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‘It’s living hell,’ says SA-born hostage’s daughter

NICOLA MILTZ

Ayelet Svatitzky is a romance novelist, but lately, she’s lost for words. Her elderly South African-born mother, Channah Peri, 79, and her brother, Nadav Popplewell, 51, were kidnapped by Hamas terrorists more than a month ago from their home on Kibbutz Nirim. They were last seen being taken hostage into Gaza. Her oldest brother Roi, 54, was murdered near them on the same day.

“When it happened, I had no words for this atrocity. Now I can say it’s hell,” she told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

“It’s hell on earth, a living nightmare that never ends,” she said from her home on Kibbutz Yagur, which is about an hour from Tel Aviv.

She’ll never forget the chilling moment when armed Hamas terrorists sent her three photographs of her mother and Nadav while they were being held captive.

“It’s something you cannot get out of your mind,” Svatitzky said.

This week marked a month since the Hamas massacre on 7 October which claimed the lives of 1 400 innocent civilians. There are 240 hostages including babies and children still being held captive, their status unknown.

“Imagine for one minute what it’s like. Both my mother and my brother have diabetes. My mom needs insulin. My brother needs his medication. I have no idea where they are, if they are being fed and looked after. I picture them in a tunnel somewhere in Gaza, but I haven’t heard anything. The Red Cross hasn’t been allowed to see the hostages,” she said.

Her mother, Channah, was born Denise Adele Levy in Johannesburg. Ayelet doesn’t know too much about her mother’s childhood. She understands that she spent time in Gqeberha (then Port Elizabeth) and Cape Town, and made aliya as a young woman with her sister, Leonore Armbruster, 75, who lives in the United States, and their late brother, Raymond.

They have distant family in South Africa, some of whom have reached out to her during this time.

“My mom and her siblings left South Africa in the sixties. They made aliya as they wanted to be a part of building the state of Israel. They were passionate about it,” she said.

She met Ayelet’s late father, British-born Israeli, Rafi Popplewell, on Kibbutz Nirim, where they married and had three children,



later divorcing but remaining close. She and her brothers have British-Israeli citizenship.

A few years ago, Svatitzky surprised her mother by converting 8mm home movies taken some time during Channah’s childhood in South Africa into digital videos.

“You can see footage on the beach, and there are some where you can see elephants and giraffe,” she said.

This week, Svatitzky recalled the chilling instant she knew her mother and brothers were in grave danger on 7 October.

Her husband, Eyal, woke her up early with the news that there was a terrorist attack taking place in the south of Israel.

“This happened often, sadly. My mother lived with the reality of constant threats and missile attacks from Gaza. Eyal said I must call her immediately because WhatsApp groups started burning with messages about missiles and a terrorist attack on the ground.

“I frantically called my mom and told her to lock the house, rush to her safe room, and not let anyone in the house. She told me she was in the safe room, which didn’t have a lock, and that she didn’t have time to lock the house.

“I then heard men in the house speaking English with an Arabic accent, and I knew what that meant,” she said.

“I hung up the phone and called Nadav, who lives next door. I heard men’s voices inside his house. I hung up.”

She told the *SA Jewish Report* that she then tried frantically to alert others on the kibbutz, eventually managing to tell friends about what was happening, but no-one was able to come to their rescue.

And then her world came crashing down.

“A couple of minutes later, I received two pictures from my mom’s phone via WhatsApp showing my mom still in her nightwear and

my brother barefoot.” The sender of the message added a caption with one word, written in English: “Hamas”.

A third picture was then uploaded from Channah’s phone to her Facebook story, something Svatitzky knew her mother didn’t know how to do. “That picture showed my mom and my brother in the living room and an armed man in the corner with a Kalashnikov [rifle]. That was the last I saw of them,” she said.

That night, she learnt that her brother, Roi, was missing. They had found his phone but didn’t know his whereabouts.

She learnt of Roi’s death while she was filling out a missing person’s report at the police station the following day.

“I received a call from the kibbutz the next day informing me that they had found Roi’s body.

“When I received the photos from Hamas, I thought they were dead. I didn’t know what would be a better option – to have been murdered or kidnapped in Gaza,” she said.

Svatitzky lives with her husband and three children about two hours from Kibbutz Nirim.

“My mom and brothers always visited us because we felt it was safer for my kids not to go to Kibbutz Nirim, which was often targeted by rockets. They would come for Shabbat and stay for the weekend,” she said.

Svatitzky said the family was close and her children were traumatised.

“There was a memorial at school this week to mark a month since the attacks. My daughters stayed home because it would be too sad for them,” she said.

Pagad ‘peace march’ descends into antisemitic hate-fest

>>>Continued from page 1

time around, however, they seem to be more focused on Zionists.”

The speeches made outside the American Consulate on Saturday afternoon were concerning, he said. “Statements such as ‘decentralising the war in Gaza’ and chants such as ‘*Khaybar khaybar ya yahud*’ [an antisemitic chant], demonstrate the intention to bring the conflict onto the streets of South Africa.”

Greenblatt said that according to the Anti-Defamation League, “Invoking this chant at demonstrations problematically shifts the complex Israeli-Palestinian conflict into a religious battle between Islam and Judaism. Moreover, in celebrating a past military defeat of Jews, this chant can be perceived as a threat of armed violence or forcible expulsion of Jews today.”

Hate speech expert Advocate Mark

She described her mom as “the kindest person you could ever imagine”.

“She’s a wonderful grandmother, gentle and patient,” she said. Her mother managed a small clothing shop on the kibbutz which also made children’s clothes.

Dr Zvi Solow, 89, a Holocaust survivor and long-time neighbour of Channah, said he knew her very well and was concerned for her and Nadav’s safety.

“We live next door to one another. There’s a small lawn between us. When the terrorists entered Kibbutz Nirim, I went into my safe room with my partner. We were holed up there for hours. Inside, there’s a small window. I looked out the window and saw two armed terrorists standing outside Channah’s house. I immediately ducked because I knew if they saw me they would have shot and killed us,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*.

“Later, I heard they had been taken. I haven’t heard anything about their fate. I’m heartbroken.”

Solow who is a retired high school teacher and lecturer from Ben Gurion University, said Channah had been his neighbour for decades.

“Nadav was my student. I would see Channah every day, that’s kibbutz life. We are both *oleh* from English speaking countries, she from South Africa and me from Australia, so we had that in common. Channah is independent and intelligent and a good person. I was heartbroken to hear about the murder of Roi. They are good people.”

Svatitzky said she would stop at nothing to raise awareness to help bring her family home.

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SA to remove diplomats, but Israeli ambassador remains

STEVEN GRUZD

The South African cabinet has taken the radical decision to bring back its diplomats in Israel, which will effectively shut down its embassy in Tel Aviv. International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco) Minister Dr Naledi Pandor is using every platform to lambaste Israel and accuse it of genocide and war crimes. Barely a half-hearted mention is made about Hamas releasing the 240 hostages it captured on 7 October.

In spite of two of those hostages confirmed as being born in South Africa, her department has done nothing to secure their release. Calls for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador are mounting at the highest level. The Jewish community feels embattled and betrayed.

"Once again, Minister Pandor and the government is totally out of line with its dual mandate to protect South African citizens and be a peacemaker," South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) Vice-President Zev Krengel said this week. "If we want to make peace, we have to talk to all sides, and the decision to recall the diplomats is ridiculous. You can't cut us off like that. This is an absolutely horrible gesture.

"They [the government] has done nothing to get the hostages released, nothing to get people back here. But the minister phones Hamas and runs off to Iran. She talks about a two-state solution, but it always turns into a diatribe against Israel. It just shows how low the government has sunk. This is everything a government shouldn't be. It's absolutely outrageous. There's no end to its hatred for the Jewish state. With no embassy, what will happen to South Africans who get sick in Israel or lose their passports?"

consultation". Minister in the Presidency Khumbudzo Ntshavheni said, "The position of the ambassador of Israel in South Africa is becoming very untenable. Cabinet has instructed Dirco to take necessary measures within the diplomatic challenges and protocols to deal with the conduct of the ambassador of Israel to South Africa." She also called Israel's actions in Gaza and the West Bank a "genocide" that was foreshadowing "another Holocaust" that couldn't be tolerated.

South Africa's government opposes Israel's military operations in Gaza, undertaken in retaliation for the heinous attack by Hamas on 7 October that left 1 400 dead in Israel and 240 people taken hostage into Gaza.

Israel's ambassador to South Africa, Eli Belotsercovsky, has confirmed to the *SA Jewish Report* that he has received no communication at all from Dirco, and that he's not going anywhere. He also doesn't know which of his remarks specifically have caused such offence.

In a post on X, Israel foreign affairs spokesperson Lior Haiat said, "The ministry of foreign affairs fully supports the Israeli ambassador in South Africa, who represents the position of the Israeli government and the people of Israel while Israel is fighting a murderous terrorist organisation that calls for its destruction. The South African government's decision to recall its diplomatic staff is a victory for the Hamas terrorist organisation and rewards it for the massacre it carried out on 7 October."

An online statement, purportedly by Hamas, said, "We welcome the position of the South African government, which recalled its ambassador to the criminal Zionist entity following its continued barbaric aggression against our people, children and women in the Gaza Strip. We call on South Africa to sever all ties with this fascist entity that is committing a genocidal war in Gaza, in victory for the right of peoples to self-determination and for the history of the struggle of South Africa, which suffered from



colonialism and racism."

Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation, told the *SA Jewish Report*, "Minister Pandor continuously and exclusively uses her international platform to single out the Jewish state for unique sanction and discrimination. She might as well be retitled South Africa's minister of Palestinian affairs, as that seems to be the length and breadth of her focus in foreign affairs. She speed-dialled the Hamas leadership to express support and solidarity almost immediately after it carried out its barbaric rampage, and then unconvincingly tried to walk back her actions. Dirco and the ANC [African National Congress] government pledge solidarity with the foreign hostage captors but abandon their South African captives.

