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■ Volume 27 – Number 11 ■ 23 March 2023 ■ 1 Nisan 5783

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UCT denies responsibility for terrorist talk on campus

TALI FEINBERG

The University of the Cape Town (UCT) has denied responsibility for allowing members of terrorist groups Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) to address an audience on its campus via a video call from Iran.

At the event on Monday evening, 20 March, hosted by the Palestine Solidarity Forum (PSF), Hamas and Hezbollah flags were draped around the room while members of terrorist groups Hamas and PIJ addressed the audience.

Nasser Abu Sharif from PIJ and Khaled Qadomi from Hamas were hosted online by the PSF at its "Israeli Apartheid Week" (IAW) event.

In response to queries from the *SA Jewish Report*, UCT spokesperson Elijah Moholola said, "The University of Cape Town is aware of an event hosted by one of the students' societies on campus ... where the two speakers in questions participated. Concerns around the speakers were raised by another students' society prior to the event. An engagement followed between the two students' structures on this matter."

He went on to say that as it wasn't "an institutional event, but one hosted by a students' society", so it wasn't the university's business.

However, the university didn't acknowledge the impact on students – both Jewish and not – of inviting terrorist organisations onto campus.

Erin Dodo, the chairperson of the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) Western Cape, says, "I believe this impacts on the safety of Jewish students and students in general. These speakers are known to have a long list of crimes that they and their organisations committed. Welcoming them on campus compromises everyone's safety, and makes UCT a place for violence to be excused."

Dodo did everything she could to stop the speakers from addressing the event. "SAUJS and the PSF had a meeting with department of student affairs to disclose plans and speakers for IAW. However, the PSF made absolutely no reference to the two speakers they would

have on Monday night [20 March], both of whom represent their organisations in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"This goes directly against our agreement to disclose speakers. Therefore, on Monday at 10:42, I phoned one of the department of student affairs' directors to alert her. She asked me to put it in an email so she could escalate the matter, which I did."

Dodo wrote in the message, "I have no idea how UCT can allow this." She then listed every terror attack that PIJ

representative (who was copied in the email to the university), who she said, "ignored what I had written (in the email), and went on to claim the speakers were 'Jewish allies'."

"The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) contacted the acting vice-chancellor, Professor Daya Reddy. I had copied him in my email and still, nothing," she continues.

Cape SAJBD Executive Director Daniel Bloch says, "There was no response to our initial email sent on

able to express themselves in an environment free from discrimination and prejudice," she says.

The event was held at the same time that Israeli Or Eshkar (32) passed away, murdered by a Hamas terrorist because he was Jewish. The Hamas charter calls for the killing of Jews and subscribes to antisemitic tropes of Jews controlling the world. The PIJ is the most radical terrorist organisation operating in the Palestinian arena, dedicated to violent *jihad*. Both have been designated as terrorist organisations by Australia,



Hamas representative in Iran, Khaled Qadomi, addressing the Palestine Solidarity Forum event on UCT campus this week

Photo: Facebook

had perpetrated, as the Hamas speaker had not yet been announced at that stage. "This terrorist organisation has labelled Jews as their enemy to be killed," she wrote.

"To say this makes Jewish students feel unsafe is a ridiculous understatement," continued her email. "We feel threatened, targeted, and ostracised. I cannot believe I even have to write an email that an organisation that supports the military regime of Iran and a terrorist organisation shouldn't be given a platform to speak."

Dodo waited but received no response from student affairs. She did receive a message from the PSF

20 March whereby we raised our concerns and requested that the messages by PIJ and Hamas not be screened.

"We sent a second letter on 21 March, whereby we voiced our concerns at UCT for allowing this to happen. Professor Reddy responded that evening [on 21 March] saying he would get back to me." That's the last Bloch heard from UCT.

Dodo heard nothing further from UCT, but still hopes the university will properly address the issue. "SAUJS, together with our partners like the SAJBD, are committed to ensuring Jewish students on campus feel safe and are

Canada, the European Union, Israel, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Photos on the PSF's social media show that less than 10 students were listening to the terrorist leaders. On the same evening, the PSF also held a poorly-attended "vigil for martyrs", in which students held Hezbollah and Hamas flags and a student wrapped his face in a scarf with a Hamas logo while holding up pictures of "martyrs".

"The Cape SAJBD is appalled [at this event]," says Cape

Continued on page 10>>

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'Not my country anymore' – why Israelis are emigrating

DEBORAH DANAN – JTA

When Daniel Schleider and his wife, Lior, leave Israel next month, it will be for good – and with a heavy heart. “I have no doubt I will have tears in my eyes the whole flight,” said Schleider, who was born in Mexico and lived in Israel for a time as a child before returning on his own at 18. Describing himself as “deeply Zionist”, he served in a combat unit in the Israeli army, married an Israeli woman, and built a career in an Israeli company.

Yet as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu returned to power, assembled a coalition that includes far-right parties, and started pushing changes that would erode hallmarks of Israeli democracy, Schleider found himself booking plane tickets and locating an apartment in Barcelona. Spain's language and low cost of living made the city a good fit, he said, but the real attraction was living in a place where he wouldn't constantly have to face down the ways that Israel is changing.

Israel's strength over its 75 years, Schleider said, is “the economy we built by selling our brains ... And yet, in less than half a year, we've managed to destroy all that.”

Schleider has been joining the sweeping protests that have taken root across the country in response to the new right-wing government and its effort to strip the Israeli judiciary of much of its power and independence. But while he considered fighting the changes rather than fleeing them, he also accepts the government's argument that most Israelis voted for something he doesn't believe in.

Schleider is far from alone in seeking to leave Israel this year. Though Israelis have always moved abroad for various reasons, the pace of



Israelis protesting against the government's controversial judicial reform bill block the main road leading to departures at Ben Gurion Airport

planned departures appears to be picking up. Many of those weighing emigration were catalysed by the new government, according to accounts from dozens of people in various stages of emigration and of organisations aiding them.

Ocean Relocation, which assists people with immigration to and emigration from Israel, has received more than 100 inquiries a day from people looking to leave since Justice Minister Yariv Levin first presented his proposal for judicial reform back in January. That's four times the rate of inquiries the organisation received last year, according to senior manager Shay Obazanek.

Continued on page 4>>

The alef of leadership

Torah Thought



Rabbi Yossy Goldman
– Life Rabbi Emeritus,
Sydenham Shul

Here in South Africa, our national treasure continues to be the late Nelson Mandela. The status and respect he enjoys even after his death are legendary. To have suffered imprisonment for 27 years and still come out preaching peace and reconciliation is nothing less than awe-inspiring. But those who knew the man knew him to possess a genuine humility.

Many years ago, my family bumped into then-President Mandela while he happened to be going for a walk near our home. He took the time to stop and chat with the children, asking each of them about school and their favourite subject. Then he carried on walking the next two blocks while holding the hands of my two young children, just like a loving *zayde*. How many presidents or prime ministers can you see doing that when they're not running for election?

In Mandela, we saw a leader who was as humble as he was great.

The beginning of the Book of *Vayikra* (Leviticus) features an interesting lesson in humility.

The very first word, “*vayikra*” features a smaller-than-usual *alef*. Tradition teaches that Moses had initially written the Hebrew word without the *alef* at all, which changes its meaning. *Vayikra* means “and he called”, whereas without the *alef*, it reads *vayikar*, “and he chanced upon”, which is the way G-d communicated to the heathen prophet, Balaam, rather than approaching him deliberately and lovingly as He did with Moses. G-d, however, insisted that Moses write the word *vayikra* with an *alef*, so he had no choice. But he used a small *alef* which is almost indiscernible, reflecting his true humility.

Today, fame and recognition seem to be the keys to success. We have our fair share of self-appointed celebrities with millions of “followers”. Often, these are individuals with absolutely no claim to fame whatsoever,

but they know how to market themselves. To become world-famous in the digital age, all you need is confidence, *chutzpah*, and ... a publicist.

But thankfully, we're beginning to hear some intelligent divergent voices.

Author Malcolm Gladwell has much to say about the downfall of the overconfident. His illustrations range from upsets on the battlefield to meltdowns in big business. According to Gladwell, “Being humble should be a qualification, not a disqualification, for picking a leader.”

Indeed, the contemporary successful chief executive is more likely to be appreciated for his humility than respected for his hubris. He or she will be more communicative, will lead by consensus, and will be a team player rather than a

controlling unilateralist.

The Torah states categorically that the Almighty Himself declared Moses to be “the humblest man on the face of the earth”. The commentators explain that although Moshe was the most powerful leader in history, who took the Israelites out of bondage, who split the sea, and received the tablets from G-d, still, it didn't go to his head. Why? Because he always considered his strengths and qualities as gifts from G-d. Had someone else been granted those very same talents, he reckoned, they might have done even better. So, Moses was simultaneously the greatest prophet and leader of all time and also the humblest of all men.

Greatness is no reason for arrogance. Indeed, the truly great are truly humble.

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G-d communicates to Moses the laws of the Korbanot, the animal and meal offerings: The Hebrew term usually translated “sacrifice” is *korban*. *Korban* literally means “drawing near”.

- The “ascending offering” (*olah*)
- Five varieties of “meal offering” (*mincha*)
- The “peace offering” (*shelamim*)
- The different types of “sin offering” (*chatat*)
- The “guilt offering” (*asham*)

Bullying is a community crisis, says chief rabbi

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

Bullying has become a crisis in our community, whether it occurs through exclusion, nastiness, or manipulation, in person or online, say experts. The problem was highlighted by a visibly emotional Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein last week, who called for the community to acknowledge it and find a resolution.

“Imagine being a teenage girl in a Jewish high school trying to find your place in that world. You battle a bit socially as you’re not a run-of-the-mill, fit-in kind of girl. You’re bullied, not outright, but subtly with gestures and tones and mocking words and actions.



Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein speaking at the Inter Jewish Day School Student Leadership Summit at Sandton Sinai Primary

Time spent with others on a school project goes well, and hope and light appears as maybe someone will be nice at school, only for it to be dashed by ignorance and the words, ‘I was dared to be nice to you.’”

Quoting this heart-wrenching social media post written by an anonymous mother, Goldstein said, “There’s a crisis out there in our community, and so many children and teenagers are in pain. I feel a sense of responsibility as chief rabbi to talk about this even though it’s uncomfortable and painful.”

