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# Funds and facts – how you can help

HANNA RESNICK

Many South Africans want to know how they can help Israel. Here's what the *SA Jewish Report* has found.

The South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) has partnered with the Jewish Agency's Fund for Victims of Terror <https://www.fundnation.org/sazf>. The SAZF has also set up a hotline for repatriation efforts (081 880 5217/hotline@sazf.org). National Chairperson Rowan Polovin said it was putting together a volunteer mission to Israel, the details of which have yet to be confirmed.

The Women's International Zionist Organisation is collecting funds to assist vulnerable individuals. The money collected will go towards emergency supplies for vulnerable populations; critical supplies for bomb shelters; psychological support – crisis counselling, post-traumatic stress disorder services, grief counselling, and trauma management; additional staff at emergency centres and shelters; food and clothes for displaced families; and social workers to support students in crisis. Email [wizosouthafrica@gmail.com](mailto:wizosouthafrica@gmail.com) for more information.

The Jewish National Fund (JNF) South Africa along with its partners in Israel is helping to evacuate hundreds of Israeli children from the south to safety at the JNF field centre in the South



Africa Forest in the Galilee. "At our environmental camp, we'll be able to provide shelter, therapy, and respite from the violence. Stand with the people of Israel in their hour of need." Sponsor a child by donating at <https://www.payfast.co.za/donate/go/jnfsouthafrica>. For information, contact 011 645 2579.

African Friends of Sheba Medical Center is a non-profit organisation based in Johannesburg, which supports the work of the medical centre in Tel HaShomer. The organisation is dedicated to raising awareness and support for its care, research, and training, allowing it to provide pioneering, life-saving treatments to patients in Israel and around the world." Contact 082 907 7728/naomi@shebamed.co.za to make a donation.

Ex-South African Yakira Snoyman and her flatmate, Tania Hammer, have been compiling

packages for soldiers which include items such as wet wipes; tissues; toilet paper; soap; deodorant; shampoo; toothbrushes and toothpaste; snack bars; sweets; chocolates; power banks; sanitary pads; and hairbrushes. They now have about 300 volunteers, and have packed more than 5 000 packages. Contact +972 53 892 5266/ [yakira9snoyman@gmail.com](mailto:yakira9snoyman@gmail.com) for banking details.

The Durban-Israel Victims of Terror Enterprises (Divote) represents the South African Jewish community to victims of terror and injured soldiers, showing them that it acknowledges their struggle and sends love. It is organising care packages for Israeli soldiers and is accepting monetary donations as well as items such as T-shirts, socks, underwear, and towels. Contact co-ordinator Cheryl Unterslak for more details: 083 799 6440/ [cheryl@divote.co.za](mailto:cheryl@divote.co.za).

The Hetz Green Chabad Victims of Terror Fund is collecting items for those in need which will be transported by El Al free of charge. "We in the diaspora can really help," said Chabad SA Director Rabbi David Masinter. "We can increase in prayer, learning of Torah, and acts of charity. The Torah assures us that these things help bring G-dly blessing and peace to the world." The fund is collecting items such as sleeping bags; towels; gloves; toiletries; jerseys; and men's and women's undergarments. These items must be new, and can be dropped off at Chabad House, 27 Aintree Avenue, Savoy Estate. For more information, contact Stan Green 082 496 8595; Brett Hetz 082 552 0878; and David Masinter 082 370 1770.

**Other international funds:**

Donations to help the terror victims of Kibbutz Nir Oz: <https://my.israelgives.org/en/fundme/kibbutznir>

Round Up, an Israeli non-profit organisation supported by the Headstart Group, is raising funds for the residents of southern Israel and the defence and security forces: <https://giveback.co.il/project/74665>

Democracy HQ and all the member organisations of the protest movement are raising funds for protective gear for soldiers; accommodation in safe areas for families; transportation assistance from conflict areas; assistance from mental-health professionals; and assistance from those licensed to work in clinical laboratories/blood donations: <https://beactive.co.il/project/73912>

Alon Futterman, the former chief executive and director of Talma Israel and the United Israel Appeal-Keren Hayesod is raising funds for children in public shelters: <https://gofund.me/1f9860e2>

Manna, the United Kingdom branch of Meir Panim, is collecting money for food for soldiers: <https://www.mannauk.org/news-1-1/israel-emergency-appeal>

Emergency fund for animal rescue: <https://networkforanimals.org/donation/israel-palestine-emergency-relief-october-2023/>

United Hatzalah campaign for emergency equipment: <https://israelrescue.org/donate/>

An alternative way for South Africans to help is by using their voices and social media platforms to spread the word and counter misinformation. "We can make people in all our environments – work, home, book clubs, soccer clubs – aware how traumatised we all feel by what has happened in Israel in past days," said Professor Karen Milner,

**Continued on page 6>>**

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## The best response to evil

It was the first murder in humanity. Cain killed his brother, Abel. Adam and Eve had to come to terms with a double tragedy. At that time, they confronted losing a loved one and the stark reality of evil. Their response to this profound evil offers us a timeless lesson.

The Midrash states that Adam and Eve wept by the body of their son, unsure of what to do. It was their first encounter with death, and they were uncertain how to react to this ultimate evil. The Midrash intriguingly recounts that they observed a bird (*araiv*) burying a dead bird in the earth. Adam and Eve decided to do the same, and buried Abel in the ground.

At first glance, the Midrash might appear to address a technical matter: the proper disposal of a corpse. On a deeper level, the Midrash teaches us how to respond in the face of evil. This is a tragically appropriate lesson for us this week after witnessing the barbaric cruelty of Hamas terrorists brutally slaughtering our brothers and sisters in Israel.

Adam and Eve were crying. They were unsure. How does one respond to evil? To the depravity of which humanity is unfortunately all too capable of?

While our brave Israel Defense Forces soldiers are on the frontline confronting evil head-on, what role do we play from afar?

G-d sent the bird to teach us how to respond to absolute evil. The sages explain that the *araiv* is cruel toward its young, abandoning its offspring at birth. Yet, Adam and Eve witnessed this same bird engaging in the truest form of kindness. When doing kindness to a living person, one might expect a favour in return. But when we're kind to the dead, we don't expect anything in return. It's the ultimate kindness.

This was the message G-d was sending to Adam and Eve. The response to absolute evil is kindness. Though it's essential to halt and contain evil, a

task entrusted to our courageous soldiers, the Torah instructs us that the antidote to brutality is boundless love and compassion. The same human heart capable of infinite hate is equally capable of boundless love.

In witnessing human cruelty, we must rise above, offering the best of humanity – kindness and unity.

We can visit the sick. End a *faribel* (grievance). Give charity – especially to those in need in Israel. Gather with friends and family to recite tehillim or study Torah together. Reach out, and see how we can help another. Do acts of goodness and kindness.

This week's Torah portion speaks about the creation of the world. But why did G-d create the world? For

what purpose?

The answer is that G-d yearned for us to be His partners in creation. Our actions can transform our world, one *mitzvah*, one good deed at a time. Through acts of goodness and kindness, we channel our divine purpose as partners in creation, while creating a shield of spiritual protection for Israel.

In the face of horror and cruelty, the darkest expressions of humanity, we must rise and share the best part of humanity, illuminating the world with goodness and kindness, and bringing us one step closer to an era of complete peace with the coming of Moshiach.

### Torah Thought

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G-d created the world in six days. On the first day He made darkness and light. On the second day He formed the heavens. On the third day He set the boundaries of land and sea. On the fourth day He fixed the position of the sun, moon, and stars. Fish, birds, and reptiles were created on the fifth day. Land animals, and then the human being, were created on the sixth day. G-d ceased work on the seventh day, and sanctified it as a day of rest.



# SA grandmother killed en route to help grandchildren

NICOLA MILTZ

Grandmother Marcelle Talia, 65, who was born and raised in the Free State, was mercilessly gunned down last Saturday by Hamas terrorists as she made her way to help look after her grandchildren. This a day after she had visited their day old sister and mother in hospital.

The tragic murder of Talia epitomises the barbarism and brutality experienced by innocent Israeli civilians last weekend during the deadliest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust.

Talia was mercilessly gunned down in kibbutz Ein HaShlosa, which is a mere field or two away from the border with the Gaza Strip. She was there to help her son-in-law, Dor Ben Tsur, with the grandchildren while her daughter, Liora, was recovering in hospital after giving birth to the couple's third child.

What should have been a magical Shabbat celebrating the birth of a baby girl, Asif, during the joyous festivals of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah turned into a gruesome nightmare that has shaken the family to its core.

"We are totally distraught, devastated," said Talia's close family relative, ex-South African Barbara Meltz-Kahn, from Jerusalem.

"Marcelle was a busy, happy, kind person. To be murdered for being Jewish in the Jewish homeland is impossible to comprehend," she said.

No-one in the family knows what was going through Talia's mind as she tried to get to her grandchildren on the kibbutz while all around her apocalyptic scenes of murder and mayhem ensued. Countless terrorists were running through the streets killing everyone in sight while sirens wailed, and a heavy barrage of rockets flew overhead.

Residents made frantic calls to police and the army to rescue them as they scrambled in the early hours to their safe houses.

Why did she risk leaving her guest room when there were incessant messages urging residents to stay put and take cover? Did she even get the WhatsApp messages, having switched off her phone before Shabbos and *yomtov*, like most observant Jews do?

All the family is certain of is that the grandmother of nine, originally from Wepener in the Free State, was savagely confronted and gunned down by Hamas terrorists on the path between her dwelling and the small home of her grandchildren sheltering nearby.

Her lifeless, bullet-riddled body was found many hours later by her sons, Betzalel and Dididia, who heroically travelled from far away in search of her after all efforts by family and friends to reach her had come to naught.

Their sister, Liora, called them from her maternity ward bed stricken with worry following radio reports and calls from the kibbutz alerting her of the violent siege. She tried for hours to get help.

Sadly, her brothers didn't reach their mother in time. The distance from their family farm, Talia Farm, near Beit Yatir in the South Hebron Hills, proved too far to make it in time to save her. "In fact, they were some of the first responders on the scene, arriving before the army and police," said Meltz-Kahn.

"They found her on the path leading to their sister's home. She was still holding onto a box of Nature's Valley Granola Bars," Meltz-Kahn said.

She was no doubt going to give them to her grandchildren as a source of comfort, knowing for sure they would be scared, she told the *SA Jewish Report*.



Marcelle Talia holding her newborn granddaughter

She said it was "impossible to believe" that this carnage had taken place.

A photograph taken the day before on Friday, 6 October, shows Talia cradling her new baby granddaughter at her daughter's bedside at the Samson Assuta Ashdod Hospital.

Talia and her late husband, Yaakov, originally from Randfontein, met in Israel after both had made aliya many years ago. Together, they turned a barren spot of land on a hilltop near Beit Yatir into their home, importing sheep from South Africa, and had four children.

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Initially they lived in a mobile caravan, said Meltz-Kahn, slowly beautifying the area with paved roads, electricity, irrigation, and water. Three of their four children, all adults now, still live on the farm.

In a Facebook post, Liora recounted the horror of trying to call for help for the residents of the kibbutz. "I called everyone I could countless times. I asked for military forces, and they never showed up," she wrote.

"Residents hid in the security room, terrorists broke into homes, robbed, murdered, and tried repeatedly to open locked security room doors," she said.

She called her brothers. "Without hesitation, they got into the car, only the two of them. My heart asked G-d to leave me a

family.

"They found my mom, lying on the ground, pierced by terrorists' bullets while holding snacks for the kids in honour of the holidays."

Liora said she sobbed when her husband told her the news.

"I cried a big cry about the woman sweeter than honey. All she wanted was to help us on the holiday, to help the family and play with the children. She came alone from South Africa, and chose to make a family here. I cried for my brothers who found her."

In a poignant message at her mother's funeral in Susia Cemetery she said, "There's a time to be born and a time to die. We have enemies at the gate every day. Arise, continue to bring children to the nation of Israel after these hard days."

## 'We have no choice but to fight'

PETA KROST

"We're in a war that we didn't choose to be in," Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister Eli Cohen told foreign media on Monday, 9 October. "We'll continue with all our might to fight for our homeland, and we'll win. We have no choice. We're fighting for our home."

Calling Saturday's devastation at the hands of Hamas terrorists "the worst massacre in Israel's history", Cohen spoke of the massive casualties of the massacre, which now tallies 1 200 murdered, 2 900 injured, and more than 150 taken hostage into Gaza. These include little children and women, many of whom were tortured and raped.

"We have never seen such scenes here. Taking an 85-year-old Holocaust survivor in a wheelchair captive? Small children taken captive and put in cages. It's viciousness and evilness that the world hasn't seen before. Only the Nazis, or perhaps ISIS."

Cohen spoke of the horror of 20 young people seeking shelter in a big trash bin. When the terrorists found them, they first threw a grenade in and after it detonated, they shot each person individually. They did the same thing in bomb shelters, he said.

He called those who did this "monsters, inhuman terrorists whose only wish was to murder as many Jews

as possible". Cohen gave his assurance that though it would "take time for us to fight terror, we cannot allow our country to be subjected to this".

Israel Defense Forces spokesperson Major Libby Weiss told the foreign media hospitals were overwhelmed by the number of injured.

"The terrorists went into more than 30 Israeli communities, overtook them, murdered people on the streets, went into homes, and murdered people in their beds. Others they took hostage and dragged into Gaza.

"They assaulted and butchered civilians, parents, grandparents, children, and young people. They attacked a music festival where hundreds of young people were just enjoying music through the night. Only to end this in horror and devastation. More than 270 of them were slaughtered."

She said the battle was far from over, and Israel was still finding terrorists in the country.

The attack from the air continues as Hamas has launched thousands of rockets into Israel and there has been mortar fire from Hezbollah. "It's a dire situation, and there's no justification for any of this," Weiss said.

"Hamas gets a disgusting pleasure in abusing and desecrating human life," Weiss said. Those subjected to this "are people who did nothing wrong, just living their lives".

Israel anticipates that this will be a long process, she said. "We're in the midst of this. It's a challenge that breaks all of our hearts."

