

CASE STUDY 26

Shira

Shira Silkoff is from Golders Green in London, England.

Shira finished school in 2016 and went on a gap year to Israel. For nine months she learnt about her Jewish heritage. However, when it was time to come home and go to university, she decided she wanted to do something else.

“I came to the conclusion that it didn’t feel right to be that person who uses Israel as a glorified holiday home, but doesn’t pay the rent. And with that, I decided that the answer was simple.”

Shira joined the Israeli army, committing to 18 months service. She has been deployed in a Field Intelligence Unit on Israel’s border with Egypt.

Serving in the Israeli Defense Forces, Shira became aware of the smallness of Israel compared to some other countries.

“It is the only Jewish state surrounded by large and powerful Arab states which have sworn themselves committed to our destruction... It’s very easy to feel isolated from the rest of the world in Israel.”

Shira was alarmed by rocket attacks on Israel from Gaza and concerned for innocent civilians. She felt that Israel’s calls for help were ignored by the rest of the world.

Israel Defense Forces mission

“To defend the existence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the state of Israel. To protect the inhabitants of Israel and to combat all forms of terrorism which threaten the daily life.”

Israel Defense Forces (IDF) website: www.idf.il/en



She remembers Jewish Israelis praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem for the people affected.

During a rise in violence in 2018, thousands of soldiers were moved to the border with Gaza, feeling supported “with the blessings of hundreds of thousands of people” in the rest of Israel.

That violence ended with a ceasefire, which was a big relief for Shira and other soldiers.

“I received texts from my friends letting me know that they were on their way home, or at least back to regularly scheduled floor washing on base.”

Shira sees herself in a tradition of Jews defending Israel through history.

“We proved almost two thousand years ago as the Maccabees fought to keep hold of all that is valued in Judaism, we will never forget about each other.”

Drawn from Shira’s ‘Eye in the IDF’ blog, featured in *The Jewish Chronicle*:

www.thejc.com/comment/blogs/isolated-but-not-alone-idf-lone-soldier-army-israel-blog-shira-silkoff-1.474119