"Pandor consistently diverts and deflects attention away from South Africa's numerous domestic and international failures, including its support for Russia in its war with Ukraine, in order to bash Israel," Polovin said. "President Cyril Ramaphosa has given his ministers free rein to professionalise their personal vendettas that undermine our country's long-term interests and threaten our country's economy and international

Continued on page 8>>

His reaction, much the same as the rest of the community, arose in the light of cabinet announcing on Monday, 6 November, that South Africa would recall all its diplomats from its embassy in Israel "for

Significance of *shidduch*



Rabbi Yossy Goldman,
life rabbi emeritus
at Sydenham Shul

The first *shidduch* in history occurs in this week's parsha. Abraham sends his faithful servant, Eliezer, to find a bride for his son, Isaac. He hands Eliezer a document ceding his entire wealth to Isaac, and makes him take a solemn oath that he won't bring back a Canaanite woman for his son but someone from Abraham's own family.

Amazing Abraham! He writes over his entire fortune to his son to help him find the right *shidduch*. Is there even a mention that Abraham demanded some security from Eliezer for the wealth that he was entrusted with? On what did Abraham ask Eliezer to take an oath? Not on the wealth, but on the woman! There's not a word about Abraham insisting on any guarantees, promises, or even a handshake when it came to the money. But when it came to the nature of the woman, the character of the person his son would be marrying, Abraham demanded nothing less than a solemn oath.

What an incredible lesson for our own priority system. What do we truly value? When it comes to our money, everything must be under lock and key, with ironclad securities. Are we as careful with our children? Are we as particular about who they go out with, where they go, and what they get up to?

There was a time when Jewish parents took responsibility for their children's social well-being and even their matchmaking. Ok, times have changed, and children don't appreciate parental interference in their romantic endeavours. But even if we can't "arrange" things, we can still try to "facilitate" an introduction behind the scenes. At the very least, we could take an interest.

Surely parents should be talking about marriage to their children when they come of age. Surely, the importance of getting married ought to be conveyed to our kids before they turn 35! And wouldn't it be a good idea for parents to sit down with their kids at some stage to discuss what to look for in a marriage partner?

If Abraham was worried about the wrong woman having a bad influence on his son, how much more should we be concerned about our children?

And children might want to take their parents' advice a little more seriously. After all, history proves that parents often

do see things that children – blinded by "love" – don't.

The "singles" phenomenon is arguably the single biggest social challenge in the Jewish world today. People are marrying older or not marrying at all. Too often, the biological clock runs out before a family can get off the ground.

Abraham teaches us that it's our responsibility as parents to ensure that our children mix in the right circles and aren't exposed to the wrong influences. Please G-d, all our children will find suitable marriage partners sooner rather than later, and raise strong Jewish families that we'll all be proud of.

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As for our brothers, the whole house of Israel, who are given over to trouble or captivity, whether they abide on the sea or on the dry land: May the All-present have mercy upon them, and bring them forth from trouble to enlargement, from darkness to light, and from subjection to redemption, now speedily and at a near time.

Cape Board unbowed by threats against Herzlia

TALI FEINBERG

"We're giving [Western Cape Premier] Alan Winde until the end of the year to close down [Herzlia] school, or the EFF [Economic Freedom Fighters] South Africa will have to!" crowed Nazier Paulsen on the social media platform X.

His incitement, along with other similar comments on social media, was part of a wider attack on United Herzlia Schools in Cape Town by extremist politicians and individuals in South Africa and beyond.

As shocking as this is, the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) isn't distressed. Says Cape SAJBD chairperson, Adrienne Jacobson, "We finds these claims to be without merit. When these comments were made, we declined the opportunity to respond publicly as we felt we couldn't dignify their comments with a public statement. We immediately reached out to both Premier Alan Winde and Minister of Education David Maynier, who reaffirmed their support and assured us that in no way will the school be closed or deregistered."

These attacks tie in with similar incitement and violent intimidation of Jewish communities around the globe since the Hamas massacre of 7 October. This includes a petition on change.org calling for Herzlia to be shut down because the school "unconditionally and unquestioningly supports the state of Israel and promotes this in its education".

"We should get their names and addresses," wrote one supporter of the petition, while another wrote, "Nice place for a bomb."

"Brand them so they can wear their shame on their foreheads"; "Julius [Malema, the head of the EFF], please do your thing"; "We're breeding local Nazis right here in South Africa," wrote others. The petition is now under review and cannot be accessed.

Meanwhile, local politician Mehmet Vefa Dag, who is known for his hateful rhetoric, wrote, "Shut down the baby killer's high school," and made up a false statistic about Herzlia alumni serving in the Israel Defense Forces.

Says Jacobson, "There's always the possibility of a protest. However, the City of Cape Town has zero tolerance for protests which incite violence and intimidation, and will ensure that no organisation is allowed to protest in this manner, especially outside a school. If they do happen to come to the school, the students inside will be protected and both law enforcement and SAPS [the South African Police Service] will be contacted to come and disperse the illegal protesters.



"There's absolutely no chance of Herzlia being closed down," she says. "This has been confirmed by both the premier and the minister of education. Herzlia is one of the top schools in the country, and will continue to provide world-class education to its students. The war in Israel will continue for some time, and baseless claims against Herzlia will continue to surface on social media. We'll continue to quash these

and protect the rights of the school, its pupils, and our community. We request that members of our community refrain from sharing things on social media, as you're only increasing awareness of the anti-Israel movement. Don't give it the satisfaction of promoting its fake news.

"We call on the community to remain calm and rational during this period," she says. "We reiterate that each one of us needs to live a strong and proud Jewish way of life. The Cape SAJBD will continue to protect our right to be Jewish and protect our Jewish way of life."

Board challenges SABC-sanctioned lies about child hostages

TALI FEINBERG

On 2 November, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) not only invited a representative of a designated terror organisation, Hamas, in Tehran, Dr Khaled Qaddumi, to speak on live national television with a Hamas flag proudly displayed behind him, it also stood by as the presenter accepted his denial that children were kidnapped by the terrorist group on 7 October without challenging him.

"There were many lies and propaganda in what he [Qaddumi] said, but what was most upsetting and offensive was the fact that he denied that there were children and babies who are currently hostages in Gaza," South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) National Chairperson Professor Karen Milner said. "We call for their release, and we call for every South African to recognise their existence and the crime that it is to hold these babies and children hostage."

Protesting this interview, the SAJBD brought 32 giant teddy bears, representing the 32 Jewish child hostages in Gaza, and sat among them outside the SABC headquarters in Auckland Park on Friday, 3 November. They had posters saying, "SABC: A platform for lies", images of the children's faces, and at least one teddy bear wearing a t-shirt with the image and age of baby Kfir Bibas, thought to be the youngest hostage at nine months of age.

This lie about the child hostages is part of the widespread denial of Hamas atrocities that has spread since 7 October. This is despite Hamas members themselves filming their abduction of more than 200 people including babies, toddlers, children, teenagers, women, men, and the elderly.

In the interview, Qaddumi thanked South Africa for its support. He also said that the hostages were "prisoners caught from the field, trying to kill our children. They are either military personnel or they are settlers ... they are equipped with weapons, killing our farmers in the West Bank". The people taken hostage were mostly civilians who lived in Israel proper, far from the West Bank.

The presenter also said, "In contrast to the way this is being framed, you were not the attacker here [on 7 October] but you were responding to what has been a historical series of attacks."

In a video of its peaceful protest and installation, the

SAJBD said it had "brought these giant teddy bears to the SABC offices, reminding the national broadcaster of the faces of the dozens of child hostages still held in Gaza".

"The SABC provided a platform for someone representing a radically racist movement that demonises and defames the Jewish people and openly calls for the killing of Jews everywhere in the world," wrote the SAJBD. "Hamas is an organisation that rejects all initiatives to bring about peace between Israel and its neighbours, and throughout its existence, has worked to destroy every peace process through terrorist violence.



"Three weeks ago, on 7 October 2023, Hamas was responsible for the greatest act of mass murder, including inhumane acts of torture, against the Jewish people since the Holocaust. It has shown time and again to have persistently and shamelessly lied to the international community about its actions and aims, and cannot be regarded as being in any way honourable or trustworthy.

"In allowing the Hamas spokesperson to deny on national television that children are being held hostage in Gaza, among many other untruths in the broadcast, the SABC allowed propaganda to spread in our country unchallenged, effectively acting as a mouthpiece of Hamas.

"We bring these teddies to the SABC office today to remind it of what no-one should have to be reminded of – that babies aren't bargaining chips. These innocent Jewish babies and child hostages, one as young as nine months

old, aren't 'prisoners', and they need to come home. To deny or justify their abduction is to deny their fundamental humanity."

SABC offered a right of reply to Israeli Ambassador Eli Belotsercovsky. "I deeply regret that such a respectable news channel as the SABC has provided a stage for a representative of a terrorist organisation," said the ambassador. "I think it's regrettable, and I'm asking what next: will you interview a representative of Al-Qaeda, or maybe of ISIS [Islamic State]? With all due respect, I'm not going to answer or reply to these blatant lies and cheap propaganda that we heard yesterday. Hamas doesn't deserve such a stage, Hamas has to be destroyed, and there's no place for such inhumane organisations like Hamas that murders children, young women, old people, kidnaps them, and in a most cynical way, lies about the hostages.


"It cannot happen that in a democratic country like South Africa, such a respectable news channel provides a stage for such terrorists to express their opinions.

"Of course there are children [among the hostages]. Everybody knows it, you don't need to ask me," he said. "It's also babies. It's also old men and women. You have 15 men and women [held hostage] who are 75 and older." He emphasised that the hostages had no access to the Red Cross, and "we don't know if they are getting medication".

