

## Video Testimony of Yossi Landau (Zaka) October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:00:01] My name is Yossi Landau. I'm 55 years old. I live with in Ashdod, father of ten children, grandfather of 22, having a business, international freight forwarding business. 33 years joining Zaka. Sorry, but I think I'm. I'm in a dream right now. A very bad dream. I'm not eating. I'm not sleeping. And not only me, it's my entire team that I was with them for the last ten days. 11 days? Something like that. And I'm always with them. I know them since they came into the to the organization, followed them. Right now, I don't know them. They're all different. This all happened last Saturday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 in the morning while we were having Saturday holiday, enjoying with the children, got up to the sirens and missile attack on Ashdod where I live. Just got my radio and then my wife and my kids know that this happens. I'm outside and not in the house. They go into the shelter. I don't know even where the shelter is in my house. Because there always, when it is, we're going out with the volunteers. We are out for the civilians to help them and to be there for them. Same thing happens this Saturday, and all of a sudden we start to get some, some information that the missiles was basically a cover up for the invasion, a major invasion for settlements and for for towns and for cities in Israel. No clue what happened. Nobody cares.

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:02:46] Nobody knows nothing. But I decided it's time for me to be not at home. I got my vest, I got my helmet. Went into my car. Just called up another volunteer. Whoever is available Saturday. We're all religious people, not everybody we can get in touch, and drove out to the south. Arrived in Sderot. There was still gunshots still. There was a war. It's a war zone. The police, soldiers screaming, and you just go down because it's right in back of you. There's terrorists and you see people struggling to life to live. They wounded. First thing that first you go to help them as a as an EMT volunteer. You just go to help them wherever you can save. And thank God we saved a couple of people. With gunshot wounds. And then all of a sudden, you see a gun in front of your face, a rifle. And you have no choice but to take him down. And thank God we took him down. Then we went further on the streets. We saw people in cars, people outside. Just pedestrians. People in the houses. Dead for no reason. Not only Israelis. I arrived to a spot. It was in a car, four, I think it was Chinese workers that came to work. They were all dead. We know we have to treat everybody the same dignity, the same respect doesn't make it doesn't make a difference. Gender or religion, we treat everybody.

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:05:27] But now we saw. We used to regular, used to a couple of bodies. The most the most that we, we treated in in Zaka was 45 bodies in one incident. And we thought this is the the highest level we reached. I was all over the world. If it was terror attacks. I'm a survivor of the 9/11 attack. I was there, I was trapped, and I saved people. I was there afterwards, bringing up my friends and people. I was in India. I was in natural disasters. I was a first responder in Miami Surfside when I was almost blown up by fire. I saw the death in front of my face numerous times, but it won't stop me to go further what I'm doing. And keep up. We went, we fought and we took. We had no place where to take the bodies in Sderot. So sorry to say, but I just broke into a truck that was parked over there had no choice. And we filled up that truck with bodies. We've taken the bodies, we put them in the bags and just putting in in the truck. That's to respect them. They shouldn't be in the street. Then when more of our volunteers came along and we start to settle to make groups, I send out a group to Ofakim because we knew that, in Ofakim, there's also an invasion and there's attacks.

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:07:49] There's civilians that are killed. So we had a group going over there. I would say I'll follow them afterwards. Then we went out to the road. The road it's called Kvish Shloshim ve Aarba. It's the 34 mark 34. It's a piece of road that should take normal, I would say between 15, 20 minutes. It took us for our volunteers and while we were under fire and we have cover up, took us 11 hours, 11 hours to clean up and not finally clean up. But whatever we could do and that's not included, burnt cars that we saw on the side that people were burned while they were alive. They got a missile, they got a grenade, and they were burned that we said, okay, we'll keep that for the last because we have to take first the the people that were shot. And I can say 70% of those victims were shot in the back, not in the front. They were all shot in the back, not once, not twice, or from the side they came in. They even had time to pull them out of the car. They searched the pockets to find money to see if they have money. We found, we saw wallets out just lying in the side, and I don't think that the victims did it. And there was no one in that by the victims before we came. So I said to my volunteers and I said to myself, okay, it's only.....

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:10:11] It's only, you know, shotguns, all the wounds. We're used to it. We saw that. Let's go further. Well, we came to a shelter where people went into that shelter was on the Tsomet, I think it's the fasim was a shelter. We just go into

that shelter and we saw 20 people. 20 people. They were hugged. They were hugging themselves, trying to defend themselves. They were all burnt to death. Just two grenades. Hand grenades. That did it, the job. Well, we have to separate them. I don't know if you know. And you should never know what it means to separate a burnt body. It's very difficult. And it's very hard to do that. Because when. And we saw even though before we got to the kibbutzim, to the area, to this. Those bodies that we we picked up, they were talking to us. Know you're going to see you're going to think that. Yes, Yossi. You're crazy. You got crazy. You know, I was I was always crazy. I'm a crazy person. Yes. Maybe something now happened more. I'll take care of it. But I'm telling you that those bodies told the stories. They were talking to us and telling us this is what happened to us. And that's before that we saw the torching that before we saw the we saw the bodies, how it looked in the kibbutzim. And I'll get to that. But those bodies that we have to take apart from that shelter, were just talking to us.

