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## Archbishop's anti-Israel stance "endangering Anglican Church"

TALI FEINBERG

They have had a longstanding friendship and worked closely together, but when Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein saw Anglican Church Archbishop Dr Thabo Makgoba describe the situation in the Middle East as "evil" and place all the blame on Israel, he refused to stay silent.

In a hard-hitting open letter in the Sunday edition of *City Press* (6 June 2021), Goldstein told the archbishop that he was "making a terrible mistake that endangers your own church". He explained that by supporting Hamas, "you are not only perpetuating the suffering of Palestinians and working against peace in this painful conflict, you are on the wrong side of history and in neglect of your most basic moral duty to protect the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, which is your parish."

"For while you castigate Israel for defending itself against violent extremists, know that the very same violent religious ideology drives extremists right here on our borders, and their intended victims are your Christian congregations."

This isn't the first time the chief rabbi has commented on the Anglican Church of Southern Africa's (ACSA) sharp turn away from Israel. In 2019, he condemned its resolution to support "well-directed Boycott, Divestment, Sanction actions" against the Jewish state.

The letter to which the chief rabbi was referring was written by the archbishop to his constituents on 1 June 2021, titled "A pastoral letter on the tragic situation in Palestine and Israel". Makgoba compared Israel's policies to apartheid, and wrote among other points, "The current state of affairs is unjust and evil. We therefore call for an arms embargo to be placed on all fighting forces in the region, just as there was a United Nations arms embargo on South Africa. We also call for other pressure, including sanctions, to be imposed to bring all the parties around a conference table to negotiate a just peace. The current imbalance of power means that the Palestinians are suffering disproportionately."

But the chief rabbi methodically explained why the accusation of apartheid was "a defamation of the Jewish state, disrespectful to the victims of apartheid, and a dangerous lie, which brings to mind the Christian blood libels against Jews in medieval Europe". He explained how attempts to establish a Palestinian state have repeatedly been turned down

by Palestinian leadership, and emphasised the genocidal essence of Hamas's ideology.

"Over the past year alone, about 4 000 Christians in Africa have been killed by Islamist extremists – Islamists who share Hamas's ideology. More than 4 000 churches have been burnt to the

allies of the perpetrators of these horrors," Goldstein wrote.

The chief rabbi told the *SA Jewish Report* he felt it was urgent to speak out because "the militant extremism of Hamas is the real obstacle to peace in the Middle East, and it's a threat to people around the world, including

Christians, Jews, and moderate Muslims. Hamas wants the genocide of all Jews, just as other extremist groups want the conversion and murder of all Christians. This is a struggle for human dignity, decency, and moderation. Religious leaders have a crucial role to play in this fight for freedom."

He says it's even more urgent now because "violent extremists are wreaking havoc in Africa and globally. This includes those on our doorstep in Mozambique. I wanted to appeal to him, to other Christian and Muslim leaders to stand together in

unity against the violent extremism that is encroaching, which is a threat to us all.

"It's important to speak the truth and say it as I see it," Goldstein says. "To accuse Israel

of being 'evil' demands a response. Silence is acquiescence. How can we be silent in the face of these accusations, when we know they are false? It's about speaking up in the name of truth and justice. It's not about personalities or emotions. It's the moral responsibility of any human being, especially a religious leader."

Goldstein doesn't think this debate will have an impact on his relationship with the archbishop.

"We have been friends and colleagues for many years. He was appointed the head of the Anglican Church in South Africa a year or so before I became chief rabbi. We had a lot in common, both being relatively young appointees at the time. We've worked together, marched together against state capture and corruption, and interacted on many forums. South Africa is blessed to have a very strong culture of interfaith co-operation. We meet and discuss, and I don't see this as a breach of that. I see this as having a public debate. It was the same with my letter to the president [Cyril Ramaphosa], much of this has been discussed in private meetings, but I'm putting it out there because we are debating for the good of the country."

It's the same reason Goldstein called on the Muslim Judicial Council and Jamiatul Ulama South Africa "to join me in imploring our communities to be tolerant of each other's vastly differing political

Continued on page 7>>>



Archbishop Dr Thabo  
Makgoba and Chief  
Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein

ground. Archbishop, these people were murdered because they are Christian. Where is your voice in defence of your own parishioners? Not only are you silent on this issue, you publicly support the



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## Bombed AP building 'had Iron Dome jamming tech'

Israel's United States ambassador told Associated Press (AP) that the Israeli army destroyed the building containing its Gaza bureau because Hamas was developing technology there that would jam Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system.

Gilad Erdan, also United Nations ambassador, met on 7 June with the wire service's president, Gary Pruitt, and its vice-president of international news, Ian Phillips.

Hamas's research and development and intelligence arms were in the building, Erdan said.

"The unit was developing an electronic jamming system to be used against the Iron Dome defence system," Erdan said, according to a release by the Israeli embassy in Washington.

Israel authorities told residents and workers in the building to evacuate about an hour before it bombed the 12-storey building on 15 May.

Hamas launched about 4 500 rockets at Israel during the 10-21 May conflict. Most hit open areas, but about 1 500 headed

for built-up areas, and the Iron Dome intercepted about 90%.

Erdan told Pruitt and Phillips that Israel didn't believe that AP knew Hamas was headquartered in the building. The ambassador said Israel was willing to assist AP in rebuilding its offices and operations in Gaza.

## Holocaust denier gets five years for death threats

A blogger who posted videos of himself calling for the murder of prominent French Jews was sentenced to five years in prison by a court in France.

The sentence, for promoting terrorism and making death threats, is among the harshest in recent years in France over such offenses.

The tribunal of Cusset, a town near Vichy in central France, handed down its guilty verdict and sentence on 3 June to Ahmed Moualek, 53, who had posted death threats against Gilles William Golnadel and Alain Jakubowitz, two well-known Jewish lawyers, as well as journalist Elisabeth Levy, La Montagne reported.

Moualek is a former associate of Dieudonne M'bala M'bala and Alain Soral, Holocaust deniers who 10 years ago founded the now-defunct Anti-Zionist Party. Moualek was among the party's founders.



those countries.

"The expulsion of ambassadors is a first step – a preliminary step – to greater action, but it's an incredibly important and symbolic step," Fiona Ferguson, a far-left politician who initiated the voting, said during the session, the *Jewish Chronicle of London* reported.

The motion passed with votes from left-wing parties including Sinn Fein, the council's largest party, with 18 seats out of 60.

Opposition parties voiced their disapproval of the motion. "The Jews are the original indigenous inhabitants of Palestine and as such have the right to exist as a nation state," said John Kyle of the Progressive Unionist Party of Northern Ireland. "Israel is confronted by organisations which do not recognise its right to exist ... and this is antisemitism."

## Switzerland adopts IHRA definition

The Swiss government has adopted the definition of antisemitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), making the Alpine nation the 36th country to do so.

"This definition can serve as an additional guide for identifying antisemitic incidents within the framework of the various measures to combat antisemitism in Switzerland," the Federal Council, the country's highest executive authority, said on 4 June.

The IHRA working definition describes various forms of antisemitism, including hatred and discrimination against Jews and Holocaust denial.

It also lists examples of anti-Israel criticism that it says in certain contexts can be defined as antisemitic, including comparing the country's policies to those of Nazi Germany, denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, and "applying double standards by requiring of it a behaviour not expected or demanded of any other

democratic nation".

The United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the European Parliament are among the national and international bodies that have adopted the definition.

## Hebrew Israelite student forced to eat to pork

A high school football coach in Ohio and seven of his staff have been suspended for punishing a Hebrew Israelite student-athlete by forcing him to eat a pepperoni pizza in violation of his religious commitment to keep a kosher diet, according to a report from Cleveland 19 News.

The 17-year-old student at McKinley High School in Canton, Ohio, was being disciplined for missing a weight lifting session on 20 May, said Edward L Gilbert, an attorney for the boy's family.

Four days after missing practice, Coach Wattlely Marcus and other coaching staff presented him with a pizza topped with pepperoni, chosen because it includes pork.

"They ordered him to go into the gym," Gilbert told Cleveland 19 News. "There is a pizza box on the floor. He picks up the pizza. They tell him that he has to, as punishment, eat that whole pizza."

The student's religious identity and his avoidance of pork were known to Marcus and other coaching staff, according to Gilbert.

"I mean it just crosses a line on every level, it's just wrong," Gilbert said.

Canton City School District said it was investigating the incident.

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Ahmed Moualek

## Belfast council calls for expulsion of Israeli ambassadors

The City Council of Belfast in Northern Ireland passed a motion calling on the governments of the United Kingdom and Ireland to expel Israel's ambassadors to

## Torah Thought

### Quarrels and Korach

Remember once being peripherally involved in a community dispute (a rare occurrence in Jewish life to be sure) some years ago. Discontent had been bubbling for a while, but it all boiled over around this time – *parshat* Korach. As support was being mustered, one party approached me during the week and asked, "Are you with me, or are you with Korach?" About a day later, I was speaking to the other party, who raised the dispute and asked me, "Are you on my side, or that of the other party, who is clearly Korach?"

In the end I was able, more or less, to stay clear of it (thank G-d), but the nature of that interaction is indicative of the challenge of learning the lesson from our *parsha* generally. Is the lesson that we should be confident in our position, invoking the wrath of G-d to strike down those who are clearly in error since they disagree with us? Obviously not. Is the lesson that there's no right and

wrong, and it all just depends on your perspective? I don't believe our Torah is compatible with such moral relativism. The *parsha* can teach us how to engage in such difficult situations through two-fold analysis of a situation, as we can see with the Korach dispute.

First, look at the merits of the arguments raised by each side. Korach is claiming that Moshe has claimed power for himself, without divine mandate, in order to rule over the Jewish people. Moshe is claiming that he has no personal desire for power, he's simply doing what G-d instructed. We, the astute readers of the Torah, know that Moshe is correct, that in fact, he shunned leadership at the burning bush, and accepted the position only at Hashem's insistence. Besides, all of the Jewish people have seen that Hashem entrusted Moshe to deliver the ten commandments, and that he succeeded in achieving atonement for

## Rabbi Sam Thurgood, Beit Midrash Morasha



us after the sin of the golden calf. Is it more logical that such a man would attempt a power grab, or that the troublesome former slaves needed a leader with a firm hand on the wheel?

Second, look at the approach of each side. Korach begins by wheeling and dealing – mustering support, putting spin on his position, and using soundbites to signal his virtue. Moshe appeals for de-escalation, reaches out to other disputants Datan and Aviram, and asks for trust based on his history of dedication to the people.

Our cognitive biases, particularly what's known as the "halo effect", nudge us to prejudge people and situations and to take sides based on who we like better. But, before deciding who is Moshe and who is Korach, we would be well served by applying these *parsha* lessons.

Shabbat shalom!

## South African Jewish Report

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# Legal stricture puts Lithuanian citizenship out of reach for many

NICOLA MILTZ

Hundreds of applications worldwide for Lithuanian citizenship based on ancestry are being rejected by the Lithuanian Migration Department, some pending indefinitely and others being placed on hold.

This follows a Lithuanian Supreme Court decision in December 2020 which has opened the law up for interpretation, making it much tougher and dramatically slower to get citizenship.

In addition to what has always been accepted as sufficient proof of Lithuanian citizenship, applicants are now also required to provide proof that their Lithuanian immigrant ancestors actively sought to maintain their Lithuanian citizenship once in South Africa (or their new country of residence) until 15 June 1940. This applies to Litvaks around the world.

This is a departure from the original position, which never required any proof that citizenship was actively maintained after leaving Lithuania.

"This is a major obstacle for applicants as in almost all cases, no such proof exists. It has far-reaching implications for all future citizenship applications," said Lithuanian emigration consultant Nida Degutiene from Next Steps.

Her company assists many South Africans to obtain Lithuanian citizenship by helping to source the required documentation for reinstatement of their citizenship. She told the SA Jewish Report some of her clients' applications have recently been declined by the migration department because of this.

According to insiders, things changed following this court decision, which highlighted the law on all citizenship applications. "There is discussion about the exact interpretation of the Lithuanian law of citizenship," Degutiene said.

This development has dramatically slowed down the application process, causing frustration, say insiders. The department has queried hundreds of pending applications, requesting this additional proof, which according to insiders is extremely difficult – if not impossible – for most people to produce.

There also appear to be many more declined applications than there were previously. In some cases where families have applied at different times using the same source documents, some have been granted citizenship, while others have been rejected.

Dainius Junevičius, the Lithuanian ambassador to South Africa, said 2 646 positive decisions were made by the migration department to reinstate citizenship for

Jews from Lithuania living in South Africa between 2016 and 2020.

