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SA Jews face vitriolic antisemitism online

TALI FEINBERG

ike Jews around the world, Cape Town business owner Aimee-Leigh Koff was horrified at the wave of misinformation online as Israel was subjected to a rain of rockets from Hamas. So, she wrote a Facebook post about how Israel has the right to defend herself. In response, she was subjected to a torrent of antisemitism and abuse.

"The most racist and ruthless nation is Israel those dogs. May G-d send a decease (sic) to those thiefs (sic) and may they die in the gutters. And you my dear may the skin from your face peel off. Remember Hitler left a few Jews in the world to show how evil Jews are. You Jewish animals forget that Jews were not wanted all over ... Jews are known to be stingy and greedy people," were just some of the comments that a Mahida Khan Moolla wrote to Koff.

Abdul Gafaa Sadick chose to subject her to the age-old antisemitic trope of the blood libel: "We don't support you or your products made with the blood of innocent children and babies," he wrote.

These were just some of the hundreds of messages sent to Koff by South Africans across various platforms. They hounded her with antisemitic messages, verbal abuse, and calls to boycott her business, which sells beauty products. They also pressurised a large online retailer to stop selling her products. A few days later, they went after her sister, sharing her profile on public platforms. The abuse was so bad, Koff got a message from a concerned citizen saying, "You must be careful ... you could be in danger."

"It was extremely traumatic," Koff told the SA Jewish Report. "I was scared for my safety and felt helpless. I was scared to go out, and still am."

She has since consulted lawyers, a counsellor, and private investigators. "It was extremely stressful for my family and my boyfriend, even though he isn't Jewish.

"I have broad shoulders. I'm stronger than them," she says. She doesn't regret posting about Israel, but does regret that her privacy settings weren't on. "Why do I need to feel scared about being proud to be Jewish?" she asks. She says she is still being cyber-bullied and getting hate mail on a daily basis.

Medical student at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), Dylan Rendel, was taken aback when a fellow medical student posted on the class Telegram group encouraging classmates to go to an anti-Israel protest at the Israeli embassy. Rendel asked that the group "refrain from posting any political related things on this group which may be sensitive to others on here. This is a class group for medicine."

From that point on, he was subjected to a campaign of abuse and defamation by fellow medical student. In response, someone called Imraan Mansoor said he wanted to punch Rendel. An anonymous Instagram account sent Rendel a private message saying, "I know that you're currently studying at Wits, and I just want you to know on behalf of MANY that are in solidarity with Palestine, be careful when you get into your car, we know your number plate."

With the assistance of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), Rendel opened a case with the South African Police Service to investigate who sent the threat. He says that Wits has been extremely supportive, shutting down the Telegram chat and fully investigating the matter.

Cape Town estate agent Lisa Osrin added a "frame" to her Facebook profile expressing support for Israel but online trolls decided to attack her. The frame said, "I stand

vith Israel".

"I got a lot of hate messages, but it's not only me," says Osrin. "I got a million messages from people saying the same thing happened to them. Teachers in Johannesburg – who teach Muslim kids – have put up frames supporting Israel and got really nasty messages."

One Zakariya Baker sent an email with the subject line "conduct of employee", supposedly "reporting" Osrin's support of Israel. The same person shared a photo of Osrin with the caption, "Here is a South African who openly is expressing support for an apartheid state. Do you miss the good old days? For anyone interested, this person is an agent for [property company]. Do with this information what you will."

Osrin says that while the experience was "unnerving", she isn't worried about her safety. "I haven't seen any Jews behave in the same manner." She says her workplace has been "100% supportive", and that her

non-Jewish boss also added a frame supporting Israel.

Photographer Chad Nathan shared a balanced post about Israel on Instagram, written by a friend, and immediately faced a backlash online. "Let's make sure he gets the attention he seeks. We might not be able to get rid of them just yet over there. But here we could!" wrote Abdullah Sonday, sharing an image of Nathan's profile.

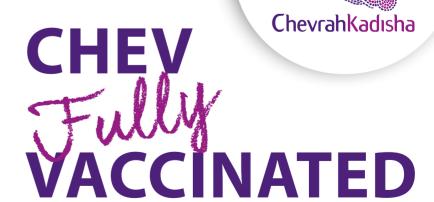
Says SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn, "We know that whenever there is a crisis or war in Israel, diaspora Jewry is affected. There was a significant increase in antisemitism in South Africa during the Gaza conflicts in 2008/2009, 2014, and 2018. I have no doubt we will see this trend in our 2021 statistics.

"They are using intimidation as their tool of choice," says Kahn. "We have been assisting students at schools, university students, professionals, and business people who have been subjected to toxic

Continued on page 14>>







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| Starts | Ends | |
|--------|-------|----------------|
| 17:06 | 17:58 | Johannesburg |
| 17:29 | 18:23 | Cape Town |
| 16:47 | 17:40 | Durban |
| 17:08 | 18:00 | Bloemfontein |
| 17:00 | 17:54 | Port Elizabeth |
| 16:53 | 17:46 | East London |

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"Israeli imperialists are planning to take our land," says Jessie Duarte general Jessie

NICOLA MILTZ

"They [Israel] have to wake up. Now!" shouted African National Congress (ANC) secretarygeneral Jessie Duarte at an ANC picket at the Israeli embassy in Pretoria on Tuesday morning,

"If we don't stop this imperialism in Israel, one day they will move into Africa and start dispossessing our land. They will become the next imperialists of the world. They are getting ready for this," she told the 100 odd people around her sporting ANC t-shirts or flying the ruling party's flag.

Duarte, speaking to a crowd of supporters from the ANC and its alliance partners, called for the Israeli embassy in Pretoria to pack up and leave the country following Israel's 11-day

defensive campaign against Gaza.

In an off-thecuff tirade, she mentioned three times that neither she nor the ANC was antisemitic, saying, "And I want to make it clear that we aren't against people of the Jewish religion."

A bit later, she said, "Our movement isn't against and I want to repeat it because Israel has already said that I am antisemitic. I can just say that that is the most stupid thing to say."

And just in case no one heard, she repeated it again, "Tomorrow, they'll have in the newspaper how antisemitic we are. We aren't antisemitic."

Describing what was happening in

Israel as "genocide", Duarte called for a complete break in all diplomatic ties with Israel and supported the boycott of Israeli goods.

Duarte said South Africans who sent their children to serve in the

Israeli Defense Forces were "part of the problem" in the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and "should stop".

She was quoted saying, "We cannot be friendly with people who are genocidal."

In a tweet by journalist Govan Whittles, Duarte was quoted as saying, "Our defence industry must stop importing bits of defence technology from the state of Israel".

On behalf of the party, she called on Israel to "stop its campaign of murder and atrocities against the Palestinian people". She accused Israel of not being a "democratic society", describing it as a "military junta". The party called on the United Nations to put "relentless pressure on Israel".

Reading from a memorandum with a set of demands, Duarte said Israel must recognise the rights of the people of Palestine to their land and freedom.

She said it wasn't enough to downgrade the embassy in Pretoria, it should close. "Go home, go talk about what you are doing wrong, invite us, we will come and talk to you and help you to bring about peace in both Israel and [for] the Palestinians. But please go home."

After listing the ANC's demands, she gave the Israeli embassy 14 days to respond saying, "Wishful thinking. These arrogant people will not even accept this memorandum."

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies described Duarte's attack on Israel as inflammatory.

It said for someone who holds the highest executive office in the ruling party, Duarte "should know better than to use inflammatory and irresponsible language at such a volatile

"Duarte threatened to storm the Israeli

embassy, which would be in clear violation of all international diplomatic regulations. Furthermore, her bizarre claims that Israel is becoming a global imperialist are ludicrous. This delusional and paranoid statement is embarrassing for a woman in such a key position. Her numerous references to genocide are scandalously false, and make a mockery of victims of real genocide," the Board said.

Duarte

In reference to Duarte's insistence that neither she nor the ANC were antisemitic, the Board quoted *Hamlet*, saying "The lady doth protest too much, methinks," summing up Duarte's rant outside the embassy.

"One wonders why Duarte needs to keep stating this? For all her protestations, the theme of manipulative Jewish power, particularly in the financial sphere, comes through all too clearly, however much disguised by code words like 'Zionist' and 'Israeli'," it said.

South African Communist Party official Solly Mapaila called for protests by workers to continue until the Israeli embassy was closed down and trade ties with Israel completely severed

ANC Gauteng Chairperson David Makhura said the Palestinians were a stateless people, a nation in search of nationhood experiencing apartheid aggression every day. He told reporters, "We aren't picketing against the Jews. There are many Jews who understand that this is a question of justice."

Former Israeli ambassador to South Africa, Arthur Link, tweeted, "Can you imagine what a great place South Africa could be if @MTANC 'leaders' like Jessie Duarte cared half as much about vaccines, fighting corruption, job creation, and education as they do about gathering a few dozen people to toyi toyi against Israel."



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Torah Thought

We have a responsibility to be inclusive

ow many times have you heard this sentence (and be honest): "He/ she is lovely, smart ... but he/she doesn't look Jewish."

Our weekly portion, B'haalotecha, teaches us about Miriam and Aaron as they speak out against Moses' life choices: "He married a Cushite woman." (Numbers 12:1) Our sages identify this woman as either Tzipporah, Moses' wife in Exodus, or a different wife from Egypt. In any case, the argument is clear: the non-Israelite woman is an outsider, she looks different, and how she could even think that she is worthy of marrying into our exclusive club? We don't know if it was her religion, skin colour, or some other "fault", but this "otherness" is too much for Miriam and Aaron to accept.

G-d punished Miriam with leprosy and during her struggle with this disease, she learned about vulnerability and what it was like to be banished from the camp for seven days. A week is a short time, but for Miriam, it was long enough to get a new

"Looking Jewish" isn't what makes us a Jewish people. We must seek truth in our world, and not be afraid to live according to those truths. And we mustn't be afraid to speak up. Our responsibility is to include, not judge, all who wish to be part of our community.

I often think about the power of language. No less than 12 of the 44 lines of the Al Chet confessional prayer recited on Yom Kippur refer to sins relating to the misuse of words. Equally, I have all too often seen the pain of those who have felt excluded from the Jewish community.

In the world we live in, our choices matter. We all have the power to change someone's life. And it's that critical choice of being inclusive rather than exclusive that's available to us all.

Personal change and growth can be so scary, that sometimes people would rather be stuck in something bad than go forward into the future. We might think of a

Rabbi Julia Margolis, **Beit Luria Progressive Shul**

person stuck in a bad work situation, or an abusive relationship, or an addiction, or

unhealthy grief, even though it's "Egypt", a place of unhappiness, sometimes it's more comfortable than the hard personal choices G-d lays before us.

Miriam and Aaron had trouble with this. They were alarmed by this Cushite woman, and spoke out against her, but G-d admonished them for it. Moses was the forgiving one. He prayed for his sister to be healed from her leprosy. He understood that our community needs more forgiveness and openness, more empathy and acceptance to get us to the promised land. This is why Moses is considered our greatest prophet.

May each of us shine light on one another, ennobling ourselves as we strive to introduce understanding to a world that prefers to look the other way. May each of us recognise our capacity to touch another soul with love and inclusiveness.



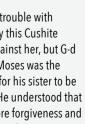
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Principal targeted in Redhill's anti-Israel flare-up

NICOLA MILTZ

oburg's multi-faith, multi-cultural Redhill School this week attempted to pick up the pieces after angry pro-Palestinian alumni and students attacked the principal for trying to calm rising tension around the Middle East conflict.

Though there is chit chat between classes and sport and extra mural activities continue just like the news cycle - which has moved onto other things - the school's executive head, Joseph Gerassi, his staff, and students are still reeling from a torrid week which threatened to tear the forward-thinking school apart.

Professor Karen Milner of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies said some of the Jewish parents were justifiably frazzled. "This was a big event in our community. It's an important issue because it brought children into the conflict at school level, and had an impact on their lives," she said.

"Parents were worried about physical altercations breaking out as well as their children's sense of psychological safety and sense of inclusion at the school," she said.

There was a general sense of disquiet on campus as children processed last week's pro-Palestinian protest outside the school during the early morning drop-off on Thursday, 20 May. Dozens of young adults descended on the school dressed in pro-Palestinian garb, some wearing old school blazers, waving flags, and chanting popular anti-Israel slogans.

"From the river to the sea, Palestine shall be free" was repeated often. This popular Palestinian slogan rejects the right of Israel to exist and calls for all of the land of Israel to be given to Palestinians. The slogan is considered an insensitive, hurtful anti-Jewish battle

The co-ed private school took a beating as alumni shoved the school's progressive headmaster under the school bus, accusing him of shutting down free speech. He denied that was his intention, and said he did what he believed was the right thing to do.

"As an educator, I have the right to de-escalate what I might see becoming a major bullying problem. If I don't do that and a child is badly bullied or hurt, I could have a parent say that I could have foreseen it. Then I become

While on leave last week, Gerassi was informed by senior staff and parents that there was a build-up of emotion within the school as tension over the conflict in the Middle East reached fever pitch. Some children were being harassed. Parents, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of being harassed themselves, said some children felt alienated and intimidated by incessant social-media posts from friends and

"Some parents were writing to me saying that things were starting to build up, and children were saying things that were cruel to one another," said Gerassi

Foreseeing that the situation might escalate out of control, Gerassi sent a letter to his staff and parent body.

He wrote that it was an "incredibly contentious and divisive issue", saying that he felt it was his obligation to ensure the conflict didn't also tear people apart within the Redhill community.