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:12:41] We only tried to defend ourselves. We only we didn't try to harm anybody. We came over here to to enjoy ourselves, to sing. And this is what happened. They were all youngsters. Then we go further. We see a van, Volkswagen, six bodies in that. They were not Jews. They were Palestinians. They were shot. It was, I don't know, with Israeli plates. They were all shot and we put them into the bags, the same thing like we did to the civilians, to the Jews, because we respect. That's our mission to respect every human being. They weren't involved in any terror attack and we're going to respect them. Then they call us in. Okay. So we said, okay, we saw everything. There's nothing else. What to see? They call us in to kibbutz Be'eri. We were warned before. We were told before. Listen. What what you guys are going to see now? Just tell me if you're ready or not. If not, we can't take. I took my team. 50 people in my team, 50 Zaka members. That I know them by heart. I know them. The size of their shoe, I know them. I took them for a talk. I explained them exactly what we going into, and I didn't ask them to get permission from the wife and the kids because I knew that if they're going to ask the family, they will not get any permission.

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:14:40] But I asked their own permission and I told them, before we go in, let's sing a song because I know we'll need it. We got a song, a hope song. It's a future song. It's a song that we know that there's. There's going to be light in the end of the tunnel. Took them all together. Hugging them. Let's go in. We went in the first house we saw. Was a couple, father and mother, sitting there on their knees on the

floor. They were on their. Now they were head down, hands tied to the back. On the other side of the dining room was in the living dining room, was seven year old boy and a girl, I would say about six years old, sitting just against the parents, hands tied to the back. Same position. The bodies were tortured, while now, start to use imagination. Who was tortured before? Who saw if this was, this was the purpose. If this was the children looking at the parents being tortured. The parents seeing. And when I say tortured. I will say missing body pieces. An eye just taken out an eye. One eye. Fingers being. Fingers being. All this happened, and by the end they all had a bullet and still not finished. In the middle, there's a table. Those terrorists were sitting and eating there. The Saturday meal that was prepared for this family. And. For this family, they just took it.

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:17:29] They were hungry and they took it. And they ate this meal while torturing these children and their parents. Three of my... I broke I, I blanked out and it took me a split second to blank out. And then I got to myself and I said, if this is going to happen to me, then we're done with the job. My volunteers would never be able to do it. Now you can say again, Yossi is a crazy guy. I took them and we started dancing. We started. We didn't dance. We just sat down next to the bodies in the blood. We had. We were sitting in the blood singing. We had this white suit that I told them when we got out, we're going to take this white cover suit and we'll change it. But for now, we sitting next to the bodies in the blood and we're going to sing this, this song that they was supposed to sing for the holiday for Saturday. And we going to we're going to make like they sitting with us by the meal. Because like 3 to 5 minutes. And then one of my volunteers said, Yossi enough. We have to go further. Just got up. We took them. We handled them. We we put them in the bags and we said, now we're going further. I told him, let's go change because we're full of blood. About he says, no, yes, we're going to change. But I need a bag.

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:19:27] I want to take this home. We go on further. We go into the next house. It was an old lady. She was dead. We took her. We said, I'm sorry that we can't deal with handle like we usually do to take the blood and everything. We go further. Then we see the woman. She was about, I would say 30. Age of 30. She was lying on the floor. A puddle of blood. Big puddle of blood. Face down. We have to turn her over in order to put it into the body bag. She was a pregnant woman. Her stomach was butchered though. The baby that was connected to the cord was stabbed. She was

shot in the back. Now we going to the same imagination we're using. Let's talk to the body. Let's talk. Let's see what happens. Did she see? See that? What was done to her baby. Or she didn't. Maybe she didn't have that suffering, you know. But. We have a debate between us. If they use two body bags for the baby and for the mother. That was our debate. While sitting with our children and having fun. We debated between us. If to use two body bags. We decide we will use only one body bag, because we don't want to disconnect this baby from the mother.

[00:22:31] I'll have a break, please.

[00:22:36] I want to give. I want to give a message. It's a message to the world.

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:22:42] And we should know that we have no enemies in the Arab world. We have in our organization, not only in our organization and every private life. I have a lot of friends, customers and co-workers. Arabs, Palestinians, Christians, everything. Those people, I won't call them people because we can't call them people. We can't call them animals. We can't call them. This is something that they don't belong to our world. It's I would see I never met the ISIS, but from the videos that were, that we saw. From the ISIS and as we know that the Arab world condemned the ISIS, this is the same thing has to happen over here. They don't belong to the world. They're not good for the world. We want to live. We can have a good, a nice living without them. Whatever they did, whatever they did, they didn't do it only to my brothers and sisters. They did it for the world. This is to show that the world is dangerous while they're living. Israel has to go through everything. Everything. It's not only Israel, it's the world. And we see that. And we thank the world. We thank the world that.. For the support that we we see the support in the world. Although we see some small groups, I saw all over, that are protesting on behalf of the they, they make it like for the, for the Palestinians but for the Palestinians is it's not good that they're controlling them.