Goldstein was spurred to action not only because of this post and the overwhelming response it generated, but because of multiple reports from parents and senior social workers

who have indicated the growing severity and prevalence of bullying across the community.

He spoke at an Inter Jewish Day School Student Leadership Summit hosted at Sandton Sinai Primary School on 12 March. With teachers and student leaders in attendance, Goldstein thought it an apt forum to raise this issue, saying that the courage it takes for bystanders to stand up against bullying requires true leadership.

Speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, the anonymous mother, whose child has subsequently changed schools, says she feels it was necessary for her story to be shared. “It seems to have opened up a can of worms, and will hopefully reach people. I don’t know if it

will though because the culprits are supported by the parents who say, ‘It could never be my child.’”

Such a response can hamper schools’ efforts to resolve such incidents. “Keeping pupils safe is always a priority of the school, but we can’t do it without the support and partnership of the parents who need to work with us whether their children exhibit bullying behaviour or are the victims of it,” says Lisa Klotz, senior social worker at King David High School Linksfield. “It becomes an impossible situation when parents

absolutely refuse to hear the role that their children may be playing.”

Social worker Tova Goldstein, who says that half of her practice is comprised of bullied teens, also advocates a collaborative approach to get results. “We have to work together, not against each other, with the same goal – the mental health and emotional development of both sides,” she says.

Rebbetzin Wendy Hendler, the co-founder and director of Koleinu SA, says that in some instances, perpetrators witness bullying at home, but it’s a multifaceted area that cannot be attributed to one factor. Koleinu SA provides a helpline for victims of abuse in the South African Jewish community, and has

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recently received multiple calls around bullying incidents.

“We need to be role models to our kids in terms of how we treat other people, how we treat ourselves, and how we treat those different to us,” says Rozanne Sack, also Koleinu SA’s co-founder and director. Hendler says we must be clear when defining incidents as bullying. “It’s not a one-off but rather an ongoing pattern of repeated acts of cruelty in whatever way they may manifest, whether it’s through exclusion, teasing, insulting, physical violence, and so on.”

Dealing with bullying is not about placing blame, says child protection and development specialist Luke Lamprecht, the head of advocacy at Women and Men Against Child Abuse. “It’s about asking how we as a community of care work together to put this child’s development back on track because they’re lacking a set of social skills.” The COVID-19 pandemic, he says, has made children more unkind and less attuned to social cues.

Lamprecht takes a restorative approach, helping the child to take restorative steps for themselves and the person they’ve harmed. “All ruptures come with the opportunity to repair,” he says. “Their behaviour is telling us something, and our job is to listen and respond appropriately even if it may be a painful process.”

Sheri Hanson, a mental health co-ordinator at Hatzolah, also highlights the impact of COVID-19, especially regarding children’s ability to connect with one another. She says there has been a marked increase in calls about exclusion, bullying, and unkindness to the Hatzolah Connect anonymous teen chatline. “Kids aren’t seeing each other as other humans with feelings. There’s a need to excel and move forward at any cost.”

She also points to the increasingly prevalent role played by the digital realm. “Cyberbullying and exclusion are at a level that we’ve never seen before,” she says. “There’s no release from it because in the past, you’d have a bad day at school and then go home. Now you go home and watch it continue online.”

King David High School Victory Park counsellor Gita Lipschitz agrees. “In the stressful times we live in, there’s a marked increase in the number of incidents of relational and emotional bullying, with the vast majority playing out on the various social media platforms.”

Yet, she says, even if an incident takes place outside of school, there are ramifications for students during school hours. “A team effort between parents and schools giving the children the same message, educating for kindness, empathy, and caring is the most effective way of responding to all forms of bullying,” Lipschitz says.

When it comes to dealing with online bullying, Klotz says, having hard evidence can make the situation easier to deal with. “Pupils have been educated to take screenshots and keep voice notes of any bullying behaviour,” she says.

In consultation with an external professional, Yeshiva College is in the final stages of updating its existing bullying policy to encompass changes in the nature of bullying. “Exclusion of children and feelings of isolation are exacerbated by social media,” say Caryn Horowitz and Larry Hirschowitz, psychologists in the boys’ and girls’ high schools as well as Caryn Falkson, a social worker in the primary school.

This is especially true when events that certain kids aren’t invited to are posted on online platforms or when some are excluded from WhatsApp groups. “Kids say things on social media which they can never say face to face,” they point out.

The school collaborates with parents and children to curb bullying, and is focusing on preventative strategies that include workshops, guest speakers, and general school themes.

We cannot totally protect our children from being bullied, says (social worker) Goldstein. “What we can do is build them up, point them in the direction of their own inner strength, create a space for them to feel good about themselves, and build their self-esteem and resilience. They need to know that no matter what, we’re in their corner.”

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Meticulous planning puts paid to EFF violence

NICOLA MILTZ

When Dean Immermann, the chief security officer of Community Active Protection (CAP), hugged his wife goodbye early on the evening of Sunday, 19 March, she had a vague idea of some of the risks he faced.

She knew that he was about to start one of the longest security shifts of his working life in anticipation of the much-hyped Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) planned nationwide shutdown the next day.

Exactly how things would turn out was anybody's guess. She could only hope and pray that things would run smoothly, and he'd return home unscathed.

It turns out the protest was largely peaceful, with sporadic and short-lived incidents of unrest, which were swiftly dealt with.

However, it was all hands on deck for police and security personnel, with massive collaboration across multiple clusters and a show of force on the streets and behind the scenes.

Immermann, whose team was supplemented with 100 additional professional operational members and had about 140 CAP vehicles on the road, remained on duty for a 30-hour deployment, which cost in the region of R700 000 to R1 million. The organisation fulfilled a vital role in helping to protect the community from any eventuality should the EFF protests turn violent or things spiral out of control.

"Planning for this day took place weeks before," he said. "We planned meticulously for any scenario." The dreaded shutdown, which called for an end to load shedding and for President Cyril Ramaphosa to step down, conjured visions of the devastating July 2021 riots.

CAP cautioned against falling prey to fear mongering and fake, unverified information, and urged community members and all stakeholders to remain calm and continue with their day, remaining alert and well informed. Cognisant of the EFF's right to protest, the organisation was also mindful of people's right to work. For updates, the organisation provided a live map outlining areas of activity.

"It was hard to predict considering the limited

information available. We made sure we had the ability to lock down a multitude of areas concurrently and bolster security if needed," he said. "We had drones on standby and canine capability as well as armoured personnel carriers with deployable barriers."

Planning for a doomsday scenario, he said, "included the procurement of thousands of litres of fuel and water and electricity supply as well as

"Earlier on Sunday, we removed tyres stashed away in bushes and on pavements, and cleared concrete rubbish bins in the street," he said.

"At one point on Monday, there were thousands of protesters on the Grayston Drive bridge, but it was peaceful, people marched alongside vehicles. We went in expecting the worst hoping for the best, and in the end, we got what we hoped for. Safety and security were our goals, and they were

infrastructure, theft, and attempted looting. A little less than 25 000 tyres were confiscated during the national planned action, strategically placed "for acts of criminality", according to Natjoints.

Of those arrested, Gauteng recorded the highest number with 149.

Natjoints spokesperson Brigadier Athlenda Mathe commended "the swift response by members of the South African Police Service and other law-enforcement agencies to pockets of opportunistic criminality".

"The secondary support role of the South African National Defence Force in assisting the work of the police by protecting critical infrastructure such as ports of entry, toll roads, and harbours has also yielded positive results.

"The role of private security in the sharing of resources and as a force multiplier on the ground also played a major role in ensuring that law-enforcement visibility was heightened."

Mathe also thanked community police forums, neighbourhood watches, and other community groups which supported law-enforcement authorities.

Natjoints further commended the transport sector, especially the South African National Taxi Council and National Taxi Alliance.

"This was a victory not only for law enforcement but for the country. Everyone pulled together and collaborated, which should instil optimism across communities that we've got this. It was a peaceful protest."

Though the risks of any shift "comes with the territory", Immermann said he made sure to check in with his wife and family regularly, and admitted to being exhausted at the end of the long day.



A few Economic Freedom Fighters show their support for the Palestinian cause

Photo: Ari Marcus

making plans for scarcity of food and shelter should there be an infrastructure collapse, including plans for effective communication should network towers go down".

"My role on the day was to roam around CAP areas and report to the specially set up Joint Operations Command [JOC], which would then verify information and relay it to ground teams and to the South African Police Service and other security and law-enforcement agencies.

"I was in the thick of things, the eyes and ears on the ground, helping to provide information to the JOC, which would then notify all policing and security structures," he said. "The risk of an escalation in tension leading to violence remained high.

"I was at the Grayston Shopping Centre when a small group of protesters began to intimidate shoppers, clearly in violation of an earlier court interdict."

Police acted swiftly to make arrests and quell the situation, Immermann said.

"We had an overwhelming presence with an additional 40 vehicles over and above our routine fleet, and relied on intelligence-driven deployment to various areas in collaboration with the JMPD [Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department] and security covering CAP's operational footprint, which includes hundreds of thousands of people.

"We confirmed a large group of protesters of about 2 000 to 3 000 which was heading towards the Sandton central business district and alerted people to avoid Grayston Drive and Katherine Street. They crossed the M1 bridge on Grayston Drive. Protesters stayed for a while outside the Michelangelo [Hotel]. There was no unrest or illegal activity and it remained peaceful," he said.

Ari Markus, a volunteer security guard from a different company, said he and colleagues had driven through the night patrolling numerous areas in the Norwood policing district, including Orange Grove, Balfour Park, and Louis Botha Avenue.

achieved," he said.

According to the National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (Natjoints), more than 550 protesters were arrested for amongst other things public violence, intimidation, damage to critical

‘Not my country anymore’ – why Israelis are emigrating

>>>Continued from page 2

"Never in history has there been this level of demand," Obazanek said, citing the company's 80 years of experience as the "barometer" of movement in and out the country.

Shlomit Drenger, who leads Ocean Relocation's business development, said those seeking to relocate included families pushed to leave by the political situation; those investing in real estate abroad as a future shelter; and Israelis who can work remotely and are worried about the country's upheaval. Economics are also a concern. With foreign investors issuing dire warnings about Israel's economy if the judicial reform goes through, companies wary to invest in the country, and the shekel already weakening, it could grow more expensive to leave in the future.

