

Israel Opens Field Hospital in Japan

✖ Israel has opened a field hospital in the Miyagi district of Japan, one of the areas worst hit by the March 11 earthquake and subsequent tsunami. The delegation includes 50 medical staff from the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) Home Front Command and Medical Corps.

An opening ceremony was held on Tuesday and included a moment of silence for all those affected by the catastrophe. The number of missing or dead in Japan has now reached over 28,000.

The first patient at the new clinic, treated for suspected broken ribs, was Minamisanriko Mayor Jin Sato. He was examined by the commander of the medical team, deputy to the IDF Chief Medical Officer, Col. Dr. Ofir Cohen-Marom.

Tokyo said Israel is one of the first countries to send aid as per the needs and request of the Japanese.

Japanese Ambassador to Israel Haruhisa Takeuchi expressed deep gratitude.

"I thank you, the crew of medical personnel, from the bottom of my heart, for volunteering to help in the aftermath of this tragedy and for carrying out this difficult mission," he says.

Earlier this month, Israel established a surgery in Minamisanriko, a fishing city where some 10,000 people are dead or missing. A small team arrived soon after the earthquake to assess the need for the larger deployment.

The clinic opened near to a facility where some 1,500 people are seeking refuge.

Israel also donated more than 18 tons of humanitarian aid to

Japan (10,000 coats, 6,000 blankets, 8,000 pairs of gloves and 150 portable toilets).

Since the disaster there has been a severe shortage of the most basic of items.

This is not the first time Israel has dispatched teams of Jewish and Arab medics to disaster zones.

In August 1999, an earthquake of 7.6 on the Richter scale struck Izmit, Turkey. Israel sent 350 search-and-rescue specialists with a team of dogs that were at work the morning after the quake.

Following the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, a 220-strong team of IDF rescue and medical staff played a major role in the international aid effort.