"Let me say that I don't believe that this issue shouldn't be discussed and debated," his letter read. "However, given the emotions currently surrounding this crisis and the age of our children, I don't believe there is anything to be gained from having them argue and debate with each other.

"At such a sensitive time, emotions tend to run high and assumptions tend to be made about people based on their religious and ethnic backgrounds. Making such assumptions is dangerous, can create divisions within our community, and more importantly, fragment friendship groups that have taken years to build."

He urged families to encourage their children not to discuss the issue at school

Anti-Israel protest outside Redhill School

His intention, he told the SA Jewish Report, was to

The letter sparked outrage among some parents and

their children. It was shared, and spread quickly online.

In a flash, the school's untarnished reputation was

dragged through the twisting tunnels of hate on Twitter.

One former alumni, Kelly-Jo Bluen, tweeted, "As a Jewish

former head girl of @RedhillSchool, I am absolutely

appalled by this virulent Zionist, racist, antisemitic

incursion on freedom of speech at the school and

policing of students. All alumni should immediately

withdraw financial support from the school as a start."

Gerassi's online presence and every past utterance

he has made has been scrutinised for potential bias. A

protest against censorship was called for by the alumni,

many of whom belong to the Wits Palestine Solidarity

to the press out there, not to other schools, and not to

the government. I was writing this after I had loads of

parents asking me for advice," Gerassi said

"The context of my letter has to be taken into account. I was writing first and foremost to my community, not

wait until safe spaces could be created at the school

which would enable children to debate openly and

respectfully with one another.

That was mild.

Committee.



"All I was asking for was time to be able to bring in specialists who could work with our kids on creating safe spaces where children would be able to have an opinion but there would also be facilitators to moderate if things got out of control," he said.

"It's all very well for journalists to think every child at school is a bastion of maturity who can sit down with their sandwich at break and have a well thought out argument. Those of us who have been in education know that doesn't take place. Not when you have these kinds

> One parent who wished to remain anonymous said the alumni had another agenda. "It was clear that this issue was hijacked and there was always another agenda. It was a pro-Palestinian protest by young adults more intent on demonising Israel than calling for freedom of speech."

fact that he was neutral and unbiased was held against him. He was trying to diffuse a divisive and emotional situation." A bruised and vulnerable Gerassi said, "I'm ok. I've managed to get past the hurt of this becoming personal. There were a lot of attacks on me personally, you get through that, and you realise the most important thing is

everything would have been fine," said one Jewish

parent who also wished to remain anonymous, "The

What hurt him the most was when he tried to reach out to students and alumni - many of whom he knew very well and had close relationships with - to engage with them before the protest took place, and they refused

Redhill, and I have to get things back together again."

"I was terribly disappointed in that. When you purport to believe so much in healthy debate and you've been at a school that has had so much debate, surely the first thing you do is phone Mr Gerassi and engage on the

Gerassi said that before mid-term break, the school would hold a full-day workshop of presentations and dialogue by experts in the field.

"The presentations will educate our students on the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as well as explain the different narratives and perspectives. Students will be given the opportunity to ask questions in a safe space and make comments in an environment that will allow for healthy debate and respectful engagement and which will be mediated by experienced facilitators."

One parent said his children had become prouder to be Jewish, and had started to wear their Star of David necklaces. "We chose not to send our kids to school on the day of the protest, it was all too much for them," he

"If it became heated, they weren't equipped to defend themselves amongst the anger and name calling. School might be back to 'normal' but there is a lot of damage this has torn friendships apart," he said.

One Jewish child who wished to remain anonymous told the SA Jewish Report, "Kids were discussing this issue which didn't directly affect their lives and which they will forget about in a week or two. But what they didn't realise was how the antisemitic rhetoric affected some of their Jewish classmates, and that lasts longer than a week

Understanding the passion of youth, and in spite of the hurt, Gerassi said he would always be available to chat to the same students who were angry with him. "I will always hold my hand out to them," he said.



The posters screamed, "End the occupation", "Boycott apartheid Israel", "Condemn the genocide", "Zionism is racism". There were one or two which alluded to free speech, which said, "We will not be silent."

Being Jewish himself didn't help Gerassi either. Nor did it help that he had been interviewed by this newspaper after winning an Absa Jewish Achiever Award. This was added to posts online. So too was the fact that he had previously been headmaster at King David Victory

"Had Gerassi come out strongly in support of Palestine,

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4 SA JEWISH REPORT 28 May – 4 June 2021

Anti-Israel protesters want Zionists kicked out of SA

MIRAH I ANGER

Johannesburg and South Africa like the Nazis were defeated, a speaker at a pro-Palestinian protest outside the offices of the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) declared on Sunday.

"We are saying Zionists and the [SA] Zionist Federation, there is no space for you here in Johannesburg. You must get out. There is no space for you in South Africa. Like the Nazis were kicked out, the Zionists must be kicked out."

So said Johannesburg-based attorney Ziyaad Ebrahim Patel, speaking at the protest organised by Voice for Justice and the Palestine Solidarity

SAZF National Chairperson Rowan Polovin said this call was the latest "in a long line of provocation". It "wasn't surprising" that "BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] leaders antisemitically call for a South African Jewish body to be 'shut down' alongside their calls for shutting down the Jewish state," Polovin said.

Patel's call, filled with hatred on the other side of a wall from a gathering of Jewish people holding a pro-Israel peace rally, was greeted with repeated chants of "Zionism is racism" by the crowd of hundreds of anti-Israel supporters.

The rally in support of Israel organised by the SAZF was held behind the walls of the Beyachad grounds while the protesters stood outside. When the tops of Israeli flags being held by supporters on the one side were seen by the pro-Palestinian camp, it made them angry. "Don't hide! Come out!" cried supporters, with a voice adding repeatedly, "Jou ma se poes!"

Inside the Beyachad premises, the Israel rally, attended by almost 200 supporters, at times



drowned out the speakers on the Palestinian side while playing Israeli and South African music.

However, Patel went on to insist that the protesters supported Hamas and wanted more attacks on Israel. "We will send those rockets to Ashkelon," he urged to huge cheers from the crowd. "We will not be apologetic for each and every rocket of resistance that goes to Ashkelon and Tel Aviv because you are murdering our children in Gaza. We see our children being taken out of the rubble and we see entire families being desecrated and destroyed. Our holy mosques are disintegrated. You come with your arrogance in Al-Aqsa [mosque] with your boots of oppression."

He said Hamas represented the "resistance of Palestine" before leading chants of "Viva Hamas, viva the resistance!" Earlier the crowd also repeatedly chanted, "Shut it down, shut it down!" in reference to the Israeli embassy in South Africa. Banners held included those

region, but what it wanted was peace.

The pro-Israel peace rally was organised after the pro-Palestinian one was declared. Valiallah said the discontent raised by the decision to demonstrate outside the SAZF office showed that it was "effective". She said while supporters had made a plan to work around the other demonstration, "we honestly wish they didn't pull this move because we are here to execute and exercise our Section 17 rights, and this is honestly disrespectful because they are trying to meet us with violence".

Asked if they had experienced any violence from the Israeli side, she said, "not at this moment because we had to re-root our protest and re-plan what our action was going to be".

Another organiser of the pro-Palestinian march, who asked to be identified only by his



declaring "Ctrl Alt Delete Israel", "Israehell", and "one Holocaust does not justify another".

Patel also called for any South Africans serving in the Israel Defense Forces to be tried as war criminals. "We want all of those dockets sitting at the National Prosecuting Authority to be investigated, and for war criminals to be prosecuted in South Africa and in the International Criminal Court."

In terms of the hoped outcome for the region, Patel declared, "We talk about solutions – there is only one solution in Palestine: a one-state solution." first name, Zaid, said that as a Palestinian himself, he knew the situation on the ground. Hamas was resistance and "resistance isn't terrorism. Terrorism is when you bring terror into hearts, and that's what Israel is doing.

"Hamas isn't using human shields. It has nowhere to go. There is a wall around it. Everything is operating underground."

Zaid said, "We don't have a problem with Judaism. I have a lot of Jewish friends." However, Palestinians need to have political power. "You can't have two governments and one state; it doesn't work. We can live with Jews, but we



Justice, spoke to the SA Jewish Report affirming
Patel's call for the SAZF to be shut down. "We
are calling for the closing of the [SA] Zionist
Federation – an organisation like this that
supports supremacy, that is so blatantly in
support of an ethnic cleansing state, doesn't
have a place in our constitutional democracy,"

She said her organisation defined Zionism "as elitism: it's the same thing that Hitler was trying to do with the Aryan race: we see over and over again. It's white supremacy, it's any sort of supremacy".

she said.

Valiallah declared that the demonstration was about human rights, saying, "It's not a Muslim versus Jewish protest."

At the rally, cries of "Allahu Akbar!" (G-d is great) were chanted consistently.

Valiallah said as a new organisation and one founded by the youth, Voice for Justice couldn't offer a "concrete solution" to conflict in the

can't live with
the government
of Zionism."
Although
the organisers
originally
arrived early
to talk to the
Johannesburg
metro police
department,
and negotiated
to have 200
demonstrators

in Elray Road, more than

double that number were allowed, including children and babies in prams.

Lior Keinan, Israel Ambassador to South Africa, said that the facts of the conflict had been obfuscated in the way the world was reporting on the matter. "People tried to create an alternative reality that Israel wasn't protecting itself – that suddenly one day, Israel woke up in the morning and started to kill people. There is a reason why in court you have to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Bafana Modise, a representative for South African Friends of Israel, said it offered its support as Christians to have "one voice against the hatred in the world and also to reclaim our apartheid narrative which was sold in Durban [at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism].

"Peace won't happen if we continue to demonise Israel," he said. "Hamas isn't the way. Palestinians shouldn't be used as war proxies; they deserve better."





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What you need to know about vaccinations

ODINION

n the first week of the national COVID-19 vaccine rollout, more than 117 000 people were vaccinated, with many of our senior citizens receiving their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine. Gratifyingly, many residential facilities for the elderly, the most vulnerable of the vulnerable, were successfully vaccinated. Families are breathing collective sighs of relief, some even celebrating their perceived immunity. Do I really still need to wear a mask and take COVID-19 precautions?

Here are key examples of the questions I have been asked over the past week.

- 1. Does being vaccinated mean that I can now dispense with COVID-19 precautions? Unequivocally not. All the COVID-19 precautionary measures must still be strictly adhered to for several reasons. First, the immune response elicited by the vaccine will kick in about two weeks after vaccination but is really properly effective only after four weeks. Second - and very importantly - no vaccine is 100% effective. The effectiveness of the Pfizer vaccine against the dominant South African variant, B.1.351, is projected to be about 65% for mild or moderate illness and 85% for severe illness. In other words, the chance of still getting mild or moderate illness is about 65% lower, and for severe illness about 85% lower, compared to unvaccinated individuals. If not careful with precautions, there still remains significant risk of infection and illness, from mild to severe. We will be able to return to our pre-COVID-19 life only once herd immunity has been reached and the circulation of the virus has been controlled.
- 2. If I have had COVID-19 previously, do I still need to be vaccinated? Definitely. Because more than 95% of virus strains in South Africa are of the relatively immune-resistant B.1.351 variant, high levels of neutralising antibodies are needed for protection. These levels are often not reached by natural infection. The COVID-19 vaccines being used in South Africa Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson have been very cleverly engineered to produce an even more powerful stimulation of the immune system than occurs with natural infection.
- 3. Why does the Pfizer vaccine require two doses while Johnson & Johnson only requires one? These two strategies have followed from their respective clinical trials. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine has been shown to retain a very strong immune response for many months after a single dose, while the strong immune response with Pfizer was seen after the second dose.
- 4. If I have been vaccinated and come into contact with an infected person, must I still quarantine for 10 days? Yes the same as if you weren't vaccinated. As mentioned above, you could still be infected, and even if not showing any symptoms, you could still pass on the infection.
- 5. If I'm not feeling entirely well, should I still keep my vaccination appointment or postpone it until feeling absolutely fine? This is a little tricky. If symptoms are suggestive of COVID-19, you should be tested rather than go for vaccination. However, if they are mild and not suggestive of COVID-19, there should be no reason to postpone a vaccination appointment.
- 6. If I have recovered from a bout of COVID-19, how long should I wait before being vaccinated? Four weeks
- 7. The recommended interval between the first and second doses of Pfizer in the United States (US) is three weeks. Why are we recommending a six-week interval?



Clinical trials of the Pfizer vaccine were carried out with a three-week interval, and consequently US regulatory authorities have maintained that recommendation. However, the United Kingdom (UK) decided to extend the interval to 12 weeks, primarily to vaccinate and provide some degree of protection to as many as possible with at least one dose. An added advantage was that the longer interval produced a stronger immune response than the three-week interval, something also observed with many other vaccines. We have taken a middle path, in concert with the World Health Organization, to delay for six weeks for an enhanced immune response but not as long as the UK recommendation out of concern about people neglecting or forgetting about the second dose.

- 8. Should I do an antibody test after vaccination to confirm that I have immunity? This isn't recommended by international bodies such as the US Food and Drug Administration. Routine antibody tests are unreliable in establishing immunity (although they may have a role in determining whether someone has previously been infected).
- 9. What side effects can I expect from the vaccine? Most people won't experience any side effects. Some may have tenderness or a rash at the injection site. Occasionally, for a day or two, rarely longer, there may be some headache, feeling out of sorts, some muscle pain, or even a slight fever, which could be controlled with something like Panado. Any more serious adverse event must be reported to a medical practitioner for onward transmission to the NISEC (National Immunisation Safety Expert Committee). Alternately it can be reported through the "MedSafety" app.
- 10. If I'm an allergic type of individual (previous vaccination or medication, foods, pets, grass, etc.) should I get vaccinated?

 Severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) to the Pfizer vaccine have been reported, but these have been extremely rare calculated at 11 per million doses. About three quarters of these have occurred within 15 minutes of vaccination. It would therefore be important for allergic individuals to alert the staff doing vaccinations, and one should wait for 30 minutes instead of the usual 15 minutes after vaccination. The risk of blood clots after the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is less than one per million doses and has not, to date, been reported after the Pfizer vaccine.
- 11. A frequent question about vaccination comes from patients with various chronic underlying medical conditions. In the

first instance, this should be discussed with the attending doctor. In broadly general terms, the COVID-19 vaccine can be given – and in most of these cases should be given – to persons with underlying medical conditions, especially where the immune system may be suppressed by illness or chemotherapy. But this must be discussed with

the attending doctor.

12. If I have had the influenza vaccine or any other vaccine, how long should I wait before getting the COVID-19 vaccine? We recommend a waiting period of at least two weeks to minimise the mild-side reactions mentioned above.

In conclusion, I reiterate that both vaccines, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson, are safe and highly effective. There is nothing to choose between them, and the advice is to take whichever vaccine is offered first in order to be vaccinated as soon as possible. Advice and recommendations will change from time to time as more and more is learnt about this new disease and newer vaccines are developed to prevent it. Importantly, advice must always be sought from authentic, reputable sources.

 Barry Schoub is the chairperson of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19 vaccines. He is the founding director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, and professor emeritus of virology at the University of the Witwatersrand. He isn't employed by the department of health, receives no remuneration from the department, and isn't a spokesperson for the department.





The IUA-UCF is pleased to announce that Lior Levy has been appointed as the new Executive Director of the IUA-UCF.

Lior has a history of success in serving SA Jewry which will stand him in good stead. Lior has spent years serving the community contributing to the successes of the IUA-UCF as senior fundraiser. Lior's main priorities is to

continue fostering meaningful working relationships and collaborations that he has helped to build in his previous position over the last 5 years.

Lior is eager to apply his many personal and professional experiences gained in the management and fundraising field to guide the IUA-UCF into the next phase of its evolution. His goal is to keep Israel alive in the hearts of all South Africans, by assisting the SA Zionist Federation and the SA Jewish Board of Deputies in achieving their mandate by keeping South African Jewry united, educated, informed and safe. Lior's long term goal is to encourage our community to keep the longevity of our organisation alive for years to come.

We wish Lior every success his new position.

Please contact Lior for any further information.

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6 SA JEWISH REPORT 28 May - 4 June 2021

Jewish Report The source of quality content, news and insights

United we stand

don't recall there ever having been so much antisemitism and hatred towards Israel as there is now, and yes, it's mostly on social media.

I'm well aware that most people in the know say that every time there is violence in the Middle East and Israel is involved, there is a marked upswing in this behaviour. Some insist it has been far worse. I can't argue about this because I probably wasn't as overtly attuned to it as I am now.

Now, it stands out vividly for me. As a journalist, it's always hard for me to criticise my colleagues, however I cannot ignore the massive bias in the mainstream media.

In the car on Tuesday morning, I caught 702 news in which the newsreader spoke about the ceasefire agreement that followed the barrage of missiles from Israel into Gaza. Such an agreement, as I understand it, refers to an end to firing from both sides, but according to this station and other mainstream media, this was a onesided affair. They reported on only a barrage of rockets from Israel.

The newsreader proceeded to tell of these terrible Israeli police who launched a wave of arrests in which they incarcerated hundreds of Israeli Palestinians for their participation in recent "sit-ins". These apparent sit-ins were in support of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and

The police sounded like the worst kind of thugs who would arrest en masse these poor people who simply conducted a peaceful protest. It didn't make any sense. When I got back to my computer, it took me all of two minutes to find out the truth.

Police were arresting people for rampaging through Israeli cities – like Lod, Haifa, Acre, and Tiberius - during the 11 days of Operation Guardian of the Walls. They attacked Jews and Jewish properties. Rocks were thrown at motorists, cars were set alight, and properties vandalised. Ten shuls were set on fire, and Jewish pedestrians were attacked.

The point is, it's easy to understand why police would clamp down on violence like this. They would do so in any country. However, arresting innocent protesters following sit-ins sounds terribly cruel. Why didn't the radio station get all the facts? Why did it put across a story that would undoubtedly intensify the already massive hatred towards the Jewish State? Why would it go with one source that is known to be biased against Israel?

I don't get it. Why would a media company purposely push the boundaries of truth that is unequivocally going to fuel an already flaming fire towards Jews and the Jewish State?

I'm seeing it all over mainstream media. I keep thinking to myself, am I going mad or are my former colleagues and friends giving only one side of the story? I admit that Israel has made and can make errors of judgement - we all can, and do. However, to ignore 4 000 missiles being launched into Israel is to ignore the truth. And as journalists, the truth is what we are meant to be offering.

I'm aware there is no such a thing as total objectivity and the way we write our stories has some form of bias. However, it's our job as the media to tell the truth as far as possible, not to leave out half the story!

The media aside, I do believe the Jewish community is feeling threatened, and not without good reason. The number of antisemitic social-media posts and threats has multiplied. People's livelihoods have been threatened because they have stated that they stand by Israel (page 1). Others are simply fearful of saying it because they don't want to create rifts between them and those who are vocal about their anti-Israel position. They also don't want to be lambasted.

From the African National Congress protesting outside the Israeli embassy, to anti-Israel protests outside Beyachad in Fairmount, to an early morning protest outside Redhill School, we hear the chant of: "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."

This slogan isn't a cry for peace or a two-state solution, it's a very clear assertion that the land lying between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea will be Palestine. In other words, the area that is Israel will be destroyed to become an all-Palestinian territory. They are calling for the all-out destruction of the Jewish State. And this isn't antisemitism? The total annihilation of the Jewish State can be nothing if not antisemitic.

Is there any wonder we, as Jews, aren't feeling so secure?

Here's the thing, now isn't the time to get upset with another Jewish person who might have jumped the queue for vaccines or who decided not to go to the Beyachad rally on Sunday. Now isn't the time to find fault in each other. Now isn't the time to find fault in a leader who made an error of judgement or a Jewish journalist who is trying to do their job to the best of

We aren't perfect.

Now is the time to join arms across our community, and face this foe as one. Now is the time to stand up and be counted as a community, not with violence or rhetoric on social

We don't need to cower. We need to fight for our rights with intelligence and wisdom. We need to work together to find smart solutions to these clear and apparent problems that have arisen

The reality is that this may be a problem that emanated from the Middle East, but Israel isn't here to fight it for us. Here, on the southern tip of Africa, we as Jews need to work together to sort it out.

We aren't Israel, and Muslims in South Africa aren't actually our enemies. We need to find ways to achieve a peaceful resolution to our problems here, not allowing racist and antisemitic threats. Where there has been genuine hate speech and crimes, these need to be dealt with by

You see, a people united can never be defeated. We need to put aside our differences and put our heads together.

If one Jewish person is being victimised because they're Jewish, we can't look for faults in them, we need to stand behind them and support them in their time of need.

It's simple and the only strategy we can use going forward.

Let's be safe and united.

Shabbat Shalom! Peta Krost Maunder Editor

Support for terror: explaining the inexplicable

he origins of all wars are contested. Israel's

"Operation Guardian of the Walls" is

bono – or he who stands to gain – some attribute

before the conflagration, there were signs that an

a Machiavellian role to Prime Minister "Bibi"

Netanyahu. It cannot be gainsaid that shortly

alternative government was in the making.

Other commentators blame the war on

during Ramadan and the mishandling of a

neighbourhood.

proximate cause.

aspirations.

Israel's short-sighted behaviour: over-zealous

action by security forces at the Al-Aqsa Mosque

complicated legal case in Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah

President Mahmoud Abbas's decision to not hold

The broader context of course is the plight of the

Whatever the cause, Hamas saw an opening, and

has done its best to show that it's the protector

Contestation around causation and the

apportionment of blame is predictable. What's

astonishing, however, is the substantial support for

Hamas (and Islamic Jihad) in the West. Both these

movements oppose democracy and all that's valued

by human-rights activists. Each has a track record

of terror. Ask Fatah – or at least those members

who survived the bloody Hamas military coup in

Yet, in spite of Hamas's odious tactics that

mosques, and close to apartment buildings and

hotels housing journalists, tens of thousands in

of this terror movement. Who cares about the

many Western cities are happy to march in support

indiscriminate firing of rockets at Israeli civilians?

include the placement of artillery in schools,

of Al-Agsa and the authentic voice of Palestinian

long overdue Palestinian elections is also cited as a

no exception. Relying on the logic of cui

and Islamic Jihad are anti-Jewish terrorist movements. Both have taken advantage of heightened tensions and stoked these with a view to political gain at the expense of their opposition,

Hamas is emboldened by a Western media and its fellow travellers. Some will argue that Israel's response is disproportionate; but all ignore the fact that Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005. All should agree that Hamas is a terrorist organisation, formally designated as such by the United States, Canada, and the European Union.

How then do we account for those marching in support of Hamas? We do not, after all, see equivalent action against the oppression (some would argue genocide) of the Uighurs in China, actions by the Xi Jinping regime in Hong Kong, the military in Myanmar, not to mention the slaughter of civilians in Yemen and Tigre, and the systematic murder of Kurds by the Turkish forces in Iraqi Kurdistan, the so-called Operation Claw Lightning that started a month ago. Innocent children, too, suffer in these conflicts.

Yes, I know there has been the occasional limited protest against some actions and yes, I know that the apartheid regime also raised examples of racial discrimination in other parts of the world to bolster its case and challenge its detractors. However, the energy, steam, and passion behind those supporting Hamas and Islamic Jihad is unique and needs explanation.

Some have argued that one can choose one's cause – that one cannot focus on all evils. The question, however, remains. Why do so many choose the Israeli question? Is it because the region is home to the three Abrahamic faiths? Is it because of oil sensitivities in the region? Is it because "Jews are news"?

None of these explanations is compelling. A more

likely reason is that a historical amnesia has descended - identified as such by Jacob Talmon more than 40 years ago. In response to the new left's anti-Zionism at the time the precursors of those marching today – the renowned historian suggested that these "young revolutionaries" were "hypnotised by the facile theory of the two camps: that of imperialism and that of oppressed peoples fighting for national



Protestors are seemingly oblivious to the medieval worldview and visceral Jew-hatred of Hamas. Not even its blatantly antisemitic founding charter - which amplified global Jewish machinations and included a reference to the notorious fabrication. The Protocols of the Elders Zion, raises doubt among the so-called progressive left. Young and old are happy to join forces with a movement that would catapult human rights back to the dark ages.

The reality is that Hamas is undermining the prospect of a Palestinian state. It's weakening the case of peace-seeking Israelis. As New York Times columnist Bret Stephens put it, "If you want a Palestinian state to exist and succeed, you must also want Hamas to be humiliated and defeated. Hamas's sole aim for more than 30 years has been to turn a difficult but potentially negotiable conflict into a non-negotiable, zero-sum holy war." Only a week ago, Hamas political chief Musa Abu Marzook told Russia Today that Jews wouldn't be allowed to remain in Israel. That was how he clarified what the war was about.

Let me be clear. If an intifada had erupted on the West Bank two weeks ago, it would have been reasonable to argue that the occupation has simply gone on for too long. But this is different. Hamas

liberation".

But reality is more complex. There has been a continuous Jewish presence in the land of Israel for more than 2 000 years in spite of the Greek, Roman, Arab, and Crusader conquests.

Historical amnesia, however, is only a part explanation. Another is more sinister: Israel is the collective Jew - the Jew writ large. Put simply, the Jewish state embodies an unresolved obsession with Jews in the Western consciousness.

Columnist Brendan O'Neill expressed this with great clarity in the Spectator: "It seems to me that, increasingly, there is nothing very rational or normal about the hatred for Israel that sporadically sweeps the West. Rather, Israel has become a whipping boy for the elites, a nation that has cynically been turned into the embodiment of evil by virtue-signalling Westerners in desperate need for an outlet for their rage and pontification.

"Without an alternative explanation," continues O'Neill, "the rest of us will be justified in wondering if perhaps an old, dark hatred, whether wittingly or unwittingly, underpins the manic loathing of Israel."

· Milton Shain is emeritus professor of historical studies at the University of Cape Town.

SA JEWISH REPORT 7 28 May - 4 June 2021

Use your heart and head to make sense of the conflict

write this with an overwhelming sense of sadness. The past two weeks have been difficult for everyone. Quite a few people have messaged me in private saying that for the first time in their lives, they are feeling unsafe living as Jews in South Africa.

For me, it has been very difficult to witness the terrible pictures coming out of Gaza. My colleague who lives there spent one night outside in the street after his neighbour's apartment building was destroyed in an Israeli airstrike. I was brought to tears when he interviewed a teenager who was the first to find the bodies of his father, younger brother, and cousin. The youngster broke down while talking about the last time his father hugged him and told him to be brave. His pain was as raw as it gets.

It reminded me of a previous conflict when I was reporting from inside Gaza, and I interviewed a 15-year-old girl who'd lost her leg, also to an Israeli airstrike. "Nobody will marry me now," she sobbed, "the only man who will take me will be an old man to be his

To be human is to be moved by these stories, but not to let them cloud our understanding of what's going on, and certainly not to make sense of them by being engulfed with hatred and loathing for the other side.