"We're talking about innocent people who haven't committed any crime," he said, describing most of the people taken as peace-loving kibbutzniks. "They're not criminals. Palestinian terrorists in prisons in Israel were convicted for terrorism including the murder of innocent people. We cannot release them because they have been convicted," he said, answering the presenter's questions about a possible prisoner exchange.

"We're also concerned about what's happening in Gaza and the loss of human lives. Our war is not with the people of Gaza. Our war is with Hamas," Belotsercovsky said.

The SA Jewish Report reached out to the SABC for a comment regarding the SAJBD's statement and display, but didn't receive a response at the time of going to print.




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Unedited hostility

I contemplated going to watch the unedited footage of the massacre that was taken from the Hamas terrorists’ bodycams because I believed it was my duty to you, our readers, to bear witness to it.

I battled to come to terms with this over the weekend because I’m still having nightmares over a baby being cooked in an oven and an almost naked young woman lying head down at the back of a bakkie with a group of terrorists effectively sitting on her and treating her body like it was a dirty rag.

These images play in my head. And I didn’t even need to see the actual image of the baby to have nightmares about it.

I was in contact with a cousin of mine in Israel who is a trauma therapist, who told me to not even consider going to the viewing. “You aren’t the audience for it. You don’t need to be convinced that it happened,” he said. “It’s for those who have doubts about what happened here. They need proof. You don’t.”

I followed his advice, and forwarded names and numbers of people from my trade who I thought might benefit from seeing this horrific footage.

You see, I’ve been in contact with some who, after this horrific massacre, haven’t just questioned the 1 400 brutally murdered Jews, the 7 198 people injured, and 240 abducted and forced across the Gazan border to be held captive there, but have blamed Israel for this horrific situation.

It astonishes me that they believe the Israeli population would want to send their beloved young adult soldiers into Gaza with the potential of not coming home. Our hearts are breaking that already, 348 Israeli soldiers and 58 members of the police have been killed in the line of duty.

Israel didn’t want this war, nor does it want it now. It’s demanding the return of the 240 hostages, and it’s hard to believe that any country would expect it to go ahead with a ceasefire until these babies, children, women, and elderly people are returned home safely.

When I attempted to explain the situation to them, they pooh-poohed what I had to say, insisting I had been indoctrinated by Israel and therefore was biased. How does one argue with someone who has decided that Israel is an oppressor and everything it does is evil?

I do hope some of those people made it to the viewing.

Meanwhile, South African Jews are battling with the trauma of the massacre. We’re struggling with what’s happening now, both in Israel and Gaza. Daily, the names of young men and women who fell fighting for their country are released. We’re shocked at what Israel is being blamed for doing, sometimes by people who had been friends. We’re all horrified at the massive resurgence of antisemitism like we have never known it before.

In the past, we would speak about the “new antisemitism”, which we made clear was blanket condemnation of everything Israel did. But somehow as we said or wrote it, we still had some hope that it wasn’t exactly antisemitism and there could be some other explanation for it.

Nobody wants to believe they are being hated for something they were born into. When we look at people outside of our community, we know we’re different because of our faith and traditions, but we all want the same things. We want a good education, to be able to earn money enough to give our families the best we can, and to be happy.

And so it’s really difficult for any of us to understand why there are so many people around the world who simply hate us because we’re Jews.

But suddenly, it’s apparent here and everywhere.

Because of this, Jewish journalists from around the world got together to put out the piece on this page because we believe it’s important to show our solidarity and commitment to the Jewish world – inside Israel and in the diaspora.

I so agree that though our haters keep referring to so-called “good Jews” who agree with them, we cannot give these folk a platform. These people sprout the same hatred for Israel and Jews as those who hate us. I find it astonishing that they make a big deal about being Jewish, and condemn the very reason they are able to hold their heads up high as Jews. That is because there’s a Jewish state, one that’s on our side. Without Israel behind us, we have no support. So, these “good Jews” are being used by our haters to condemn us because they are proof that even Jews can see that Israel caused its own massacre. They, too, should have been to see the unedited footage this week, but unfortunately, much like our haters, they don’t want to see the truth. It’s way more convenient to sprout hatred.

Meanwhile, we watch as our government closes down relations with Israel because of all these trumped-up atrocities they claim Israel committed.

Our minister of international relations and cooperation is still denying the murder of babies. She’s still denying that it was a Palestinian rocket that bombed the hospital. She also still insists that Gaza is occupied.

The truth, dear minister, is that by cutting ties with Israel, you aren’t punishing the Jewish state, you are harming us, your South African Jewish community. We, as a community and individuals, contribute a great deal to this country that we love dearly.

We may not be a huge community, but we punch way above our weight and, in everything we do, we enhance this country. Are you sure you want to harm us?

Israel couldn’t care less if you cut ties. It’s only concerned about us, not the ties.

We’ll prevail and survive because we, as a global Jewish community, will stand together as a force to be reckoned with.

You may have noticed a yellow ribbon on the masthead on our front page. This is a campaign launched in Israel that the *SA Jewish Report* has adopted to show our solidarity with the effort to bring home the Israeli hostages being held in Gaza. We’ll continue to wear our yellow flag until the hostages are returned. Join us!

Shabbat Shalom and Am Yisrael Chai.

Peta Krost

Editor



Jews haven’t been this fearful in living memory

OPINION

WORLDWIDE JEWISH JOURNALISTS



Two decades ago, former British Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks astutely compared antisemitism to a constantly evolving virus. One that, in the modern era, specifically targets the Jewish nation-state.

He aptly described this prejudice as a deeply ingrained malignancy, perpetually lingering beneath the surface of society. For many of us in the global Jewish community, the great man’s words were not merely a statement of truth but also a stark reminder. Until recent days, the extent and intensity of this virulent strain of hatred were tragically underestimated.

While the need for stringent security measures at schools and synagogues has long been a familiar reality, the realisation that such profound levels of hatred and indifference to the threat exist on a global scale has been a devastating shock.

We dared to hope such malevolence had been relegated to the annals of history.

Today, in an unprecedented moment in Jewish history, we unite as Jewish news outlets spanning borders, continents, and religious affiliations to issue this open letter – something we never envisioned as necessary or even conceivable.

The events of recent weeks have surpassed even the sombre portrayal offered by Rabbi Sacks all those years ago. Some of those who propagate hatred, concealing their prejudice under the veneer of being “anti-Israel”, no longer find it necessary to obscure their malice.

We’ve witnessed raw hatred against Jews in cities across the globe.

In Dagestan, a mob ran towards planes on a runway to check passengers’ passports, hunting for disembarking Jews.

In Sydney, when authorities lit the famous Opera House in Israel’s colours, a crowd sang, “Gas the Jews.”

In Lyon, a woman was stabbed at her home, and a swastika spraypainted on her front door.

In London, red paint was daubed on Jewish school doors and the Wiener Holocaust Library.

In Berlin, Magen Davids were spraypainted on homes, a haunting echo of scenes in that German city 90 years ago.

On an American campus, students have openly chanted for Jewish genocide and celebrated the “martyrs” who butchered Jewish children in their beds on 7 October.

This isn’t a call for two states living side by side in peace. This isn’t legitimate opposition to Benjamin Netanyahu and his government.

How could we have been so blind to this malignancy in our midst?

And yet, all that we have seen so far isn’t even our worst fear. Our gravest concerns lie in what the future may hold.

Meanwhile, some world leaders act as cheerleaders, sometimes inadvertently but at other times, not. Colombia’s president, Gustavo Petro, said, “If I had lived in Germany of 1933, I would have fought on the side of the Jewish people, and if I had lived in Palestine in 1948, I would have fought on the Palestinian side.”

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, “Hamas is not a terrorist organisation.”

The head of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, said 7/10 “didn’t happen in a vacuum”.

No, it didn’t, Mr Guterres. It required decades of indoctrination; years of holding up terrorists as heroes to be lionised, a sure way to fame and often fortune; and the presence of a terrorist organisation whose central aim is to wipe Israel – and every one of our Jewish family and friends – off the face of the earth.

Have no doubt that Hamas is cheering those “from the river to the sea” chants because a Palestine state between the river and the sea leaves not a single inch for Israel.

Why do so many still seek to deny what’s in Hamas’ own charter?

And why are so many good people still silent when cheerleaders for terrorists decide the worst

massacre of our co-religionists since the Holocaust is a good moment to open up a second, global front targeting Jews on campus, at work, on the streets, and at home?

Clearly not everyone marching under the Palestinian flag fantasises about our deaths or the destruction of the world’s only Jewish state.

But please, try to understand that whether it’s one person, 100 people, or 10 000, the chilling impact of seeing so many people echo and excuse hateful chants is profound.

It’s not easy to speak on behalf of Jews in one country, never mind the world, nor do we purport to. As journalists, we report, opine, and comment. But the level of fear among our readers is like nothing in memory. It feels like those two equilateral triangles that combine to form our beloved Star of David represents a six-pointed target.

This is heightened by the fact there will be those who dismiss every word in this piece as having been written in bad faith, part no doubt of our supposed control of power and the media that has manipulated their warped minds. There will also be Jews who tell you this article doesn’t speak for them. Before those in the media feel the urge to put them on the airwaves in an attempt at “balance”, please first ask for an ounce of proof that they represent more than a tiny band of misfits. Some are more likely to stand alongside the Iranian regime that is so despised by much of the Muslim world than they would with most Jews.



Please don’t, however, mistake this growing fear for a lack of determination to fight our corner as citizens deserving of support and protection in our home nations, or doubt our solidarity as a people numbering just 16 million. In fact, we’ve never been so determined, so energised, so united, and so proud, as highlighted by the huge uptick in sales of Stars of David. The incredible response in holding rallies, supporting charities, and fighting running battles on social media is something that will remain a source of pride for as long as those horrific images from Kibbutz Be’eri and the peace rave.

