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# south african Jewish Report

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## Pop-up protesters thwarted in anti-Israel action

NICOLA MILTZ

A motley crew of pop-up activists attempted to vandalise the shop front of a Rosebank gallery at the weekend to protest an exhibition showcasing Israeli and South African photographers' work. Their attempt was quickly thwarted, and it became clear they had scant knowledge of their cause.

Early last Sunday evening, three young people dressed in black arrived at the FotoZA Gallery in the Rosebank Mall and frantically plastered childish paintings of what appeared to be an artist's impression of the old South African flag with reproductions of the Israeli and Palestinian flags on the glass windows of the gallery.

No sooner were the posters put up, the trio were caught red handed by mall security guards, who called the police.

After a brief interrogation, the police handed them back to mall security, who questioned them further before giving them a stern warning never to attempt such a trick again.

The Johannesburg-based trio, namely Kelly-Jean Gilbert, July Eccles, and Tiego Khoza were only slightly rattled by the experience. That didn't stop them requesting images from the *SA Jewish Report* to post on social media.

When asked why they were staging a protest, they chanted a string of anti-Israel, pro-Palestine slogans with arms raised and fists pumped.

This group is typical of today's social justice warriors (SJW), said Benji Shulman of Friends of Israel.

"SJW refers to a phenomenon of people who see themselves as morally important, and who feel the need to go out there and do something. They can adopt a range of issues like gender or race-related issues, often with very little knowledge about the topic," he said.

At last Thursday's opening of the exhibition, titled #YallaYebo, a disparate mob of menacing protesters with Hezbollah flags painted with splotches of red paint disrupted the opening, causing many patrons to be turned away.

Social commentator and futurist, Daniel Silke, the Director of the Political Futures Consultancy, believes the Israel-Palestinian conflict is "the flavour of the month". "In years past, it was Green Peace or some other issue," he said.

"It is in vogue to use the issue to gain activist credentials," he said, mainly because of heightened awareness of the issue in South Africa.

"The successful penetration of BDS in public discourse in South Africa and awareness of the issue makes activism

a useful conduit for those seeking to establish their names in the political or civil arena. Protesters' knowledge might be factually incorrect, but it is a useful platform for budding activists to gain credentials."

Former BDS activist, Klaas Mokgomole, who now works for an organisation called Africans For Peace, said it was common for groups of friends to stick together for a cause they know little about. "It's like a rent a crowd. Let's go protest! You give them a piece of paper to read and they understand your cause without asking questions, and because you're a so called friend, they support the cause."

"People love jumping on the bandwagon and chanting slogans without understanding what they are talking about.

I know, I've been there. As a well-known student activist on campus, I've blown a vuvuzela and held placards and chanted anti-Israel slogans."

Mokgomole spent months exploring the subject and visiting Israel before he realised that the BDS and its allies "were doing nothing to come up with meaningful solutions or helping in any way".

Ramon Cabanacco, a lawyer and the co-host of the *Renegade Report*, a weekly podcast on CliffCentral that seeks to undermine narratives using evidence, facts and statistics, said: "The BDS movement has no real power in the world. It likes to cause a fuss to make news irrespective of how small the victory is. Most of the time, people are ignorant. When the goal is to make the news and not solve the problem,

there's no incentive to understand what's going on. Making the news is easy, solving the problems is hard."

His colleague on the *Renegade Report*, Dr Jonathan Witt, said, "This is not a South African phenomenon. It is a syndrome of identity politics and outrage culture, which now allows anyone who views themselves as a victim to take up a cause regardless of whether they have any connection to it or without having an understanding of the facts of the matter. A whole bunch of people will protest who don't have a clue what they're protesting about."

Terence Corrigan, Project Manager at the Institute for Race Relations, agreed that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had become a cause celebre amongst various social groupings.

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The protest action outside the #YallaYebo Photo Exhibition last Thursday evening. See page 14 for story on the exhibition.



# Ugandan rabbi calls for Jewish recognition

JOSEFIN DOLSTEN

**A** Ugandan rabbi has called on Israel to recognise his community after Israel ruled against allowing its members to move to the Jewish state.

Rabbi Gershom Sizomu confirmed a report in *Haaretz* last week that the Israeli Interior Ministry had denied a community member's immigration application. The Interior Ministry, according to Sizomu, said the decision represented its stance on the Ugandan Jewish community, not just the applicant, Kibita Yosef.

Sizomu, who leads the community of about 2 000, urged Israel to give Ugandan Jews the same rights afforded to Jews worldwide.

"We as a Jewish community need to be treated like any other Jewish community in the Diaspora," he told JTA from Kampala, where he serves as a member of the Ugandan Parliament.

Israel's Law of Return gives anyone who has at least one Jewish grandparent,



Rabbi Gershom Sizomu leads Uganda's Jewish community

is married to a Jew or has converted to Judaism, the right to move there. Yosef, who is staying at a kibbutz in southern Israel, is the first Ugandan Jew to try to immigrate to Israel, according to Sizomu.

Sizomu emphasised that his community was not looking to emigrate to Israel en masse, and that the decision would not change its practices.

"We are not Jewish for purposes of immigration," he said. "We are Jewish because that is who we are, and we will never change that, whether they recognize us or not."

The Ugandan community, also called the Abayudaya, traces its roots to the early 20th century, when a former leader read the Bible and embraced Judaism. Most members were converted under the auspices of US Conservative rabbis in the early 2000s, and thus are not recognised as Jewish by Israel's mostly Haredi Orthodox Chief Rabbinate.

In 2016, the Jewish Agency for Israel recognised the community for the purposes of the Law of Return, seemingly opening a path for its members to emigrate to Israel. However, the Abayudaya have struggled to obtain government recognition to do so. In December, Israel denied a visa application by another member of the community to study at a

yeshiva in Israel, leading to accusations of racism.

Today the community, which is based in the rural town of Mbale, has seven synagogues, including a large centre that opened in 2016, a mikvah, and two Jewish schools.

"We feel like we have an established Jewish community that deserves to be recognised by Israel," Sizomu said.

Last Friday, Rabbi Julie Schonfeld, who leads the Conservative movement's Rabbinical Assembly, called the Israeli decision "unlawful".

"This is completely inconsistent with more than two decades of Israeli practice of Conservative converts – who are, by the way, halachically converted to Judaism under our auspices – who had been recognised as Jewish for the purposes of the Law of Return," she told JTA, using a phrase meaning that something was done in accordance with Jewish law, or halachah.

Schonfeld said that the movement and its allies were planning "to use all means at our disposal to see that this is reversed".

Sizomu said that despite the latest decision, he remained hopeful about his community gaining status in Israel. In August, 40 young Ugandan Jews will travel to the Jewish state on a trip organized by Birthright, an organisation that provides free trips to Israel to young Jews around the world. It is the first time that Ugandan Jews will participate in such a trip. (JTA)

# Pro-Israel petition not a hoax

JORDAN MOSHE

A petition calling on the South African government not to sever ties with Israel is gaining momentum fast – despite the anti-Israel lobby calling it a hoax.

The South African Friends of Israel (SAFI) launched an online petition addressed to the South African government on Wednesday, calling for "support for continued relations between Israel and South Africa".

The petition urges "all South Africans to demand that the South African government cease its efforts to sever ties with the State of Israel, and to reinstate the South African Ambassador to Israel".

It goes on to assert that the severing of ties will "violate South Africans' Constitutional rights with regards to freedom of movement, free choice, and matters of faith". The petition says cutting ties would have an impact on "jobs, travel and tourism, and trade and investment, all of which will have a direct effect on South Africa and its people".

By 22:00 on Wednesday, 11 312 people had signed the petition. Ben Swartz, the creator of the petition and co-Chairperson of SAFI, feels positive about the reception it has received so far, and believes it will attract further support.

"It is a known fact that supporters of Israel from across the spectrum exist in South Africa. This petition gives them the chance to express their disapproval and stand with Israel," says Swartz.

"SAFI launched this petition based on demands received from constituents across the country. They are calling for the government to reconsider its decisions, and to change the way it has addressed diplomatic ties with Israel. The petition is the response of the people."

Although the petition is still in its infancy, Swartz believes that it will gain traction in days to come. "So far, I've had only positive feedback from the public about the petition. I admit that I am often nervous about petitions, simply because you never know how well they will be received by the public, and if they will get the circulation you want. Fortunately, the response has been very strong so far."

Swartz said the online submissions were not the only ones that would be passed on to government. "Not all of our constituents are online," he says. "I know that tens of thousands of written submissions will be submitted in the days to come. These will be attended to, and the voices of those who wrote them will be treated seriously. We've had many constituents approach us to ask to submit written submissions. We welcome all submissions, and will make sure that the government receives every single one."

By Wednesday afternoon, messages that the petition was fake had spread across social media platforms. Swartz dismissed these messages, believed to be disseminated by the anti-Israel lobby, saying that they were not worth attention. "How is it possible for a petition to be a hoax?" he asked. "These messages are absolute drivel. The petition is legitimate, and has the support of thousands of people."

"We believe our friends and supporters are active, and [are] ensuring that the government knows exactly how they feel. The petition affords people the chance to make their voices heard, and to contribute in a constructive way."

## Shabbat times this week

Starts	Ends	
17:05	17:57	Johannesburg
17:26	18:21	Cape Town
16:45	17:38	Durban
17:06	17:59	Bloemfontein
16:57	17:52	Port Elizabeth
16:50	17:45	East London

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## Torah thought of the week

# Despair is the most powerful weapon of evil

**P**arshas Shelach tells the tragic account of the Sin of the Spies. Hashem was about to bless us with miracles like those which we experienced in Egypt. He was ready to shower upon us all the bountifulness of the land where His Presence can be perceived the most, and all without the need for a single weapon.

Then, the people requested a pilot mission to investigate the land. Their report back was disastrous, causing panic. That night, the nation erupted in a torrent of tears as a result of fear at the probability of mass slaughter by native peoples living on the land.

Our Rabbis call this "a crying for nothing".

I ask, what went wrong?

Rabbi Asher Zelig Rubenstein zt"l, the Great Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Toras

Simcha, explains that the root cause was a terrible malady that has the power to destroy. That malady is called despair.

In fact, many great rabbis teach that despair is the most powerful weapon of the evil inclination. When there is hope, there can be new beginnings.

When there is despair, the white flag is raised.

With belief, there is progress.

With despair, there is stagnation.

When there is determination, there is energy and success.

When there is despair, there is defeat.

That night of despair was Tisha B'Av, the day of mourning for all our suffering, primarily the loss of our Temple.

This Tisha B'Av, let us not cry out in despair, let us never do that.

Rather, cry out of longing and hope.

Hashem should bless us with courage and hope!



Rabbi Yonatan Landau, Ohr Somayach Savoy

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# Pulitzer Prize winning journalist credits Habonim for sense of social justice

TALI FEINBERG

“Habonim helped to instil in me a strong sense of social justice, and so contributed to the career path that I have chosen,” said Peter Hirschberg, who accepted the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting at an awards ceremony in New York City last Wednesday. It is arguably the most coveted award for journalists.

This home-grown newshound was born in Cape Town, attended Herzlia, and played a leadership role in Habonim. He made Aliyah in 1988. He was head boy of Herzlia High School in 1983, and went on to marry the head girl of the same year, Chanine Odes. He completed a degree in Political Science from the University of Cape Town, and a Masters in Political Science at Hebrew University.

Hirschberg’s career began at the *Jerusalem Post* and *Jerusalem Report*, followed by seven years at the English edition of *Ha’aretz* where he was a founding editor. He then moved to Hong Kong and *Bloomberg*, and he is currently based in Australia for Reuters, where he manages the Asia Enterprise team, heading up investigative and enterprise coverage across Asia.

“The Pulitzer is extremely prestigious. Being part of the team that won the award is a great honour,” said Hirschberg, who is the Reuters Asia Investigative Editor of the team that won the award for its investigative journalism exposing a bloody drug crackdown in the Philippines.

“The work that won the award focused on the drug war in the Philippines that was unleashed by President Rodrigo Duterte when he came to power in June 2016. We worked for 18 months on exposing the methods employed by the police, and a campaign of what was essentially extra-judicial killings of people suspected of being involved in pushing or using drugs,” said Hirschberg.

“We revealed, for instance, how police were removing dead bodies after they had shot drug suspects dead, and rushing them to hospital as if they were still alive.

But they were all dead on arrival at the hospital. This was a way for the police to muddy the evidence at crime scenes.

“A second story we did exposed a death squad that carried out multiple killings in a part of Metro Manila, further revealing the methods and tactics the police were using in the killings, which have largely been aimed at people in the poorer areas of the Philippines.”

Their work combined “shoe-leather” reporting (old fashioned journalism involving walking from place to place observing things and speaking to people, rather than sitting indoors at a desk) and data reporting. “We were able to obtain multiple police reports from the police, and to use those in our work, which made it very difficult for the authorities to refute our findings,” said Hirschberg.



Photo: Reuters

Peter Hirschberg (top left) and the team that did the series on the drug war in the Philippines. This is at the awards ceremony at Columbia University.

and this is a critical skill for journalism and in many other aspects of life. I would say that Habonim education and leadership is really an asset in all of our lives.”

He pointed out that “being South African with a social conscience has been both a burden and an asset in that it has made us challenge authority and seek the truth while growing up in

apartheid South Africa”, and that this might have had an impact on his commitment to fearless journalism.

After a whirlwind week post-Pulitzer, Hirschberg will head back to Australia to resume work on another series of investigative stories.

His advice to journalists who want to achieve excellence is: “Be inquisitive and dogged, and don’t accept conventional wisdom.”

Others agree that Hirschberg’s background had a profound impact on his career: “I would say that Peter, like many Habonim graduates, has an inquiring mind.

I would attribute that to the fact that Habonim nurtured in all of us the skill to introspect and assess all aspects of our lives, as Jews, as Zionists, and as people in general,” said his friend and contemporary, Neville Sweijd.

“We were taught to think critically and independently,

## Pop-up protesters thwarted in anti-Israel action

>>Continued from page 1

“South Africans tend to assess the rest of the world through the prism of their own experiences, and that is why the Israel apartheid narrative finds resonance, in the same way that Black Lives Matter does in America. There is a misidentification of South African history with that of the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

“Because of the uniqueness of our national experience, and because of the closeness we have to our recent past, we have a sense that this is our defining reality. It produces a sense of parochialism, a limited or narrow outlook.”

He said an effective, worldwide campaign had attracted the world’s attention to the issue at the exclusion of other pressing issues.

“No other conflict in the world gets nearly the same attention. Being pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel has become a sort of litmus test of your social acceptance in certain quarters, and [it is risky for a person to] come out with a differing view.”

When asked what Hamas stood for, Sunday night protester Eccles, 32, who works in advertising, said, “Hamas is a political party and organisation in Palestine that goes around building things like schools.” She said that she had heard that Hamas was “propped up by America and Israel, which gave it money”. She said there

were “many policies and laws in Israel that discriminate against Arabs and Palestinians in Israel”.

Her Facebook page shows numerous pro-Palestinian articles and articles by leftwing fringe group, Jewish Voice for Peace. She did express a willingness to engage in open dialogue on the subject.

Her protest partner, Kelly-Jean Gilbert, said they were “apolitical” and did not belong to any particular organisation.

“We are independent activists,” she said proudly. “We are individuals operating on our own steam. We are activists in bridging racial divides in the country. She concluded by saying, “A person can be pro-Palestine without being anti-Semitic. I know Jewish people who feel this way.”

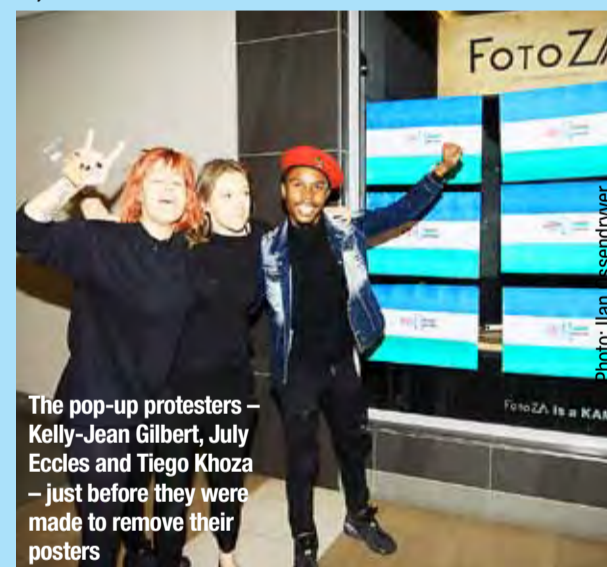
The third member of the group, Tiego Khoza, a politics and journalism student at the University of Johannesburg, said with pride: “I am an activist. I cannot tolerate injustice.”

He was added to a WhatsApp group which in his mind showed solidarity to the Palestinian cause, and he felt obliged to participate in the activities of the

group.

“Yasser Arafat sided with our liberation struggle, and so it makes sense to help the Palestinians in their time of need.”

He dropped words like the Ottoman Empire, the Balfour Declaration, and the two-state solution, but said he did not know that Hamas was an internationally recognised terrorist organisation, admitting “I have to find out my facts about Hamas.”



The pop-up protesters – Kelly-Jean Gilbert, July Eccles and Tiego Khoza – just before they were made to remove their posters

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# History professor hits out at Holocaust question

MIRAH LANGER

Professor Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu, the chair of an educational task team, lashed out at the *SA Jewish Report* for daring to question him about the Holocaust's place in the future history curriculum at South African schools, saying, "Our history is more important."

Ndlovu chaired the task team investigating whether history should become a compulsory subject for Grade 10, 11 and 12s. He agreed to speak to the *SA Jewish Report* about the recently released report commissioned by the Department of Basic Education.

Prior to its release, history textbook writer Gengs Pillay, was reported to have told the *Sunday Times* that there was an over-emphasis on the Holocaust in the proposed adjustments to the curriculum. "You are living in Africa, in South Africa, but you don't know about the Bambatha Rebellion of 1906, the Land Act of 1913, or segregation," he was quoted as saying.

History teacher and textbook writer Michelle Friedman was quoted in the article as saying that the Holocaust remained "seminal" to the subject's curriculum.