Because for every Gaza story, I have an Israeli one to match. Like the five-year-old boy whose brother was serving in the army and who would stay up late every night drawing pictures for him so he wouldn't feel alone on the border.

Or the 90-year-old woman who was watching TV in her living room two weeks ago when a rocket exploded in her home. She lost both legs and is on life support in an Israeli hospital as I write this.

And what about the injured soldiers whose lives are forever changed and who no-one writes about?

Ziv Shilon is a 33-year-old former Israeli commander who lost his left arm and has only 10% movement in his right one after an improvised explosive device almost killed him in Gaza in 2012. He was unconscious for four

home. He mentions mornings that the PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) gets so bad, he can't get out of bed. But this isn't what he wants to talk about.

"If losing part of my body and soul is the path I must travel for serving my country, then that is my journey," he smiles.

Shilon is as close as I've ever got to meeting a modern-day hero. Shrapnel that would've blinded him missed his cornea by a millicentimetre. Doctors were convinced he wouldn't pull through. But he did, and doesn't feel bitter at all. Instead, he talks about how

he and his soldiers risked their lives to prevent civilian casualties in Gaza.

"I'm proud to have served my country in Gaza, and would do it again," he repeats several times during our interview

My point is: both sides have pain and suffering. There are lives in Israel and Gaza that have forever been affected by the cycles of violence between the sides. One person's death reverberates through dozens of changed lives.

My second point is: you can't compare pain and suffering – and we mustn't try. But neither must we be taken in by the barrage

of anti-Israel sentiment and lack of reporting in mainstream media reflecting the Israeli position. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers are made out to be villains committing war crimes on helpless Gaza civilians. It can leave supporters of Israel feeling lost and confused.

I remember the first war I covered. It was 2006, the Second Lebanon War between Israel and Hezbollah. It was midnight, and I was at the Metula fence on the Israel-Lebanon border. In those days, we were allowed to talk to the soldiers just before they crossed over into enemy territory. I remember the fear in their eyes and one soldier asking me to pray for him.

linking arms to form a barrier a year earlier in one of the Jewish settlements in Gaza that was being evacuated. Abuse was hurled at them by young teenagers who were being dragged from their homes. One brown-eyed soldier was crying, the tears flowing down her cheeks without a free hand to wipe them away.

In Lebanon, there's a museum that showcases all the remnants Hezbollah fighters have captured off Israeli soldiers - tins of kosher food line the shelves as do pieces of IDF uniforms with blood on them. I remember a pair of blue-rimmed sunglasses.

Ziv Shilon, a 33-year-old former Israeli commander who lost his left arm

> The Palestinian struggle has become a celebrity cause for people. News anchors to social media influencers and Hollywood stars talk about the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. It's almost fashionable to be pro-Palestinian. This year, United States rights group Human Rights Watch and Israeli rights group B'Tselem (both of whom the Israeli government accuses of bias) announced that Israeli officials were "guilty of the crime of apartheid", a term that has become far more prevalent than it ever was before.

Pro-Palestinian activists have gone as far as to say that it's too late for Israeli officials media. Israel and Zionism are losing the public-relations war, they declare.

But to the mom whose husband was lost at sea during the Yom Kippur War, it's not about PR. I never thought someone could die of a broken heart until I heard her son's story. He was just 12 years old, and was so traumatised by images of his dad drowning that a year later, he simply gave up living. After trying everything to help him, his mother said she came to understand that she needed to let him go to join his dad. The

> Last week, I sat down with Leah Goldin, the mother of 23-yearold Hadar who was killed and kidnapped during the last Gaza war. His body is being held by Hamas as a bargaining tool.

"I'm asking as a mother, please help us, please bring Hadar home. We aren't a bereaved family. We are a captive family, fighting to bring our son home."

And then she broke down.

"Hadar was engaged to be married. And his fiancé was married two weeks ago to someone else ... which makes me very happy because we want our kids to build their lives and show that terror never wins."

I know that by publishing this piece in the SA Jewish Report I'm by and large preaching to the converted.

But the constant barrage of allegations being levelled against the IDF and Israeli government might be leaving some at a loss as to what's really happening and even doubtful about Israel's actions. Don't be taken in by the numbers game – which side has more casualties - and don't be misled by the onesided stories of pain and suffering. Listen to your heart - and reason.

• Paula Slier is the Middle East bureau chief of RT, the founder and chief executive of Newshound Media International, and the inaugural winner of the Europear Woman in Leadership Award of











8 SA JEWISH REPORT 28 May – 4 June 2021

Tshwane takes sides – again – in Palestinian-Israeli conflict

DIMION

veryone is relieved that the guns have fallen silent
– for now – in the worst Palestinian-Israeli clashes
since 2014. The South African government
hasn't minced its words in standing steadfastly behind
the Palestinians. Recent pronouncements from both
President Cyril Ramaphosa and Dr Naledi Pandor, the
minister of International Relations and Cooperation, have
been extremely emotive and one-sided, pointing fingers
only at Israel. Why does this happen, and is this a shift
away from Tshwane's decades-old position on a two-state
solution?

On 14 May, a Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) statement said, "The South African government strongly condemns the unjust attacks on civilians by Israel in Gaza and Jerusalem. The continued escalation of attacks by Israel on Palestinians in Gaza is totally unjust and shameful, particularly the targeting of the most vulnerable section of the Palestinian community, children, women, and the elderly."

Not a word is said about the thousands of rocket attacks against Israel from Hamas, or stone-throwing at policemen on the Temple Mount, or, indeed, Israel's right to defend itself

Then on 17 May, the president wrote in his newsletter, "For all who believe in equality, justice, and human rights, we cannot but be moved and indeed angered at the pain and humiliation being inflicted on the Palestinian people; for it echoes our own."

Ramaphosa wrote, "The senseless and continued Israeli bombardment of Gaza will have devastating consequences ... the continued occupation of Palestinian land and the suffering of the Palestinian people is a blight on the conscience of humanity."

He said the controversy over land in Sheik Jarrah, Jerusalem, "was not just about a local dispute; it was fundamentally about the forced dispossession of land, about colonial occupation, about racial discrimination, and about the violent suppression of dissent".

YESHIVA COLLEGE While Ramaphosa calls for the parties to "find each other", there is no mention, again, about rocket barrages, Hamas aggression, or use of Palestinian civilians as human shields in residential areas, schools, and hospitals. There is no mention that Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005. No mention of Hamas tunnel networks, dubbed "the metro". No mention of Israelis having only seconds to seek refuge in bomb shelters.

On 20 May, in her budget speech, Pandor said, "Sadly,

In spite of its venomtipped rhetoric, Tshwane still sticks to its old twostate principles, even if its conditions would be mostly unpalatable to the Israeli electorate.

we all watched as Palestine suffered more and more brutally ... We continue to stand in full solidarity with the people of Palestine ... the cruel bombings and killings of the innocent we witnessed in the past two weeks are a sad testimony of the cruel impunity the world has granted to Israel. The international community must stop this impunity. South Africa should support the International Criminal Court in the planned investigation of the abuse of human rights by the Israeli government. We hope sanctions and other measures to show the world's offence at this brutality will soon be evident."

Again, this is completely partisan, and further evidence that the African National Congress makes friends for life. Any hope that South Africa could be an "honest broker" in solving this conflict is long gone.

Why write a response to Ramaphosa?

The key points made by Ramaphosa were

In a radio interview on 702 on 24 May, Pandor said, "We withdrew our ambassador from Israel because we have reduced the diplomatic representation as a sign of protest, given the constant aggression, the occupation of land, and the intransigence of the Israeli government."

When asked why South Africa still has ties with Israel, Pandor said, "We have wanted to engage in a positive manner, but I think it has become clear that you now have a stance among the leaders of the Israeli government where South Africa may certainly have to reconsider its engagement." South Africa hasn't had an ambassador in Israel since May 2018.

"Do remember," she continued, "that Israel is the aggressor, and the Palestinian people are trying to protect themselves with inadequate means. They are trapped in an apartheid-style township manner. They can't move without permits. They don't have a livelihood. They don't have land, their land is usurped. So they respond by whatever means they can. But they remain the victim and we should not forget that."

Every time there is a flare-up in the conflict, it ratchets up more pressure on Israel, and provokes its opponents to adopt more radical measures – alluded to by Pandor. Senior members of the South African government filter this Middle East conflict through their own apartheid experiences. They also are genuinely horrified by the violence shown on TV. The Palestinians can be nothing more than victims, never aggressors, in their view, whatever the realities on the ground. This same South African government, remember, "noted with concern" the Abraham Accords of 2020 that Israel signed with the United Arab Emirates (and subsequently Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan), calling them "regrettable".

The DIRCO statement – and the president's newsletter and minister's views – reiterated South Africa's commitment "to the establishment of a viable

Palestinian state, existing side by side in peace with Israel within internationally recognised borders,

based on those existing on 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in compliance with all relevant UN resolutions, international law, and internationally agreed on parameters." Such a Palestinian state should not be "devoid of sovereignty, territorial contiguity, and economic viability". This remains South Africa's official position.

So, in spite of its venom-tipped rhetoric, Tshwane still sticks to its old two-state principles, even if its conditions would be mostly unpalatable to the Israeli electorate, and disregards how the situation has shifted over the past 54 years. Tshwane is implacably opposed to the pragmatic peace plan developed by the Trump administration. It's calling for the Biden administration to reverse the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and revoke the Trump peace plan. Biden has been reluctant to tackle foreign policy issues with his urgent domestic agenda.

South Africa, it should be noted, never calls for a Jewish state. It's therefore presumably in favour of a not-so-distant demographic day when Palestinians will outnumber the current eight million Jewish Israelis. They could then vote a Jewish state out of existence.

Pandor's call for sanctions on Israel or a rethink about relations shouldn't be taken lightly. The president's sentiments should also give us pause.

Maybe a small ray of bone is that Tal Aviv ise't on the

Maybe a small ray of hope is that Tel Aviv isn't on the list of 10 South African diplomatic missions slated for closure for financial reasons. But is it only a matter of time?

 Steven Gruzd is a political analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs in Johannesburg. These are his personal views.

America's culture war could threaten Israel from within Frans Cronje, the chief executive of the Institute of Race Relations, wrote a penetrating critique - "Ramaphosa woefully misreading the Israeli-Palestinian conflict", News24,

Frans Cronje, the chief executive of the Institute of Race Relations, wrote a penetrating critique – "Ramaphosa woefully misreading the Israeli-Palestinian conflict", News24, 20 May – which referred to President Cyril Ramaphosa's 17 May letter to South Africans, titled "From the desk of the president". Cronje talks about his motivation for writing the response, and why challenging the narrative of the president's letter is important.

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demonstrate that those claims were either misleading or baseless in that Israel was under attack, had a right to self-defence, and that South Africa should be standing with Israel

What is your take on the consequences of the conflict?

A positive of sorts is that Hamas' ability to target Israel has been degraded. A second is that the Abraham Accords held up in the face of a determined Iranian effort to fracture them. A third is that American support for Israel held across the Democratic Party, in spite of an attempt from within that party to isolate Israel. A fourth is that several central European states were bold in their support of Israel.

And what were the negatives?

There are a number, but let's deal with two big ones. A first is the extent to which Arab-Jewish relations within Israel may have fractured. If the damage is serious, it potentially opens an internal front of conflict that must be added to the external fronts that Israel has always fought on.

Iran knows that a military assault on Israel from without is, in a sense, futile, because Israel's military defence is too strong. If you cannot attack it successfully from outside, you might have better luck trying to do so from within. That few Israelis saw the

tie between America's culture war and their own internal security worries me.

The second negative is that Western opinion on Israel has, I think, been **Frans** altered over the past Cronje week. Coming on the back of America's culture war inspired by the spectacular rise of critical race theory in the West, Israel is now more vulnerable than ever to American public opinion turning sufficiently far that a future White House might limit support for Israel. The effect would be to weaken its external defences. Should Israel's enemies succeed in fomenting an internal front while also weakening external defences, Israel becomes very vulnerable.

You've spoken a lot about the role of Iran.

Yes, indeed, this is critical to understanding what transpired over the past week. The Iranians, after the setback of the Abraham Accords last year, have, I think, regrouped. Iran is emboldened by what I read as the Biden administration's naivete on Iranian nuclear ambitions. It's a lesson of history that you cannot placate or appease revolutionary ideologues. I also suspect that the Iranians have astutely perceived that the rise of critical race theory in the West presents them with the opportunity to apply the theory to the Israeli/Palestinian question in order to undo American support for Israel.

You've spoken a lot about critical race theory – what is it?

The potential influence of this theory is now the greatest threat to the survival of Israel. Critical race theory underpinned the culture wars that spurred the Black Lives Matter and QAnon movements in America to exploit that country's existing racial divides to cleave a great chasm across which America's damaging social

and political contestations
now rage. It's an ideology
designed to foment conflict
given that its theoretical
point of departure is to cast
societies into unbridgeable
racial camps of victim and
perpetrator. Usually the theory
holds that the perpetrators are

white and the victims black, with whites using their influence over Western societies to become rich by keeping blacks down. The only way to liberate the victims is to destroy the institutions of Western democracy and the "wars" to do so are culture wars. Jews have featured prominently on the periphery of critical race theory debates. Ellie Krasne of the Heritage Foundation put it well:

"According to the theory's perverse logic, Jews are first and foremost members of the oppressor class, bearing guilt for any wrong done to any non-white group by any white people. Simply put, critical race theory repeatedly casts Jews as having outsized economic success, even relative to other white people, and this supposed success makes them the worst of the ... oppressors. Antisemitism has long depicted Jews as racially inferior and extremely clever puppet masters who surreptitiously control banks, politicians, and the media. Modern-day critical race theory does much of the same. This, coupled with antisemitism, targets Jews and blames them for perceived societal ills. But the goal isn't simply hatred of the Jewish people; it's to upend the civic order. Jews are just the scapegoat."