This unity has been a light in the darkness. Another has been the support, publicly and sometimes not, of our real friends in all communities. Again, we’ll never ever forget this.

Our collective Jewish heart bleeds for the families of those who lost relatives in the Hamas atrocities and those facing an agonising wait for news of the kidnapped men, women, and children. Whether directly or not directly, many of our readers will be connected to these innocents. But our hearts bleed too for the innocents killed in Gaza as a result of this entirely unnecessary war launched by Hamas.

Over the unbearably painful days ahead, we – as providers of news for secular or religious Jews, those who frequently critique Israeli policy and those who don’t, those who see Israel as central to their identity, and those who are drawn nearer by crises such as this – call on the world to listen and treat us as you would want to be treated.

It shouldn’t be too much to ask.

Murdered Israeli helped underprivileged SA kids

TALI FEINBERG

A month after the massacre of 7 October, stories are still coming to light of the lives ended by Hamas. One such story is that of Tiferet Lapidot (23). Eighteen months ago, she was spending her days teaching English, geography, maths, and science to underprivileged children in Khayelitsha outside Cape Town. When school emptied out in the afternoons, she and other volunteers painted murals so that the pupils could enjoy a more colourful environment. In her own small but powerful way, Tiferet enriched the lives of South African children, leaving a lasting impact.

After going on to travel to India, Sri Lanka, and Australia, she returned to Israel for the *chaggim*. It was there that she attended the Supernova festival, where she was killed by barbaric Hamas terrorists. It took 11 days for her family to learn her fate.

It was during that time, as Tiferet’s family frantically traced her phone to Gaza, believing she was kidnapped, that

“Every Shabbat she had in South Africa, she was invited to a family, and she felt like she was at home,” says Ohad. “When she was in Gqeberha, they had a *seudat shlishit* [Shabbat third meal] for her and her friend, Yaffa,” he recalls. “Even though it was a tiny community, they felt that it was important to host Israelis.”

Ariella Wolf hosted Tiferet when she was in Johannesburg. “She came from Harish, where my sister-in-law lives. She was a free spirit, but it was important to her to have Shabbat in a *shomer Shabbos* home. She spent a Shabbat with us, and she wanted to see the local shuls.”

Her husband, Dan Wolf, says, “Our time with Tiferet was uplifting. She said she was feeling homesick until she came into a Jewish home that felt familiar. She exuded an enthusiasm for life.” Dan, who is passionate about the Drakensberg, shared his knowledge with Tiferet, who used it to plan her time there, and she and her friend played with the Wolfs’ children in their garden.

“When we heard the news, it was

Ohad says knowing how warmly Tiferet was hosted by the South African Jewish community has sustained him since his daughter’s passing. “We really are one big family. The saying, ‘*Kol Yisrael arevim zeh ba-zeh*’ [all of Israel is responsible for one another], I feel it in my guts. It’s not just an expression. We’re like one body. My call to the South African Jewish community is to continue to deepen that recognition, that solidarity. We know each other, even though we’ve never met.”

Tiferet worked with at-risk youth during her *sherut leumi* (national service), and then came to South Africa with the organisation Heroes for Life, which was established in 2013 so that Israeli backpackers could dedicate two weeks of their post-army trip to volunteering.

Yuval Cohen, who co-ordinated Tiferet’s delegation to South Africa, says Tiferet loved volunteering and touring in South Africa. “The pain is huge, and the reality unimaginable. With an infectious smile, eyes full of kindness, you touched every teacher and child you volunteered with. You were and will remain a significant and inseparable part of our delegation. We promise to continue spreading your light.”

Ohad says Tiferet came home for the *chaggim* and they had a normal Shabbat meal in which she discussed her plans to travel back to Australia. “A normal meal, but you never know that it’s the last one,” he says. He and his wife, Sarit, have six other children. Tiferet went off to the festival, and they next heard from her on the morning of 7 October, when she called to say she was “surrounded by murderers’. She asked if we thought she should stay with her friends or join another group. As a parent, I never thought I would be asked these questions.”

On the call, Tiferet remained calm and strong, ensuring that her parents didn’t worry. Ohad believes she was killed soon after they spoke. He doesn’t know what happened to his daughter in her final moments, and there are many unanswered questions, yet he believes “the hand of G-d Almighty” was with her. He continues to have deep faith that “G-d is with us”.

Ohad believes that just like the Jewish people emerged stronger and with their own state after the Holocaust, so after the horrors of 7 October, the Jewish people will emerge into a place of strength, healing, and gifts from G-d.

He’s also adamant that he and his family will continue to live, to celebrate *simchas*, and to find joy again. Even when things feel so dark, he encourages others to do the same, and to fight not only to survive, but thrive as Jews and human beings. “If we don’t carry on living, then Hamas has claimed more victims,” he says. “I don’t want to give it that. We’ll let the light in. We choose life.”



Tiferet Lapidot volunteering in Cape Town

the South African government refused to condemn the massacre that took the life of a young woman who came to this country to uplift its children.

It was while South Africa’s silence spoke a thousand words that the Canadian government went all-out to try trace and save Tiferet. “I was born in Canada, and even though she wasn’t, the Canadian government treated Tiferet as one of their own children,” says her father, Ohad Lapidot.

Though the South African government may not have shown one iota of compassion for Israeli victims – including one who had come to help our children – Ohad emphasises that his daughter was warmly welcomed by the South African Jewish community. In addition, he says the school she taught at in Khayelitsha held a memorial ceremony for her.

Photographs from her time in South Africa show her smiling, laughing, and bringing joy to everyone around her. “She grabbed life with both hands. It’s like she knew she had limited time,” says Ohad, sharing a video of her bungee jumping off the Bloukrans Bridge on the Garden Route.

heartbreaking,” he says. “As a family, we were privileged to have met her, and it has made this travesty so palpable. I sent her father a message, and just felt so deeply for him because this was a magnificent young woman, no different to my daughters.”

Chana Joubert hosted Tiferet in Gqeberha. “I love hosting young people as they are refreshing, and she was just that,” she says. “A sparkling personality. Tiferet and her friend fitted into our home beautifully. They became part of the family for Shabbat. I kept in contact by sending her Shabbat messages.

“*Motzei* Shabbat, we heard about the attacks. I contacted my Israeli visitors on WhatsApp to check whether they were safe. I didn’t hear back from Tiferet, and saw the message wasn’t read.” She was then told Tiferet was missing.

“I have daughters, and here I was hearing that this precious young woman was missing,” she says. “Then the shock came when I eventually found out she was murdered. I pray that her parents will be enfolded in Hashem’s love. Tragedy affects the whole Jewish people.”

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Christian protesters – victims of violence outside Parliament

TALI FEINBERG

Protesting peacefully in front of Parliament is a South African tradition, yet anti-Israel extremists violently attacked a Christian pro-Israel vigil there on Friday, 3 November.

The spark was lit a week earlier, when extremists at an anti-Israel protest in Cape Town called people to disrupt the weekly Christian demonstration outside Parliament.

They disrupted Christian supporters of Israel who held a gathering to protest against the terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians and highlight the plight of the 240 hostages still held by Hamas in Gaza.

"A group of aggressive Pro-Palestinian supporters came and stood in front of them, ripped their Israeli flags, pulled balloons and hostage posters, and intimidated the peaceful pro-Israel group," said South African Friends of Israel (SAFI) following the attack. "A charge is being lodged with the police."

The attack comes after an anti-Israel protest outside Parliament in April 2023, in which Israeli flags were burnt and protesters called out "One Zionist, one bullet!"

Vivienne Myburgh, the national director of the South African International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, was there on 3 November. "When we arrived this week, they were there in force, with 'dummy' bodies on the ground. There were probably about 20 to 30 of them. We just stood there peacefully, singing our songs, holding our posters. We decided to come in the opposite spirit. There was no aggression from our side, and very little engagement.

"I was standing right in front, between the pro-Palestinians and our side, when a black car came into that four-way crossing and stopped. This guy jumped out, and I immediately knew it was trouble. It was so quick. He lunged towards the guys holding the big Israeli flags, and pulled them out of their hands. Some people came and joined him.

"We had to grab a flag that was stood on, but we managed to get all but one of the flags back. It was shocking and unexpected. We can sense that the aggression is rising. Charges were pressed on Sunday. Some pro-Palestinians came and said they were sorry. There was no police presence because of the rugby tour at the same time, but afterwards, some police arrived and promised they would be there from now on."

SAFI said this behaviour was "the result of South Africa's political leaders openly praising internationally proscribed terrorist organisations like Hamas".

"We call on [members of] the public to stand firm in their support and solidarity for the holy land of Israel, while remaining vigilant to ensure that they aren't physically assaulted. We condemn this behaviour, and call on the ANC [African National Congress] government to ensure that every South African's right to freedom of speech is respected, protected, and upheld," SAFI said.

SAFI spokesperson Bafana Modise told the *SA Jewish Report*, "It's important to note that South Africans are peace-loving people. We're the people of Nelson Mandela. We would love to be agents of peace and reconciliation. As SAFI, we want to make it clear that the ANC, the EFF [Economic Freedom Fighters], and the BDS [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions] movement don't speak for the majority of our people.

"We support a two-state solution. We condemn terrorist attacks on the people of Israel. We call for a reconciliation process whereby leaders across the world will come together to negotiate a lasting peaceful solution. We stand in solidarity with the only democracy in the Middle East, which is Israel."

Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape SAJBD) Executive Director Daniel Bloch says, "The Cape SAJBD condemns these acts of aggression and violence against Christian supporters outside



Christian pro-Israel protesters being attacked by pro-Palestinian protesters outside Parliament

Parliament. It's everyone's constitutional right to freedom of expression, and pro-Israel supporters have the same right to protest as everyone else. We call on the South African government and all citizens to protect our rights and condemn the violence perpetrated by the anti-Israel movements."