In the report released by Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga last week, a recommendation is made that, "In terms of chronology, before learners study about the Nazis and the Holocaust in the theme/topic on genocide, learners will have to study about genocide in the Americas, particularly in Latin America and also on the African continent."

"The impact of disease, plants and animals brought by colonisers to the 'new world' is also important."

"Before we study about the Holocaust, we have to study the history of genocide on the African continent as perpetuated by King Leopold II of Belgium, who carried out a brutal plundering of the Belgian Congo, ultimately slashing its population by 10 million in the late 19th century," states the report.

"This should be followed by genocide in Namibia, as carried out by the German government during the same period," it concludes.

In response to the *SA Jewish Report's* first question about the Holocaust's place in the proposed adjusted curriculum, Ndlovu went completely silent.

"I'm just taken back: why only the Holocaust? I'm taken back. I'm just taken aback. I haven't even recovered. Can I not answer this question? Our history is more than the Holocaust."

Ndlovu disrupted any attempt to clarify the question, instead offering his interpretation of what was being implied: "And we even haven't spoken about ourselves as a people, and the first thing you ask me is about the Holocaust..."

Speaking over another attempt by the interviewer to engage, he declared, "So South African history according to you should be about the Holocaust?"

"History is not about an interest group, so that is why I am saying to you I am not even contemplating answering your question," he said.

Despite attempts to ascertain why Ndlovu was responding in this way, the interview continued to degenerate, with Ndlovu becoming unresponsive.

When it was explained that the interview was to gain insight into the task team's recommendations, Ndlovu refuted this, saying, "No, you want me to talk about the Holocaust, and I don't want to talk about the Holocaust. I just want to talk about the way we interpret genocide that it is inclusive; it is not exclusive to the Holocaust, that is what I said."

Asked what the intended outcome for students in studying genocide would be, the professor said repeatedly, "It's obvious; it's obvious... We are part of the international community; it's about human solidarity."



Professor Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu

To understand the basis for the task team's selection of which genocides to recommend for study, the professor was asked why, for example, the Belgian Congo was proposed.

This query, too, seemed to go awry. "Why not? Why not? We are in the African continent," he declared.

When it was pointed out that the question was not an accusation, he began to raise his voice, and speak over any attempt to interject

and gain an understanding, he said, "We are in the African continent. Don't you understand that South Africa is part of the African continent?..."

He refused to listen to pleas that this was not the question asked, instead raising his voice even louder. "The Belgian Congo is in Africa," he repeated twice, before saying: "So why do you ask me a question about why do I write about Africa?"

He then proceeded to say, "Now is my turn to question you... Why should the questions be one sided?" He then repeatedly asked the interviewer where the Belgian Congo was, refusing to proceed until his question was answered.

When it was posed that an interest in the Holocaust did not exclude an interest in Africa, he retorted: "It does exclude."

The task team of which Ndlovu is at the helm was appointed in 2015 and completed its work in December 2017.

Its recommendations include that Life Orientation remain a compulsory subject until Grade 9, after which it will be replaced by History in the Further Education and Training band.

Further, it is proposed that History be phased in incrementally in the final years of high school, from 2023 to 2025.

In Grade 12, two History exam papers should be written – one on African History and another

focusing on the history of "the wider world", including Europe.

Elijah Mhlanga, the spokesperson for the Department of Basic Education, said that the "popular view" indicated that the department was likely to go in the direction of the report's recommendations.

However, he said there would be no final decision before the report went before Cabinet and Parliament.

The department was "moving with speed" to complete these processes, Mhlanga said.

Currently, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for History Grades 10 to 12, which is dated from 2011, stipulates that Nazi Germany and the Holocaust should be studied in the second term of Grade 11 under a section titled "Ideas of race in the late 19th and 20th centuries".

According to the policy statement, the section covers a variety of aspects, including Hitler's rise to power and political machinations, his ideology of race and eugenics, the Final Solution, labour and extermination camps, as well as the Nuremberg trials.

The syllabus also requires that students study the various groups targeted by the Nazis, as well as unpack the choices made by various role-players such as perpetrators, bystanders, resisters and rescuers, including the responses of the persecuted.

## Running for the next generation

TALI FEINBERG

It may seem somewhat unusual that a group of fit Jewish runners are running the Comrades marathon this Sunday in aid of a medical cause – the Malka Ella Fertility Fund, but for many of them, it is the perfect fit.

"This race requires dedication, and is often a very hard journey, but it can result in such a feeling of success and accomplishment. It is very similar to the journey of fertility, which can be long and taxing, but please G-d will result in a positive outcome," says Suzanne Sackstein of Malka Ella.

"This initiative was the idea of Alan Jacobson and Glenn Black who were running the Comrades and wanted to make it about more than just running."

Nine years ago, Jacobson and his running friends realised how personal the experience of the race was, and how "it focused on individual running and did nothing to contribute to society at large". They decided they wanted to run the Comrades Marathon with a bigger purpose in mind.

"All those years ago, we and many of our friends were at the age of growing our families," he says. "We came across many couples having trouble falling pregnant. The financial burden was an obstacle to realising their dream. At that point, we approached the Malka Ella Fund with a simple request – to run our race for the fund, and try to raise funds from fellow runners. At that point, The Malka Ella Comrades, Running for the Next Generation, was born."

Fertility treatment is very much a marathon, not a sprint. The cycles of medication, injections, blood tests and scans, the endless waiting, the devastating losses, and the miracle highs, the endurance that the body goes through with no guarantee of reaching the finish line, is a metaphor for the Comrades if there ever was one.

"We are literally running for the next generation," said Saul

Adler, who will be running his second Comrades. "Knowing that we are benefiting this cause and thinking of all the families who are struggling to build a family helps you to get through the darkest hours of the race."

The tradition of running the Comrades in aid of the Malka Ella Fertility Fund has become the norm for Jewish runners over the past few marathons, and this year will host the biggest group yet, with 57 runners.

All funds raised will go towards fertility treatments for Jewish couples who could otherwise not afford them. "I don't think any of the runners have actually benefitted from the

fund, but a few have known the struggles of infertility," says Ester Unterslak of Malka Ella. The organisation's work goes beyond funding treatment – it includes counselling for pregnancy loss and infertility, genetic testing, even freezing eggs for single women who want to preserve their fertility. Since the inception of the Malka Ella

Comrades, R 2 450 000 has been raised, resulting in the birth of 24 babies. "That is 24 lives that have been brought into this world thanks to this campaign. Each of those lives represents endless joy, nachas, and potential. None of this would be possible without every single runner who takes to the road for our campaign, every single person who contributes their time or effort, and of course every single donor," says the Malka Ella team.

This year, the campaign is aiming to raise R720 000, which is a multiple of 18. A sum of R360 000 has been raised to date, so all contributions are appreciated.

Donations can be made through the Malka Ella website: [www.malkaella.co.za](http://www.malkaella.co.za)

Photos courtesy Malka Ella



Talía Zulberg running in support of Malka Ella



Ezra Sher running in support of Malka Ella last year



# Max Price hit by new race row

TALI FEINBERG

As Dr Max Price's ten-year term as at University of Cape Town's Vice Chancellor comes to an end at the end of June, the race card has once again reared its head, and caught him in the middle of the fracas.

While he is adamant that this is in fact not a racial issue, he admits that race has been a constant battle, most recently when the #FeesMustFall protests turned into a racial fight.

"I'm disappointed," Price told the *SA Jewish Report*, after the *Cape Times* drew him into a senior appointment-turned-race-battle on Monday, saying: "When former UCT Vice-Chancellor Max Price called to inform a black professor she was unsuccessful in her application for a senior job, he apparently expressed shock at her disappointment, saying he assumed the only reason she applied was because she had been nominated by the Black Academic Caucus (BAC)."

UCT Professor Elelwani Ramugondo is now taking UCT to court to challenge its process of appointing a Deputy Vice-Chancellor for

to Professor Ramugondo. We have always had a good relationship, and she was an advisor in my office. I'm [also] disappointed that the *Cape Times* has misconstrued this as something personal, when it was a committee decision that has been re-endorsed by council. It was a very transparent process, and the person chosen is the best person for the job, who happens to be white".

The latest row, which Price has construed as a labour issue, contrasts with the very real challenges posed by transformation at the university that confronted Price during his two terms over the past ten years, exploding in the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements that shook the institution to its core. When steering that ship, Price was deeply invested in understanding student grievances, as he wrote at the time. "When UCT removed the statue of Rhodes, this was not a one-off concession to the pressure of student anger. The university made a significant declaration that we wanted to make a decisive break with the colonialist past. We are well aware that this demands that we tackle the elusive but extremely powerful creature of institutional racism."

In terms of appointing academic staff, Price explained that under his tenure, the university had always chosen the most capable person for both faculty and leadership positions. It has a strong affirmative action policy, but would appoint someone only if they were fully capable of performing the role, while investing heavily in up-and-coming black academics.

"So yes, a white student may find it more difficult to attain scholarships and funding as we try to re-dress the imbalance." At the same time, "the urban legend that white students cannot get into or succeed at UCT is wrong", Price said.

"My being Jewish has never been made an issue, and I've never encountered any anti-Semitism in my ten-year tenure," he said. However, he admitted that race issues had been a constant battle, most recently during the #FeesMustFall protests.

"We saw how the movement was influenced by youth leagues and party politics. It started out as a very diverse movement, and we as a university supported it as a way to get [the]

government to come on board in addressing financial exclusion at universities."

The violent protests that followed, and the shutting down of campuses compromised the cause, and students who needed subsidies the most were the ones that suffered, Price said.

Going forward, he believes that the free-education issue has largely been resolved with the government's December commitment to student subsidies, and he does not predict further violence or shutdowns. This month's exams will go ahead across campus, and will not be restricted to a tent surrounded by security as they were in November.

Price assures Jewish parents that the University of Cape Town remains an excellent choice for their children's education. At the end of May, UCT was elected "the best university in Africa", and leapt 36 places to 223rd in the world, according to the latest report from the Centre for World University Rankings.

While the university has had its up and downs, Price points out that protests and political movements like #FeesMustFall and Israel Apartheid Week are the best preparation for life in the real world.

"It's a diverse environment, confronting issues of white privilege and the black experience. It may not always be comfortable, but it's a crucial place to be if you want to play a role in South African society," he said.

Dr Max Price



teaching and learning.

The appointment of Lis Lange, a white candidate from Argentina, has caused outrage, with activists saying she did not meet the equity requirements, nor key criteria of the post.

On Tuesday, the *Cape Times* printed a response from UCT, in which spokesperson Elijah Moholola said that "The insinuation that Dr Price personally could block an appointment is inaccurate. The process simply does not allow it, with a selection committee of over 20 independent representatives. Dr Price was also not the chair of the committee.

"UCT reiterates that we believe the selection process was rigorous, fair and transparent. The selection committee included representatives of multiple constituencies, and was demographically very well represented. The committee agreed overwhelmingly that the successful candidate was appropriately qualified and deserving of the job."

In previous statements on the appointment, Price said: "The BAC's argument also assumes that a white person cannot drive a transformation agenda. We reject this view, and in this particular case, Associate Professor Lange has years of experience in transformation in other universities and across the sector as a whole."

He said he was disappointed "because I unequivocally deny expressing such thoughts

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# South African Jewish Report

## We don't go out the back door

Jewish people in South Africa have nothing to hide, and we certainly don't have to be shamed into going out the back door.

Last Thursday evening, the Israeli Embassy and the South African Friends of Israel launched their #YallaYebo photo exhibition. It showcases photographs taken by South African Instagrammers in Israel and Israelis visiting here (See page 14). It is a great way of showcasing the beauty, idiosyncrasies, subtleties, and oddities of both countries through the eyes of foreigners.

Going there, people felt safe. Why wouldn't they? It was at the Rosebank Mall, which for many of us is like our own backyard.

However, there were a group of about 20 anti-Israel protesters outside the exhibition who were harassing and haranguing patrons arriving for the launch. They were rude, shouting, and vomiting snide and ugly things at those wanting to get in. And they were showing off the Hezbollah flag with blood (red paint) on it. If the shouting and threatening comments weren't enough, the Hezbollah flag hit a horrible note because this terror organisation makes no bones about its determination to destroy the State of Israel. No two-state solution for it, nor any kind of peace treaty.



Once inside, the patrons were well protected and could ignore what was happening on the other side of the bullet-proof glass. And the event went on.

However, those who arrived once the situation had become heated were either taken inside through the back door or were turned away. And when the event was over, people were escorted out through the tradesmen's entrance, across the rubbish bins and all the items that are usually hidden from patrons,

customers, and dignitaries.

It was not a pretty sight, according to those who went out the back door.

My question is: What are we doing going out the back door? What message are we giving to the protesters and the world by doing that?

I can see why this was done from a security perspective, and obviously, I would not like anyone to be harmed. I also understand that going out the front door would have meant the need for more security, and would have created a heightened risk of violence. My gut still says it is wrong.

We have nothing to hide or to be ashamed of, so we MUST go out the front door with our heads held high.

Jews in South Africa are not ashamed, nor do we have anything to be ashamed of. We don't cower when there are protesters.

We cannot let anyone put us in a situation where we have to scarper out the back like common criminals.

As ugly as these protesters may have been towards patrons, we had right and the law on our side. They could not hurt us. The CSO and police were there to prevent anything happening, so why go out the back door?

We will not cower to people who oppose Jews in this country, whatever their reasoning. We cannot and must not give people that power over us.

As Jews, we need to stop being divisive. We need to stop fighting with each other over who supports what, and who is more kosher than the next. Yes, there are some of us who support the Israeli government 100%, and others who question what it does. There are some who keep Shabbos every week, and others who head for shul on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and maybe on Shavuot.

There are some who support the DA, and others who are hard and fast ANC supporters. Our politics, social beliefs and views on Israel differ, but we are all Jews.

Frankly, it makes me mad when Jews attack Jews and ostracise them from the community because their views differ and don't quite fit in with the conventional wisdom of the mainstream Orthodox community.

We are supposed to be a nation of questioning people. We know that every Jew has a different view to the Jew next to him. That is who we are. So why attack one another?

And why let those who oppose us have power over us by turning the other cheek and walking out the back door.

No, we must stand together and stand strong.

As a united force, we are invincible! As a community at odds with each other, we cannot win, and will all be going out the back door, because if you stand alone, you fall over. If you stand united, you are nobody's pushover.

The research being done by Professors Shirli Gilbert and Deborah Posel on identity in our community (on pages 11 and 14), shows just how many of us see ourselves in the margins. It also shows how we still identify with similar issues and beliefs because – no matter what – we are a community. Let's set aside our differences and stand together against those who want to see us fall.

Shabbat Shalom!

**Peta Krost Maunder**  
Editor

## Israel's diplomacy with Russia reaps benefits in Syria

### DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

Paula Slier



Media reports suggest that Iranian forces, assisted by Hezbollah and Shia militias, are to withdraw from the areas they currently occupy near the Golan Heights in southern Syria.

This is a huge victory for Israel, whose position has been consistent: not to allow any kind of Iranian military camps to be set up near Israel's northern border with Syria.

The Israelis have achieved this by getting Moscow on their side. After all, it is Russia who calls the shots in Syria. It has been doing so ever since September 2015, when it was invited by the Damascus government to intervene in the Syrian conflict.

In the past week, Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman visited the Russian capital, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had a telephone discussion with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Reports suggest that both sides agreed that Moscow would allow Jerusalem – albeit tacitly – to attack Iranian sites in Syria, as long as they were not tied to the Damascus government, which Russia supports.

Netanyahu is all smiles. Repeatedly he's made his position clear: allowing Iran to set up military bases in Syria is a red line from which he won't budge. And since May, there has certainly been a change in Russia's behaviour towards Israeli strikes against Iranian targets in Syria.

Think back to February, when the Israeli air force shot down an Iranian drone that had entered Israeli territory. Jerusalem responded with two waves of aerial bombardments that destroyed almost half of Syria's air defence systems.

In a foreign ministry statement, Moscow objected to Israel's violation of Syrian sovereignty, while ignoring Tehran's provocation by sending in the drone in the first place.

Moscow would have known when the Iranian drone took off, as it was very close to its air-control centre in the Syrian city of Palmyra. Moscow chose not to give the Israelis any warning.

At the time, there was a lot of discussion and analysis about whether Russia had taken Iran's side in the conflagration.

Compare this to last month's 9 May Victory Day celebrations, when Netanyahu had pride of place, walking alongside Putin in Red Square during

the ceremonial military parade. The following night, the Israeli air force carried out massive attacks against Iranian targets in Syria, it's largest action there in decades.

This time, the Russians did not issue a strong statement of criticism against Jerusalem – and in so doing sent a tacit message to both the Israelis and the Iranians. The message: Russia is not in the pocket of Iran, and is prepared to turn the cheek when Israel strikes Iranian sites in Syria.

Jerusalem has repeatedly vowed to prevent Tehran establishing a permanent presence in Syria. In recent months, Jerusalem has carried out dozens of air strikes against Iran-backed forces and attempts to smuggle advanced weapons to Hezbollah.

Should the Russians have chosen to do so, they would have had the ability to protect such targets with their own air force and air defence systems inside Syria. But clearly they've chosen not to.

Israel has always respected Russia's involvement in

Syria, presumably because she sees it as a means of stabilising her northern neighbour. In return, Russia understands Israel's security concerns.

Netanyahu has made it abundantly clear on repeated occasions that he will not shy away from using military force to keep Iran out of Syria.

No doubt, Moscow wants to avoid a military confrontation between Russia and Israel that would risk a direct clash with American President Donald Trump, who sits squarely behind Jerusalem.

Now, as the war in Syria winds down, Moscow is pushing for a peace settlement to be hammered out as soon as possible. Iranian advancement in Syria destabilises the chances of success. What's more, the Russians are distrustful of Tehran.

The countries share a complicated and uneasy history. Moscow's standing in the Middle East is the strongest it's been in decades. It doesn't want to upset relationships it's worked hard to cultivate with other major powers in the region, especially Saudi Arabia, Iran's nemesis.

