



# Tamir Erez

“I grew up in Sderot when it was a peaceful city, and it gave me everything I have in life: friends, education, values and a beautiful environment. Until the Kassam rockets started hitting, and haven’t stopped. It is difficult to understand the depth of the long-term damage on every aspect of our lives.”



Tamir Erez, 26, was 18 when the deadly Kassam rockets starting falling on Sderot. The son of Argentinean-born parents, he and his four siblings had an idyllic childhood. Tamir was a young soccer star, and still plays on Sderot's semi-professional team.

However, all this changed when Sderot became a city on the frontline in 2000, and has been engaged in a war of attrition ever since. Tamir, unfortunately, was a victim of this reality.

"I was working in a supermarket to earn money after the army," explains Tamir. "At this time, there were no sirens to warn us of a rocket attack. My brother and I were hanging out at the entrance to the supermarket when all of a sudden we heard a tremendous 'boom'. The ground shook underneath us. There was so much smoke that I couldn't find my brother, and I panicked. A Kassam rocket fell on a car 30 feet from us."

Tamir and his brother were taken to the hospital. Tamir suffered short-term hearing loss, and his brother still has hearing problems. Both boys received psychological assistance, and until this day they, like many people in Sderot, jump when they hear a loud noise. "Thank God we are alive," says Tamir.

Today, Tamir helps the youngsters in Sderot deal with the terror and their trauma. He is the coordinator of the sports enrichment program, implemented by Hapoel Keter Tel Aviv together with the

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Jewish Agency, which gives kids life and education skills through sports. These enrichment activities are funded by the United Jewish Communities' Israel Emergency Campaign (IEC), and have been successful in combating trauma by providing a structured and nurturing environment for children after the school day ends.

"My wonderful staff and I are trying to give these children a little bit of hope and some moments of happiness in this impossible situation," says Tamir.

At the same time, Tamir is a senior at nearby Sapir College, majoring in technology marketing. For the past three years he has received an IEC-funded Jewish Agency scholarship that covered half of his tuition. "I don't know what I would have done without this scholarship," says Tamir. "It has made getting a college education possible."