To the Christian protesters, he says, "We're in discussion with law enforcement and the SAPS [South African Police Service] to protect the peaceful Christian rally and to ensure that the anti-Israel movements are restrained from intimidation and causing damage.

"As a result of the war between Israel and Hamas, we're seeing this horrific conflict playing out in the streets of South Africa," Bloch says. "While there has been an increase in protest action and the verbal rhetoric has been one of hate and intimidation, there have been no physical incidents. We're fortunate that Cape Town has one of the lowest rates of antisemitism anywhere in the world.

"Everyone has the right to protest, however it should be done in a peaceful manner respectful of all our rights," he says. "The Cape SAJBD will continue to work with law enforcement and the SAPS to protect every citizen. We call on all religious leaders to promote peace within our communities. While we may not share the same beliefs and opinions, that doesn't mean we cannot live side by side in peace as South Africans."

This isn't the first time Christians have stood up for Israel and the Jewish state since the Hamas massacre on 7 October. Since October, senior Anglican cleric Reverend Canon Peter Houston has relentlessly made statements, written letters to the media and opinion pieces criticising the church's silence in the face of Hamas atrocities.

On 10 October, Simon Goslett started a petition on change.org titled "The celebration of murder is never acceptable".

"We, the undersigned Christians, recognise that Hamas, according to its own charter, seeks to destroy the state of Israel and commit genocide against the Jews," stated the petition. "We condemn the murder, kidnapping, and rape of Israelis and other foreign nationals by Hamas militants. We assert that the Anglican Church of Southern Africa is wrong to conflate the struggle of ordinary Palestinians for greater autonomy and civil rights with the end goal of Hamas, which is the destruction of Israel.

"We're disturbed that the involvement of Iran as part of its genocidal strategy to destroy Israel is overlooked," the petition continued. "We believe that by avoiding naming Hamas and Iran in its resolutions and statements, the Anglican Church is disingenuous about the cause of ensuring that Palestinians gain their freedom in Gaza because they are under a yoke of religious fundamentalism and ideological totalitarianism.

"We state categorically that the murder of innocents is never acceptable, the desecration of corpses is never acceptable, the taking of children as hostages is never acceptable, and the celebration of murder is never acceptable.

"We acknowledge that, in every age, the church has in some way promoted, condoned, or remained silent in the face of antisemitism. We express our pain and sorrow that the church has repeatedly been complicit in the victimising of Jews, and that the Anglican Church continues to do so. We affirm how vulnerable Jews feel right now, having experienced the darkest day in Jewish history since the end of the Holocaust."

More than 1 200 people signed the petition.

SA to remove diplomats, but Israeli ambassador remains

>>>Continued from page 4

standing with other democracies. Ramaphosa is the president of all South Africans. Likewise, Pandor isn't just an ANC minister for an anti-West aligned foreign affairs department, but a minister for all South Africa, whose department is supposed to represent the interests of all in this country. The actions of our government discriminates against South African Jewry, who have religious, spiritual, cultural, and historic ties to Israel and are also equal citizens of this country with the constitutional rights and freedoms of religion and belief afforded to everyone else."

Professor Karen Milner, the national chairperson of the SAJBD, told the *SA Jewish Report*, "Given the religious, cultural, and familial ties of the Jewish community to Israel, it would be alarming for the community not to have a representative of the only Jewish state in this country. What's worse is that such a move would do nothing to address the plight of the Palestinians, but merely appease the Hamas-supporting lobby. At this stage, the government has stated it's 'acting against' the Israeli ambassador to South Africa, and the SAJBD has asked for a meeting with the president to clarify what that means."

A statement issued by the SAJBD on 7 November said, "Dirco's most recent display of support for Hamas has been to threaten action against the Israeli ambassador in South Africa on the claimed grounds of him being 'undiplomatic'. This is the same government

department that has consistently refused to engage with the ambassador, even in the immediate aftermath of the horrors of 7 October. It's the same Dirco that instead reached out to the perpetrators of those atrocities." The Board has launched a Promotion of Access to Information (PAIA) application to determine what Pandor actually said to Hamas during her phone call.

The statement continues, "The SAJBD calls on the South African government urgently to reconsider its ill-considered, immoral, and ultimately self-defeating stance on the conflict in the Middle East and instead align itself with other members of the international community who are doing whatever they can to help bring peace to the region."

In Parliament on Tuesday, 7 November, Pandor called for the International Criminal Court to arrest Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for war crimes. She also put forward a seven-point peace plan for ending the war in Gaza, endorsed by the Palestinian embassy. These were: a call for an immediate ceasefire; humanitarian corridors; the exercise of restraint; the release of civilian hostages; a nuclear-weapon-free zone; dialogue led by Palestinians and Israelis; and a United Nations rapid deployment force.

Pressure on the Israeli ambassador to South Africa is set to intensify in the days and weeks to come. And the war of words is far from over.


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THEATRE ON THE SQUARE

Social media battle rages alongside Israel war

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

From death threats to photos of dead babies, our community's social media personalities have been subject to online abuse that would shock even the most jaded among us. Yet they remain undeterred in their commitment to counteract the propaganda that continues to flood our feeds.

"We're coming for these two Jewish kids next. These are her babies, what would she feel if we murdered them? We should teach her a lesson and take her children away." When Gabriela Demby posted a video of the Nelson Mandela Bridge bedecked with red balloons, each attached to a poster of one of the hostages



being held by Hamas, she had no concept of the horrific threats that would follow. A "momfluencer" – a mom who builds her social media following by sharing their motherhood experiences – Demby shared the video as her own reel on her popular Instagram page @momsyandmee on Friday afternoon, 27 October. When Shabbat came out the next evening, she found her page not only brimming with antisemitic vitriol, but death threats on photos of her children that she'd shared on her profile. "It was horrible. Their faces are there, and I just went into a complete panic," she says. "I deleted all of it, I didn't want that on my page. Then I realised that I should have screenshotted the comments. I know better, but it was just so terrifying." Yet there were still enough threats to constitute the 53 screenshots she later sent to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies for further investigation. With more than 500 comments on the video and more than 11 500 views, which far surpassed her then-following of 2 800 people, Demby had been tagged in a multitude of threatening comments that

were drawing widespread attention. "Really horrific things were being said, obviously about the situation, but a lot about me," she says. "They were tagging me and tagging the EFF [Economic Freedom Fighters], saying, 'We've got to find this white girl. We don't want her in South Africa.' My inbox was flooded with horrible messages about me being a white, Jewish princess and saying, 'You're lucky you don't have a location on your page. We would come for you,' as well as general antisemitic comments."

Yet it was the threats to her children that evoked the most anxiety, which almost two weeks later, still lingers. "My good friend from the Community Security Organisation calmed me down, telling me that they are keyboard warriors and this is the only way they can be part of the conflict. It's a tactic to instil fear in another human being, he said, which is another form of terror, but you have to know that nothing is going to happen to your kids, they've moved onto the next Jewish person."

Though she has removed hundreds of threatening followers and made her page private, Demby says she's not a victim and remains firm in her convictions. "Nothing will shake my Jewish pride," she says. "I still feel very strongly about my stand. I've continued to post and share. Seeing the messages of encouragement and unity, that's the magic piece to the Jewish people. We draw strength from each other and when we're unified and doing mitzvahs and bringing light into the world, that's our mission. I'm proud to be part of that."

South African influencer Jenna Berkowitz, now based in the United Kingdom, is also committed to speaking up for Jews and Israel on her Instagram page, jennababez_, which has more than 6 300 followers. Though she has more than 64 000 followers on her TikTok profile, jenberks, she has steered clear of that platform in recent weeks even though it's a source of income for her. "TikTok is a different ballgame. It's so scary, so my Israel posts are all on Instagram because it's more niche," she says. That's not to say that she hasn't been subject to a deluge of hatred on the platform.

Though initially Berkowitz just posed the news as it happened, she later decided to educate people about the facts surrounding Israel and the terrorist nature of Hamas in her Instagram story, especially since she has both Jewish and non-Jewish

followers. "I don't know why it's such a difficult concept to wrap your head around – terrorists being such bad people," she says wryly. "I've lost more than 500 followers, and I genuinely don't care. I get hate messages almost every single day, which is insane." Something that was initially seen as a "land problem" has turned into pure,

deep-rooted antisemitism, she says. Berkowitz has been called a "dumb b**ch", received a deluge of Palestinian flags in her comments, frequently been told to "go and die", and has been accused of committing "Jennacide" in a not-so-subtle play on her name. "It's draining and I'm constantly on edge," she says. "It's never been a secret that I'm Jewish though – that's

what my content is all about, being a Joburg Jewish girl, and so on. And people are asking how I could support Israel. What do you mean? Why wouldn't I?" Berkowitz says the propagandistic nature of social media is alarming. "A lot of what's shared on social media is people's opinions. That's the problem because it's not fact." If you look for

Continued on page 15>>

Antisocial life and times of an Israel supporter

I was raised to think that the greater the criticism, the greater the expression of love. Whereas I know that in theory, this isn't healthy or accurate, I can thank my parents and grandparents for gifting me the ability to survive these difficult times.

There's little doubt that my Germanic upbringing has prepared me for a life in social and mainstream media. Indeed, anyone raised in a Germanic home will confirm that the link between criticism and love is sometimes confusing. Which often results in the inability to distinguish between the two.

This is also why when told on X by Maggs Naidu that "You're lying through every orifice when you imply that the ANC [African National Congress] is anti-Jew at any level. And you know that and still do it because you're a shameless liar," I spend more time considering the logistics of lying through my various orifices than I do being offended at being called a liar. A shameless one at that.