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# You could hear a pin drop – Joburg Jews join in prayer

LEE TANKLE

More than 2 500 Jews descended on Yeshiva Mizrahi in Johannesburg on Monday, 9 October, at 18:00 to pray for the state of Israel after the massacre on Saturday, in which 1 200 people were brutally murdered, 2 900 were wounded, and more than 150 captured and taken to Gaza as hostages.

In any other circumstance, the sheer number of people would have yielded a lot more chatter than there was on Yeshiva campus on Monday night. The atmosphere was sombre. People weren't looking around to share the week's gossip or goings on with their friends. There weren't any excited greetings. Everyone was there for one reason, to show solidarity and pray for the people of Israel.

Even before you entered the Yeshiva College campus, the streets around it were filled with people and vehicles joining in this much-needed community event.

People kept filtering into the shul and outside area, even after the mincha service had started. There was praise for the Community Security Organisation and Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein for having the gumption to put on such a large event during such a horrific time in Jewish history. Attendees

included members from every part of our community; school children; youth movements; those coming from work; young; old; and everything in between.

When Goldstein started to speak, the crowd became even quieter. He started his speech by talking about the brave sons of Rabbi Lawrence Perez, Yonatan Tzvi ben Sharon, who is recovering after being wounded in action;



Photos: Ilan Ossendryver



and Daniel Shimon Ben Sharon, who is missing in action in the south of Israel. And he sent his thoughts to those being called up to serve in this war.

Goldstein repeatedly urged everyone to come together as a community, and give all our strength to those in Israel and South Africa.

There wasn't a person in our community who was completely unaffected by this war, he said. Everyone in that space knew someone or had an acquaintance, friend, or family member in Israel.

"We need to be able to say with conviction to our government, the African National Congress, that we don't need its endorsement or support as its moral standing has been defined by the support of dictators. We mustn't

be desperate for its approval."

Goldstein said we needed to advocate for Israel, and

spread the word of its story to work colleagues, the media, and friends. He reminded those present that "those who support savagery and barbarism will be judged by G-d himself".

The Israeli ambassador to South Africa, Eli Belotserkovsky, reiterated the fact that "this is a war that was imposed on us. We didn't choose this war."

Several rabbonim spoke about the fact that Israel and its people will survive and come out of this stronger. They spoke about defeating the descendants of Amalek, as Israel has done before, time and time again.

Avrom Krengel, the national president of the South African Zionist Federation, told the crowd, "Hashem didn't listen to our prayers [which were said over the past *yomtovim*]. We need to pray every day like we do at shacharit on Yom Kippur. We need to *daven* the same way we do on our holiest days of the year. We need to *daven* this way until we have peace. We don't know how long it will take."

"We'll get Hamas off of the face of the earth once and for all," Krengel said to massive applause.

South African Jewish Board of Deputies National President Shaun Zagnoev shared how his son, who lives and works in Israel, wanted to

donate blood to help the effort. He shocked the community by telling them that there weren't enough grave diggers in Israel at the moment, and the government was looking for volunteers to help dig the graves of those who have lost their lives.

The service continued with the prayer for Israel, read by Rabbi Alon Friedman; the prayer for the soldiers of the Israeli Defense Forces, read by Rabbi Yossi Chaikin; and the prayer for those who have been captured, read by Rabbi Yechezkel Auerbach.

After these three prayers, *tehillim* were said by Rabbis Dovid Hazdan, Nechemya Taylor, and Dayan Yoel Smith. In between every prayer, there was absolute silence. You could hear a pin drop. The only sound was the collective voice of 2 500 people joining together in prayer. Everyone joined in the *tehillim*, and the strength of the prayer was felt through the massive sound they made.

The service concluded with the singing of *Hatikvah*. It felt like the weight of the world was resting on the words. Everyone joined together, singing Israel's national anthem with such passion, the volume was overwhelming. The anthem brought the hope that this isn't over, and Israel will come back stronger than ever before.

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## 'We'll collect ourselves and start again'

DIANE WOLFSON

"I don't want to talk about the horrors, the videos, and heartbreaking photographs," said Adi Cohen Hazanov, deputy ambassador of Israel to South Africa, who was speaking at the special prayer service for Israel in Pretoria.

"I want to say that coming here tonight, the religious and less religious, we all have Israel in our hearts. I feel as if I'm at synagogue in Israel," she said on behalf of the embassy to the large crowd of Pretoria Jews who came to support Israel.

"While I'm not *frum*, sadly we all know the kaddish prayer. We have all witnessed death, and we'll collect ourselves, rise up, and start again. No matter how hard it is, we'll still be here

tomorrow," she said.

An emotional Rabbi Gidon Fox said he had earlier spoken to Ya'akov Finkelstein, a former deputy Israeli ambassador to South Africa. Finkelstein had just returned from the funeral of Nathaniel Young, a *chayal boded* (lone soldier) from the United Kingdom. He was standing next to a man who looked uncomfortable and out of place. He asked the man what his connection was to the young soldier, and his reply was, "My son's funeral is next." There wasn't a dry eye in the Pretoria Shul.

After the prayer service, there was a sense of unity among the crowd when *tehillim* were recited.

On Tuesday morning, a special prayer service was held at Jaffa retirement home in Pretoria to enable all the residents to participate.



Adi Cohen Hazanov at Pretoria Hebrew Congregation

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# World Mizrachi head awaits news of missing son

NICOLA MILTZ

The head of World Mizrachi, Rabbi Doron Perez, and his wife, Shelley, have endured agonising uncertainty this week, waiting endlessly for news of their son, believed to be missing in action near Gaza.

With their hearts balancing between hope and anguish, they await news of Daniel, 22, who has been uncontactable since Saturday, 7 October following Hamas’ large scale, unprecedented, and surprise Israeli onslaught.

Their older son, Yonatan, was shot during the mayhem. He’s said to be recovering from his wounds at home. He and his fiancé are due to get married next week, and what was meant to be a joyful time for the family has turned into a torturous waiting game of not knowing.

Though hundreds of Israeli families face similar dread, the plight of the well-known Perez family has brought the horrors of the past weekend right into the hearts and homes of the local community to which he and his family are inextricably linked.

On Monday, 9 October, thousands of people gathered at the Yeshiva Mizrachi campus in Johannesburg, overflowing the large synagogue, as well as at separate venues around the country, in a show of unity, strength, and faith to pray for the safety of Israel and its soldiers, the safe return of all hostages, and for peace.

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein addressed the crowds, saying the gathering was one way of drawing strength from each other during this distressing time.

He mentioned two “very special young men” who grew up in the community.

Yonatan, Goldstein said, was called up on Shabbat and Shemini Atzeret by his commanding officer to help defend the south.

“He went down and bravely fought. He was shot in the leg and taken to hospital, and is on the way to recovery but still needs our prayers,” Goldstein said.

“His brother, Daniel, who had his Barmitzvah in this shul, was stationed at the Nahal Oz base close to the border with Gaza, which was overrun by terrorists, and he’s missing in action.”

He said the brothers were examples of the “awesome heroes of the people of Israel” who have been “subjected to a savagery and a barbarism that knows no limits”.

Also on Monday, leading rabbonim read psalms at an online convening of members of the Mizrachi movement.

The deputy chief executive of World Mizrachi, Rabbi Danny Mirvis, said, “We’re desperately waiting to hear from their son, Daniel”. There was increasing concern about his whereabouts and well-being.

According to recently available information, Daniel and his tank crew are classified as “missing” as opposed to “captive” as there’s no

clear evidence that they have been taken to Gaza. It also seems that the area their tank is located in isn’t yet fully under Israeli military control, with battles continuing.



Daniel Perez

The Perez family is deeply appreciative for the ongoing *tefillot* and the outpouring of love and support coming their way, and says it senses the great strength and unity of *am Yisrael* (the people of Israel) at this time.

Perez, who has been with his family in Israel awaiting news, was born and raised in Johannesburg. He made aliya after school when he was 18. He went on to study for 10 years in Israel’s leading yeshivot, served in the Israel Defense Forces as part of the Hesder programme, and completed his rabbinic ordination and a Bachelor of Education majoring in Jewish philosophy. During his 15-year *shlichut* in South Africa, Perez fulfilled multiple leadership roles, as executive director of Mizrachi South Africa; senior rabbi of Mizrachi Shul; and head of Yeshiva College. He is the executive chairperson of the World Mizrachi, a position he has held since he returned to Israel nine years ago.

Perez is the author of the book *Leading the Way*, and a sought-after speaker and scholar-in-residence in communities in Israel and around the world.

“He’s my close friend and mentor,” said Rabbi Daniel Kaplan, the executive director of Mizrachi South Africa and the Yeshiva Mizrachi Community.

“It has been a distressing time. You can’t imagine. Rabbi Perez has a lot of faith, but it’s very hard.

“We don’t question Hashem because we don’t understand the full picture. We see only through the keyhole, we don’t get to open the door to see the whole picture. It’s horrific, but as much as we don’t understand, we have to have continuous faith,” he said.

Kaplan said he had been in close contact with Perez, who was now referring calls to his office as the family processes the events that unfold around them.

It’s understood that Yonatan was at home over Shabbat when he was called by his army unit to assist. Two soldiers he was with sustained serious injuries after also being shot.

Perez spoke at this year’s Yom HaZikaron ceremony in Israel to commemorate fallen soldiers. His words were hauntingly profound.

With reference to the Jews’ exodus from Egypt, he said, “Jewish history is remembering things the way they were, and there’s pain. Life isn’t a bed of roses, there are thorns. That’s the human story, and that’s the Jewish story.” However, he also stressed that amid the pain and suffering there was another part of the story, one of triumph.

He concluded by praying that the weight of the people who had lost loved ones would be lifted, and they would be comforted. May his child come home safely and soon.

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## Jewish lives also matter

How does one fully understand the horrific violence and degradation that our Israeli brothers and sisters endured last weekend? How do you forget the image of Hamas brutes celebrating on the back of a bakkie literally sitting on the damaged and almost naked body of a young woman who had hours before been a vibrant happy person?

How do you unsee the image of an elderly woman being hauled off into Gaza from her home in Israel, not knowing what terrible fate awaits her? Did they take her medication? Did these monsters see her as someone’s mother, grandmother, as a human being? Or was she just a trophy or collateral damage in their revolting, brutal hate fest against Jews?

How does one unhear the eyewitness who saw young Israeli women being raped en masse next to the bodies of their murdered friends at what was a peace festival?

How do you even try and comprehend the murder of 40 babies and little children at Kibbutz Kfar Aza, a kibbutz on the Gaza border? Many of them had been beheaded. Surely, no human could do that!

How does one absorb that these Hamas madmen murdered a mother and father and left their bodies with their living 10-month-old twins in a place it would take soldiers a long time to find?

These bloodthirsty monsters butchered whole families in their homes, some in their beds. They raped and brutalised young Jewish women, and paraded them in Gaza.

Seeing the footage of Israeli civilians being mowed down in their own street as they were peacefully walking or riding about town on Saturday morning is abhorrent. All this murder and mayhem took place against unarmed, innocent Jews on a day that wasn’t just Shabbat, it was Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. Only, there was no *simcha* (joy) in Israel last weekend, only depravity, horror, and heartbreak.

At the time of going to print on Wednesday, more than 1 200 people had been massacred in Israel last weekend, and more than 2 900 wounded. G-d alone knows how many were abducted and dragged over the border to Gaza.

The fear we all have about what’s happening to those they hold hostage is immense.

As Israelis reel from this atrocity in which thousands of terrorists destroyed something deep inside of all of us, the Western world has been vocal in its horror.



The United States (US) has come out in full support of Israel retaliating against these monsters. President Joe Biden made it very clear that Hamas has one sole aim – to “destroy the state of Israel and annihilate the Jewish people”. He promised that the US would support Israel 100% in whatever way it needed to defend itself.

Most European countries also condemned Hamas for what it did, and supported Israel.

However, here on the southern tip of Africa, somehow Jewish lives don’t hold value for our government. In fact, it didn’t even acknowledge the massacre. It didn’t recognise that what Hamas did was wholesale slaughter. No, it didn’t acknowledge that Hamas broke, as Biden said, “every code of human morality”.

Our government didn’t even recognise that anything untoward was done to Israelis. In fact, on Monday, the portfolio committee on international relations and cooperation put out a statement saying instead that it was “greatly troubled by the grave atrocities that are perpetrated against the people of Palestine”. Not for one second did it recognise the bloodthirsty depraved acts of pure violence that Hamas perpetrated on the Jewish people, as if our lives don’t matter. Brutalising the Jewish people is clearly not even worth government mention. That’s despicable!

The day before that, on Sunday, the department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco) first acknowledged what it called “the new conflagration” in the Israeli-Palestinian situation. And lo and behold, it blamed Israel for what amounted to the most heinous war crimes since the Holocaust, perpetuated by Hamas. Dirco blamed “the continued illegal occupation of Palestine land, continued settlement expansion, desecration of the Al-Aqsa mosque and Christian holy sites, and ongoing oppression of the Palestinian people”.

Where on earth did it get that lie about the “desecration of the Al-Aqsa mosque and Christian holy sites”? As far as I know, Al-Aqsa is far from desecrated, but can we put any facts past a government that cannot recognise a massacre, and won’t condemn bloodthirsty butchers for mass murder?

What will it take for this government to acknowledge what the rest of the world does openly – that Hamas is out to annihilate the Jewish people and destroy Israel? How can our government side with terrorists?

As Biden and the Israeli leadership made very clear, if you don’t condemn what Hamas did, you support and endorse it.

Some have said when they heard my anger at the South African government’s response that I shouldn’t be surprised by its reaction – it’s just more of the same rhetoric. However, in a situation that has changed the face of the Jewish world in 24 hours, this is far worse than an all-time low. It’s abhorrent! This was the worst massacre in Israel’s history! More Jews were killed in one day than any day since the Holocaust, and our government didn’t even make mention of the actual atrocities let alone condemn it.

And as for most of the mainstream media in South Africa, I was equally astonished by their unbelievable ability to ignore a massacre. How is that done?

I guess they take their lead from the government and BDS (the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) group.

In our newspaper this week, we have chosen to dedicate the entire edition to the war in Israel. We, the South African Jewish community, like our Israeli family, are in mourning, and so we have chosen to have a black front page. No image or words could convey how this week has been for the Jewish world better than this.

We have done our best to bring you as broad a picture of the horror experienced by South Africans or former South Africans.

