

# CRISIS RESPONSE

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JOURNAL

PROTECTION | PREVENTION | PREPAREDNESS | RESPONSE | RESILIENCE | RECOVERY



TIME	DESTINATION	✈ STATUS
12:00	HOMICIDE	DELAYED
12:00	ABDUCTION	ON TIME
12:35	HEART ATTACK	ON TIME
1:00	ROAD ACCIDENT	ON TIME
1:20	DISEASE	CANCELLED
2:35	DRUGS	ON TIME
3:00	DISASTER	ON TIME
4:15	KIDNAPPING	ON TIME

## TRAVEL SAFETY

### RECOGNISING RISKS & HOSTILE SITUATIONS

Humanitarian cargo logistics; Interviews with Waze & DJI; Social media & resilient communities; Data breaches & reporting dilemmas; Modelling critical infrastructure interdependencies; Maritime future of urban disaster response; Situational prevention & terrorism; Urban resilience in Skopje; Fake alarms & mass alerts; Hybrid attacks

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### The UK's Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee has published



its first interim report on its *Disinformation and Fake News Inquiry*, with its findings confirming the creeping, yet acute malaise that so many have been feeling for so long. Damian Collins, MP, Chair of the Committee, noted: "We are facing nothing less than a crisis in our democracy – based on the systemic manipulation of data to support the relentless targeting of citizens, without their consent, by campaigns of disinformation and messages of hate."

We all know rumours and fake news are easily spread and rapidly amplified online, and they can have appalling consequences – on p3 you can read how false allegations spread on a social messaging app, have contributed to mob attacks and murders in India.

The interim report notes that murky forces have attempted to influence many elections around the world. Indeed, disinformation has been called an "active threat" and is a tactic of unconventional warfare in its use of technology to disrupt, magnify and distort our views of the truth. On p43 Ørjan Karlsson discusses such hybrid warfare and attacks.

There are even more disturbing implications to this manipulation and malign influence, as Lina Kolesnikova notes on p46. She reveals how false alarms in mass warning systems could create panic, mistrust or even galvanise specific groups into acts of civil unrest or revolution. Whether accidental or deliberate, the consequences could be dire.

Along with the documented human tragedies of this pernicious trend, the values of trust and truth are also significant casualties.

So, what can be done to counter this tsunami of disinformation and misinformation? As a start, we *all* need to rediscover our natural scepticism. We need to question, check facts and overcome our ingrained biases to believe what we want to believe. The Committee report is correct to say that digital literacy should become the "fourth pillar of education" alongside reading, writing and maths.

No single body can reclaim the narrative of truth and transparency alone. It behoves us all – governments, organisations, institutions, service providers, the media and, critically, individuals – to work together. Or else we risk entering an age of denialism, characterised by sociologist Keith Kahn-Harris as: "A dystopian vision of a world unmoored, in which nothing can be taken for granted and no one can be trusted." And this truly would be a global crisis of epic magnitude.

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Kaitlyn E Eads | US Navy

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Team Rubicon

# Societal resilience in the

**Christo Motz** interviews **Itay Gil**, a security specialist, to learn more about his thoughts on societal resilience and how he thinks public preparedness for terrorist and marauding firearms attacks could be improved by training the public to defend themselves if they need to



**D**

r Itay Gil served in the Israeli Special Forces airborne commando team (paratroopers). He still currently serves as a captain in the reserves in one of the Israeli Defence Force's elite special forces. Gil served a total active duty of 14 years and was an officer in the reserves of the commando regiment for 21 years.

On leaving the service, he founded a security company. "I had this vision, of training law enforcement, military, private security sector and just regular citizens in hand to hand combat, using Krav Maga," he explains. "I wanted to train them to protect themselves better, how to defend better, teach them how to fight better."

His company grew much faster and larger than initially expected, and secured government contracts for training and security, licensing thousands of security guards. Gil was also involved in training and security for the Office of the President: "So I have managed to be placed in some interesting places, which helped to develop my skills and experience," he notes.

Gil has just completed his doctorate in National Defence and Security, with his thesis concentrating on human behaviour and performance under stress – and this is where we begin our discussions.

## Situational awareness

Talking about how to train civilians to react in conflict and terrorist situations, the first rule is prevention, Gil says. "Go online, inform yourself before travelling to other countries; there are many countries with a troubled reputation for incidents such as hostage taking and kidnapping.

"Rule number two is: don't go there. If you don't need to be in a particular country, avoid it," he continues, citing examples of tourists whose car navigation systems have led them into the bad areas of cities, with sometimes fatal consequences.

