

Sgt. Major (Res.) Keren Tendler

Keren was always special – in life as in death. The 26-year-old graduate of ORT Rehovot and daughter of Rivana Tendler, an English teacher at ORT Singalovsky High School in Tel Aviv.



According to the history department of the Israeli Air Force, Keren was the only female aircraft mechanic in the history of the helicopters of the Yasur type (Sigorski C 53) the first female to qualify as an aircraft mechanic on a Yassur helicopter and in charge of rescue and evacuation. The helicopter on which she was serving as an airborne mechanic was returning from transporting troops into south Lebanon, when it was shot down by a Hezbollah rocket.

Keren Tendler had highly developed technical ability. One of the few females in a class of over 30, her scores and achievements often outpaced the males. When she applied for the mechanics track at ORT Rehovot, she told Victor Zilberstein, her 12th grade homeroom teacher, “You’ll see, I will be not only the same as everyone else, I will be better.” Beyond being known as an outstanding student, her teachers spoke of her popularity, her willingness to help and how pleasant and cheerful she was.

When Keren heard that ORT Rehovot had an agreement with the Air Force that allowed students to enlist in technical jobs, she was ecstatic. “She said that this would enable her to really make use of what she had studied,” Zilberstein said. After she enlisted, she was one of the few, even among her male peers, who managed to become an airborne mechanic. Even after her discharge she did frequent reserve duty.



“Keren was a real fighter. It was important for her to take part in combat missions,” family members said. She fought to be accepted into the regular army and really loved her military service. She insisted on doing reserve duty and taking part in every mission – even in this war, from which she did not return.

In an interview for the Air Force magazine four years ago when she was a First Sergeant, she stated, “I see myself as a combat soldier just like the others. My aim is to show other girls that they can do this job, too.”

Keren, you were one of a kind, on your own in a typically male environment. Surrounded by male combatants, by complex giant machines, by air and ground forces, day and night in difficult weather: in the blazing heat and in the freezing cold, on snowy mountains, at sea and in the desert, in a hostile land and at home. You knew your mission and were determined to accomplish it.

You have left your mark, you have set new standards, you taught us that the small body with a helmet and a pony tail was really a giant whose presence was a privilege to us all. May your memory be blessed.

Brigadier-General Amir Eshel

IAF Chief of Staff



The Israeli Airforce official website ~ Plane Gallery / Sigorski (Yasur)
<http://www.iaf.org.il/Templates/homepage/homepage.aspx?lang=HE>

בפגיעת טיל במסוק יסעור בעת פעילות מבצעית בעומק לבנון ב-12 באוגוסט, נהרגה רס"ל קרן טנדלר מרחובות שהייתה המכונאית המוטסת הראשונה במערך היסעור. עוד לפני שהתגיסה לצה"ל רצתה להגיע לתפקיד. את לימודי התיכון סיימה כהנדסאית ושירתה תחילה בטייסת "מובילי הלילה" כמכונאית מסוקים. בראיון לבטאון חיל-האוויר בשנת 2002 סיפרה: "מראש ביקשתי לשרת כמכונאית מסוקים, כי ידעתי שבבוא היום ארצה להיות מכונאית מוטסת, זה היה החלום שלי". "את קרן אני מכיר עוד מהתקופה שהייתה חיילת סדירה בטייסת" מעיד רס"ן גיורא, "הייתה לה יכולת קליטה והבנה טכניים. מאז שהפכה למכונאית מוטסת הייתה לוחמת במלוא מובן המילה, לחמה באותה רמה כמו של הבנים ועשתה גם את הפעילויות הפיזיות הקשות. כשהגיעה לטייסת תמיד שמחה לראות את הבנות מכונאיות המסוקים, הסתכלה עליהן בגאווה". "הבנות בגף הטכני הסתכלו על קרן בהערצה, היא הייתה בשבילן סמל", "תמיד אהבנו לראות אותה מגיעה כילדונת על אזרחי ופתאום מחליפה 'תפקיד', שמה על עצמה סרבל, לוקחת נשק והופכת ללוחמת. תמיד חימם את הלב והעלה חיוך."

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