

Statement by Daniel Yuval to the Tenth Meeting of the States Parties

29 November 2010

Thank you, everyone, for letting me speak to you today. This is my first trip to Geneva. I am so happy Switzerland invited me to come. Thank you!

I want to tell you my story and ask for your help. We have a big problem in Israel – landmines. Most people in Israel didn't know about it until this year.

Ten months ago, I went on a picnic with my family to the Golan Heights. It had just snowed, and I had never seen or played in the snow. The place is called Har Avital. My sister Amit and my brother Yoav and I were laughing as we ran into the field to make snowballs. My mom and dad were there, along with many other families.

Suddenly, there was a big "boom." I didn't know what happened. I didn't feel anything at first. I didn't know there were landmines under the snow, and all around us.

My dad came into the field to pick me up and carry me out. I told him not to worry, I would be okay. And, I told my brother and sister to hold tight to dad's legs, so they wouldn't get blown up, too.

Other parents took off their shirts to tie around my leg. Then a helicopter came to fly me and my sister to hospital. Only then I started to know what happened. I had stepped on a landmine.

When I woke up from the operation, the pain in my leg was bad. But, I started to think about something just as bad, that this could happen again to other children.

I spent more than three months in the hospital, and had almost 20 operations, to cut off my right leg below my knee, and to clean and fix my left leg. Many famous people called or visited me in the hospital. When Prime Minister Netanyahu called me, I told him, we have to do something to clean up landmines. I told Mr. Netanyahu that no more children should ever get hurt from this weapon.

Jerry White and his friend Dhyhan Or came to visit me in the hospital. Jerry also lost a leg to a landmine in the Golan Heights. I asked them, 'How do people get rid of landmines?' They told me that many countries do it. They said, "If we work together, we can try to stop any more people from getting hurt or killed."

I am now the Youth Ambassador for the Campaign for a Mine-Free Israel. We are asking the government of Israel to pass a new law to clean up old minefields everywhere in Israel and the West Bank.

I'm told there over 500,000 mines to get rid of. Some say, one million.

In March and May, I went to the Knesset and told them it was time to take action. I am asking everyone to support this new law. Help us clean up the mess. I believe we can do this by the time I graduate from high school in Israel.

Someone told me we need about 70 million dollars to do this. That is a lot of shekels, that I don't have! But, I hope that the Israeli Government and others can make this happen. It is worth it – to make sure no more children get killed, or have to spend months in the hospital like I did.

Stepping on a landmine is terrible. It's scary and painful, not just for me, but for my mom and dad, and my whole family. For myself, it was really hard work. I had to learn to walk all over again. But, the good news is, I have learned to run, and can beat some people in my class in the 660 meters. I also take kick-boxing and Judo, and play football.

I want to thank everyone in this room who is committed to getting rid of landmines. We in the Middle East have a big problem. But, we know it can be done. My neighbor Jordan joined the Mine Ban Treaty and is almost finished clearing all its minefields. I hope Israel will be next. I hope soon all the world will be free from landmines.

I thank you for listening to me and hearing my story. I want to thank Roots of Peace for bringing me here, and Mom and Dad for believing I can make a difference. Thank you!