

# Israeli Runs for the Front Line of Democracy

When I told people I was running the Jerusalem Half Marathon, I was met with a sympathetic head tilt, the pursed lip exhale followed by the ominous, "Do you think that's a good idea?"

I had run a few half marathons, but the last one was more than three years ago, and let's say I've not kept myself in the best of shape. My closest friends happen to be Ben and Jerry!

So as I began preparing for the Jerusalem Half Marathon, things were going well until the end of September when I fractured my ankle in a freak accident. I was able to run again, still with some pain, in December.

I had no intention of quitting, simply because the cause I did it for is too important. The cause—Lone Soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces. I wanted to do something to support them, as these lone soldiers have become increasingly close to my heart.

I have the utmost respect for the Israeli soldiers of the IDF. These youngsters of 18 who leave their families to defend their home, to defend all citizens of Israel against the terror and hatred of her enemies.

So when I read many months ago about "lone soldiers," many of whom volunteer from overseas or make Aliyah and join the IDF, I couldn't help but be inspired by them.

- 40 percent of lone soldiers serve in combat units.
- They didn't have to come to Israel and join the IDF. They made the choice.
- They put their lives directly on the line for the people and the State of Israel.

- They spend Shabbat and holidays without their parents.
- They have to deal with a multitude of stress, being in a military that is constantly fighting threats on all sides.

Since I started speaking up for Israel, I receive messages from people telling me how brave and courageous I am. As much as I appreciate the kind words, these men and women are the brave and courageous ones.

Here we have young men and women who see the vilification of the Israel Defense Forces that occurs in the media and on university campuses. Even with the vile lies, these individuals go to Israel, leaving their parents behind, and volunteer to defend the Jewish state. The lone soldiers of the IDF aren't just on the front line of Israel; they stand in the front line of democracy and freedom.

*Note: Hafeez did finish the half marathon, which took place on March 1. He finished it in one hour, six minutes, 23 seconds.*

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