There are other South Africans whose lives were torn apart by Hamas this week, but they are in too much pain to speak to us at this point. We honour and respect them.

We’re journalists, and our aim is to make sure – unlike our counterparts in the local media – that we tell the story of this massacre and let the world know how horrifying it truly was. However, unlike Hamas, we do have hearts, and our aim isn’t to exacerbate the pain of those already in agony.

Our hearts go out to each and every person harmed in this tragedy. *Baruch dayan ha’emet!* We vow not to forget you, and we’ll make sure the world knows what happened.

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

## Blaming Israel is an insult to humanity

OPINION

AMBASSADOR ELI BELOTSEKOVSKY



On Tuesday night, 10 October, I went out to visit the home of an Israeli colleague in South Africa. Usually I don’t visit colleagues on a week day. This time there was a reason. She was informed that her brother-in-law was murdered by Hamas terrorists in the south of Israel. Her brother was an ordinary guy with a family, who woke up early on Shabbat to ride his bicycle. Nobody in the world expected him to be found on the road, next to his bike, murdered.

I’ve been reading some of the comments in South Africa, and one can hear people speaking about both sides, calling for restraint, some even blaming Israel for the murder of its own citizens. This brings to my mind George Orwell’s book, 1984, in which he wrote, “War is peace, freedom is slavery, ignorance is strength.”

Unfortunately, these words are as relevant in our world today as they were in Orwell’s Oceania. Reality continues to be distorted unashamedly, strong opinions that are based on sheer ignorance continue to be expressed forcefully. The same meaningless clichés are repeated time and time again, apparently out of adherence to Joseph Goebbels, who said, “If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it.” Along these lines, if you continue to blame Israel for the atrocities against its citizens, maybe people will believe it.

in the south of Israel, where ordinary families were living their ordinary lives, being their ordinary selves, until terror and destruction hit? Only Jewish lives were brutally taken.

The scope of the atrocities committed against ordinary Israelis, the degree of barbarity and savageness, was unprecedented. Even ISIS (Islamic State’s) terrorism pales in comparison to what Hamas did.

But what’s no less important is the response of the civilised world. We heard country after country expressing shock at this heinous attack, offering sympathy and gestures of solidarity, as well as condemning Hamas unequivocally.

A few, however, chose to disregard the facts, and conveniently blamed Israel in their statements, justifying terror, placing themselves in the camp of the perpetrators. Even more ridiculous are the offers of mediation between murderers and their victims, between savages who destroyed lives and their targets. This attitude is an insult to humanity.

Unfortunately, Israel has always been the preferred choice for bashing by the so-called “politically correct supporters of the oppressed”. Accusations of Israel’s responsibility for all crimes possible and sometimes impossible are among the favoured pastimes of the self-righteous hypocrites.



Germany showing support for Israel

People all over the world don’t like to be shocked. They prefer to be “balanced”, to see “both sides”, to issue meaningless calls for “ceasefire”. People don’t like to watch the video clips that were taken by perpetrators of families being murdered, old people, Holocaust survivors, women being kidnapped, and young women being brutally attacked. Definitely not thoughts about 40 babies in one kibbutz that were murdered in their cradles, some decapitated.

It’s disturbing, and creates a dissonance with the long-tested and comfortable “both sides” and “restraint, support for peace” ideals. What has happened these past days

Much of these critics disregard the fact that they choose to support a theocratic military dictatorship, Gaza, under Hamas. That they support a brutal regime that oppresses the rights of women, minorities, and LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) people. A theocratic junta that draws its support from Iran and openly propagates destruction of Israel and the Jewish people.

It’s time to stop hiding behind false “political correctness”. More than 1 200 men, women, and children were murdered only because they were Jews. Their murderers are direct followers of the Nazis. They don’t hide it, and their actions speak for themselves.

There can be no more sitting on the fence. Those who don’t openly condemn the atrocities perpetuated by Hamas identify themselves with the murderers. In reference to Pastor Martin Niemöller’s (an opponent of Hitler) famous quote: “If we don’t take a clear and decisive stand against Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, and Iran, they won’t stop at Israel, they will come for Jews worldwide, and then there will be no-one left to speak for us.”

• *Eli Belotsekovsky is the Israeli ambassador to South Africa.*

## Funds and facts – how you can help

>>Continued from page 2

the national chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies. “We need to explain the horror that has taken place and how every Jew in South Africa is affected, and we need to clarify that Hamas is a terror organisation intent on destroying Jewish lives and the Jewish state.”

“As a journalist, I’ve noticed that we aren’t getting the full picture unless we’re Jewish or spending time on a variety of news sites,” said journalist Rolene Marks. “The news needs to be challenged for its lack of reporting on what’s happening here. I’ve been on so many stations, TV and radio, and have had to correct, for example, the number of deaths. We have more than 1 200 people murdered and counting. We need people to be vigilant in the media. We need people to be vigilant on social media. We should donate to organisations that can help Israel. Reach out to your friends and family in Israel who don’t even know what hit [them]. We’re profoundly traumatised in Israel, and there are so many places to volunteer help.

“Forget your political affiliations,” she said. “Forget whether you’re religious or not. This is a catastrophe of epic humanitarian proportions. This was an act of barbarity that we can’t even contemplate, and it’s on the front page of every newspaper around the world except South Africa. It’s unfathomable. This isn’t about policies; this isn’t about occupation. This is a massive human tragedy. South Africans can help in many ways, including by donating to organisations, but what they also need to do is make sure that these stories are told.”







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# A prayer for Jewish women everywhere

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At this time of harrowing danger, let’s harness the spiritual power of lighting Shabbat candles to pray for Israel. For generations, Jewish women have prayed for their children and families at candle-lighting.

This Friday afternoon, 18 minutes before sunset, after we light our Shabbat candles, let’s pray for the families and children, and the brave soldiers of the state of Israel. At a time when many of us are lost for words, we offer you our personal prayer, to recite after you light your Shabbat candles this week.

This is a spiritual war against those who seek to destroy Israel, not because of its borders, but because of what it stands for as the world’s only Jewish state. Our response must be to reaffirm our eternal Jewish values through Shabbat.

“The Jewish people are redeemed in the merit of righteous women,” say our sages. In the merit of our prayers and the *mitzvah* of candle-lighting, may G-d bring security and safety to Israel and comfort to her people.

**Prayer at Shabbat candle-lighting**

*“Our G-d and the G-d of our forefathers, Rock and Redeemer of Israel, hear my supplication in the merit of Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Leah, our mothers, and in the merit of lighting the holy Shabbat candles.*

*Protect and deliver the soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces and security forces, and all those engaged in saving lives, from all trouble and sorrow. Strengthen their hands, and adorn them with the crown of Your salvation and victory.*

*I plead with You, Merciful One, in Your vast majesty, liberate our captives, speedily deliver them from anguish to relief, and return them home to life and peace.*

*Save our brothers and sisters, our aged, men, women, and children, all who were wounded at the hands of the cruel enemy. Illuminate your presence for them and send them complete healing, speedily in our days.*

*G-d, full of mercy and compassion, provide tranquil rest on the wings of the Divine Presence, for the souls of Your nation, men, women, and children, murdered in cold blood, their blood spilled like water. May their eternal rest be in Gan Eden.*

*L-rd, our G-d, comfort the mourners of Your nation, heal the broken-hearted and bind up their wounds.*

*Turn Your countenance, oh G-d, to those dwelling in our land, from the border of Lebanon to the Egyptian desert; and spread over them Your shelter of peace, grant them safety, tranquillity, and security. Send Your light and truth to the leaders of the state of Israel, her ministers, and advisors, and grace them with Your good counsel.*

*Speedily bring your final redemption to the world, when “death will vanish in life eternal”, when You will “wipe away tears from all faces”, when “nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore ... and the earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the oceans”. Amen.*

## What happens in Gaza doesn’t stay in Gaza

OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD



I’m still reeling in shock, disbelief, and anger at the brutal, well-coordinated Hamas attack on Israel from Gaza that began on 7 October.

Numbers are hard to verify in the fog of war. As I write this, the Israeli death toll has climbed beyond 1 200, with more than 2 900 injured. Thousands of rockets have been fired from Gaza into Israel, overwhelming missile defences like the Iron Dome by the sheer volume of simultaneous strikes. More than 100 Israeli Jews, and presumably citizens of other countries – women, children, men, the elderly, Holocaust survivors – have been dragged into Gaza as hostages and human shields. The fatalities and injuries in Gaza are approaching these levels after massive retaliatory air strikes by the Israel Defense Forces. They will surely climb as Israel seeks to destroy the Hamas threat once and for all. The sickening body count will continue. The international implications of this heinous act of terror, which may in time be called the “Sukkot War”, are already being felt across the world. And the geopolitical ramifications of this conflict are complex.

That this current war began 50 years after the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and on a Jewish holiday and Shabbat is no coincidence. The war in 1973 was also a surprise for Israel, stemming from poor intelligence and Israeli over-confidence after the stunning, seemingly miraculous successes of the 1967 Six-Day War. In the former war, Israel faced a full-blown attack by two Arab states – Egypt in the south and Syria in the north. No army wants to defend on two fronts.

invasion of Israel, there’s no doubt that it’s a strong supporter of these terror groups. It has also made repeated threats to wipe Israel off the map.

Iran is threatened by the real possibility of Saudi Arabia normalising its relationship with Israel. The two remain the biggest rivals for power in the Middle East, in spite of a rapprochement engineered by the Chinese earlier this year. As Israel retaliates against Hamas in Gaza, there will be thousands of civilian casualties, especially because Hamas sites its rocket launchers and other combat materiel in schools, hospitals, and mosques. This will make it very difficult for any Arab state to support Israel, and will almost certainly knock back any putative Israel-Saudi deal for months or years. Israel’s peace partners in Bahrain, Egypt, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates will similarly be put under pressure. The longer this war lasts, the less international sympathy for Israel it will sustain.

As this all plays out, don’t be surprised to see Russian support for Iran – and hence Hamas and Hezbollah. The two rogue states have drawn close in the past few years, both suffering from Western sanctions. Russia surely backed Iran being invited to join the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) grouping. But Moscow is also politically close to Jerusalem, with long-standing ties between the two leaders, and military co-ordination between the countries in war-torn Syria. About 1.5 million Russian speakers live in Israel, and Israel has been quieter than expected on Russia’s war in Ukraine.



One of the main fears is that the current hostilities will embolden Hezbollah in southern Lebanon to attack Israel’s northern frontier. Indeed, there have been some missiles fired from the north and infiltrations of Israeli territory from Lebanon. However, these seem to have been contained. For now.

Both Hamas and Hezbollah receive significant funding, weaponry, and political support from Iran. There’s evidence of Iran meeting with these terrorist organisations in the past few weeks. They may not be puppets or proxies of Tehran, making their own decisions, but these and other organisations, like Palestinian Islamic Jihad, rely heavily on Iran. Even if there’s not yet a “smoking gun” tying Iran directly to the

a not-so-veiled threat to Iran. However, Congress is without a speaker of the house and Russia’s war on Ukraine is taking its toll, compromising the White House’s position to mobilise help for Israel. Don’t forget, there’s an election in November 2024, and a divided polity, which may complicate calculations.

The Western world has roundly condemned Hamas. Landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower, the Brandenburg Gate, and the Empire State Building have been lit up in the blue and white of the Israeli flag. Ukraine, in spite of its own war, has lit up public buildings in Kyiv. The sheer savagery of the attack has made even some sympathetic to the Palestinian cause recoil. The European Union announced a suspension of financial aid to the Palestinians, but had to backtrack as some member states objected.

The conflict has spawned demonstrations for and against Israel in many cities around the world. It’s a sad fact that antisemitism flares up across the diaspora when there’s fighting in the region. Don’t expect this time to be different. I’m aware of at least three rallies in South Africa in support of Hamas being called for this week. Jewish communities are holding communal prayer sessions. South African Jews and their supporters will need to be vigilant and careful.

And as for the South African government? Its reaction has been predictable. It cannot bring itself to condemn its ally, Hamas, no matter how depraved and despicable its actions. The statements from the department of international relations and cooperation shows absolutely no sympathy for the horrific trauma Israel has suffered. They tiredly repeat the same old mantras, heaping all the blame on the Jewish state. Don’t expect the Union Buildings to be bathed in blue and white any time soon.

While the hostilities may be focused on the 365km<sup>2</sup> of the Gaza strip – an area four-and-a-half times smaller than Johannesburg – the ripples of war will wash up on many a shore.

• Steven Gruzd is a political analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs in Johannesburg. He writes in his personal capacity.

## ‘Not in Britain’ – Sunak condemns antisemitism in the UK

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said that his government’s support for Israel was “unequivocal” in an address at a synagogue on Monday, 9 October, as Britain’s Jewish community counted its dead and missing from Hamas’ attacks on Israel and protesters clashed at a pro-Palestinian rally in London.

British leaders from across the political spectrum issued an almost unanimous declaration of support for Israel on Monday, capped by Sunak’s attendance at a service at the Finchley United Synagogue in North London.

“I’m unequivocal,” Sunak told a packed audience. “There aren’t two sides to these events. There’s no question of balance. I stand with Israel. We stand with Israel. The United Kingdom stands with Israel.”

There are believed to be more than 10 British Jews dead or missing from the Hamas raids on towns near the Gaza Strip, including 20-year-old Nathanel Young, who was killed while serving with the Israeli military on Saturday.

There are thought to be between 50 000 to 60 000 Britons and dual nationals living in Israel and Gaza.

Sunak had earlier told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that London was prepared to provide Israel with “diplomatic, intelligence, or security support” to meet the challenge posted by Hamas.

Also among those thought to have been killed are photographer Danny Darlington, who went into hiding in a bunker in Nir Oz, a kibbutz near the frontier with Gaza.

Another British-Jewish man, Jack Marlowe, had been providing security at the music festival near Kibbutz Re’im that came under attack from Hamas. He hasn’t been heard from since.

The Palace of Westminster, home to the British parliament, was lit up in Israeli colours on Monday night, along with the building that houses the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Number 10 Downing Street had had an Israeli flag beamed onto its walls on Sunday evening.