Iranians will try to exploit the theory to "upend" Israel via fomenting a culture war against "Israeli apartheid" that will incite

Continued on page 9>>

Pensioner defrauded, then dies under suspicious circumstances in hospital

TALI FEINBERG

t sounds like something out of a horror movie, but it happened in a private Johannesburg care facility.

Jewish pensioner Bernard "Bernie" Katz was admitted to Netcare Rosebank Hospital on 26 January 2021, but died under suspicious circumstances on 5 May 2021. In that time, R153 500 was allegedly stolen from his account, and he was then poisoned with rat poison, as per a toxicology report.

According to a family member who could not be named, the 83-year-old grandfather was in hospital for bowel-obstruction surgery. "After the surgery, he was very weak, but I nurtured him back to life," the family member said. "At first he hardly ate, but just before he was due to be discharged, he ate four kneidels in one go! He was ready to go home and was building up his strength. He had such a zest for life, and had so much more living to do."

The family member says that Katz "suffered horrendously" in the last month of his life. "After the incident [the alleged poisoning], they had to resuscitate him and put him on a ventilator. He had to have dialysis and blood transfusions. He was in agony, with tears running down his face. I could see he was begging me to help him, and there was nothing I could do. And when he died, we had to wait for the police. We couldn't even call the Chevrah Kadisha because of the need for an autopsy. It was a double trauma."

An autopsy has to be done if there is the possibility of murder, but according to lawyers, the results could take up to a year. His death certificate, which the

SA Jewish Report has seen, says the cause of his passing is "under investigation".

Katz' family is being represented by David Swartz of SWVG Inc. Attorneys. In a summons to the High Court of South Africa Gauteng Division, dated 4 May 2021, the chain of events is laid out.

It describes how Katz was admitted to hospital on or around 26 January 2021 for observation. "Upon admission, the plaintiff [Katz] was instructed by hospital staff to surrender possession of his personal belongings, including his wallet, to the hospital for safekeeping."

The next day, "his cell phone was also taken from him by hospital staff for safekeeping". On 28 January 2021, he underwent surgery, after which he was transferred to the hospital's intensive care unit (ICU). "While in the ICU, he was intubated in a serious but stable condition. On 13 March 2021, after he had been transferred out of ICU, he accessed his online banking facilities using a laptop provided to him by his daughter-in-law."

He discovered that "funds totalling R153 500



had been misappropriated from his banking and credit card facilities through a series of credit-card payments, ATM withdrawals, cash transfers, EFT payments, and 'Autobank instant money cash' transactions on his bank account," the summons

Upon discovering the missing funds, Katz requested the return of his personal belongings. He then ascertained that "his credit card had been stolen from his wallet". He realised funds had been stolen by using his cell phone "or cloning his SIM card". Alternatively, they could have been stolen by using his credit card. He also ascertained that this theft "was perpetrated by persons employed by the hospital, or persons who had access to his cell phone or wallet, both of which had been given to the hospital staff".

Upon discovering the misappropriation of funds, Katz and his family complained to the hospital. He was also told he would be discharged in mid-April, according to a letter his lawyers wrote to Netcare dated 16 April 2021.

The summons and letter describe how on 6 April 2021, after eating breakfast, "he was rushed to ICU presenting with difficulty breathing, low heart rate, and hypothermia. Blood tests performed on his blood on the same day revealed that he was suffering from organophosphate poisoning. Organophosphate is a powerful nerve agent found in pesticides and insecticides such as Rattex [rat poison]."

In the summons, the lawyers state: "The plaintiff

was poisoned whilst admitted as a patient in hospital by persons employed at the hospital or with access to hospital facilities in an attempt to kill off the plaintiff in order to quash the complaints laid by him regarding the theft of monies."

As a result of the poisoning, Katz was intubated, and was unable to breathe without assistance. Although at times lucid, he was unable to walk and had no quality of life. He died one month after being poisoned.

In the summons and their letter, the lawyers state that "what is of grave concern is that not only was there an attempt to murder our client while in the care of a private hospital, but in all probability, there are syndicates within Netcare hospitals who are committing similar crimes on other patients".

They plead with Netcare to put in place measures to address that possibility, as well as for the hospital group to share documentation and video footage that could help with the case. However, all they have received from Netcare is a request for Katz' medical records – the same records in Netcare's possession.

"The public has a right to know what transpired as it is grotesque in the extreme that a patient admitted into a Netcare hospital could in fact be murdered while in such care," says Swartz in his letter addressed to the directors of Netcare. Swartz says he didn't get any response, and has confirmed his mandate to pursue this matter to its conclusion.

In a statement issued on 25 May 2021 in response to questions from the *SA Jewish Report*, Netcare Rosebank Hospital General Manager Richard Mulder says, "We extend our sincere condolences to the family of the deceased patient. We understand the family's pain over the uncertainty regarding the cause of their loved one's death, and while we as a hospital cannot speculate as to the cause, we are doing everything reasonably possible to support the process that must, by law, be followed in such instances.

"Whenever a person passes away and the cause of death cannot be determined with clinical certainty, the death is certified as an unnatural death, as was done in this case. In accordance with the Inquests Act, 1959, and as part of the investigation by the state into the probable cause/s of an unnatural death, an autopsy will be conducted by an independent state pathologist. Any enquiry regarding the death of the patient should be directed to the state prosecutor, via the South African Police Service (SAPS).

"As is the case in all circumstances where a death in our facilities is considered of unnatural cause, we are fully supportive of the process to determine the cause of death, which must now take its course," Mulder says. "The hospital as well as the clinicians involved will co-operate fully with the authorities in this due process.

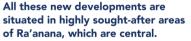
"We were further greatly concerned about allegations that funds disappeared from the bank account of the patient and the insinuation that a member of staff may have been responsible for the alleged theft.

"Netcare looked into the matter to determine what transpired and to ascertain whether the hospital's strict procedures for safekeeping of patient valuables were adhered to. In consequence, we strongly dispute the allegations as well as a possible connection between the demise of the patient and the money which is said to have gone missing.

"We have encouraged the patient's family to report the matter to the SAPS, and to open a case so that this matter can be fully investigated. We have zero tolerance for any criminal behaviour, and our hospital will co-operate fully with a SAPS investigation should a case be opened to bring any person or persons responsible to book."

Says the family member, "Bernie was not an 'old' 83. He lived on his own, was driving and independent. He loved playing bowls, and was an avid follower of the stock market. He loved his family, and was just the sweetest man. I feel angry and devastated. I loved him back to life, and they stole him from me."





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America's culture war could threaten Israel from within >>Continued from page 8

Arab Israelis to turn against their Jewish neighbours while turning Western opinion against Israel to cut off American support. How well positioned is Israel to counter these threats?

Israel may have a problem here. General William Westmoreland, the commander of United States forces in Vietnam, would later agree with the lament "[that] we lost the war not in the jungles of South East Asia, but on the streets of Washington and in the living rooms of America".

This is very much the evidence of the past week – that Israel might have been dominant on the physical battlefield, but it doesn't possess strategic understanding or resources to contest the culture-war battlefield.

How could that danger play out?

In five steps. First, Israel remains so confident in its military defensive capacity and never develops an equally strong strategic capacity to confront the far greater and more insidious danger of

culture wars.

Second, America stays soft on Iran, allowing the latter to better resource its proxies in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria.

Third, every few years, Iran incites rocket attacks against Israel in order to present Israel's response as genocidal Israeli aggression.

Fourth, that message gets traction in the West because it resonates well with critical race theory and the idea of "Israeli apartheid".

Fifth, reading the public mood, a future Democratic administration in Washington gradually cuts Israel off. This may take 10 to 15 years, but Israel would be a sitting duck, and its Jews forced out of the Middle East into a great new global diaspora.

Some Jews and Israelis will say this

I'm afraid the things that cannot happen do happen more often than they should.

cannot happen.

10 SA JEWISH REPORT 28 May – 4 June 2021

Uplifting Shavuot as Chev vaccinates residents and Holocaust survivors

TALI FEINBERG

very single Chevrah Kadisha resident over 60, as well as most of Johannesburg's Holocaust survivors, were vaccinated last week to their relief and that of their families.

"To say that there was overwhelming relief is an understatement," says Benjy Porter, whose parents are residents at Sandringham Gardens.

The Chev's chief executive, Saul Tomson, says, "The Department of Health visited us on International Nurses Day, and were impressed with our setup and ability to roll out mass vaccinations. We were told we would be given vaccines for our Sandringham Gardens residents, as many are the most frail and bedridden, and there is no way they can go to vaccination sites.

"We had no choice but to start on Shavuot with this life-saving mission," Tomson says. "The reaction of the residents was heartwarming. Some of them were dancing and singing in celebration."

According to Tomson, the Chev has ten qualified vaccinators and a pharmacy on site. As the first doses were given on Monday morning, he walked over from shul to witness them.

"It was really overwhelming. Later, dignitaries from the Department of Health, the premier's office, and the MEC's office arrived. We were one of 11 sites they initiated, but one of the only sites that used all our shots on the first day. So, they sent more the next day and so on for the rest

of the week. This was how we were able to vaccinate all residents across all our facilities. They kept sending and we kept vaccinating, working late into the evenings at times.

"At the end of the week, we realised that we would have a few left over, and we sought permission to vaccinate Holocaust survivors in Johannesburg," he says.

"We are mindful that Holocaust survivors don't do well in queues, so we brought them to Sandringham Gardens. It was very emotional." Sadly, some survivors have lost their lives to the pandemic, so the Chev was eager to help those that it could.

"We wanted to show them they haven't been forgotten. Their story requires us to go above and beyond the call of duty, with extra care and compassion."

Porter's mother, Joan Porter, says she is grateful that the Chev prioritised her husband, knowing that he had to have five days between his vaccination and his chemotherapy.

"It was done magnificently. A nurse came to fetch us and our IDs were checked. We were asked if we had any fears [about the vaccine] as well as allergies and health issues. We were told it might be sore as it's a long needle, and shown what to do if it hurts. It was very quick. Afterwards, we were taken for tea and coffee and given two Panados!"

"We are so thrilled and relieved that we got vaccinated," she says, describing the atmosphere among residents as "positive" and the process as "very professional".

Clara Taub, a resident of Our Parents



Sandringham Gardens resident Betty Milner getting her COVID-19 vaccination

Home, admits that she was both apprehensive and full of hope. "COVID-19 has been with us for almost a year and a half. We have all been in a state of limbo during that time, but now we have a vaccine, and maybe that will help to alleviate the stress and loneliness we feel," she says.

Describing the chatter between the residents as they were told they would finally get their jabs, she recalls how some asked, "Will it hurt?", "How will it feel?", and "Do I really want to go into the unknown?"

"How is it going to work, we wonder? I sit and give the sister my arm. 'Ready?' I nod and breathe. 'All over.' Wow, that was quick, and I didn't feel anything! I have to go and sit with the others who have had their injections. I'm given a red sticker with the time on it. 'You must wait for 25 minutes,' the matron says. Well, now it's all over and I go to lunch. 'Any reaction?' is the question going round the dining room. 'I feel very tired,' says one resident. 'Will we be able to go to the shops now?' says another. The next

day, we all have sore arms, but the soreness doesn't last. Now we wait for the second shot!"

Tomson says the Chev has since spent a lot of time educating residents about vaccines and has explained that immunity begins only after two weeks. Returning to some sense of normality is still a long journey, but for him, it's a miracle that this momentous step has been taken.

"As the numbers creep up towards a third wave, the risk profile hasn't changed. In time, we will look at increasing residents' movements responsibly while maintaining a cautious approach."

Jack Shmukler, who is turning 85 next week, is one of the Holocaust survivors who was given the vaccine. From surviving the Shoah by hiding in holes in the forest at the age of three to a global pandemic, Shmukler really has seen and survived it all. Now, the vaccine is one step closer to him enjoying the full and blessed life he has built up in South Africa.

"COVID-19 has been very hard on him and the whole family," says his wife, Denise. "We led a very active life before the pandemic hit." Her husband has also battled health issues, and going to hospital during the pandemic hasn't been easy. "So, we were thrilled to get the vaccine. There's no way we could have gone to vaccination sites and stood in a queue."

Says Porter, "I feel immense gratitude to the Chev and Hashem that my parents were lucky enough to get a vaccine. I think it's an enormous privilege."

Antisemitism "on an unprecedented scale", say British Jews

CNAAN LIPHSHIZ – JTA

he ceasefire declared by Israel and Hamas after 11 days of fighting seems to be holding, but the after effects on Jews in Europe – especially in Britain – are still being felt.

As in previous rounds of Israeli military conflicts involving Palestinians over the past 20 years, antisemitic violence and intimidation have surged in Europe, where tens of thousands of protesters have marched and rallied at events that expressed rage toward Israel. Some have used the moment as a pretext to target Jewish people.

