



Photo by: Ariel Jerozolinski

## 'Gov't must respond to growing needs of Shoah survivors'

By RUTH EGLASH  
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A third of some 208,000 victims living in Israel suffer from loneliness during the holidays, Foundation for the Benefit of Holocaust Victims says.

With a recent study revealing that more than one-third of the country's Holocaust survivors are in dire need of assistance, the Foundation for the Benefit of Holocaust Victims in Israel has called on the government to respond immediately to make sure this population can live out its final years with dignity and respect.

"The younger generation will never forgive us if we do not take care of the older generation with the respect they deserve," said Maj.- Gen. Elazar Stern (res.), the voluntary chairman of the foundation. "I urge the relevant parties within the government to deal with this matter as soon as possible. There is no way that we can wait until tomorrow.

Stern pointed to the findings of a recent study carried out earlier this year by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's Myers Brookdale Institute, which found that the social and economic needs of Israel's Holocaust survivor population is expected to increase dramatically in the next four years.

"The needs of Holocaust survivors will only continue to grow," he said.

"To see even just one Holocaust survivor go hungry or feel lonely over the holiday period is a failure of the State of Israel."

Awareness of these needs has grown in recent years, Stern said, but it is now time to translate the awareness into political action.

According to the study, some 208,000 victims of Nazi atrocities live in Israel today, compared to 233,000 in 2009. It said that on average, 12,800 survivors pass away each year (35 people die per day).

The study highlighted that even though the number of survivors will have dropped by an incredible 30 percent to 145,000 by 2015, the number of those in need of financial assistance and medical aid will have risen sharply. Today roughly 33%, or 60,000 individuals out of the 208,000, are considered "needy."

The increased need is clearly linked to the aging of the survivors, found the study, noting that while today 3% of the survivors are under the age of 70, 47% are between 70 and 80 and 50% are over 80. By 2015 more than two-thirds will be over 80.

Last April, representatives of some 15 government and nongovernmental organizations working to aid Holocaust survivors in Israel came together for the first time at a special parlor meeting organized by the Ministry of Welfare and Social Affairs, together with the Foundation for the Benefit of Holocaust Victims.

However, five months later, there has been little improvement, as survivors still face an intense bureaucratic process even before they can understand what exactly their rights are

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“We’re fighting this difficult situation every day,” said Col. (res.) Rony Kalinsky, the foundation’s CEO. “We are assigning volunteers and social workers to help the survivors and also providing financial help, but unfortunately we cannot meet all the needs of survivors in this country.”

He added that while the state is doing much more today than ever before, “the dire conditions of some Holocaust survivors does not allow us to relax. Some of the survivors live in shameful conditions and we are in a race against time to do what we can to help them deal with the loneliness and hardships stemming from the difficult years in the past.”

Just last month, the Foundation announced that it was gearing up for an intensive fundraising program in North America.

It currently receives 40% of its budget from the government and the rest from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, to provide home care and other programs for the survivors.

The State of Israel is doing all it can to support survivors, said Stern, highlighting that the goal was not to raise money for food or medicine but “more for programs that will afford them respect and honor in their old age.”



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