Thousands gathered for demonstrations in London starting on Monday afternoon. About 5 000 people attended a vigil near 10 Downing Street in memory of those killed in the attacks. Thousands of Israelis and British Jews were joined by senior politicians from Britain’s three main political parties.

United Kingdom Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis told the





# Emergency Support - Israel Under Attack

Israel is at War! Men, women and children in Israeli southern communities along the Gaza border came under brutal attack from multiple fronts by Hamas terrorists.

**We are all devastated by the loss of life!** Hundreds of Israelis are dead and thousands have been wounded. It is shocking that soldiers and civilians have been kidnapped and taken hostage in Gaza, including women, children and the elderly.

JNF SA has for many years focused our efforts on supporting Israeli communities along the Gaza border. We have been in contact with the communities most directly impacted by this terror.

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**Mayor of Sderot, Alon Davidi said:** "A ruthless and devastating wave of terrorist attacks have struck at the heart of our community, causing widespread destruction, injuries, and loss of life. Families have been torn apart, homes reduced to rubble, and our sense of security shattered. The scars of this horrific incident will be etched into our collective memory forever.

"We are reaching out to you with a plea for assistance, for support, for solidarity. Our brave emergency responders, medical teams, and volunteers are working tirelessly to care for the injured and provide comfort to the traumatized. Still, our resources are stretched beyond capacity, and we desperately need help to rebuild our city and heal our wounded hearts."



Photos by Michael Huri, KKL-JNF Photo Archive.



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# Beach to brutality in one day

OPINION

On early Friday afternoon, 6 October, I was sitting on the beach in Poleg, and took a photo of my kids swimming in the Mediterranean, paragliders surfing the sky behind them. Our weeklong holiday was drawing to a close, and it felt like we had experienced the best version of Israel. We had been to the Kotel during Sukkot, visited the Heroes exhibition at the ANU Museum of the Jewish People, and shopped Shuk HaCarmel.

During the week, I strolled the Tel Aviv promenade with the former ambassador to South Africa, Arthur Lenk. We watched Jews drumming in a lit up sukkah as the sun set and walked towards the ancient city of Jaffa, listening to the call to prayer of the Mu'adhdhin. We discussed the developments in South African and Israeli politics, and Arthur remarked to me that this version of what we were living was "his Israel", the "ideal Israel", an Israel of peace. "It's an illusion, and reality isn't just this, but let's imagine now what might be," he said.

After dinner overlooking the port, I asked him what the chances were of a potential terrorist attack. He shrugged. Who knows? A very Israeli response.

Israel has been fraught with division over the past few months over constitutional reform, and many I spoke to were occupied with that conversation, discussing what the internal political future would be for the country. Israel is always a state teetering on the brink of war, but it didn't necessarily feel imminent last week.

Everyone was introspecting, and perhaps that's why the developments of Saturday morning came as such a shock. It also may well be why there was such a lapse in intelligence and the security forces were evidently caught off guard.

What was astonishing for me was how quickly the situation developed from sitting on the beach on Friday to full-scale terror and war on Saturday morning. I suppose that's the reality of life in Israel.

But what wasn't normal was the sheer scale of the violence and terror. What we were witnessing and experiencing was what some Israeli media are now referring to as that country's 9/11.

In Netanya, there were no air missile sirens all day, but the atmosphere was eerie. Roads were quiet and it felt like a COVID-19 lockdown. We were on high alert and continuously following developments in the news. I was checking social media constantly.

My kids, who are aged seven and nine, were with me, so I took them down to the bomb shelter in the building to explain to them what happens if the siren goes off, but didn't expect that reality to materialise for us.

As the news unfolded about what was going on in the south of the country and the horror of what was happening emerged, I was anxious about getting to the airport and flying out on Saturday night. I was obviously nervous about driving to Tel Aviv and being at the airport as there had been rockets into that area during the day.

The airport was packed with people trying to get on planes. The El Al counter was crowded with travellers trying to get onto flights. We were in the queue to check in, there was a general sense of anxiety, and everyone was on alert.

All of a sudden, a woman started blowing her whistle repeatedly, threw open the security barriers, and shouted for everyone to run to the bomb shelters. There were hundreds of people all heading the same way with their luggage, and I was alone with both my kids, so we left our luggage and tried to get through the crush of people into the stairwells, and there was just general chaos as we were trying to get down to the shelters.

We went down several flights of stairs. I could hear the repeated bang of the missiles as interceptors from the Iron Dome exploded overhead. Constant banging. My kids were totally overwhelmed by the situation, so I was trying to keep them calm. Fortunately, with years



Sign to the bomb shelter at Ben Gurion Airport

of experience as a breaking news reporter, I could respond but it's different when your own children are in danger. On the tarmac, planes were landing, and there's footage of CNN reporter Nic Robertson taking cover at the same time as the interceptors exploded missiles overhead.

It was about 10 minutes of listening to the banging and waiting, not knowing what was going to happen next, considering all the scenarios. What if the Iron Dome fails? What if a rocket hits? Many foreigners were in the stairwells sobbing, consoling one another, just trying to keep calm. It was all a bit surreal. I tried to reassure my kids, who were terrified. Israeli kids do regular drills but for these Joburgers, it was so far detached from their reality that it came as a shock.

Fortunately, the situation settled, and we were

able to go back and check in, get through security, and after many hours, make it onto our plane.

We met some other King David families. There's enormous comfort in being part of a community, and the familiarity was reassuring. I could still hear the banging overhead throughout, so there was constant anxiety about what could still potentially happen.

Taking off on an airplane while there's an aerial missile assault going on around you isn't easy, but we were just grateful to be going home.

Our experience, while scary, is incomparable to that of so many others who lived through far worse over the first 48 hours. But it's a demonstration of what terror feels like, and how quickly the situation escalated.

As the sheer horror of what has happened in Israel has emerged, I think of those who have lost loved ones so traumatically, and who are still waiting desperately for news of those who have been kidnapped.

I fully acknowledge and appreciate that there are two sides to this conflict and that the history of the Middle East is vexed and complicated. There has been large-scale loss of life on both sides.

But what we saw Hamas do on Saturday was outright terrorism, and for the South African government not to condemn it, but rather call it regrettable, is deplorable.

For our government not to condemn Russia and argue that it's neutral, yet on this issue, it contravenes that stance, is hypocritical.

But it's not surprising.

I do support our government's call for a cessation of violence, and we can only pray that there will ultimately be peace. Sadly, for now that will remain an idyllic illusion.

• Mandy Wiener is a broadcaster and author.



MANDY WIENER

# The barbarians at the gate

OPINION

I'm not the same person I was when I went to sleep last Friday night. Our country isn't the same as it was. We'll never be the same again. On Friday night, a nation went to sleep filled with joy. How could we not be joyful? It was the end of Sukkot, and we would celebrate Simchat Torah.

At 06:30 on Saturday, everything changed. Red alerts on our phones went haywire, and what followed was mayhem. Non-stop rockets as far as Netanya, Jerusalem, Modi'in, and everywhere in between. We're used to rockets. We know what to do.

Among them are people we know. As I volunteer with the Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO), I have taken many delegations to our projects in the south in towns like Sderot and to kibbutz Netiv HaAsara.

I've always been so proud not just to show off our projects like rocket-proof day care centres, but also the residents of these amazing towns. These are the nicest people you could meet. They have a strong Zionist identity, and care deeply for each other, having endured decades of rocket attacks.

The Sderot police station where I have taken delegations is no more. Hamas terrorists held police hostage for hours. In order to take out the terrorists, the station had to be demolished. My only hope is that the hostages were no longer there and didn't suffer.

In 2014, WIZO evacuated the residents of Netiv HaAsara to safety during Operation Protective Edge. They hosted a magnificent lunch to thank us. My tile of peace is fixed to the Wall of Peace, which is its project. How many are still alive? Young people celebrating a festival of peace, slaughtered as they ran for their lives. Eyewitness accounts claim some of the women were raped.

Hamas and its supporters, who are nothing but apologists for depravity, are revelling in their evil. The desecrated bodies of their victims, paraded in the streets, shared across social media. The world is watching in horror as the extent of their hatred is exposed. We have warned for decades – do you believe us now?

The barbarians who murdered our people didn't care if we were religious or secular, left or right, a Bibi supporter or a Lapid supporter. They just wanted to kill us.

The African National Congress and its cohorts who say we deserve this because of "apartheid" and occupation – well, here's a fact they need to know. On Saturday, rockets killed Bedouin and Arabs. Foreign workers were killed and were taken hostage. Israelis from all walks of life are defending our country. As I write this, more than 1 200 have been murdered, 123 have fallen in battle, and at least 200 have been taken hostage. These numbers are expected to rise. May their memories be blessed.

We have faced the unimaginable together, we're mourning together, and G-d willing, we'll be victorious together.

The barbarians came through the gates. They opened the gates of hell. We'll never be the same again.

• Rolene Marks is a Middle East commentator often heard on radio and TV and is the co-founder of Lay of the Land and the SA-Israel Policy Forum.



ROLENE MARKS



Medical responders in Sderot on 8 October 2023

But what do we do when Hamas terrorists who go from house to house, murdering innocent people, setting fire to homes, executing people in the street, slaughtering 260 at a peace party, and kidnapping nearly 200, infiltrate our peaceful southern towns and kibbutzim?

These are the scenes from horror movies. Except they aren't. This is our reality, and we're all struggling to absorb it. We cannot.

By now, we're starting to know the names of the dead.

We have day care centres that could keep the rockets out, but we couldn't keep the monsters out. They came into homes and slaughtered whole families. They took pregnant mothers, Holocaust survivors, disabled, the elderly, and frightened children into Gaza. The barbarity and cruelty is too much to fathom. They came into our kibbutzim and murdered. The mayor of Sderot said that Israelis couldn't comprehend the depths of the devastation.

Photo: Saeed Daq- Anadolu Agency via Getty Images



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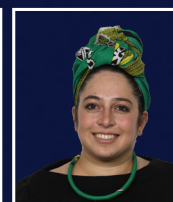


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Heather Zar



# Time to emerge from the Iron Dome

OPINION

One is tempted to quote the old cliché about the fact that those who forget their history are condemned to relive it. The latest troubles in the Middle East are perhaps more nuanced than old clichés reveal, however Israeli intelligence has again been found lacking.

The circumstances are chillingly similar to the ones experienced 50 years ago – almost to the date – when Egyptians and Syrians launched a devastating surprise attack on Yom Kippur in 1973.

Delivering an analysis of the recent cataclysmic events in southern Israel may be a case of “too soon”.

One must remain sensitive to the developing situation. Israel has suffered enormous losses at the time of writing, and Hamas has captured more than a few Israeli soldiers and civilians. The agonising prospect is that Hamas will use these hostages as propaganda toys and bargaining chips in the days, months, and perhaps years to come.

Undoubtedly, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) will restore the situation militarily, but Israel faces enormous challenges and unenviable choices after that. What next to rid Gaza of Hamas and permanently heal the festering wound on Israel's southern border?

Military scientists dissect and critically analyse battles in history



The southern Israeli city of Ashkelon under rocket fire from Gaza on 7 October 2023

Photo: Erik Marmor Flash90

to extract past mistakes so that students of history will know not to repeat them. The careful study of history also reveals the art of what's possible under the most challenging circumstances. History has much to offer our warriors in uniform, short of actual combat.

Even while Israel is in a costly battle to regain military control over the regions Hamas has infiltrated, many are incredulous at how Israel finds itself in a precarious position driven by what seems to be a complete intelligence failure. It's too soon to offer hard facts on a subject that will be extensively examined inside and outside the country for many years. However, some of the reasons for the lapse in Israeli concentration are obvious, while others, though less obvious, are no

less discernible. At first glance, Hamas may have committed a severe blunder at strategic level. Its murderous and ruthless surprise attack has cost it the sympathy vote, at least in the West. Israel has miraculously, perhaps temporarily, regained the moral high ground.

The sudden invasion has galvanised the fractured Israeli society, which was threatening to tear the country apart a few short days ago. Talks of a possible civil war, maybe far-fetched, have been averted. Hamas has shot its bolt and inadvertently handed Israel a golden opportunity to rid itself of the terrorist scourge in Gaza comprehensively and with the full backing of the West

Therefore, a severe setback at

the operational and tactical level of warfare has created a strategic opportunity for Israel. Or as they say in Afrikaans “*geluk by die ongeluk*”. In brief, this is where Israel finds itself, and it will take a mighty commitment to ensure that the chance to obliterate Hamas isn't squandered.

How did Israel get here? Although the outcome of the insurgency is almost certainly an Israeli military victory, the IDF's image will suffer in the eyes of Israelis because it failed to protect the southern border. The country has never been more divided against itself. Fractured societies are vulnerable.

While Israel has been devoted to pressing internal matters and Israelis fight among themselves, their enemies have taken advantage of the opportunities presented. Security issues have taken a back seat to political expediency. Complacency is another powerful enemy. “Safe” behind their high walls and Iron Dome, with the occasional retaliatory surgical air strike, Israelis have become comfortable with the status quo brought about by overwhelming military superiority.

All seemed relatively under control, with Hamas hermetically sealed in Gaza and Arab countries

lining up to restore diplomatic relations. A potent mixture of hubris, distraction, and being lulled by the status quo created a perfect storm for Hamas to exploit.

Here's a lesson from history. Building static defensive positions hands over the initiative to the enemy. The infamous French Maginot Line in World War II exemplified the French defensive mentality brought about by the false sense of security offered by fortifications. The Germans, seizing the initiative, quickly overcame the French defences by simply bypassing them. Similarly, the Bar-Lev line straddling the East Bank of the Suez Canal inculcated an Israeli defensive mentality. This stood in stark relief to its penchant for manoeuvre in the remarkable Six-Day War. Israel handed the initiative to the Arab armies in 1973, and suffered the enduring consequences of fighting on the back foot for most of the war at a significant cost.

The Iron Dome and extensive border wall are defensive measures that allow Hamas to determine the time and place of an attack. Hamas holds the initiative. Extensive tunnel systems allow Hamas to concentrate its forces in time and space and achieve overwhelming firepower at a point of its choosing. Israel mans static positions along the border, and conducts itself in a reactionary manner.