In the United Kingdom (UK), 116 antisemitic incidents have been reported since 9 May, the day Hamas started launching rockets into Israeli cities, compared with only 11 cases in the previous two weeks. In one incident on 16 May, a rabbi was beaten by two young men who hurled antisemitic slurs during the attack. The rabbi, Rafi Goodwin, sustained moderate injuries that required hospitalisation. Police arrested the alleged assailants, who also are accused of stealing Goodwin's phone.

On Friday, after the ceasefire, a man broke into the car of an Orthodox Jewish man in a heavily Jewish part of London and assaulted him. The suspect was detained by passersby until police took him into custody, the *Jewish News of London* reported.

For British Jews, the spike has been terrifying. Some are feeling unsafe and wondering if they will stay in the UK. And it's dashing the idea that Jews in the UK, where most Muslims are not from the Middle East, could avoid the level of antisemitic violence observed elsewhere in Europe.

"It's the mobilisation, the impunity, the scale, the sheer misogyny, and the violence that's so shocking this time around," said Linzi Pinto, a Jewish mother of two from northern London. "It's the worst it's been. It's terrifying, and we're definitely questioning our future here. We're fortunate to be able to leave."

Like many other British Jews, Pinto was especially shocked by a convoy of at least 10 cars flying Palestinian flags and blasting music in Arabic that on 16 May, drove 200 miles (321km) from the northern city of Bradford to the heart of Jewish London, the Golders Green neighbourhood. One convoy rider shouted antisemitic insults and incitements to violence there, including "f—the Jews, rape their daughters". Police have arrested four

people in connection with the incident.

Earlier in the day, Goodwin was assaulted outside his synagogue in Chigwell, north of London, in what police eventually said was an antisemitic incident.

Pinto said her family recently purchased real estate in the United States and the antisemitic events – notably over the past two weeks – increasingly are making them contemplate a move across the Atlantic.



A protester marches at a London rally against Israel's actions in Gaza

Victoria Prever of London recalled in a column for the *Jewish Chronicle* that on the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, her two children had prepared cover stories in case they were asked on the street why they weren't in school so as not to reveal that they attend a Jewish one that was closed for the holiday.

"My heart broke. What has happened that at primary school age, she is working out how to hide her Jewishness from strangers?" Prever, the *Chronicle's* food editor, wrote of her 10-year-old daughter in the column. "Should we be more discreet? Would we be better off more integrated – in non-denominational schools?"

The convoy and related events have triggered dormant fears among British Jews.

"My grandparents were Holocaust survivors. I'm usually long asleep by now, but my stomach is in knots," Becky Aizen, a historian and author who was born in Australia and has been living in London for many years, wrote on Twitter on 17 May. "This IS different. My DNA isn't equipped."

Many have echoed that feeling – that the intensity of antisemitic abuse in the UK is higher than in previous situations involving Israel.

"Antisemitism in the UK, sadly, always spikes when there is conflict in the Middle East, but this feels worse than ever," wrote Luciana Berger, a former prominent Jewish Labour legislator who now works in public relations.

"This time it feels different. It feels more intense and far scarier," Simon Cohen, a 36-year-old Jewish lawyer from London, wrote in a reply to Berger's tweet.

The increase in antisemitic violence in London hasn't changed the daily routine of Joseph Cohen, an Orthodox Jewish Israel activist whose focus is advocacy in especially hostile environments.

"I think especially in these times we have to be visible, we have to be present, and I will still walk around London with my tzitzit out, a big kippah, and a jumper labelled 'Zionist'," said Cohen, 37, who engages with Muslims at anti-Israel events for videos he

posts on the website of his Israel Advocacy Movement charity.

But even Cohen acknowledges that he is "more fearful than ever before" because of the intensity of the current wave of anti-Israel and antisemitic animus that began with the fighting on 9 May.

"I'm dressing exactly the same way as I always have been, I'm going to the same places," Cohen told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "But I'm looking over my shoulder much more than I ordinarily would have. And I'm much more aware of who I'm talking to and basically where I am."

Britain isn't alone. Elsewhere, in places such as Vienna, Brussels, and Amsterdam, recent anti-Israel events have featured chants urging Jews to remember Khaybar, the site of a seventh-century massacre of Jews in Saudi Arabia, because "the army of Muhammad is returning" to kill them, as the chant goes.

Jonathan Arkush, a previous head of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, isn't convinced that the current spike in antisemitic incidents is unprecedented.

"I think the people are feeling the heat of the moment and are having an emotional reaction," said Arkush, a lawyer and father of three who said he feels safe walking around London while wearing a kippah.

Broadly speaking, Arkush said, the UK's antisemitism

is mitigated by the fact that unlike in continental Europe, most British Muslims come from southern Asia and aren't Arabs with roots in the Middle East.

"Antisemitism is still more prevalent among British Muslims than the general population," he said, "but Israel occupies a far less central place in their worldview compared to Muslims in France."

That may be changing with social media.

"When young British Muslims are surrounded by hate speech about Israel on their timeline, that may be eroding the buffer I've just described," Arkush said.

In a 10 May panel discussion hosted by the Spillars Muslim website, a British-Muslim imam from Birmingham called for "an announcement for jihad by Muslim majority states". The imam, Asrar Rashid, also said Pakistan should fire missiles at Israel just as Iraq had in the 1990s, when "every Jew was running into his shelter, those with the European passport would be running back to Europe" as the "Jews are a cowardly nation".

This sort of agitation by imams and some Muslim community leaders has existed for decades in the UK, a nation of 66 million, including three million Muslims and about 295 000 Jews. But it's experiencing a resurgence following the rise of Jeremy Corbyn, an anti-Israel politician who once called Hamas and Hezbollah his "friends", to the head of the Labour Party.

Corbyn was replaced last year by a centrist, Keir Starmer, amid a highly covered scandal over the proliferation of antisemitism in Labour's ranks under Corbyn, as well as his alleged failure and reluctance to deal with it. Both current and former chief rabbis of the UK have accused Corbyn of being antisemitic, an allegation he has denied.

"First, the Corbyn years have been traumatising to Jews, who still don't trust Labour and for good reason," Arkush said, alleging that Starmer hasn't done enough to reform the party. "So they're scarred."

The Corbyn clique, Arkush said, "has placed Israel at the centre of the far-left movement, who are now rushing to use conflicts involving Israel politically."

The agitation shows what "sentiments exist within a section of British Muslims and in our society," he said. "But it will die down once hostilities end – until the next time"

28 May – 4 June 2021 SA JEWISH REPORT 11

Israel losing battle for global opinion

OPINION

he recent Israel-Palestine outburst of violence was in many ways a media and public-relations war: a battle for the global, regional, and local support which is so critical to both parties in this conflict.

Both sides had limited goals, so both were able – with at least some credibility – to claim victory in the media after last week's ceasefire. Hamas was able to assert its militant credentials and instil fear in Israeli citizens with thousands of rockets raining down on them; Israel exacted a severe toll against the people of Gaza for Hamas' actions, and set back Hamas' military capacity, maybe (maybe!) earning a few years of comparative quiet.

That Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was able to strengthen his precarious position in internal Israeli politics probably served the purposes of both him and more militant Palestinians.

When looking at the media, one can point to many instances of partial, biased, unfair, one-sided coverage, leaning both in Palestine and Israel's favour – as might be expected in a longstanding and brutal conflict which raises strong emotions everywhere.

To dwell on this is useful in understanding the role of the media and coaching journalists about bias and fairness, but it detracts from the major shift that has happened.

What we saw reflected in the media was a tidal change in global sentiment towards Palestine and Israel. If we don't take this on board, we won't understand how much things have changed and how futile it is to argue the minutae of bias or the fairness of coverage.

For many years, Israel has been able to rely on the support of most global and particularly Western media, reflecting its relationship with Washington, London, Berlin, and other capitals. There was media criticism of some of Israel's actions, but the overriding sentiment in most coverage in the dominant mainstream outlets was sympathetic to Israel.

When looking at the media, one can point to many instances of partial, biased, unfair, one-sided coverage, leaning both in Palestine and Israel's favour

Not this time. What we witnessed was a rising global awareness of and sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians and a horror of Israel's use of its military power and dominance. We can argue about whether this is fair and just, but more important is to understand why it is the case and what it means for the future.

A few things account for this shift. One is the rise of social media, which has broken down the mainstream media's capacity to be the gatekeeper of international coverage and set the agenda. Social media has given voice to ordinary Palestinians in a way that did not happen before, and allowed the widespread dissemination of horrific images from ordinary citizens on the ground. Some of these are fake, unverified, or partial, but many aren't.

The second is that Israel did some things in the past few weeks that infuriated even sympathetic media. It bombed the building of two of the very few international outlets based in Gaza trying to report from there, Associated Press and Al Jazeera. While it said Hamas was using the building for military purposes, it provided no evidence to the public (though it said it had given evidence to the United States administration) and wanted us to take it on its word. But journalists are less likely to do that after it emerged that the Israeli military misled the media a few days earlier when it said it had begun a ground invasion of Gaza. A number of international outlets reported it, only to be embarrassed when Israel withdrew its statement. Israeli media said this had been a deliberate ploy to draw out Hamas soldiers. And the third important shift is that in the

United States and elsewhere, the #BlackLivesMatter movement has heightened awareness, particularly among young people, of issues of prejudice, bias, and discrimination, and the unfettered use of power to defend it. In other words, the cry of the Palestinians that they suffer the daily humiliation of apartheid resonated in places it hadn't done before. For the first time, there were impassioned speeches in the United States Congress on behalf of the Palestinians. President Joe Biden, who was trying to stay away from the fray, came under strong pressure to shift his position.

During the conflict, both sides were vying to portray themselves as the victims. Israel pointed to Hamas' rockets, fired both from and into civilian areas. But it's

hard to be the victim when you clearly have massive military supremacy and high levels of control over Palestinian territory. Never mind the issue of the treatment of Israeli Arabs, who joined the battle in the streets of Israel.

We can contest the comparison with apartheid, and we can argue about the treatment of Israeli Arabs. We can compare Israel's behaviour with other countries in the region. We can point to instances of biased coverage. We can express outrage that the world overlooks the nature and history of Hamas. We can write selective and partial histories.

But we should be aware that the signs are that Israel is losing this battle for global opinion, even in capitals where its position had been assured.

Even Israel's friends are having increasing difficulty defending aspects of Israeli policy and conduct. And this tide will continue until these core issues – such as occupation, the treatment of Palestinians, and illegal settlements in occupied territories – are faced up to squarely and dealt with

Israel cannot depend any longer on the leniency of the media.

 Anton Harber is Caxton professor of journalism at the University of the Witwatersrand and author of the recent book, "So for the Record: Behind the Headlines in an Era of State Capture" (Jonathan Ball, 2020).



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12 SA JEWISH REPORT 28 May - 4 June 2021

'We're ready for anything', says firefighter on Gaza border

TALI FEINBERG

volunteer firefighter who was born in South Africa has been at the forefront of the fight to protect Israel's "Gaza envelope" - the area of Israel that shares a 40km border with the Palestinian enclave.

Former farmer Keith Isaacson, who is head of security in the Eshkol region, says his family made aliyah to the area in 1975 and has never left - and he will stop at nothing to protect it.

Last week, a video went viral of Isaacson standing in front of a fire which he said was on a moshav nearly 7.5km from the border with Gaza as a result of a rocket landing there. For him, it was just another day at the office, as he attempted to help wherever he could as the area faced a barrage of destruction from the

Of the 4 000 rockets fired into Israel over the past two weeks, "just more than 1 200 were fired into the Eshkol region, and of that, 72 were fired directly into kibbutzim and moshavim. If 30% of missiles are shot into one area, it definitely has side effects," he says.

These include rockets that have burned acres of agricultural land in Israel, and residents leaving the area to get a break from the

incessant stress. "We don't call it evacuation," says Isaacson. This is home for him and so many others, and they certainly aren't leaving.

Though people in the area are resilient, Isaacson says, more than 50% have had to have counselling to deal with the trauma of living under a rain of rockets. "I'm sure there will many more. The whole world comes to this area of Israel to learn about how we treat trauma because there is no one more experienced."

One of his most challenging moments in recent days was "saving wooden houses from a big fire. It surrounded us, but we managed to fight it." Though the farm's fields were burned, he's satisfied that they managed to save the homes from going up in flames.

"My father is from Johannesburg, my mother from Namibia. We made aliyah in 1975, straight to a moshav next to Gaza," Isaacson says. A husband and the father of two sets of twins, he was a farmer until 2014, when Operation Protective Edge wreaked havoc on the region.

"After that, I decided to close my farm and go into security, hoping to restore the confidence that was damaged in 2014. I mostly work with the army because it's such



a sensitive area which shares borders with Gaza and Egypt. I also work with emergency units like fire fighters and rescue teams."

Isaacson says that 40km - two thirds of the Eshkol region's border - is shared with Gaza, and 20km with Egypt. "In those 20km, there are many problems with fighters from ISIS [the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] interacting with the Egyptian army, which affects us daily. It's not our fight, but because it's so close, we are affected. ISIS is trying to smuggle drugs, and it's violent smuggling, with shooting. This whole area feels the bombardment of the Egyptian army. It's not a quiet border."

Yet, ultimately it's a peaceful region, with wide-open spaces and the beauty of farming communities. When he was a farmer, Isaacson's main crop was chrysanthemums. "It's the biggest farming area in Israel – about 450 000 square metres of agricultural land," he says. "It's mainly tomatoes, but also vegetables and citrus."

Terrorists across the border know that the fields are susceptible to fire and take advantage of it. "They send fire balloons and kites which are always carried inland as the wind flows in from the sea. They don't care about nature and conservation. But for us, to see the fields burn is traumatic. Since 2019, they have burnt 40 000 square metres. But lately it has been much less as we have better equipment and are much more organised. There is much more co-operation between fire fighters and nature reserves."

