At first I did not understand what they wanted but when more and more people started shouting I realized something was happening and I ran to the scene. When I got to the place I started up the

stairs and saw an inconceivable spectacle. At first I did not understand what was happening and what I was seeing and as I was advancing along with three policemen I saw a pile of people a few meters tall and they were screaming for help.

And I try my best to help and understand where I can pull people to get them out but it's impossible.. I will not forget it, I will not forget the look of the older man shouting at me "I am suffocating, help me". For long minutes policemen and rescue forces tried to force people out of the pile."

After a few moments a lot of rescue forces started to flow and we realized that all the people we got out of there needed immediate treatment. The most important thing was to clear the aisle while providing care and we separated those who needed life-saving care. I will never the forget sights for the rest of my life. I was especially shocked by the very difficult resuscitation experience that I will not forget his sight. This is the most difficult event I have attended, which has left me with very heavy precipitation. It's hard for me to get back to routine. I need time to digest the things that were there, the things I saw and experienced.



MDA Provides Psychological Assistance to MDA Teams from the Mount Meron Disaster

On Friday, April 30, as soon as the treatment of the dead and injured of the disaster on Mount Meron ended and when the dimensions of the disaster became clear, the volunteer coordinators in the regions were instructed to talk to all the volunteers who were there.

Throughout the day, conversations took place, and updates were received on staff members who showed signs of distress.

At the beginning of the week, conversations in the regions were held with about 200 staff members who spoke about their feelings during and after the event.

From the conversations it emerged that the staff members experienced difficulties in seeing the piles of corpses, the sights of the injured, some of them young, shouting, performing so many resuscitations, and all this while music was still playing in the background that accompanied the revelry.

MDA is implementing the “Resilience” program to respond to staff exposing to injuries and situations

that include disturbing appearances - such as in multi-casualty events, resulting in an immediate and prolonged stress response, causing many functional problems.

Processing the event shortly thereafter can prevent the development of these syndromes. A concluding conversation of the medical staff takes place after each significant incident of treatment of the injured and is essential in preserving and improving the personal and team capacity.

Also, proper management of the conversation after a difficult event allows for emotional processing of the experience in a natural and professional way.

All team members who were at the event take part in the conversation.

MDA operates under the guidance of Professor Knobler, a psychiatrist and former head of the IDF's Psychological Health Department.

MDA continues to monitor and accompany the participants in the Meron event.