Situational awareness is vital, whether you are in an unfamiliar country, or at home: "What is going on around you? Many people are only focussed on their smartphones," he says, so they are not aware of what is going on around them. "Your gut instinct is the key. You could see someone showing strange behaviour, watching CCTV cameras in a hotel lobby or public place. Why would someone be doing that? Why would someone pull their hood over their head or wear a cap and cover their face? Why are they wearing many layers of warm clothes on a hot summer day? Why are they carrying a heavy

bag? Do they look as if they are sweating and nervous? "It is very hard to conceal emotions and these are some examples of human behaviour that show somebody is about to do something bad."

Keeping yourself safe is also about personal responsibility which, in turn, leads to societal safety and resilience. Gil is of the opinion that a person is more likely to be able to help themselves and others if they are physically fit. "If there is a shooting in a public place, is someone strong enough to climb out of a window?" he asks. "During a flood or tsunami, can a person climb a high tree, can they swim? Is a person strong enough to carry a victim outside the danger zone?"

More importantly, he argues: "The main question is, who can you rely on and depend upon in a crisis situation? The police cannot be ever-present 24 hours a day, seven days a week – the police need assistance and support from the general public.

"The trouble is, that many civilians simply don't care, and they don't do anything about it. Self-protection should be integrated into any country's laws. Every citizen should learn at least the basics of swimming, self-defence and basic first aid and medical skills," Gil says. "And if they are well trained, they won't freeze, they will know how to act, and that, in turn, helps to create a resilient society."

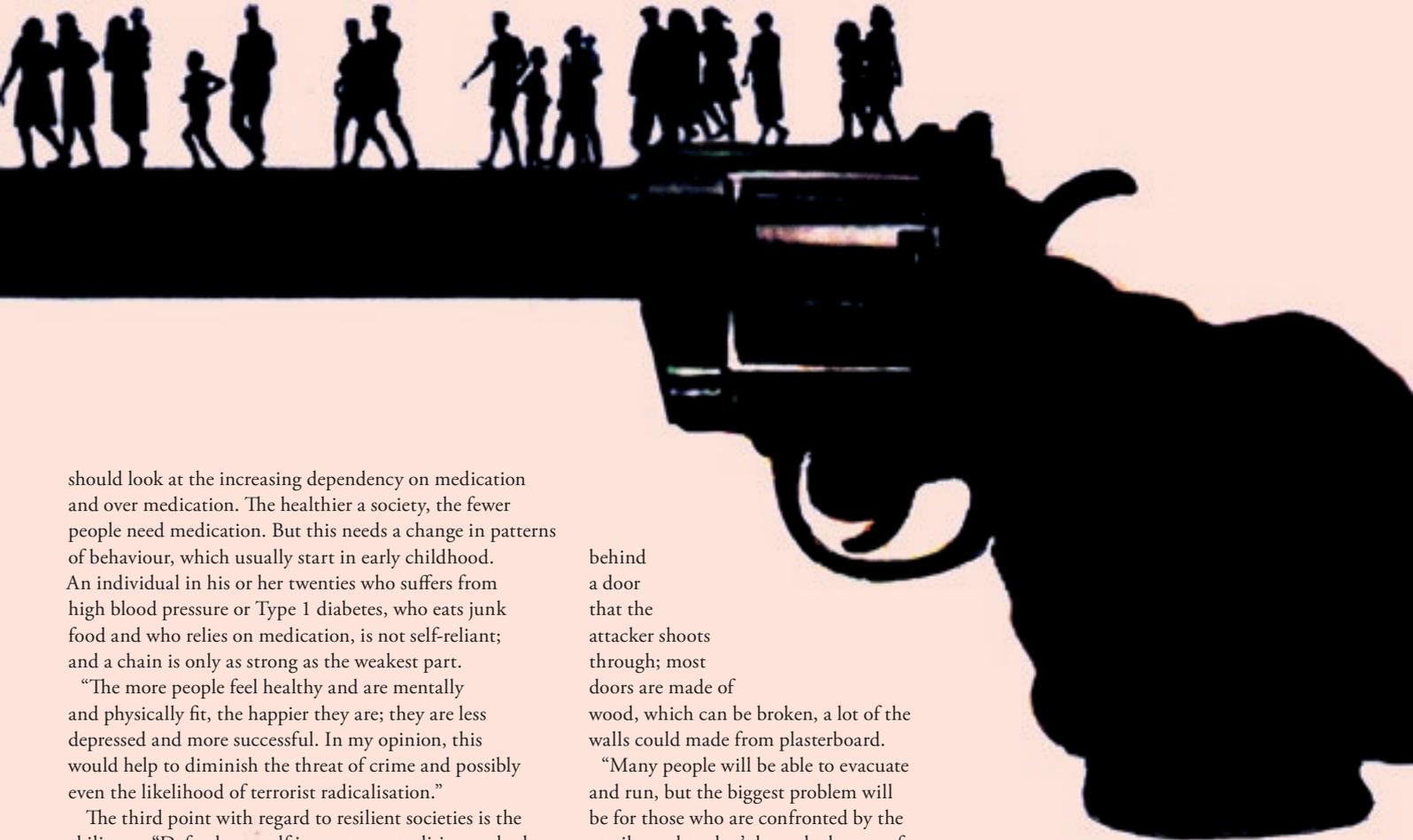
Gil's views on societal resilience are nothing if not holistic: "The department of health in any country should take the first lead. Statistics show that obesity and all kinds of degenerative diseases such as diabetes are on the rise in the western world. Governments should put focus on, and pay attention to, the health of the general public.

