



Consulate General of Israel



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## City of Miami Proclaims State of Israel Day and Presents Honorary Citizenship to Captive Israeli Soldier



*Commissioner Tomas Regalado, Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, Consul General of Israel to Florida, Ofer Bavly, Mayor Manny Diaz, Mayor Manny Diaz's daughter Elisa Diaz, and Commissioner Michelle Spence-Jones celebrate State of Israel Day during the City Commission on April 23, 2009. Photo Credit: Jorge R. Perez/City of Miami*

(Miami, FL) In honor of Israel's 61<sup>st</sup> Independence Day, Mayor Manny Diaz proclaimed April 23, 2009, State of Israel Day during the City Commission meeting that same date. A special tribute of honorary citizenship was also presented to Corporal Gilad Shalit, who has been held in captivity since June 2006.

"Miami and Israel have always enjoyed strong cultural and economic ties, and we congratulate them on the Day of their Independence to show them our support in their struggle to remain a state," said Mayor Diaz. "We also hope for the safe and swift return of Corporal Gilad Shalit to his loved ones."

The Consul General of Israel to Florida, Ofer Bavly, received the proclamation and Corporal Shalit's Honorary Citizenship at City Hall. Several members of the community in Miami were in attendance during this commemorative ceremony.

"Today, the City of Miami, in proclaiming the State of Israel Day and bestowing honorary citizenship to Corporal Gilad Shalit, has once again highlighted the strong bond of brotherhood and common values that the state of Israel and Miami share," said Israeli Consul General Bavly.

After the ceremony, Israeli Consul General Bavly connected Mayor Diaz to Noam Shalit, Gilad's father, and the latter thanked him for the gesture.

Israel's Independence Day in 2009 is on Wednesday, the 29th of April. Israel's Independence Day (Yom Ha'atzmaut in Hebrew) commemorates the declaration of independence of Israel by David Ben-Gurion in Tel Aviv on May 14, 1948, and the end of the British Mandate of Palestine.

Israel Defense Forces Corporal Shalit was abducted on the Israeli side of the border with Gaza on June 25, 2006. He was 19 at the time of his abduction.