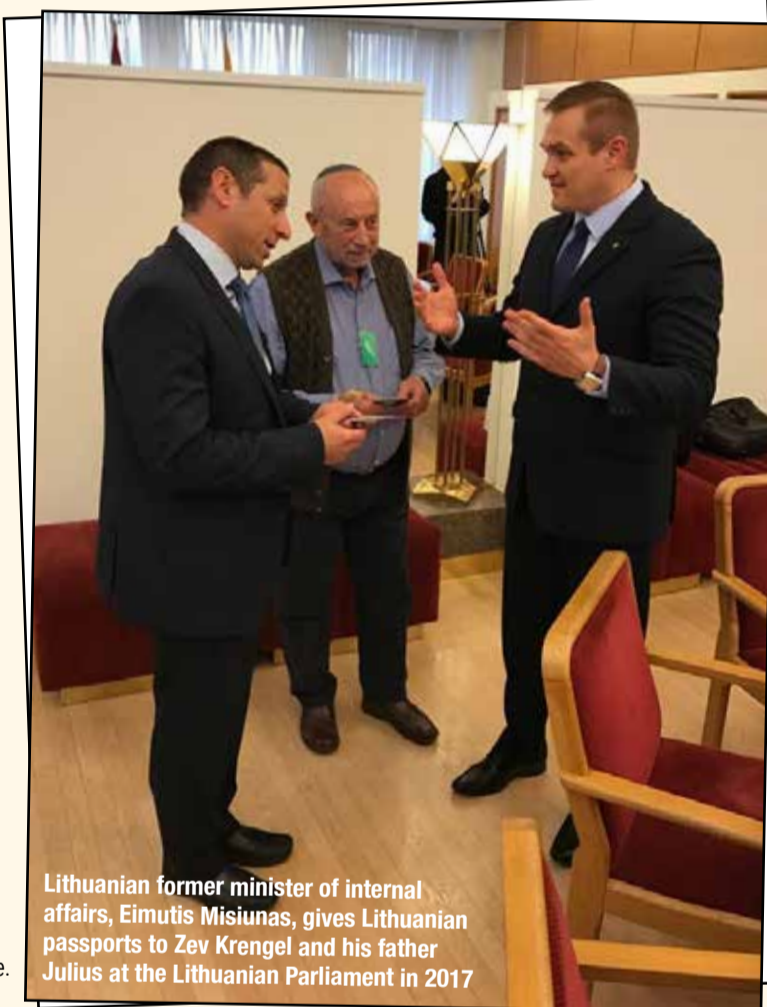
"The number increased tenfold in five years – from 119 in 2016 to 1 121 in 2020. During that period, the embassy accepted 2 116 passport applications and issued 1 679 passports. Last year, the consular section of the embassy exceeded all of its limits, and accepted 659 passport applications," he said.

Junevičius said the migration department had processed 1 242 reinstatement requests last year. Citizenship had been reinstated in 1 121 cases, and rejected in 121 cases. "This gives about 90% positive decisions," he said.

There is uncertainty about where people stand now regarding the prospect of gaining citizenship.

However, there may be hope on the horizon.

In recent weeks, following extensive lobbying, there are initiatives in parliament to amend the citizenship law. A Bill has recently been drafted formally supported by more than 30 members of the Lithuania Seimas (parliament).



Lithuanian former minister of internal affairs, Eimutis Misiunas, gives Lithuanian passports to Zev Krengel and his father Julius at the Lithuanian Parliament in 2017

"This is a very positive development," said Degutiene.

The date for tabling the Bill, debating it, and voting whether or not to pass the Bill into law, is still to be decided.

The Bill, which requires a majority vote in its favour before being passed, aims to remove the requirement that applicants prove that their ancestor actively retained

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Lithuanian citizenship up until 15 June 1940. If the proposed amendment is passed, the requirement would be to prove only that their ancestor held citizenship at any time prior to 15 June 1940.

"This would likely ensure the success of many pending applications which are currently under query," said Nicole Marcus of AccessEU.

It follows pressure from many service providers who have been actively engaging with Lithuanian authorities to amend the way in which applications are being considered.

Many have written to the Lithuanian Home Affairs Ministry to complain about the way in which the migration department is now considering applications, describing it as "unreasonable and unfair".

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) has written to Lithuanian authorities at the highest level, seeking to make things easier for South African Litvaks.

"This is a matter of principle," said Zev Krengel, SAJBD national vice-president. "Most of our ancestors were forced to flee Lithuania under terrible circumstances, and restoring our citizenship will go a long way to heal and address the wrongs of the past."

Krengel, who has visited Lithuania several times, received his passport in 2017 with his father, Julius, whose father fled the country in 1925 with literally "the clothes on his back", according to Krengel.

The Board has written to the president and prime minister of Lithuania, including several other prominent members of parliament, appealing for an amendment to the law, correcting the wording so that citizenship of Lithuania will be reinstated as before.

The letter calls upon the leadership of Lithuania "to cherish and preserve" significant resolutions that allowed all people of Lithuania who were expelled or emigrated in pre-war times to return their citizenship and be part of the new Lithuania.

The SAJBD said it was concerned about "new legal barriers" which were creating obstacles for those applying for reinstatement of Lithuanian citizenship.

Junevičius, said the principle of state continuity was

very important for Lithuania. "Modern Lithuania is a continuation of the pre-war Republic of Lithuania, which lost its independence on 15 June 1940, when it was occupied by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. All persons who were Lithuanian citizens on that day are considered Lithuanian citizens until now, regardless of where they lived then – in the United States, Russia, British territories, or elsewhere. We're talking not only about Jews, but about people of all nationalities and faiths. Lithuanian legislators enshrined this principle of continuity of citizenship in the Law on Lithuanian Citizenship," he said.

"According to the current law and the interpretation of the courts, there is an important condition for the reinstatement of citizenship – the person had to be a Lithuanian citizen on 15 June 1940, so that they or their descendants could reinstate Lithuanian citizenship," he said.

"The majority of Jews living in South Africa are of Lithuanian descent. The reality is that not everyone meets the criteria for reinstating citizenship."

If documents are missing or the migration department has doubts that the applicant was a Lithuanian citizen on 15 June 1940, the procedure takes time, he told the SA Jewish Report.

"We are well aware that some applicants cannot prove that their ancestors were Lithuanian citizens until 15 June 1940, and their requests are rejected. As long as this citizenship law and court interpretation is in force, no other solutions can be expected."

Junevičius said it was important for prospective passport holders to show an interest in Lithuania.

"I'm frustrated that the Lithuanian passport is valued only because it provides an opportunity to travel around Schengen countries, without even visiting Lithuania," he said.

Although the Lithuanian embassy in Pretoria was opened only in 2015, investment from South Africa in Lithuania is negative, and only 300 tourists from South Africa visited Lithuania in 2019.

"Lithuania is still an undiscovered place for South African Jews to do business, get a great higher education, spend a vacation, or even relocate to the country where their ancestors once used to live," he said.

He said the embassy did its best to increase the speed of service to reduce waiting times, but asked for patience while booking a time slot for a visit at the consular section.

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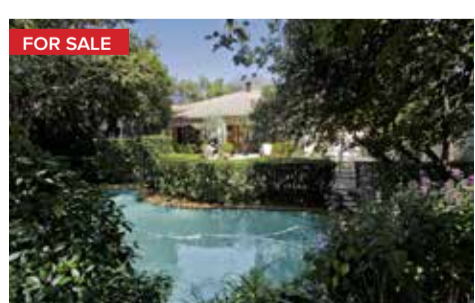
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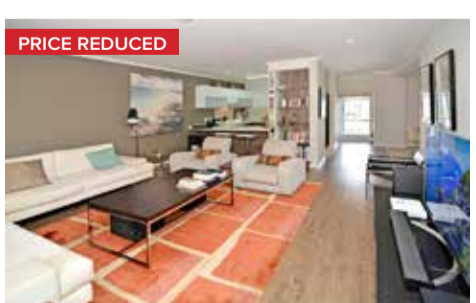
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# Pandor holds line against pressure to cut ties with Israel

TALI FEINBERG

Minister of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) Dr Naledi Pandor brought a sense of calm in the midst of the recent feverish anti-Israel rhetoric in South Africa by refusing to commit South Africa to cutting ties with the Jewish state.

Responding to a parliamentary question on 7 June 2021, she said, “South Africa has recently issued a number of media statements strongly condemning the actions of the Israeli government, where casualties have been mostly innocent civilians, children, women, and the elderly.

“South Africa recalled its ambassador accredited to the state of Israel, Mr Sisa Ngombane, in May 2018. The government remains seized with the modalities related to its diplomatic relations with the state of Israel. The department will communicate any further actions still under consideration.”

She was responding to a question by Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) MP Thembi Portia Msane who wanted to know South Africa’s “response to the criminal and indiscriminate killing of Palestinians by the State of Israel”.

Then, at an online event hosted by DIRCO titled “Justice for the Palestinian people” on 8 June 2021, Pandor made statements that were more extreme. She called it an “unbalanced power equation between an occupying power and a people resisting occupation” and said that “the Palestinian narrative evokes experiences of South Africa’s own history of racial segregation and

oppression”.

South Africa welcomed “the initiative to convene a special session of the Human Rights Council on the grave human-rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem which was held on 27 May 2021,” Pandor said.

**Minister of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) Dr Naledi Pandor**



“South Africa supports the recent adoption of the United Nations Human Rights Council resolution which establishes an international commission of inquiry to investigate violations in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel.”

At the same time, she acknowledged Israel’s right to exist in peace, saying, “We, along with many in the UN membership, have long accepted and supported a two-state solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace.”

Pandor could potentially have descended into worse rhetoric during the event, which consisted of more than two hours of Israel-bashing. It’s clear that she’s under enormous pressure from various quarters to cut ties with Israel, but she has held the line. Where is this pressure coming from, and what will she do about it?

“South Africa is under tremendous pressure to further reduce her relations with Israel – there’s not much left frankly, other than to cut full diplomatic relations,” says local political analyst Daniel Silke. “BDS [the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement] has certainly entrenched itself within the

that in order to at least keep South Africa within the broader community of nations – including with a view to improving relations with the US – we will fall short of what would be a full downgrade of diplomatic relations”.

“In spite of an apparent lack of empathy with the South African Jewish community, it does remain a prominent community within South Africa, and from President Ramaphosa’s understanding, a downgrade would clearly affect relations between the government and the community. This includes business entities that are important for economic growth in South Africa via private-sector initiatives,” Silke says.

Silke says it’s also important to look at the African context. “We’ve seen a shift from some African countries towards close relations with Israel. Ramaphosa is head of the African Union, so South Africa has to balance her role with greater co-operation between African countries and Israel. Those factors also help to keep the channels open, albeit under difficult circumstances.”

Local political analyst Steven Gruzd agrees. “There’s definitely political pressure from BDS to take even further measures against Israel to the extent of cutting ties,” he says. “As Pandor noted, we withdrew our ambassador from Tel Aviv in May 2018, and that ambassador hasn’t been replaced. As we’ve seen, whenever there’s a flare-up in the Middle East, the pressure to cut ties increases.

“It’s difficult to know how great that pressure is, but BDS has certainly been putting pressure on the government. Also, there’s pressure coming from political parties like the EFF, and many within the ANC itself, who portray what’s happening in the Middle East very much through a South African prism.

“But the ANC still believes in a two-state solution. That’s still official policy and it hasn’t gone back on that,” Gruzd says. “So there will be more condemnation in the weeks and months ahead, but I strongly doubt there would be a physical cutting of ties. I hope I’m proved right.”

## Redhill alumni attack Muslim peace activist

NICOLA MILTZ

Nausheena Mohamed is a Muslim and a Middle East peace activist. She is no stranger to insults and criticism from her own community for her alternative views on peaceful dialogue and conflict resolution in the region.

But when she was attacked in an advertisement in *The Star* newspaper last week for taking part in a one-day programme at Redhill School dedicated to discussion of the conflict, she felt “hurt and shocked”.

Unnamed members of the so-called Redhill Parents and Alumni Concerns Committee (RED-PACC) took out a paid advertisement in the form of an open letter in the daily newspaper to express its dissatisfaction with the school’s executive headmaster, Joseph Gerassi, and the school’s choice of speakers for a programme dedicated to discussion on the Middle East conflict.

This follows ongoing protest by RED-PACC that accused Gerassi of limiting free speech for trying to calm rising tension on campus during the recent 11-day flare up between Hamas in Gaza and Israel.

In an open letter to the Redhill executive and trustees, the anonymous pro-Palestine group wrote on 4 June that it had “no trust

in Joseph Gerassi’s objectivity to centre Palestinian perspectives in any dialogue or discussion” on the conflict.

The group lambasted Gerassi for inviting Mohamed to address the school on the day, which was devoted to education and information about the conflict. The advert accused Mohamed of being a blogger for “Zionist lobby groups” and for being a “beneficiary of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies” routine and fully funded “hasbara” tours of Israel, where a “sanitised and one-sided view is curated”.

Mohamed has written about peace in *The Times of Israel*, and has visited the region to engage with people on the ground.

Gerassi’s choice of speakers, the group said, promoted a biased view. It demanded that an alternative speaker such as anti-Israel lobbyist Ronnie Kasrils be invited to take part in the programme.


Mohamed, a multimedia and broadcast journalist, told the *SA Jewish Report* this week that she was “disappointed” by this group, which made no attempt to engage with her and find out who she really was and what her beliefs were.



Nausheena Mohamed

“What they said was unjustified. They have a totally incorrect perception about me and my involvement in this conflict. If they had reservations about me, they were more than welcome to approach me for open engagement.”

She said it was “a poor reflection” on them.



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# Communications minister shares fake news on Israel

TALI FEINBERG

It's the height of irony that South Africa's minister of communications and digital technologies, Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, heartily endorsed an item of fake news about Israel last week.

Yet, local politicians took it upon themselves to set the record straight, ensuring that false statements about the Jewish state didn't find their way into parliamentary discourse.

"The minister of communications made the outrageous statement during last week's youth debate that she had come across a most disturbing picture of a lifeless Palestinian child under the knee of a uniformed policeman from Israel, and that this picture continued to haunt her," African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) MP Steve Swart told the *SA Jewish Report*. "She added that it's a reminder of the Soweto riots [commemorated on Youth Day next week], and that this kind of crime should be classified as a crime against humanity.

"The only picture that we as the ACDP could find during the debate was that of a Chilean official with his knee on the neck of a child. This occurred in 2016, but sadly, it appears that this picture is continuously used to bash Israel," he said.