"National health policies should integrate proper education on disease, nutrition, diet and food, and should promote a healthy lifestyle. The health system should also support sports activities, such as bike riding, swimming and hiking, for example," he says.

Gil continues: "Second, we

Every citizen should learn at least the basics of swimming, self-defence, first aid and medical skills. If people are trained, they will not freeze in an emergency; they will know how to act, and that helps to create a resilient society

# face of malicious actors



should look at the increasing dependency on medication and over medication. The healthier a society, the fewer people need medication. But this needs a change in patterns of behaviour, which usually start in early childhood. An individual in his or her twenties who suffers from high blood pressure or Type 1 diabetes, who eats junk food and who relies on medication, is not self-reliant; and a chain is only as strong as the weakest part.

“The more people feel healthy and are mentally and physically fit, the happier they are; they are less depressed and more successful. In my opinion, this would help to diminish the threat of crime and possibly even the likelihood of terrorist radicalisation.”

The third point with regard to resilient societies is the ability to: “Defend yourself in extreme conditions, whether during a school shooting or other attack,” according to Gil, which brings us right back to situational resilience.

“Protecting public places demands resources, budgets, training and equipment, but it also takes awareness and knowing your own system and culture as an individual,” he explains. “As someone approaches a security point or X-ray machine, even just a small question can change their attitude and it takes collaboration and awareness to pick this up.”

He says that although nations invest millions into CCTV, cameras merely record activity, but they do not prevent it from occurring in the first place.

When asked about current advice in a marauding firearms attack, Gil’s response certainly leans towards the contentious: “Most of it – such as Run, Hide, Tell – is a waste of time in my opinion. Of course, if you have the option to run away, it is okay to do so. But, if you are a 12 or 15-year-old in a school and someone comes through and starts shooting in the corridor, hiding may not be the safest option. Much of the building will not form a protective barrier that will keep you safe – you could be standing

behind a door that the attacker shoots through; most doors are made of wood, which can be broken, a lot of the walls could made from plasterboard.

“Many people will be able to evacuate and run, but the biggest problem will be for those who are confronted by the assailant; they don’t have the luxury of running or hiding. And they are likely to freeze when faced with an automatic gun.”

His solution for people trapped by an armed attacker, which many might regard as controversial, is for people to work as teams: “Act as a wolf pack. Throw bags, throw books, use chairs and tackle the assailant. Students should be instructed and trained to respond and attack as a pack – the armed shooter with a rifle or handgun needs to reload his weapon at a certain point. This is the moment to begin a multiple attack.

“When a large number of students start throwing mobile phones, bags, water bottles – even pens – it will disrupt and, in all likelihood, knock down and neutralise the attacker. Responding as a wolf pack will decrease the number of fatalities and increase the survival of the majority.”

However, he accepts that this would need: “A clear mindset to overcome fear and to establish an aggressive state of mind, the will to survive and the ability to defeat an enemy.”

Gil continues: “We have conducted a number of drills involving scenarios like this over a long time and we have

Gary Waters | Alamy Stock Photo

discovered some helpful actions for people unfortunate enough to be caught up in an armed shooting attack. For example, if you take your notebook or use a bag to protect your upper torso and head, you will have more protection. Of course, you may take a round in the leg – and we can fix that – but if you protect your head, books contain enough paper and are thick enough to slow down the projectile to near zero. It may penetrate, but won't have the same velocity.”

He also emphasises that people should be trained to care for each other; good Samaritan patterns of behaviour should be embedded, as this creates greater resilience.

Gil expresses regret that many people do not have an understanding of how weapons work – for example when a weapon needs to be reloaded – nor do they understand self-preservation or have survival skills. “So we need to educate them,” he insists. “We have fire evacuation drills, we have drills for hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes. But where are the anti-shooter drills? I talk about this repeatedly in my speeches.”