"We're living in a democracy and that democracy is dependent on demography, and I can't fight it," said Ofer Stern, 40, who quit his job as a tech developer to travel the world. He is alluding to the fact that Orthodox Jews, who tend to be right-wing, are the fastest-growing segment of the Israeli population. "The country that I love and that I've always loved won't be here in 10 years."

"If this so-called 'reform' is enacted, which is really tantamount to a coup, it's hard to imagine that I want my children to grow up to fight in an army whose particularism outweighs the basic human rights that are so fundamental to my values," said Marni Mandell, who is considering emigrating.

Casandra Larenas had long courted the idea of moving overseas, but she had always batted away the idea. That all changed with the judicial overhaul. While not against the idea of reform per se, Laranas is firmly opposed to the way it is being carried out, saying it totally disregards the millions of people on the other side. Chilean-born Laranas grew up under Augusto Pinochet's

military dictatorship.

"I don't want something like that again," said Larenas, who has purchased a plane ticket in a few months' time and plans to take up residency abroad.

The departure of liberal and moderate Israelis could have implications for Israel's political future as Israel doesn't permit its citizens to vote absentee.

Benjamin-Michael Aronov, who grew up with Russian parents in the US, said he was taken aback by how frequently Israelis express shock that he moved to Israel in the first place. "The number one question I get from Israelis is, 'Why would you move here from the US? We're all trying to get out of here. There's no future here.'"

He said he had come to realise that they were right.

"I thought the warnings were about something that would have an impact on our children or grandchildren, but that our lifetime would be spent in an Israeli high-tech, secular, golden era. But I'm realising the longevity of Tel Aviv's bubble of beaches and parties and crazy-smart, secular people changing the world with technology is maybe even more a fantasy now than when Herzl dreamt it," Aronov said. "I found my perfect home, a Jewish home, sadly being undone by Jews."

Not everyone choosing to jump ship is ideologically aligned with the protest movement. Amir Cohen, who asked to use a pseudonym because he hasn't informed his employers of his plans yet, is a computer science lecturer at Ariel University in the West Bank who voted in the last election for the Otzma Yehudit party chaired by far-right provocateur Itamar Ben-Gvir. Cohen was willing to put aside his ideological differences with the haredi Orthodox parties if it meant achieving political stability, but was soon disillusioned.

"None of it is working. And now we're on our way to civil war, it's that simple," he said.



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Hate Speech Bill a victory, now battle for awareness

OPINION

ALANA BARANOV



After more than a decade of research, countless civil society consultations, lobbying of government, and numerous oral and written submissions to parliament, the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill was finally passed in the National Assembly on Tuesday, 14 March 2023.

This important milestone in the fight against prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination in our country is long overdue, and the news of the overwhelming vote of 237 in favour of the Bill to 79 votes against was welcomed by the majority of non-governmental and human rights organisations across the country.

The Hate Crimes Working Group (HCWG), of which I have the privilege of being a founding and steering committee member representing the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), issued a statement congratulating the department of justice and constitutional development on its efforts to get the Bill adopted. The SAJBD also published its own press release, thanking government and parliament for their efforts on this important issue, and looking forward to engaging further as the Bill now moves to the National Council of Provinces for further discussion.

Effective hate crimes legislation is needed today more than ever. Not just in South Africa, with our rising wave of Afrophobia, xenophobia, and the violent persecution of the LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex) community continuing unabated, but global levels of hate continue to soar.

Internationally, a hate crime is defined as “a criminal act committed with a bias motive”. Hate crimes are often referred to as “identity crimes”, actions directed at the identity of the victim. They are also “message crimes” traumatising and harming not only the individual they are directed at, but serving as a threatening message to the broader group which the victim is seen to represent.

The worsening scourge of hate-based violence around the world has been linked to a dangerous escalation in hateful speech – threats from faceless social media handles online and in traditional broadcast media, as well vitriolic political rhetoric and propaganda in political debates and public dialogues. Fringe worldviews once deemed politically incorrect or socially inappropriate are being emboldened and going mainstream. The spread of fake news and conspiracy theories only further serves to ferment discord and mistrust, festering fear of the “other”.

The Jewish community has been leading efforts to combat hate in South Africa for many years. In the aftermath of the horrific xenophobia riots of 2008, the SAJBD joined other civil society groups to strategise about longer term and durable policy solutions that would address the core of the problem. It was during these discussions that the HCWG was formed – a multi-sectoral network of nongovernment organisations that works to spearhead advocacy and reform initiatives pertaining to hate crimes in South Africa. Since 2009, the HCWG has been doing research and monitoring data on hate crimes across the country, using this data in our lobbying for comprehensive legislative measures and awareness programmes to combat hate.

The passing of the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill heralds a new dawn in the ongoing struggle for human rights for all in South Africa. The Bill not only sends a strong

message that hate and prejudice are unacceptable in our society, it assists the South African Police Service and prosecutors in investigating, charging, and prosecuting hate crimes and hate speech. The Bill will also give courts meaningful sentencing guidelines, and allow for the recording of statistics, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of the nature and scope of the problem of hate so that effective interventions can be devised.

The Bill has been the source of some controversy, with certain organisations and interest groups coming out publicly against it. Indeed, parties such as the Democratic Alliance, African Christian Democratic Party, and Freedom Front Plus all voted against the Bill in the National Assembly last week. It's important to stress that while many may have disagreements with certain aspects of the Bill, specifically the section on hate speech, the Bill ultimately protects freedom of religion, freedom of expression, and freedom of speech. All of these freedoms are protected by the Constitution of South Africa.

“THE PASSING OF THE PREVENTION AND COMBATING OF HATE CRIMES AND HATE SPEECH BILL IS A NEW DAWN IN THE ONGOING STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL IN SOUTH AFRICA.”

Although this long-awaited Bill is a powerful step in the right direction, unfortunately much more needs to be done to address the disintegration of South Africa's nation-building project and our delicate social cohesion. Legislative and judicial processes need to be supported and augmented with educational and awareness campaigns that will address the deep-seated roots and attitudes of racism, homophobia, and other forms of hatred. Examining our own prejudices and beliefs about others and ensuring that the lessons of the past – in particular how hate that often begins with words soon deteriorates into hurtful action – are passed on to the next generation is crucial to ensure a free and fair society in the future.

It's tragic that while we waited for this Bill, in the past 18 months alone, we have witnessed the murder of more than 30 LGBTQI people, the emboldening of the vigilante group Operation Dudula, and the intensification of medical xenophobia across the nation. Hate harms society and degrades us all. Everything must be done to change not just the laws but the hearts and minds in our country, to foster a culture that celebrates and respects diversity and promotes inclusion, and work towards a country where freedom, equality, and dignity are afforded to all who live here. To create a South Africa where hate truly has no place.

• Alana Baranov is a founding and steering committee member of the Hate Crimes Working Group and the Political and Social Justice Liaison for the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. Alana is also a steering committee member of the World Jewish Congress' Jewish Diplomatic Corps and the Social Justice Liaison of the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre.



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Bullies and bystanders

When something happens on your watch or on your property, can you refuse to accept responsibility for it because you weren't intrinsically involved in it?

That's exactly what the University of Cape Town (UCT) did this week, when it allowed representatives from known terrorist organisations to sprout hatred, albeit online, on its campus.

The organisations, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, are both listed as terrorist organisations by Australia, Canada, the European Union, Israel, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Both are clear in their determination to destroy the Jewish state and its people. In fact, when hundreds of rockets are launched from Gaza into Israel, it's invariably one of these two organisations behind the attacks. Their intention: to kill as many Jews as possible.

However, at the university where so many members of our community got their degrees and have sent their children, this was disregarded because it was simply not an official UCT event.

Perhaps we might understand it slightly if the South African Union of Jewish Students and the Cape Jewish Board of Deputies hadn't made urgent calls to the university – including the acting vice-chancellor – to stop this hateful event before it happened. So, the university cannot claim it didn't know about it.

Surely, the university is aware of the dangers this poses to Jewish students? Wouldn't this make it a little more sensitive about holding such an event, at which there were but a handful of people?

Was it really worth it for the university? Is this what freedom of expression is about – allowing terrorists to spread hatred on campus?

It's Israeli Apartheid Week, and every year, we expect an anti-Israel hate fest. We expect students to voice their support for the Palestinian cause. That's their right, as it's the right of Jewish and other people to counter it.

It's not okay, however, to bring representatives of terrorist organisations to speak on campus. Yes, I know it was online, but what difference does that make? They are live, visible, and spewing hatred. Whether they do it in the flesh or via a camera, it's just as unacceptable.

I hope the university rethinks its decision, and ensures that this never happens again. We don't need to put a match to the kindling on UCT campus, and we do need to do everything in our power to protect all our students.

We won't be bullied into keeping quiet when the situation is so utterly unacceptable.

Bullying isn't just a political problem, it's a daily activity harming our children. So much so, that the chief rabbi has taken up the cudgels to help stop it.

Though some children are fortunate to go through life without being bullied, there are so many whose lives can be tainted or even destroyed by bullies.

In my youth, bullies called you names at school or beat you up on the school playground. Perhaps they would follow you home and harass you outside of the school grounds so it wasn't so public.

The point is: bullying was visible. And at some point, the school, teachers, or parents witnessed it and could potentially act on it – whether they did or didn't do so.

But today, bullying is practically invisible. You may see the signs of it only in the impact it has on a bullied child's personality and the way they behave.

For the most part, it happens on social media and on devices. It's not a physical thing, but emotional and psychological torture.

And though other children or teens are aware of it, they may not do anything to stop it out of fear of the bullies turning on them. Either that, or they carry the shame of not having stopped the bullying for so long, they just let it be. Others have witnessed the bullying for so long, they don't realise how damaging it is.

It takes so little for someone to be selected for bullying. A kid accidentally breaks wind in front of others and becomes known as the smelly child and harassed and bullied indefinitely. If you had to ask the children who bully him why they block their noses when he walks by or spray deodorant at him when he passes, they probably won't be able to remember. But the child carries the stigma of body odour. It can leave a lifetime of scars.

Many children don't fit the traditional mould. They can be quirky, have learning issues, and not always say the right thing. And they get excluded from parties, arrangements on weekends, WhatsApp groups, and fun at school. They may be taunted or, worse, just ignored.

These children are likely to grow up thinking that there's something wrong with them, carrying a shame that's unwarranted.

The point is, it has to stop.

Just recently in our community, we know of two teenagers who took their lives, and we have been led to believe that it was because they could no longer deal with the bullying they endured.

