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# Resilience: Reflections of a teacher from the Gaza envelope

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I live and work on the border with the Gaza Strip. This week, we experienced 22 1/2 hours of rocket fire that was as bad as any of the worst days during the 2014 war: Operation Protective Edge.

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I was working from my home on Kibbutz Nirim on Tuesday, and had to run for cover at least four times during the day. There were even more

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alarms that night. The post trauma and fight or flight instincts that had become second skin during the war, yet gone into partial hibernation over time, were back faster than you could say “Tzeva Adom” — Red Alert — the words that you hear when a rocket has been launched towards you when you live in the Gaza envelope.

It starts with a metallic crackle as the opening chord, a female voice, padded by an eerie echo. It whips you out of your chair or bed or car, wherever you are, and catapults you to your nearest safe haven (if you are lucky enough to have such a spot nearby). There, you wait to hear the explosion. You try to calm your breathing. You check that your loved ones are also safe (providing you had the wherewithal to grab your phone first) and then you try to get back to what you were doing, before you had to run for your life.

I am a teacher on the border, and my students all live and learn here. On Wednesday we were due to have English Day for the seventh graders — a day that is one of the most challenging of the year, entailing hours of painstaking planning for weeks before. On English Day, different stations are spread around our sprawling, green campus, manned (mostly womanned) by English teachers. The kids go to the next station at the end of each lesson. The teachers greet them each time, trying to duplicate the same high-energy infectious enthusiasm with which they greeted them the first lesson. It is an exhausting day for the teachers, and one I was sure would be cancelled in light of what had gone on the day before.

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In retrospect, following through with it despite our exhaustion, despite our concerns that the cease fire would not hold: it was the best thing we could have done. It was the most excellent, educational and emotional gift we could have given our students. Returning to routine as quick as possible following trauma, is the healthiest thing one can do. In this case, we provided a routine of sorts: the students were able to be with their friends, rather than being stuck at home on their own or with family. But it was not really routine, since the learning was done through puzzles or trivia games or a Druze tents or theater games, just to name a few. They learned English but also had the opportunity for an emotional outlet, in a familiar, safe environment, with peers and adults who understood what they had just been through.

So here we remain, with the time bomb of the humanitarian disaster in Gaza ticking again, with the constant hum of drones hovering nearby, and with the arson which continues daily from the early afternoon until the evening, when the wind from the west dies down. Incendiary kites setting our fields afire, making "cease fire" into an oxymoron.

<http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/resilience-reflections-of-a-teacher-from-the-gaza-envelope/>

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