

Over \$15 Million Raised at First-Ever Virtual FIDF National Gala

Gala featured live performances by superstar and active IDF soldier Noa Kirel, Israeli singer-songwriter Idan Raichel, and IDF soldier Eden Alena, who will represent Israel in the next Eurovision Song Contest

Israeli PM Netanyahu: "The great transformation of our people's history took place when the Jewish people restored the capacity to defend ourselves by ourselves"

New York, September 14, 2020 - Thousands of supporters from across the globe joined Friends of the Israel Defense Forces (FIDF) in saluting Israel's brave soldiers and veterans yesterday at the first-ever virtual FIDF National Gala. Last night's 2020 FIDF National Gala, themed "A Night of Heroes," raised a total of over \$15 million to support well-being and educational programs for Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers, with donations still being made.

This FIDF initiative aimed to enable the global FIDF family to unite for an unprecedented night of giving and extraordinary solidarity, saluting Israel's IDF protectors, despite the limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The program featured several

segments to honor IDF soldiers, including Lone Soldiers, who join the IDF with no immediate family in Israel. Among those being recognized at the gala was a female Black Hawk Pilot, Cpt. T., who participated in an opening segment called "Air, Land, and Sea," in which active-duty soldiers took the audience on a dynamic and action-packed training mission. Another segment, focusing on one family's multigenerational story, highlighted FIDF's Witnesses in Uniform Program.

The gala featured a live performance by pop star and active IDF soldier Noa Kirel, who recently signed a deal with Atlantic Records, the largest ever for an Israeli artist. Israeli singer-songwriter Idan Raichel also performed live, as did the IDF Musical Ensemble featuring IDF soldier Eden Alena, who will represent Israel in the next Eurovision Song Contest.

FIDF National Chairman Rabbi Peter Weintraub and Israeli-American actress, model, and host Moran Atias presided as masters of ceremonies.

Other distinguished guests who participated in the gala included Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu; Israel's Alternate Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Lt. Gen. (Res.)

Benjamin (Benny) Gantz; IDF Chief of the General Staff Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi; Founder and Chairman of Christians United for Israel (CUFI) Pastor John Hagee; and President and CEO of The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (The Fellowship) Yael Eckstein. FIDF National Director and CEO Maj. Gen. (Res.) Meir Klifi-Amir - who will be succeeded this month by incoming FIDF National Director and CEO Steven Weil - gave a farewell speech after six years of unprecedented organizational growth.

"The great transformation of our people's history took place when the Jewish people restored the capacity to defend ourselves by ourselves. This is what the IDF is all about," said Netanyahu.

Among the major donations, Nefesh B'Nefesh pledged \$1.3 million; Brothers for Life pledged \$1 million; Or Lachayal pledged \$1 million; Momentum pledged \$750,000; Genesis Philanthropy Group pledged \$600,000; and the Iranian American Jewish Federation pledged \$600,000.

In addition, notable among the gala's donations was a pledge from FIDF's ardent supporters, Cheryl and Haim Saban, who will match donations up to

\$500,000, and FIDF National Vice President Marc Perlman and his wife Claire, who will also match donations up to \$500,000. That is a total match of \$1 million, for which donations will be ongoing post-gala.

"I have no words to express my appreciation to this big, huge, and unique organization. I do not think that anywhere in the world there is another kind of ties and organization like this. Thank you from the bottom of my heart," said Kochavi.

Funds raised at the gala will provide much-needed and well-deserved services such as academic scholarships to combat veterans, financial assistance for soldiers in-need, support for Lone Soldiers throughout their service and upon release, crucial aid for wounded veterans and the families of fallen soldiers, weeks of rest and recuperation for entire IDF units, as well as educational, cultural, and recreational facilities. The evening presented a rare and exclusive opportunity to pay tribute to the state of Israel and its brave men and women in uniform.

To watch the full FIDF Virtual National Gala, please visit its website: <https://events.fidf.org>.



Top: (from left) Moran Atias, Noa Kirel and the IDF Ensemble; FIDF National Chairman, Rabbi Peter Weintraub; Idan Raichel. Bottom: (from left) Staff Sgt. Aviazar; Cpt. T; Lt. Col. Efrat and Moran Atias.

Photos: Courtesy of FIDF