Politically, Putin doesn't need the war in Syria to earn him brownie points back home. He campaigned heavily on his foreign policy achievements in the Middle East and North Africa ahead of the Russian presidential elections in March. However, now that he's secured a fourth term in office, his attentions have turned elsewhere.

Iran, meanwhile, says it won't withdraw its troops from Syria, arguing that, like Russia, it is in the war-torn country at the request of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

But it's questionable what the Iranians could do should Moscow pressure them to leave. Assad would listen to Moscow; and ultimately the Iranians would follow suit.

This week, Tehran announced that it was working to increase its uranium enrichment capacity in a threat to European powers who are desperately trying to salvage the 2015 nuclear deal after the Trump administration withdrew from it.

The country is trying to save face in what was a huge blow, not only for Iranian reformists, but also for the Iranian economy which is now bracing for

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Russian President Vladimir Putin



crippling sanctions.

For Tehran to have to withdraw from Syria would be another major setback to the country's prestige. It would also hinder the establishment of an overland stretch of influence from Iran to southern Lebanon.

It's still too early to say whether Israel's diplomacy with Russia will result in the complete removal of Iran from Syria. Israel's success so far seems to have been only to keep Iranian forces away from her border.

The next step will be for Netanyahu to convince Putin that Iranian forces must leave Syria completely. It remains to be seen whether he can succeed.

• Paula Slier is the Middle East Bureau Chief of Russia Today (RT), the founder and CEO of Newshound Media and the inaugural winner of the Europcar Woman in Leadership Award of the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards.



# Does Judaism allow for abortion?

## OPINION

Rabbi Gidon Fox



The referendum in Ireland to legalise abortion requires reflection through the prism of Torah. The question itself is a very weighty and onerous one that cannot be decided by populist view and societal norms.

The notion that the average man in the street is possessed with the innate wisdom to determine weighty legal and societal matters would doubtless be countered by former Prime Minister David Cameron following the Brexit referendum.

Consequently, the idea of seeking populist approval and determination on a matter of life and death is certainly not the way the Torah would approach a matter of this gravitas.

No mother who has had the gift of a child in her womb, who has felt the movement and kicks of the life growing inside her, would question whether it is a living being. Thus, the question of abortion is indeed a question of life – or the opposite of life.

In order to better understand the Torah's view, further context is necessary.

It is insightful to note that the original text of the Hippocratic Oath from around the third century

declares, "I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody who asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect. Similarly I will not give to a woman an abortive remedy." While Maimonides does not mention this in his physician's prayer (perhaps because it is axiomatic) it is noteworthy that in the 20th century, this was removed from the oath.

Indeed, with the advent of the 21st century, medical practice in many countries includes precisely this, euthanasia. In the Netherlands, the first to legalise doctor-assisted dying, there has been a sharp uptake in both its use and abuse, with 6 091 people being euthanised in 2016 alone, an increase of 10% on 2015.

It is estimated that a further 1 400 may not even have been reported as euthanasia. There is said to be the intention to relax the grounds upon which euthanasia may be requested and provided.

Coupled with the latest referendum on abortion, one could be excused for believing that modern society has a greater or equal fixation with death than it has with life.

Judaism, on the other hand, has always been and will always be more fixated on life than on death. Indeed, the divine right of doctors to practice their profession is based on the Biblical phrase, *verapo yerapo* (doctors can heal). The doctor is given a singular right to provide healing and life, not the opposite.

In the Torah view, life is absolute,

not relative. The Torah does not place greater import on one life over the other, regardless of talent or disability. All life is equal and on par with each other.

The value of life outweighs all else in the Torah, allowing, nay demanding, the abrogation of all laws in order to save a life (save for the three cardinal sins).

In sum, the Torah has always "worshipped" life, even as other civilisations deified death.

It is through this prism that the Torah's laws of abortion must be viewed. Torah law allows the termination of a pregnancy in order to save the confirmed life of the mother.

It is our obsession with the value of life that places the life of the mother at the helm of this decision. It is therefore a life-affirming and life-saving question, not a life-taking question.

Consensus among Halachic authorities exists that where the mother's very life is at risk from either the pregnancy or birth, an abortion is mandated. However, the more subtle definition of risk to the mother's life presents divided opinions.

While some are of the opinion that only the risk of the mother's death is grounds for termination, others believe that mental and emotional welfare may also play a factor. In this latter instance however, and indeed in general, no two cases are alike.

Each case needs to be evaluated on its own merit, taking into account the opinions of mental health professionals, understanding the history of the couple, and personal involvement with the family itself.

Thus, when deciding whether an abortion is permitted or not, it is Torah law, underpinned by a passion for life, that guides us through this difficult question.

Regrettably, the complexity of this extended question is beyond the scope of this article. A more robust understanding of the issues can be found at [sefaria.org](http://sefaria.org) in the books titled *Contemporary Halachic Problems*.

In all instances, however, a competent Halachic authority must be consulted when deciding such matters.

*Disclaimer: The purpose of this article is not to be decisive and authoritative. It provides a cursory view of Torah's view on this matter. As in many areas of Jewish law, Halacha is circumstantial, with each case being dealt with on its own merit or otherwise. No conclusions are thus to be derived from this article.*

• Rabbi Gidon Fox is the Rabbi of the Pretoria Hebrew Congregation and Chairman of the SA Rabbinical Association.

## Volunteering builds leadership and community spirit

YAAKOV SCHWARTZ

Independent research shows that when done right, adult Jewish education can offer a lot more than knowledge.

The Limmud Impact Study 2018, released on 5 June, shows that volunteer-based educational programmes can foster a sense of community and leadership outside the classroom.

"The impact of this study is not limited to Limmud," the study's author, Dr Keith Kahn-Harris, told *The Times of Israel*. Based in London, Kahn-Harris is a senior lecturer at Leo Baeck College, and runs the European Jewish Research Archive at the Institute of Jewish Policy Research. He has also been a regular at Limmud conferences since 1996.

"What this shows for other organisations and the Jewish community more broadly is that creating a community around volunteering is really important," Kahn-Harris said.

UK conference attracts 2 500 participants, and Limmud programmes internationally attract more than 40 000 people each year. Significantly, the research showed that volunteering with Limmud encouraged a new generation of Jewish leaders. Fifty-five percent said that involvement with Limmud bolstered their leadership skills, and an equal number reported that it boosted their confidence.

A full 20% said that being involved with Limmud led them to establish a new Jewish initiative or organisation.

According to the impact study's adviser, Dr Ezra Kopelowitz, the Chief Executive of Research Success Technologies in Israel, "most Jewish learning opportunities are provided by the religious or communal establishments and occur in small homogeneous groups in formal settings.

But, according to Limmud chair David Hoffman, his organisation's adult learning initiative "impacts equally on Jews regardless of denominational identity, religious practice, or gender. Limmud has the greatest impact within a diverse community".

Kahn-Harris agrees that in addition to being driven by volunteers – "Limmud in the UK only has a skeleton professional staff," – diverse age groups also play a role in its efficacy.

"Focusing solely on young people is not a good strategy. Limmud volunteer communities may be most sustainable and effective when they are multi-generational."

"[Limmud] does not necessarily change the way one practices Judaism and defines oneself Jewishly," the study says. But, it "may change the nature of engagement with Jewish life in profound ways."

The study also claims that "Limmud may play a vital role in maintaining Jewish practice into the future."

The survey queried volunteers from the United States, Argentina, Bulgaria, Israel, Germany, Hungary, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, and was conducted in six languages.

It was funded by The Morris and Rosalind Goodman Family Foundation and UJA-Federation of New York. In addition to online questionnaires, it also got its information from focus groups and informal discussions in Israel and the UK. – *The Times of Israel*

Participants gather at Limmud Jerusalem in 2012



According to the study, volunteers reported improving their connections with other Jews. Eighty-four percent of respondents said that Limmud helped them make new friends, while 82% said that it enabled them to meet Jews different from themselves. Sixty-eight percent said that the volunteer-based organisation, which holds multiple-day international learning conferences, deepened their sense of connection to the Jewish people.

Researchers polled more than 500 volunteers from Limmud, whose non-denominational model has sprouted local offshoots around the globe since its establishment in the UK in 1980. According to the study, the annual

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# Absa Jewish Achiever Awards 2018 open for nominations

JORDAN MOSHE

The Absa Jewish Achiever Awards 2018 is open for nominations. It's time to acknowledge those who have achieved great things.

This is the 20th year of this unique awards ceremony, in which Jewish individuals are acknowledged for the powerful, influential, and life-changing roles they play in South Africa.

The Absa Jewish Achiever Awards acknowledges those whose contributions to society deserve recognition, paying tribute to the men and women who have enhanced our community.

Once again, we are calling for nominations. It's time to recognise these unique individuals.

This year there are some smart changes to the awards.

What was the Creative Counsel Young Jewish Entrepreneur Award is now the Creative Counsel Jewish Entrepreneur Award, and will no longer be limited to young talent, according to Howard Sackstein, the Chairperson of the board of the SA Jewish Report. It can now be awarded to an individual of any age who has shown entrepreneurial flair.

There are also some new awards, including the Absa Business Icon Award, Absa Business Award, and Absa Professional Excellence Award. The first two will replace the Absa Entrepreneur Award, the Absa Unlisted Company Award, and the Absa Listed Company Award.

Sackstein explains the changes: "It will open up the awards to new audiences, honouring those who were previously excluded, and recognising that some people have transcended the previous criteria, reaching iconic status."

The Absa Business Icon Award recognises those who have achieved iconic status in community's business world. "We are looking for nominations of people who represent the dynamic, entrepreneurial, enterprising spirit of our community," says Sackstein. "Those who have gone beyond the norm, and achieved something truly remarkable."

The Absa Business Award will go to an individual who has displayed exceptional leadership and performance in either a listed or an unlisted company. The goal, Sackstein says, is to be as comprehensive in recognising our community's talent as possible.

As for the Absa Professional Excellence Award, it will branch out beyond the realm of business, acknowledging the contributions

of any professional in any field. The award will pay tribute to a person who has achieved national recognition and acclaim in their profession. "We want to find someone who, in their field, has shown excellence of some kind and is deserving of recognition," says Sackstein.

"Hope drives us forward with relentless optimism," he says. "The problems we face today can and must be solved by us alone. The Torah demands of us to be a 'light unto the nations' and now, more than ever, our moral leadership will define who we are as people. We celebrate not to brag of our success, but to highlight that each individual plays a role in shaping the world."

"Throughout the years," says Sackstein, "household names such as William Kentridge, Johnny Clegg,



Jan Maganwa of Absa with Brett Osrin, the winner of the Absa Unlisted Company Award 2017

Thuli Madonsela, George Bizos, Pravin Gordhan, and Jonathan Jansen have been among those recognised for the indelible marks they have made on our community and country." Kentridge and Clegg were both recipients of the arts award; Bizos, Jansen, Madonsela and Gordhan received the humanitarian award.

Award recipients like these didn't only achieve remarkable things, they showed great strength of character under trying circumstances. In spite of his dismissal in a midnight cabinet reshuffle and untimely recall early last year, Gordhan remained determined to act in the interests of his country and its people. Not only did he battle to maintain financial confidence in South Africa, he also determinedly demanded answers from defence products company Denel about its suspicious dealings. Madonsela, too, is no stranger to challenge, coming under frequent fire for her findings as Public Protector, pointing out the abuse of power, maladministration, and other unscrupulous behaviour of our country's leaders.

From entrepreneurship to the arts, community service to leadership, these awards seek to acknowledge



Gary Scott and Don Krausz, winner of the Kia Community Service Award 2017

Photos: Ilian Ossendryver

in South Africa, in business, or the broader community.

"Throughout history," says Martin Lydall, Chief Commercial Officer of Europcar, "strong women have made their mark on the world, have risen to the challenge when faced with adversity, and their courageous actions have shaped the world we live in. They do this despite increasingly demanding societal, professional, and personal obligations. We know first-hand the impact women can make, and hope to encourage other women to realise their potential contributions in all spheres. The award honours the leadership, impact, achievements, success and overall contribution made by Jewish women in business or in the broader South African community."

Previous winners have stressed the importance of rising to the challenge, assuming responsibility, and making every effort to contribute to South African society

individuals from across the professional spectrum for their work. "We celebrate South Africans who have changed the very fabric of our nation – it is they who are our role models and inspiration."

Absa Bank, the title sponsor of the event, shares this view. "The Jewish achievers represent some of the most ambitious individuals in our community," says David Hodnett, former Deputy Chief Executive of Barclays Africa Group. "The success of any society depends on its best and brightest making significant contributions to business, entrepreneurship, and the humanities. It is an interdependent relationship."

In spite of the challenges posed by trying circumstances, members of our community remain determined to stand out and make tangible contributions. Europcar is the proud sponsor of an award which recognises the unique role played by women

at every level. The winner of last year's Humanitarian Award, Pravin Gordhan, called on people to abide by the words of Nelson Mandela: "What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived. It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that will determine the significance of the lives we lead." The role played by those who have made tangible differences in our lives must be recognised, for it is through their commitment to excellence that we enjoy our many benefits.

Nominations are open to the public. All nominations should be sent via email to [nominations@sajewishreport.co.za](mailto:nominations@sajewishreport.co.za). Nominations must include the nominee's name, telephone number and email address; the award for which the nominee is nominated; as well as a short motivation for the nomination. Nominations close at 17:00 on 13 July 2018.



Brian Joffe and Bryan Schimmel, winner of the SA Jewish Report Art, Science and Culture Award 2017



Ronli Gaddin, winner of the Europcar Jewish Women in Leadership Award 2017



Ryan Canin, winner of the Creative Counsel Young Jewish Entrepreneur Award 2017



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**The Humanitarian Award - in honour of Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris** - awarded to a Jewish or non-Jewish person who has contributed substantially to the betterment of the lives of the people of South Africa

**Nominations  
close 17:00  
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# Art and anti-Semitism – where to draw the line?

TALI FEINBERG

The Chevre Kadisha's recent announcement that it will be sponsoring the premiere of the musical *Matilda* at Teatro Montecasino on 21 October has led to a number of complaints from the community because Roald Dahl, the author of the book, was anti-Semitic.

In a letter to the Chev that was shared with the *SA Jewish Report*, Guy Hoffman wrote: "Roald Dahl was a rabid anti-Semite and Nazi sympathiser. In my view, no Jewish organisation should associate with him and his work in any way. Why has the Chev chosen this particular musical to associate itself with? I am somewhat taken aback."

While the Chev is planning to go ahead with the show, it raises the question of how closely Jews should associate themselves with artists who are anti-Semitic.

Even the great Steven Spielberg did not know about Dahl's hate speech when he directed a

film adapted from the book *The BFG* in 2016.

At a press conference during the Cannes Film Festival in France, Hollywood's most accomplished Jewish filmmaker said he "wasn't aware of any of Roald Dahl's personal stories" before shooting *The BFG* for Walt Disney Pictures. Spielberg later told *The New York Times* he had "no excuse" for not researching Dahl's public statements.

These include a 1983 interview with British magazine *The Statesman*, in which Dahl said: "There is a trait in the Jewish character that does provoke animosity, maybe it's a kind of lack of generosity towards non-Jews. I mean, there is always a reason why anti-anything crops up anywhere; even a stinker like Hitler didn't just pick on them for no reason."

In the same interview, he blamed Jews for being victims during the Holocaust, saying: "I mean, if you and I were in a line moving towards what we knew were gas chambers, I'd rather have a go at taking one of the guards with me; but they were always

submissive."

During the 1982 Lebanon War, Dahl accused Israel of "bestiality", and said the IDF behaved "like Hitler and Himmler" in its aggressive treatment of terrorists. In an 1983

article in Britain's *Literary Review*, Dahl posed the question, "Must Israel, like Germany, be brought to her knees before she learns how to behave in this world?"

"I am certainly anti-Israel, and I have become anti-Semitic," Dahl told *The Independent* in 1990, eight months before his death.

Some people, however, believe that using Dahl's work to raise funds for Jewish welfare is an empowering way to stand up to anti-Semitism. Certainly, the fact that his books are present in classrooms and libraries means he simply can't be avoided. And if Jews were to boycott anti-Semitic artists, playwrights and authors, should they also avoid the works of Shakespeare, whose *Merchant of Venice* has been described as profoundly anti-Semitic?

"I can empathise with the feelings with those members of the community who have voiced concerns," says United Herzlia Schools Curriculum Advisor Mark Helfrich. "When I first became Principal at Herzlia Constantia many years ago, I voiced similar concerns when I questioned our Grade 3s spending a term on a Roald Dahl theme which, needless to say, all of the kids adored – this same theme is now used at Grade 3 level across the Herzlia system.

"To be honest, I am still uncertain about this, but popular culture certainly argues otherwise, and our pupils are all shown the various movies at home and taken to the theatre to watch the annual stage productions.

"Of course, if *Merchant of Venice* was a matric network, which it has been, we would have no choice but to teach it – of course, dealing with the anti-Semitism in our lessons."

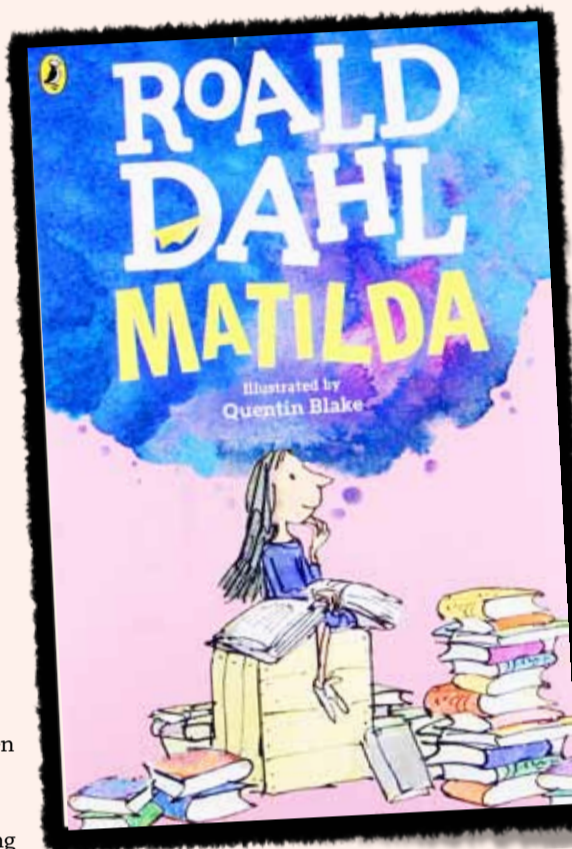
Tali Nates, the director of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre, explains that she "sees everything as an opportunity for education. We could look at a story like *Matilda*, which is about inclusion and acceptance, and say to children, isn't it interesting that this author wrote about this message but had anti-Semitic

views? People are complex beings, for example, some rescuers in the Holocaust became betrayers. We also need to see that writers are a product of their time, when anti-Semitism was acceptable and people did not question it. Shakespeare wrote at a time of expulsions and blood libels, and we can learn from that."