Since 7 October, I've been called more names than likely in my 50-something years. If I had a dollar for every time that I was called a racist or an apartheid supporter, I would have lots of rands. I've been told repeatedly that I support genocide, that I'm paid for by the Israeli government (if only), and that I'm a Zionist nationalist who has lost all perspective.

In another interesting case, I received a threatening letter from a well-known South African commentator because I had suggested that he showed a negative bias towards Israel. He demanded that I delete the tweet where I had said this or face a defamation charge. I did delete it, not because I was concerned about the legal consequences, but because I had clearly upset him. And that wasn't what I wanted. I responded to try and point out an alternative view. Never to cause hurt.

Mostly I do it to be the voice for Jews, friends of Jews, and supporters of Israel who aren't in the same position

I have had moments of hope. One such case was when ANC Secretary General Fikile Mbalula responded to a tweet where I accused the ANC of being antisemitic. "You are not correct Howard," he said. Respectfully, and in an attempt to further dialogue I tweeted back, "I would, more than anything, love to be wrong. There is a terrible feeling of abandonment right now. The Jewish community has always valued the Constitution and South Africa. Help us feel safe again." I didn't think I would receive an immediate reply. But when none came, I checked, only to find that the ANC secretary general had blocked me.

It seems that he was less interested in furthering dialogue than I was.

Whereas my followers have increased over the past month, my South African social currency hasn't. I have until now managed to balance my brand carefully, only weighing in on Israel where I felt it was necessary. I have always been aware of the "cost" of being branded the "Israel guy" in a broader South African context

because the obsession with identity politics would reduce me to the status of a one-dimensional

INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman



Zionist. And everything I write or say would be relative to Israel. The events of 7 October and the subsequent reaction (or non-reaction) of the South African government left me no choice but to take this on. With existing platforms in mainstream publications, radio, and social media, remaining silent became less of an option. I also have the German upbringing and confidence to know that I'm not a racist or a bigot simply because someone calls me one. If I did consider standing back, the absurd but rapid increase in antisemitism that followed the Hamas terror attack – even before Israel responded – removed all hesitation. Like it or not, I had found myself on the frontline of the South African social media war.

The abuse has been relentless. Soon after 7 October, I found myself "proving" that Hamas had committed the atrocities that had been reported. I found myself defending what we knew to be true and searching for "acceptable" sources. Only to realise that none would qualify because the narrative that Israel had manufactured the events using artificial intelligence had already been birthed. What this meant was that no amount of proof would be acceptable. Because days after the event, with the blood of the murdered still on the floor, with bodies still being found and identified, with the dead not having been buried, and the

missing still to be sought, the antisemites on X had determined the whole event to be an Israeli hoax.

So why bother? Why fight a tsunami with a beach bucket? For a few reasons. The main one being that I'm equipped to do so. I have the platform, some of the knowledge, and I have a voice. I can at least cause someone who doesn't already hate to consider that there might be a different perspective. And because perhaps those who do hate will know that there's someone who isn't afraid to challenge them, and will think twice before posting.

But mostly I do it to be the voice for Jews, friends of Jews, and supporters of Israel who aren't in the same position. Many potential defenders have been silenced by threats and many aren't able to take the risk that's inherent in being a vocal Israel supporter. This is the reality of our environment, and I strongly encourage people to consider this carefully before engaging. It's uncomfortable. It's lonely. And it's often scary.

Or could be if one were sensitive. Or if one were to take offense to an eloquent conversationalist who just earlier tweeted the suggestion that I wasn't telling the truth and that I should perhaps consider rethinking it. Or as he put it, "Ag kak man, take your hasbara propaganda and shove it up your ass!"

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SA medics poised to answer Israel’s call

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Though they have yet to be called upon, more than 80 South African-based doctors, medics, and others with specialised skills have signed up to volunteer in Israel.

“I stand in complete solidarity with my people, the people of Israel,” says Israeli-born, Joburg-based specialist radiologist, Liat Malek Alhadeff. Though breast-cancer diagnosis is her speciality, as a radiologist, she’s capable of interpreting any trauma-related scans – a useful skill in Israel at this time.

“This is an important time in all our lives,” she says. “We all need to stand up and contribute in some way. This is now a threat to Jews all over the world. I don’t feel like this is just a country that’s at war, it’s our entire nation.”

The mother of a five-month-old baby and two older kids, Malek Alhadeff says she’s thought long and hard about whether she should be volunteering in Israel if needed. “I just feel like this is a different situation, like this is like pre-World War II, in which we can’t sit still and just do nothing. I want to be able to say to my own family, ‘I stood up and did something.’”

Malek Alhadeff wouldn’t be on the frontlines and wouldn’t endanger herself if she were to go. “If I’m needed, I’m going to be in a hospital setting and I would be in a pretty safe environment, but obviously providing much-needed assistance,” she says. “I wouldn’t go there unless it was necessary, and I was actually going to be of service.”

At the moment, she says it seems that the Israeli health ministry is looking for surgeons, for those practicing more clinical physician-based disciplines, and psychiatrists. The delay in calling up our medical volunteers also seems to be partially around either finding ways to register their qualifications or to allow them to simply come in and volunteer, she says.

Malek Alhadeff is inspired by the example of her Israeli father, who served as a general in the army, fighting in the Yom Kippur War and the Second Lebanon War. “This



isn’t something unfamiliar to my family,” she says. “For me, being all these miles away and not able to participate and do something is frustrating. I have a deep connection to Israel. I still feel that it’s my home.”

Her need to help has grown to encompass more than that notion, says Malek Alhadeff. “It’s about right and wrong. I’m not a religious person, but that’s my heritage. It’s just about the injustice of it all. That’s what infuriates me, how history is repeating itself. We can’t just sit back silently and say we’re in South Africa and nothing is happening to us personally. It is happening to us. It is personal.”

A Joburg-based specialist physician who prefers to remain anonymous agrees. “As Jews, we step up where and when we can and always have this pull to help,” he says. “I have a skill that’s particularly necessary with so many hurt or injured, and I believe I can help. If viable, I would definitely use those skills to do something useful.”

Having seen an email with a request for medical volunteers to be added to a database, the specialist’s wife filled in his details. “She discussed it with me afterwards, an indication of how strongly she feels about me going,” he says, speaking of who he would leave behind. “I have three kids who, while a little anxious, would definitely encourage me. They are strong kids who were incredible during the COVID-19 pandemic, and although this is on a different level, they would be good with their father

stepping up. I don’t have details about where I’d be working, but I have both in-hospital and paramedic training.”

Though he’s no stranger to stressful medical situations, the specialist says that if he is to go to Israel, he knows that he’ll probably see and hear things that will stick with him always. “That said, I have the skills and ability to help, so if I can, I must.”

Speaking of his hopes and fears if called upon,

he says that he prays that by the time he gets there, there will be no more need for him to be there. “My fear is that there will be a need, because if Israel is calling on outsiders, then there’s no end in sight.”

Benjamin Sher*, another potential volunteer, says that being born in Israel has fostered a deep connection to the country. “My skills range from search and rescue, to being a medic, to fire containment, to tactical skills gained through working with the police and security companies here,” he says.

“If admitted, I’d like to help with anything and everything. A Jewish homeland is vital for the sustainability of Jews everywhere around the world. So, Jews around the world need to step up to assist in protecting that Jewish homeland.”

Jews today are far better equipped to protect themselves than they were during the Holocaust, he says, and we need to learn from history and not stand idly by. “Through our skills, our training, and our military resources, we can stand together and protect Israel.”

*Name has been changed

Hostage plight etched on Durban beach

OPINION ALANA PUGH-JONES BARANOV



We silently wandered down from the sleepy promenade onto the yellow sand dunes of North Beach, as if in reverence for the task that lay ahead. Fishermen, here long before dawn, cast out another line, and joggers strode past a group of Shembe worshippers as they prepared to enter the sea for baptism. The glowing morning light seemed to reveal another perfect Durban day, which made the bright red towels and beach buckets in my arms seem all the more jarring.

We were part of a group in Durban who came together to show solidarity with and raise awareness of the horrific plight of the Israeli men, women, and children taken hostage in Gaza four weeks ago.

Every one of the 242 red beach towels we laid out had a poster for each of the innocent civilians being held by Hamas terrorists. Men, women, and children, some elderly and sick, others just toddlers, and even a baby of nine months old. Lives so full of promise, with their stories just beginning. Brutally ripped from their homes, taken from their families, and abducted into darkness, simply for the crime of being Israeli.

A particularly difficult moment was when I had to count out each of the 32 buckets and spades to symbolise the missing children. I couldn’t help but wonder if Ariel, aged four, and Aviv, aged two, loved toys like these as much as my own children safe at home.

The red towels stretched out as far as the eye could see, a stark reminder that 242 isn’t just a number but a collection of individual worlds. Each one has a name, an age, a favourite food, or hobby. They are someone’s mother, a best friend, an aunt, or a nephew. Someone’s child who is loved more than life itself. While South

African government ministers and a Hamas spokesperson in a South African Broadcasting Corporation interview refers to “prisoners” and “settlers”, we won’t let their humanity be erased.

As we finished setting up and took a moment to gaze at the surreal contrast of a beautiful beach day with the living hell that the hostages must be enduring, a group of onlookers wandered over. South Africans from all walks of life were shocked to read the posters, learn the names, see images of the hostages, and hear some of the stories of what had happened during the massacre in Israel on 7 October. One woman was moved to tears and comforted by our community members.

An impromptu prayer service was held by a group of Christian pastors who had come to see the towels and express their solidarity with Israel. As they linked arms, their words of protection for those abducted floated across the beach to where some of us were reciting tehillim for friends and family in Israel.