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:25:07] They're only controlling the Palestinians. We have nothing against the Palestinians. We want to live our life. And none of us came to attack the children. I want to give for my team, my team that was with me for the last week. It was we thought we were finished. It was only yesterday and I can say it was only yesterday. It's ten days after the attack in Kfar Aza. We thought there is no more bodies and we went in to take. Unfortunately, it's very hard for us to do, but we do it because

we're human beings, to collect the terrorists. We collected with the same with the same honor with the same honor that we collect the civilians. And all of a sudden we see a body. I would say he was maybe 14 or 15, a youngster. He was not in the house, but he was outside like. It looks like, and as I said before, the bodies were telling the stories. He was running, he was on the run and they most probably got mad on him and they killed him. They chopped off his head. We found him without his head. We put him in a bag. We don't know who this is. It's for sure not a terrorist because we know the clothing that he was wearing, but. And he was without a head. The evil. The horror is. So it's crying. It's crying. And I don't know why this has to happen.

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:27:12] We go home.

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:27:14] We can't talk to the wife. We can't talk to the children. We can't tell them anything. The smell. When I came home, I woke up my wife in the middle of the night and asking her. Are you sure you put everything in the fridge? Don't you have any meat outside that couple of days already? And she knew. She knew what I'm going through. We have the smell. That's what we smelling. That's what we eating. And that was just started for a nice, beautiful holiday. With no warning before. With no. With nothing. With nothing doing to them before. I ask you, I beg you. Please have a prayer. Pray for us that we should be able to raise our children with no damages. With no, who should be normal father normal grandfather. That's all what we need. Thank you.

**Matt Frei (Channel Four):** [00:28:31] And my name is Matt Frei from channel four news in the UK. Thank you very much for your testimony. It was the hardest thing I think I've ever heard in my journalistic career. And I cannot imagine what you're going through. Yossi, let me ask you, how do you. I mean, how do you carry on living after seeing what you've seen? How do you deal with that? And are you also, do you worry that maybe the stories that the things you've seen, right, what you're telling us can be used in order to visit violence on innocent civilians on the other side of this?

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:29:16] We are in a mission now. And we were taught that when everybody, everyone, every volunteer goes into this organization and start testing him. And I was tested not once and not twice, while I was feeding my own family that were in terror attacks and all other disasters. Could be a car accident when you come to

yourself. And it could be a very unnatural death when you come to. And sometimes it's your own family member, you have to know to split your job and your thoughts and your feelings. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't work. Unfortunately, after 33 years of doing this, I'm used to this already. I thought so, I thought so as of now, I know the mission is still not over. It's still not finished. We're in the middle of the mission. When I will finish the mission, I'm sure. I'm sure I'll get some help and I'll need some help. When I came home. I wasn't home Saturday. I came home Friday, back in the afternoon. That was the first time I came home. My wife and kids, they looked at me. They didn't recognize me. I was, I lost, I would say about five kilograms from my weight. And I looked different. When people are telling me, you know. I went to the synagogue on Saturday meeting some friends.

**Yossi Landau (Zaka):** [00:31:21] They were afraid to talk to me, and I saw that they all looked in the back. Something is wrong with this guy. But as I promised, for my volunteers when we had the first incident that I promised them, we will not leave the job without knowing that everyone, every civilian, everyone that was killed, will get the full respect. It's not only for them, it's for the families. And that's our promise that keeps us going. And another thing that keeps us going is the support of the world. We feel we have the support. The world feels it. And they know exactly. We don't have any images. We might have images, but it's against our rules, against our religion. It's it's not an honor. We know it's not an honor. I know when I, if I would see one of my volunteers taking a picture of a, of a victim and I would, I would take him out of the force. Why? You never know what can happen in tomorrow looking on that images or one of his kids. I remember once, it was a couple years ago when it was terrorist attacks, and I was crawling up on a wall, taken off body parts, and a photographer journalist, he made some pictures of me. And my kids were small then, and they didn't know exactly what I'm doing, what I'm doing in Zaka. But he wanted to do me a favor. He sent me home some pictures that he he followed me. And I wasn't home. And they opened up the envelope and they looked at it and I came home. They didn't want to talk to me. I didn't know why. They said, we have a crazy father. So this can happen. Therefore there's no images. We will not make any pictures. And if yes, we'll give it for these sources. Sometimes we have to make pictures. Yes, we'll make pictures. But in general, and second of all, in these kind of. We don't have to prove any war crime that happened over here. It's when somebody's being shot in the back or when we went in and we saw two piles of children, minors. I wouldn't say they were babies. I would say they're

minors. I would say they were age of 10 to 15. They took them in to one place. They weren't even shot. Their hands tied but burned. They were all burned. Isn't that a war crime?