



## Macer Gifford

Most leadership models assume systems that work, teams that already exist, and time to plan. Real crises arrive without any of those things. The question for senior leaders is what holds a group of people together when the rules collapse, the information is bad, and the cost of getting it wrong is no longer abstract.

Macer Gifford is a British former currency trader, frontline volunteer and combat medic who helps organisations think clearly about leadership, courage and decision-making when the systems around them stop working.

### Macer Gifford's 2026 Biography

#### Why organisations work with Macer Gifford

- He has built two functioning units from nothing, a Combat Medical Unit with Kurdish forces in Syria and Operation Golden Hour in Ukraine, both still saving lives. That is a rare proof point on creating capability under pressure.
- He has fought alongside Kurdish and Syriac forces against Islamic State and now serves as a reconnaissance infantryman and medic in the Ukrainian Foreign Legion's 131st Battalion. The material is firsthand, not interpreted.
- His talks translate combat decision-making into language a board, a transformation team or a frontline manager can actually use, without the bravado that typically comes with the genre.
- He brings credible standing on two of the defining conflicts of the era, with published work in The Spectator and The Telegraph and regular appearances on BBC, CNN, MSNBC and Channel 4.
- He is the author of "Fighting Evil" (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, foreword by Andy McNab), a sustained piece of writing about why an ordinary person chooses to act when most do not.

#### Biography highlights

- Volunteer fighter with the Kurdish YPG and a Syriac Christian unit in Syria, mid-2015 to 2017, including the Manbij offensive and the siege of Raqqa.
- Founder of a Combat Medical Unit with Kurdish forces in Syria, still operational, and of Operation Golden Hour, a battlefield first-aid training programme for Ukrainian and international volunteers.
- Reconnaissance infantryman and medic with the Ukrainian Foreign Legion's 131st Battalion and the International Cossacks Expeditionary Force; awarded a medal by the Supreme Commander of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

#### AVAILABLE FOR

- Speaking

#### MACER'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Business Continuity and Crisis Management
- Geopolitics
- Leadership
- Motivation and Inspiration
- Resilience & Stress Management

#### LANGUAGES: English

- Author of “Fighting Evil: The Ordinary Man who went to War Against ISIS”, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, with a foreword by Andy McNab.
- Contributor to The Spectator and The Telegraph; regular interviewee on BBC, CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, Channel 4, ITV, Sky News and LBC.
- Reading for a Master’s in Security, Peace-building and Diplomacy at Loughborough University London.

## **Biography**

A foreign exchange trader from Cambridge with no military background flew to northern Syria in 2015 and joined the Kurdish YPG. Over the next three years, that decision became one of the longest tours by any British international volunteer in the war against Islamic State, ending at the siege of Raqqa.

The interesting question is not why he went, it is what he learned about command, fear and group cohesion when the people around him were untrained, frightened and being killed. Out of that experience came a Combat Medical Unit, built from nothing with Kurdish forces, that still operates in north-east Syria.

He repeated the pattern in 2022. Ten days before Russia’s full-scale invasion he was on the ground in Ukraine, and within weeks he had launched Operation Golden Hour, a battlefield first-aid programme that has trained domestic and international volunteers across the conflict. He now serves as a reconnaissance infantryman and medic with the 131st Battalion, was decorated in connection with the liberation of Kherson, and writes about the war for outlets including The Spectator and The Telegraph.

His memoir, “Fighting Evil”, carries a foreword by Andy McNab and sits alongside regular appearances on BBC, CNN, MSNBC and Channel 4. For an organisation thinking seriously about leadership when the systems break, the practical question is simple: who actually has done it, and can explain it. Gifford can.

## **Key speaking topics**

- Leadership and decision-making under extreme uncertainty
- Building teams and capability from scratch in hostile conditions
- Courage, fear and individual moral choice
- Frontline lessons from Syria and Ukraine
- Humanitarian action and combat medicine in conflict zones
- The fight against Islamic State and the war in Ukraine

## **Ideal for**

- Senior leadership offsites and CEO forums focused on resilience and crisis decision-making
- Transformation, change and operations leaders dealing with high ambiguity and human risk
- Defence, security, NGO and public-sector audiences working in unstable environments
- Conferences and dinners that need a serious, firsthand voice on the conflicts shaping the decade

## **Audience outcomes**

- A direct account of how trust, command and morale actually function

when conditions deteriorate

- A practical view of how small groups build capability quickly when no system supports them
- A frame for thinking about courage and individual responsibility that does not collapse into cliché
- A clear-eyed sense of what is happening on the ground in Syria and Ukraine, from someone still serving there

## **Macer Gifford's Videos**