During our planning, we hoped there would be no need for another campaign. Each installation, from the red balloons along Nelson Mandela Bridge and the Israeli flag lighting up Ponte in Johannesburg, has elicited the most heartening reaction from South Africans across different communities. Please G-d, the red beach towels will be our last event, and the nightmare of our 242 brothers and sisters will be brought to an end soon. Until then, we won’t stop saying their names and sharing their plight. We cannot look away.

• Alana Pugh-Jones Baranov is the social and political justice liaison for the national office of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and social justice liaison for the Durban Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

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Tools to carry us through a crisis

HANNA RESNICK

She was sitting in a safe room in the middle of Ashkelon while rockets were fired overhead, but Debbie Gross remained calm as she advised South Africans about how to deal with the trauma of the war in Israel.

Gross, a trauma therapist and director of Tahel Crisis Center in Jerusalem, partnered with Koleinu SA and the Shoshana Foundation to host a webinar titled “Feeling safe in an unsafe world”.

“On 7 October, our lives were turned around,” she said, “and our basic assumptions about many things were shattered. When too many of these assumptions are shattered, that can cause trauma.”

These included assumptions about the government, army, and Israel’s ability to defend itself. Though most people know about post-traumatic stress disorder, there’s something else called PTG – post-traumatic growth, Gross said, which is when we “take all our tools and not only get through a terrible trauma, but grow and even thrive from it”.

To do this, she said, it’s important to build a toolbox to prevent trauma in times of crisis. She compared this toolbox to a bank account, a storage room, or a pantry.

“Many people have been comparing what’s going on now in Israel to 9/11 in the sense that nobody believed such an attack could happen,” Gross said. Rudy Giuliani, New York City mayor at the time, managed to react efficiently. “About seven or eight years before 9/11, he brought together all his top advisors to plan for a building in New York having a gas explosion. And then he took that plan and put it in a drawer. When 9/11 occurred, all he had to do was pull out the plan and start working.”

When we’re stressed, she said, we need to consider it as a scale, with what’s stressing us out on the one side and our resources on the other. “What happens most often is that our stressors are much heavier than our resources because we haven’t put our resources together in one place so we can access them.” She suggested making a list of your stressors long before any crisis or panic.

War trauma helpline

In this distressing time, we’re all struggling to find ways to cope. Victim support group Koleinu SA is offering a helpline to support anyone battling to deal with trauma related to the massacre in Israel and its war against Hamas.

Call the Koleinu SA helpline on +27 11 264 0341 Monday to Friday 08:00 to 12:00; 14:00 to 17:00; and 19:00 to 20:00.

Describing what happens when we panic, Gross said, “If I’m standing in the middle of the jungle and a lion is coming at me, my brain will secrete two hormones, cortisol and adrenaline, and I’ll suddenly have energy. This causes a fight-or-flight reaction. But if that SOS situation lasts for too long, it leads us to freeze and often we can’t function. So, we have to find ways to teach our brain to secrete other hormones.”

There are five steps to take when facing a crisis, Gross said. “Step number one: recognise that this is a crisis and it could be traumatising. None of us ever thought we would see slaughter like this happen in *eretz Yisrael*.”

Secondly, maintain realistic expectations, realising it could take you time and energy to get through it. The next step is to keep to your daily routine where possible. If you can’t, build a new one. By keeping to a routine, you’re signalling to your brain that “you aren’t in the jungle”, Gross said.

Routine is particularly important for children in crisis, she said. “They need boundaries and normalcy. And if you’re far away, by setting up a time every day that you’ll call them, that’s giving

them a routine.”

The fourth step is to gather your resources so you can use them, and the fifth is to be aware of your surroundings and what the people around you need and can offer you.

“Sociologists have found one of the most effective resources is to make a short list,” she said. Start with a list of resources. “For this list, a resource must be three things – it must be cheap, light, and accessible. For example, we have a home to live in, we have food, we have a spouse or friend or family.”

The next is a list of what you’re going to do today. “By making this list, you’re giving your brain another message: ‘I’m capable.’ Have realistic expectations of what you can do. Don’t expect too much of yourself during a time of crisis. Try to just get that much done.”

Another list is who your human resources are.

“Who are the people you can depend on? It’s important to rate them from one to three. We all might have a best friend that we love talking to, but every time you had a crisis, was she the one who really came through for you? Or maybe

it was a neighbour that you’re not so close to, but every time you needed someone to drive you to the hospital or do something else, she was there for you.

“Another important resource is to unplug, put your phone away some of the time, to not listen to the news 24/7, because the more that we bombard ourselves with these horrible stories, the more we’re reconfirming to our brain that this is an SOS.

“Another is to have self-compassion. This is the time to understand that we’re all doing the best we can, we’re going to be okay, and we’re good enough.”

Along with lowering stress hormones, try to increase oxytocin levels. “Oxytocin is a hormone that calms us down,” she said.

The first way of doing this is what Gross calls “the butterfly”. “Put your hands straight out. And cross them over and make an X, then turn the X over and touch your shoulders and then go down to your elbows, up to your shoulders, and repeat. It’s like giving ourselves a hug.”

The next is to “take your right hand and put it on your heart and think of someone you love. See that person and feel that love.” Additionally, “Hug someone, whether it’s a baby, a spouse, a kitten, or a dog.

“Another way to increase oxytocin is to do acts of *chesed* [kindness]. Go to a neighbour and see how she’s doing, call someone who’s alone. See what you can do to reach out to somebody else.”

Another technique is to breathe. “Put your hands on your stomach, breathe in, fill your stomach, let it out. Calm breathing is different to the breathing of somebody under stress, so your brain realises you can’t be running away from a lion.”

An important tool is self-care. “Make sure that you’re sleeping, you’re eating, you’re getting some exercise, you’re doing some sort of relaxation, whether it’s breathing, yoga, or meditation, and a hobby. These five things – eating, sleeping, exercise, relaxation, and hobbies are the first things we throw out the window in a time of crisis. But we must take care of ourselves so that we can be there to take care of others.

“Lastly,” said Gross, “find someone you can talk to and find time to talk because getting it out is so important.

“I can’t predict when this war will end,” she said. “I can’t promise you that everybody is going to be okay. But I can promise that our nation is just going to get better, and we’re going to rebuild *eretz Yisrael*.”



Debbie Gross

Announcement by the

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regarding

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'Mandatory Palestine' question in matric paper causes outrage

STAFF REPORTER

Students writing their matric National Senior Certificate (NSC) mathematical literacy exam last week were shocked to see a question reading, "Timothy will fly from the United States of America to Mandatory Palestine to play in a tournament. Before he leaves, he wants to exchange \$2 580 for New Israeli Shekel (NIS). The currency used in Mandatory Palestine is the New Israeli Shekel (NIS)."

Aside from the unnecessary political stance, the use of the term "Mandatory Palestine" is factually incorrect, as it refers to the period of the British Mandate over the area now comprising Israel and the West Bank, which commenced in 1920 and ended with Israel's Declaration of Independence on 14 May 1948.

The issue has been handed to the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) to address.

"The haters of Israel have become so emboldened within government administration and the system by the levels of anti-Israel rhetoric and the de-legitimisation of Israel that they feel comfortable falsifying history and reality in order to convey their view that the state of the Jewish people shouldn't exist," said David Saks, the associate director of the SAJBD. "And this was done completely deliberately. This is no honest mistake. And it was done not in the history paper, but sort of snuck into a mathematical literacy paper to somehow indoctrinate young people into believing that there's no such thing as Israel."

He said the Board intended to bring this up with the Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga. "There needs to be an investigation, at the very least, and there needs to be appropriate action taken against the person or persons responsible," said Saks.

"This is somebody in education who can't be trusted to convey the truth to pupils, instead using his or her position to promote their own ideological agenda that has nothing to do with truth and reality. This isn't an appropriate person to hold such a position."

"It's extremely upsetting for Jewish students to have the existence of the state which they support and are

linked to in various ways – culturally, religiously, and through family – just denied. And the fact that they're writing an exam, they're probably pretty tense. To have this insult thrust in their faces at a time when they are supposed to be focused is

frankly an infringement of their rights as students."

One of the few Jewish schools which writes the NSC examinations set by the department of basic education is Mesivta Sha'arei Torah. The principal of Mesivta Sha'arei Torah and Beis Yaakov, Jodi Davis, said she believed her pupils weren't affected at all by that question in the mathematical literacy paper.

"If the person who sent the paper intended to politicise it, it didn't affect our pupils and it certainly won't affect their results," she said. Be that as it may, Davis said, "I don't believe that political statements have any place in a mathematical literacy exam, but I also don't believe that whoever set the paper and set that question represents the entire Gauteng education department or the department of basic education."

Herzlia, the biggest Jewish school still offering the NSC matric certificate, declined to comment on the issue. Many Jewish students and parents across different schools were upset by the question but were afraid to come forward due to concerns about their safety as well as possible repercussions for their matric results.

A student at one of the Jewish schools who wrote the paper described her reaction to the question as "deep

shock". The student's mother said, "I don't understand when the questions were set, but certainly before the current war. Nonetheless, there are 196 countries in the world, so many others to choose from rather than 'Mandatory Palestine' which ceased to exist in 1948. Lots of questions [that need] to be answered by the department of education."

One mother said, "I'm absolutely disgusted that that question came up in the paper. It was unnecessary. They could have picked any other country. That paper was obviously set well before the massacre, but is indicative of the level of increase in antisemitism. The kids were horrified and disconcerted" and some felt "targeted and offended".

"It was unnecessary to bring any sort of politics to a matric final exam, and it affected my ability to answer the question fully," said another student.

One Jewish student at a non-Jewish school said that, at first, "I didn't want to answer this question because of how I felt, but my second thought was that it's matric, and I need all the marks I can get despite my feelings, so I answered it. I wouldn't say it distracted me, but it

definitely did disturb me."

The student spoke to a Muslim friend, who was also "extremely shocked" by the question and felt that "there should have been more consideration" from the education department.

