

# Former IAF Commander Amikam Norkin: Our Power Isn't Measured Only by Military Prowess But Also by Social Unity"

*IAF pilots meet disabled children at Shalva National Center in Jerusalem. "We connected to them immediately and invited them to visit us at Palmachim Airbase."*

NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, February 14, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A heartwarming behind-the-scenes glimpse of the IAF pilots who visited the [Shalva](#) National Center in Jerusalem to work with children with disabilities. Major General (res.) Amikam Norkin: "Our pilots were deeply touched, and they connected on a profound level to the children through their shared activities. At the end of the visit, we invited all the children to visit us on Palmachim Airbase where they met with the military personnel."



Amikam Norkin with a Shalva kids

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Our Power as a Country Is Not Measured Solely By Our Military Prowess But Also By Our Social Unity”

*Former Commander of Israel Air Force Major General (Res.)  
Amikam Norkin*

Former Commander of the Israel Air Force General (Res.) Amikam Norkin, 56, is married and a father of three girls. Born and bred in Beit She’arim, a town in the Jezreel Valley, he attended a prestigious agricultural high school, and in 1985 was drafted into the IAF Flight Academy in 1985 where he completed his training in the IAF Flight Academy's Fighter Division and graduated with honors. After four months spent flying the Skyhawk, he was assigned to the Knights of the Twin Tail Squadron, which operates the Baz (F-15), thus becoming the youngest F-15

pilot in the world.

As one who spent 37 years engaged in military service, Norkin is firm in his commitment that

soldiers must connect in a profound way to the people that they defend, and that this chain of connection includes a special link representing Israelis with disabilities.

“As the commander of the Israeli Air Force, the significance of this bond linking the IAF to Israeli society with all its components was something very close to my heart. In the framework of a series of meetings between IAF commanders and various communities and sectors, a forum of senior commanders and pilots was invited to visit the Shalva National Center in Jerusalem. As soon as we arrived, we immediately felt that spark of connection, and we fell in love with the place and the special children there. At the time, the IAF forged a very close and meaningful bond with Shalva. At the end of the visit, we invited the children to visit us on Palmachim Airbase where they met with military personnel, and since then, the bond between us has developed and been strengthened.”

Norkin, an Israeli hero and warrior, speaks of Shalva with shining eyes. For those who are unaware, Shalva is Israel’s largest center for persons with disabilities. The non-profit was founded in 1990 by Kalman and Malkie Samuels after their second child, Yossi, became blind and deaf with other disabilities after receiving a faulty vaccine. The ensuing challenges led the Samuels to absorb that families of children with disabilities require a multilayered support system and warm community to help them cope with and surmount the challenges.

“We discovered and confronted these challenges on our own. Our lives transformed drastically, and we had to change gears completely,” Samuels relates. Yet their efforts bore fruit, and over 30 years after Shalva first opened its doors in a modest Jerusalem rental apartment, it now occupies a colossal 22,000 square meter facility and has expanded to offer a broad range of services for thousands of people with disabilities ranging from infants to adults. Its comprehensive life-cycle



Amikam Norkin with a Shalva kid



Amikam Norkin with a Shalva kids 2

programming provides cutting-edge therapies, inclusive educational frameworks, social and recreational activities, vocational training, and independent living, as well as respite and family support. Renowned as one of the world's largest associations for the care and inclusion of persons with disabilities, it is dedicated to providing transformative care for children and adults with disabilities, empowering their families, and promoting social inclusion.

When Norkin is asked about what prompted his connection to Israelis with disabilities, he divulges that he has a younger brother with disabilities, "which is definitely part of what fortified my awareness, understanding and resolve regarding the national need to help and strengthen families struggling with challenges that are difficult for us to fathom. As a leader, it was so important to me to inculcate those under my command with the values of humanity, compassion, and genuinely connecting to the people that we're protecting—and this includes all the people whose lives we're safeguarding. I wanted to introduce our pilots to children and adults with diverse needs and disabilities, and to do everything in our power to help them integrate into society for everyone's benefit. This sensitivity and appreciation of every human being regardless of ability or disability will mold them into better soldiers, better commanders, and will make Israel a better, more unified country."

On Thursday, March 2, Norkin will take the stage at Shalva's annual gala dinner in New York. "Israel is approaching its 75th year of statehood, and I believe that we can look proudly back on all that we've achieved as a nation. At the same time, it's an opportunity for us to look toward the future and work to maximize goodness. It's a time to identify and seize all the exciting possibilities that exist in Israel, to overcome differences and conflict, and to help Shalva's children along with other children and adults in Israel with disabilities integrate successfully into society, with the knowledge that it's up to us to make it right!"

Shalva's Founder and President, Kalman Samuels: "Amikam Norkin is personally attached to Shalva's mission and we are honored to have of such stature to help us share our message among Israeli leaders. It is evident that IAF cares deeply about our children and recognizes them as equal and important members of the society they protect. Norkin and IAF are helping to integrate our children into society by taking responsibility, connecting with different people, and working toward a more inclusive society."

Eli Mandelbaum

Shalva

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