The area is also affected by terrorist tunnels, snipers, drones, and anti-tank missiles from Gaza. Another danger from the recent rocket attacks is missiles left on the ground, some of which haven't yet exploded. "We have the demolition squad come in, and their work can take up to a month," Isaacson says. But, in spite of the dangers, "I doubt one family will leave the area," he says. His parents, brother, and three out of his four adult children live in the Eshkol region.

As Israel battled Hamas, Isaacson says, "We definitely hit them hard - especially their military capacity and tunnel network." He points out that the Israeli army "works tirelessly to prevent the loss of innocent life, sending warnings for civilians to evacuate well ahead of operations". In this context, most of those killed were terrorists, and the total loss of life in Gaza was low compared to what it could have been if any other army was at war in such a highly populated area.

As the ceasefire came into effect, Isaacson notes that "there are many different factions in the terrorist groups, so we hope that no factions break the ceasefire. We are ready for anything, and we are proud to be civilians of this area."

Afrikaans, Jewish, and on YouTube, advocating for Israel

MIRAH LANGER

YouTube channel detailing the facts behind the conflict in Israel is going viral for its assertive unpacking of the context behind the headlines. However, the life story of its creator, Theo Kriel - an Afrikaans South African who was inspired to become an Orthodox Jew by two German Muslim converts he met in

Born in Louis Trichardt, Limpopo, to a staunch Christian family and growing up in George, Kriel said that while he "always believed in G-d from a very young age", he didn't believe in Christianity. In fact, he always felt a particular infinity for Moses,

Saudi Arabia - is the most epic tale of all.

and was nicknamed "Klein [little] Moses" by those

Kriel's childhood was riddled with illness, including cancer as a result of which his leg was amputated at the age of seven after a year of chemotherapy. It was an experience that would later inspire his choice to become a medical prosthetist

orthotist and help others in a similar position. His career path opened up opportunities to work overseas, and by exposing him to many different cultures, would even ultimately lead him

Coming from quite an insular Afrikaans context, his first travels to work in Malaysia, where

he lived with a Hindu family and then Buddhist friends, were eyeopening, he said, although he remained secular.

He then went to work in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, dealing mainly with the royal family. At the hospital where he worked, he met two German brothers who had converted to Islam. The trio would often debate religion. Eventually, these friends told him that his views reflected Judaism, and that he should investigate it further.

At the time, he didn't even know that one could convert to Judaism, as he understood it as a "tribe, a bloodline".

Nevertheless, he consulted – as he jokes – "Rabbi Google", and started researching the religion online, discovering that converting was possible.

In 2012, when he returned to South Africa, he moved to Port Elizabeth and began the process of an Orthodox conversion. At the time, coming from a totally secular lifestyle, he found the switch to a "black and white Haredi vibe" too hectic. He left for England, deciding to practice the religion on his own.

In 2014, he returned to South Africa and settled in Cape Town. He briefly tried Reform Judaism, but felt it didn't suit him, and eventually found a religious home under Rabbi Sam Thurgood at the Beit Midrash Morasha in Arthur's Road, Sea Point. In 2017, he completed his

Kriel made aliyah in 2019, and is now a part of the Hardal community. In Hebrew, Hardal literally means



"mustard" and represents a level of observance between Haredi and Dati Leumi - the national

"We are very strict in our observance, praying three times a day, and in our learning of between three and four hours a day, but we also believe that you should work like everyone else," Kriel said

Although his mother asked him

to speak to a panel of dominees before becoming Jewish, after four of them approved the conversion, she did too. Since then, his family have been supportive and remain close.

Even before his conversion was complete, Kriel launched his YouTube channel - The Jewish Convert. At the time, while many converts had social media channels, they were often more concerned with blending in, "even trying to alter their accents. So, I went the opposite direction. I believe converts should be very proud that they are converts."

The information the channel offers is a mix of

discussion about Judaism including dispelling some Christian ideas about it, conversion, and now commentary

For the first few years, the channel was quiet, with about 100 subscribers joining a month. However, recently, about 100 people have joined a week, and Kriel now has more than 5 000 subscribers as well as more than 500 000 views in total.

> There is an eclectic mix amongst those interested, Kriel said, including Jewish baal teshuvas (secular Jews who have become religious) and Christians. The majority of subscribers are from America and also represented are South Africa, Israel, and

The function of his channel, including the commentary on Israel, is "to show what things are really about, without the media or what people say or believe, because with belief, you can believe in anything. I'm pro-Israel but I'm also pro-facts, so if Israel does something that isn't sababa [cool], I will also report on it."

Most recently he has made videos discussing what really happened at Al-Agsa Mosque in Jerusalem, as well as filming and explaining rocket attacks on civilians in Israel. He has also discussed comedian Trevor Noah's comments about the situation.

When it comes to the situation in the region, "I wish people would fact-check

more. I say in all my videos on the matter: 'Don't believe what I'm telling you: I've got an Israeli flag in my background, I'm ultra-Orthodox, I'm going to give you the religious pro-Israel opinion, but fact-check me - go google it'."

He says making aliyah "isn't as advertised" because of some of the logistical complications but nevertheless, Israel remains the "land of the Jews for centuries, and where we should be".

"It's not Lalaland, but it's our land," he posits.

Now aged 35, Kriel said on reflection, he appreciates the inner growth his conversion has nourished. His connection to Judaism is profound. "You are joining a very long history: the longest history in the world of a people that have survived. There is no older civilisation still in existence. You can read about them in books, but you can't come out in the streets of Ra'anana [where he now lives] and speak to them."

At its heart, converting has been about connecting with other Jews. It's not, said Kriel, a religion that can be practiced alone. "Ruth [a convert herself] didn't say, 'Let your G-d be my G-d and your people my people'. She said it the other way around. First you must join the people. You need a community. This is the greatest thing about being a Jew."

28 May – 4 June 2021 SA JEWISH REPORT 13

'You wouldn't just unfollow the Nazis' - dealing with online hate

MIRAH LANGER

he Jewish community must never kowtow in the face of online hate. It needs to reframe the discussion of Israel to counter allegations of colonialism and learn about Palestinian history. This is the advice of activist Rudy Rochman about how best to cope with the current rise in antisemitism in mainstream and social media.

"Ask yourself what you would do if you were living when the antisemitism that would lead to the Shoah was rising? I don't think any of us, knowing what happened next, would say, 'Let's ignore it. Let's unfollow the Nazis, and let them do what they want to do.' We would all expose them; we would fight them; we would try to change society," said Rochman at a webinar organised by the SA Zionist Federation, the Israel Centre, The Arch, and The Base this week.

"Keep that in mind as antisemitism is rising in front of us now. Don't put your head in the sand and ignore it," the French-born former Israeli Defense Forces soldier said. Rochman continues to serve as a reservist, and is also involved in organisations and on various public platforms that deal with Jewish education and uniting Israeli and Palestinian activists.

The social-media influencer said that accusations that Israel was a colonial state had to be turned on their head. "In terms of colonisation and settlements, these are terms describing foreign experiences and foreign individuals coming into a land that doesn't belong to them, and exporting those resources back to the motherland.

"The Jews are from this land. When you dig in the sand, you find our history. We are the indigenous, first civilization, pre-colonial identity – the descendants of the Hebrews that finally, for the first time in history, achieved decolonisation. We came back and undid what the Romans did." While Rochman acknowledged that there had been "a lot of failure in between" and "much to fix" whereby "we were getting it wrong

about the other", including Palestinians, "our origins, our legitimacy, our identity, and our connection to this land isn't foreign".

He also called for a change in labels. "A Jewish village isn't a settlement, it's a Jewish village or town or city. We have to stop using this language."

Rochman said a further problem was that the Jewish community, for the most part, never learnt the Palestinian narrative. "We were never taught that they are real human beings who are also suffering; that Israel is also involved in the situation, can play a role, and has a responsibility to deal with their suffering."

Furthermore, many Jewish students are then exposed to the Palestinian story only as spun on university campuses by movements like the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement. Once they feel like they have never been told the whole story by their own community, at times they then reject supporting Israel in the future.

Those supporting Israel not only need to understand Palestinian history, they also need to understand the way Palestinian supporters have twisted this to argue against Israel so that they can better counteract it. "We need to be able to show why being anti-Israel isn't the way to be pro-Palestinian."

After all, suggested Rochman, many of those who purport to be pro-Palestinian are in fact "hijacking" their experience for other purposes. "They don't care when Palestinians are dying by the thousands in Syria; when Palestinians are suffering by the hundreds of thousands in refugee camps in Lebanon; when Palestinians don't have equal rights in Jordan or are suffering in refugee camps there; or when they are being blockaded by Egypt on the side of Egypt and Gaza. They care only about Palestinian suffering when it can be used against Israel." This manipulation

Activist Rudy Rochman spreading Israeli pride in Paris

has to be stopped.

When it comes to the mainstream media, Rochman suggests that these channels tend to communicate information like a "soccer match – making it about one side versus the other; a good guy versus the bad guy". This reductionist approach needs to be challenged, he urged, suggesting that in this case, social media is actually an advantage because it allows a plurality of voices to emerge.

In addition, modern media houses are ultimately businesses concerned with selling advertising. As such, if their audience is anti-Israel, they will keep that angle in their news. The responsibility of those supporting Zionism is "to be ten steps ahead, and be able to change the audience".

The point also isn't to defend Israel based on its accomplishments, such as how it created cherry tomatoes, drip irrigation, or internet applications. It's also not about playing "Israeli music, eating hummus, and feeling proud for a few minutes". Even highlighting the country as a democracy in the Middle East isn't useful. "First of all, democracy is a corrupt system that clearly doesn't work in many places and doesn't achieve true justice for what it's intended to build," Rochman said.

Second, he questioned why, if monarchies like Thailand, Jordan, and Morocco, or semi dictatorships like Singapore, didn't have to defend their legitimacy, why Israel should.

Rochman contends that a solution for the region will have to come not from the top, but from the ground up. For a variety of reasons, "politicians currently in power, on both sides, aren't interested in changing the status quo". Instead, "there's something better that we can create that can fulfil the aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians. It's going to be about getting both people to open their hearts to recognise the other."

If this is the end point, there's no quick fix in turning the tide of antisemitism. "It's not going to happen overnight. It's not going to happen in one conversation," he said.

Nevertheless, the focus has to be on investing in the next generation and education. "It doesn't matter how many petitions you sign or laws and resolutions you pass; all those laws will be overturned because the next generation is growing, and they are against Israel. So it's our responsibility to make sure that the next generation isn't like that.

"Ultimately, it's important in these tough times to make sure that we take the next chapter of our history into our own hands," Rochman urged.



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14 SA JEWISH REPORT 28 May - 4 June 2021

Virtual tour of Jerusalem a highlight for KDL



om Yerushalayim celebrations at King David Linksfield Senior Primary began with a live walk to the Kotel with Israel-education organisation StandWithUs and a moving tekes (ceremony) with a flag procession, singing, and dancing. Other highlights of the day included a Grade 6 tour of the sites of Jerusalem, a Grade 5 Jerusalem poetry workshop, and sessions run by the DIJE (Division of Informal Jewish Education) and Lior Agiv from the South African Zionist Federation.

Sandton Sinai appoints student leaders

andton Sinai Primary School held a special assembly to announce the Grade 7 monitors for 2021. It was a proud moment for the school as it was the first time it had formalised student leadership positions. Jesse Bregman was appointed head monitor; Saul Ephron sports monitor; Ariel Margalit cultural monitor; Uriel Miller sound and lighting monitor; and Jaden Cohen hatzlacha boys!



events monitor. Mazaltov and Jesse Bregman; Ariel Margalit; Saul Ephron; Uriel Miller; Mrs Lara Salkinder (primary school principal); Jaden Cohen; and Mrs Sofia Caripi (head of department intermediate phase)

Letters

MEDIA BIAS REGARDING BOMBING OF ISRAEL PUZZLING

I have been reading about the present war in Gaza and watching the comments on TV. Mention has been made of the thousands of rockets launched by Hamas and others at Israel and of the casualties caused by Israel in retaliation. According to the reports, so far, most of the casualties seem to have been Palestinian. Very few Israeli casualties have been reported in comparison with Palestinian ones, and I found the tone to be one of largely anti-Israel condemnation.

I find this puzzling. During and before the 2014 Arab onslaught on Israel and the erection of the Iron Dome defence system, the number of rockets fired from Gaza at the surrounding Israeli population was estimated to have been about 14 000. In fact, it was only after that bombardment of the Jewish civilian population by the

Palestinians reached 80 missiles a day that Israel sent in its army.

The present Palestinian onslaught mentions about 2 000 missiles. Some years ago, I visited the Israeli village of Sderot which is located on the border of Gaza about 5km from Gaza City after it had been hit by about 4 000 rockets from Gaza. I saw the effects of such an assault on a civilian city and its population for myself, especially on the little ones in the creche, the only bomb-proof building in the village.

I also noted that Israel had destroyed some large buildings, but in the TV interviews, one of the occupants stated that they had been warned by Israel of the impending destruction of the edifices, and so evacuated before suffering any casualties.

- Don Krausz, Johannesburg

JEWS IN CROSSHAIRS OF SA GOVERNMENT

The South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) headed by minister Naledi Pandor has called for sanctions against Israel resulting from the recent hostilities between Hamas in Gaza and Israel. As the minister of foreign affairs, one would think that her department would be aware of a host of unfortunate and tragic conflicts around the globe in which innocent civilians including children have been killed.

