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## IDF team returns from Haiti

By JPOST.COM STAFF  
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PM praises delegation; commander describes devastation in Port-au-Prince.

The Israeli medical and rescue delegation which was sent to assist in an international disaster relief effort in Haiti returned to Israel on Thursday, 16 days after a 7.1-magnitude earthquake hit the nation.

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu addressed the crowd of family members, IDF brass and lawmakers gathered on the tarmac at Ben-Gurion International Airport . “Forty-eight hours after [the earthquake], on January 15, the [Israeli] team was already on its way. The plan was to set up the field hospital in 20 hours; it was up in about half that amount of time.”

The prime minister praised the delegation for “elevating the name of the IDF, and the state of Israel.” Noting his recent trip to Nazi death camps in Europe to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Netanyahu said that unlike in Haiti, during the Shoah, “nobody came in time.”

He congratulated the team on “a job well done.”

Barak also spoke at the ceremony, thanking the delegation for their “contribution to the greater good.”

Home Front Brig.-Gen. Shalom Ben-Aryeh, commander of the delegation, described the extent of the destruction which the delegation witnessed in Haiti , including the complete collapse of all government buildings and institutions. He praised the team, noting that everyone they treated would have died if not for their efforts.

After rescuing Haitian trapped in rubble, he said, they went into “Phase 2,” distributing aid to the devastated population, many of whom were left homeless after the quake.

He said that they decided to pack up the IDF field hospital and return to only when it was apparent that the United Nations, the , and local institutions could deal with the situation.

IDF Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen Gabi Ashkenazi addressed the gathering after Ben-Aryeh, congratulating the team, which he called “a source of pride” for . He said their efforts in saving lives “broke new barriers.”



More than 900 people were treated at the IDF field hospital in the last two weeks, and the Israeli team received international praise for its work.

Earlier in the week, the IDF said the decision came following the arrival of additional aid forces to Haiti, including members of the US military and other civilian aid-givers who are now providing regular medical services. Furthermore, many of the local hospitals are at a sufficient level of functionality, the army had said.

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