Asked if Jews should avoid artists who are known to be anti-Semitic, Richard Mendelsohn, the Emeritus Associate Professor of Historical Studies at UCT and an expert in film and history, says: "I don't think we can. The most famous case is, of course, Richard Wagner. His views on Jews are quite detestable and his music was adored by Adolf Hitler, yet should we forego experiencing his sublime music? I for one as a lover of Wagnerian opera would not. Likewise, I read all of Dahl's great children's stories to my sons despite being fully aware (unlike Steven Spielberg) of Dahl's noxious views.

Ronnie Gotkin, the director of Hebrew Studies at Herzlia Schools and a literature expert, says he is not sure he would be happy to have the music of Richard Wagner played at the school, "Perhaps because of the particularly vicious nature of his anti-Semitism (and indeed of his daughter and son-in-law, the infamous Houston Stewart Chamberlain), and because his views were later used by Hitler and the Nazis."

"Unfortunately, the stereotype of the rapacious Jew is a trope throughout English literature. This is a sad fact," Gotkin says. "So, the question really is whether one separates the art from the artist and in general, I would argue that the art stands for itself – except of course where the particular piece is in itself anti-Semitic, in which case it is tainted. Yes, Roald Dahl was indeed an anti-Semite – but that is expressed in his personal views, not in his creative writing. If we can't read *Matilda*, then we also can't read *A Tale of Two Cities*, or *Hamlet*."



## Throwing the book at anti-Semitic literature

OPINION

Jordan Moshe



It's one thing to find that you relate to a book's hero, or feel that his praiseworthy features are not unlike your own. It's another thing altogether when you pick up a novel and find that the character with whom you share certain attributes is plotting a scheme, has committed murder, or is otherwise derided as villainous in some way.

It can be quite thrilling to find that an author mentions Jews, or even goes as far as including a Jewish character. However, as an avid fan of Shakespeare's drama, I admit to feeling less than flattered when I found a Jewish character described as "an inhuman wretch, incapable of pity". Here was the typical caricature of the Jew rearing its head during my first reading of "The Merchant of Venice". Like me, he is a Jew. But here was the Bard describing a typical member of my faith as a creature without compassion, an enemy of humanity who has no humanity himself.

Shaken, but not exactly put-off Shakespeare's works altogether, I assumed the oft-used Jewish approach of shrugging my shoulders, and pushing on. Charles Dickens is one of my favourite novelists, and it's not difficult to see why. Dickens was known as a great social reformer who tackled the more pressing issues facing society.

However, Dickens expresses sentiments which are often borderline offensive, if not outright racist. While we often attribute these less-palatable expressions to the unhealthy

influences of his time, it does not make it easier to stomach the depiction of reprehensible characters like Fagin alongside the innocent Oliver.

Fagin, a major character in the story, is an underworld criminal who trains small children to be pickpockets. He is an unseemly character, and is referred to derisively as "the Jew". The novel refers to Fagin 257 times in the first 38 chapters as "the Jew", while the ethnicity or religion of the other characters is rarely mentioned.

Countless scholars have tried to grapple with the attitudes of Dickens and Shakespeare. In respect of the former, many refer to a letter Dickens received in 1863 from a Jewish woman who wrote that he "encouraged a vile prejudice against the despised Hebrew". Dickens altered the negative references, and included a favourable character in a subsequent novel.

Where Shakespeare is concerned, scholar Stephen Greenblatt has suggested an alternative perspective from which we might better understand the author's intention. Though he acknowledges that Shakespeare probably never set foot in Italy and his views were shaped by his time, he goes beyond these technical explanations and focuses on the fact that Shylock is afforded a voice and disturbs the accepted status quo by opening his mouth.

Perhaps the presence of unlikeable Jewish characters can be explained by history or viewed through different perspectives. But let's put these examples aside and consider an author whose books don't have a trace of anything that could be read as unflattering: Roald Dahl.

It is difficult to imagine a literary world without characters such as Willy Wonka, Matilda, and the BFG. In recent years, it has come to light that Dahl was famous for insulting

people, stirring up arguments with other authors, and being generally unpleasant. His first wife, Patricia Neal, nicknamed him "Roald the Rotten." Even his publishers said he threw tantrums.

Dahl appears to have expressed contempt for Jews publicly on more than one occasion – a fact even some of his biggest fans may not be aware of. In a 1983 interview, he said, "There's a trait in the Jewish character that does provoke animosity... there is always a reason why anti-anything crops up anywhere; even Hitler didn't just pick on them for no reason". This from the author whose books characterised the reading experiences of thousands of children, myself included.

How do we reconcile Jewish identity with literature that may not depict us in the best light? What about dealing with books which are not necessarily anti-Semitic, but whose authors have virulently maligned Jews?

At times, I've considered it a betrayal to read the works of authors who would openly insult my people. At others, I've opted to ignore the fact that the author would consider it sinful for a Jew to so much as hold his or her book.

Recently, I hit upon a constructive solution: I would thumb my nose at the authors. Not by discarding their works and avoiding them,

but by holding them as closely as possible and reading them over the imagined screams of

indignation I hear from their living or dead, anti-Semitic authors. I would read these books as though they were my own property, while being cognisant of the fact that their authors are opposed to my very existence.

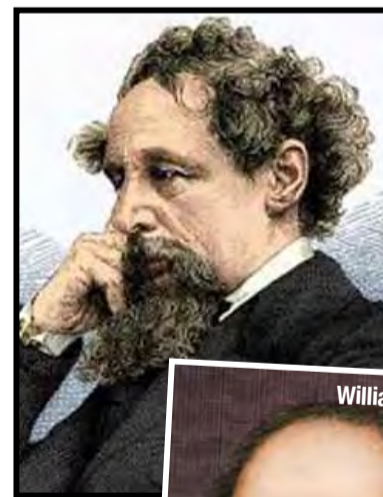
While some may criticise me for being grossly naïve or foolish, accusing me of feigning ignorance or

betraying my Judaism, I remain convinced that I can defy authors defined by their anti-Semitism by making their books part of my reading journey. I won't turn away from

works that cause me pain as well as pleasure. Instead, I will engross myself in the vast collection of world literature as if it were the only natural place I should be.

Greenblatt writes: "What you inherit, what you receive from a world that you did not fashion but that will do its best to fashion you, is at once beautiful and repellent. You somehow have to come to terms with what is ugly as well as what is precious."

I think I have done just that.



Charles Dickens



William Shakespeare



# THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

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Contact: Britt on 011 430 1980

## Shin Bet thwarts plot to assassinate Prime Minister and Jerusalem mayor

JUDAH ARI GROSS

Israeli forces arrested an East Jerusalem man suspected of planning to assassinate Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat earlier this year on orders from a Syria-based terrorist group, the Shin Bet security service revealed this week.

The main suspect, 30-year-old Arab Israeli Muhammad Jamal Rashdeh, was

arrested on 24 April. Two more suspects were arrested in the following weeks, the Shin Bet said. The security service refused to identify the two suspected accomplices.

Indictments were filed against the three on 27 May, but the case was kept under a court-issued gag order until Tuesday.

Later on Tuesday, Israel police released footage (above) of Rashdeh's arrest from the Shuafat refugee camp in East Jerusalem where he lived.

"Working on orders from terrorist operatives abroad, Muhammad planned to carry out a number of significant terror attacks against a variety of targets," the security service said.

The targets included Netanyahu and Barkat, as well as buildings belonging to the US consulate in Jerusalem (which has since been converted into an embassy) and a delegation of Canadian security officials who were in Jerusalem to train Palestinian Authority security forces in the West Bank, the Shin Bet said.

In a video statement, Barkat said that he'd been updated by the security service about the threats on his life. He said he had not changed his routine despite the threat to his life.

A Shin Bet spokesperson said Rashdeh received his orders from members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command, a Syria-based terrorist group that fights alongside Syrian dictator Bashar Assad.

In order to carry out the attacks, Rashdeh and his accomplices planned to bring in an additional terrorist operative from Jordan, the Shin Bet said.

According to the security service, Rashdeh had already begun collecting intelligence about his targets.

"The arrest of the suspects thwarted significant terror attacks which the cell had been requested to advance," the Shin Bet said.

According to the Shin Bet, Rashdeh had previously been incarcerated for "terrorist activities".

In his statement, Mayor Barkat praised the Shin Bet for foiling the assassination attempt on his life.

"Our internal security agency is one of the best in the world. Throughout their handling of this

threat, I was updated and knew that the Shin Bet was in the picture and that the police were in the field. I could trust in them and sleep soundly and securely," Barkat said in a statement on Tuesday.

The PFLP-GC – not to be confused with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which it split off from in 1968 – was responsible for a number of vicious terror attacks in Israel in the 1970s and 1980s, including one against a school bus in northern Israel, which killed nine children and three adults.

The PFLP-GC largely went underground in the late 1980s, working behind the scenes with the Lebanon-based Hezbollah terror group, but it reemerged in 2011 with the outbreak of the Syrian civil war.

## 'MESSI' CANCELLATION ASTOUNDS ISRAELI FOOTBALL FANS



The anticipation was palpable in Israel as the country waited to watch football hero Lionel Messi and the Argentine team play a friendly match in Jerusalem on the weekend. However, Argentina's soccer association on Wednesday announced the cancellation of the match, citing the "current situation". See page 4 *Times of Israel* supplement and page 20 *SA Jewish Report*.

## US DEFENDS ENVOY'S RIGHT TO CRITICIZE PARTISAN REPORTING ON GAZA CONFLICT

ERIC CORTELLESA

The US State Department backed its envoy to Israel over controversial comments made recently, indicating that envoys are entitled to free speech, but that reporters should be silenced in some cases.

State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert said Ambassador David Friedman was correct to criticize media coverage of the Gaza protests and tell reporters to "keep your mouths shut", but also said there was no problem with him and another envoy backing baldly partisan claims in the wake of the new US ambassador to Germany saying he wanted to empower the rightwing there.

On Monday, Friedman blasted the reporting on the deadly violence on the Gaza border, saying journalists should explain how Israel could have defended itself with less-than-deadly force or withhold their criticism.

"Just keep your mouths shut until you figure it out. Because otherwise, all you're doing is creating impressions that have no basis in fact.

Pressed over whether Friedman's comments reflect the Trump administration's position, Nauert essentially doubled down on his

contention that media outlets were pinning the blame for the crisis in Gaza on Israel and not holding Hamas, the terrorist group that rules the strip, accountable.

"I'm not singling out any of you, but in general, when you look at the situation in Gaza, let's look at the misery there and what has brought on that misery," Nauert said. "Has it been brought on by the US government? No. Has it been brought on by Israel? We would assert [that the answer is] no. Has it been brought on the people of Gaza by Hamas? Yes, it certainly has. Hamas has a responsibility to take care of its people, and it does not."

Friedman, who was Trump's long-time friend and attorney before his diplomatic appointment, has deep ties to Israeli settlements, and has been criticized by some as a rightwing hawk echoing Israeli government positions. His comments have been thrust back into the spotlight after the new US envoy to Germany, Richard Grenell, told rightwing news website Breitbart of his ambition to "empower other conservatives throughout Europe."

Nauert said Friedman and Grenell were both merely exercising their rights to free speech.

## MACRON BLAMES US EMBASSY MOVE TO JERUSALEM

AGENCIES AND TOI STAFF

French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday said that the US transfer of its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem last month sparked the deadly violence in Gaza.

US President Donald Trump's administration and some Israeli officials have maintained that the violence was unconnected to the embassy transfer, which they said was just an excuse for Gaza terrorists to carry out attacks.

"If [moving the embassy] leads to people dying, it's not a celebration," Macron said, referring to widespread violence on the Gaza border in which dozens of Palestinians were killed, and which occurred at the same time the embassy was moved.

He said that France wanted to help alleviate the dire humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip.

Macron spoke at a joint press conference with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the Elysee Palace in Paris after talks between the two leaders.

The French president expressed his "condemnation of any form of violence toward civilians and in particular, these past few weeks in Gaza".

Netanyahu met Macron as part of his European tour, aiming to rally support from allies against the Iran nuclear deal and to help push Iranian forces out of

Syria. However, tensions with Gaza have become a major theme of his talks.

On Monday, Netanyahu said he discussed alleviating Gaza's humanitarian situation with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. He said the weekly protests on the border were a symptom of the Hamas terror group failing to pull the enclave out of the dire situation which has left millions without electricity or clean water.

Photo: Philippe Wojazer, pool via AP



French President Emmanuel Macron and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

More than 110 Gazans have been killed in border protests since 30 March, including more than 60 on 14 May, the day the US moved its embassy. Hamas said 50 of the 14 May fatalities were its members. 14 May was also the eve of "Nakba Day", when the Palestinians mark what they call the "catastrophe" that befell them with the establishment of Israel.

Netanyahu is next scheduled to meet with UK Prime Minister Theresa May.



# BDS umbrella organisation 'has link with terror groups'

TOI

An umbrella group for American organisations that are part of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement funnels donations to a Palestinian organisation with ties to terror groups, *Tablet Magazine* reported on 1 June.

According to *Tablet*, the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights, which oversees the work of 329 different BDS organisations, sponsors the Palestinian BDS National Committee (BNC), a West Bank- and Gaza-based group that is the main co-ordinator of BDS efforts in the Palestinian territories.

The Campaign funnels tax-exempt US donations to the BNC. The BNC, meanwhile, counts as one of its members the Council

of National and Islamic Forces in Palestine, a coalition of "resistance" movements that includes Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – all considered terror groups by Israel, the US and Europe.

*Tablet* stressed that "there is no indication that any of the money raised through the fiscal sponsorship is going to terror groups", but that a financial relationship of some sort was clear – one that may be illegal under US law.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center, which combats anti-Semitism and hate, said that the magazine's reporters had "confirmed an official link between the American BDS campaign and some of the most evil, violent organisations on the planet".



Photo: AP Photo/Jacques Brimon, File

French demonstrators and supporters of Palestinians hold a placard with the word 'Boycott' during a demonstration in Paris, France

It asserted that, "Any person of faith who endorses the anti-Semitic BDS movement should now realise that they are also supporting the goals of its sponsors, among them people with the blood of more than 1 000 Israelis and tourists on their hands. The hypocrisy of BDS has

always been obvious, but now it's official."

Israel has intensified its fight against the global movement calling for boycotts, divestment and sanctions. The BDS movement has urged businesses, artists and universities to sever ties with Israel, and it has thousands of

volunteers around the world.

Supporters of the movement say the tactics are a nonviolent way to promote the Palestinian cause. Israel says the campaign often masks a more far-reaching aim to delegitimise or destroy the Jewish state.

In May, Jerusalem called on the European Union to halt funding to more than a dozen European and Palestinian non-governmental organisations that it says promote boycotts against Israel, saying the financial support violates the EU's stated policy that it opposes boycotts against the Jewish state.

Israel's Strategic Affairs Ministry published a report with a list of groups that it said receive EU funding and call for boycotts against Israel. It said some of the groups had links to terror groups while receiving EU money.

## Ease Gaza restrictions, Israelis say

TOI STAFF

Following the largest outbreak of violence with the Gaza Strip in four years, more than 41% of Israelis would like to see Israel ease restrictions on the coastal enclave that have contributed to a humanitarian crisis, according to a poll published on the weekend.

The survey, published on *Hadashot* news, also showed about 28% of respondents calling for Israel to reconquer the Gaza Strip and bring down the Hamas terror group that has ruled Gaza since 2007. A further 18% said Israel should leave Gaza as it is, while 11% had no opinion.

However, the majority of those polled thought Israel was not doing enough to avert another war with Gaza. About 53% said the government was not doing enough, while 40% thought that the government's actions were sufficient to avert another conflict.

Gaza faces a lack of electricity, drinkable water, and food. Israel and Egypt maintain a blockade on the strip to prevent Hamas from importing weapons and other goods that could be used to build fortifications or tunnels.

Israel says the humanitarian situation will not improve until Hamas returns the bodies of two IDF soldiers and the two civilians captives it holds. It blames Hamas for the dire situation, charging the terror group with diverting millions in aid to purchase weapons, dig tunnels, manufacture rockets, and train its military wing, instead of using it for the welfare of the people.

The situation has been made worse by an ongoing dispute between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, which has cut the salaries it pays to workers in Gaza, and has imposed various sanctions, including cutting payments for electricity supplies to Gaza.

The poll was taken following a week in which the violence between Israel and Hamas escalated to its worst levels since the 2014 war in Gaza. The poll was conducted by the Midgam company on 31 May. It polled 514 Israelis, and had a margin of error of 4.4%.

## Israel rushes aid money to volcano-struck Guatemala

TOI STAFF AND AGENCIES

Israel said on Monday that it would send emergency aid money to Guatemala after a deadly volcanic eruption left at least 25 people dead and cities covered in ash.

The Foreign Ministry said it was sending \$10 000 (R126 692) to the country. The money is to go toward buying medicine, food, and blankets for those affected.

There was no immediate word on whether Israel would send search and rescue teams or other aid to the country, where lava flows have blocked roads, destroyed bridges, and hampered rescue efforts.

"We will later carry out an evaluation with the Guatemalan authorities," the ministry said.

The Volcan de Fuego, Spanish for "volcano of fire", exploded in a hail of ash and molten rock shortly before 12:00 last Sunday, blanketing nearby villages in heavy ash. It then began sending lava flows down the mountain's flank and across homes and roads at about 16:00.

Authorities said at least 25 people were killed, and 20 more injured, with fears the death toll could rise.