Children leave schools to get away from bullies.

The schools themselves are often held responsible by the parents, but the bullying isn't generally visible to teachers. And those bullied often don't seek help from the powers that be at the schools because they feel such shame.

The solution starts from home, and with all of us. We must accept responsibility for our children who bully – if they do – and we need to teach our children that no form of bullying is acceptable.

We live in a country where bullying is almost a norm, and we're the only ones who can change this.

We have experts who can help, but we need to teach our children how to curb and stop bullying when they see others being subjected to it.

I recall a story told to me by a fabulous man who was in my year at school. He had been seriously bullied. He sought out a very popular older boy, who was kind, and asked him for help. The older kid warned the bullies – in no uncertain terms – to leave his friend alone and threatened them that they might regret it if they did it again. It worked.

There are ways of curbing bullying, but it isn't easy when you're facing it. Because of this, it's important to seek help, even if it is from an older child.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor



Sharpeville and Sobukwe: the day the world turned



OPINION

BENJAMIN POGRUND

There's good reason why South Africa's Human Rights Day is also the world's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. At Sharpeville on Monday, 21 March 1960, the police killed 69 people protesting against pass laws. The massacre transformed South Africa, and overnight, created international hostility against apartheid.

On that day, Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe, the president of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) called for black people to leave their passes at home and go to the nearest police station and demand to be arrested. Not carrying the *dompas* was a crime and meant instant arrest.

I went to see him at 05:30 that morning at his home in Mofolo in Soweto. Not only was I a reporter on the then *Rand Daily Mail*, but we were already close friends. We had liked each other the moment we met. As my wife, Anne, later described him, "A tall, elegant man with such life and kindness shining in his face." He had a natural charisma, and with his fierce commitment to freedom, was a powerful speaker at meetings.

He had proved his leadership capabilities in heading the student representative council while doing a Bachelor of Arts at Fort Hare University. His speeches urging African nationalism had become legendary.

He was the obvious choice to lead the PAC. The movement was less than a year old, after a breakaway from the African National Congress (ANC). The Africanists, noted for belief in the continent's unity, had accused the ANC of failing to carry out its policy of non-collaboration with the oppressor adopted in 1949.

The PAC was ignored by whites. It was seen as anti-white, a view fostered by ignorant white newspaper commentators (although, to be correct, some members were that). Sobukwe was a nonracist to his core. He said, "There's only one race to which we all belong, and that's the human race."

Sobukwe had told me about his intention to launch a mass campaign against the passes. We had also talked about his personal struggle: he enjoyed unusually high status and income because he was a "language assistant" teaching Zulu at the University of the Witwatersrand.

But he faced a hard critical decision: Rhodes University had just offered him a full lectureship. For black people, it was ground breaking, and would provide him with a sedate and stable academic life. He agonised, then accepted that his role was to serve his people, whatever the cost. He said no to Rhodes and resigned from Wits.

Robert Sobukwe and Benjamin Pogrund in 1969

In calling on people to get arrested, he again proved his leadership by announcing that he would go first. That's why I was with him that Monday morning, and followed him and a dozen other PAC members, walking the 4.5km to Orlando Police Station. About 200 other PAC members were also there. The officer in charge told them to wait outside the wire-mesh fence.

In mid-morning, word came that the police had shot and killed people at Bophelong, an hour's drive away. I told Sobukwe. He was deeply upset. He had called for non-violence, and had urged this on the police.

At Bophelong, an air force Harvard propellor plane was flying low, close to telephone poles. People were at first frightened but then angrily shook their fists as it roared overhead. Policemen were there with Saracen armoured cars, which had recently come into use. I heard they were going to a township called Sharpeville, near Vereeniging. I had never heard of it.

I followed them, with a photographer, Jan Hoek. The police ordered us to leave the township, but we stayed and I drove inside the crowd of about 5 000 – the police said 20 000 –



surrounding the police station. Contradicting what the police later claimed about the crowd being threatening, I had no trouble. I sat on the pavement and when people learnt I was from the *Rand Daily Mail*, they were eager to tell me about their suffering from the pass laws which controlled every aspect of their lives, and their hardship because of poverty-level wages.

After a while, I drove around the crowd and, suddenly, the crackling gunfire. We saw bodies covering the ground. A minute or two later, we were surrounded by a crowd which had become a mob: they battered the car with rocks and sticks. I managed to break through, bumped over the veld until I found a tarred road, and got back to Johannesburg. I was lucky, with only a bloodied ear. The car was a write-off.

That was the Sharpeville massacre. Immediately afterwards, Sobukwe and his men – no women took part – were arrested. It proved to be his last day of freedom until his death 18 years later.

Bold and brave as was Sobukwe's "positive action" against passes, he had seriously over-estimated popular support. The PAC was new, and there was also mass intimidation in the police and employer threats.

Sharpeville was one of the few places where large numbers responded to Sobukwe. Another was Cape Town. But intense anger spread. On Friday, the frightened government suspended pass-law arrests. Never before had black protest led to such a government retreat.

The ANC stepped in. Its leaders publicly burned their passes, and called for a nationwide strike (which was illegal for black people and thus called a "stay-at-home"). South Africa was on fire. The government rushed laws through parliament banning the PAC and ANC, and then declared a State of Emergency. During the next eight months, 1 600 people of all colours were detained without trial for past and current political activity; 18 000 black people were detained as "vagrants"; and many landed up as abused labourers on farms.

Sharpeville proved to be a dramatic turning point for South Africa. There was the tragic loss of life. And the black resistance which followed was met by ever-harsher repression. The Afrikaner Nationalist government went down the road to authoritarianism: the all-powerful Bureau for State Security; unbridled army power; assassinations; and the cruel 1980s and early 1990s, until democracy was finally achieved in 1994.

Sharpeville also changed the world outside. The massacre was headline news, and South Africa became a focus of interest and abhorrence. Anti-apartheid movements sprung up. Protests and demonstrations became commonplace. Countries became hostile. The United Nations passed resolutions to impose sanctions on South Africa.

In 1966, the United Nations General Assembly declared that 21 March be observed every year as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. For South Africans, it's Human Rights Day to remember those who died to fight for democracy and equal human rights.

Sharpeville was also the start of Sobukwe's travails. After the massacre, he was charged with incitement and served three years in jail. As his sentence was ending, parliament enacted a special law called the "Sobukwe Clause". He was put into virtual solitary confinement on Robben Island. They feared him that much. He was released after six years because of ill health. But it was into another confinement: banishment and house arrest. Nothing he said could be reported.

He died from lung cancer nine years later, in February 1978, aged 54. The restrictions on his movements delayed a medical diagnosis; otherwise he might have lived longer.

We had grown closer. I was allowed to visit him a few times in Pretoria Central Prison and on Robben Island. I visited him in Kimberley, always alone with him so as not to transgress his bannings. He studied and became a successful attorney, known as the "social-welfare lawyer" because he charged the poor such low fees.

I always thought of him in words from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*: "A parfit gentil knight." He was denied the national credit he deserves, and has been largely whitewashed out of history.

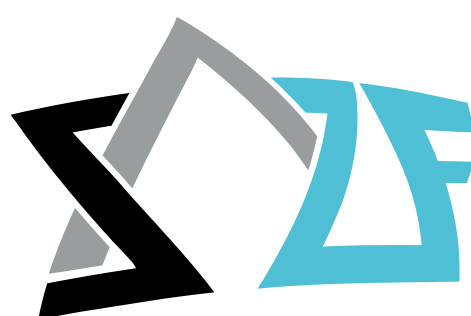
- Benjamin Pogrund was deputy editor of the *Rand Daily Mail*. He now lives in Jerusalem. His books include: "Robert Sobukwe: How Can Man Die Better" and "Drawing Fire: Investigating the Accusations of Apartheid in Israel".



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Silber lauds SA Jewish shutterbugs

STEVEN GRUZZ

"The best thing about Roodepoort in the West Rand where I grew up was the train station to Johannesburg," joked journalist Gus Silber. His father was a librarian who catalogued their books at home according to the Dewey Decimal System. As a young boy, Silber found reading was a way to escape the small-town blues. When he picked up a book called *The Family of Man*, he was entranced by its black-and-white photographs from 37 countries on six continents. His lifelong fascination with photography began.

Silber gave a talk titled "People who shoot people: on the frontline of history with South African Jewish photographers" at WeWork in Rosebank on 16 March. He was speaking at Taste of Limmud.

"Photographs take us into other people's lives and worlds from far away," Silber said. "Good photographers capture the soul. Their images linger for years."

Silber offered some thoughts on why there are so many famous Jewish photographers, in South Africa and around the world. "Part of it is they feel they have a duty to bear witness, to see that future generations aren't allowed to forget," Silber said. There was also a tradition of photography in Europe, from where many Jews emigrated, for example in taking family portraits. Photography was a way to make a living in their new countries. Several had social and political leanings (usually on the left).

One of South Africa's most famous humanist photographers was David Goldblatt. "His father, Eli, was a tailor. He had a way of summing up his customers before they spoke, and David

inherited that eye for sizing up people," Silber said. Goldblatt was a *Boerejood*, a Jew who grew up speaking Afrikaans. His subject was people, especially Afrikaners and black South Africans from his hometown of Randfontein. His evocative photographs capture the essence of his subjects, and he documented what life was like.

Goldblatt influenced and mentored many photographers in the generation that came after him. One was Paul Weinberg, who took graphic pictures during the State of Emergency in South Africa in the 1980s. Silber remarked how Weinberg saw his work as a way to fight ignorance and "national amnesia" about apartheid and its depravities.

Another photographer Silber discussed was Anne Fischer. She was a German-Jewish emigrant in Cape Town, having left Nazi Germany in 1937. She was a documentary photographer who had a studio for wedding photographs but was drawn to the townships to record and reflect life there.

Gideon Mendel is a South African-born photographer now living in London. He took iconic photographs of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South

Africa. He has become famous for his *Drowning World* series, where he photographs flood victims standing in the water as if for formal portraits, giving his subjects dignity. "They are pictures of resilience, survival, and hope in a world devastated by climate change," Silber said.