Indeed, as far back as a year ago, Reuters Fact Check showed that the photo in question "actually shows a police officer detaining a man who was caught vandalising in the city of Valparaiso, Chile, in 2016" and the claim that it's an Israeli officer and a Palestinian child "is false".

Said Swart, "My colleague, Marie Sukers, who participated in the debate, was outraged by this statement, and wrote a letter of complaint to the minister's office." In it, Sukers stated, "It's deeply concerning that an office bearer serving as minister of communications and technology should continue a false narrative that may lead to further divisions and add fuel to the fire in the Middle East that is acutely felt in our country."

Swart said that he, too, decided to set the record straight, "and did so during a declaration on ICASA [the Independent

Communications Authority of South Africa], the communications regulator." A recording shows Swart standing up and explaining that the minister was mistaken, then saying, "The minister should correct that issue, seeing as what we're dealing with is a communications issue."

Swart said he set the record straight because "President [Cyril] Ramaphosa and members of his cabinet – including the ministers of communications and international relations and cooperation – must be held accountable and called out for their hypocrisy and double standards.

"They are quick to criticise Israel at any turn, but fail to hold the Palestinians accountable for their role in the conflict. What about the 4 000+ rockets launched at Israel, with many of those rockets falling into Gaza itself?

"What about the ill treatment of Palestinians in Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, as well as the persecution of large numbers of Muslims in China and Myanmar? Not a word is said about this. The anti-Israel bias verges on antisemitism. We in the ACDP won't remain quiet when this is said, and we will continue to set the record straight and stand for Israel and the Jewish community."

Is there any recourse for a politician who states false facts? After all, many members of the public have faced a backlash or even professional repercussions for spreading fake news.

"In practical terms, the only real recourse would be to engage the person concerned and present the verified and accurate version for public consumption," said local social media expert Gus Silber.

"The reason people share fake news and disinformation so readily is because of something called 'confirmation bias'. So, if we have a certain set of beliefs and we come across something which fits in with our beliefs, we're much more inclined to accept it as true without checking.

"This is because it confirms our view of the world and our beliefs. This is especially the case with 'hot button'

sensitive political issues, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," Silber said.

"It's also important to be aware of who is spreading the news. What's

Minister of communications and digital technologies, Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams



their agenda and motive, who do they represent, and why are they sharing this news? If you can identify those aspects, you'll be a lot more inclined to think twice before sharing it.

"It's important in this particular case to counter false information with verified and accurate information, and to put the accurate information out there. It's important that people understand that there's a big difference between misinformation – which is information that could be put out through human error – and disinformation. Disinformation is deliberate distribution of information that is known to be wrong or inaccurate."

Silber said it's easy to check and verify images like this. "If you come across an image on social media or elsewhere online, 'right clicking' on it, and pressing 'search Google for image', will quickly let you know if the image is an accurate reflection, or whether it's patently false or misleading. It's also important not to rush into sharing something. In other words, think twice, and if you're in any doubt at all, rather don't share information.

"Stories like this aren't uncommon. We must also check our own confirmation

bias. Fact checkers are important in society today because of the rapid spread of fake news, so it's vital to know about reputable fact-checking sites

Meshoe told the national assembly plenary on 4 June 2021 that the "South African government must stop its support of haters of Jews who are dreaming of the removal of Jews from the face of the earth, which will never happen."

"I also took issue with another parliamentarian for what I perceived to be antisemitic comments in parliament," Swart said, referring to Ahmed Munzoor Shaik Emam of the National Freedom Party's response to Meshoe, saying, "Wherever Jews have gone ... to many countries all over the world... they were not wanted anywhere in the world." Swart immediately responded, "The honourable member [Emam] made some extremely antisemitic comments about Jewish people, and I would ask you to study the record and rule on that, because it is highly unparliamentary, and we are seeing increased antisemitism across the world and in South Africa."

"We are deeply concerned about the lack of objectivity and bias towards Israel shown by many parliamentarians and cabinet members," Swart told the *SA Jewish Report*. "How can we play a role of an honest broker under such circumstances? The ACDP won't remain silent. As I said in parliament last week, 'Am Yisrael chai – the people of Israel live!'"

The *SA Jewish Report* reached out to Minister Ndabeni-Abrahams for comment, but received no response.

## for appearance at school

"Instead of running to *The Star*, which I see as intimidating, they could have rather engaged with me, and the school," she said.

Mohamed advocates peaceful solutions to the conflict and has engaged with many peace activists in the region such as the popular and growing Women Wage Peace organisation, which is comprised of Jews, Muslims, and Christians who seek alternative paths to peace.

Gerassi told the *SA Jewish Report* that the school and its trustees still had "no idea" who was behind the RED-PACC open letter. "As a school, we have tried to reach out to them, but unfortunately they haven't been willing to meet us or tell us who they are. They have refused to give their names. How do you engage with people you don't even know?" he asked.

Mahomed, meanwhile, is the founder of Channel M Productions, and started an online campaign on social media called, "Give Peace A Chance", which highlights the importance of peace activism in Israel and Palestine.

She spoke to the children about the "third alternative – the other peace process, which is a non-political process that aims to build bridges of understanding to heal the divide of the two large narratives without dehumanising or cancelling out the other".

"I gave the children a snapshot of the incredible peace initiatives in the region which rarely make the headlines. Ordinary Arabs and Israelis, Muslims, Jews, and Christians have more commonalities than differences. The majority don't want violence and war, they want peace," she said.

The one-day programme at the school was broken up into three sessions. The first featured a panel comprising veteran journalist Anton Harber, journalist Flo Letoaba, and advocate Ben Winks who debated the topic, "Should freedom of speech be limited in the media and in schools? If so, what should those limitations be?" In session two, lecturer Larry Benjamin presented an historical perspective of the conflict featuring both narratives. Mohamed spoke in session three.

Gerassi said the school would establish a centre for conflict resolution and dialogue.

Meanwhile, the SAJBD wrote a letter to the editor of *The Star* in response to the RED-PACC open letter describing it as "intimidation".

In it, Professor Karen Milner accused RED-PACC of "insisting on bulldozing its political agenda into the school" by amongst other things "vilifying" the headmaster and providing an ultimatum to the school on who could and who couldn't participate in a discussion of the conflict.

"Why are the Redhill alumni so insistent on a speaker [Kasrils] who has been deliberately offensive and hurtful to the Jewish community over a woman [Mohamed] who tells the story of tolerance and peace? We shudder to think that Redhill is being bullied into choosing toxicity and vicious hatred over peace activism."

She accused the "alumni association" of trying to prevent free speech by forcing its own narrative into the school space.

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## Keep calm and carry on fighting COVID-19

Too many in our community are contracting COVID-19, and too many are dying from it. What's too many, you might ask? One person is too many, and the numbers are so much higher than that (see Dr Daniel Israel's story on this page). What's worse is that they keep growing.

At this point, I don't know anyone who hasn't got someone they care about who is sick with this dreaded coronavirus. This week, my best friend contracted it. Now, you don't get closer to home. She is my confidante and is super-precious to me. She was as careful as most of us and has no idea how she got it. That's so often the case – how do you tell where you contracted it unless you attended an event that became a super-spreader or you found out that someone you spent time with had contracted the virus before you?

For the most part, we're all running blind. We're also all so tired of this seemingly endless pandemic that keeps resurging just when you think it's about to die down. And we all – I believe this to include every one of us, young, old, male, and female – just want to get on with our lives. We all want some kind of normality again, whatever that's going to look like.

But we can't escape this clever coronavirus unless we are meticulous in observing all the protocols. Trust me, I know how hard they are to maintain. We have to do it, no matter how sick and tired we are of sanitising, wearing masks and, hardest of all, keeping our distance from people.

I don't know about you, but I love hugging people I care about. Not being able to connect with people is unnatural for human beings.

Nevertheless, we have to persevere and live our lives like this until this pandemic subsides or until we are all vaccinated.

Many in our community are vaccinated, and so many more wish they could be. A while back, we ran a story about people jumping the queue for vaccines. Some people commended us for this piece because they felt it wasn't morally acceptable to jump a queue if there is one. Others were angry with us because apparently, we made people feel bad for legitimately wanting to be vaccinated, thereby stopping those who would have had an opportunity by now. As I understand it, many vaccines have been thrown away because there weren't enough arms to put them in.

In hindsight, seeing the devastation caused by the third wave that is upon us here in Johannesburg, I apologise for dissuading anyone who honestly went about getting their vaccine as soon as possible. I am now of the belief that the more people who are vaccinated, the sooner we move from this pandemic.

I don't subscribe to people lying their way to a vaccine, but I certainly believe that whoever you are, every person vaccinated takes us one step closer to what used to be called herd immunity. It's also one step closer to freedom from this prison the pandemic has created for us. And it's a tad closer to ending the madness and sadness that COVID-19 leaves in its wake.

In our newspaper last week, we had a page one story about a phenomenal woman who passed away. In truth, we put the story about the late Zoe Cohen on our front page because her daughter is married to the son of the United States president. And, in spite of criticism of our choice to use it on the front page, I'm so glad we did. Here's why. Cohen was a true unsung hero. She wasn't just involved in adoptions, she was responsible for hundreds and maybe more of Jewish children finding beautiful families. She was renown in the country as being one of the top in her field, and because of the selfless work she did, she was buried in the section of honour at West Park Cemetery.

After her death, the Chev was inundated with letters and tributes from children and families she had helped.

So, why didn't we know about her, and why didn't we honour her before she died in the Absa Jewish Achiever Awards or something like that? Well, it's simple, says Saul Tomson of the Chev, "That's the thing about heroes, you don't know how special they are unless you know." He went on to tell me, "Even her husband came to me after her funeral and said he really never understood the scale of her impact until now. She didn't shout it out, she kept a low profile, but there was none like her."

Life works in mysterious ways. Whatever the reason we chose to put her story on our front page, it was important that she got the *kavod* she got because of what she did for others.

Our community has come under a lot of fire recently, what with the pandemic and issues around Israel, creating a lot of anger. I have felt it sitting in this seat. People who normally wouldn't be critical of what we do are hypercritical. And not just about our newspaper, but as a general rule. People are hurting and angry because of what's happening, and need a place to direct it. I understand that.

And I appreciate that on this newspaper, we can make mistakes, but we give our absolute best to keep you informed.

We make choices that in hindsight may not be the same choices you would make, but we make them and so we carry responsibility for them. Suffice to say, we make the decisions with our readers' best interests at heart, and we don't make them lightly.

Last year this time, our newspaper was practically filled with stories about COVID-19 and lockdown. It was like that for a substantial amount of time. Why aren't we doing the same now, you might ask, especially in light of the impact on our community? It's simple, I believe we have COVID-19 fatigue and no desire to read a newspaper full of COVID-19-related stories, so we keep it to a minimum. Also, there are other issues that are having a significant impact on our community, and we need to focus on them as well.

However, having said that, I implore you to take every precaution you can to avoid contracting this potential killer coronavirus. There has been too much death and destruction in its wake. Let's avoid parties, gatherings, and places where we might be at risk. Let's stay home if we can. Please, let's do whatever we can to avoid this virus and save lives.

**Shabbat Shalom!**  
**Peta Krost Maunder**  
Editor



## Pull up masks for the third wave

OPINION

DR DANIEL ISRAEL



With the plummeting temperatures across South Africa, our community has once again descended into concern and despair as new COVID-19 infections skyrocket. This round seems even closer to home.

My cell phone is once again saturated with COVID-19 contact questions. For me, it has been a week of encouraging maximal caution among community members against the backdrop of having witnessed the devastating bereavement that this virus has recently unleashed on a few patients and close friends.

We need to understand that pandemics are dynamic. In the first article I wrote for the *SA Jewish Report* in March 2020, I spoke of a predicted short-term future of "pumping the breaks on social distancing" by epidemiological experts. This is precisely how this pandemic has ensued. South Africa is well into its third surge, and this is the time for this "pumping". Let's give some context.

As of 7 June 2021, there are 21 700 active cases in Gauteng alone, a number that's probably better estimated as 31 000 due to untested individuals. Over the past seven days alone, there has been a 36% increase in cases. Most notably, the positivity rate of cases has increased from <4% to >13% in just a couple of weeks.

The Jewish community, unfortunately, outshines these humbling statistics, with 235 new cases loaded on the Hatzolah Wellness Programme in the past week (1 to 8 June 2021). This is more than its maximum number of

cases at the peak of both the first and second waves. My own practice has admitted more COVID-19 patients to hospital in the past month than it has admitted over the past six months.

Another change in the dynamic of this wave is the astounding transmissibility amongst children. I clearly remember the claims of "COVID-19 doesn't affect children" last year. This week, I have diagnosed COVID-19 in several young children under the age of seven.

However, let's not despair that this picture was unexpected, nor that we are ill-equipped to deal with it. Let's understand that it's in our power to curtail the pandemic and overcome it.

On a societal level, there are several vaccines emerging on the market that have each shown demonstrable efficacy against serious disease. It's important to understand that breakthrough infections may still be reported after vaccination, but the level of immunity attained by the vaccines has shown impressive results against serious disease and death across all variants, including the South African variant.

