

## **Interview with Annie Perez (Friends of MDA in Hong Kong)**

By Josh Herman and Alon Coret

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*Annie Perez moved from France to Hong Kong some twenty years ago. She has a son who got married in Israel five years ago who currently lives here with his wife and two kids, and a daughter who studied at IDC in Herzliya. Annie became involved with Magen David Adom a number of years ago, and together with the Hong Kong community, donated an ambulance to the Tel Aviv region. Today she serves as the Executive Director of Friends of Magen David Adom in Hong Kong.*

*The following interview was conducted over the phone. Please note that the responses to the questions are not necessarily direct quotes, as certain omissions and modifications were made.*

Q: How do you feel about being in Israel given the current situation? What are your feelings on the conflict in general?

A: I feel very secure in Israel, and visit my family here every six or seven weeks. I don't fear for my security or their own, but it's still stressful, especially during periods of escalation. We're not used to living in countries where we're being attacked. It is simply an unacceptable situation, and should not be taken to be 'normal.' We must make every effort to try to change the status quo.

Q: How do you feel Israel is portrayed in the Hong Kong media?

A: People in Hong Kong simply don't know very much about the Arab-Israeli conflict. For the time being, Hong Kong has not taken a political stand for or against Israel. Despite not knowing much about the issues, however, people in Hong Kong tend to be open-minded, and so I have been working very hard to try and clarify the image of Israel. People over there are willing to listen, and that is something I greatly appreciate.

Q: Is the Jewish community in Hong Kong strongly affiliated with Israel? Are there any events or fundraisers being run on behalf of Israel?

A: Our community has a very strong affiliation with Israel. We have multiple Jewish organizations including the Jewish Woman's Association (JWA) and UJA. We have about 4,000 Jews living in Hong Kong, as well as many Israelis who reside here temporarily for business. We have two major events every year to raise money for Israeli charities. The first is called 'Big Bazaar,' where all shopping proceeds are donated to Israel, specifically to organizations focused on women and children. The other is a Chinese Independence Day Ball, the proceeds of which are given to various Israeli charities.

Q: How are you currently raising Magen David Adom awareness in Hong Kong?

A: Efforts to recruit donors and volunteers are underway, as this is only our second year of operations. We are trying to get many students to volunteer, even those outside of the Jewish community. There is a growing interest in Israel from the Christian community in Hong Kong, which is a promising outreach opportunity.

Q: Is there any message you would like to send on behalf of Friends of MDA and the Jewish community of Hong Kong?

A: Hong Kong is a very safe and democratic place, and I feel proud to live in its thriving Jewish community. I would also like to point out that Hong Kong and Israel have certain similarities, particularly in their being open, democratic societies surrounded by oppressive regimes. Hong Kong is fighting a war – not of violence, but of values – against communist China. I believe Israel should continue to do the same in the Middle East, while at the same time strive for a change in the status quo. Israel and the Jewish people at large deserve a peaceful existence and coexistence in their homeland, and I am determined – through the humanitarian efforts of Magen David Adom – to try to make that dream a reality.

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On behalf of Magen David Adom Israel, we would like to extend a warm thank-you to Annie Perez and the Friends of MDA in Hong Kong for their continued support of our efforts.