Like most Western powers, Israel has placed its trust in superior technology. It sees technology as an answer to avoiding casualties rather than placing boots on the ground. An example of such technology is the Iron Dome. Each Iron Dome battery costs \$150 million (R2.9 billion), and an interceptor missile costs \$50 000 (R958 400). The Iron Dome is pitted against Hamas' unguided, short-range rockets, which cost between \$300 and \$800 (R5 750

and R15 300) to make and have an estimated range of about 10km. The maths overwhelmingly favours Hamas, who has lately used swarming tactics to partly overwhelm the Iron Dome in the opening phases of the insurgency.

Israeli airstrikes have proved ineffective against Hamas rocket sites, and all the technology, just like in Afghanistan and Iraq, has proved to have little deterrent effect on a determined enemy. World War II, Vietnam, and the current Ukraine war adequately demonstrate that bombing urban areas strengthens civilian resolve rather than the opposite.

Occupying Gaza for a decent length of time with boots on the ground seems to be an idea growing in likelihood by the hour. However, asymmetrical warfare in a densely populated urban area is a nasty prospect.

Israel may have to consider occupying Gaza, and using combined armed forces of aircraft, tanks, artillery, and infantry working in unison to hunt down and neutralise Hamas as a fighting force. The extensive Gaza tunnel system must also be destroyed to deny Hamas its logistics and means of cover and concealment.

Israel must seize the initiative, climb from under its defensive systems, and occupy Gaza. This will come at an enormous human and political cost, but a comprehensive military solution may create the space for a political one thereafter.

• Dr David Brock Katz is a research fellow at Stellenbosch University in the faculty of military science. He has published three books and numerous academic articles dealing with aspects of South African military history and military doctrine.



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## U2's Bono sings tribute to festival victims

GABE FRIEDMAN – JTA

The original lyrics of U2's hit song *Pride (In the Name of Love)* were about Martin Luther King Jr. But on Sunday night, 8 October, the band's singer, Bono, changed some of the song's lyrics to pay tribute to Israeli victims of Hamas attacks.

In a break in the performance of the song at the newly-opened Sphere venue outside of Las Vegas, Bono mentioned the Supernova music festival by name. More than 250 festival-goers at the event held in the desert in southern Israel were killed on Saturday as Hamas militants opened fire and sought to take many hostages.

“We sing for those, our people, our kind of people – music people, playful, experimental people,” said the 22-time Grammy-winner, who has for decades been an anti-war activist who has commented on conflict around the world.

He then sang an altered verse dedicated to the victims: “Early morning, October 7/Sun is rising in the desert sky/Stars of David, they took your life/They could not take your pride.”

The original verse references King's assassination in Memphis on 4 April 1968.

Bono wasn't the only celebrity to comment on the weekend's violence. Madonna, who is known to be a student of Kabbalah, posted a graphic video to Instagram showing footage of Hamas violence. She wrote a long caption,

including, “My heart goes out to Israel. To families and homes that have been destroyed. To children who are lost. To innocent victims who have been killed.”

Other celebrities to post messages of support for Israel include Israeli *Wonder Woman* star Gal Gadot; Zoey Deutch; Jamie Lee Curtis; Amy Schumer; Kylie Jenner; Jennifer Love Hewitt; Sarah Michelle Gellar; Mandy Moore; and Sofia Richie, the daughter of Lionel Richie, who converted to Judaism before marrying her Jewish husband.

On Instagram, Jewish comedian Sarah Silverman re-posted a note aimed at activists and others who have celebrated Hamas' violence. Broadway star and Grammy-winner Josh Groban re-posted a note from Israeli-



U2 in Las Vegas

American composer Or Matias, who was music director for the hit show *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*, which starred Groban. Matias said that he has been “vocally critical of Israel's government” but those who are silent in the wake of the attacks “aren't purely pro-peace. You are anti-Israel.”



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# SA reaction to massacre speaks volumes

NICOLA MILTZ

For South African Jewry, it has felt like a week of *shiva*. We are mourning, yet only a few outside our community have come to offer comfort and support. Some have twisted the knife.

Body after body has emerged following the worst attack on Jews since the Holocaust, yet the government's response to the atrocities inflicted on civilians in Israel last weekend by Hamas terrorists remains ice cold.

It has shown zero compassion for a community grappling with harrowing images of death and devastation. In pro-Palestinian sectors, sickening undercurrents of celebration can be felt.

The ruling African National Congress (ANC) has made its feelings crystal clear. It stands with Palestine no matter what, saying the actions of Hamas were "unsurprising" considering Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian land. It later condemned the killing of civilians and called for restraint on both sides.

The Economic Freedom Fighters has unyieldingly championed the Palestinian cause, while showing no empathy for the Israelis in the face of this unprovoked assault.

Social activist and political commentator Howard Sackstein said, "If the South African government cannot find it within itself to condemn the slaughter of innocent Israeli civilians or offer sympathy for the South Africans murdered or missing or who have lost their homes in the barrage of Hamas rockets that have pumelled Israeli cities, then it has once again proved that it lacks the moral authority to govern.

"For the ANC, the wholesale slaughter of innocent Jewish civilians or grandmothers and babies is of no consequence. Its incapacity to comprehend the consequences of its approach is simply astounding, but it lacks the credibility to speak on any of these issues, and must be treated with the disdain it deserves."

There are many South Africans living in Israel, many directly affected. The *SA Jewish Report* is holding onto stories of witnesses to the massacres at kibbutzim in the

south of the country. The trauma is too raw for them to be disclosed publicly.

"Every one of us knows someone who knows of someone killed or missing in Israel," said Professor Karen Milner, the national chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) at a press conference earlier this week.

While morally upright nations worldwide unequivocally condemned the heinous, evil actions of Hamas, some countries displaying colours of the Israeli flag on prominent buildings in solidarity, the South African government and its allies remained steadfast in their stance, placing responsibility for the attacks on the Israeli government, persisting even in the face of gut-wrenching images of lifeless Jewish infants in body bags on gurneys.

"We know of South Africans that have probably been captured or murdered and are in Gaza, and our government doesn't care. We haven't had one phone call. It's a sad day," said SAJBD National Vice-President Zev Krengel.

He said Pretoria's downgrading of the embassy in Tel Aviv had made it difficult to help South Africans, some of them Christian tourists who may be trying to leave the country or others caught up in the conflict.

Addressing thousands of members of the community at a communal prayer gathering for Israel earlier this week, Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein said South African Jewry should stand proud and united, and not rely on the government's support.

"We need to stand up and be proud citizens of this democracy, and say with strength and conviction to our government and the ANC that we don't need its endorsement, we don't need its support," he said, pointing out that the government's moral credibility was questionable.

Encouraging people to be bold, he said, "We need to make sure that the story of the state of Israel is told, but ultimately, those who support barbarism and savagery will be judged by G-d himself."

There was an entire day of death and destruction

last Saturday, 7 October, starting when the sun rose until it set and beyond. Yet there was no mention of it in the country's largest newspaper, the *Sunday Times*, the following day. Other news outlets focused on the government's one-sided response and included front-page photographs of burning Palestinian buildings showing the aftermath of retaliatory attacks in Gaza. A few days in, News24's editor in chief, Adriaan Basson, criticised the ANC for immediately blaming "apartheid-state" Israel for the attacks on its citizens.

Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation, said, "The South African media has so far shown a mixed response to the Hamas massacre, at times uncritically repeating fake news in the department of international relations and cooperation [Dirco's] statement about the "destruction" of the Al-Aqsa mosque, or including comment from the antisemitic BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] movement and other extremist organisations in order to show 'balance'.

"Balance in the media isn't to balance views on whether Israel should exist alongside those that advocate for the country to be destroyed, and organisations that seek her destruction aren't legitimate commentators. Thankfully, a number of publications have carried editorials on Hamas' gross human rights violations and war crimes, but as far as we can tell, no publication was brave enough to come out unequivocally in support of Israel."

As the scale of atrocities unfolded this week, a horrified United States President Joe Biden condemned the attacks as "sheer evil". United Kingdom Prime Minister Rishi Sunak pledged his support for Israel during a moving speech at a London synagogue.

All this wasn't enough to deter local pro-Palestinian



lobby groups such as Africa4Palestine from taking part in numerous radio talk shows giving support to the Palestinians and showing disregard for the Israeli civilians butchered in the attacks. Nor were images of Hamas militants having killed babies and dogs in kibbutzim enough to deter pro-Palestinian groups from gathering in numbers to protest Israel's "continued colonial occupation of Palestinian land".

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign said Hamas "had the right" to do what it did, and said it was "no surprise".

Soon after the massacre, students of the University of Cape Town's Palestine Solidarity Forum posted menacing messages on social media saying things like, "The time has come." One said in capital letters, "The future of Palestine is being decided as we speak. All eyes are on Al-Aqsa. Will you be supporting the resistance?"

Other campuses including University of the Witwatersrand and Stellenbosch University are following suit with demonstrations in support of Palestinians.

There has been support from Christian groups and several political parties such as the Democratic Alliance, Freedom Front Plus, African Christian Democratic Party, Inkatha Freedom Party, and the Patriotic Alliance, which have all condemned the vicious attacks, agreeing that there was no justification for such atrocity, and have made calls for the return of hostages from Gaza and for the resumption of peace talks.

## Public figures condemn Hamas

Most South Africans are appalled at the massacre of, at the time of writing, more than 1 200 Jews in Israel at the hands of Hamas last weekend, the injuring of more than 2 900, and the kidnapping of more than 100 others. The following people sent messages to us for the people of Israel and the world Jewish community:

### Gareth Cliff - radio personality

Just like so many people around the world who have expressed solidarity with Israel and the South African Jewish community in the wake of this horrific and disgraceful attack on free citizens of the state of Israel, I send my love, support, and friendship. I've been a supporter of Israel since long before these tragic and terrible events, and I shall be one for long afterwards.



Gareth Cliff

Congress (ANC) has no issue with it.

The South African government and ANC response is utterly predictable, and has less to do with the Middle East of which it has an understanding rooted in its deeply entrenched anti-Western world view and more to do with its misconceived struggle notions.

Israel has every right to defend itself, and we stand with our friends in Israel.

### Emma Powell - DA shadow minister of international relations and cooperation

The Democratic Alliance (DA) condemns Hamas' unprovoked attack on Israeli territory during the religious holiday of Simchat Torah.

The DA urgently calls on the department of international relations and cooperation to condemn this unprovoked attack unequivocally, and join the international community in its call for an immediate end to the rapidly escalating violence.

The DA condemns this senseless violence and all acts of terror against innocent civilians, women, and children, and calls for aggressors in this conflict to withdraw immediately.



Gayton McKenzie and Israeli President Isaac Herzog in July 2023

We stand united with the global community in our call for the release of Israeli civilians who are being held hostage across several cities in the south of Israel.

The DA continues to support a viable and sustainable two-state solution based on United

Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. While we recognise the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, we equally recognise the right of the Israeli state to defend herself and her people.

We urge all parties to this historic conflict to return to the negotiating table to find a mutually agreed pathway to lasting peace.

### Barry Schwartzberg - Discovery

We are survivors.

The fact that we are here today as practising Jews is testament to the resilience and strength of our people. We have overcome countless challenges throughout history, from the destruction of our temples, to the Spanish Inquisition, to the Holocaust. We have made it through, and now it's incumbent on us to continue our traditions so that future generations can similarly survive.

To be survivors means never giving up hope, even in the face of adversity. It means staying true to our values and beliefs, and ensuring that Israel remains a Jewish state. I condemn the horrific terrorist attacks on our fellow Jews. This is unprecedented, but it won't break us.

To be survivors, we must stand united and protect what's most precious to us: our faith, our family, and our homeland.

### Mmusi Maimane - Build One South Africa leader

We're deeply concerned that this weekend's attack has struck a mortal blow to the peace process and the normalisation of relations between countries in the Middle East.

When the fog of war clears, we call on all parties to negotiate a lasting peace in the Middle East that recognises the rights of Palestinians to sovereignty and guarantees the right of Israel to live in peace with secure borders within a two-state solution.

### Gayton McKenzie - Patriotic Alliance leader

The horror of seeing children being dragged from houses has rendered the saying "safe as houses" useless.

Young people being shot and killed in cold blood, parents learning about the death of their kids on national television, these are the horrors that people in Israel have been exposed to.

No political aim, no ideology exist where children are the victims, unless you represent the worst evil.

Jewish people said, "Never again" after the Holocaust, but "never again" happened. My deepest and most sincerest condolences to the people of Israel and everyone from other countries who have been killed like a dog.

do with its misconceived struggle notions.

There will be time when this crisis passes to demand accountability, as Israelis will doubtless do, of the epic governance, military, and intelligence failures which led to this debacle and dark days for the state of Israel. We wish it strength and courage.

### Geordin Hill-Lewis - Cape Town mayor

I utterly condemn the shocking events and senseless violence in southern Israel. My heart goes out to the families and the innocent victims of these attacks, and on every side of the ongoing Middle Eastern conflict. I pray for an end to the war, and for the state of Israel and the state of Palestine to live side by side in peace.

### Andreas Peschke - German ambassador to South Africa

We are very worried about the situation in the Middle East. We stand in solidarity with the state of Israel. We are concerned and strongly condemn the terrorist attacks by Hamas. These attacks must stop.

### Tony Leon - the first leader of the Democratic Alliance

I'm a supporter of a two-state solution in Israel. Hamas believes in the destruction of Israel. Its action is reminiscent of the Nazi Holocaust and pogroms. More than 260 people murdered at a music festival. Women and children murdered and kidnapped. Rapes. And the department of international relations and cooperation/African National



Tony Leon



# South Africans grieve friends caught in massacre

TALI FEINBERG

The mayor of the Shar HaNegev regional council, Ofir Liebshtein (50), and Canadian *olah* Vivian Silver (75) have spent their lives dedicated to peace and improving the lives of Israelis and Palestinians, according to their many South African and global friends.

This clearly didn't stop Hamas terrorists from targeting them on 7 October, when they brutally massacred more than 1 200 people, wounded about 2 900, and abducted many more into Gaza.

Liebshtein, who was creating an industrial zone to provide jobs for Gazans, was killed defending his family and community. His teenage son was injured and is still missing.

Silver, who has dedicated herself to women's rights and peace initiatives, lived on Kibbutz Be'eri, which terrorists stormed and took hostage. Silver's fate is unknown, and she may have been abducted. Her last text said, "It's absolute chaos here. Terrorists have infiltrated Be'eri. There's shooting and screaming." When her friend responded, there was no reply, and she hasn't been heard from since.



