The Religious Zionist Party

Army Services and Reserve Duty

Discounts on the Purchase of Land

The ‘Reserve Duty Law’ passed in 2008 authorizes all public agencies, for example the Israel Land Council, to give a “reasonable and proportionate” discount to soldiers who perform reserve duty. The Israel Land Council determined that it would offer a modest discount (read: stingy) to soldiers who serve in the reserves – only a 10% discount in settlements that are not considered national priority areas; 20% in “Type B” national priority areas, and 35% in “Type A” national priority areas, up to a ceiling of 75,000 NIS plus VAT.

Theses discounts are exceptionally modest, and rather paradoxically do not apply to the full cost of land (for example, the government does not charge for the purchase of land in regions of conflict, yet this discount cannot offset the cost of land development in these areas). Despite the sharp rise in the price of residential land, the 75,000 NIS (plus VAT) ceiling has not been updated since 2016.

Israel has a national interest as well as a moral and ethical responsibility to support the people who serve the country and perform reserve duty, individuals who by and large served in combat, including the air force and navy.

What will we do in the upcoming Knesset to provide for those who devote their best years to serving our country?

* We will double the discount ceiling offered to individuals who perform reserve duty to 150,000 NIS (plus VAT).
* We will promote a proportional discount of an additional 5% off the full price of land in areas that are not national priority areas, and an additional 10% in national priority areas, for young couples who performed combat service (if both husband and wife performed combat service they will be both be eligible for this discount, if just one of them performed combat service, the couple will be eligible for this discount), as well as a discount that amounts to half of this decrease for an individual who performed non-combat military service or national service.

Reducing housing costs is the least the country can do to express its gratitude to the men and women who give of themselves to protect and serve their country.

Victims of Post Trauma Stress Disorder (PTSD)

In recent years, the Israeli public has become more concerned about the needs of former Israeli soldiers who suffer from PTSD in the aftermath of their military service. It is an issue that impacts our national resilience. Combat soldiers who were ready and willing to go to war and give of themselves for their country, return home after their service to a completely different type of battle: A battle for recognition of their vulnerability and emotional injury by the very same country that sent them to fight a battle that changed their lives forever.

According to the Ministry of Defense, there are approximately 4,500 former soldiers who are victims of PTSD. Yet the professionals who work with this population contend that the number is really much higher.

In the 23rd Knesset, MK Ofir Sofer of the Religious Zionist Party chaired a Knesset committee dedicated to assessing the needs of soldiers who suffer from PTSD in the aftermath of their military service. Through committee discussions a worrisome picture emerged about the complicated process former soldiers are subjected to in order to receive official recognition from the rehabilitation department of the Ministry of Defense, as well as the type of treatment and support extended to these soldiers and their families and the country’s general attitude toward the issue.

The committee further came to understand that families of soldiers who suffer from PTSD bear the brunt of the burden and do not receive adequate support. Additionally, the critical need to help soldiers who suffer from PTSD reintegrate into the workforce in their chosen profession came to light.

What will we do in the upcoming Knesset on behalf of PTSD victims?

* We will work to restore the lack of confidence that these soldiers have in the State of Israel, the Ministry of Defense, and the rehabilitation department. It is untenable that soldiers who suffer emotionally on account of their combat service should be perceived as liars until proven otherwise, as they fight for recognition from these government agencies.
* We will work to limit the lengthy process of being recognized as a PTSD victim. Within a maximum of 6 months, a soldier will be able to receive temporary disability status, and within one year he will be recognized as permanently disabled.
* We will advance the ‘Officer Route’ which extends official recognition to soldiers based on the recommendations of the commanding officers who were in charge of their company/regiment.
* We will work to provide soldiers and their families with a clear outline of the full process of gaining recognition as a PTSD victim.
* We will work to provide flexible and comprehensive treatment that addresses the subjective needs of each PTSD victim (current treatments are not flexible and based on outdated approaches to PTSD).
* We will advance legislation that limits the fees that can be charged in the process of gaining official recognition from the Ministry of Defense (similar to the ‘Law for Compensation for Car Accident Victims’ and the law that regulates legal counsel fees for Holocaust survivors).
* We will promote nationwide deployment of the Compat Response Unit and ensure that the therapists who work in this unit reach victims who do not have the emotional capacity to seek out the treatment they need.
* We will work to ensure that spouses, children, and parents of PTSD victims undergoing rehabilitative therapy will be eligible for support, guidance, and different treatments streamlined to their needs.
* We will work to make the benefits more accessible to PTSD victims and their families.
* We will pass legislation that cuts down on the bureaucracy encountered by soldiers and their families when they try to arrange treatment, including legislation that empowers soldiers’ families to do things on their behalf (like buying medication and attending to banking issues).
* We will work to promote economic and treatment models that provide vocational rehabilitation for former soldiers who suffer from PTSD.
* We will work to promote the “*Magen Yisraeli*” certificate for employers who hire PTSD victims, which will give these employers various benefits.
* We will work to establish a PTSD research institute in the Ministry of Defense. In light of different traumatic battles and events, the State of Israel has extensive experience with PTSD and everything that goes along with it. Establishing this research institute will enable the State of Israel to optimize treatment and function as a resource to other countries regarding PTSD and resilience.
* We will advance a government decision to establish halfway houses and rehabilitative villages for PTSD victims that will provide for their unique needs.
* We will work to adapt available mental health treatments and streamline them for the distinct needs of former soldiers who suffer from PTSD. (At current, they are hospitalized in regular psychiatric hospitals which generates a lot of complexity and compromises the quality of treatment).