Dramatic video footage showed a fast-moving lahar, or flow of pyroclastic material and slurry, slamming into and partly destroying a bridge on a highway between Sacatepequez and Escuintla.

Sacatepequez television published images of a charred landscape where the lava came into contact with homes. Three bodies lay partially buried in ash and coloured debris from the volcano, which lies about 44km from Guatemala City.

## JNF threatens to sue Hamas in international courts for kite arson damage

MICHAEL BACHNER

The Jewish National Fund (JNF) on Tuesday threatened to sue Hamas in an international court for severe damages caused to land it owns in the Gaza border area by incendiary kites sent into Israel, as well as by firing rockets and mortar shells.

Since the "March of Return" protests began along the Gaza border at the end of March, hundreds of kites and helium balloons have been flown into Israel outfitted with Molotov cocktails and containers of burning fuel, setting fire to large swaths of land.

The Israeli nonprofit said that it intended to recruit international lawyers who specialised in lawsuits of this kind.

The move echoes longstanding attempts by Palestinians to internationalise the conflict by suing Israel for war crimes in international courts.

"It is inconceivable that the international community would allow Hamas not to be held accountable and pay for its criminal acts – not only against the citizens of the state of Israel, but also against the environment, which has been severely hurt by this criminal environmental terrorism," said JNF world Chairman Daniel Atar after touring the damaged area.

"Hamas has proved it has no humanity," Atar said. "Not just toward human beings, but also toward natural resources."

The JNF also said it was launching a planting campaign involving children from the communities surrounding Gaza.

"Hamas burns forests – we plant them," said Atar. "We will prove that our lives here are founded on strength and growth."

Firefighters, soldiers and local residents have worked on an almost daily basis to try to contain fires in Israeli fields



Photo: Yehuda Peretz/KKL-JNF/courtesy

A JNF firefighter tries to put out a blaze near the Gaza border

ignited by the burning kites.

Israeli officials said that since the start of the protests at the Gaza border, there have been more than 250 fires in the Gaza periphery, destroying about 17 500 dunams (4 300 acres) of land, the majority of it in nature reserves and parks.

About 2 820 dunams (approximately 697 acres) of JNF forests have been burned.

On 29 May, the Hamas and Islamic Jihad terror groups launched hundreds of mortar shells and rockets at Israel, in apparent retaliation for the killing of three Islamic Jihad men in a shelling a day earlier. Israeli aircraft hit dozens of sites belonging to the two groups in response.

Last Sunday, the heads of the local governments on the Gaza periphery sent a letter to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon, and Interior Minister Arye Deri calling for increased investment in the area in light of the precarious security situation.

"In the past week, including last night, almost 200 mortar shells and Qassam rockets have landed in Gaza periphery communities, serving as a painful reminder that the Gaza periphery must manage a fragile and complicated way of life under constant threat to its residents,"

the local mayors wrote.

The JNF, known in Hebrew as Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael, owns 13% of all the land in the country and brings in about \$3 billion (R38 billion) a year, most of it from land sales.

Established in 1901, it bought land, founded settlements, and planted hundreds of millions of trees in Israel. The not-for-profit group also focuses on land reclamation and the development of communities outside central Israel.

**We no longer have a sponsor for the Times of Israel supplement.**

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**Contact: Britt on 011 430 1980**



# IDF vet gets death threats after she's falsely accused of killing Gaza medic

JUDAH ARI GROSS

A demonstrably false claim started spreading on social media sites around the world last week accusing a long-since-released IDF soldier, Rebecca, of being the sniper who shot dead a

Palestinian medic during violent clashes along the Gaza border.

Amid widespread Palestinian and international anger over the killing of Razan Najjar, a 21-year-old volunteer paramedic, during a riot along the security fence, the accusation about Rebecca spread rapidly on social media, prompting threats against the former servicewoman, her friends and family members.

The Israeli army said it had launched an investigation into the death of Najjar, and said that at the time she was shot, the violence included "thousands of rioters" at five locations along the border, "burning tires adjacent to the security fence, and attempting to damage security infrastructure".

But that didn't stop activists from coming up with their own culprits.

The accusation against the IDF veteran may have originated with a woman from Chicago with more than 13 000 followers on Facebook, who posted a photograph of Rebecca that was

published four years ago on the army's official page.

A few hours later, the "Freedom for Gaza" Facebook page, with more than 100 000 followers, published Rebecca's picture, claiming that she had "executed a 21-year-old Palestinian nurse in Gaza". By Sunday evening, the post had been shared nearly 15 000 times.

Similar posts from pro-Palestinian Facebook pages and Twitter feeds were shared and re-shared tens of thousands of times all around the world. Within two days, the claims against Rebecca were translated into Arabic, Spanish, Turkish, French, Malay, and Indonesian.

Rebecca, 24, who requested that her surname not be published, was released from the army about two and a half years ago. She did not serve as a sniper.

Rebecca works for a gap-year programme in Israel. Next month, she will start teaching English to African asylum seekers, she told *The Times of Israel*.

She found out she was the



Former IDF soldier, Rebecca, falsely accused by pro-Palestinian activists of killing a Gazan medic

subject of the spurious allegation on the weekend, when she turned on her phone after Shabbat.

"There were hundreds of messages from people on Facebook, and all my friends had messaged me on WhatsApp because they'd been getting these hate messages all weekend," she said. Her Instagram account was also bombarded with "terrible

comments", prompting her to shut it down.

Rebecca was initially overwhelmed and confused by the online fervour, then frightened by the threatening messages. Now, she says, she feels disheartened that tens of thousands of people around the world "were so eager to believe something that's a lie".

"I'm sad that in the world of social media, there's no way to protect yourself from falling victim to threats and lies," she said. "This kind of propaganda impedes any opportunity for peace."

As people started to realise the claims about Rebecca were false, the Freedom for Gaza page edited its posts.

It kept its original post intact, but added a notice at the top saying that it was aware that the claim appeared to be false, but that "whether it was this sniper or another one, does it really matter? They are ALL killing innocent Palestinian men, women and children".

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## Most Israelis favour same-sex marriage, but Knesset keeps its counsel

TOI STAFF

As Tel Aviv gears up for the influx of tens of thousands of revellers for Friday's annual Pride March, a survey commissioned by Channel 10 News and published on Monday showed that 58% of Israelis are in favour of same-sex marriage.

However, Israeli legislators were more reticent about airing their views on the issue, with 47 MKs stating that they were in favour, 12 strongly opposing, and the remainder of the 120 Knesset members refusing to respond.

Only four politicians from the ruling Likud party said that they were in favour of same-sex marriage, including Amir Ohana, the first openly gay Likud legislator, with two MKs saying that they were opposed to it. According to Channel 10, the remainder of Likud legislators did not respond to the survey, including Culture Minister Miri Regev, who in the past has marched in the gay pride parade.

The Kulanu party had only two supporters of same-sex marriage, with the rest abstaining. The majority of Jewish Home legislators did not respond to the poll, with only Uri Ariel stating his opposition. The Shas and United Torah Judaism parties had two objections between them, and the Joint List had two MKs in favour, five opposed, and six who didn't answer. There was no response from legislators in the Yisrael Beytenu party.

The left-leaning Labour and Meretz parties both came out in full support of

same-sex marriage. MK Merav Michaeli, who is the co-Chair of the gay rights lobby in the Knesset, responded to the results in a statement to Channel 10: "I am happy that I am not surprised by the results. The public has long understood that members of the community deserve equal rights like every other citizen. The State of Israel is the only democratic state in which there is no civil marriage, and it is time for this government to understand that we are in the year 2018."

Dr Evan Cohen, the Chairman of the Likud party's pride faction, said he believed that Israeli legislators would catch up with popular public opinion.

"The results of the survey do not surprise anyone well acquainted with the Likud party, which has a constitution calling for equality and the prevention of discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation," he said, according to Channel 10. "The Knesset is, as always, lagging behind the people, and despite the support of most Likud MKs for equality, MKs are afraid of the electoral implications. I hope that with the understanding that there is broad public support, the public support of our elected representatives will also come."

In Israel, though same-sex marriage is not technically illegal, there is no institution authorised to carry it out. In a system inherited from Ottoman times, people can marry in Israel only via their religious institutions. Jewish couples must marry through the Chief Rabbinate,

which refuses to carry out same-sex marriages, and Christians, Druze and Muslims all marry through their own state-sanctioned and publicly funded religious legal systems.

A similar survey last year looking at the Israeli public's support for same-sex marriage, albeit with a different sample size and questions, showed an all-time high of 79% of Israelis supporting same-sex marriage or civil unions.

## Rabbinical court opts to free 'chained' Israeli woman

MARISSA NEWMAN

A private rabbinical court on Monday dissolved the marriage of a Jewish Israeli woman whose husband has refused to grant her a religious divorce, or a gett, for 23 years, in what is believed to be the most extreme case of an agunah or "chained woman" in the State of Israel.

Tzviya Gorodetsky's husband, Meir, has opted to remain in prison since 2000 rather than grant the divorce papers, without which she cannot remarry under both Jewish law and the law in Israel, where personal status issues are handled by the rabbinate.

Gorodetsky, 54, has been unsuccessfully pursuing a gett through the state rabbinate system since 1995, and last year, launched a hunger strike outside the Knesset to protest her status. Though Monday's decision will not be recognised by the state's Chief Rabbinate since it was conducted by a private court, it gives the Ukrainian-born Gorodetsky, who is religious, a Jewish legal mandate to remarry.

A spokesperson for the state rabbinical courts declined to comment on the private ruling.

The ruling by the private rabbinical court, headed by Rabbi Daniel Sperber and convened by the Center for Women's Justice, terminated the marriage on the grounds that the abusive conditions of the marriage were such that no one would knowingly have agreed to the nuptials; that the husband failed to disclose his mental illness before the wedding; and based on Gorodetsky's testimony, it was she, not her husband, who had purchased the wedding ring.

It was the convergence of those three conditions and their corresponding Jewish legal arguments – Umdena d'mochach, mekah ta'ut, and kinyan – that persuaded the rabbinical judges

that the marriage could be invalidated without a divorce, the ruling said.

"Tzviya Gorodetsky has suffered enough," the rare religious ruling said. "The husband has proven that so long as he is alive, she will not receive a gett."

Two of the rabbinical judges who debated the case have remained anonymous over fear that criticism of the ruling could result in the rabbinate calling into question its past conversions and rulings, according to Rachel Stomel of the Center. The



A private rabbinical court dissolves the marriage of Tzviya Gorodetsky

British-born Sperber is a professor of Talmud at Bar-Ilan University and an Israel Prize winner.

The anticipated controversy was addressed in the ruling, which said, "We have no doubt this ruling will arouse controversy, as has happened now and again over innovative decisions.

The ruling further affirmed that the decision was made in consultation with prominent "talmidei chachamin [scholars] who have dealt with practical matters of divorce and marriage for years.

"I really feel at peace," Gorodetsky told *The Times of Israel* on Tuesday. "Beforehand, I felt that I was in a situation that was unreasonable, that justice had not been done. Now, it's a comfort that there are rabbis who think differently, and who [have] agreed to free me."

A gay couple has a symbolic wedding ceremony under a chuppah



Photo: Hadass Parush/Flash90



# Argentine pundits lambaste national team's 'hypocrisy' on Israel game

## TOI STAFF

Argentina's leading newspaper on Wednesday printed two scathing rebukes of the national team's decision to cancel its friendly game with Israel scheduled for Saturday.

In an opinion piece published in *Clarín* and featured at the top of the publication's website, journalist Miguel Winazki suggested it was time to "abolish soccer and lift the World Cup in hypocrisy".

In order to be consistent in its decision to avoid controversy abroad, Winazki wrote, the national team should also "not play in Russia, because the Kremlin was behind the decision to launch military incursions in



Argentine striker Lionel Messi training with teammates

Syria in complicity with the tyrant Bashar Assad".

It should also stay away from Iceland due to its involvement in alliances "that invaded Iraq and Afghanistan by blood and fire".

"Nor against Nigeria in protest against the atrocities perpetrated

by the terrorist group Boko Haram against thousands of victims, mostly women," he said.

"We will not play against Spain, for its colonial enclaves in Ceuta and Melilla" on the Moroccan coast, Winazki said, and "for the electrified gates at those sites

that kill migrants".

France was out of the question due to its colonial past, he continued, as was Saudi Arabia "for the oppression in that country against women". Croatia and Serbia would also be boycotted over the brutalities of the regional wars in the 1990s.

"Strictly speaking, and of course according to this line of conduct, neither should the national team ever appear to play in Palestine – the Gaza Strip is dominated by the terrorist group Hamas, and at war with the Palestinian Authority that rules the West Bank."

Winazki finally offered: "Let's not play with anyone. Nor against ourselves, since we cannot even deal with our cases of

corruption."

Another leading piece in the paper titled "World Champions in the absurd" mocked the team for "only now" finding out about the problems of the Middle East.

Argentina's superstar striker, Lionel Messi, writer Daniel Lagares noted, lives in Barcelona, where only last year 13 people were murdered in a terror attack.

Other Argentine team members play in England "where just a year ago, a bomb exploded on the London Bridge."

"Now they've been warned that Jerusalem is dangerous? Is it more dangerous than other cities? By how much?"

# Corbyn supporters angry over anti-Semitic sketch

## TOI STAFF

Supporters of UK Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn reacted angrily over the weekend to a sketch in a BBC comedy programme which lampooned the anti-Semitism controversy in his party.

In the sketch on Tracey Ullman's "Tracy Breaks the News", Ullman-as-Corbyn says he's "completely on top of all this Jewish stuff", and claims that he's told the party's anti-Semites "in no uncertain terms – tone it down a bit".

Some Corbyn supporters took to Twitter to lambaste the sketch as biased and a piece of political propaganda, with a certain subset claiming – falsely –

way – that the Corbynistas had decided that I wrote this Tracey Ullman sketch."

Baddiel, who has previously spoken out about anti-Semitism in Labour, said, "The idea seems to be that if I have said something to call out anti-Semitism in the Labour Party, then if there's something or someone else doing that, then I must be behind it in some way. At a deeper level, that speaks about myths of Jewish conspiracy, of Jewish control of the media etc."

In the sketch, Corbyn is taking selfies with a group of young people at the airport when he is confronted by an Orthodox Jewish man, who tells the Labour leader he's "very angry" over his failure to "do more about the anti-Semites" in the party.

"I'm all over it, like cream cheese on a bagel," Corbyn says. "It's alright to say that, is it?"

Corbyn then tells the youths he is "completely on top of all this Jewish stuff".

"I've spoken to every single anti-Semite in the Labour Party, and I've told them in no uncertain terms – 'tone it down a bit'."

After noting awkwardly that he has "always been very careful about the company that I keep", Corbyn is approached by Irish nationalist Gerry Adams

who lauds him as "a great supporter of the Republican armed struggle".

The flustered Corbyn then rushes off with the young men into a taxi, where he is greeted warmly by the driver, "Ismael from Hamas". Corbyn mutters "Oh, bloody hell!" as the taxi drives off, with Ismael reminiscing about the time Corbyn invited him to the House of Commons along with "those guys from Hezbollah".

Photo: Mary Turner/Getty Images/JTA



Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn

that Ullman is Jewish and a Zionist.

Actor Dylan Strain then set off a small storm by claiming, apparently in jest, that the sketch was written by Jewish comedian David Baddiel, leading to attacks on the latter.

Baddiel told the *Guardian* he was surprised to find himself in the middle of the controversy.

"Then it becomes clear to me – in an incredibly 'Jew plus Jew equals seven'

# Die Antwoord's Israel concert cancellation 'not politically motivated'

## JESSICA STEINBERG

South African rap rave group Die Antwoord announced on Sunday that they had been forced to postpone their scheduled concert in Israel this summer, and apologised to their fans, saying they would reschedule.

The duo from Cape Town – frontman Ninja and singer Yolandi Visser – were scheduled to perform at Live Park Rishon on 2 August.

"Die Antwoord needs to reschedule the start of their tour to begin on 4 August in Belgium and unfortunately, their show at Live Park Rishon on 2 August needs to be cancelled," their promoter said.

The band did not give any political motivation for their cancellation.

"Die Antwoord" means "The Answer" in Afrikaans, and the band, part of South Africa's "zef" counterculture movement, performs in English and Afrikaans, with some elements of Xhosa.

# Tel Aviv highway tries out smart studs to alert for hazards, traffic

## SHOSHANNA SOLOMON

Tel Aviv motorists probably won't notice, but if they are whizzing down the Ayalon Highway toward the Rokach Boulevard exit, they will be watched by smart studs – sensors strategically placed on the sides of the road to alert for hazards or traffic hiccups.

The smart studs – which look like the traditional cat's eyes used to demarcate roads – were created by Israeli startup Valerann, which is conducting its first pilot run on a real, traffic-jammed environment, with the co-operation of highway operator Ayalon Highways Company.

Set up in August 2016, the Tel Aviv-based firm has developed an end-to-end traffic control and road-monitoring system that uses wireless sensory chips installed on the road itself. Using these sensors, together with an algorithm and a communication system, the combined platform is able to provide real-time information for road operators and drivers about occurrences on the road – such as traffic levels, stranded cars on the roadside, and hazardous conditions like "black ice".

Valerann hopes that this pilot, along with two others in the US and the UK later this year, will help make its technologies part of the infrastructure of smart cities and autonomous cars.

Most roads today, especially intercity roads, have reflective road studs, or cat's eyes, to help outline lanes, bumps, and road crossings.

Valerann suggests replacing these studs – which are replaced by road operators every few years anyway – with durable, smart road studs that transmit information about conditions to a centralised control centre. The studs can also receive information from the centre, providing bi-directional feedback to drivers; such as starting to flicker if there is a hazard coming up.

Until recently, all the sensors that enable autonomous cars have been placed on the vehicles themselves, Jacobson said. But infrastructure has a part to play.

"It is clear that it would not be right for the autonomous car to work alone," he said. "It must work within an ecosystem of

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technology and entities and be part of a basket of solutions."

The sensors developed by Valerann are meant to be strategically deployed on highways and roads as a "platform of information" over thousands of kilometres.