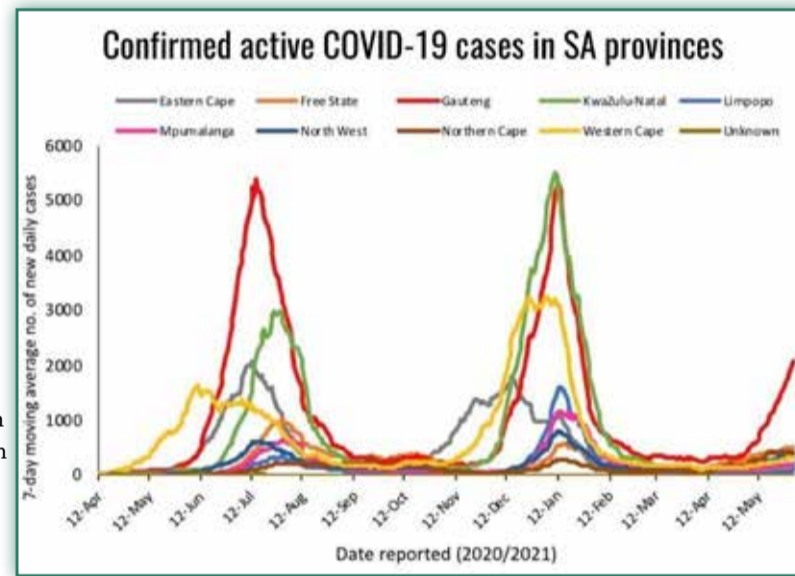
In the world's history of viral outbreaks, there has been a pattern of viruses mutating into variants that are clinically milder, although endemic, and which haven't imposed ongoing significant risk to life. It's thought that the Russian flu of 1889 was most likely a coronavirus itself which mutated into a more tolerable disease that eventually abated without a vaccine! Even in our own lifetimes, we have seen the famous H1N1 "swine flu" impose less of a real threat to individuals each year, in spite of the fact that this virus is far from eradicated and still rears its head each winter.

Professor Barry Schoub, virologist and the

former head of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, explained to doctors on an online education webinar this week that the goals and likely outcome of the vaccination programme isn't to eradicate COVID-19 but rather to convert the SARS-COV-2 virus into just another coronavirus that, at most, causes mild disease. This goal is reachable and probable.

On the ground, we have learnt over the past 16 months how to drop the number of new infections quickly. The old thinking was "stay home, save lives". The new thinking is "don't let your guard down, even with your most trusted friend". I have had a plethora of patients recounting to me recently that they were infected by "a harmless interaction". During previous peaks of this pandemic, we have learnt that the attention to simple details like interacting with loved ones with masks religiously worn, wearing the masks properly, interacting in only well ventilated spaces, and not participating in unnecessary shared meals have each been paramount.

There is, indeed, understandable COVID-19 fatigue after 16 months of social curtailment,



but it's important to realise that previous peaks have been short lived and the prediction is that in six to eight weeks, we'll once again be able to relax some of these measures.

The biggest question at the forefront of most lay people's minds at the moment is, "Will this pandemic ever end?" We can be deeply grateful for the formidable achievements of Israel, the United Kingdom, and the United States (US) amongst other developed nations that have answered this question with a resounding "yes". The US, with a population of 328 million people, has vaccinated 52% of its population. Its infection rates have decreased from 208 000 new cases per week in January 2021 to 14 000 per week in June 2021. Israel, which has vaccinated about 60% of its population, recorded its first day this week with zero new cases in spite of conducting 7 575 tests on the same day. Israel's positivity rate is now 0%, with only a handful of active cases in the country, and Israelis are no longer required to wear masks in outdoor public spaces! Developed countries and past pandemics have taught us that this pandemic will indeed end.

So, what is the week's take-home message? We must understand that prevention is better than cure. We can relatively easily prevent COVID-19 infections; to cure complicated patients is far more challenging. Let's pull up our socks for the next few weeks and bring the infections in our community under control. Let's look forward to future widespread vaccinations that will indeed eventually be offered to all adults, and we really can look to a brighter future without the overhanging clouds of COVID-19.

• Dr Daniel Israel is a family practitioner in Johannesburg.



# Is Israel heading for its own 6 January?

BEN SALES – JTA

As Benjamin Netanyahu makes a last-ditch attempt to stay in power, even with a rival coalition set to take office, American journalists and scholars are offering a dire comparison: 6 January.

In Israel, the political turmoil now seems eerily similar to what was happening in America prior to the insurrection at the Capitol that day.

Like Donald Trump, Netanyahu is trying to foil a democratic process that historically has been little more than a formality. Also like Trump, the prime minister says the new administration is the product of the “greatest electoral fraud in the history of the country”.

On Monday, 7 June, Netanyahu’s Likud party claimed that the new coalition would be a “dark dictatorship” with laws “akin to the dictates of North Korea or Iran” because it will seek to institute term limits that could disqualify Netanyahu from running again.

Netanyahu, Israel’s leader for the past dozen years, has a loyal and passionate base that feels aggrieved and betrayed, similar to the

incoming coalition, Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid, have tried to stress that democracy will take its course while condemning incitement.

But a left-wing member of their coalition, incoming Environmental Minister Tamar Zandberg, tied Netanyahu’s verbiage to that of Trump during the fraught presidential transition.

“It’s similar to what Trump and his hate groups and supporters were doing in the time before the Capitol attack,” she told *Politico* in an article published on Sunday.

Zandberg has borne the brunt of violent rhetoric from the extremist right. Last week, she and her family fled their home in Tel Aviv after receiving death threats. A fake notice of her death circulated on social media.

Meanwhile, other politicians have received death threats or faced protests outside their private homes that have been promoted on social media by Netanyahu allies.

Still, the Israeli transition is proceeding, albeit slowly.

On Monday, Knesset Speaker Yariv Levin, a Netanyahu ally, officially announced that parliament would vote on the new coalition by 14 June, though he didn’t set a date.

as the Israel Police cancelled a right-wing nationalist parade through the Old City of Jerusalem scheduled for Thursday, 10 June. The march was denied permits amid fears that it would reignite violence just weeks after the conflict in Gaza, as well as the precarious electoral transition.

The parade, known as the Flags March, takes place annually on Jerusalem Day, which marks Israel’s 1967 capture of eastern Jerusalem. Israel subsequently annexed the area as part of its capital city. The march is meant to celebrate Israeli sovereignty over the Old City, and its route generally takes the mostly Orthodox Jewish marchers through the Muslim Quarter. In past years, the march has featured racist chants, and Arab shopkeepers in the Old City have been advised to board up their stores while it is taking place.

This year, on Jerusalem Day, which fell on 10 May, the parade was interrupted by rockets fired by Hamas launching 11 days of warfare between the terrorist group that controls the Gaza Strip and Israel. The march also took place amid escalating clashes between Jews and Arabs in Jerusalem and across Israel.

Last week, after organisers announced that the parade would be rescheduled for 10 June, Defence Minister Benny Gantz, who is also part of the incoming coalition, advised that the route be changed. After refusing to approve the permit for Thursday, police did invite organisers to reapply with a new route or date.

The Biden administration also reportedly urged a change of route, fearing that Jerusalem could again experience violence.

Two Netanyahu allies, far-right legislator Itamar Ben-Gvir and May Golan, a Likud member, have vowed to lead the parade down the same route on Thursday anyway, with or without a police permit.

“We won’t give a prize to those Arab rioters and chicken politicians,” tweeted Golan, who compared her parliamentary opponents to “suicide bombers” on Sunday. “We will preserve our Jewish sovereignty in Jerusalem!”

Fears remain that tensions could still erupt in Jerusalem, parade or no parade. On Monday, *Ha’aretz* reported that Israel’s attorney general wouldn’t intervene to stop the pending eviction of Palestinian families from the eastern Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, making the eviction more likely. The pending evictions were among several contributing factors to the violence in Jerusalem last month.



Photo: Olivier Fitoussi/Flash90

Naftali Bennett and Tamar Zandberg in the Israeli parliament on 2 June 2021

former United States president.

One key difference is that an event that would have gathered Netanyahu supporters for a potentially volatile rally was denied a permit on Monday.

Even as the head of Israel’s internal security agency, the Shin Bet, has warned of political violence, the leaders of the

With the coalition having the slimmest of majorities – 61 of the Knesset’s 120 members – Netanyahu is desperately trying to get one rival legislator to defect. His goal is to deadlock the Knesset into a 60-60 tie and prevent the new government from taking office. Thus far he has failed.

Meanwhile, a potential flashpoint for conflict appears to have been removed,

## Archbishop’s anti-Israel stance “endangering Anglican Church”

>>Continued from page 1

and religious views regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict”. This call, made at the end of May, was rejected by those organisations.

“We can have a different view, and we can all agree to disagree, but religious leaders need to show respect, peace, and tolerance,” Goldstein said. “If religious leaders don’t stand together, then these negative forces will divide us.”

The chief rabbi feels that by condemning Israel, “the archbishop is hurting the very people he is trying to help. Israel is a bastion of freedom and dignity in the Middle East for Christians, Muslims, and Jews to worship in freedom. By supporting Hamas, the archbishop is leaving the Palestinian people to suffer under the jackboot of violence and dictatorship. Hamas doesn’t believe in negotiation, so by supporting extremism, he is pushing the option of peace further away.”

Goldstein hopes that his letter “will provoke real debate within the Anglican Church. I have heard from Anglican rank and file members that they aren’t aligned with the views of the archbishop. In addition, millions of Christians who support Israel

should be able to do so without being intimidated or threatened.”

He also hopes that this debate “will lead to a time for reflection for all religious leaders” and that they will continue to meet and keep the channels of communication open, as has been the case for many years.

“What I hope will be on the agenda for the interfaith movement is commitment across the board for religious leaders to preach tolerance, peace, human dignity, and to support forces in the world to do the same,” he says. “I hope all religious leaders will oppose in every way the violent extremism that is gaining ascendancy, particularly in Africa. We can agree to disagree without denigrating each other. We must call out violent extremism with one voice. This is a wake-up call that we need to take a stand.”

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report* on Wednesday, 9 June, the archbishop said, “Nothing in my letter suggests that I support violent attacks by one community on another or that I question the right of Israel to live in peace and security and that of the Palestinians to self-determination.”



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# “I’ll take my chances,” says resident on Hamas’s firing line

STEVEN GRUZD

“Living on the Gaza border is 95% heaven, and 5% hell,” said Adele Raemer. She’s made it her mission to tell the world what life is really like in the shadow of Hamas rocket and mortar attacks on Israel. When the weapons went silent in “Operation Guardian of the Walls” on 21 May after 11 days, Raemer was at her laptop, documenting her experiences and feelings. This fiery, courageous teacher and part-time hospital clown has become “an unwitting war correspondent”. She even addressed the United Nations Security Council in 2019.



Adele Raemer

Raemer was speaking on a webinar hosted by the Gilah Branch of B’nai Zion WIZO Western Cape on Monday night.

She has lived on Kibbutz Nirim in the Negev, about 2km from the Gaza border, since she made aliyah from the United States in 1975. She showed pictures of the “heaven” – wild poppies bursting into

bloom and tranquil green fields growing in the desert. Raemer reminisced about when it was possible to go the beach or the suq (marketplace) in Gaza.

Israel withdrew unilaterally from Gaza in 2005. When Hamas took over the territory, it began to fire rockets at southern Israel. Soon Iran replenished these with deadlier, longer-range missiles.

In the 2008 to 2009 “Operation Cast Lead”, they had no safe rooms on her kibbutz, and no Iron Dome missile defence shield. The Israeli government spent billions of dollars on reinforced concrete safe rooms within a 7km radius of the border over the next year.

“Being so close to the border,” she said, “I have about 10 seconds to get into my safe room when there is a red alert (*tzeva adom*).” When rockets rain on the area, life becomes unbearable and people in their path can suffer severe trauma, especially children and senior citizens. And the retaliatory strikes by Israel in Gaza also cause much pain and anguish.

Raemer started a Facebook group in 2011

to document her experiences, which now has more than 6 500 members. It was her way of telling the world what was really happening. It also helped her process her feelings. Raemer is on “the prime minister’s list” of people who can be interviewed by local and foreign media during attacks. She started blogging on

CNN’s *iReport* and then for the *Times of Israel*.

Back in 2014, “Operation Protective Edge” lasted 50 days. Raemer was on her kibbutz, documenting the hostilities every day. She also began tweeting the conflict. “Israelis aren’t on Twitter so much, but Gazans are,” she said.

A tractor on the kibbutz accidentally uncovered a subterranean tunnel hidden under the fields. Raemer showed a picture of her inside it. “These terror tunnels aren’t for transporting food or medicine,” she said. “They have one purpose only – to attack and kidnap Israeli soldiers and civilians. This tunnel was three stories underground, wired for electricity and communications. We have no idea what other tunnels may be under our fields or our homes.”

In the 2014 escalation, a mortar exploded just 3m from her bedroom window. She smelled smoke and gunpowder. If she wasn’t in her safe room, she would have died from shrapnel wounds. On the last day of that war, two *kibbutznikim* lost their lives to rockets, and another lost both his legs. He’s now the mayor of the area.

In April 2018, Gazans began sending kites and balloons attached to smouldering coals over the border to burn Israeli fields and properties. Raemer developed an online map showing where they fell. The entire region is blanketed with fire sites. That year, Palestinians also massed at the border, sending acrid smoke



across the fence from violent protests.

Raemer has been in contact with many people “on the other side”. They have organised joint bike rides, but a plan to develop a cross-border choir singing in Arabic, English, and Hebrew has been shut down by Hamas. Most ordinary people, she says, just want to live in peace and have a hopeful future for their children.

Raemer supplied some stark facts about the just-completed “Operation Guardian of the Walls”. A total of 4 360 rockets and mortars were fired into Israel from Gaza, 1 661 of which were downed by the Iron Dome (which doesn’t fire if rockets are aimed at the sea or sparsely populated land). About 176 missiles fell in populated areas, showing the Iron Dome to be about 90% effective. About 680 rockets from Gaza misfired, killing 20 Gazans. More than

200 died in Gaza and 12 in Israel.