The ‘Basic Law’ of Torah Learning and the Draft Law

‘Good’ necessarily refers to Torah, as it is stated “For I have given you a good teaching”. If people understood and felt the sweetness and pleasantness of the Torah – they would become passionate and fervently chase after it. They would not consider a house full of silver and gold to be anything [worthwhile] at all, because the Torah encompasses all the good in this world. (Commentary of the Ohr Hahaim)

While the values of human rights and the symbols of the State of Israel are incorporated into the state’s ‘Basic Laws’, the value of Torah learning has not yet been recognized in the context of a ‘Basic Law’ or given expression as a fundamental value.

It goes without saying that the value of Torah learning stands on its own right, independent of official legal expression. Even so, it is extremely important for the Jewish state to acknowledge and uphold the value of Torah learning within its ‘Basic Laws’.

Giving expression to the importance of Torah learning through a ‘Basic Law’ will prevent biases prevalent in the State of Israel today and guarantee that the value of Torah learning is given proper weight in legal discourse.

As a direct result, the ongoing controversy about the ‘Draft Law’ and the Haredi population will be brought to an end. Even more importantly, many members of the Haredi community who are unable to join the workforce in light of the limitations of the current law, will be able to pursue an education or undergo vocational training, support their families, pay taxes, and propel the Israeli economy forward.

What will we do in the upcoming Knesset to end the endless controversy regarding drafting Haredim and stimulate the job market?

* We will pass the ‘Basic Law’: Torah Learning, that establishes that the value of Torah learning is fundamental to Israeli life in the Jewish State.
* We will pass the original ‘Draft Law’ and enable thousands of Haredim to join the workforce and thus propel the Israeli economy forward.
* We will promote professional training and higher education that coincides with religious values to facilitate a smooth and optimal transition into the workforce.

Legal Immunity for Soldiers in the Context of Military Service

The IDF has been leading a war against Israel’s enemies since the establishment of the state. The State of Israel is surrounded by strategic threats on all its borders and within Judea and Samaria. The complex security situation leads to never-ending friction between IDF soldiers and Israel’s enemies.

On a basic level, the job of the army is to defeat its enemies. Everything else is a direct outcome of this basic premise. On occasion, in the heat of battle, soldiers make bad decisions, but the responsibility for these decisions does not fall only on their shoulders. The State of Israel, the entity that sent these soldiers into battle, bears responsibility and must defend them from errors or missteps that happen in the context of fighting. Mistakes like this should be dealt with within the army, after an operational investigation, by army commanders, and not in the court of public opinion or civilian court.

The value of pushing toward victory and overcoming our enemies means that our soldiers must be focused on their job, not paralyzed by fear of being court martialed.

What will we do in the upcoming Knesset to protect IDF soldiers?

* We will pass the ‘Soldier Immunity Law’ that establishes that soldiers cannot be placed on trial in a criminal court for things they did in the context of fighting a battle and protecting their homeland.

This is the most basic thing that we can do for the soldiers who protect our country day in, day out. If a situation arises, it must be dealt with administratively, and not in the court of public opinion.