A staunch Zionist and devoted public servant, Geula Cohen has fought her entire life for the State of Israel and the Jewish People.

Born in Tel Aviv, at the age of eighteen she joined Lehi, the “Fighters for the Freedom of Israel.” Pursued by the British secret police, she was arrested in 1946 and sentenced to nine years’ imprisonment. After a daring escape, she returned to her activities with Lehi and married Emanuel Hanegbi, one of the organization’s most prominent operational commanders.

Following the State’s establishment, she completed a Master’s degree in Bible, Literature and Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Always a passionate activist, she established there a student union named Sela - Students for a Hebrew Revolution - and served on the editorial boards of the monthly Salam and the newspaper Divrei Hayamim.

In the 1960s, Geula Cohen published her first book, Story of a Fighter, which has been translated into English, Russian, French and Dutch, and excerpts of which are included in school textbooks. David Ben Gurion, then prime minister, read her book and wrote her an emotional letter that ended with the words: “The pen that wrote this book is holy.” Joining the editorial board of Maariv, her investigation into the lack of knowledge of Judaism and Zionism amongst youth led the Israeli Minister of Education to invite her to reinforce Jewish awareness studies in schools.

A champion of immigration, Geula Cohen campaigned on behalf of Soviet Jewry, serving as a figure of hope for Jews waiting to make aliyah. Some 20 years later, as the Knesset chairwoman of the Immigration and Absorption Committee, she aided the immigration and absorption of Ethiopian Jews, and made a substantial contribution to the legendary Operation Solomon.

A member of the Herut movement, Geula Cohen founded the Aryeh ben Eliezer National Seminary for the study of Zionism, Judaism and national issues, and joined in the struggle for Jewish settlement in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza region. As a Knesset member for 19 years straight, she served as Deputy Science Minister and a member of the Defense and Foreign Affairs committee, spearheading the struggle for Jewish settlement of Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

Her greatest achievement was the legislation of the Basic Law: Jerusalem, passed in 1980, which established the complete and undivided Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, the place of residence of the State President, the Knesset, the government and the Supreme Court, and provided for the preservation of Jerusalem’s holy sites and freedom of access to them for all religions.

In 1998, she established the Uri Zvi Greenberg Heritage Center, a unique cultural center that brought together members of the political left and right, sponsored seminars and lectures on literature, and inspired a revival of the culture of poetry readings. In 2003 she was awarded the Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement.

In recognition of her outstanding contribution to the State of Israel and the future of Jewish People, Geula Cohen is hereby named an Honorary Fellow of the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya.

Prof. Uriel Reichman
President

June 1, 2009
Herzliya, Israel