## Advice for citizens

In 2004, he published a book called *The Citizen's Guide to Stopping Suicide Attackers*. “The aim was to help the average, regular person, with no combat, law enforcement or military experience, those with nine-to-five jobs, who don't get into trouble and who are law abiding citizens. They have never been in stressful conditions, have never had to fight anybody – so how would they react if things were to go really wrong? That is why I called it the *Citizen's Guide*.”

The book clearly explains how attacks can unfold, analysing terrorism and crisis events in public places, encouraging the reader to think how they would react and act if they were with their families and something were to happen.

“You can train people and provide them with basic skills, even if they are not masters in it,” according to Gil.

Turning to the role of first responders in terrorism and marauding firearms attacks, he is equally outspoken. “One of the things I notice as a counter-terrorism specialist when I travel around the world training law enforcement officers, is that those first on scene are highly likely to be the regular police, not the SWAT or tactical units.”

He cites examples of marauding firearms attacks, whether in schools, shopping malls or elsewhere, saying that there is likely to be a delay – however short this might be – before armed tactical units arrive at the scene. Until then, the people involved are on their own and have to work out how to survive.

On the subject of regular law enforcement officers, Gil opines: “Their level of training in such incidents is likely to be low, and they won't necessarily have the equipment – nor the personal protection – necessary for such incidents. They won't have had enough hand-to-hand combat training, they don't shoot enough rounds a year, it is only the tactical teams that get to do the high-end stuff.”

“But tactical teams are small in numbers compared to the general population that they have to protect. It is impossible to have a tactical team on every corner. That's why, a few years ago, I started to work with some countries that are training their civilians in self defence.”

This will be another controversial concept to a lot of people but, says Gil: “Many people actually love the idea that there are some civilians trained in improvised weapons, trained in how to use a baton and pepper spray,

who know first aid and can help during evacuations.

“In Australia, I taught people to fight an assailant with a gun or with a rifle. But in an attack you can use many things, you can throw bags and destroy the attacker's freedom of flow and movement to shoot, impede his patterns.

“That is my active shooter drill. I have been teaching this since around 1999, and I believe governments should force schools to do more of this type of training, because schools are highly crowded places, filled with children.

“And while we are on the subject, why don't we make laws that empower children, which teach them leadership and self esteem? They will be the next generation of leaders in 20 to 25 years' time, we need to train them to make decisions.”

Gil says that everything he teaches is neatly encapsulated in Krav Maga, a military self-defence and fighting system developed for the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) and Israeli security forces.

“In essence, this means minimum effort for maximum effect,” he explains; every move an assailant makes is blocked and the defender strikes simultaneously.

“It is all about taking advantage of the bio-mechanics of your opponent. And it is also about reading signals of intent – human behaviour and body language.”

In conclusion, Gil says that in his opinion, there are four important lessons to remember when seeking to build individual and societal resilience: “Mental and physical fitness and health; train yourself in self defence; get medical first aid training; and remember to love life!”

## Author



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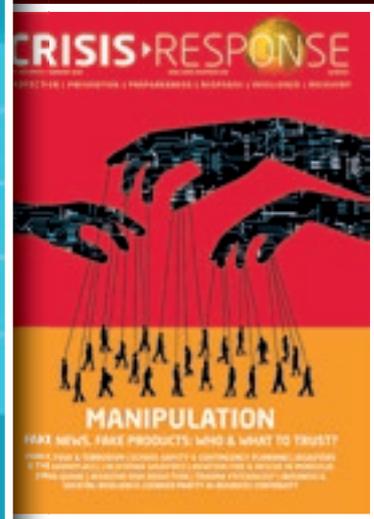
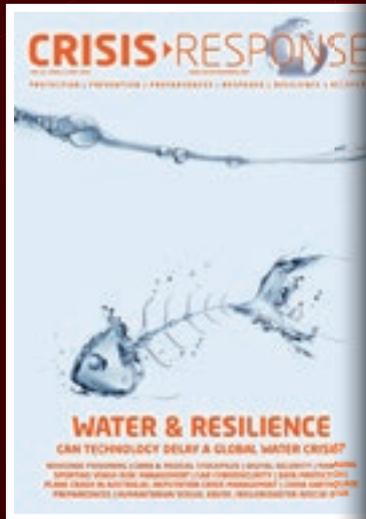
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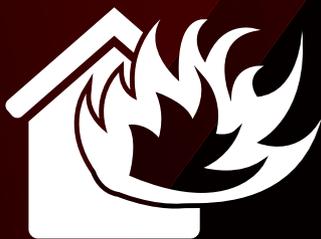
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