This a recommendation to award the Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement to David Almog, a former IDF Major General, and chairman of Aleh Negev-Nahalat Eran. Doron Almog has made his mark in Israeli as an outstanding individual and a highly principled man of vision and action. His life has been dedicated to countless praiseworthy public activities, notably those concerning the wellbeing of children and adults with special needs. He has worked tirelessly to improve the quality of their lives, and to move them from the margins of society to the center of the public agenda.

Doron’s wide range of accomplishments, to be detailed here, include a myriad of highly diverse activities. Yet above all, Doron Almog deserves the Israel Prize for his central lifetime achievement of bringing about considerable changes in the therapeutic, rehabilitative, and educational systems catering to individuals with special needs. This hard-earned success was accomplished due to his firm beliefs and fierce determination in his struggle against the unjust treatment and indignity to this disadvantaged population has suffered. He has been unrelenting in his efforts to raise public awareness, challenge widely-held public perceptions and recruit all available resources to develop educational frameworks and schooling facilities that meet this population’s special needs. Doron Almog’s crowning achievement is the establishment of the village of Aleh-Negev – Nahalat Eran, named in memory of his son, Eran. He has been indefatigable in his efforts to promote the village and disseminate its message worldwide.

Born in 1951, Almog volunteered for service in the IDF Paratroopers Brigade after graduating from a military boarding school. He then launched an illustrious military career that culminated in his appointment as the Major General of the Southern Command in 2000. In the academic field, Almog holds an MBA from Tel Aviv University, and an MA in international relations from Haifa University. He is also a Senior Research Associate at both Howard University and the Washington Institute, and has published books and studies about security and strategy issues. He is married to Didi and is the father of Nitzan, who holds a Ph.D. in Special Education, and Eran, his late son, who suffered from a severe congenital intellectual disability. Eran was one of the first residents of the Aleh-Negev rehabilitation center. Almog is also the bereaved father of Shoham, who died one month after birth.

Aleh-Negev had its cornerstone laying in 2003. In 2004, Almog decided to resign from his distinguished military career in order to work toward making a major impact in a completely different area: catering to the special needs of the disadvantaged and developmentally delayed, focusing on Aleh-Negev as well. The first residents of the village arrived in 2006, among them, Eran Almog, who died several months later from an incurable disease.

Although Doron Almog was a member of a bereaved family, as his brother Eran (Doron named his son after him) was killed in the Yom Kippur War of 1973, Doron served in the military for 35 years as a soldier and a commander of IDF elite units. Doron was the commander of the Paratroopers Brigade commando unit, the elite Air Force commando unit “Shaldag,” the [infantry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infantry) [brigade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brigade) unit of the [paratroopers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paratrooper), the Gaza Division, and the IDF Southern Command. Doron was always in the vanguard – right in the line of fire – whether leading a task force against the perpetrators of the Munich massacre in Tripoli, leading the first task force in Entebbe, during the First Lebanon War, when he was in charge of covert military operations to bring 6000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel, and more. There is not enough space to list all his military accomplishments, for which these alone, Almog deserves a special prize. But first and foremost he deserves the Israel Prize for his lifetime achievement of dedicating so much time and energy to helping people with special needs.

In the course of his military service, in between his official duties, Doron made it a policy to accompany his son to his medical treatments. His devotion and the personal price he paid as a father to a child with special needs is not something to be taken for granted. Too often we witness the painful reality of some of these children being abandoned by their parents in worst-case scenarios, or, in other cases, being hidden from view. Many parents are too overwhelmed by the circumstances to act, whereas Doron seized the initiative and enlisted help from government institutions and private individuals.

Doron vowed never to abandon his beloved son during his life. Since his son’s death, he has persevered in his efforts to act on behalf of other children with special needs, while doing his utmost to convey the message that those with special needs need not be ashamed. He has insisted that it is incumbent on all of us to enhance their personal development, enabling them to live meaningful and decent lives. Doron has certainly been an highly influential figure in changing the status of the disadvantaged and vulnerable members of our society. For this reason, he deserves special recognition and appreciation.