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Israel

By REVITAL ARANBAEV \

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A ride to heal past wounds, prevent future harm

Rape victim sets out to raise awareness among Israelis cycling across the country.



aliza amar 298.88. (photo credit:Courtesy photo)

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After completing her army service, Aliza Amar went on a job interview that she learned of in a newspaper advertisement. Little did she know that at the interview she would be lured into a room, raped and videotaped for the distribution of pornography. "After I left the interview, my friend was waiting outside for me. I walked out and said nothing to her about it. I was raped in one of the most humiliating ways that anyone could possibly imagine," Amar said. "I felt as if my spirit left my body, as if someone took away my soul." Twenty years later, in an attempt to put her past behind her, Amar is going on a bicycle ride across **Israel** in order to raise awareness and money to fight violent assaults on women. The ride begins Saturday at 9 a.m. in **Rosh Hanikra** and ends on Friday in **Eilat**. Though Amar, 45, has not ridden a bike in 30 years, she is not discouraged. She is using her own funds to inspire other women to speak up and stop hiding behind their fear. All of the proceeds will go to **The Association** of Rape Crisis Center in Israel. "It will help me heal myself and get other women's attention," Amar said. "The more women see someone breaking the silence, the more comfortable they will feel in coming out and realizing it wasn't their fault." Amar was raised in Israel with a strong conservative **Moroccan** upbringing. After her awful experience, she felt pushed to leave Israel and move to **San Francisco**, leaving behind her entire family. It was just weeks ago that Amar finally confided in her family about her assault, only to have them reject her as a daughter. Prior to her visit to Israel, she was close to her siblings, yet since opening up about her experience they chose not to support her. In general, her family was not a subject she felt comfortable discussing. Living in denial for over 20 years, Amar feels like she went through a spiritual awakening. "Before my awakening I was a rageaholic, an alcoholic, I was addicted to love, sex, food - I had all of the addictions," Amar said. "I couldn't keep a job or a relationship. I was spinning out of control." Hitting rock bottom, Amar traveled for nine months in hopes of finding inner peace. She began studying Buddhism and had the rare opportunity of studying with the **Dalai Lama** for two weeks. Amar chose to go on a bike ride in Israel in order to change her tainted memories of the country into positive ones. She will mostly likely return to San Francisco when her visit here is through. The public is invited to join the ride at any point. There will be more than 20 people accompanying Amar in her quest at different locations. This will include the adviser to the mayor on women's rights in Haifa, Hana Shrodek. "This issue needs to be discussed in schools, children have to learn what is and isn't inappropriate," Amar said. "We need to start educating our children and stop the assaults."

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