About 200 metres of the Ayalon Highway now hosts the sensors, which for now just transmit information. In a second stage, the experiment will be extended to a kilometre, and will test the system's data processing capabilities.

The pilot will enable the company to develop its product before commercialisation, said Yossi Margalit, the Chief Technology Officer of Ayalon Highways, a company which he says

Workers lay out smart studs developed by Israeli startup Valerann on the Ayalon Highway



prioritises innovative smart-transit technology and out-of-box thinking to deal with transportation problems.

Valerann will pilot its technology later this year in Washington, DC, having its sensors laid out over a 500 metre stretch by a road operator that it said it could not yet name. In July, the sensors will be deployed on 200 metres of a UK highway operated by Highways England.



# Mainstream Jewish community doesn't represent all Jews

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

Not all South African Jews feel represented by the mainstream community. For some, this statement may be shocking, but for others, it will come as a relief.

A recently-launched extensive study on identity in the South African Jewish community aims to fill gaps in the community narrative, beginning with those who regard themselves as inhabiting its margins.

Professors Shirli Gilbert and Deborah Posel presented snapshots of the ongoing project at an event held under the auspices of the South African Jewish Museum, the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre, and Limmud SA.

Gilbert is Professor of Modern History and Director of the Parkes Institute for Jewish/non-Jewish Relations at the University of Southampton in the UK. Posel is Professor of Sociology at the University of Cape Town and Founding Director of the Institute for Humanities in Africa.

Gilbert explained that the “mainstream is presented as white, Orthodox and Ashkenazi – not much attention is paid to Sephardi Jews or to converts to Judaism, for instance”.

She said the three key pillars of Jewish identity identified in existing scholarship were Orthodoxy, the Holocaust, and Zionism. “The Zionism of this community is quite unique – almost unanimous,” she noted.

“It wasn't challenged here as in other places, and remained largely unquestioned as the ideology of the mainstream Jewish community.”

Posel aims, through the research, to reveal the diversity of this small Jewish community, investigating how South African Jews who don't feel represented by mainstream Jewish organisations define their Jewishness.

The interviews also cover the impact of the Holocaust on identity, the relationship between Jewishness and South African-ness, and attitudes towards Israel.

“We've had unusually honest and open conversations on topics which many respondents often found difficult to engage in, especially in a public forum,” Posel said.

The ages ranged from those born after 1994, those aged 24 to 50, and those over 50.

Included to date is a mix of lawyers, doctors, business people, academics, and people working in a variety of NGOs.

So far, Gilbert said, all participants identified as Jewish, but they often struggled to articulate precisely what it was that defined their Jewishness. The majority felt their Jewishness was rooted less in religious practice than in culture, history, and tradition, although many nonetheless expressed a deep sense of connection with Jewish ritual and, in some cases, spirituality.

“For many, rituals are important because they bring family and community together,” Gilbert commented.

Shirli Gilbert



Deborah Posel

occupied territories now.

One of the powerful themes in the findings is the combination of a unanimous and very positive embrace of a Jewish identity, and an increasing discomfort with what's happening in Israel.”

The vast majority defended Israel's right to exist. “The dilemma was how to reconcile support for Israel's right to exist with critiques of the form the state of Israel currently takes.”

A few respondents said the analogy of Israel and apartheid was “spot-on”. Some said Israel was, in many respects, worse.

“Others said there were historical differences, and the analogy was not helpful. Some didn't want to go there. “Many of the people

we interviewed expressed a great deal of discomfort in relation to Israel as it is now, and how it affects their global positioning as Jews. They also spoke about how difficult it is to speak about this in public.”

The interviewees identified two barriers to speaking out, namely, the reactions anticipated or received from the Jewish mainstream and fear of marginalisation; and the reality that it has become so difficult to talk about the complexities in non-Jewish circles because of the way the issue has become politicised

What emerged was a lament on the lack of a space in which to have this conversation. “This is a vindication of a forum like this,” Posel concluded.

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# Love in the face of adversity

TALI FEINBERG

“No one goes into a relationship with the pretence that it’s going to end due to illness,” says Nicci Marcus. Her husband, Craig Marcus, passed away nine months ago from cancer-related complications, when their baby daughter was just six months old.

Their story is one of courage, hope, inspiration and mind-boggling adversity, as they went through more in their short time together than some couples experience in a lifetime.

On their wedding day, the young couple looked like any other under the chuppah – glowing with health and happiness that they had finally found their be’shert. Although it

affect patients in many different ways. For Craig, it made his skin tighten around his body and he had excruciating pain in his legs. Craig was admitted into hospital several times and was put on morphine drips to alleviate his pain.

Seventeen days before their baby was due to be born, Craig went into multiple organ failure as the tightening skin around his torso started to put pressure on his vital organs. He was put on every possible means of life support and was put in an induced coma.

As the days drew closer to their due date, it became clear that Craig was not going to be present. Thankfully, Nicci’s sister Martine was allowed

the hospital so we could spend time together. Craig would be wheeled out of ICU with his drips, oxygen and other peripherals, and we would sit outside in the fresh air.”

After spending 68 days in the Donald Gordon Hospital, Craig was discharged and moved to Auckland Park Rehabilitation Hospital, where he spent eight weeks in an intense rehabilitation programme. Craig wasn’t able to walk – he had lost all muscle mass in his body, and his skin was still so tight around his joints, it made it almost

hardly slept during the night due to discomfort, while Gemma was a brilliant sleeper.

In June, Nicci returned to work full time and Craig went back to work twice a week. But as the weeks

On the night of 3 August 2017, Craig was struggling to breathe, and their worst fears were about to unfold when Craig was re-admitted to hospital.

“No one should ever experience or witness what we went through that week. Craig was in hospital,” says Nicci. “Six days later, Craig’s suffering was no more and he was finally at peace. Craig was surrounded by everyone who loved him and who he loved. When I saw that dreaded flat line, I dropped my head and said: ‘That was a good fight, my boy. Well done. We are all so proud of you.’”

Nicci continues: “Since Craig’s passing, I find myself being an outsider in society. There are those who avoid eye contact with me in the shops. Others stop and say: ‘It’s so sad’, or ‘You poor girl’ and my absolute favourite, ‘You knew he was sick’. These people

clearly didn’t know Craig and although he was sick physically, the light he brought into our family overshadowed his illness. As the poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson goes, ‘It’s better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all.’

Most of all, it is Nicci’s inner strength and positivity that has defined her journey. “I truly believe Craig keeps me going every day. I saw him in excruciating pain and discomfort and despite that, he lived each day as if there was no tomorrow. If Craig could do this, then so can I.



Craig and Nicci Marcus on their wedding day



Nicci and Craig Marcus with their daughter Gemma

Photo: Bronwyn Moore

Photo: Splendid Productions

went on, Craig’s health started to deteriorate. The couple discovered that Craig’s lungs were functioning at 24% – the tightening of the skin that he had from the GvHD was starting to happen to his lungs.

“It was recommended that we see a doctor in Pretoria, who said he had never seen such a severe case in his entire medical career.”

Craig now needed to be on a CPAP machine at night to help him breathe. He had an oxygen tank at home and a portable oxygen machine when he went out.

appeared to be perfect, Craig had been battling cancer for many years, and it quickly intruded on their newly married life.

When they first met, Craig was in remission. But soon into the relationship, he was re-diagnosed. Craig received several cycles of chemotherapy followed by an allogeneic (donor) stem cell transplant on 4 February 2015. Three months later, he was cancer-free.

“In true Craig style, two days later he went down on one knee and asked if I would marry him,” recalls Nicci. “We got married on 25 October 2015 surrounded by family and close friends who were on this journey with us.”

With Craig’s health challenges behind them, the couple planned to start a family. “When Craig was first diagnosed with Hodgkin’s lymphoma, it was advised that if he ever wanted to have children, he would need to store his sperm, which he did,” said Nicci.

And so they began fertility treatment. After two rounds of treatment, their dream came true.

A few weeks later, Craig’s health started to change. His skin became blotchy in places, his legs and muscles started to cramp and things just didn’t seem right. “His oncologist said Craig was experiencing Graft-versus-Host Disease (GvHD). This is common after a stem cell transplant as it means that the transplant is successful and that the donor cells are becoming more prominent than the host cells,” explains Nicci.

GvHD is unpredictable and it can

to support her. Their special friend Adam recorded the birth, which was what Craig had planned to do.

The doctors had told Nicci that there was a possibility that they would be able to wake Craig for the birth, and the day before, they started to reduce his sedation medication. During the birth, Martine video-called Craig’s brother, who was with him. “My sister turned the phone to me and I saw Craig with his eyes open. Throughout the whole procedure all I could do was focus on Craig,” she remembers.

“From the moment our daughter, Gemma, was born, I knew she was going to be my strength and I would protect her in every possible way. Gemma was brought into the world under the most stressful and unnatural circumstances, but she will only know peace, serenity and love.”

The family could still not be reunited as Craig had picked up a bacterial infection, which could be passed on to Nicci and ultimately, on to their daughter. “The first week was the hardest of my life. First-time mom, no husband at home, feeling very emotional, vulnerable and still in disbelief about everything that had happened. Despite all the turmoil, when I was with Gemma, I was as calm and engaged as any ‘normal’ mom. My child was not going to feel the worry I was under.”

Craig met his daughter for the first time three weeks after she was born. “It was a day we were praying for: We were a family. Following this, and depending on Craig’s strength on the day, I would take Gemma to

impossible to move. He came home in a wheelchair, but he was home for good.

A carer would look after Craig during the day and Nicci would take over in the evenings. Ironically, Craig

## Holocaust survivor still going strong at 100

Madeleine Lopato-Heitner recently celebrated her 100th birthday. She is one of the oldest Holocaust survivors in Johannesburg.

Her big day was celebrated in the company of her loving family, including her daughter-in-law, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, whose lives she has shaped with her own story.

Madeleine was born in Poland on 21 May 1918. In 1923, her family left their home and settled in Belgium.

As a young girl, she learned to speak French, as well as Polish and Yiddish, and excelled at school. Madeleine found true love and married Max Mantel in the midst of war-torn Europe in 1942.

Sadly, she was pregnant when her beloved Max and her younger sister, Marjem, were arrested and killed by the gestapo. Max would never know his unborn son, Rene.

In her determination to secure her and her son’s survival, she hid the child with a non-Jewish family, who looked after him during the war.

Madeleine then married Theo Heitner and, together with her mother and young son, they left Belgium for South Africa in 1950.

Theo legally adopted Rene and passed away shortly before Rene’s barmitzvah. Tenacious and determined, Madeleine ensured that her son completed his schooling and went on to university.

Rene became a prominent specialist paediatrician in Johannesburg, saving the lives of many children with rare diseases.

Madeleine then married Isaac Lopato in 1961, but unbeknown to her, he had already been diagnosed with cancer and he passed away in 1962.

Finally, she found 27 years of happiness with Michel

Abrahamson. But he, too, passed away in 1997.

Madeleine’s sense of humour and joie de vivre are known to many. She continues to regale everyone she meets with stories of her past, many of them bitter sweet.

Her beloved son, Rene, passed away in 2012.

Madeleine is a woman of determination and courage. Her raison d’être is “to live and to give”.

Her daughter-in-law, Yvonne Heitner, grandchildren Nikki Heyman, Ryan and Stephen Heitner, and her six great-grandchildren are grateful to be able to celebrate this milestone with her.



Nikki Heyman, Madeleine Lopato-Heitner and Yvonne Heitner



# NEW HOPE IN EASING THE PAIN OF CRITICALLY ILL CANCER PATIENTS

BY KEN STEPHENS

Dr. Yaacov Richard Lawrence, a London-born and educated doctor, is part of a unique team of Radiation Oncology specialists at Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan, Israel conducting the world's first clinical trial and study of targeted radiation treatments into the "celiac plexis" (main abdominal artery), to relieve excruciating pain and prolong the lives of critically ill pancreatic cancer patients.

"It's well known that pancreatic cancer patients just don't respond at all to morphine, so we have developed a different form of palliative care, which can provide relief from pain, as well as the physical and mental stress associated with this type of disease, which is usually terminal," revealed Dr. Lawrence, who is also a respected Assistant Professor at Jefferson University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as well as a distinguished member of the Royal College of Physicians of London and American Association for Cancer Research. "We are delivering an unmet need for these critical ill patients. We believe that after we have finished our trial/study along with other participating hospitals in the UK and USA, and publish the results, we are reasonably sure this will be the standard procedure for pancreatic cancer care all over the globe."

According to Dr. Lawrence, some patients have described how they have been able to greatly reduce, or even stop taking their pain killers. Another patient described how the pain had decreased to the point where she was able to return to her favorite activity—ballroom dancing!

How does it work? "We deliver a very high dose of radiation into the nerve. We have been doing this clinical trial and research for the past 2.5 years," Dr. Lawrence divulged. "80% of the patients who were given this unique treatment showed a significant decrease in pain and 30% of the patients within the 80% were actually pain free. As a result, these patients were more

active and mobile, which allowed them to live longer and be treated with stronger medications. It's not a cure, but its giving them strength and hope to deal with the disease and allows doctors to fight this horrible disease in the best way they know how at this point."

Pancreatic cancer has the highest mortality rate of all major cancers. 91% of pancreatic cancer patients will die within five years of diagnosis – only 8% will survive more than five years. 74% of patients die within the first year of diagnosis.



The pilot study, whose results will be presented in Chicago in June, was supported by the Israel Cancer Association. Because of these promising results, a larger international clinical trial is underway and is actively recruiting new patients across North America, Europe and Israel.

Dr. Lawrence, who made Aliyah from the UK to Israel in 1997 and joined Sheba's Oncology Division in 2007, works in tandem with two South African born and medically trained professionals, Dr. Tzvi Simon, Head of the Department of Radiotherapy and Dr. Talia Golan, who runs The Sheba Pancreatic Cancer Center and is the Medical Director of the Sheba Phase I clinical trial unit, which has garnered a stellar international reputation. Dr. David Hausner, who currently resides in Toronto, Canada but will return to Israel in the near future played a vital role in creating the study.

"Though 50% of pancreatic cancer patients are dying in just a few months, we are making significant strides. If we can expand the number of patients who are surviving based on scientific clinical trials and studies, I believe we will eventually find a therapy that will subdue this dreaded disease," added Dr. Golan.

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# Dialogue through the lens: the pictures they didn't want you to see

NICOLA MILTZ

"It was Friday night in Jerusalem. A random stranger asked me if I wanted to join his family for a shabbat meal. I was blown away."

This is the words of renowned South African Instagrammer, Miklas Simeon Mannekke, who spent six jam-packed days in Israel taking photographs around the country for a unique cultural exchange project.

Mannekke, who had never been to Israel before, was astounded by the local hospitality experienced in every city he visited.

"Where else in the world do complete strangers genuinely ask you to join them for dinner," said Mannekke, who found Israel to be a land of sublime contrasts and extreme beauty.

He joined fellow South African Instagrammer, Alexis-Kyprianos Portokalli, on the short trip to Israel after being asked to take part in a photographic dialogue between South Africa and Israel. The two accomplished photographers have thousands of Instagram followers.

The initiative was conceptualised by the Embassy of Israel in South Africa, and the South African Friends of Israel. Four Instagrammers, two from each country, took part in the joint project with the ultimate aim of exploring both countries to showcase their differences and similarities.

Last week, their combined efforts culminated in an exhibition titled #YallaYebo, which opened in Johannesburg at the FotoZA Gallery in the Rosebank Mall. The result is an artistic travelogue which displays a creative cross section of the grit and glamour that makes up each country.

Two Israeli Instagrammers, Alexander Rozenson and Ella Uzan, came to South Africa to photograph the country's cultures and vast landscapes, while Mannekke and Portokalli were in Israel.

Deputy Ambassador Ayelet Black said the objective was to show how similar Israel and South Africa are in their diversity, by means of a photo dialogue. According to her, the photographers immersed themselves in each other's countries, while artistically capturing the similarities along the way.

"There were so many incredible moments that resonated with me," said Mannekke, who is Christian and enjoyed the cultural melting pot that makes up Jerusalem. According to his impressive resume, he is an Academy Award-nominated filmmaker, and has won numerous photographic awards both locally and abroad.

One of his brightly-coloured

photographs shows a relaxed Arab carpet merchant in the Old City in Jerusalem.

"The guy was so chilled, reclining in his chair, totally relaxed about me capturing him on film, without a care in the world," Mannekke said.

Another of his photographs shows the silhouette of a religious Hassid walking away from the Kotel on Shabbat, winding his way up the long stone staircase.

There is a mirror on the wall to show who is coming in the opposite



Taken in Soweto by Alexander Rozenson

captured the parks, religious sites and city scapes, and experienced the post-Shabbos night life on Ben Yehuda Street. They visited Tel Aviv, the nearby beaches, and Jaffa, went on a graffiti tour of Neve Tzedek, visited

Haifa, the Bahai gardens, travelled to Masada, swam in the Dead Sea, and visited a kibbutz, as well as numerous other destinations including Yad Vashem and Ein Kerem.

"I didn't know what to expect, I was pleasantly surprised," said Mannekke.

The Israeli Instagrammers likewise travelled extensively during their six-day stay, taking in things like the Hector Pieterse Memorial, Vilakazi Street, and other sites in Soweto. They went to Constitutional Hill, sampled Ethiopian food, visited Maboneng, Arts on Main and Keyes Avenue, went to the Lesedi Cultural Village, and the Lion Park. They visited Durban, sampling Indian food and culture, captured beach scenes along the promenade, and visited local schools. While in Cape Town, they enjoyed tandem paragliding, going on the Table Mountain cable car, whale watching, beer tasting, and visiting various townships.

The opening of the exhibition coincided with renewed attacks on Israel from Gaza following the recent flare up along the Gaza border. It was a week

in which dozens upon dozens of rockets were fired into Israel, causing emergency siren alerts to ring across the southern region, with residents scrambling for cover.

Anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian protesters made several attempts to disrupt the opening. The small group of protesters waved Hezbollah flags covered in red paint, and insulted patrons wishing to enter the gallery. Members of the community security organisation and local members of the South African Police were forced to blockade the entrance because of the menacing protesters. A number of patrons were turned away.