Silber also highlighted the work of Marc Shoul, who grew up in Brakpan on Johannesburg's East Rand. Through his *Landsman* series, he takes expressive photos of the Orthodox Jewish community. His website says, "The pictures he is taking are in part a study of acceptance and exclusion. While some carry greater resonance, they

do not engage directly with political complexities or current affairs. There is something of the claustrophobia and compassion of the family in the series; of a tension between filial duty and rebellion; of bewilderment and pleasure at its strictures. This is the domain of the personal: of exceptionally ordinary spaces, and clothing, and symbols that have seeped into life. Of sheitels [wigs worn by married women] and kosher stickers and Jerusalem souvenirs. Despite the domestic prosaicness, there is a nod to the incongruousness inherent in practicing what are in essence ancient rituals, right here in contemporary South Africa."

Although cellphones have democratised photography, and millions of pictures are taken every day, it's quite rare that one of these makes us say, "Wow!" Silber said that while all of us carry a powerful camera in our smartphones, it's the photographer's eye that separates the professional from the amateur. It's the way she observes and reflects society, her empathy with her subjects that allows her to take the perfect shot. And many of the very best have been and are Jewish.



Gus Silber

Photo: www.goimage.co.za

Barking up the right tree – ChatGPT hits the mark

STEVEN GRUZZ

Has the robot Armageddon commenced? ChatGPT took only five days to gain its first million users after its launch on 30 November 2022, and just two months to get 100 million users. This is the fastest uptake of any technology that the world has ever experienced, said Professor Benjamin Rosman. Give ChatGPT written instructions, and it delivers, at lightning speed, everything from silly poems to speeches and mini-biographies. It can translate accurately, write tweets, and solve arithmetical problems.

Rosman was speaking at Taste of Limmud in Rosebank, an event designed as an appetiser to the main Limmud gathering to be held in August 2023.

ChatGPT defines itself as "a large language model developed by OpenAI". When I asked it what it was, it wrote, "I have been trained on a massive amount of text data and can generate human-like responses to a wide range of prompts and questions. My purpose is to assist users in generating human-like text and help them find information on various topics." The GPT bit stands for "generative pretrained transformer".

"It was trained on 570 gigabytes of text," Rosman said. "That's a lot. The big idea is this: it has learned which words to pay attention to and that the context of each word matters." He demonstrated how it can tell the difference between a dog's bark and a tree's bark from the context, for instance.

Rosman also spoke of the limitations of ChatGPT. Its answers aren't guaranteed to be factual. "This is called 'hallucinating' – generating plausible sounding nonsense. It can also show cultural biases and messes up some maths problems. It sometimes struggles with causality and logical reasoning."

He also said it was difficult to keep users safe. Troubled teens might seek ways to self-harm, for example. It will also have an effect on jobs, and may increase fake news and phishing attacks.

A new version, GPT-4, was released on 14 March 2023. Compared to the earlier version, which could write a United States-based law exam and rank in the bottom 10%, the new version aces the exam in the top 10%. It can also interpret handwritten text on the back of a serviette.

Rosman said ChatGPT is most useful as a writing assistant, a little like the annoying, animated paperclip that used to pop up on earlier versions of Microsoft Word. Given the right prompts, it can write reference letters, code and find bugs in code, and generate poetry. It can simplify concepts, or make them more complex. It can criticise arguments and find flaws

in them. It can even analyse data in graphs. It could be helpful in teaching, researching, and writing, in a myriad of professions.

"Artificial intelligence will keep challenging what it means to be intelligent, or conscious," Rosman said. "ChatGPT offers countless opportunities to improve our lives. It's not to be feared. There have been ways for students to pay other people to do their assignments over the internet for a while. We have to reassess how we learn and teach – a take-

home assignment has little value now."

Curious, I took ChatGPT for a test-drive. I asked it to write a sonnet about bananas, which was very good – it rhymed and scanned just like Shakespeare. I also asked it to translate Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy into Afrikaans and French, which it did flawlessly. But it refused to write a limerick about Jews, saying that it wouldn't promote harmful stereotypes and prejudice. Maybe the machines aren't taking over the world quite yet.



Professor Benjamin Rosman

Photo: www.goimage.co.za

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Community forced off grid in drought-stricken Nelson Mandela Bay

TALI FEINBERG

Members of the small Jewish community in the Eastern Cape municipal area of Nelson Mandela Bay (which includes Gqeberha, formerly Port Elizabeth), are among thousands who can no longer rely on municipal running water.

After many years of drought and mismanagement, most are getting by with water from tanks or boreholes that they filter, or buying bottled water. While it's tough, the Jewish community is more focused on the disadvantaged in the area who are suffering much more.

"This is very much a crisis. Friends reliant on municipal water report very low water pressure in their homes, and many suburbs go a few days with no water at all," says one Jewish woman from Gqeberha, who asked to remain anonymous for her own protection. A number of community members asked not to be named as the gaps between those who can access water and those who cannot widens by the day.

"We have put in a large water system with three tanks to store and purify our own borehole water," she says. "The UV-treated water then goes into the house. As long as there's underground water, we won't have a problem. Our dysfunctional municipality could have acted years ago, when the drought began, to alleviate the water shortage.

Who is fighting to address the needs of people who don't have these basic necessities every day?

"Certain areas of Gqeberha get water from the Nooitgedacht treatment scheme, which pumps water from the Gariep Dam. They will always have water," she says. "We get mixed messages from the municipality. On the one hand, it says Gqeberha will never truly run dry, on the other, we're urged to use water sparingly as our dams are empty. In theory, the Nooitgedacht water can be funnelled into reservoirs all over Gqeberha to avoid certain suburbs running dry.

"Obviously, we're very lucky to be able to afford our water system," she says. "My cleaning lady in New Brighton township had no water at all for a whole weekend, reliant only on rain water from a tank I had installed for her."

She emphasises that "the majority of Jews in Gqeberha are elderly, and on tight budgets. They will certainly suffer if the taps run dry. I don't know what the future holds. Fields of taps have been built all over Gqeberha. How one goes there to fill up a drum and then lift it into a car, I don't know. I don't even know if the taps are functional. I have yet to see anyone using them."

Another community member, who also asked not to be named, lives in a complex that has sunk its own borehole. The water is potable [drinkable], but not connected to the mains, "so we have to go with buckets to the collection point, or to the water tankers supplied by the municipality".

But she emphasises that "this is easier than for those living in the township areas, where the poorer



Critical water shortages in Gqeberha

communities suffer the double whammy of no water and no electricity. Little or no effort is made to alleviate their suffering. I have the financial means to buy bottled water. Who is fighting to address the needs of people who don't have these basic necessities every day?" Most Jews in the city have electricity, with prevalent load shedding.

"We have low water pressure for three days at a time," she says. "Many in the poorer communities have no water for weeks. Small businesses in Gqeberha are buckling under the strain."

Load shedding worsens the situation because it means the little water that is available cannot be pumped to various parts of the city. An elderly Jewish woman speaking anonymously says she also lives in a complex that has gone off the grid with a borehole and tanks connected to pipes.

"The municipality has said that the quality of the municipal water is suspect. So some are adding chemicals to the water they draw from boreholes," she says. "There are people in our community who can't afford to go off the grid or to buy water, and there's a great deal of uncertainty and anxiety. I've lived in Gqeberha for many years and when I arrived, it was a vibrant, large Jewish community. Today, it's very small and people are despondent."

"My suburb had no water the whole of yesterday," says Elaine Racussen, referring to Thursday, 16 March. "People have to plan ahead. We harvest rain water from tanks and borehole water.

"We are concerned for the majority of people who don't have these extra facilities," says Racussen, who is part of a small Union of Jewish Women branch in the city trying to help where it can. "People have to buy water to wash. A welcome idea is for motorists to fill two-litre bottles of water and hand them over to those in need at traffic lights."

Michelle Brown says that she and her husband drink bottled water. "We're managing because we have to. We had no water for three days last week and used water we had put aside. We have been lucky enough to buy a JoJo [water-storage] tank, but there are many who cannot buy one."

She doesn't plan to leave. "This is my home, where we brought up our children, where we work. Sometimes you have to make a plan, and our mayor has called on all of us to do just that."

The water situation is "100% a crisis, but we have to manage it," she says. "We all have to work together to reduce our daily water usage. We all have to fight this battle for the sake of our city and every citizen. If you visit us, please be aware of the water crisis."

Phyllis Price lives in a "granny flat" at her son's house,

sometimes ask to shower at their house. At times, they have had to take water from their swimming pool to flush the toilets.

Janice Lazarus has a borehole "which we use for the pool and garden. Last year, we installed water tanks with filters for all our household needs. But last week, there was a leak in one of the pipes. Not only did we lose all the water from the tanks, but we also received a water bill for R25 000! So it cost us an absolute fortune every time we switched on the municipal water.

"We had someone come to my house with special equipment to check where the leak was coming from. The plumber came the following day and managed to sort it out. We then had to buy water which was very expensive. Thank G-d we now have water again."

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Jewish Literary Festival discusses *The World and all*

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

There was a pervasive air of excitement as more than 600 literary enthusiasts attended the Jewish Literary Festival at the Gardens Community Centre in Cape Town on Human Rights Day on Tuesday, 21 March. This sold-out event, the fourth of its kind, was the first to be held in person since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The stellar line-up of authors included keynote speaker, renowned British historian Simon Sebag Montefiore, who discussed his latest book, *The World*. Other international authors in attendance were Denis Hirson, historical fiction writer Louisa Treger, and apartheid activist John Schlapobersky.

Together with local literary luminaries, amongst others, Gail Schimmel, Kate Sidley, Jonathan Ancer, Steven Boykie Sidley, Nechama Brodie, Joanne Jowell, Patricia Schonstein, and Antony Albekker, they participated in panels covering a wide spectrum of genres ranging from business, politics, and history to narrative, identity, heroes, and villains.



SA can be saved with ‘compromise and creativity’

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

“There are opportunities in all the doom and gloom,” Tony Leon, former Member of Parliament and founder of the Democratic Alliance, told the Jewish Literary Festival, held at the Gardens Community Centre on Human Rights Day, 21 March.

Leon was in discussion with political adviser and business leader Colin Coleman on the topic “SA: What Next?”

“Can Mandela’s dream of a free and democratic South Africa be saved?” Coleman asked. “We’re in an economic growth trap, with rising inequality and extreme levels of unemployment.”

Infrastructure is collapsing, with load shedding a feature. And then there’s the rise of organised crime accompanied by failing policing networks.

All three problems are interdependent, he said. “How do you fix Eskom if there’s sabotage? How do you fix corrupted police structures? If you don’t fix corruption, you won’t get economic growth. If unarrested, we will see a Nigeria. That’s the way South Africa is headed unless we have a political rupture,” Coleman said.