"Both of them embody not only the best virtues of Israelis, but the best virtues of global citizens," says Wayne Sussman, Johannesburg resident and Africa Institute director at the American Jewish Committee. "We must always honour Ofir's legacy, and we hope that Vivian and others are safe, because the world, Israel, and the Middle East needs Vivian Silver."

"I had the privilege of working with Ofir Liebshtein on numerous projects to strengthen ties between South African Jewish youth and the youth of the south of Israel," Sussman says. "Ofir was an incredible individual. He spent most of his life living in the south, and he worked every day to close the gaps between those in the core – like Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, the Gush Dan area – and those in the periphery, the areas he represented."

"He was committed to creating as many economic opportunities as possible for those in the south. He was a mayor committed to all residents in the area, whether they were Jews or Bedouins. He made a profound impact on Habonim Dror, as its national chairperson. His last act was to defend his family and community. He paid the ultimate price for his unwavering commitment to his people."

Sussman has also known Silver for many years. "She had a remarkable impact on ANC [African National Congress] leaders [who visited Israel]. They were amazed at her commitment to female empowerment in peripheral areas, and the way she worked across borders, whether it was with Palestinians, Israelis, Jordanians, or Egyptians. She would often wait at the checkpoint from Gaza for sick Palestinians who needed cancer treatment in Israeli hospitals, and would personally drive them there. She isn't just a great Israeli, she's a person with global humanity. What happened to her and all those who were taken hostage or are unaccounted for is a great tragedy."

"My friendship with Vivian spans nearly 30 years," says South African Jewish Board of Deputies National Director Wendy Kahn. "I met her in 1996, and went on to work with her for many years, taking groups of South Africans to Israel to learn about agriculture, rural development, water, and more."

"Vivian's incredible commitment to upliftment and to sharing expertise was an inspiration," she says. "The organisation she worked for was called the Negev Institute for Strategies of Peace and Development [NISPED] and her real passion was working with one of NISPED's divisions, the Arab Jewish Centre for Equality and Co-operation, together with Amal Elzana Alh'jooj. Not only did

they work on projects to uplift Israel's Arab communities, but for many years, they were able to extend their upliftment work to Palestinian groups." She was also a founding member of AJEEC-NISPED, a Bedouin women's organisation.

"Vivian and I reconnected when she went on to become one of the founders of Women Wage Peace [WWP], a grassroots peace movement in Israel that works with thousands of Jewish and Arab women promoting peaceful solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," says Kahn. "In 2019, we brought a WWP delegation comprising Jewish and Arab women to South Africa to share their experiences with us and learn from our own experience of peace-building. During their visit, they engaged with government, civil society, other faith groups, and the media."

"Vivian has dedicated her life to peace-building and to uplifting those in need. I've been privileged to learn from her. My prayers are for the safe return of precious Vivian and the others who have been ruthlessly kidnapped."

Cape Town resident Tamar Lazarus knew Liebshtein. "Four years ago, Ofir helped us bring kids from the southern region of Israel to visit Cape Town so that they could enjoy a holiday and go to machaneh," she says. Of these young people, Lazarus knows of only one that's safe. The fates of the rest are unknown. She says a number of other *shlichim* to Cape Town knew Liebshtein well, and are devastated.

Yossi Eshed, a former *shaliach* to Cape Town, saw Liebshtein as "a friend and brother". "In 2015, I went on *shlichut* as fundraising *shaliach* for JNF [the Jewish National Fund] Australia, to Sydney, and he became the mayor of the Shar HaNegev [Gate of the Negev] regional council. As JNF Australia always supports the south [of Israel], we became more than good friends as we were supporting the region and his regional council specifically. Two years ago, we hosted him in Sydney. As I knew they would, people just fell in love with him. Such a strong Zionist, such a decent leader, a true *mensch*. One of his biggest projects was developing an industrial zone to promote coexistence and create employment for Palestinians."

Called the Israel-Gaza Economic Development Unit, it would "utilise the skills of young, unemployed Gazans by giving them job opportunities which will in turn allow them to provide for their families", according to a brochure for the development. "This enterprise will allow for about 10 000 workers to come out of Gaza every day and earn dignified salaries. Alongside industry, a medical facility will be established in the park, as well as a branch of an international-level university."

In addition, the brochure said, "We aim to improve the infrastructure in Gaza, namely sewage, water, and electricity." The project also sought to enable "high-level training for Gazan farmers to optimise agricultural resources" including "a training programme for Gazan high-tech engineers and entrepreneurs based around the Shar HaNegev incubator and Sapir College."

One of Liebshtein's last Facebook posts was about him meeting young people from the region. "They ask questions, take interest, and show that the future of the Negev Gate is important to them," he wrote. "With young people like this, the future looks optimistic and promising."

"Habonim Dror Southern Africa is devastated by the killing of Ofir Liebshtein," the organisation said, describing it as an "insurmountable loss". He was the "ultimate example of *dugma ishit* [personal example]", it said. "We will always honour his memory."

Habonim Dror Olami paid tribute to him, saying, "It's with deep sorrow and shock that we inform you of the passing of our beloved chairperson. We're thankful for all his incredible achievements for the Jewish people, and Habonim Dror in particular."

The day before he was murdered, Liebshtein wrote his last post on Facebook: "Simchat Torah is a celebration of finishing reading the book of the Torah and continuing reading it again from Genesis. The end indicates the beginning, marks the journey we went through, and gives us a moment to say thanks for being, and to be filled with hope for what's coming. Together, we'll continue to do good for the future of the Negev Gate. Shabbat Shalom and happy holidays, Ofir."

## Jews of Lithuanian or Polish heritage eligible for EU citizenship

There's a common misconception that to get European citizenship and a European Union passport, you need to have documents proving your lineage. **The fact is** not having any documents proving lineage doesn't necessarily disqualify you from eligibility. In many cases, the required documents can be obtained in the European country of origin.

Having European citizenship offers many **benefits** besides the fact that it makes travel a lot easier than with a South African passport.

And, as we are fully aware, South Africa faces many uncertainties, not just today, but for our children as well. Though we still have it relatively good here, we know that the time will come when, as Jews, we will seek alternative options. European citizenship will be the tool we're looking for.

As we know, the majority of South African Jews are descendants of Jews whose European citizenship was illegally deprived. Therefore, they are entitled to reinstate citizenship and obtain an EU passport.

The most important thing to take into consideration is that prior to the end of World War I, the European map was very different from the one we know today. Countries like Poland and Lithuania didn't exist as independent countries, and until 1918, these territories were known only as Lithuanian or Polish regions/countries of the Russia empire, which ruled all of north eastern Europe.

Until 1918, residents of these territories had Russian citizenship as Polish and Lithuanian citizenship didn't exist. Therefore, applications for reinstatement of these citizenships are based only on whether one's ancestor was a Polish or Lithuanian citizen. The descendants of an ancestor who left Europe prior to 1918 won't be eligible.

In addition, since borders in Europe were shifted during and after World War II, eligibility for Polish or Lithuanian citizenship depends on the city from which his/her ancestor originated.

For example, Jews who left Vilnius and its region could be declined, whereas a similar application for reinstatement of Polish citizenship could be approved.

My name is Avi Horesh. I'm well-known in Israel as one of the leading lawyers in the field of reinstatement of European citizenship.

With only a four-hour flight to Warsaw and Vilnius, I'm able to arrive quickly and safely to Poland and Lithuania, where I collaborate closely with local professionals in tracing the required documents for your successful application for reinstatement as a European citizen.

Having lived in Poland for seven years, I have in-depth understanding of European immigration laws.

I have been operating in the South African market with our Jewish communities since March 2018, and visit every three to four months, which will allow us to meet in person.

**My next trip to South Africa will be 29 October to 9 November 2023**

**Contact me on**

**WhatsApp: +48 783 953 223**

**Email: [adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com](mailto:adv.avi.n.horesh@gmail.com)**



# SA olim narrowly miss rocket hitting building

TALI FEINBERG

South African *oleh* Gidon Boolkin is grateful to be alive after a Hamas rocket hit his building on the corner of Ben Yehuda and Mendele streets in Tel Aviv on the night of 7 October 2023, destroying the apartment above his.

Just two hours before the rocket hit, he was in his apartment, finishing an indoor bicycle training session. He then decided to head out to make dinner with his girlfriend. That decision probably saved his life.

“Before we left to make dinner, a friend of mine suggested I pack a bag with some extra clothes in case we had to flee the country or something similar,” says Boolkin from Tel Aviv. He did so, and left.

“I made dinner with my girlfriend, and then we heard a few sirens going off and headed to a bomb shelter. I started getting phone calls from friends crying and asking if I was alive as they saw the video of my building in flames.

“I knew my roommate [fellow South African *oleh* Adam Jankelow] was staying with his girlfriend, so I wasn’t too concerned, but called him to let him know. He couldn’t believe what happened until I shared the video with him, after which he finally conceded that it was our apartment building.”

The two South Africans lived on the fourth floor of a five-storey building. The apartment on the fifth floor was totally destroyed.

“I didn’t really care too much as everything was replaceable,” says Boolkin. “My girlfriend and I headed to the apartment to have a look, after which we heard two further sirens. During the first siren, we ran into the Mashya Hotel and after the second one, we ran to a nearby building where there were two policemen. The policemen couldn’t bash the door down, so we landed up taking shelter behind the building.

“We tried to access my building, but it was blocked off for structural reasons. We decided to leave it and go back the next day. That night, we were thinking what stuff I could take if I was allowed five minutes, what was important to me, and if anything had survived.”

Boolkin got “an overwhelming amount of calls that day from my company and friends offering me shelter and food. But the sad part is that this is just a drop in the ocean compared to what’s happening in the south”.

“We’re lucky and grateful not to have been in the building,” says Boolkin. “Life would have been a lot more traumatic, even if we weren’t injured.” The day after the event, he went to shul, borrowed tefillin, as his were locked in the apartment, and donated *tzedakah* in gratitude for this miracle.

“I don’t think anyone was seriously injured or killed in the building,” Jankelow says, “but it was a crazy experience. We were camping in the north for a friend’s birthday when we started to hear about the attacks. When we heard about the situation, we started to make our way back to Tel Aviv. I was at my girlfriend’s place, and we were debating whether we should stay at her place or mine. We decided to stay at hers.

“And then the rocket siren went off. It was super loud and scary just to be there. Gidon phoned me to say that he had seen videos that our apartment block had been hit. It had made a massive hole on the top of the fifth floor. We’re on the fourth floor. We got to go there yesterday [8 October]. We were allowed only 10 minutes to get as many of my belongings as possible. I managed to store it all at a friend’s place. I’ll stay at my girlfriend for now.

“There’s a lot of uncertainty whether I can move back into the building or ever go back to that apartment,” he says. “At the moment, I don’t know what’s going to happen. We’re just trying to stay positive and send our support to friends and family. We all know someone affected by the atrocities in the south.”



Damaged building on the corner of Ben Yehuda and Mendele streets in Tel Aviv

Friends of his friends were killed in the Nova Festival massacre. “A friend of mine was shot in the stomach when going to protect one of the kibbutzim in the south,” he says. “It’s a tense time, and we just need to stay strong, remain together, and focus on the positive. Luckily we weren’t in the apartment. It’s just stuff that can be replaced.”

## ‘I was sobbing’ – SA woman’s trip from hell

TALI FEINBERG

“I felt like we were suspended in time,” says Capetonian Sonja Woolf (29) of the moment she and her best friend swam in the calm Tel Aviv sea as the sun rose on the morning of 7 October 2023. “I had landed at 04:00, and the only thing I wanted to do was to swim in the ocean.” Back in Israel for the first time in 10 years and seeing her best friend for the first time in more than two years, she felt content, happy, and excited.

“I can’t even explain what a beautiful morning it was,” she says. She and her best friend, Andi Shapiro, filmed themselves swimming at 06:00 in turquoise water, laughing together. “That video was taken 20 minutes before the first siren went off. We had no idea what was to come,” says Woolf. “We meditated on the beach, and I just felt so unbelievably grateful to be back in Israel. I was excited to be on a Partnership2Gether (P2G) leadership seminar, see close friends, and maybe understand Israel a little more.”

But as she and her friend walked back to their apartment, sirens sounded, and they dived for cover alongside a building. “We were holding each other and the rocket hit very close. It was a huge shock. Everything was shaking. Andi said to me, ‘I don’t want to scare you, but that was the loudest I’ve ever heard it.’”

They got back to the apartment, but the block had no safe room or shelter, so every time the sirens sounded, they had to go in the stairwell. “It was my first time experiencing this, when everyone brings their dogs and babies and everyone is together. It was loud and scary.”

She eventually realised things were serious. Sleep deprived, in shock, and scared, she and Shapiro stayed in the apartment, too scared even to go out to get food. “When the sirens continued to go off in the afternoon, I could no longer hold it together. I was sobbing. I was fearful for my life, and looking around me, dogs were barking, there was crying. There were rumours circulating that Hamas had stolen vehicles and were coming into the city dressed as the IDF [Israel Defense Forces], saying they needed to come in. They were saying that we needed to lock our doors but also hide in the stairwell. There were layers of fear.

“In the afternoon, I lost all composure. I was very worried. I had nowhere to go. I didn’t



Sonja Woolf

feel that anywhere was safe. In the evening, the programme organiser called and said, ‘We can get you out. You can take the next El Al flight at 23:30. Do you want it?’”

Woolf felt a lot of guilt but was scared that she would get stuck in Israel. She didn’t know if things would escalate for hours, days, or months. She spoke to people, and “not one person told me to just wait it out. Everyone said, ‘Get out as soon as you can.’”

So, she called the organiser back and agreed to go. “There was one ticket, which cost \$3 000 [R57 500]. It was shocking, but they said they would cover the cost.”

But another siren went off at that moment, and in the stairwell, Woolf lost signal. By the time she returned to the apartment, the ticket had been taken by someone else.

However, the organisation miraculously found her a ticket on another flight. She grabbed her bags and booked a cab driver, still feeling fearful about whether this was safe – from getting into a taxi with a driver who could be anyone, to getting safely to the airport. “I was sobbing. I was hysterical about leaving my friends. And everything was chaotic.”