In an attempt to provoke violence, the protesters screamed anti-Israel abuse, all of which was muted for those inside the gallery by its bullet-proof windows.

Said patron and well-known community leader, Reeve Forman: "It was refreshing to see these two countries through the eyes of young artistic people with no political agenda, just a factual photographic account of what lay before them."

• The exhibition runs until 10 June.



Taken in Jerusalem by Miklas Simeon Mannekke



Taken in Jerusalem by Alexis Kyprianos Portokalli

direction.

"In Israel, you always need to know what is coming around the corner," said his colleague, Portokalli, whose black and white photograph of a young religious man chatting to an alternative hipster best captures the diverse cultures which collide constantly in daily life.

He said: "I was struck by the warmth of the people. On the Friday night, a group of religious men were praying together at the Wall. They saw me taking photographs of them on Shabbat, and happily pulled me towards them and embraced me. It was beautiful."

While in Jerusalem, the South African photographers captured pictures of the pre-Shabbos rush at the Wall in Jerusalem, took in all the major sites in the Old City,

## Racial bias and borderline Orthodoxy – all in a day's work at Limmud

SIMON SHEER

For white South Africans, transformation involves confronting uncomfortable truths like implicit racial bias, said Brett Morris, Group Chief Executive of FCB Africa, a speaker at Taste of Limmud, hosted by the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Centre last weekend.

"We don't have to be the victims of our bias. We have to acknowledge that we have it and work to overcome it," said Morris, reflecting on his company's approach to Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE).

Limmud, to be held in August, is a highlight for anyone with a keen interest in Jewish history, culture, art and literature. Taste of Limmud is a preview of the annual event.

With two, hour-long sessions featuring three presentations each, the topics ranged from the lessons of totalitarianism to how traditional Japanese pottery can inform modern psychology.

I chose two talks that seemed to have little in common. Both raised deep questions about what it means to be a Jew and a South African.

Morris believes that any serious

discussion of B-BBEE needs to take historical context into account. He explained that at the advent of democracy in South Africa, it was all too easy to get caught up in "rainbow nation" rhetoric while carrying on with business as usual.

Subsequent decades have tested this mythology, and we are now witnessing growing anger at the perceived slow rate of transformation.

He stressed that feeling annoyed by the situation was counterproductive. Instead, we should acknowledge that South Africa has massively under-delivered since 1994, and commit ourselves to address past injustice.

There is a positive side to transformation, Morris pointed out, saying B-BBEE is an unfairly maligned concept. Far from giving away resources, B-BBEE is a process of inclusion – growing the pie for everyone.

Though there are plenty of inefficiencies and shortcomings in the way B-BBEE is realised in the real world, the challenge is to work to make the system better.

Morris said that we have a clear choice: to sit back and blame the government for all the country's

shortcomings, or to use our privileged knowledge and creativity to address the injustices of past.

He documented some of the innovative programmes driven by FCB Africa designed to deliver tangible improvements, including an empowerment deal with the Maharishi Institute that secures high quality education for disadvantaged young women.

### Speaking with one voice?

What does it mean to be a South African Jew? Is it one thing, or can it be many things? The local community is made up of diverse individuals, but arguably, it perceives itself as a homogenous entity with a common history and culture.

In the second talk, South African-born historian Shirli Gilbert, Professor of Modern History at the University of Southampton, pushed us to reflect on the way the community tells its story.

Gilbert is investigating how South African Jews who perceive themselves as marginal to the mainstream understand their relationship with the traditional cornerstones of Jewish identity.

Continued on page 16>>



Taken at Maboneng, Johannesburg, by Alexander Rozenson



# The answer to Jewish anxiety? Better leadership

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



**W**e grew up insecure. I recall so clearly the conversations that my parents had when we were children. Their interactions were coded so that we wouldn't understand what it was they were talking about. But we did understand, and we knew that many of their friends were leaving and that we had chosen to stay.

Our present and our grandparents' past mixed dangerously, and I am uncertain if, "Your education is the only thing that you can take with you," referred to their history or our future. But it added yet another layer to the anxiety that is embedded into the DNA of each Jew and into the community itself.

"I don't know." Is the inadequate answer that I give to the question I am asked more than once each day. Whether there is a future for South African Jews, given the current anti-Israel sentiment, is not an answer that I am able to provide. What I do know is that the frequency with which I am asked for an opinion on this issue reflects a community in crises.

The ANC's uneven and obsessive focus on Israel is disconcerting to say the least. Add its apparent willingness to embrace blatantly false information with regard to the situation in the Middle East, and one becomes only more concerned.

Threat of an embassy downgrade, hyperbolic and emotionally peppered language and photos of politicians embracing anything Palestinian all create the sense of isolation and alienation that

results in tremendous anxiety for South African Jews.

Because Jews know what begins as being anti-Israel, ends with anti-Semitism.

Sadly, it seems that we are way past that. The ANC government has taken sides. And we are not on it.

**The community requires spiritual guidance. I don't know if there is a future for Jews in South Africa. I do know that Jews are as entitled to one as any other South African.**

I don't blame South Africans. Anyone who is not aware of the facts on the ground in Israel, and who receives one repeated narrative that equates Zionism with racism will reach the same conclusion: Jews are racists. Any decent person who is told over and over again that Israel is murdering babies and carrying out ethnic cleansing and genocide would understandably feel hatred for those who perpetrate this.

Anyone who is shown photos of Hector Pieterse participating in the Soweto uprising alongside a photo of a Palestinian youth at the so-called Great March of Return will identify with the struggle of the Palestinians and not with Israelis who face an existential threat.

Social media is where most of the battle takes place. And supporters of Israel are not winning. To the contrary. The numbers are imbalanced – as it is with voters. And supporters of Israel are under constant attack. It is as relentless as it is evil. And the attackers are not curtailed by fact.

The anxiety of the community is not only political. The increased cost of living and resultant financial strain is not to be underestimated. Tuition, kosher food, and lifestyle all compound the feeling of panic. So too does the insecurity of the community about the Beth Din and Kashrut bodies. South African Jews used to feel pride in these institutions. Now there is only ambiguity and uncertainty. Even some anger.

It doesn't take an expert to understand that vulnerable people seek guidance and reassurance. They seek meaning and they seek spirituality. This is the time for religious community leaders to step forward (or up) and to provide that which is needed. It is in fact incumbent on them to do so.

The "this week's Parsha" sermon in shul on a Friday night is acceptable when we can focus on it, but when anxiety about our future and the future of our children is overwhelming, they can be assured that no one is listening. Not unless it is a segue to something relevant.

The community requires spiritual guidance.

I don't know if there is a future for Jews in South Africa. I do know that Jews are as entitled to one as any other South African. I do know that South Africans are good people, and I don't believe that the majority of the country is anti-Semitic. I know that Jews in South Africa have so much to contribute for the betterment of the country. I know that we need to focus on our spiritual growth, and that if we lose sight of that which makes us Jews, we don't stand a chance. I know that we need our leadership to remind us of that.

I also know that we have just sold our house and bought another, and feel blessed to live in the community and the country that we do. I also know that we are not planning on going anywhere. But I have no idea if that answers the question.

## World News in Brief

### Tamika Mallory dropped over remarks on Israel

An Australian social service agency has cancelled Women's March co-President Tamika Mallory's appearance at its annual conference next week, saying that it did not want her recent remarks on Israel to "overshadow" the meeting.

Mallory was scheduled to deliver the keynote speech at the Victorian Council of Social Service "Good Life" summit in Melbourne.

In a video address on Friday to the Centre for Constitutional Rights in Manhattan which sponsored her trip to Israel, Mallory called the establishment of Israel in 1948 a "human rights crime".

"It's clear you [Israelis] needed a place to go – cool, we got that," she said. "But you don't show up to somebody's home, needing a place to stay, and decide that you're going to throw them out, and hurt the people who are on that land. And to kill, steal, and do whatever it is you're gonna do to take that land. It's a human rights crime."

"My soul would not rest, standing by and doing nothing about it, to know that the US government – my taxpayer's money, \$10 million (R127 million) a day – is going to a government, a military, that takes the lives of people who were there first."

In February, Mallory sparked an outcry when she posted a photo of herself and Louis Farrakhan on Instagram following his Saviours' Day speech in Chicago, during which he declared that "powerful Jews are my enemy", and that he had "pulled the cover off the eyes of the satanic Jew."

## Director:

Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre



The CTHGC is the first Holocaust centre to be established in Africa and one of 3 regional centres of the South African Holocaust and Genocide Foundation. It houses a permanent exhibition and conducts educational programmes for schools, educators and diverse adult groups.

The CTHGC is recruiting a visionary Director to lead its educational and outreach programs, activities and events. The Director is responsible for project funding as well as its day-to-day operations including the management of its professional staff and financial management. The Director is further responsible for the coordination and implementation of citywide and national strategies and partnerships.

- **Location:** Cape Town
- **Reporting to:** Chairman of the Advisory Board of Cape Town
- **Hours of work:** full-time
- **Salary range:** R40 000 – R60 000 (Commensurate with skill and experience)
- **Benefits:** Contribution towards RA, disability insurance.
- **Start date:** January 2019

### Interested?

Email Loren for a detailed spec & application form: [loren@ctjc.co.za](mailto:loren@ctjc.co.za)

Closing date for applications: 18 June 2018

If you have not been contacted within 2 weeks of submitting your application, kindly consider your application to have been unsuccessful



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## Labels and epithets: who are you calling 'loony'?

### TAKING ISSUE

Geoff Sifrin



There is a term which mainstream Jews use for Jews on the far left who show up at Israeli-oriented events and protest against Israel with pro-Palestinian supporters, condemning Israel for its "oppression" of the Palestinians. They are called the "loony left". Do you endorse or take exception to this label? Among them are members of the group JVJP (Jewish Voices for a Just Peace) who have waved vitriolic anti-Israel banners at Israeli Independence Day celebrations and elsewhere.

When a speaker at a Limmud seminar in Johannesburg last weekend used the term "loony left", it evoked a strong response from an audience member, who said, "I take issue with your use of that phrase." The speaker apologised immediately, showing that the term is not endorsed by all.

The challenge the "loony left" poses to Jews is: What is Israel about, and what is Zionism? Most Jewish South Africans are ardent Zionists. Their rage is palpable – even understandable given that Zionism is a pillar of community life – when the "loony left" shows up with negative banners and slogans at celebrations of Israel and Zionism.

What do you make of these "aberrant" Jews? Do you simply dismiss them as self-hating? Or are you more sympathetic, believing that everyone is entitled to their viewpoint and should be engaged with? Maybe you are supportive. Historically, it is often the aberrant members of society, blowing their whistles, who are retrospectively identified as having the sanest stance. That is in spite of them having been reviled at the time.

Being Zionist is almost axiomatic for South African Jews. This community has traditionally been one of Israel's greatest supporters. But Zionism is not axiomatic for Jews everywhere.

Among American Jews – the world's second largest

Jewish community – for example, attachment to Israel, once strong, has weakened considerably in recent years. It has weakened particularly among the youth, who say that Israel's current values conflict with their own. These are: aggressive nationalism, ongoing occupation of Palestinian land, and a failure to seek peace with the Palestinians.

Some American Jews have never been Zionists. Take the world's greatest folk singer, Bob Dylan, who was recently awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. He explores in his autobiography, *Chronicles*, the personal difficulties of being revered by the masses. He didn't want to be the "toastmaster" of any generation, he says. As a wry tactic to counteract being seen as a perfect leader by the leftist crowds of the '60s generation who were unsympathetic toward Israel, he went to Israel. He says, "I went to Jerusalem, got myself photographed at the Western Wall wearing a skullcap. The image was transmitted worldwide instantly and quickly, all the great rags changed me overnight into a Zionist."

South African Jews outside the mainstream are also not all Zionists. But studies show that most of those who identify strongly with being Jewish do support Israel's right to exist, even though they may not call themselves Zionists. These are professionals in general society, academics, writers and so on, whether they are politically right or left.

But they are critical of government policies. Current events such as the Israel-Gaza conflict disturb them. So too do deeper issues such as Israel's embrace of US President Donald Trump despite the buffoonery of the man who now heads the world's most powerful nation.

The same applies to many members of the Jewish "loony left". They support Israel's right to exist, but object to its government's policies, and abhor Trump and what he stands for.

Where does this leave the mainstream community? Could the "loony" label itself be discarded, with a recognition that this sector of society has something worth listening to? Or could the mainstream itself change its borders to incorporate a greater degree of debate and argument about what Israel and Zionism stand for?

### Community Column

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

## Israel boycott reveals its true face once again



The #YallaYebo Exhibition, described as "A Photographic Dialogue between South Africa and Israel", had its official opening at FotoZA Gallery in the Rosebank Mall last Thursday. The event was attended by more than 100 art enthusiasts, dignitaries, community leaders, and members of the media.

Speakers included Israeli Ambassador Lior Keinan and Deputy Ambassador Ayellet Black, both of whom stressed the value of cultural

spaces as platforms for dialogue and engagement, where people can experience a different side to both countries.

Outside the venue, a group of noisy, aggressive protestors screamed abuse at those arriving at the event. The Board's National Director, Wendy Kahn, who helped to prevent the situation from getting out of hand, testifies to the fact that she and others were called "Nazis" and "child killers", amongst other repellent epithets. Flags representing the radical Islamist grouping Hezbollah were also displayed.

While they were unable to disrupt the function itself, the threats, insults, and gross acts of intimidation on the part of the protestors inevitably left a sour after taste. Their behaviour clearly crossed the line between legitimate peaceful protest, which we have no problem with, and infringing the right to freedom of expression. It certainly typified the modus operandi of BDS organisations, not just in South Africa, but worldwide. We were reminded yet again of how anti-Israel fanatics

are quite prepared to provoke ugly confrontations in pursuit of their goal of silencing dissent and shutting down debate.

### Sound counsel from BRICS meeting

This week, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs/International Relations of the five BRICS countries (namely, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) met in Pretoria to plan for the upcoming 10th BRICS Summit.

Participants exchanged views on issues of global significance in political, security, economic, financial and sustainable development spheres. Afterwards, a media statement was issued referring to, amongst other matters, "the ongoing conflict and heightened tensions in the Middle-East region".

The Israeli-Palestinian situation was specifically mentioned, but reference was also made to the conflicts in Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan. Most importantly, rather than singling out any particular party for special condemnation, the statement reiterated the need for "renewed diplomatic efforts to achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict", with a negotiated process between the parties taking place with a view to creating "an independent, viable, territorially contiguous Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel".

The support expressed by South Africa and its fellow BRICS members for the international community to involve itself in conflict resolution initiatives is to be welcomed. We hope that our government, despite pressure from anti-Israel hardliners to break ties with Israel, will keep its policy of maintaining diplomatic channels of communication with all parties and looking for ways in which South Africa can help to advance peace prospects in the region.

• Listen to Charisse Zeifert on Jewish Board Talk, 101.9 ChaiFM every Friday 12:00 to 13:00.

A column of WIZO South Africa

## Empowerment brings hope in tough times

It's been a busy few weeks in WIZO, and despite the many tough challenges Israel's currently experiencing, there's also been much to celebrate, especially in the sphere of women's empowerment, one of WIZO's main focuses.

One of the most thrilling developments was Netta Barzilai winning the Eurovision Song contest. This amazing 25-year-old is an example to all youngsters who feel that they don't fit in. WIZO counsels, nurtures and empowers young women just like Netta to believe in themselves. She's a strong woman with a big voice, delivering an important message and the result was great. Thank you Netta! WIZO applauds you!

The newly-crowned Miss Israel, Nicole Reznikov, is another example. The 18-year-old communications student from WIZO's Nir HaEmek Youth Village in Afula intends to use the media exposure that comes with the title to create awareness about the weaker segments in Israeli society. She breathes life into the values of giving back to society that WIZO promotes in its educational framework. We know she will be an excellent ambassador for Israel – and for WIZO.

We are also proud to congratulate Lily Peyser, a WIZO honorary life member who was granted an honorary doctorate by Tel Aviv University for her philanthropic contributions.

We are delighted to see photos of our very own Esther Mor, the President World WIZO and Tova Ben-Dov, (Honorary Life President

This column paid for by WIZO SA

World WIZO, guests at a prestigious event for top dignitaries held at Israel's British Embassy on the day of the Royal Wedding.

On the home front, WIZO has continued with to work with Israeli

NGO, Wheelchairs of Hope, donating a further four wheelchairs, this time to Athlone School for the Blind in Cape Town. The chairs will give greater freedom and help empower children who suffer from impaired vision and mobility.

Habonim and WZO Shaliach Danny Abebe spoke at WIZO events around the country of his 800km trek from Ethiopia to the new world in Israel. He stressed the vital role that WIZO and other organisations play in helping to absorb and integrate new immigrants.

The recently celebrated festival of Shavuot has a message that resonates with WIZO. Taken from Megilat Ruth: "May we learn from Naomi, Boaz and Ruth to demonstrate loving kindness towards each other and towards those who are different or less fortunate." We hope to continue to emulate – and increase – this very important and much needed attribute throughout our communities.



Moonyeen Castle  
President

## Racial bias and borderline Orthodoxy – all in a day's work at Limmud

>>Continued from page 14

The overwhelming dominance of orthodoxy (local reform movements are small and marginal) results in the phenomenon of the "unobservant orthodox", those of us whose conception of a "proper" shul is invariably an orthodox one, but who rarely go, or who drive to shul on Shabbat. The Holocaust has shaped community identity since the 1940s. It produced two divergent (though not mutually exclusive) strands: on the one hand, a commitment to non-racism and social justice; on the other, a strong sense of Jewish vulnerability and the need for a Jewish safe haven.

While many initially claimed that their attachment to Judaism had nothing to do with religion, as the interviews unfolded, participants revealed an attachment to ritual and practice, and the sense of community inherent in, for example, orthodox high holiday services, Gilbert said.

Many felt at home in orthodox services and weren't comfortable with the idea of reform shuls, even though they might appear to accord more closely with their intellectual sensibilities.

Like the mainstream of South African Jews, interviewees' identities were strongly tied to an awareness of the Holocaust. In many instances, this was expressed in a more universalist sense of the need to fight injustice and be sensitive to racism and prejudice.