African nationalism is administered with largely right-wing economic policies and an absence of skills to administer it. “The opposition seems to think it operates in the United Kingdom,” Coleman said.

“We have a social democratic, non-racial vacuum in the centre,” he said. “The Mandela spirit requires us to occupy it.”

Referring to the recent Cabinet reshuffle, Coleman noted that there were now no Indians and only one non-African in that

body. “Mandela wouldn’t have allowed it,” he said.

Leon agreed that there was a “huge vacuum at the heart of South Africa’s polity”. Referring to the government’s stance on the Russia-Ukraine war, he said it was increasingly on the wrong side of the divide.

With gross domestic product growth at 0.3% this year according to the Reserve Bank, load shedding is costing the country R899 million a day.

Referring to examples of leaders who had made a difference, Leon mentioned David Ben Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister. In a move that had split Israeli society in two, he had taken the decision to accept reparations from West Germany.

“He realised Israel needed help wherever it could find it.”

Similarly, Nelson Mandela had entered into negotiations with the South African government with no mandate from the African National Congress (ANC).

South Africa was in a classical Catch-22 situation. There could be no reform without splitting the ANC, yet President Cyril Ramaphosa had stated that his first priority was the unity of the party.

“We cannot possibly save South Africa with the ANC. It’s the biggest threat to South Africa’s political and economic prospects,” Leon said.

The Democratic Alliance (DA) hadn’t been able to extend its control outside the Western Cape, suggesting that it had reached its ceiling of support.

As with his founding of the DA in 2000 by uniting opposition forces, Leon advocated the building of a new coalition or entity to draw support from the ANC.

“But it has to be done in the next 13 months, otherwise we’ll continue on the path of

disintegration. A lot of creative thought, energy, and leadership can get us out of this trap.”

Referring to former President Thabo Mbeki’s warning of an Arab Spring, Coleman said, “We’re in it – a slow-burning version of what you see in North Africa.”

The country needs to create 3% to 6% economic growth somewhere in the next 10 years. To do that requires about five million jobs, he said.

“We need to stimulate the economy – put money in the hands of the poor so they can start shopping, give people more means to start businesses.

“We absolutely have to recapitalise Eskom, and cut red tape for small and medium-sized enterprises. It’s time for us to rethink black economic empowerment.

“It was bastardised by big capital selling stakes [which] enriched a few people but did nothing for the masses. We have to rethink the relationship between employers and employees,” Leon said, referring to the “misalignment” between the rewards for the two groups.

“Would it be so terrible to put workers on boards [of companies]?” he asked.

“I don’t have confidence that the DA has the ability to rethink its social democratic policies so that it can

combine with the likes of us in a constructive way,” he said.

For his part, Leon noted that there were 7.4 million taxpayers in the country, of whom 1.4 million paid 71% of all taxes. About 20 million receive social grants.

“We have one of the smallest tax bases in the world supporting one of the largest welfare states in the world. That’s got to change.”

Questioner Professor Anton Harber asked whether the DA leadership was capable of constituting the centre proposed by the speakers. “It’s an evolution,” said Leon, referring to former president F W de Klerk’s political about-turn. “Leaders can rise to the moment.”

Coleman, on the other hand, didn’t believe the DA was going to reinvent itself alone, with “the leadership showing no sense of taking advantage of this massive opportunity of the failure of the ANC.”

“The DA needs to stay in business. It does a great job of governing here. But the truth is that some entity with which the DA, I hope, will collaborate, should or could be formed” to win over the dissenting ANC voter base and get beyond the present 34% combined opposition, excluding the Economic Freedom Fighters.



UCT denies responsibility for terrorist talk on campus

>>>Continued from page 1

SAJBD Chairperson Adrienne Jacobson. “We recognise that the UCT decision was made under considerable time pressure on account of the brazen failure of the hosting organisation to give the mandatory seven-day speaker identity notification.

“The PSF consciously chose to sow disharmony and hate with its choice of speakers. At the same time, we’re disappointed that the university authorities chose not to heed our concerns but rather allow this to go ahead.”

Jacobson said, “[PIJ representative] Sharif is on record as having not only incited violence against Israel but of maligning Jews in the most egregious and racist terms. Iran is a country associated with terrorism and human rights abuses, actively calls for the violent destruction of Israel, and propagates hatred against all Jews.

“The SAJBD finds it bewildering that UCT has so palpably failed to stand by its statement of values, in which a firm commitment is made to ‘build an equitable social order based on respect for human rights’”, says Jacobson.

“Students look to UCT to provide platforms for engagement in meaningful, respectful discussions, free of discrimination, persecution, or hate. SAUJS and PSF had agreed to rules of engagement, which UCT neglected to enforce and allowed the PSF to breach.

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) spokesperson Rolene Marks says, “Our universities shouldn’t be hostile environments which encourage the dissemination of propaganda from extremist organisations. Places of learning in South Africa must be clear on the dangers of incitement and hosting speakers who call for the discrimination, annihilation, and destruction of Jewish people.

“The SAZF condemns the PSF for encouraging the discriminatory, racist, and extremist political ideologies of Hamas and the oppressive regime of Iran on South African campuses, and calls on UCT to join us in condemning this behaviour.”

In UCT’s response to the *SA Jewish Report*, the university stated, “UCT management is not involved in the speakers’ invitation process for events hosted by staff and/or student structures who are autonomous in this context, nor does management necessarily align with any views held or expressed by any invited speaker.”

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When the political becomes personal

MOIRA SCHNEIDER

Former apartheid activist John Schlapobersky used the Jewish Literary Festival to pay tribute to his childhood doctor, Dr Alec Folb, who was in Vereeniging on Human Rights Day.

“He was on casualty duty in the hospital in Vanderbijlpark on 21 March 1960, when the Sharpeville massacre took place,” said Schlapobersky. “He went there immediately, and his account of the casualties as they came in with bullet wounds in the backs of women and children confirmed that they suffered atrocities at the hands of the police who said that they [the police] were protecting themselves. He got that material into the press, and he saw that the truth was told.”

Schlapobersky, much like authors Denis Hirson and David Dison, maintained that his political consciousness had shaped his life and books he has written.

In discussion with Judge Dennis Davis at the festival, they addressed the personal in the political.

Hirson, who now lives in Paris, left South Africa in 1973 at the age of 22. His family had been given three days to pack up their home in Johannesburg following the release from prison of his father, Baruch Hirson, who had served a nine-year sentence for sabotage.

The title of his book, *My Thirty-Minute Bar Mitzvah*, refers to his 13th birthday, when Baruch was allowed to spend 30 minutes with his son in the back of a prison department car at The Fort in Johannesburg. Seated in front were two prison officers.

Davis asked Hirson why he wrote this book so many years later. “I don’t know if I could have written it while my father was alive, it’s so charged with emotion,” he said.

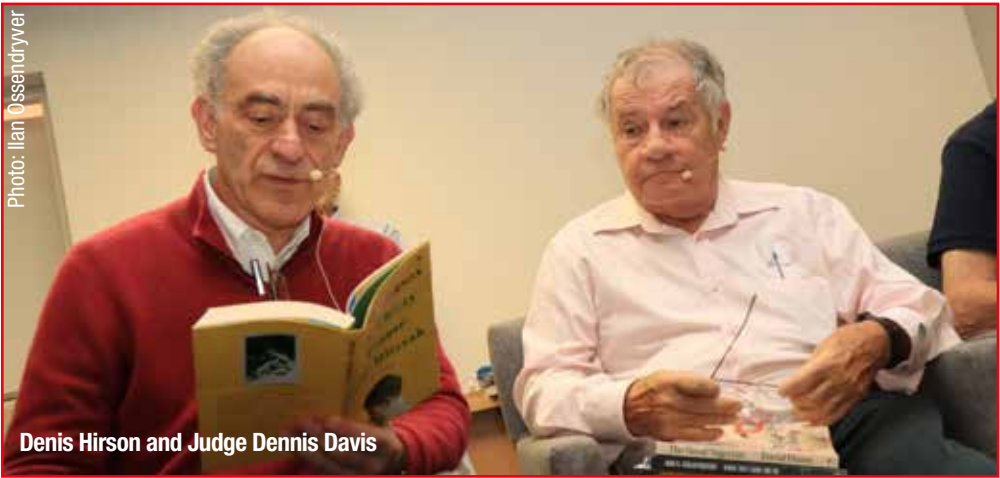
I had to wait until I was strong enough to write my own story.

Trauma continues for at least three generations, he said. “One of the key figures in the book is my daughter who, during preparation for her secular Batmitzvah, chose the story of Abraham and Isaac, and showed at just before the age of 12, that she understood deeply what had happened to me and my trauma when my father was arrested just before I was 13.”

Nevertheless, Hirson said he didn’t believe that his father set out to sacrifice his children. “There was sacrifice and choice, and I don’t believe for one minute that it was directed at me.”

In 1969, while a student at the University of the Witwatersrand, anti-apartheid activist Schlapobersky was arrested and detained in solitary confinement, tortured, and eventually deported. His book, *When They Came For Me: The Hidden Diary of an Apartheid Prisoner*, details his struggle for survival.

He now works as a psychotherapist in London in the



field of trauma. Davis asked him, similarly, why it had taken 50 years for him to write the book.

“I wrote the book when I could,” was his reply. “I had to wait until I was strong enough to write my own story. I was a 21-year-old lifted out of my life and subjected to a level of degradation that deprived me of almost everything except for the determination to survive and tell my story.”

After his arrest, he was taken to Pretoria, where he was interrogated for a week without sleep and had to stand on a brick for much of the time. He remembers being asked by then police captain, Johann Coetzee, if he recognised his assistant, who it transpired was a police spy.

“I was sitting next to you at university in your class when you were arrested,” the man said. “We were in Comparative African Government and Law together, and I watched you being taken out.”

The chief interrogator of the security police, “Rooi Rus” Swanepoel (who gave the order to fire on the children of Soweto in 1976) arranged for Schlapobersky to see a Dr Venter who took blood and pronounced

that there was “*niks verkeerd met hom – ry hom geweld*”. (There’s nothing wrong with him – ride him as hard as you can.)

“That’s a doctor

speaking,” Schlapobersky commented to the audience.

A doctor, Schlapobersky, made clear who was so different to Folb, whom he said, “wasn’t a liberal man and was very critical of me, but was a committed man of medicine.”