She got to the airport, but arrived to massive queues. Miraculously, two other P2G participants were at the front of the queue, and she was able to join them. Everyone from airport staff to other passengers helped her get on the flight. “There was a lot of panic but also solidarity. People let others through if they needed to get past urgently.”

As a woman on her own, Woolf had to go through a rigorous security check. “I got to the flight with 10 minutes to spare. People were helpful, and I and the other P2G participants even got seats together. Safely on the plane, there were no words for how we were feeling. It was surreal. I wasn’t even in Israel for 24 hours. I couldn’t stop crying.”

Back home in Cape Town, “I’m now trying to process it all and the feeling of wanting my friends to get out, but also respecting that they want to stay,” says Woolf. She knows that what she went through is minor compared to so many others, but still felt so much fear and heartbreak. “There’s so much grief for all the suffering. I feel like it’s a miracle that I got out, and I am eternally grateful to the staff at P2G, who did everything they could to help me.”

## ‘Why him?’ sisters ask of beloved cousin’s murder

TALI FEINBERG

When Ma’ayan Jowell and Sigalit Levin were growing up in Port Elizabeth, their Israeli cousin, Avi Zakuto, came to stay with them for a few months. “Avi moved in with us when I was 15 and become our ‘big brother’. My friends all thought he was so good-looking,” remembers Jowell, who now also lives in Modi’in, Israel. He was her eldest cousin, and she saw him as someone larger than life, “with the hugest heart” who “gives the best hugs, sweeping me off my feet”.

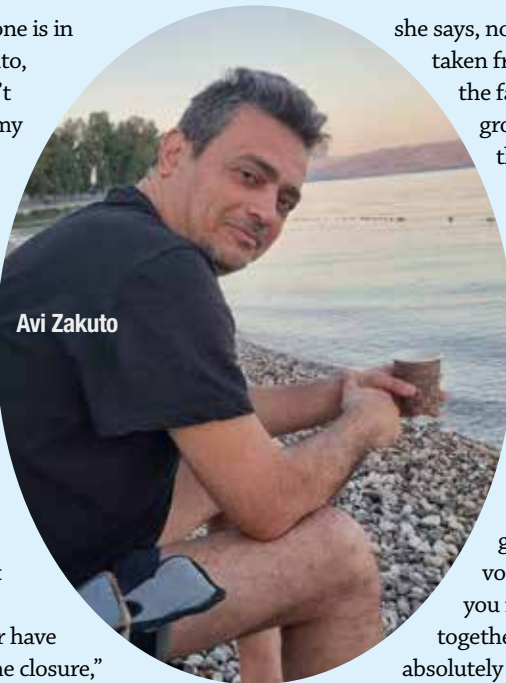
But coming out of Shabbat and Simchat Torah on the evening of 7 October, Jowell was told that Zakuto, aged 53 and a father of two, hadn’t been in contact with anyone for many hours. Only three weeks earlier, he had moved from Be’er Sheva, where he grew up after coming to Israel from Turkey as a toddler, to Ofakim, a city in southern Israel. “He moved so he could be closer to his work as a manager of large Shufersal store,” says Jowell. “When we were searching for him, lots of people recognised his picture as they knew him from the store.”

Like many other Israelis searching for loved ones after Hamas unleashed a massacre on the citizens of southern Israel, Jowell

pleaded for answers on Facebook. “If anyone is in Ofakim and has seen my cousin, Avi Zakuto, please let us know,” she wrote. “We haven’t heard from him since this morning. He’s my first cousin, and means the world to me. We need confirmation that he’s safe.”

However, her worst fears were confirmed when she found out that “tragically, he was murdered during the terrorist raid of Ofakim. No-one is 100% sure what happened, but we do know he was killed in his home, unarmed, as an innocent civilian.” The army broke the news to his heartbroken parents. “And my *safta* [grandmother], who is 95 and also lives in Israel, now has to endure this heartbreak – the murder of her eldest grandchild,” says Jowell.

“We haven’t been able to get his body or have a funeral yet, but at least we will have some closure,”



Avi Zakuto

she says, noting that this closure has been so cruelly taken from so many Israelis who have no idea of the fate of their loved ones. One of Zakuto’s grown children is studying medicine, and the other is in the army. They will now live the rest of their lives without their warm and loveable father.

Hearing the news from her home in Australia, Levin says she felt “devastated, shocked, and angry”. “Why you?” she asked rhetorically. “The most wonderful father, son, grandson, brother, nephew, and our first cousin, Avi was the most selfless human and always made his family a priority. Continents apart, I’m so grateful for our WhatsApp video calls or voice notes. You gave the biggest hugs, and you meant it! We’ll treasure the times spent together as a family with you in Israel. We’re absolutely heartbroken.”



# Cookie-wielding mother, gun-toting grandpa – Israel’s new heroes

PHILLISSA CRAMER – JTA

When Hamas terrorists broke into her home early on Saturday, 7 October, Rachel Adari didn’t have any guns.

But she had another kind of weapon: cookies, which she offered to the men who held her and her husband captive for the next 15 hours as her city of Ofakim and dozens of other towns in southern Israel faced a brutal invasion by Hamas from Gaza.

“I could see they were angry,” Adari told Israel’s Channel 12. “I asked them if they were hungry. I prepared them coffee and cookies.”

“She drove them crazy,” her husband David said. “She kept asking them if they want something.”

The snacks helped buy the couple enough time for their sons, both police officers, to join an operation that resulted in their liberation, a rare moment of rescue on a day marked primarily by loss.

Her insistence on snacks – archetypal Jewish-mother behaviour deployed at a dissonant moment – has also turned Adari into something of a national hero, one of several to emerge in the wake of the deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust.

As the country mobilises a military response and reckons with the unanswered questions about how such a breach could have happened in the first place, stories of individual people’s bravery in the face of unimaginable danger have provided a welcome counterpoint.

In addition to Adari, there’s Noam Tibon, a retired general who was already well known for his military leadership, which included commanding the Israel Defense Forces in the north and his participation in this year’s pro-democracy protests.

On Saturday, Tibon learned that his son, the journalist Amir Tibon, was trapped with his family in their home on Kibbutz Nahal Oz, a short distance from the Gaza border. He grabbed his single pistol and, with his wife, drove from Tel Aviv toward Nahal Oz.

Their journey, the stuff of action movies, has been thoroughly documented in Israeli media, including in an account by Amir. First, Tibon encountered survivors of Hamas’ attack on a rave and drove them north, away from his son. Then, he ran into soldiers with no apparent mission and convinced one of them to join him. Before getting to his son’s kibbutz, they met injured soldiers and, once again, drove in the opposite direction to take them to safety. Finally, Tibon arrived at Nahal Oz and, with a handful of soldiers, killed the Hamas attackers outside his son’s home.

Then he knocked on the window. Inside, Amir’s three-year-old daughter responded using the Hebrew word for grandfather, saying, “Saba is here.”

Tibon isn’t the only retired general to burst

into action without receiving orders. Yair Golan, who was previously also a leftwing legislator, has drawn attention for making multiple heroic rescues. First, Golan retrieved a journalist trapped in his home after his father posted on social media that the

army and police weren’t acting to save him, according to a report on the Israeli news site *Walla*.

Later, Golan learned about three young men who were in hiding after running from Hamas attackers at the nature party at Kibbutz Re’im, where 260 Israelis died and others were taken hostage. There, too, the army hadn’t attempted a rescue, according to an account from Rani Gaon, the father of one of the young men, that the family posted on Facebook.

“Suddenly, out of nowhere, the angel arrives at the location of my son and his friends, calls my son, calls him by name, tells him, ‘Hello, Major Yair Golan is speaking, come to me,’” Gaon wrote.

He said his son told him, “‘Golan came to collect us. He will bring us all the way to you’,

and so it was. This person, this hero, this angel, came and rescued them from the area, simply unbelievable! I have no words to thank and salute you, Yair Golan.”

On Monday, a new name entered the pantheon of last weekend’s heroes: Inbal Rabin-Lieberman, a 25-year-old woman who is being credited for the survival of everyone on her kibbutz even as many of the neighbouring kibbutzes suffered heavy losses.

According to viral social posts, Rabin-Lieberman noticed early on that someone was trying to infiltrate Kibbutz Nir-Am and ran from house to house to raise the alarm, becoming sort of an Israeli Paul Revere who mustered a strong enough defence that dozens of Hamas attackers were killed before they could do any damage.

“When it’s all over, this woman will receive the Israel Prize,” one post by a user named Ziv Rubinstein said. “The story of her heroism is a story that will enter Israeli mythology for generations.”

In Ofakim, the Adari home has become something of a pilgrimage site for Israelis who want to connect with a story of survival. Several people stopped by with their own deliveries of sweets, although the Adaris are staying with their son because their home is too damaged to be habitable, according to a report in the *Times of Israel*.

Her neighbours say they are unsurprised by her heroism. “If there’s one person in Ofakim who could charm even Hamas terrorists, then it’s Rachel,” one told the Israeli news site. “She told me she’d fed them because she knows a hungry man is more dangerous than a recently fed one. She also knew these young men believed they would die, and were probably missing their mothers. It wasn’t a bad idea to become that person.”





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# Helping our kids navigate the trauma

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

From horrifying newscasts to disturbing videos and images online, the stories out of Israel over the past few days have been nothing short of devastating. Whether our kids have been exposed to such stories and graphics or if they're simply picking up on our distress, it's important that we know how to guide them through the complex emotions they may encounter.

"We're experiencing collective trauma," says clinical social worker and logotherapist Carin Marcus. "We're connecting around the collective of what's happening in Israel, in our communities and among our people, either directly or indirectly."

During a webinar held on 10 October for parents of children at South African Jewish schools, Marcus and clinical psychologist David Abrahamsohn offered tools for parents to engage meaningfully with their kids around the war in Israel.

"We're holding that dual space of the 'and'," Marcus said. "Our hearts and minds are in Israel – we're there, but we're here. If the space we're holding feels huge for us as adults, we wonder how our children are making sense of it.

"The preschool child has magical thinking, so they struggle with a concrete understanding of major concepts like war, fighting, and terrorism," Marcus said. "They can't make sense of these ideas, so we need to be aware that the words they're hearing are often not landing in a grounded place in their understanding."

However, they are aware that something big is wrong in the world around them. This is because they are attuned to us, their parents, teachers, and carers, and our emotional response to what we're seeing. In turn, they demonstrate a stress response, with high degrees of anxiety, worry, and over-clinginess.

This may manifest in separation anxiety or displaced fears of things like spiders, rain, or monsters. "They will also enact their fears through play," Marcus said. "Listen out for themes that come up the playground, and ask them questions." This creates a space for them to vocalise their feelings.

Primary school-aged children display more concrete thinking, she said. They are also exposed to more of the outside world. Amidst global calls to delete Instagram and TikTok from our children's phones, which is a must for pre-primary and primary school kids, we need to be aware of what they're watching.

"Our children will house a wide range of emotions, from sadness to deep and intense worry and anxiety, and sometimes even a sense of guilt for not feeling what they think they should be feeling," said Marcus. They also struggle to identify and process their emotions, and often feel on edge. Concentration and focus may also suffer. Their feelings may also present as separation anxiety, sleeping difficulties, and nightmares. "We must reassure our children that they are 'safe enough', she said, and help them externalise the massive feelings they're dealing with by asking them to voice or write down their concerns."

When it comes to helping our children, there's no one-size-fits-all approach. Each child and parenting style is different. Helping our children starts with examining how we're responding and learning to regulate our emotions. "Our children are looking to us to see how we handle this, which is hard as we're struggling too. Yet our children need to connect to us.

"We need to take whatever reactions

Don't be afraid to talk to teens about Israel



our children have seriously," she said. "Create a safe space for your children in which they can talk about what's happening and their emotions around it." We need to ask them what they're seeing online, and give them permission to share this because misinformation is confusing and damaging. Let their questions guide us in terms of how much age-appropriate but

soldiers, to giving to charity, to basic acts of kindness on the playground. "We need to show children at times like this that one of our greatest weapons is just kindness," Marcus said.

Teenagers can experience vicarious trauma from other's trauma, said Abrahamsohn, which has a significant negative effect on emotional well-being. Today's reporters are either

clear information we share.

Normalise their fears, but also make room for them to feel disparate emotions. Maintaining routine is key, Marcus said. "Our home is our safe haven." Help them to unplug by reading them a book, having quiet time, or practicing relaxation techniques.

Children also need to feel like they're doing something to help. This can range from writing letters to

victims or perpetrators, who share their images and videos on social media. "Our kids spend inordinate amounts of time on social media, so they observe the trauma first-hand. In Israel, we've seen kidnappings happen in front of us, we've seen people being murdered, and other horrific things."

To understand how susceptible our teens are to vicarious trauma, we need to look at their psychological health at the time of exposure, Abrahamsohn said. "Those who have mental-health challenges have less resources to protect themselves from what they see." Older teens are also facing exam stress, which increases their vulnerability.

"The more that they see, the more likely they are going to experience some degree of vicarious traumatisation," he said. As Jews, we're also connected to those who are suffering, which makes vicarious trauma more likely. If you see continuous dramatic change in your teen's behaviour for five days or more, seek professional help, Abrahamsohn said.

Don't be afraid to talk to teens about Israel. Communicating with them, asking questions, and listening without judgement and without trying to fix things is key, he said. Normalise their emotions.

Though we may want to ban social media, Abrahamsohn believes that with teens, this is easier said than done. Rather prepare them for seeing potentially traumatic things, teach them to be careful about what they click on, and to have an awareness of what they're seeing. Parents and children need to take breaks from social media and the news cycle. Encourage your kids to focus on what they can control through community initiatives, prayer, and acts of kindness.

## Stay or go? Parents of Masa youth face dilemma

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

From disbelief to shock to panic, the parents of South African kids on Masa Israel Journey Programmes have been through a gamut of emotions since the Hamas incursion on Saturday, 7 October. Most Masa Fellows are, for now, staying on their programmes, which are continuing in constant consultation with the appropriate Israeli authorities, while others are coming home.

Offering immersive international experiences in Israel for young adults between the ages of 16 and 35, Masa Israel Journey Programmes explore Israeli society, culture, politics, and history. In a statement issued this week, Masa said that led by their chief security officer, it was closely monitoring the situation to ensure the utmost well-being and safety of its fellows.

