

'Mom, I have to fight'



DVIR EMMANUELOFF, 22
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Tovah Lazaroff, Jerusalem Post, Jan. 5, 2009

IDF officers spent hours Sunday searching for Dalia Emmanueloff to tell her that her son, [St.-Sgt. Dvir Emmanueloff, 22](#), was the first casualty of the ground incursion into Gaza.

Already by mid-morning, Dvir's friends began calling one another to spread the word that he had been killed by mortar fragments in Jabalya. Residents of his hometown of Givat Ze'ev, north of Jerusalem, had called its municipal offices to confirm the rumors they had heard.

As Givat Ze'ev residents reeled from the news, Dalia had no idea that her son had died.

She had a vacation day from the kindergarten where she taught in the capital's Ramot neighborhood, and was not in class when the officers arrived to speak with her.

Their presence, however, immediately alarmed the teachers who worked with Dalia, including Rachel Salamah. She knew that Dvir was in Gaza because he had called his mother on Friday to tell her that he would likely be heading in.

"Mom, I have to fight. I have to be there," he had said.

The conversation unnerved his mother.

"I am so worried," she told Salamah.

Dalia spoke with her son, one last time, on Saturday night and asked if he would be home the next week for Shabbat.

"I don't think so," he replied.

Late Sunday afternoon as Dalia sat in tears inside her home, Salamah spoke on her behalf with reporters outside.

She said that when the officers came to the school on Sunday morning, she was immediately concerned about Dvir.

"We asked did something happen to Dalia's son," Salamah recalled. "We begged them to give us some information, to tell us if he was wounded."

The soldiers refused to divulge any details.

"They said only that they needed to speak with Dalia," she said. The officers left to see if Dalia was at home, and when they still failed to locate her, they returned

to the school.

"We already understood the reality," Salamah said, sighing.

A teacher at the school then called Dalia. The teacher, according to Salamah, tried to sound casual, as if she was just checking in, to see how Dalia's day was going.

Dalia told her that she was running errands, but would be home mid-afternoon.

As soon as school was over, Salamah and two other teachers headed to Dalia's home to comfort her, only to find that Dalia was not yet home and that neither she, nor her remaining four children — three girls and a boy — had been told the sad news.

They waited for close to two hours outside her home, along with the IDF officers and the head of the Givat Ze'ev council.

Among those who quickly gathered in the home late Sunday afternoon was Dvir's childhood friend, Amichai Peretz.

"We grew up together, we went to school together and we served together," said Peretz, who was a year older than Dvir and had already been released from the army.

Among the many similarities that drew the two young men together was that their fathers had died around the time they were getting ready to enter the army.

"Dvir's father died of an illness," said Peretz. "It was a hard time for him. My father had died four months earlier and I entered the army one month after," he said.

So Dvir spoke with Peretz about his decision to serve, as he contemplated whether he should continue to pursue his own plans to enter a combat unit.

Peretz said that Dvir had even come to his home to speak with his mother.

"Dvir asked my mother how it felt to have four sons who had served in the army, including my brother Uriel who was killed in Lebanon," Peretz said.

Dvir thought it was important to defend the country and the people in it, Peretz said.

In particular, Dvir felt for the people who lived under the missile threat along the southern border.

He left an officers course so he could fight with his unit, Peretz said. The two men had spoken only the night before the incursion, which was to be Dvir's first real combat experience.

They did not talk for very long, but Dvir seemed happy that he was about to help the people in the South.

"Let us not forget that Dvir is dead, but the battle is still raging in the South. We will cry for Dvir. We are pained by his loss, but we are continuing forward to fight for this country," Peretz said. "His family knows that his loss was not in vain."

Dvir Emmanueloff was laid to rest at the Mount Herzl military cemetery late Sunday night.