Dison’s book, *The Good Nigerian*, while not specifically political, has an “underlying theme of trauma and South Africa is a place where you suffer trauma”, Dison said. He recalled driving a truck close to Namibia at the age of 17, and “hoping not to be blown up by a landmine”.

Dison writes about the nature of violence inherent in Joburg society, “but I feel it’s important to show that underneath, there’s incredible goodwill”.

Once a distinguished human rights lawyer, said he didn’t believe we understand the trauma apartheid caused. “We tend in this country to compromise and smooth over, deliberate, and the

TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] scratched the surface.

“I don’t believe that South Africa has come to terms with its past. It’s unfortunate because this ANC [African National Congress] government has become so negligent, that people say, ‘Well, now you can blame apartheid.’

“But actually the process that [TRC Commissioners the late Archbishop Emeritus Desmond] Tutu and [Alex] Boraine were engaged in could still be going on today. It should have become an ongoing investigation just so that the country could never go back to this kind of situation again.

“And here we are, slipping slowly back into it.”

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Ruth First’s legacy lives on in Jeppe Girls

HEATHER DJUNGA

Jewish anti-apartheid activist Ruth First may have been killed by a letter bomb sent by South Africa's security police back in 1982, but 40 years later, her legacy lives on in scholars at Jeppe High School for Girls.

This year, there are 65 Ruth First scholars at the school, and there are 58 alumni who have benefited from the Ruth First Jeppe Memorial Trust scholarship programme, run by Jeppe High School for Girls.

First, an alumna of the school, embodies the bravery and dignity the programme encourages in its beneficiaries.

As South Africa commemorates 21 March 1960, when human rights were disregarded as police opened fire on a peaceful anti-apartheid protest march, killing 69, the programme celebrates First's legacy.

Following the Sharpeville Massacre, the government declared a State of Emergency and detained many prominent anti-apartheid activists. First was forced to flee to Swaziland.

She returned to Johannesburg six months later to become editor of *New Age*, however political persecution was on the increase.

Soon afterwards, in 1963, First was arrested for her anti-apartheid efforts and detained under the 90-day detention law. She spent 117 days in solitary confinement. Later, First was forced to go into exile, but continued to be active in the anti-apartheid movement until her murder.

Former headmaster of Jeppe High School for Boys, Kevin Tate, who is also the manager of the trust, was the person behind putting the trust in First's name.

"When I learned that Ruth First was a former Jeppe High School for Girls pupil, I became intrigued by her story," he said. "She was a revolutionary figure. Here was a woman who at 18 years of age spoke in open-air political debates at the University of the Witwatersrand about concepts like justice and equality, which in the early 1940s was ahead of her time.

"We chose to name the trust after Ruth as she embodies the courage and strength we hope to instil in our learners. The Jeppe motto is '*Forti nihil difficilius*'. Translated from Latin, this means, 'For the brave, nothing is too difficult.'"

Tait said that as a Jeppe pupil, Ruth was studious and extremely intelligent. She married Jewish politician and anti-apartheid activist Joe Slovo at a tentative time in the nation's history and was devoted to him, their three children, and her career, but was also a "real lady", as Tait called her. To him, this meant she kept her hair and dress-style impeccable, but still risked everything for the cause she believed in.

She wrote against the apartheid regime, and fought alongside big names like Nelson Mandela, Albie Sachs, and Ahmed Kathrada against injustices in the country. She was also among those in the team that drafted the Freedom Charter.

Now retired, Tait continues to be involved with the trust, and recently handed over its reins to school social worker Robyn Hill.

To become a Ruth First scholar, applicants undergo an interview process. As part of this, they must write an essay about Ruth First. "Through their writing and perceptions, we are again reminded of what strength, integrity, and courage can accomplish," said Hill.

She said the trust gave many pupils an opportunity to get a quality education. "We believe an investment in a learner and in education can change not just one life but the life of a family and even a community," she said. "One of the former scholarship recipients is now in a top-ranking position in banking. Another is a qualified medical doctor."

Tait and Hill said that over the years, they had met many of First's friends and heard different stories about her from them. "We feel like we knew her too," they say.

Over the years, the school has also welcomed in a succession of



high-profile figures. Among these is Justice Albie Sachs, who is also the trust's patron.

Sachs commented that First was a legend in anti-apartheid circles long before she was killed by the letter bomb.

"She grew up in a strongly anti-racist home. When she went to do a course on sociology at Wits, she began to work closely with Nelson Mandela, Ismail Meer, and other activists in the struggle for national liberation of the oppressed black majority," said Sachs.

He spoke about how after being detained in solitary confinement, without access to lawyers, family members, or being taken to court, First had gone into exile with her three daughters, Shawn, Jillian, and Robyn. "In England, she wrote a number of books for the Penguin African Library supporting the decolonisation of the African continent."

Just two weeks before speaking to the *SA Jewish Report*, Sachs said he had found himself in the office in which Ruth First was killed, explaining to visitors from many countries why he and others had loved her so much. "Later, we went to the cemetery where she and a dozen other African National Congress supporters who had been killed

by a commando raid in Matola lie buried. I recalled the beautiful songs that were sung at her burial, and the roses that were thrown into the grave as her body was lowered there, as her mother, Tilly, cried, and we all wept."

Tait said that before officially adopting Ruth First as the trust's name, he had approached a Jewish authority and asked him what he thought of the school using First as the focal point of the scholarship. "It was well-received," he said. "Ruth First is a feather in the cap of the South African Jewish community and the community at large."

Tait, Hill, and the team from the school's governing body hope to awaken the stories of courage, honour, and bravery, such as those of First and Sachs, in the hearts of the youth attending the school.

"Who knows, maybe there's a Ruth First among us," said Hill.

• For more information on the Ruth First Jeppe Memorial Trust, contact ruthfirstjeppeitrust@jeppegirls.co.za

‘My Thirty-Minute Bar Mitzvah’ packs a punch

REVIEW

JULIE LEIBOWITZ



"I couldn't have written this book while my father was alive," Denis Hirson told an audience gathered in Joburg recently for the launch of his novel, *My Thirty-Minute Bar Mitzvah*.

That's not surprising, because the book is as angry as it is moving.

Hirson's father, Baruch Hirson, was an anti-apartheid activist, academic, author, and historian. He was convicted of sabotage and jailed for nine years in 1964, being arrested shortly before Hirson's 13th birthday. He was released in 1973 when Hirson was an adult. His two younger siblings grew up without their father.

Hirson's book is a powerful account of the experience of the child of activists. For most of the book, he writes from his 13-year-old perspective, alternatively dumbfounded and dumbed down by his father's disappearance from his life. For the rest, he writes from the perspective of an adult and a father himself, with greater understanding, forgiveness, and grief.

Every word in the book is carefully chosen, creating a beautiful work that packs a punch. There's outrage in almost every line, and a silent withholding of emotion. The reader gets the sense that in writing the book, Hirson is releasing emotional baggage held for most of his life.

On hearing of his father's arrest, Hirson writes, "My mind was being laid out horizontally in my head and anaesthetised, as when I'd had a hernia operation a few years earlier. 'Blow into the orange balloon,' the doctor had said, and then slowly I went sinking down."

He talks about how he couldn't talk about this atom-bomb event in his life to his schoolfriends or even his mother. "We sat there at arm's length on the settee and silence fell between us, filled with my father's absence. We had no idea how to speak

to each other, not even to ask how the other was feeling . . . My mother and I were also balancing on a piece of string, one end tied to our house and the other to a prison called the Old Fort in the middle of Johannesburg."

The subject of having – or not having – a Barmitzvah, pervades the book, and Hirson writes amusingly about the pressure from the community on a young boy whose parents didn't identify strongly with Judaism – from his grandmother to community rabbis, and the anxiety it engendered in him. "Back in South Africa," he writes, "when I was with Jewish friends, it seemed that I was not Jewish enough, because unlike my family they were always doing something about it, like not eating bacon, or going to shul. I did not know what to do about it."

In the end, his Barmitzvah is a true rite of passage, toppling his father from omniscient in his life to someone frail and disempowered. "Of course that was my father, but with a smile on his face that was not a smile, sitting but not as he usually sat, in a manner that was crumpled and in a place that was not his. Since when did he occupy the back seat of a car?"

Ultimately, Hirson reflects as an adult who has travelled to Paris – as far away from the leafy streets of Joburg as he could get – on the Batmitzvah passage of his daughter, the story of Abraham's sacrifice, which concerns a father being willing to sacrifice his son, and his anger with his father.

He writes, of Isaac, after his last-minute amnesty from G-d, "We are told nothing more of the boy, whether or not he is still motionlessly bound up while the torch of fire goes on burning at his side. Does he dwell upon what just happened, has his

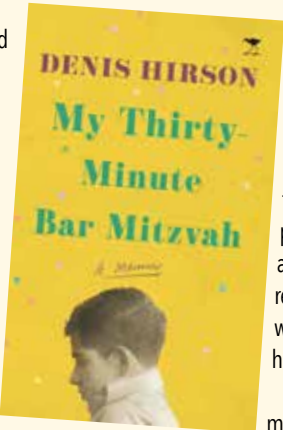
mind gone entirely numb, or do his thoughts bear him as far away from his father and the altar as possible?"

My Thirty-Minute Bar Mitzvah is full of broken, stoic people, including Hirson's Grandpa Joe and Granny Lily, who left Latvia to live in Jeppe, only to re-experience "guns and blood" on the street in miners' and workers' strikes in a fight that wasn't their world, and who, by the time Hirson is around, just keep on keeping on, just as he had to do after his father disappeared from his life.

The characters in his life are as vividly and lovingly depicted as Joburg suburbia in the sixties, which was full of comfort and contradictions. Hirson is as cutting about his teachers, who willingly took part in the school apartheid propaganda machine as he is about the "darkness" of recently released fellow political prisoners, who flitted through his house after his father's arrest.

"Everything about him irritated me, from the clearly relieved expression on his face to the bad cut of his trousers and the way he sat there munching Romany Creams," he writes of one of these shadowy visitors. "What was this man doing in his place? When was he going to stop speaking and smiling and bringing my father's absence so impossibly close?"

My Thirty-Minute Barmitzvah is a gem of a book about becoming a man. It's also a valuable account of a forgotten time of white, Jewish activists, their families, their community, and most importantly, their children, who had to stumble through life in the aftermath of their commitment.