When asked why she hasn’t moved away, Raemer replied, “This is my home. Where am I going to move? There are attacks on Be’er Sheva, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and knife attacks and car ramming. There is nowhere that you can promise is terror free. So I’ll take my chances.”

Nevertheless, Raemer retains hope that this endless cycle of violence will end. “I’m old enough to have known a reality that was different. There is no reason not to get to this again,” she said. “But there has been no real Gaza strategy from the government since 2006. These wars are started and ended by Hamas, on its terms. At present, desperate Gazans have nothing to lose ... And if we are attacked, we have every right to fire back.”

## Kosher and halaal? This shop is food for thought.

NICOLE RAZ – JTA

Tucked between a dance school and a 1960s retro lounge on a quiet street in Tucson, Arizona, sits a small Middle Eastern and African foods store. But the Al Basha Grocery isn’t just a place to get kosher meats and hard-to-find ingredients.

“It provides an opportunity for people to see each other as real people and have a normal interaction with people who ordinarily might not interact in their day-to-day lives,” said Jesse Davis, a regular Al Basha shopper.

Ghufran Almusawi and her husband, Anas Elazrag, both Muslims, opened Al Basha in July 2019 with the intention of creating a “melting pot”, Almusawi said.

“Serving kosher in our store was one of the ways that we can bring the communities together,” she said. “We just want to offer services to everybody. We want to make everybody feel welcome.”

Almusawi regularly witnesses dialogue between Muslim and Jewish shoppers.

“I see a lot of customers interacting with each other, especially if they have questions,” she said. “Sometimes the customers will jump in and answer as a way of them showing, ‘Hey, we accept you, you’re welcome here.’”

Al Basha caught Davis’ eye before it even opened, with its big sign advertising halaal and kosher foods.

“A halaal, kosher store – somebody who’s actually trying to reach out to both markets and both communities? That’s pretty striking,” he said. “They were definitely reaching out a hand.”

Davis appreciated the gesture, and has been shopping at Al Basha about three times a month since it opened.

“They’re super friendly and helpful,” he said. He’ll often get recommendations on products and spices to use in recipes. His favourite Al Basha item is pomegranate molasses, which he described as “a sort of finisher” for meat, giving it a “sweet, tangy flavour”.

Evelyn Sigafus looks forward to Al Basha’s tea selection when she goes a few times a year for kosher deli meats and holiday food ingredients. Sigafus appreciates the store’s efforts to meet the need for kosher food and

Photo: Michael Zaccaria/Keeping Jewish



The shelves of Al Basha Grocery in Tucson, Arizona

foster dialogue and relationships between Jewish and Muslim communities.

“One time I was in there and the woman there didn’t have other customers, so we had a wonderful conversation about kosher products, keeping kosher, halaal, what I personally do, and how I cope and how she copes. We had a wonderful little chitchat time,” Sigafus said.

Sigafus said that kind of person-to-person conversation is beneficial, no matter how much exposure somebody has already had to different cultures.

Elazrag, a doctor, came to Tucson in 2008 from Sudan. He decided to open Al Basha after he had a poor shopping experience, Almusawi said. At the time, her husband wasn’t convinced existing local markets had what people really needed or that they could make all customers feel comfortable.

Almusawi, an Iraqi American, grew up in Michigan and was already familiar with the grocery business.

“My dad was in the grocery world, and he was always so happy to see his customers and was welcoming,” she said. “He didn’t really look at a customer as being somebody other than a human that he’s providing a service for. He didn’t look at race, colour, religion, none of that. And I kind of grew up following that. And fortunately, my husband’s the same way.”

Almusawi said she’s had fewer Jewish customers since the recent violence between Hamas and Israel.

“I just don’t think they feel comfortable coming in,” she said. “I’ve had people come in and say, ‘How could you do this? How could you sell this right now?’ And I’m just like, ‘OK, this company [kosher food supplier] in California has nothing to do with it. We’re just one business supporting another.’”

The pushback comes from both worlds – some Muslims don’t want to support the store

because it supports the Jewish community, and some Jews don’t want to support the store because it’s owned by Muslims. She tries to focus on the positive responses and those showing support for unity.

“What both religions teach is peace,” Almusawi said. “We’re welcoming of everybody. We don’t want to make anybody feel uncomfortable and anybody is welcome to shop. And if there are any items that are missing that they are looking for, we’re always willing to bring it in.”

Al Basha is in Yisrael Bernstein’s regular shopping rotation. He usually makes an “east-side loop” on Fridays gathering food for several Chabad rabbis. He stops at Al Basha, Trader Joe’s, and Costco. It can take up to six hours, depending on who joins him.

He discovered Al Basha a couple of years ago “on a lark”, figuring that if they sold halaal food, they might also have kosher items, “and sure enough, they did”.

Bernstein became friendly with Almusawi, and she began making sure the store carried his favourites: corned beef, pastrami, and hot dogs. With his long beard, black hat, and long coat, he always feels welcome.

“I really do. It makes my whole Shabbat weekend,” said Bernstein, who is a medical doctor.

Almusawi and Elazrag opened their second location last month, also in Tucson. Al Basha isn’t “going to save the world”, said Davis, but it’s those little bridge-building exchanges that can.”

“We can’t just reduce each other to what we see on television,” he said. “For all the differences that we might have, maybe we just have more in common. And you get a chance to see that in a really human context – you’re shopping for what you’re going to put on your family’s table.”

Sabje

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A Curriculum Vitae and contact information of two references should be emailed to [sevitjz@sabje.co.za](mailto:sevitjz@sabje.co.za) (Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted)

Closing Date for Application: Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021



# Couple dies hours apart from COVID-19

MIRAH LANGER

"This isn't a COVID-19 story; it's a love story." So says Cindy Silberg, the oldest daughter of Simon and Maxine Schneider, reflecting on the profound legacy her parents – who died within hours of each other – have left behind.

"It just shows that they were true soulmates," says Hayley Kissos, their middle daughter. "They got married under the chuppah as one *neshoma* [soul]; they passed away together as one *neshoma*. From the time they got married until the time they were buried, they lived their lives as one."

"They lived lives of respect: respect for each other, and of others, and through that, others respected them," says Stacey Barnett, their youngest daughter. "Our parents would just do whatever they could to help others."

Two weeks ago, Maxine, aged 66, tested positive for COVID-19. A day later, Simon, 71, received the same test result. Maxine was carefully monitored by Hatzolah and as a precaution, since she had an underlying condition, was hospitalised. A few days later, Simon's temperature started going up, and again as a precautionary measure, he was admitted.

"The doctors weren't even sure that he really needed to be admitted," says Kissos. "This was part of Hashem's greater plan that my father would be with my mother."

When Silberg asked her father if he wanted her to try to make sure that he was placed in the same ward as her mother, their bond was so deep, "he said to me, 'No, then we are going to worry too much about each other; we both have to get better.'"

Both parents remained in a stable condition, without needing to be moved to

intensive care (ICU). They were making plans for them to be released last Friday.

Instead, last Tuesday night, Maxine phoned Simon in his ward to remind him to watch MasterChef – they shared a love of reality cooking and dance shows. Maxine then climbed into bed and within half an hour, slipped away quietly in her sleep.

Simon was told the news and sat with her body as they waited for the Chevrah Kadisha to arrive. "He spoke to her and said his goodbyes," says Silberg. "He told us she was so beautiful; she looked like she was dreaming," says Kissos.

Rabbi Mordechai Rodal phoned Simon after hearing the news of Maxine's death. He recalls that "Simon told me, 'Rabbi, this is just a temporary separation. We are going to be reunited before you know it ... We are both the same soul.'"

Seven hours later, Simon, too, slipped away in his sleep.

Having first met through a mutual friend when Maxine was 15 and Simon 19, three years later, Simon asked permission to propose to Maxine on her 18th birthday. They wed soon after, and set up home first in Orange Grove and then Sydenham. On 10 June, they would have celebrated their 48th wedding anniversary.

"They were the salt of the earth," says Avril Epstein, Maxine's younger sister. "It was a privilege to have chosen to be her sister. She was the nucleus of our family." Justin Farkas, a family friend especially close to Simon, recalls how on the day Simon died, he was still trying to uplift people. "That day, from

hospital, he created a WhatsApp group to help a gardener in a complex where he was involved. This is how he was to everyone. Everyone looked up to him as a father figure."



Maxine and Simon Schneider

Maxine worked as a legal cost consultant, mostly half days to be able to be with her daughters in the afternoon. Simon was a part of *The Star* newspaper team for more than three decades, working until retirement as credit manager.

Their house was "a *simcha* home", reminisces Kissos, describing how it became a venue for endless parties to celebrate various people's birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, and other happy events. Sometimes, even just on ordinary weekends, "people would arrive at 08:00 on a Sunday

for breakfast," Barnett remembers.

They had seven grandchildren ranging in age from three to 20, and "each one believed they were the favourite" the family jokes.

Their father made few but strong stipulations for his family. "Growing up, we had to have dinner at the dinner table every night, and then when we left home, my father had two rules," recalls Kissos. "The first was we weren't allowed to emigrate. We were to stay here as a family. The second was that we didn't go to sleep not talking. We always followed through."

The Schneiders' deaths are sadly part of the recent rapid increase in cases of the virus. Specialist physician pulmonologist Dr Carron Zinman of Netcare Linksfield Hospital says that "by every single definition in the book, we are definitely in the third wave". However, compared to previous waves, "it has a slightly different trajectory, and we don't really know if it's going to suddenly shoot up or keep going up more slowly for longer than before".

Three main trends have emerged in the current wave. First, although previously a person who got the virus might land up infecting maybe one or two others in their family, now entire households are contracting it. What remains unclear is whether this is because the virus itself is more transmissible or people are living in closer proximity to each other than before. Most cases are being traced back to social

gatherings, work functions, or dinner parties.

Second, people who are vaccinated, or even both vaccinated and who had the virus before, are assuming that they are immune and then contracting COVID-19. Zinman said people have to remember that even with the vaccine, "there's a chance that you'll get COVID-19 very mildly or not even know you have it, and yet still be able to transmit it".

Lastly, ICU beds are still in desperate demand, with ambulances driving around to eight or nine hospitals to try and find space for their patients. People are also staying in ICU longer during the current wave, making the situation more dire. "Maintaining the proper behaviour to try and prevent transmission of the virus" is the only tool people have to keep safe, say frontline medical expert.

As the Schneider family grapple with the rawness of their loss, they cherish the small details of lives lived so closely together. Whether it was the pair of winter and summer pyjamas the couple brought every grandchild for each season; the endless chocolates Simon offered even just before mealtimes; or Maxine's need to bake 11 *pesadiche* ginger cakes in one morning so that nobody would be left out; even their light-hearted bickering about whether the TV was too loud or too soft – all are reflections of the "warmth they radiated", says Silberg.

She considers how at their funeral "seeing their graves together, I thought at least they have taken the next step together. There is something comforting in that. I told my children they were lucky to have known their grandparents." I said, "Take those lesson into your life – that's how you will keep my parents alive."

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# The South African epilogue to Anne Frank's diary

MIRAH LANGER

Anne Frank's diary was a source of strength and inspiration for Robben Island prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, who would copy out its passages by candlelight in their cells at night.

"Mr Mandela astonished the audience at the Johannesburg opening of the Anne Frank exhibition in August 1994 when he spoke about how he had read Anne's diary as a young man before he went into prison and the effect it had on him," recounted Gillian Walnes Perry, the founder of the Anne Frank Trust in the United Kingdom, during a webinar this week.

"Mandela then said that it had been smuggled into the library on Robben Island for the university that had been started to educate the young political prisoners. Eventually the little paperback copy was handed around and read so much that it literally fell to pieces. Mandela related how prisoners took turns to copy it out at night on pieces of paper by candlelight in their prison cells so that it could continue being read by the young prisoners as a testament to the human spirit. I think it's one of the most remarkable stories of Anne Frank's diary's place in history," said Perry at the webinar hosted by the South African Holocaust & Genocide Foundation in commemoration of Anne Frank's 92nd birthday on 12 June.

At the time, in his speech at the opening of the Anne Frank in the World exhibition, Mandela remarked that "the victory of the democratic forces in South Africa is a contribution to this worldwide effort to rid humanity of the evil of racism. It's Anne Frank's victory. It's an achievement of humanity as a whole."

During this week's webinar, Perry and Myra Osrin, the original chairperson of the Cape Town Holocaust Memorial Council, spoke about the potent impact of this original exhibition in South Africa, and how it served as a catalyst for later founding the permanent holocaust and genocide centres in the country.

The travelling Anne Frank exhibition, first created by Anne Frank House in Amsterdam in 1985, was launched in Cape Town in April 1994 on the eve of democratic elections. With "huge success", it toured across eight cities for the next 18 months. By 1995, "the exhibition left our shores, but the seeds had been sown", said Osrin.

"The huge impact on the general public and, more particularly, educators, by the story of Anne Frank and the important human-rights lessons of the Holocaust was to lead, within a very few short years, to the establishment of a permanent centre in 1999, first in Cape Town and then later in Johannesburg and Durban," she said.

Moreover, with more than 30 million copies sold and translations into more than 70 languages, Anne Frank's legacy is still universal and relevant. Perry, the author of *The Legacy of Anne Frank*, who has been awarded an MBE (Order of the British Empire) in recognition of her work in education, detailed the

many extraordinary effects it has had across the globe, particular for the youth.

