This document is a recommendation for awarding 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 as an outstanding individual in the Israeli milieu and a highly principled man of vision and action. His life has been dedicated to praiseworthy public activities, particularly concerning the wellbeing of children and adults with special needs. He has worked towards improving the quality of their lives, and putting their issue on the public agenda in order to end their social exclusion and marginalization.

Doron’s wide range of accomplishments, which will be discussed in detail later, include multifarious activities of an immeasurably great diversity. Yet Doron Almog deserves the Israel Prize for his primary lifetime achievement: effecting major 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 strong determination in his struggle against the unjust treatment and indignity to which this disadvantaged population has been subject. He has been unrelenting in his efforts to raise public awareness and challenge widely-held public perceptions. Additionally, he has mobilized all available resources towards developing educational frameworks and schooling facilities that meet this population’s special needs. Doron Almog’s crowning glory was the establishment of the village of Aleh-Negev – Nahalat Eran, named in memory of his son, Eran. His efforts to promote the village and disseminate its message worldwide have been unremitting.

Doron Almog was born in 1951. After graduating from a military boarding school, he volunteered for service in the IDF Paratroopers Brigade. 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 a Master of Business Administration degree from Tel Aviv University, an MA in international relations from Haifa University, and is a Senior Research Associate at Howard University and the Washington Institute. He has published books and studies about security and strategy issues. He is married to Didi and is the father to 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 rehabilitation center of Aleh-Negev. Almog is also a bereaved father to Shoham Almog who died one month after birth.

The cornerstone laying of Aleh-Negev took place in 2003. In 2004, Almog decided to resign from his promising military career in order to work towards making a major impact in a completely different area: catering to the special needs of the disadvantaged and developmentally delayed. The first residents of the village arrived in 2006; among them was Eran Almog, who died several months later from an incurable disease.

Doron Almog ended his military career after 35 years of service, during which he served as a soldier and a commander of IDF elite units. This is despite being a member of a bereaved family: his brother Eran (who Doron named his own son after) was killed in the Yom Kippur War of 1973. Doron served as 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 – be it in Tripoli leading a task force against the perpetrators of the Munich massacre, while 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 so forth: there is not enough space to list them all. For these reasons alone, Almog deserves a special prize, but first and foremost he deserves it on account of 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 self-abnegation as a father to a child with special needs is not something to be taken for granted, as evidenced by the painful reality in which some of these children are abandoned by their parents, in the worst-case scenario, or, in other cases are hidden from view. Many parents are too overwhelmed by the circumstances to take action, whereas Doron took the initiative and enlisted, to this end, the help from government institutions and private individuals. Doron swore he would never 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 in this condition. Further, he does his best to convey the message that individuals with special needs are not something to be ashamed of, and that it is incumbent on all of us to enhance their personal development so that they can live meaningful and decent lives. In this respect, we should perceive Doron as a highly influential figure and an opinion-maker regarding the status of the disadvantaged and vulnerable members of our society. For this reason, he deserves special recognition and appreciation.