Unfortunately, armed with such facts, the minister, wearing her colour-coded blinkers, sees only one conflict that warrants comment from her and DIRCO.

The conflict in the Tigray province of Ethiopia, the Turkish onslaught on the Kurds, the Yemen war, the Syrian genocide, or the multifaceted conflict in Myanmar are just a few of the conflict regions around the globe claiming not hundreds but thousands of civilian casualties including thousands of children purposely targeted, as has been the case with schools and a hospital in Syria. But the good minister marks all those absent, and has yet to make any comment about the human-rights abuses in these conflict regions. Obviously these conflicts don't constitute such abuses.

Of the 245 killed (on both sides) in the Gaza conflict, it seems there wasn't a single combatant killed in Gaza. Of those

children killed, it seems there were no child soldiers forming part of the Hamas militants. Just how blind, biased, and antisemitic can this minister be?

South African arms have found their way to most of those conflicts except Israel, in direct contravention of the country's policy of not selling arms to countries with doubtful human-rights records. But profit overrides humanity when it comes to the morality of the African National Congress (ANC) government.

The South African government needs to do some soul searching, and look in its own backyard at the crime statistics and every other facet of its incompetent administration including its abysmal management of securing and distributing coronavirus vaccines.

When will an administration responsible for international relations find the responsibility and morality to deal fairly with all nations around the globe?

It's simple, the ANC government, in its international stand and its president's statements, displays blatant antisemitism of the worst nature. It's Jews that are in the crosshairs of the ANC government, and it's time that this is called out by freedom loving nations, and the ANC is condemned for firing up hatred amongst its citizens. - Allan Wolman, Israel

OUTPOURING OF SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

Over the years, whenever Israel has had to fight a defensive war against Hamas in particular, the world has condemned it. This time around, things have changed.

An interesting article published in Israel Today (23 May) stated that the speaker of Knesset, Yariv Levin, had thanked various countries and organisations for their outpouring of support for Israel during the latest round of fighting Hamas.

Levin said that he had received calls and messages of support from Inter-Parliamentary Union President Duarte Pacheco who expressed unwavering support for Israel's right to selfdefence, as did German Bundestag President Wolfgang Schäuble, and the president of the

National Council of Austria, Wolfgang Sobotka. Letters were also received from pro-Israel groups in the parliament of France, Slovakia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Statements of solidarity and support were issued by the parliamentary national security committees in Lithuania and Latvia, by pro-Israel groups in the United Kingdom, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Honduras. In Brazil, the son of President Jair Bolsonaro spoke in favour of the Jewish state in a speech before parliament.

I'm sure that there are many more in the world who are pro-Israel.

The tide is turning, folks. We aren't alone.

- Sonny Myerson, Cape Town

THE MASTER OF THE ONE-LINER WHO MADE PEOPLE LAUGH

A tribute to the pen of the late Russell Sadowsky, born 17 November 1936, died 26 February 2021 - my dad, my hero, my blood.

your jokes, personality, and loved making people happy. You were a true celebrity who loved 702, letters to editors at The Star, Daily Mail, Greek radio station, and

You always uplifted your fellow man or woman with

Your zest for life uplifted people, and your humour will never be forgotten.

As a butcher in Hillbrow, your business card said, "Our reputation is at steak" - it was direct and it made people laugh. You said, "Mike, never put off tomorrow what you can do today."

You loved calling John Berks and radio stations to be heard. They never had to screen you as they knew you had something up your sleeve.

Dad, your attributes and one-liner jokes were

Your wife, Anita; daughter Ros; brothers Lional and Cyril; and family in the United States will miss you.

Thank you to the SA Jewish Report for giving me this opportunity to write this tribute.

May you rest in peace, and may your legacy live on.

- Mike Sadowsky, Johannesburg

GRATITUDE TO JOBURG CHEV FOR CARE DURING COVID-19

At Golden Acres, we have just received our vaccines against COVID-19. We would like to take this opportunity to express our deepest thanks and gratitude to the Johannesburg Chevrah Kadisha. The Chev has now administered well over a thousand doses to all residents and staff in all of its facilities,

As residents of Golden Acres for the past 12 years, and the parents of our late daughter, who resided at the Selwyn Segal Hostel for 13 years, there can never be enough words to express our sincere gratitude to the organisation that is the Joburg Chev.

Each member of staff (past and present), serves a "holy" purpose. The welfare of each resident of every facility has always been the top priority of the management and staff. From a personal perspective, all these amazing people have been magnificent, especially during these trying times of the COVID-19 epidemic.

May the entire staff (and all the donors) of the Chevrah Kadisha enjoy Hashem's richest blessings. They are most deserving. – **Anonymous**

SA Jews face vitriolic antisemitism online

>>Continued from page 1

posts on their WhatsApp and Telegram groups. Each scenario has to be handled differently according to the circumstances. We aren't attempting to shut down conversations, but rather ensure that the discussions take place in more appropriate forums."

Says Cape SAJBD Executive Director Daniel Bloch, "The social media assault is abusive and intense, designed to attack the individual on both a personal and professional basis. We cannot advise the community whether or not to express themselves and what platforms to use - that's a personal choice. However it needs to be aware that social media is a platform for hate speech, and people need to be prepared for a variety of responses."

The Community Security Organisation's Jevon

Greenblatt says, "There has been a global increase in online antisemitic content. In South Africa, we are witnessing an increase in cyber-bullying. There are numerous reports of South Africans sharing online antisemitic content, and we are reviewing the evidence.

"Words turn to actions, so when antisemitism is allowed to exist and flourish without consequence, acts of intimidation and possibly violence against Jews are likely to follow. We are already seeing this in the United States and across Europe. In at least three instances in South Africa, we have seen cyber-bullying resulting in physical threats. These are all being investigated."

His advice to anyone being harassed is "to report any antisemitic incidents immediately, with as much information as possible. If it's a threat or physical assault, a case must be opened with the police. Ensure that your social media profile has the necessary security activated. Be very careful of letting others know your family's location, including your children's school. This should be discussed with your children too.

"Although the conflict may have come to an end for now, the global tremors of antisemitism are likely to continue," says Greenblatt. "We must ensure that we continue to build and strengthen the overall security of our community. This takes time, good people, and resources. It's human nature to think about security only when there is a known threat, however this is usually too late. It's incumbent on each of us to empower ourselves with the skills, knowledge, and actions to remain safe."

Nicole Rosenbaum, who made aliyah from South Africa in 2020, got caught up in an online debate about Israel on 24 May 2021. She's unafraid to ask hard questions, and says anti-Israel supporters are usually unable to answer them. Instead, many turn to empty slogans or antisemitism.

Responding to some of Rosenbaum's points, a Nazeem Hartey Jumbo (who appears to be from Cape Town) said, "I'm starting to wonder if the Holocaust was a blessing!" Responding to Jumbo, a Sarah Achmad (whose Facebook profile says she lives in Cape Town) said, "Me too. They never learnt their lesson."

 To report antisemitism, cyber-bullying, intimidation or threats, email sajbd@sajbd.org (Johannesburg) or call, text or WhatsApp the Cape SAJBD's #ReportHate Hotline on 079 994 5573, or complete its #ReportHate tool here: https://bit.ly/3hH1ZbU

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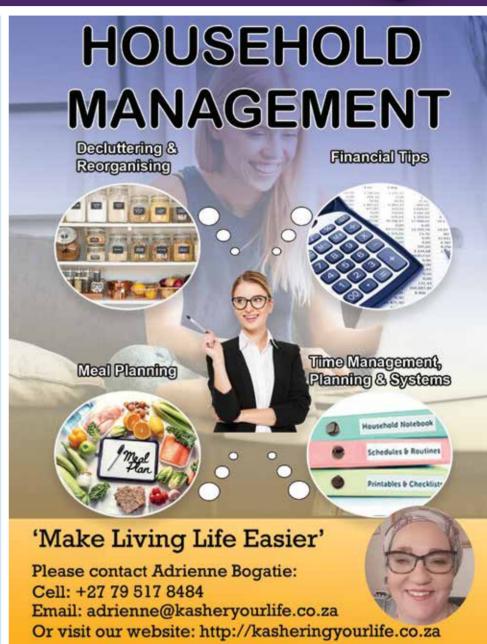
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How to throw a protest party

ere's an opinion I'm fairly certain won't be a popular one. What if we looked at this whole protest thing from another angle? What if we didn't meet protest with protest, flag with flag, screaming with shouting, and what if we didn't allow hate onto the agenda? What if instead of protecting of my protest party is dependent on our our neighbourhoods from the onslaught of anti-Israel demonstrators, we welcomed them as our guests? Because after all, last Sunday's protestors were our guests. In a strange way. And I hope we weren't rude.

Before you explain to me they didn't wish us well, let me pre-empt it by saying that I have a list of Shabbat guests we have had in our home that were less kind. And maybe more deadly.

I know that if my mom was still alive, her first question would be to ask what we will be serving our guests from another neighbourhood. And because running out of food isn't an option, we would have to go the catered route. Although tempted to choose falafel and pita, it would be best, I would tell her (if she were alive), to keep away from anything Middle Eastern. I would hate to have resolved the Israel Palestinian conflict only to have it fall apart in an argument as to who invented humus. No, Nando's - an unequivocally Portuguese and South African brand that has the ability to provide kosher and halaal - would be an obvious choice.

Not only does everyone love Nando's, but it's almost impossible to scream something hateful while eating a double chicken burger, lemon and herb, with no garnish. We have tested this on our children. It's also virtually impossible to hold tightly on to a Hezbollah flag with marinade dripping down your arm.

Don't ask me how I know this.

For dessert, I would open it up to the greater Glenhazel bakers to whip up something in blue, white, red, and green, and mention to our pro-Palestinians that if they do want to bring something with them into our area, cut up fruit always goes down well.

The music choice also can't be left to chance. I would refrain from playing anything by Shwekey or Omer Adam, but would definitely go with Jerusalema, Johnny Clegg, to remind our guests that Jews can both sing and dance, and Kaptein, just to mix it up a little.

Whereas I'm fully aware that the success

INNER VOICE Howard Feldman

guests not wanting us dead for being Zionists, I do wonder if it isn't time we considered alternatives to the traditional hate festival. And, whereas it might be too soon to go the Nando's route, I do believe that in South Africa, we have the opportunity to do things

Why? Because we aren't so good at hate. Because as South Africans, we can't help ourselves and deep down, we don't want conflict. Scream what we will, I believe that South Africans on either side of the Beyachad wall are decent people who might view life and history



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differently, but who following a protest, would be the first to help each other out.

responsibility seriously, and it's time for us to

URNISHERS

show the world how conflict can be resolved.

I believe it's time for us to take our

And even if we can't agree on who invented humus, we can always order a double chicken burger, lemon and herb, with no garnish.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Fighting fires after the ceasefire

■ogether with the rest of the Jewish world, we welcomed with relief the cessation last Friday, 21 May, of the latest deadly round of hostilities between Israel and Hamas. The conflict lasted 11 days, and resulted in the heaviest bombardment of Israeli cities since 2014, but fortunately it didn't necessitate a full ground invasion of Gaza. At the time of writing, the ceasefire appears to be holding.

Diaspora Jewry has learned to brace itself for retaliatory attacks whenever there is a major eruption of violence on the Middle East front. Indeed, over this past fortnight, there have been a rash of incidents around the world, many of them involving serious acts of violence and/or vandalism.

Openly targeting Jews outside Israel, even when (as was the case here) there can be no doubt as to who was guilty of actually instigating the conflict, has become the modus operandi of radical Islamist groups and their ideological fellow travellers everywhere. As shown by a sharp spike in antisemitic incidents over the past several days, South Africa hasn't been unaffected by these dangerous trends. However, in terms of both numbers and gravity, the impact of these attacks on our community has, fortunately, been less serious than that experienced by our counterparts in North America and Western Europe.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies

(SAJBD) is in the process of following up on the incidents reported to it. In addition to considering how best to bring perpetrators to book, this has involved providing support for community members who have experienced abuse in various settings, including in non-Jewish schools, universities, and in the business environment. Working with our international partners, we have also assisted in addressing the multiple instances of online hate that is especially prevalent at times like this.

On the political front, the Board has engaged with political leadership and diplomats at the highest level to address issues that have arisen, as well as consulting and liaising with our global counterparts. We have also devoted much effort to making a difference in the media arena, ensuring that while still grossly biased, the coverage of events hasn't been all oneway traffic. I commend those members of the Board and the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), both lay and professional, who have come forward to present Israel's case in spite of the profoundly hostile environment in which they have to operate.

We also continue to engage on a political level, challenging the gross one-sided statements that have been issued in the past weeks.

In response to a protest march against Beyachad on Sunday, the Board, SAZF, and Community Security Organisation (CSO) organised a counter-



Shaun Zagnoev

demonstration at the same venue. While necessarily limited in size because of COVID-19 concerns, this gathering provided an important opportunity for Israel supporters from within and without the community. We will continue to do everything we can to protect our community and ensure that our right to identify with and support Israel continues to be upheld in spite of the efforts of those seeking to intimidate, silence, and sideline anyone who opposes their radical anti-Israel ideology and in so doing, shamelessly flout the fundamental democratic principles upon which our society is based.

We request that community members continue to appraise us of any incidents they experience or otherwise become aware of by emailing the SAJBD on sajbd@sajbd.org or by contacting the CSO control room on 086 18 000 18 or by WhatsApp 066 101 8360.

• 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