"More recently, it's actually the teenagers who have been doing the educating. They are being trained by Anne Frank House to be peer guides," she said. "Teenagers talking to teenagers about a teenager – it really works. By telling Anne's story, you don't have to preach about being nice to others and being equitable to others. The kids get it. They suggest it themselves."

For example, she said in Kolkata, India, the students themselves made the connection between discrimination in the caste system and Anne Frank's story. From Moscow to Kazakhstan, Sao Paulo to Sri Lanka, "Anne Frank has a message and a relevance to teenagers wherever they are". Perry recalls a moving example when she worked in

Northern Ireland with "very divided" Protestant and Catholic communities in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In facilitation with Protestant and Catholic school children, "they came together to produce a cross-community newspaper called *Anne's Legacy*".



Anne Frank

Perry said the impactful educational legacy of the diary tied in deeply with the wishes of Otto Frank, Anne's father. In his private capacity, he came to play a remarkable role for teenagers reading Anne's diary.

"In the 1950s, a strange phenomenon started happening. Otto started receiving letters from teenagers all over the world. During this era, teenagers weren't considered young adults like they are now, they were still considered children and they felt that they couldn't really open up and talk candidly about their concerns and problems to their

parents or their teachers

"However," continued Perry, "because Anne had given such a wonderful description of her father in her diary as a liberal-minded man that she could talk to openly, they started writing letters to him. Mr Frank answered every single letter

individually on an old typewriter. That's quite a feat."

In the 1960s, Otto, with a group of friends, went to the mayor of Amsterdam to propose that the building in which his family had hidden be turned not into a memorial site, but an education centre, "a centre of learning where young people would come together from different backgrounds, from different countries, and would break down those barriers of misunderstanding, suspicion, and mistrust".

Once it was established, Otto started holding student conferences and bringing young people together from all over Europe. Some of the first students invited to these conferences, just 15 years after the war, were from Germany.

"He so believed in the power of education. He built hope so that young people wouldn't have to suffer like his own two beautiful daughters had."

## My grandfather, the Nazi war hero, pens Lithuanian author

MIRAH LANGER

Sylvia Foti grew up believing her grandfather was a war hero but a deathbed promise to her mother to write a book about his life unearthed a buried history. Instead, as the title of her newly-launched book reveals, she discovered that Jonas Noreika was a notorious Lithuanian war criminal and, she was, as summed up by the book's title, *The Nazi's Granddaughter*.

The literary excavation she undertook meant sifting through not just a family denialism and cover-up but also exposing how Lithuania still struggles to face the truth of its Holocaust complicity.

"My grandfather gave the order to kill all the Jews in the town of Plungė," says Foti who later also discovered that "my grandfather, grandmother, aunt, and mother took over the house of a Jewish family" living in the area throughout the massacres.

At the same time, she discovered, that "Lithuanians pretended to be completely blind to what was happening to the Jews. To me, this was also astounding: half the town is missing, and you don't notice?" Foti, an investigative journalist and teacher, was speaking at an online discussion hosted by the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre, Jacob Gitlin Library, and Jewish Literary Festival earlier in May.

She was born in Chicago within an expat Lithuanian community so insular, Foti recounts her mother's pride when she arrived in kindergarten fluent in Lithuanian but unable to speak English yet. She was nurtured on stories of her grandfather as a "wonderful hero from World War II", one who died in the KGB (Committee for State Security) prison in 1947 at the age of 36, tortured, and then shot "because he was trying to lead a revolt against the communists in 1945".

"Before that, I heard he was in a Nazi concentration camp for almost two years, and this was because he tried to save Jews." His legacy was so potent politically that in 1997, the Lithuanian government presented the family with the highest posthumous award possible – the Order of the Cross of Vytis. Within their family, Foti watched her mother spend decades collecting bookshelves of material about him for a book which she was always planning to write.

However, in 2000, Foti's mother, at the age of only 60, became ill. "I went to visit her in hospital and she called me to her bedside and said, 'Sylvia, you have to write the book.'" Although Foti found it painful to agree to the task as it meant acceptance of her mother's dying, she agreed, knowing it meant so much to her. "Then she died, and here I was left with the deathbed promise. I started bringing over all the material to my house and very, very slowly going through things."

However, a few months later, Foti's maternal grandmother had a heart attack. "Now I was at her death bed, and she asked me how the book was going. I said, 'Grandmother, everything is fine, I will get it done.' I thought I was giving her great words of comfort. But then she said, 'Don't write the book; just let history lie.'" At the time, Foti thought that perhaps her grandmother was trying to prevent putting



Sylvia Foti

her under pressure. "And I said, 'No, no, I'm going to do it; I promised mom.' My grandmother didn't like that answer. She rolled over and faced the wall, and that was the end of the conversation."

Foti's grandmother died shortly afterwards. Both she and Foti's mother wanted to be laid to rest in Lithuania. Little did Foti know that the trip she then took in October 2000 with her brother to bury their remains would lead to the first exhumation of the truth.

During the trip, they "were invited as honorary guests to visit the school named after our grandfather. The school children greeted us grandly with flowers and Lithuanian songs." While in conversation with the school's director, who praised her for taking on the writing of the book about her grandfather, saying that the country needed "heroes", they moved to discussing how the school came to be named after her grandfather. The director confessed that while they were thrilled to be able to rename it "after such a magnificent hero", he had "got a lot of grief" for the choice.

"I said, 'Grief from whom?' and he said, 'From the Jews.' I said, 'What could the Jews possibly say about my wonderful grandfather?' He looked at me like it was strange that I didn't know this, and said, 'Your grandfather was accused of killing Jews.' That was the first time I had ever heard anything – just anything – like that. I was completely blindsided."

So overcome was Foti, she had to sit down to compose herself. The director comforted her by telling her the

allegations were simply communist propaganda. This remains a frequent narrative in Lithuania, says Foti, with the idea being that the Jews killed were part of the communist threat.

However, as Foti then began going through the documentation which her mother had acquired, irrefutable and incriminating proof emerged. She discovered that in addition to her grandfather giving the orders to massacre the Jews of Plungė, as governor of the Šiauliai district, a position held during Nazi rule, he had drafted documentation for the rounding up of all the Jews in the area as well as for the creation of a ghetto.

"I shortly found out that the Jews were murdered within six weeks. They chose the date of Yom Kippur to start murdering them." All in all, he signed about a hundred documents related to the Holocaust.

"It was devastating. I really did go into a state of depression, of wanting to drop the whole project. I kept asking myself, 'Why me? I'm just the granddaughter. I'm not a PhD in history.' Yet it was like a magnet that pulled me back in."

In completing the book, Foti has learnt to sit with many unanswered questions about her mother and grandmother's awareness of the truth. In one of the books in her mother's collection, she found that her grandmother had underlined a passage which mentioned her grandfather's order to kill Jews. "So, she knew this. She had read it, and my final conclusion is that she just went into denial like all the Lithuanians do."

With her mother, "we talked for hours and hours about this project and her father, and she never once brought

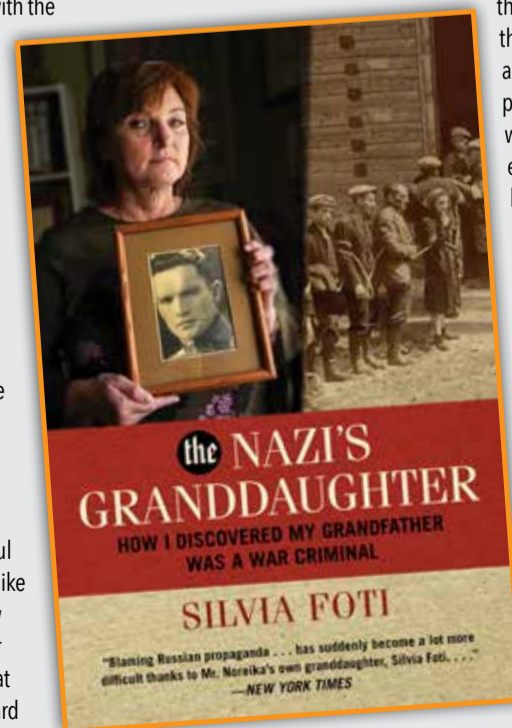
this side of it up". She imagines that perhaps her mother asked her to carry on with the project hoping either that Foti would ignore the evidence, or even find a way to exonerate her grandfather. Ultimately though, "I just don't know," Foti muses.

The book has received widespread attention worldwide, and Foti's bravery in uncovering the darkness in her own family story has been heralded. On a personal level, it has caused rifts with some family members, with one even threatening to sue her for defamation of character.

It's reflective of the struggle Lithuanians have in accepting their

collaboration with Nazis, suggests

Foti. "It's like there's a glass wall between what happened and what Lithuanians think happened, and they just can't cross over and look at the horror of it."





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# Singles find romance in the Cloud

MIRAH LANGER

"COVID-19 lockdown? It's epic. It's probably the single greatest thing that has happened to single people ever."

This assertion by gym owner Nicholas Ingel, who has been on the dating scene for four years since his divorce, reflects the fact that many older daters in the community are finding brave new ways to meet their *besheret* and keep a social distance.

"Before, we were tied into a relationship or a potential relationship only with people that we could physically meet. Now, we are no longer locked in by location or even time," says the 49-year-old, reflecting on the possibilities for romance across the Zoom-iverse, even in the post-COVID-19 world to come.

Even after the pandemic is contained, the world won't go back to the way it was before, Ingel says. "This is the new normal. It's a hybrid between in-person and online meeting, and what an amazing thing it is!"

Lisa Kowalsky, the original founder of the Joburg Jewish Singles 35+ Facebook group, agrees, having recently launched an online series of dating events for the community.

"Obviously COVID-19 made it very difficult for us at first. I tried to get people to continue to interact by putting up questions on the Facebook page to which people could respond. Then I came up with online speed dating, which has been brilliant."

Kowalsky, who started the events last month, hosts South African only and international Jewish singles dating events. Each participant gets a minimum of eight dates that last five minutes each. Participants share only their first names, and the dates are held on a special online platform that mimics a date setting.

"It has been such a success. We have had so many matches. In the first event, almost everyone had between one and four matches. Some people dated afterwards, and lots said it was so much fun."

Michelle Blumenau has thoroughly enjoyed participating in two of the events. "It's a low-stress way to meet new people via your computer."

Blumenau explains the process. "It's a Zoom-like platform, but there's only you and one other person on the screen for a couple of minutes. Then the next person arrives. It's just enough time to get a sense of the other and whether you would like to see that person again. If you both agree to meet, you are sent each other's contact information the next day."

She says it certainly has advantages over traditional dating. "It saves you having to sit through a drink or a meal with someone when there is absolutely no connection. It's very good in that way."

Meanwhile, Lorna Falkson, who voluntarily organised many social events for older singles before lockdown, has started coming up with outdoor activities that allow people to gather in COVID-19-compliant ways.

She recently held a garden get-together that was so popular, she had to turn people down as she could accommodate only 50 people to ensure social distancing. Moreover, she laughs, once the participants arrived, she struggled to get them to leave!

Kowalsky and Falkson say it's clear that many singles have found life

during COVID-19 lonely. In this context, Kowalsky's Facebook group and Falkson's gatherings have become not just about dating but serve as a place to connect in general.

"People form wonderful friendships and make great networks. Being single might be the common denominator, but it's just a starting point," says Kowalsky.

She says there has been a huge increase in the numbers of people joining the Facebook group during COVID-19, with about 150 new members recently joining the now 900-member collective.

For the first time, this includes Jewish singles from outside South Africa, although Kowalsky has been careful to ensure that they are specifically looking to meet South Africans.

Each member is carefully vetted and each post monitored. She is assisted by fellow administrators Wendy Miller, who is able to offer legal advice, and Colin Gluch, who is her "male counterbalance".

The group was started in 2017 and since then, romance has blossomed for

many of those in the group, with several serious relationships on the go and engagements confirmed.

For some members, it was their first foray back into the social world after a painful experience like the death of a spouse. "One member in his 70s lost his wife 10 years ago. He had become a hermit. He told us how this group had changed his life. He was going out; he was dating; he was having the best fun."

Kowalsky herself isn't single, and her passion for the project is motivated by a wider love for the community. "I love to see people happy" she says.

Yet, at times, she gets frustrated by the fact that people allow their inhibitions to get in the way of putting themselves out there. For example, page activity statistics show that about 90% of them are actively reading posts. However, this statistic isn't represented when it comes to attending events. "The truth is, people moan and groan about where they are, but they're not always putting in the effort."

A reason could be insecurity. "A huge problem with singles is self-esteem. You

have to realise that a lot of them have come out of bad marriages where their self-esteem has been broken, or they are widowed. They might not have dated since they were 18 years old. Now they're like 50 or 60 -- where do they begin?"

Falkson says "older men are more shy. If you phone a *shadchan* [matchmaker], they will tell you there are no men on the books. But the reason there are no men on the books is that men don't come forward. Yet, there are so many. What I would like to do is encourage them to make contact."

Falkson says she is motivated by her experience of arriving in Johannesburg as a farm girl from Limpopo. "When I came to Johannesburg at the age of 20, I didn't know anybody. I opened up a newspaper, and although then I wasn't religious at all, there was a little advertisement for a Jewish matchmaker. I thought okay, well, this is my only hope.

The lady set her up on a number of dates. Eventually via one of these, she met a man who later introduced her to her husband, although they are now divorced.

"If you live in Johannesburg, there can

be hundreds of people around you, but you can be very lonely. That's why I'm passionate about creating opportunities for people to meet."