Contrary to what may be expected from "marginal" Jews, an overwhelming number of participants felt a strong emotional attachment to Israel, while despairing of Israeli government policy in the preceding years.

"Without a doubt," Gilbert said, this was "the most vexed, complicated, painful part of the interview." Interviewees felt that they could not discuss these questions with fellow Jews out of fear of being hounded or further marginalised; nor were they comfortable discussing Zionism in non-Jewish circles, where they perceive a lack of nuance on the issue.

The debate engendered about being Jewish and South African was in line with Limmud's ethos of diversity of thought, choice of speakers and culture of respectful debate – not to mention a diversity of snacks and lunch options.

• Limmud 2018 will be held in August in Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban. Learn more about this year's renowned local and international speakers and secure your spot. <http://www.limmud.org.za/>



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## KDVP soirée wows audiences



Gabriella Wade, Angie Fisher, Isabella Goldberg, Aron Lazer, Max Perlov, Ilan Fainman, Miya Ichikowitz

If King David Victory Park's recent music soirée is anything to go by, there is no shortage of talented young musicians at the school.

The soirée was held to showcase the talents of the high school's music students and give them the opportunity to perform exam pieces for an audience.

Performances included solos by vocalists, guitarists, pianists, drummers and trumpet players, as well as group Marimba pieces performed by the Grade 8 and 9 music classes.

The highlights included The Show Choir performing a traditional Hebrew prayer, *Ose Shalom*, as well as a medley by Canadian singer Shawn Mendez.

Another high note was the school's jazz band, which performed *Hello* by Adele and *Havana* by Young Thug. The jazz band has performed at many festivals and school functions this term to standing ovations and the soirée was no exception.

## A Purrfect Pet Party at Sydenham

Sydenham Preschool is encouraging children to love and care for their pets by holding a pet friendly Shabbos ring including real-life critters like Ella the rat and Flash the gecko.

Pets is one of a number of themes the school has introduced. It follows a Shavuot celebration a few weeks ago and time spent introducing the children to much loved books like *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson.

In the spirit of pets, the

children brought their favourite fluffy toy pet to school and learnt how to care of their animals. The week culminated in the pet-friendly Shabbos picnic on the school playground, which included a visit from Ella the rat and Speedy and Flash, two Leopard Geckos. The children also learnt how to bake dog bone shaped biscuits.

Georgia Rittoff and Ava Azizollahoff



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## Torah Academy tots enjoy school upgrade

Torah Academy Nursery School in Oaklands, Johannesburg, has been completely upgraded, with the addition of three new classrooms, an occupational therapy department, and a library. Several generous sponsors donated playground equipment, including a new jungle gym.

### Saturday (June 9)

- The Jewish Women's Benevolent Society invites you to see *Visiting Mr Green*. Time: 20:00. Venue: Theatre on the Square. Cost: R200 per ticket. Contact: Carol 083 680 7524, cpcarol.pincus@gmail.com or 011 485 5232.



### Sunday (June 10)

- The Big Band Music Appreciation Society is hosting a programme compiled by Ron Cowley, an audio musical tour of some of the big bands and dance orchestras of the 30s and 40s using their theme songs and signature tunes, followed by a video – A March 1957 American TV broadcast of Roy Anthony featuring songs from the musicals. Time: 14:15. Venue: Beit Emanuel, Slome Auditorium, 38 Oxford Road, Parktown (entrance in Third Avenue). Contact: Marilyn 072 243 7436 or Jack 082 450 7622
- Nechama's ongoing Growth From Grief support group. Time: tea 09:30, group 10:00 to 11:30. Venue: Jossel Card Room, Ground Floor, Golden Acres. No need to book. Men and women welcome. Contact: Linda Fleishman 011 532 9701.

### Monday (June 11)

- The Union of Jewish Women hosts Bridget Hilton Barber, travel author, on *Travelling the World – The Ups and Downs*. Time: 10:00. Venue: 1 Oak Street, Houghton. Donation: R40. Contact: UJW Office 011 648 1053

## Yeshiva girls took their own shoes off to help others

Our Under 10 netball girls showed incredible Kiddush Hashem in the netball playoffs this week, taking the powerful Torah mitzvot "vehalachta bidrachav" – to walk in the ways of Hashem – to a new level.

During the playoffs, a competing school was advised by the coach of the opposing team that they could not play in school shoes. The girls proceeded to play barefoot. Once again, the opposing team objected and said that this was against the rules, and the team must therefore forfeit the match.

Upon hearing this, our Under 10 girls sprang into action, offering their sports shoes to the team. The team graciously accepted the offer, and played their game.

We cannot describe the immense nachas and pride we feel from this selfless act from our pupils. Kol hakavod girls – this is what we are about at Yeshiva College – and thank you for walking in His ways so beautifully.

After the match, the girls asked their parents to help donate sports shoes. A collection has begun, and is rapidly growing in number.



At a netball match at Yeshiva College

## Letters

### DIPLOMACY BEATS DESPONDENCY

The world has changed. The once all powerful Church no longer demonises Jews. In America, we are a popular minority. In England, the majority view Jews favourably.

In spite of these changes, any hint of anti-Semitism hits a nerve, evoking terrible memories of a time in which our survival was at stake.

Many Jews were hardened by the trauma of the Holocaust, and decided that to survive, we would have to return to the Holy Land and become fighters. The Diaspora Jew was viewed as a persecuted loser.

Unfortunately, Arabs in and around Israel bitterly opposed the influx of their Hebrew cousins, and repeatedly tried to destroy the Jews. Fortunately, we were tough enough to survive – in fact, we prospered.

Nevertheless, ongoing war is not in anyone's interest.

Many have become despondent, believing that peace is impossible. We have to keep on fighting, even if it turns into a public-relations disaster for the country. Right wing politician Menachem Begin was a strong proponent of such a view, yet he made

peace with Egypt, our biggest enemy. Begin knew that the military option would have been suicidal. Instead, he became a master negotiator.

In South Africa, the majority of Black people are not anti-Semitic, even if many of their leaders support their Palestinian allies. Shootings around Gaza won't win us sympathy. Even a hardliner like Ariel Sharon considered Israel's stay in Gaza to be a humanitarian problem.

It's best to keep a level head. Locking horns with our government and trading insults won't resolve the situation, or make it easier for us. If we want to be heard, diplomacy would probably work better. I believe our leaders need to de-escalate rather than increase tensions.

Two thousand years ago, most Jews were still living in Israel under Roman occupation. They decided to attack and expel the occupiers. Unfortunately, Rome crushed the rebellion and destroyed the Great Temple. Many Jews were killed, while others were sold as slaves in Rome. And so, the terrible 2000-year exile began. Militancy doesn't always help us. – **Martin Zagnoev, Johannesburg**

### BIBLE QUOTE LOST IN TRANSLATION

I read your weekly newspaper and greatly appreciate being kept abreast of important news within the Jewish communities of South Africa and Israel.

I was angered by the insert on page 2 of your edition dated 18-25 May 2018 concerning the leader of the Democratic Alliance and his participation in Heritage Day celebrations.

The authors of the poster that appears in that article are clearly attempting to drive a wedge between the Jewish community and Evangelical Christians, most of whom (to my knowledge) are staunch supporters of Israel and fully comprehend the machinations of Hamas in Gaza.

They hoped by means of a manipulated passage from the New Testament section of the New Living Translation to effect this social fracture. The said passage is misquoted and misunderstood in historical context.

The main issue of the passage is that

there was opposition from Jewish leaders to the preaching of the Gospel. I challenge these misguided souls to explain the modern-day prohibition preventing the public preaching of the Gospel in Islamic countries of the Middle East, although such preaching and teaching takes place in Israel today.

Should the authors of the poster require clarification, I would welcome them to my Bible study groups or to join me on study tours that I lead to Israel. In the interim, I would advise them to consider the original Koine Greek in which this Pauline letter was composed, as well as the conditions of Nero's empire for the Jewish community of that period.

These linguistic and historical facts will place this misquotation in a new light. Rather than skew the past, could we please concentrate on the present? – **John Lübbe (retired Professor and HOD of Semitics, Unisa), Pretoria**

**Disclaimer:** The letters page is intended to provide an opportunity for a range of views on any given topic to be expressed. Opinions articulated in the letters are those of the writers and do not reflect the views of the SA Jewish Report. The editor is not obliged to use every letter and will not publish vitriolic statements or any letters with inappropriate content. Letters will be edited and - if need be - shortened.

**Guidelines:** Letters are limited to 400 words. Provide your full name, place of residence, and daytime phone number. Letters should be emailed to [editorial@sajewishreport.co.za](mailto:editorial@sajewishreport.co.za)



## Israel builds ties to Africa through dialogue



The audience at the "Bringing Israel to Africa" conference

### RODNEY MAZINTER

The "Bringing Israel to Africa" conference in Cape Town last weekend was attended by about 300 people from all religious, racial, and cultural backgrounds, who showed solidarity, admiration and love for the embattled Jewish state.

Singing, dancing and musical interludes from the STAC Foundation Singers and Erez Shaked drew the audience in at the Hugo Lambrechts Auditorium event in Parow, and underpinned the more serious presentations from local and visiting luminaries.

Julie Berman, the Executive Director of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) (Cape Council), set the tone by underlining the co-operation between Christians and Jews in South Africa, and their support for bringing Israel to Africa and taking Africa to Israel. SAFI (the South African Friends of Israel) – the event's organiser – is built on the foundation that the future of Israel lies in "spreading the truth", while reaching out to all communities to find solutions.

"As a flagship initiative of the South African Zionist Federation, SAFI is at the forefront of changing attitudes towards Israel and global Jewry," said Berman.

SAZF Chairman Rowan Polovin said that an overwhelming number of South African Jews and Christians supported Israel as a modern, humane, innovative country that brought hope to the world.

He emphasised the destructiveness of organisations such as Boycott Divestment and Sanction (BDS), saying that they were the very antithesis of peace and prosperity in the region.

SAFI's goal is to strengthen ties between Israel and its allies across the African

continent, and to build new relationships through dialogue between the South African Jewish community and the broader South African faiths, cultures, political and civil Society."

Rabbi Carlos Tapiero, Deputy Director General and Director of Education at the Maccabi World Union, spoke about Israel's 70 years of existence, and the role played by Christians in supporting the Holy Land.

Sivan Ya'ari, the founder and Chief Executive of Innovation Africa, gave an emotional presentation about how an Israeli woman with drive, love and a belief that anything is possible, could make a difference in the most primitive of situations, bringing light, food, and water to saddest inhabitants of the African continent.

Eytan Gilboa, Professor of Communications and International Relations at Bar-Ilan University, demonstrated how Israel has always been willing to compromise in the search for peace.

Vivienne Myburgh, the Director of the Israel Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, said it was time that all who have the best interest of the Jewish state at heart stand up to intolerance and hate.

Archbishop Mbulelo Mvubu of the Council of Churches of South Africa told the audience that he had returned from his visit to the Holy Land with an entirely changed perspective and, more importantly, as an advocate for Israel.

The conference exemplified the principles of peace, love, unity, education, and truth, and sought to promote mutually beneficial connections between Israel and Africa.

• Rodney Mazinter is Vice-Chairperson of the SA Zionist Federation (Cape Council).

## Exercise classes for the elderly

Mascha Schainberg is proving that age is nothing but a number. Despite having just turned 90, this sprightly lady continues to attend exercise classes at a gym in Berario twice a week.

This is an amazing achievement for a woman who survived four years in Auschwitz.

As more and more people are living longer, there are increasing numbers of senior citizens contemplating the prospect of 10, 15 or more years of retirement. What are they going to do during these years? Enter the SA Seniors Fitness Association (SASFA).

SASFA aims to enable senior citizens to socialise more and feel healthy by presenting exercise and recreational programmes in a relaxed environment.

A seniors' fitness programme focuses on flexibility, balance, co-ordination, stamina, muscle strengthening and cardiovascular exercises. These exercises are set to enjoyable and stimulating music. Senior instructors are all fully trained and must hold a National Certificate.

• To find out more about SASFA, call Iona Henning 010 222 0070, Helga Calitz 011 792 9245 or Dot Tyldesley 076 538 7308.



Mascha Schainberg – who was awarded an honorary membership of the SA Senior Fitness Association (SAFSA) – with Iona Henning, SAFSA's chairperson

## Winning all round with the Grand Sports Raffle

"I thought it was a prank when I got the call. I'm not used to winning prizes. I am thrilled." So said a jubilant Lorna Falkson, who received a call at 12:35 on Sunday, 13 May telling her that she had won the Grand Sports Raffle.

The raffle is a project of the non-profit organisation Soul Workout, headed by Rav Ilan Herrmann. It had numerous charities on board, including Choc; Afrika Tikkun; FeedSA; and Chaiyainu, which raised funds for their organisations.

The incredible prize is two tickets and a week at the FIFA World Cup in Moscow this June.

The draw was held at Norwood Mall on Sunday, 13 May. Among the fanfare and excitement, there were performances by the Russian School of Ballet; Hip Hop dance and The Alexander Harmonius Melodies group.

This is the second Grand Sports Raffle. Last year's winners went to Chelsea FC to watch a Premier League derby with Arsenal, and took a trip to the Australian Open tennis tournament.

"We have big plans in the pipeline for Grand Sports Raffle 3, and are looking forward to something really spectacular," said an enthusiastic Ilan, who would not divulge what the grand prize will be. "It's SA's biggest sports raffle, and all for a good cause as it offers charities an opportunity to raise funds through a dynamic and sporty medium."



Ilan Herrmann with winner Lorna Falkson

## WIZO wheelchairs empower disabled children

WIZO (the Women's International Zionist Organisation) South Africa donated four wheelchairs to children at the Athlone School for the Blind this week as part of its local outreach programme.

The child-sized chairs give freedom of movement to students with impaired vision and mobility.

Made by Israeli non-profit organisation Wheelchairs of Hope, the rugged chairs are designed specifically to help disabled children in developing countries.

Adrienne Judes, the chairman of WIZO Cape Town, said: "These wheelchairs will have a life-changing impact on students by allowing them to partake in community activities more easily. The entire family unit is transformed by the

basic human right of mobility, which leads to increased self-reliance and confidence."

The school is both a day and boarding school for more than 300 children from pre-school to Grade 12, and accommodates the blind, visually impaired, and those with multiple disabilities.

Fletcher Fischer, the school's headmaster, said the exceptional care and nurturing shown by staff helped the children to excel and become wonderful examples for their community. He thanked WIZO and donors for making a difference in their lives, and said that he looked forward to continued association with WIZO.

If you would like to recommend suitable recipients for wheelchairs, call 021 464 6700 ext 131 or email wizosa@ctjc.co.za.



Donors and WIZO members with Fletcher Fischer, the headmaster of Athlone School for the Blind, and four children



## Argentina calls off Jerusalem World Cup warm-up



Argentinian and Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi pictured at the Western Wall during a previous visit to Israel

### JACK MILNER

Anti-Israel activists had the final say as Argentina pulled out of its World Cup warm-up football match against Israel scheduled to be played in Jerusalem on Saturday night.

“It’s a shame that Argentina’s footballing nobility did not withstand the pressure from Israel-hating inciters,” Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman tweeted after hearing about the decision on Wednesday morning.

The 2018 FIFA World Cup kicks off in Russia next week, and all qualified teams are trying to get in as much practise as possible before the start. Argentina offered to play in Israel. According to the organisation selling the tickets, the 20 000-seater Teddy Stadium in West Jerusalem was sold out within 20 minutes.

The Argentinian Football Association informed their Israeli counterparts that the team would not play, citing safety of the players as the main reason. The Israeli embassy in Argentina announced the “suspension” of the match, blaming “threats and provocation” against Argentinian superstar Lionel Messi.

“We shall not surrender to a group of anti-Semites who support terror,” Lieberman said.

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called Argentine President Mauricio Macri to intervene.

The Argentinian president, with whom Netanyahu has good relations, reportedly said the government had no impact on what was a private decision.

Netanyahu’s response – according to the *Jerusalem Post* – was brief: “We continue on, friends.”

Israel-Argentina ties improved significantly with Macri’s election in 2015. The decision to cancel the match is not expected to have an impact on these relations.

Argentinian striker Gonzalo Higuain said in an interview with ESPN: “They’ve finally done the right thing.”

The visit of the two-time World Cup winners had attracted huge interest among Israeli fans, mainly because of Lionel Messi’s planned participation.

People in Gaza cheered, and in Ramallah in the West Bank, the Palestinian Football Association issued a statement thanking Messi and his colleagues for cancelling the game.

“The Palestinian FA thanks Argentina’s players led by star Messi for refusing to be used to serve a non-sporting goal,” it read.

Palestinian FA Chairman Jibril Rajoub said: “Values, morals, and sport have secured a victory today, and a red card was raised at Israel through the cancellation of the game.”

Rajoub called a news conference in Ramallah later in the day, which he was planning to hold outside the Argentinian representative’s office. On Sunday, he had called for Palestinians to burn replica shirts and pictures of Messi.

The cancellation is just one more obstacle for Argentina, whose World Cup preparations have been troubled this time around.

The team suffered a 6-1 defeat by Spain in a friendly in March, and it lost its first-choice goalkeeper, Sergio Romero, to injury, giving little encouragement to fans who watched the team struggle to qualify for the tournament in Russia.

Argentina faces Iceland, Nigeria and Croatia in what is considered to be one of the hardest groups in the tournament.

**The Israeli embassy in Argentina announced the “suspension” of the match, blaming “threats and provocation” against Argentinian superstar Lionel Messi.**

President Reuven Rivlin lamented that the Argentinians had not made an effort to keep sport free of politics.

“The politicisation that lies in the Argentinian step worries me greatly. Even at the most difficult of times, we made an effort to leave considerations that are not purely about sports off the playing field, and it is a shame that the Argentinian team wasn’t careful to do that this time,” Rivlin said.

On hearing the news, Israeli Prime

• Additional reporting from *The Times of Israel*

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**2nd PRIZE**

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**3rd PRIZES**



2 Villa Cape Wine hampers



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LUCKY DRAW ON FATHER'S DAY 17TH JUNE 2018

Entry forms instore. Terms & conditions apply