Solidarity with Israel

July 22nd-24th 2014

Our solidarity mission visited the family of Moshe Melako where we passed our condolences on behalf of B'nai B'rith Europe

Already 40 soldiers gave their life for the security of Israel since the beginning of the operation

We spoke with Prof. Efraim Inbar, Director of The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies who shared very interesting points of view about the politics of Israel concerning the Gaza strip and the international community.

He explained to us the strategy of Israel in this operation consists of getting rid of tunnels, keeping Hamas as weak as possible but also sending a message to Hezbollah and other terrorist groups standing at Israeli borders.

He confirmed the hand of Iran in the military force of Hamas, and stood on the fact that Iran is Israel's biggest enemy.

He opened our eyes on Israel's new and future partners, which are from Asia and for example India, rather than Europe.

We also met Akiva Tor, Director, Division for World Jewry and Religions, Ministry of Foreign Affairs with whom we discussed the diaspora situation. He regretted the amount of protest for Gaza compared to those for Israel, but realized the security of the Jewish communities may be compromised when organizing such protests.

On Wednesday we started by visiting an "Iron Dome" battery and received an IDF Security Briefing about the situation on the field, insisting on the danger of the tunnels and the necessity of getting rid of those for the security of Israeli citizens. The Iron Dome today stops around 90% of rockets from Gaza. Each anti missile from it costs between 45.000$ and 210.000$.

We also visited the regional council of Ashkelon, Merhavim and the Ashkelon municipality center of command, we were received by their Mayors.

It was impressive to see how they organized themselves to be as effective as possible. They have been using the same kind of management as the Americans since 9/11. They organized all moshav settlements and cities into three regions, centralizing emergency needs but also police, post trauma centers and more. Everything is underground in shelters.

We afterwards entered a camp organized to supply food and goods to the soldiers.

It was organized by individuals by major personal efforts (1500/2000 meals per day!)

The solidarity we witnessed during our entire trip was amazing and moving.

We finally went to visit Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon.

They moved all installations underground (the hospital building is not in use, only shelters), where we saw soldiers and civilians being treated due to causes of the current situation.

They are facing huge issues as there are only a few operation rooms underground and one delivery room. Unfortunately, most of the installations are not mobile.

They are building a new entirely sheltered hospital building. They are still looking for funds.

On Thursday we first met Jonathan Shachter, Advisor on Diaspora Affairs to the Prime Minister who gave us an overview of the situation on the field and the relationship with the media. After, we met Dr. Eran Lerman, Deputy National Security Advisor, who gave us a very interesting overview of the Prime Minister of Israel's politics and the international reactions concerning the conflict.

Alan Schneider of the B'nai B'rith World Center did an amazing job on such a short notice. We met incredible people and went directly on the ground. We are really thankful.