Ingel urges people to rethink their attitude to dating. "Men tell me there is no one to date, and women tell me there is no one to date. We get brought up with these fairytales, and they're not true. No one's perfect. Stop looking for perfect – it doesn't exist. It's not about settling, it's about understanding what's real."

The disjuncture is in how "people are arrogant in what they look for, but insecure in what they offer".

They need to find a middle ground in their sense of self. "You aren't as good as you think you are, but you certainly aren't as bad as you think you are," he says.

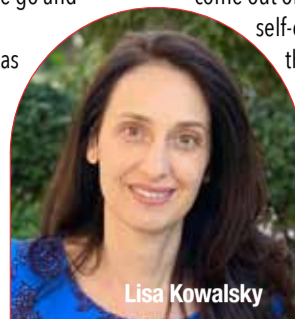
He suggests that rather than a hindrance, being older is an advantage. "[Being in the 35+ category], is really when you come into your own. I know myself better now than I have ever known myself. I'm comfortable

with who I am. I know what I want, and importantly, I know what I don't want."

Ultimately, his advice is to remember that relationships aren't repair shops. "We can't fix people, and we can't expect people to fix us. Learn to love yourself first."



Nicholas Ingel



Lisa Kowalsky



Michelle Blumenau



Lorna Falkson

## Jews should draw a line under latest social-media pogrom

OPINION

SAMUEL HYDE

It's a cold autumn night in Johannesburg. I lie on my bed preparing for my pending aliyah, my laptop resting on my thighs, writing. Suddenly my phone vibrates, I continue, it vibrates again, I focus on these words, the third buzz grabs my attention, and like most of us today I can't stop myself from running to check the latest notification. Is it work? A friend? Maybe a funny meme worth sharing to the family group? No! It's a vile message of hate, one I have become all too accustomed to as a Jewish and Israel-rights activist.

Over the past two weeks, there has been a silencing of Jewish voices across platforms with verbal violence that can be described only as a social-media pogrom. The terms used to demonise Israel such as "apartheid", "genocide", and "ethnic cleansing" have been meticulously designed to silence Jews. In a world where cancel culture is the modus operandi, the Jewish state is being spun into a web of lies designed to cancel us from the conversation.

What we are experiencing now is nothing new. Jews make up 0.2% of the global population and yet we find ourselves, once again, on the other side of an obsessive, vicious campaign of lies. Every time antisemitism re-enters society, it masks itself as social justice.

It's sold as speaking truth to power. It functions by turning the Jew into whatever a given society hates or fears most. Under Nazism, the Jew was the race contaminator. Today, when the greatest sins of the world are racism and colonialism, Israel, the Jew among the nations, is being demonised as the last bastion of racist colonialism.

Antisemitism will always be a political question. Atrocities against Jews didn't succeed because individuals didn't like Jews, it was because political movements convinced the public that stripping Jews of their rights was in their best interest. To achieve this without any pushback, antisemitism is hidden in plain sight.

This is why from the Middle Ages until now, antisemites have said they weren't antisemitic just anti-Hebrew, anti-capitalist, anti-globalist, and of course the all-too-familiar anti-Zionist.

It's interesting for me that Jews are coined "colonisers". Native peoples can't colonise their indigenous homeland and aren't referred to as foreigners or settlers. The West is attempting to turn history's most successful indigenous rights liberation movement – Zionism – into settler-colonialism.

It's proof positive that the far left's form of antisemitism is rooted in projecting its own white societal guilt from the past onto the Jewish people and our self-determination. Thousands of years of historical and archaeological evidence show that Judaism and the beginning of the Jewish people began in the kingdom of Judea and Israel. After Roman colonisation about 2 000 years ago, ethnic Jews were exiled from their ancestral homeland and subsequently settled in every corner of the world.

In an act of blatant neo-colonialism, the American story is viewed as the universal prism through which all societies must be understood.

Completely ignorant of the specificities of Israel/Palestine, these neo-colonialists fit the square peg of the conflict into the round hole of American history. Jews are bizarrely cast as the white oppressor, and Zionism a movement of white supremacy, while Arabs who look exactly like Israelis are cast as people of colour.

This blind and seemingly ignorant superimposition of American racial politics must not be mistaken for naivety, it's purposeful and dangerous as it normalises antisemitic attitudes in society.

The effect of this has been seen and experienced by us all with the recent violence. We are living in an era of white versus black, straight versus gay, oppressor versus victim. The allowance for nuance

and complexity seems just not to exist anymore. I'm beginning to suspect that it's not that attacks on Jews in the West are the unfortunate and unintended consequence of the persistent demonisation of Israel, but rather the demonisation of the Jewish state is undertaken so as to re-legitimise attacks on Jews in the West.

Denial is the weapon of choice for many antisemites. They deny the Holocaust, deny the ethnic cleansing of Jews in the Middle Eastern Arab states, and now they deny that we even originated from the Middle East.

With a 500% increase in antisemitic attacks in the past two weeks, the silence of the non-Jewish world is deafening, but history shows us not shocking. On an

**"No more! In the spirit of our ancestors, we are once again resolved to take charge of the Jewish destiny."**

emotional Monday morning during the conflict, I wrote this on social media to many of my non-Jewish friends who had engaged with misinformation, the spreading of antisemitic tropes or anti-Israel bias: "You sat at my Shabbos table. You listened to us sing 'Next year in Jerusalem' on Passover. You ate my apples dipped in honey for a sweet new year. You told me how much you love challah. You love hummus, you love bagels, you love Jewish humour films. You are a humanitarian, an anti-racist. You are against hate. You walk with BLM. You march for gay pride. You love everything Jewish besides for Jewish people. You are silent! Replace the word 'Zionist' with 'Jew', and one can understand how the Nazis successfully killed 2/3rds of the Jewish population with the help of millions of regular everyday citizens."

We must no longer try to convince

anybody of our humanity. We know our humanity. We are no longer interested in false interpretations of our history. We know our history. In solidarity as a community, we must now say, "No more! In the spirit of our ancestors, we are once again resolved to take charge of the Jewish destiny."

From generation to generation, we were unwelcome guests in the diaspora. An annoyance to the world like a mosquito buzzing in the dark, and that's where they are right, we are an annoyance. The non-Jewish world has done everything in its power to isolate us from the orders of society, and time and time again, we revolutionised those very orders.

Abraham with his one G-d, Moses with his ten commandments, Jesus with his second cheek ready for the next slap. Einstein. Kissinger. Kafka. Marx. Herzl. Ben Gurion. Meir. I truly had hoped the rise of intersectionality would chant from corner to corner in solidarity with Jews – "lesson learnt: never again". But that never happened.

Again, we are alone, but this time not from nowhere, we are from where we always have been, Israel, our home. Zionism has given us as a community the space to be liberated from millennia-long persecution. When we were sold into slavery out of Israel, our ancestors made a promise to one day return us home. We are the ones lucky enough to live their dream. It truly is a miracle of biblical proportions. Cherish it. Nurture it. *Am Yisrael chai* – the people of Israel live.

• Samuel Hyde is an audio engineer/music producer and a Jewish and Israel-rights activist. He worked at the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre educating youth on antisemitism and its function in society.





# Charcoal breathes fire into African artist's Jewish works

MIRAH LANGER

A man wrapped in tefillin, head bowed in prayer against a background abstracted with an intensity of brush strokes; Haredi scholars striding like warriors; soldiers' heads pressed against Kotel stone; a young girl enfolded in a windswept Israeli flag; an elderly scholar illuminated by light: These are just some of the iconic scenes of Jewish and Israeli life rendered in charcoal by a remarkable new South African artist, Treatwell Mnisi.

"I am myself, in my heart, an Israelite of some sort," is how Mnisi, born in rural Mpumalanga, describes the unique intersection of his African identity and the Judaic and Israeli subject matter of his work.

"The Jewish art that I do; it's already a living thing. The Jewish people live it; they practice it. I'm merely a vessel to bring that into fine art. I am simply somebody who is showing them the greatness that they already have."

Mnisi's unique artistic style was discovered by members of the Jewish community, who have since formed a team to help him showcase his work. Most recently, Saul Jassinowsky, Gila Zulberg, Gila Abramson, and Daniella Ash helped host his first solo exhibition.

Zulberg, a rebbetzin and an artist herself, and Jassinowsky, a businessman, were the first to hear about his art. "It's such a different kind of stroke, very expressive. I found it to be a deep and proper understanding of movement," says Jassinowsky about what moved him in Mnisi's style.

Beyond his talent, Jassinowsky was impressed at how Mnisi engaged in the world. He recalls a fundraiser where many upcoming artists had their pieces on show. "None of their pieces sold for values, except Treatwell's, which

sold for five times its value. When his friends' pieces weren't selling, he picked the pieces off the wall and walked around, encouraging the crowd. He is this small guy, but he put in the effort. I just thought: he's a *mensch*."

Jassinowsky decided he wanted to try and help Mnisi. He and Zulberg then thought of commissioning Mnisi to make works related to Judaica and Israel. "I always have to go overseas or look in Israel to find something Jewish to put on my walls. You can't really find anything here," says Zulberg.

Ash, a South African interior decorator living in Israel then brought Abramson into the fold. Although a lawyer in practice, Abramson has been extensively involved in curating African art. They planned to host a small gathering at one of their homes with maybe 20 pieces on this theme.

"I sent him three or four ideas, but he just didn't stop," recalls Zulberg. "He just painted and painted and painted and painted. We ended up with 100 pieces. The night before the exhibition, an Uber arrived at my house with an extra 28 pieces.

"The charcoal was still wet," recalls Jassinowsky.

The exhibition, held at Under the Trees, a restaurant in Johannesburg, left people mesmerised. "There's been an outpouring of awe at how he has captured Jewish experience," says Zulberg.

What was incredible was the thought and emotion behind the work, says Abramson. Mnisi relentlessly researched and questioned in order to understand the full meaning behind the imagery he was capturing. "He said when it's right; it's respectful. He has such a huge amount of respect for the religion."

Mnisi has the highest regard for his connection with these community members, and a deep sense of gratitude. "My favourite person in the world is Grandpa Mandela. According to him, we are a nation, and we must

build a system in which all people are able to coexist," he says. "Being with Saul, Gila, Gila, and Dani is a beautiful thing. It was meant to be. Their coming into my life and my coming into theirs, it's two sides coming together as one, doing the very thing that we're supposed to do as blacks and whites: come together for a specific purpose and find common ground in what we do."

Mnisi says his earliest memory is of drawing at the age of three. After matric, he followed his passion and started studying at the Tshwane University of Technology in fine and applied arts. However, as a result of difficult circumstances, he couldn't continue, and instead entered "the nine-to-five hard labour, minimum-wage industry. I was mixing concrete, cement, building RDP houses, working as a gardener. My last job was at a car wash."



Then COVID-19 hit. "Although it's a pandemic and not something good for us as human beings, for me, it was a blessing," Mnisi says. Working as a night security guard at a crèche during lockdown, he had "time to think about my life, my dreams, and whatever it is I want to do".

He also reunited with renowned artist Azael Langa, whom he had previously known at university. "He started to tell me about all the endless possibilities that we can have as artists if we put our minds and hearts into it. He gave me a piece of charcoal, but I told him I don't do charcoal, I'm a pencil guy, I use oil paints for superrealism."

Langa said, "Do the opposite of what you normally do." In hindsight, Mnisi realises that it was a process of

coming full circle. "As a child growing up on my mother's side in the village, after they cooked, I would go to the ashes to find charcoal to draw with. It was my first love."

He returned to the visceral experience of painting with his thumbs, and started creating impressionistic works radically different to what he had done before. Since then, he also incorporates tools like rubber brushes in his process.

He recalls his first encounter with Jewish life as a small boy in Middelburg. "I remember as a kid going into the city, and I saw these men dressed up in black suits, coats, and hats. So I asked my grandfather, 'Who are those people?' And my grandfather said, 'Those are the Jews.'" I said to him, 'The Jews from the Bible?' and he said, 'Yes, those are the descendants of the Jews from the Bible.' That day, I vowed that I would become friends with a Jewish boy because I was still a little boy, but I never did. And now that I'm a grown man, guess what? I meet two brothers [Jassinowsky and his brother] and they have become my friends."

When Jassinowsky sent Mnisi Psalm 121 as inspiration for the exhibition, Mnisi not only recognised it as "scripture I used to read to my mother", but took it as a deeper "subconscious, spiritual" sign. It was telling me "to lift up my eyes". I thought back to the conversation with my grandfather telling me, 'Those are Jews.' Those Jews dressed in monochrome, and my art is monochrome. I could see the art before I even started."

He dreams some day of "mixing this project with my own African culture. Imagine putting a Jewish guy next to a Swazi guy: one dressed in his Jewish regalia, the other in his Swazi wear. They are sitting together. That would be a beautiful piece."

It's an image that evokes Jassinowsky's reflections about the deeper meaning behind their cross-cultural interaction: "A founding tenant of Judaism is to look outwards and reach outwards. It's a reminder that we can't exist in isolation. We have to engage. We have to reach out and people on the outside need to reach in."

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A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

## Backlash against Israel supporters undemocratic and disturbing

One of the aspects of the recent Israel-Hamas conflict that should concern anyone committed to fundamental democratic values in South Africa was the disturbing extent to which even the most mild defences of Israel were met with intimidation, threats, and vitriolic abuse.