"A small number of fellows chose to leave Israel for the time being, and we respect their decision. However, no Masa programme has been cancelled or closed due to the situation. We're continuously monitoring the situation, and remain prepared to evacuate more fellows if necessary."

The parents of children who are remaining in Israel say many simply want to stay and feel safe knowing that Masa is prioritising their security. "They want to do something to help, and don't want to leave their [Israeli and international] friends behind," says one anonymous mother. "Probably 85% to 90% of my daughter's group have stayed, even kids whose parents want them home are refusing to come back." Most are 18, and recently finished school.

Half of her daughter's programme has been relocated to a kibbutz, says the mother. "Many parents have left their kids there so that they can help the country, thus the volunteering at kibbutzim."

A father who wishes to remain anonymous, says his 22-year-old son is remaining on his Masa ulpan, working on a kibbutz in the Galil. "The area has so far been isolated from the immediate fighting," he says. "We didn't even discuss it, he's just staying. He's in a good emotional space and he's fine physically. Obviously, it's not so easy if you're in the firing line, and my son is making provisions so that if there any issues, he'll have some backup."

The father says he'd rather his son was in Israel in a safe area than in South Africa sitting on his phone watching events unfold there. "He's in Israel for another five months, and then will decide on his next move," he says. "He's growing in leaps and bounds, experiencing things he wouldn't otherwise. Nobody wants the current experience, but the general experience of interacting with people of his own age in a good, healthy environment has been great."

However, all the South Africans on the Habonim Shnat gap-year programme are due to return to South Africa in coming days by mutual agreement between their parents. Sarah\*, a mother who wishes to remain anonymous, says her 18-year-old daughter, Batya\*, will be among them. "We won't breathe properly until she's here. It's stressful, you just have to take it bit by bit."

The group are staying put in Tel Aviv and have been in and out of bomb shelters over the past few days. "Though we were shocked and stressed when it began, Batya coped quite well," says Sarah. "She started to get a little overwhelmed on Sunday when they started getting bombarded by images and videos, especially of those young people at the music festival."



preparing for camp."

Cohen's older son, Tivon, has just completed his first year at Reichman University in Herzliya, and is with his family in Cape Town. Although he was due to fly back to Israel next week, he's staying put for now. "All his friends there are being called up," she says, becoming emotional. "He already has a friend who has been killed. It's difficult for him not being there." She says through Tivon's constant updates from friends, the family is aware of the seriousness of the situation, which is why they're bringing Jacob home.

"The Shnat programme has lots of support in place, and parents are constantly being assured that their kids are safe," says Cohen. "Jacob's a proud and passionate Shnattie. He's so committed to the movement. Initially, he felt disbelief that this incredible year that he's dreamt about is going to be cut short. He's been through multiple emotions."

Single mother Deanne Herson was determined that her son, Jayden, who was on a Masa grant at Mayanot Yeshiva in Jerusalem, come home immediately. "I contacted him, but it was still *yomtov* here so he wouldn't answer there," she says. "It was terrible when I couldn't get hold of him." Through the South African Zionist Federation, she managed to find out that her son was safe.

"He didn't want to come home, but I was so neurotic, I said that I would arrange for him to fly home straight after *yomtov*," she says breaking down. "The Zionist Federation booked the ticket for me because I was in such a state. I organised a private taxi to take him straight to the airport as soon as *yomtov* came out. On his way there, there was a rocket flying very close to where he was."

Her relief at welcoming Jayden home is palpable. "I've been so emotional. It's been terrifying on this side," she says. "My son is torn. He feels guilty that he's left his friends and he's the only one so far that's left the yeshiva. He says he wasn't nervous in Jerusalem at all. I feel that we got him out at the right time." Before he got on the plane, Herson promised her son that he could return to the yeshiva once things settled down.

Tarryn Friedman, 26, who is a Masa teaching fellow at a school in Haifa, also returned home soon after the Hamas incursion. Though it was quiet in Haifa, she jokes that she came home because of her "very stressed Joburg Jewish mommy". Yet her parents left the decision in her hands.

Friedman says most of her colleagues booked flights home because they were worried that the fighting would move to the north closer to where they stay, and that flights may be difficult to come by. "I left everything there because I plan to go back," she says.

For Batya, part of the appeal of the programme was the freedom it offered in terms of travelling around, and she no longer feels that sense of safety. "It's near the end of the programme, and I also felt like unless they're doing something to help, they're extra people who need to be looked after," Sarah says.

Judith Cohen, whose son Jacob, 19, is also on the Shnat programme, agrees. "Israelis don't need my child to worry about. G-d forbid, if something were to happen to him, he'd be using Israeli resources that could be used for soldiers. He can do more for Israel being back in South Africa by speaking about his experience, supporting the friends he's made in Israel, and



# A time to stand tall against our enemies

The news was slow to reach me. Whereas I don't switch my phone off on Shabbat, I also don't check it or use it. Which is why as I walked past it on the morning of Shabbat as I prepared for synagogue, I noticed it flash something about rockets and Sderot. So accustomed are we to that occurrence, I thought nothing of it. And truthfully forgot about it until later.

We were in the middle of reading the book of Ecclesiastes when the news started to filter through. Slowly at first. Just a trickle. And then more information began to flow. And then a tsunami of horror that threatened to drown us in its force. With such intensity that it literally took our breath away. "There is a time to tear apart and a time to sew together; There is a time to be silent and a time to speak; There is a time to love and a time to hate; There is a time for war and a time for peace," said the reader.

But we weren't listening. Rabbis, unsure of the accuracy, debated appropriate behaviour. Continue with celebrations or limit them? Was it the duty of diaspora Jews to celebrate because our brothers and sisters couldn't, or to cancel completely out of respect for a situation that we weren't certain about. What was this the time for? There might not have been a wrong answer. But there didn't seem to be a right one either. And in a conversation with an Israeli correspondent, I was assured that that was indeed the case. Chaim Smeirc lives in Ashkelon and was woken on Shabbat morning to the sound of explosions. He and his family, like many across the country, spent the day in the "safe room" waiting for news. There they made sure to dance the *hakafot*. (I imagine in small circles.) As a family, they chose to "sew together". Another story was of a community in the centre of the country which was about to cancel everything only to be told by a Holocaust survivor that they had

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



"celebrated" in the camps, and they should do the same on that day. In South Africa, each community found ways to be true to their faith and to their brothers and sisters. All made the right choice. And all made the wrong one. At the time of writing, the magnitude of the events, the barbarism, the heroism, the failure, and the success aren't fully understood. Thousands of our young men and women are standing tall against a monster. Hundreds of thousands of men and women have been drafted or volunteered. Since Shabbat, it's unlikely that one has discussed a public *mechitza*, and unlikely anyone has argued passionately about judicial reform. Whereas that time will come, now isn't that time at all. Because there's a time for everything. It's hard to imagine that last week's column was about people who leave closed doors open. And that I could devote 600 words to something frivolous and cute in the spirit of the festival that we were about to celebrate And yet it was appropriate then. This week, writing on anything other than the events that shifted the Jewish world would be unimaginable. This is a time to tear apart those who have harmed us; and a time to sew together our people. There's a time to be silent in prayer and contemplation; and a time to speak out against those who define us. It's time to love our fellow; and a time to hate those who wish us harm. There's a time for war against our enemies; and a time for peace among ourselves. May the good news be quick to reach us.

## A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

# Evil thrives when good people stay silent

To our brothers and sisters in Israel, our beloved community, and our treasured Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Bahai, and other religious allies, there are no words to describe the grief and rage that we are experiencing. I thought briefly of leaving this column blank this week, a testament to the unspeakable horror we have just witnessed. But we don't have the luxury of keeping silent. Evil thrives when good people keep silent. The world we lived in when we were preparing to celebrate the final days of the *chaggim*, traditionally a time of the greatest joy and togetherness, has changed, perhaps forever. As Jewish leaders, we need to find ways to comfort, reassure, guide, and assist our own community while speaking for and representing it to society at large. Since the first reports of the atrocities perpetrated by Hamas emerged, these imperatives have consumed us all, from the elected leadership in all regions to the professional staff working on the ground. We have had to speak for our community in the media, putting aside our own mourning and engage with those who even now, persist in viciously maligning and inciting hatred against Israel and Jews. We have had to respond to the barrage of hate and misinformation online and in our press. Along with communities around the world, we have had to manage responses to the hate marchers, the so called "pro-Palestinian" rallies glorifying murder, rape, kidnapping, public desecration of bodies, and other horrors too terrible to mention. We have to remind anyone with an ounce of humanity that these acts are not acts of resistance, but of terror. Worst of all, we have had to confront our own government, which couldn't find a word of comfort or compassion for its Jewish citizens in our time of greatest need. The government's victim blaming

## ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



leaves us breathless. It has shamed us all. We have watched governments across the world stand with their Jewish citizens, and we're left alone. We have often pointed out the hypocrisy of our government's foreign policy, but its inability to recognise how the wholesale slaughter of Jews is of such a different scale from anything that has happened in the Middle East conflict before, its hackneyed phrases of blame, show the hollowness of its position. At all times of great trauma and tragedy, it's important to look for the helpers, the heroes of Israel, whose bravery saved many. The governments of countries on every continent, the foreign embassies, political parties, religious leaders, and individual well-wishers, whose personal messages of support have meant so much to us. And our own special community, which will find ways to support itself through this and the difficult days ahead. We will be sending out a communal letter to keep everyone updated and informed of all developments. And as for those who chose not to stand up, who instead have sought to somehow justify the unspeakable horrors that have occurred and place the blame on its victims, we see you. We see your disdain for Jewish life. You are the same people who stood by and cheered every atrocity against the Jewish people throughout the centuries. We see who you are in our own time, and we know how history will judge you.

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

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# US sports teams issue statements of support

JACOB GURVIS – JTA

In an unusual show of support for Israel, a number of professional athletes and sports teams issued statements about Hamas' invasion of the country, which left more than 1 200 dead.

"The National Basketball Association and [the NBA Players' Association] mourn the horrific loss of life in Israel, and condemn these acts of terrorism," the NBA posted on X, the social media platform previously known as Twitter. The league's commissioner, Adam Silver, is Jewish. "We stand with the people of Israel, and pray for peace for the entire region."

Numerous NBA teams then reposted the league's message. The Washington Wizards, the team of the NBA's lone Israeli player, Deni Avdija, posted that it "stands with the people of Israel". Avdija himself posted a lengthy statement on Instagram, writing that he knew some of the victims and that "while I'm here playing ball, my thoughts are constantly pulled back to Israel".

NBA star Kyle Kuzma, Avdija's teammate on the Wizards, posted, "Israel just terrible stuff happening right now, and my prayers with them!"

The Major League Baseball (MLB) posted a statement on Monday, 9 October, on X that the league was "horrified by the acts of terrorism committed against the people of Israel" and is "heartbroken for the people of Israel".

Baltimore Orioles' Israeli pitcher, Dean Kremer, who

was born in California to Israeli parents and has played for Team Israel in international tournaments, shared the MLB's message on Instagram with a Hebrew note saying, "There are no words. My heart just got ripped to shreds."

Many of Kremer's teammates from Team Israel also reshared the MLB's post, including rookies Matt Mervis and Zack Gelof and Orthodox prospect Jacob Steinmetz. Boston Red Sox pitcher Zack Weiss, another Team Israel alum, posted an Instagram story about the conflict, and Team Israel coach and former big leaguer, Kevin Youkilis, posted a photo of himself in his Team Israel jersey with the caption, "I stand with Israel"

Similar messages of support have poured in from across the sports world over the past three days, including from New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft, who is Jewish and a long-time supporter of Israel.

Other teams that shared posts of support for Israel include the National Hockey League's New Jersey Devils; Miami's MLB and NBA teams; the New York Jets; Cincinnati Reds; and Philadelphia 76ers, among others. Cincinnati Reds assistant pitching coach Alon Leichman, who is Israeli, also posted a message of support.

Detroit Lions player Alex Anzalone shared that his parents were in Jerusalem, pleading with the American government to help them evacuate safely. "It's hard," Anzalone told the *Detroit News*. "(It's) really all I've been thinking about."

Anzalone's parents are reportedly part of a group of 53 Americans who arrived in Israel on 2 October as part of a

tour group through their church in Naples, Florida. Representative Byron Donalds, who represents the area in Congress, posted about the group on X, to which Anzalone replied, "My parents are in this group. Please get my parents home @POTUS," tagging United States President Joe Biden's official account.

Amar'e Stoudemire, the former NBA star who converted to Judaism and played professionally in Israel, shared a video on Instagram calling for a ceasefire, saying that he "pray[s] for the safety of Palestinian children along with the Israeli children". Former Super Bowl Most Valuable Player Julian Edelman wrote on X that he was "heartbroken".

Boston Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla spoke about the war during his pre-game press conference on Sunday, saying, "there should be a lot of thoughts and prayers" for Israelis.

"I went this past year, and I went in 2016," Mazzulla said. "It doesn't matter what you are, whether you're Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Israeli or Palestinian. They're people, and they go through a lot of dangerous situations. Our country is 400 years old, and they've been suffering for 10 000 years. You start to see the perspective of the world, and it's a really tough area to be. We should all be aware of that."



In Israel, the conflict has already begun to affect planned sports events. The Israeli national soccer team's upcoming Euro 2024 qualifying match against Switzerland, which was scheduled for Thursday, has been postponed. Matches for Israel's under-17 and under-21 soccer teams were also postponed.

"In light of the current security situation in Israel, UEFA has decided to postpone all matches scheduled in Israel in the next couple of weeks with new dates to be confirmed in due course," the Union of European Football Associations announced on Sunday.

Israel's top basketball and soccer leagues have also postponed games. The Maccabi Ra'anana basketball team is scheduled to play an exhibition game against the Brooklyn Nets in New York on Thursday as the team celebrates a previously scheduled Israeli Heritage Night. (*The Jewish Sport Report*, JTA's sports newsletter, and the *New York Jewish Week* are co-sponsoring the event.)

The Hapoel Tel Aviv Football Club shared on social media that former player Lior Assulin and youth coach Alon Shamli were both killed during the attacks.

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