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Saudi Arabia flexes Middle East might with Iran deal

OPINION

PAULA SLIER



The recently announced Iran-Saudi Arabia deal isn't good for Israel. The Americans might be trying to undersell it, but behind closed doors, they're panicking. The optimism of the late 2020s, when the Abraham Accords were signed normalising relations between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain – Sunni Muslim countries – mediated by the United States (US), now seems premature.

At the time, Israel thought it was making inroads into the Sunni world against Shia Iran. I was one of those who completely bought into it. I remember saying that Tehran's attempts at building a nuclear bomb were primarily to use it against Saudi Arabia and only later, against Jerusalem. I was wrong.

At the time, I attended a women's conference in Bahrain and was proudly introduced as the first delegate ever from Israel to participate. I'm still in contact with some of the lovely women I met there, many of whom were curious to find out more about a country they'd grown up hating. But they consistently warned that without Saudi Arabia – the big brother of the Muslim world – recognising Israel, there would be little positive movement on the ground. And now everything's been turned upside-down.

Saudi Arabia will always be the main player in the Middle East. It has more money and oil than Iran, and although



Saudi Arabia's national security adviser Musaid Al Aiban, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Iran's Ali Shamkhani

there have been generations of conflict between the two countries, at base they're both Muslim.

For Tehran, the deal affords it massive Saudi backing in terms of global power, finance, weapons, and defence. For Riyadh, Iran is a good ally to have and it's a slap in the face of its fast-becoming former ally, Washington, from which the Saudis have long since grown tired of taking dictation.

As the world's biggest oil producers, Iran and Saudi now have a significant control over the market, and Riyadh recently started accepting purchases in local currencies. This is in stark contrast to the deal US Secretary-of-State Henry Kissinger secured in the 1930s that prevented Saudi Arabia from selling oil in any currency but the US dollar (petrodollar). This guaranteed the value of the dollar and secured American currency as a trading currency for oil. In return, Kissinger promised that the House of Saud would remain in power.

At the same time, Russian diesel is flooding the Saudi market and Russia, China, India, and Africa are lining up against the West. They've shown a complete disregard for America and anything it has said or done.

A case in point: Chinese President Xi Jinping was in Moscow this week meeting his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin. The American government asked him to convince Putin to respect Ukraine sovereignty and also said it wouldn't accept a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine brokered by China. I don't think the requests were even dignified with a response!

The Americans are waking up a little too late. They seem surprised that the Iran-Saudi deal was brokered by China, which is fast becoming the world's big brother – a prediction French astrologer Nostradamus made hundreds of years ago – and filling a role the US has so inconsistently tried to fill itself.

Until now, Beijing has stayed out of

world politics. Unlike America, it hasn't invaded any country to broker peace and its agenda is more economically driven. Whereas America wants to control countries, China wants to control economies and is prepared to provide military assistance to protect its trade deals.

For decades, US foreign policy has focused on Europe, which sadly today is a continent falling apart. Beijing isn't wasting its time there. Instead, it's looking to the Middle East with whom it shares a basic culture and worldview. What's acceptable in China and the Middle East isn't always socially acceptable in Europe or the US.

For years, Beijing has been open about wanting to be the number-one world power and economy, and the more allies it has, the less does America.

So what does all this mean for Israel? It's a reminder that the Middle East will never – and cannot ever – turn its back on Saudi Arabia. Riyadh will partner with a Muslim brother, albeit Sunni versus Shia, long before it will partner with an Israeli brother who is completely different.

The US isn't averse to using proxies to fight its wars, as history has repeatedly shown. Neither is it averse to flying false flags to start those wars. Just think of its claims of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq that it used as the pretext for destroying a modern, functioning country.

It saddens me to write that I believe America would use Israel to start a conflict against Iran in an attempt to drop oil

prices and weaken Tehran. But I believe it could. Washington will probably bank on the fact that the Saudis won't back Iran militarily, but I think they will, as will Russia and China. American arrogance and desperation seems to have given them a G-d-like complex, with little appreciation of how much they are despised in the region.

Israel will be in a fix, and while I believe Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is an excellent negotiator, I don't think he's a wartime leader. It's one thing to talk of war; it's another to lead your country through it. But he'll have no choice but to comply. Israel needs America.

We could have a scenario in which America fires weapons into Israel, claims it was Iran, and insists that Jerusalem responds. It'll turn into a Ukraine-like scenario, where Washington won't send troops to help Israel but will back it with money and equipment.

We're not yet at the stage where artificial warfare led by artificial intelligence is feasible, so Israeli soldiers will end up meeting the Iranian army on the battlefield, and from the military minds I engage with, it will end badly for Israel. Jerusalem will also be held to a set of standards that Iran won't be held to. I pray I'm wrong, but I fear I'm not.

• Paula Slieber is the Middle East bureau chief for RT, and is currently launching RTAfrica.



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Kids ring in Shabbat at Mina Lopato



Shabbat ring at Mina Lopato Nursery School

Mina Lopato Nursery School's Shabbat ring with Felicity Klawansky is something all the children look forward to every week, especially when they get to give tzedakah.

My Family Story a journey of discovery for Torah Academy



Huvi Kagan

Torah Academy Grade 7s Huvi Kagan and Sara Meltzer were the winners of this year's My Family Story project, displayed on 2 March. The project is a Beit Hatfusot, now renamed Anu, initiative, run by the Israel Centre in South Africa. My Family Story is a fun-filled, meaningful, personal, global, and multigenerational Jewish heritage journey to the past in which the exploration of pupils' Jewish family story, genealogy, and traditions culminates in an artistic installation. Torah Academy has incorporated the project into its syllabus. Marrion Sacks guided the girls, encouraging them to interview relatives, create family trees, and locate their families' journeys geographically, sparking curiosity in the girls to find out more about their heritage. They will forever treasure the family stories and information they have gleaned.

King David Schools celebrate 75th birthday in style



Natalie Lutrin and Tanya Ginsburg in their school blazers at the 75th celebration

The King David Schools' Foundation kick-started its global 75th birthday celebrations at King David High School Linksfield (KDL) last week with an event to thank its Crown donors who have supported the schools over the years. The celebration treated guests to a showcase of talented students from KDL and King David High School Victory Park (KDVP). Following a dinner, with musical entertainment by KDVP students, the donors were entertained by the original-scripted production of *A Musical*, which touched on memories from past school days and featured performances by alumni and KDL students. A guest appearance by former headmaster of KDVP High School, Jeffrey Wolf, was the cherry on the top for the cast, who alluded to the "Lupine legacy" in the play. The King David Schools' Foundation will be celebrating with alumni in the United States, Canada, Israel, London, and Australia throughout this year. For more information, contact sassens@kdsf.org

Chief rabbi addresses student leadership summit

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein opened the inaugural Sandton Sinai Inter Jewish Day School Student Leadership Summit on 12 March with a powerful message about the "epidemic of bullying" at our schools. Goldstein called on young leaders to stand up and be proactive in the battle against bullying. Jewish schools nationwide were invited to send a delegation of students and teachers to the summit, held at Sandton Sinai, with the theme "Lighting up leadership". Hirsch Lyons, King David Linksfield, King David Sandton, King David Victory Park, Torah Academy, Yeshiva College, and Sandton Sinai participated in the summit, which focused on self-development and interpersonal leadership skills through two interactive workshops

led by Darren Basserabie, a clinical psychologist and executive coach. "To be a Jew is to be called on to lead," said Lara Salkinder, the principal of Sandton Sinai Primary School, opening the summit and quoting Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks. Morah Batya Slasky, the head of the Jewish Studies department at Sandton Sinai, compared the passing of the flame of leadership to our quest to illuminate the world in the hope of bringing Moshiach through acts of goodness and kindness.



Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein

WIZO Joburg honours members for lifetime service

The Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) Johannesburg honoured eight recipients who have given many years of unbroken service to the organisation at its Rebecca Sieff Awards Ceremony, part of its 109th annual general meeting on 2 March. Honours went to: Evelyn Furman for 25 years of service; Jenni Strous (25 years); Joceline Basserabie; (40 years); Hazel Crown (40 years); Wendy Roth (50 years); Elaine Smith (60 years); Belle Berlowitz (60 years); and Annette Price (70 years). WIZO Johannesburg Chairperson Joceline Basserabie welcomed Israeli Ambassador to South Africa, Eli Belotsercovsky, who discussed the situation in Israel, leading to a lively dialogue between him and those present on a variety of pertinent issues. Basserabie was voted chairperson for another year, Jenni Strous took vice-chairperson, and Andrea Wainer treasurer.



Israeli Ambassador Eli Belotsercovsky delivering his speech



Mount Scopus Memorial College

בית הספר הר הצופים

Secondary School Psychologist

Mount Scopus Memorial College is a co-educational Jewish School from Early Learning to Year 12 across three campuses located in St Kilda East, Caulfield South and Burwood, Melbourne, Australia.

We are inviting applicants with a growth mindset and expertise in psychological/ counselling in education and learning, social and emotional development to support and build the capacity of the school community toward the same goals.

This is a (1.0) FTE full-time ongoing position working at our Secondary School in Burwood. Applicants must have the following;

- appropriate qualification and experience as a Psychologist
- a sound understanding of the Child Safe Standards and a commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children.
- experience in working in a similar environment and/or position is preferred but not essential.
- current Working with Children Check

Mount Scopus Memorial College is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Being Jewish is not a prerequisite for employment, although a worldview that is sympathetic to the Jewish ethos is essential.

To view the Position Description, please click [here](#). Should you require further information, please contact Hayley Traub, Acting Director of Student Services (Secondary) on email: htraub@scopus.vic.edu.au or contact the College on telephone number (03) 9834 0000.

If you would like to be part of this exciting and educational environment, please click on the "Apply Now" button and complete the Application Form attaching your Curriculum Vitae and cover letter addressed to Maria Di Paolo, People and Culture Administrator.

Mount Scopus complies fully with the Child Safe Standards. All candidates for roles at the College are subject to screening and assessment against child safety standards as part of the recruitment process

Applications Close: Wednesday, 5 April 2023

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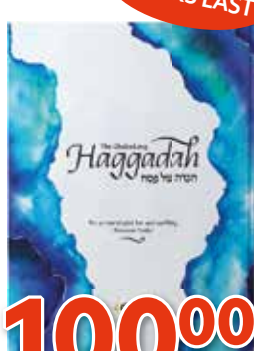
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