In a democratic society, it's legitimate to disagree, however robustly, with such viewpoints, but the backlash against anyone – usually although not always Jewish – who declined to toe the anti-Israel line went far beyond this. Merely to raise the issue of, for example, Israel's right to self-defence was to invite a storm of insults and inflammatory accusations which all too frequently went beyond mere denigration to incitement to cause harm, including advocating physical violence and economic harm in the form of demands that "heretics" be dismissed from their employ and boycott initiatives be initiated.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies has devoted much effort both to exposing and denouncing these totalitarian tactics and to addressing some of the more egregious instances of intimidation that have arisen. One concerns the orchestrated campaign of vilification that a group calling itself

the Redhill Parents and Alumni Concerns Committee conducted against Redhill School after its principal, alarmed by the hostility and division that the issue was generating within the student body (not least through the school's own WhatsApp discussion platforms being spammed by anti-Israel propaganda) ruled that the debate be taken off campus. In response, an ugly demonstration was held outside the school, the principal himself was the target of an online hate campaign, and pressure was brought on Redhill to reject a young Muslim peace activist as an on-campus speaker in favour of one of the most extreme anti-Israel voices currently active, Ronnie Kasrils.

In a letter published in *The Star* this week in response to a paid advertisement insisting on Kasrils being invited to speak, Gauteng Council Chairperson Professor Karen Milner condemned how Redhill was "being bullied into choosing toxicity and vicious hatred over peace activism". Thankfully, the school remained firm, and the original panellists spoke.

The previous week, Kasrils published a column in the *Sunday Times* that even by his rock-bottom standards was venomous and defamatory. Combining the standard demonisation of Israel with vicious asides



### ABOVE BOARD

Shaun Zagnoev

concerning Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein and the Jewish religion itself, it resulted in our major communal bodies taking the unusual step of publishing a joint response by our Jewish communal leadership groups (see the Board's Facebook and website) in the same paper.

Not content with demonising Israel, Kasrils "breached all standards of civil discourse" by crassly impugning the integrity of a senior representative of the Jewish faith community and by "propagating a particularly obnoxious form of religious bigotry". Typically, Kasrils employed the classic totalitarian tactic of portraying those who disagreed with him not just of being wrong, but of being "so morally twisted as to make anything they might have to say entirely unworthy of notice".

In addition to responding in the public arena, the Board has been engaging with various members of our community who have experienced cyber bullying and other forms of harassment, and extending to them whatever support we can in dealing with these attacks.

We will continue to do so over the coming weeks while also following up on cases of intimidation involving a clear-cut infringement of the target's civil rights.

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

This column is paid for by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

## Lighting up Oneg Shabbat at KDHSVP



King David High School Victory Park matric girls light candles at Kabbalat Shabbat on Friday, 4 June, during an Oneg Shabbat (Joy of Sabbath) session during their break.

### Letters

#### ISRAEL'S NEW GOVERNMENT A MODEL OF DIVERSITY

In contrast to the Palestinian Authority (PA) which last held elections in January 2006, and yet again cancelled elections scheduled for 22 May 2021, Israel's vibrant democracy has produced the broadest coalition of eight political parties in its history.

What is particularly noticeable about Israel's new government is that it excludes all Jewish religious parties, and includes a Palestinian Arab party, Ra'am, led by Mansour Abbas. While Ra'am recognises Israel and aims for a two-state solution to the intractable Palestinian/Israeli conflict, it adheres to the Islamic movement, which advocates for Islam in Israel and Sharia law.

Having an Islamist party inside government deals a decisive blow to those denigrators of Israel who accuse it of "ethnic cleansing" and "Judaisation". While Israel is inclusive of Islam and religious freedom and even accepts a party which propagates Islam, the PA denies the right of even one Jew to live in any future Palestinian state.

Ra'am will serve the interests of Arab society,

in particular helping to address the housing shortage of the rapidly growing Palestinian and Bedouin populations, where three new towns and cities will be recognised in the Negev region in southern Israel. Budgets for development aid and improvements to infrastructure to Arabs exceed R265 billion, which is about 20% of South Africa's total budget. In addition, more than 12 billion has been pledged to fight organised crime and violence in Arab society.

Israeli Arabs play an active role in Israeli society, and are well represented as high court judges, medical doctors, scientists, diplomats, and even as officers in the border police and military. Arabs comprise at least 20% of the student complement at the best Israeli universities, and their education levels are higher than any other Arab country.

Israel is truly a model for intercommunal relations between diverse religious and ethnic groups. I wish the new government "long live" and great success!

– Ben Levitas, Cape Town

#### EMIGRATION LEAVES ME EMPTY

How I miss my son and grandchildren!

Does time heal wounds? When my youngest son made a crucial decision at the end of 2020 to take up a position in Liverpool in the United Kingdom, I was devastated. He has degrees in architecture, town planning, and an MBA and a PDM. Working for a development company that tries to upgrade parts of Johannesburg, for which he was praised, it was decided that he would be the one to be retrenched when his contract expired. He was the only white person in the department. Doug has always been determined to uplift communities and now, I suppose, in Liverpool he will pursue his aims.

His wonderful wife, Lindsey, and children Anna,

11, and Tom, 9, were faced with the huge task of packing up their modest home because Doug left two months before them and had already undergone quarantine. Their much-loved Yorkie, Felix, will also emigrate once they move into their new home in Liverpool. Doug continues to pay his erstwhile employee, Sibongile, although she has found a good job. The children were greeted warmly by the progressive Jewish community in Liverpool, and now attend King David in that city where they seem to have made friends.

I face icy loneliness when driving past their former home, Johannesburg schools, and nursery school daily. I desperately miss the lift schemes, playing eye

spy, and trips to our favourite coffee shops.

It has been said that if you want to move forward, it's best not to look back. Somehow, there is an emptiness inside of me in spite of rationalising that Doug and Lindsey's move is for the good of their family.

I have two older grandchildren in this city. I love and admire them enormously, and hope to teach the younger of the two, Natalie, how to cook some of my favourite dishes during the July holidays. She asked me if I would.

When the pandemic ends and we can visit, I'll be the first one on the plane.

– Margot Cohen, Johannesburg

#### REVERSING ISRAEL HATRED STARTS WITH YOUNG MINDS

There's a solution to the problem of Israel haters. It's long term, but successful. Let me give you an example.

In the late 1950s, Prime Minister David Ben Gurion met Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of Germany somewhere in Europe. It was a secret meeting. The two statesmen had decided that the Jews and Germans somehow had to overcome the tragedy of the Holocaust. Various ideas were discussed, and they parted with the understanding that they would meet again and come up with the solution.

After Ben Gurion returned to Israel, the story broke that he had met Adenauer, and there was widespread unhappiness among survivors of the concentration camps. Demonstrations were held and demands were made that Ben Gurion should resign.

So, Ben Gurion went back to Adenauer, and told him there was much unhappiness

among many Israelis, and there was a generation of Jews who would never forgive nor forget. It was decided then to start reconciliation with young children who had no knowledge of the past. There was an ongoing exchange of young people and over the years, the system had been so successful, that by the mid-1970s there were more tourists in Israel from Germany than from any other country. Lufthansa became the airline of choice for Israelis. Israeli companies bought German machinery and technology. The system which started with small children became very successful.

We have to implement a carbon copy of the successful Israel/German experiment in South Africa. We need to influence young minds. We should have exhibitions at black schools about how Israel helps Africa and the world at large. Let children see for themselves what Israel does.

They don't know anything about Israel. Top matric students should be offered bursaries/scholarships to study at Israeli institutions. Let South African black students get Israeli degrees or diplomas. We have to invest in the youth. It's a long term proposition, but the current generation, particularly of grown-ups, is a lost cause. We need to control the narrative, and give the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement a free pass.

We need as many people as possible on Israel's side. We have enough enemies.

Another idea is to print a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly advert in a local newspaper telling all the readers about the latest inventions/innovations and good-news stories coming out of Israel.

At the moment, we don't control the narrative. Let's do something about it.

– Sonny Myerson, Cape Town

#### ANC ACCUSATIONS ABOUT ISRAELI RACISM A CASE OF THE POT CALLING THE KETTLE

Let's take a deep look at apartheid Israel. Israel will have an Israeli Palestinian minister in the new coalition, eight Israeli Palestinian members of parliament, an Israeli Palestinian party, eight female ministers, and a female Ethiopian minister. The new government is one third Mizrahi origin (dark skinned), with 44 ministers and deputy ministers, with 17 ministers not of the ruling party (old government). Three totally different political parties make up the new government. Is this not democracy

at work? South Africa has a total of 61 ministers and deputy ministers; only one white minister, Barbara Creecy; only one white deputy minister, John Jeffery; with only one minister not from the ruling party. Which is the more democratic government?

Does Israel practice job reservation or to put it in modern terminology, broad-based black economic empowerment (BBBEE)? Nothing of the sort, as Israeli Palestinians are represented in every

aspect of civil life from government, the judiciary, commerce, and industrial activity. No BBBEE scorecards are necessary for any position in Israel. No racial profiling for any state or private appointments is permitted.

Every civil and municipal department is staffed by Palestinian and Israeli personnel. Israeli Palestinians serve in the police and military at all levels up to staff officer, regardless of gender.

South Africa practices a stringent policy of affirmative action (a euphemism for

blacks only) to the prejudice of minority groups. Racial profiling is practiced in government employment policy. So, who are the racists?

Please will the African National Congress (ANC) care to comment on some of the above facts.

Does anyone remember the ANC government ever criticising its sister African country, Egypt, which shares a common border with Gaza, for destroying a 10km strip of housing along the border for "security" reasons. There was indeed a

deafening silence from all quarters.

Again, the ANC government is at pains to condemn the eviction of six houses in the Sheikh Jarrah area where people had been illegally occupying the houses in defiance of a court order. But what do the ANC's "Red Ants" do to whole communities who occupy land illegally? Is it a question of the pot calling the kettle black?

We live in a hypocritical world, but there is hypocrisy and "uber-hypocrisy". Guess where the ANC fits?

– Allan Wolman, Israel



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# 'G-d isn't playing around'

**INNER VOICE**  
Howard Feldman



So, there we were in the desert waiting to enter the land of Israel, when the spies returned from their reconnaissance mission. They had news which we didn't like. And, because we complained, G-d, who wasn't having a particularly good day, decided that for the next while, we would be destined to wander. And while we did that, said G-d, who wasn't happy at all, the older generation would die out and only then would He allow us to enter the promised land.

There is something biblical about the COVID-19 pandemic. Something unnatural and suggestive of a plague from another realm. It has felt even more like this over the past few weeks with the older members of the community being particularly hard hit. Day after day, we are assailed by news of the passing of friends and their parents and each time, the shock seems to be less but the weariness a lot greater. With each death, our spirits sink lower, and we wonder what our world will look like on the other side of this.

A Facebook advert posted by one of the kosher restaurants in Johannesburg as follows: "Winter Warmer. Ready to eat meal - serves 3-4 (also great for shiva house meal or family in isolation/quarantine)" reflects the gravity of the situation. No doubt more than it intended to. Whether the post was in good, bad, or

no taste at all, is irrelevant, but it does indicate the need and the demand. We're a community that's alternating between quarantine and shiva. And we need to eat.

The situation in Gauteng is grave. Hospitals are on divert, beds are scarce, and schools are trying the best as they can to remain open. Netcare has announced the suspension of visitors to protect patients, and educators are forced to decide daily which grades and classes need to be quarantined so as to protect the environment. Daily shul services are now filled with those saying kaddish for lost parents, and it's hard to keep track of the bereavements.

As a friend put it, "G-d isn't playing around."

I write this having returned from yet another COVID-19 funeral. Yet another passing of a person who seemed to be in their prime, who had children, who although adults, are too young to be mourning. And a wife far too young to be a widow. My fingers are tired and my heart is weary from sending WhatsApps to people asking if they would prefer me not to attend a

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service because of the numbers and regulations. And although I might process the world through words, I find that I have none that can be any comfort.

Not to the bereaved and not to myself.

The list of names that I include in my prayers is too long. And then just like that, it's too short. We're living through a time that is infused with loss and punctuated with sorrow. We're seeing those a few years older than us disappear before our eyes. And we seem unable to

stop it.

The only thing that we can do is to be as cautious and careful as possible. We have tested the alternative, and the results speak for themselves. We might not understand why this is happening and why our generation has been chosen to live through it. But I do know that we need to introspect, reconnect with faith, and accept that we don't control this world.

G-d, it seems, isn't playing around.

## ORT Jet breakfast creates supportive network for business owners

Author, lecturer, and facilitator David Zidel told an ORT Jet networking session on 21 May that businesses should uplift one another, saying, "Even if someone can help you or your business a little way; a little way is further than where you were."

Zidel told business owners and entrepreneurs at the breakfast session, which emphasised embracing the new, that a business needs three key things. "First, you need your bread and butter. This is an income that helps you to survive the month. Second, your gem. This is something that makes you ten times the

income of your bread and butter. Third, your rainmaker. As the name states, it pours with income. This endeavour could make 100 times your gem or bread and butter."

The COVID-19 pandemic makes it hard for community members to support each other, but ORT Jet's breakfast created a wonderfully warm atmosphere for face-to-face networking, while adhering to the protocols in place.

The tenacious individuals present are refocusing their strengths to adapt themselves and their businesses, with the assistance from ORT Jet every step of the way.



The breakfast attendees

## UJW sewing class graduates with style

The Union of Jewish Women (UJW)'s sewing school recently graduated its February 2021 class. At the graduation, each graduate wore outfits and displayed items they had made on the course.

The UJW sewing school was established in 2010 to help alleviate South Africa's most pressing problems: a dearth of skills and poverty. Since then, it has graduated more than 80 students. Some have found employment, and others are working for themselves producing items for sale.

The February 2021 class came to the course

hardly able to switch on a sewing machine, but not even strict cleaning protocols and social distancing slowed them down.



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