It wasn't just Jewish people who were offended by the exam question. Education spokesperson of the African National Congress (ANC) Western Cape caucus, Muhammad Khalid, issued a statement saying that the ANC caucus "strongly condemns the use of the term 'Mandatory Palestine' to refer to the state of Palestine in the Grade 12 mathematical literacy paper 1, question 5.2, administered on Friday, 3 November 2023," and that the question "demonstrates a blatant disregard for the deeply rooted political sensitivities surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict".

On 7 November, the education department published a response saying, "The department regards the use of this term in national examination question paper as highly unfortunate and regrettable", and that it would "put mechanisms in place to ensure that this unfortunate incident doesn't recur".

Survived to Tell gives testimony to global audience

LEE TANKLE

Merav Barel, part of the non-profit nongovernment organisation Israel Is and a former Shinshinit (Israeli youth who do service in the diaspora) was told by her former army commander, Nimrod Ravid, that Harvard students had no idea what was going on in Israel since 7 October because of misinformation swirling on social media.

So, Barel, who did her diaspora year in Johannesburg, decided to use Israel Is to set up an initiative to tell the stories of those affected by the 7 October massacre.

The Instagram page "Survived to Tell" offers the stories of those who survived the Supernova massacre on 7 October as well as the survivors from kibbutzim that were attacked by Hamas.

"At first, I had to look for people who were willing to give their testimonies," said Barel. "The first place I thought to look was the survivors of the massacre at the Supernova music festival as a lot of these people are my age. The page in the last month has grown so much and people are now approaching me to tell their story."

"On our first day, we got 15 000 followers and we now have more than 117 000 followers with more than 10 million views worldwide. The survivors of these massacres send in their testimonies and our editors work to translate them into English as well as Spanish and French so that they can be understood by all our viewers," Barel said.

"We're also collaborating with other organisations so that people everywhere can hear these testimonies. We're working with Reichman University and the Israeli foreign ministry on this project. We just want these stories to be told. Our job is to try and tell what happened so that the world can be aware."

One of the many stories told on Survived to Tell is the story of Rotem Yaakobi, one of the survivors of the Supernova massacre. "There's no way to explain the pain, my heart is broken, and life will be different without all the people I love who are no longer with me," Yaakobi wrote. "At sunrise, I was lifted onto my girlfriend's shoulders, and we started seeing rockets and hearing interceptions. We were told by the festival managers that this wasn't a joke, it wasn't a dream, there was a red alert and we should lay on the floor." At this point, we were still telling ourselves that everything would be fine, the music would come back.

"We heard screams that terrorists had penetrated the building," she wrote. "We saw gunshot wounds, people were falling, being shot from everywhere, and then the nightmare began. As soon as I saw the bullets, I heard them hitting everywhere."

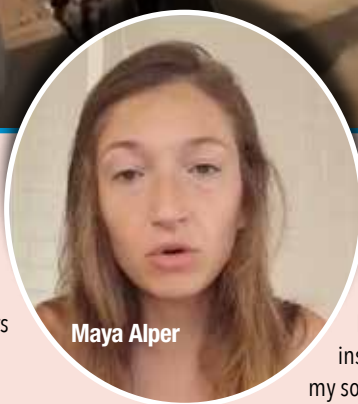
The terrorists surrounded us and shot from every direction. We couldn't see them, so it was impossible to figure out where they were firing from. We just saw people being shot and falling to the ground. It's impossible to explain the fear, the helplessness, the realisation that my life would end there."

Maya Alper, another survivor of the Supernova massacre said, "I don't usually share too much on social media, but after running for my life, being shot at, and hiding in a bush for six hours, I realised that there are things worth sharing. I saw people being shot to death. I saw the smile on the terrorist's face

Attendees at the Supernova music festival trying to escape



Photo: Screenshot



Maya Alper

when he shot the girl who was with me and she fell to her death."

Shai Sherem, a member of Kibbutz Nirim, wrote, "I was inside the shelter with my son, when the terrorists turned our house upside down and destroyed everything."

Similarly, Yaniv Halili visited Kibbutz Reim, one of the kibbutzim that was attacked and the place where some attendees of the Supernova festival fled and were subsequently killed by Hamas terrorists. He wrote, "The sight of charred houses, burned while the families were inside, the stench of corpses still lingering in the air, legions of flies hovering over bloodstains, torn clothes full of blood – all these serve as living evidence of the massacre."

Itzik Biton, a food truck supplier for the Supernova festival, told Survived to Tell, "We saw cars with holes in them, bodies thrown, sights I'll never forget," he said.

Angel Cohen, who also survived the Supernova massacre, told how her friend, Inbar, who was operating a painting booth at the festival was taken captive by Hamas. "It's hard to imagine what she's going through during these hours," Cohen wrote.

Agam Yosefzon wrote, "The terrorists threw stun grenades and RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades] into our shelter. They dragged people out of our shelter."

Tomer Mabruka wrote, "The terrorists slaughtered people next to us."

This is just a small taste of the experiences described, an account critical for the world to hear.



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Hostage billboard torn down at gunpoint

TALI FEINBERG

When thugs threatened a security guard at gunpoint on the night of 6 November before pulling down a Johannesburg billboard showing hostage Kfir Bibas, it wasn't unlike the way Hamas terrorists took Israeli hostages on 7 October 2023.



The billboard which will replace the one that was torn down

However, Wendy Kahn, the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) says that what she has learned over the past four weeks is that "the majority of South Africans are appalled by what happened on 7 October and the fact that Hamas is holding the 240 civilians".

"[The SAJBD] put up a billboard on 1 November to highlight the plight of the 240 civilian hostages being held by Hamas in Gaza. We wanted to make it clear that, contrary to the statements by Hamas in an interview on the SABC [South African Broadcasting Corporation], which claimed the hostages were 'prisoners' and 'there are no child hostages', and contrary to statements by the department of international relations and cooperation [Dirco] that the hostages are 'soldiers and settlers', these are 240 innocent civilians.

"These are people who were abducted from

their homes by terrorists following their killing spree. The hostages aren't a number, they are real people: babies, toddlers, children, teenagers, grannies, young women, and many others. We chose baby Kfir, who was nine months old when he was abducted, and is now 10 months old. A tenth of his life has been spent as a Hamas hostage."

Yet, "two young thugs came in the dead of night to tear down the poster in an attempt to prevent people from knowing the truth about the brutality of Hamas as it interferes with their narrative. When a security guard attempted to stop them, they pulled a gun on him," says Kahn.

"We say to these two Hamas supporters and Israel haters: we'll not be silenced. We live in a constitutional democracy where we all have the right to our views and beliefs. Today [8 November] we'll re-install the billboard, and we'll continue to do this until baby Kfir and all of the civilian hostages are released and brought back to their families and loved ones. We'll continue to light up the Johannesburg skyline with an Israeli flag on Ponte, we'll continue to engage with South Africans on the Nelson Mandela Bridge with posters and balloons about the hostages, we'll engage with the churches, and we'll share the horror of the hostages on the Durban beachfront. We won't be silenced. Our voices will become louder.

"The SAJBD has continued to express its sympathy for all the innocents suffering in this conflict, in Israel and in Gaza," Kahn says. "Tearing down posters does nothing to help the situation. It just paints the offenders as thugs and criminals."

Global memorial commemorates 30 days since massacre

LEE TANKLE

"Since Shabbat morning, Simchat Torah, on 7 October, our hearts have been bleeding. The destruction and terror will be with all of us forever. The loss of 1 400 men, women, elderly people, and children in one day is unimaginable."

With these words, an international memorial ceremony on 5 November to commemorate 30 days since the Israel massacre began, bringing together Jews from Israel, where the ceremony was held, and representatives of 102 communities in 31 countries online. They included South Africa alongside Holland, Hungary, France, Canada, Switzerland, the United States, Britain, Ethiopia, and Ivory Coast, among others.

The World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency for Israel, the Jewish National Fund (JNF), and Keren Hayesod joined together at the National Institutions Building in Jerusalem for the ceremony, which was livestreamed around the world.

"Due to the tense security situation, this event takes place without an audience but is livestreamed to Jewish communities in Israel and around the world," said the host. "The control room that connects this event to the rest of the world is in the city of Sderot, which was severely damaged in the massacre and its residents evacuated. It's a disaster that affects every Jew, wherever they are, everywhere in the world. Tonight, the entire Jewish people is grieving the lives of those who were murdered".

The chairs of each of the organisations behind the event, as well as Israel's president, Isaac Herzog, together with his wife, Michal, lit candles in memory of the people killed in the massacre. In all, 1 400 candles were lit.

"Israel will remember the wishes and boldness of those who were killed in this fight. The soldiers will always be victorious, and will be remembered in the hearts of Israel from generation

to generation," said JNF Chairperson Ifat Ovadia-Luski.

Sharon Liebshtein, the sibling of Ofir Liebshtein, the head of the Sha'ar HaNegev Regional Council Region, who died in the massacre, said, "I'm here today carrying in my heart the heavy feelings of pain and grief of the representatives of the families of the dead, the missing, and the captured."

"Since 7 October, we are one family, and our story and your story represent the 1 400 souls that we lost, of which four are in our little family – Mila, Netta, Nitzan, and Ofir. We're facing a heartbreaking pain. A predicament that connects us all," Liebshtein said.

"My brother came face to face with Hamas terrorists and died on the morning of 7 October together with his family," said Liebshtein. "At 06:30 that morning, we heard that terrorists had broken into the kibbutz of Kfar Aza. My brother was shot and killed outside the house under an olive tree. My brother's name was the first name published of those who were killed," Liebshtein said.

"Ofir always said that their house in Kfar Aza was 95% heaven and 5% hell. We celebrated holidays at the kibbutz every year for 25 years. He was the anchor and heart of our family," said Liebshtein.

"Jewish communities in the diaspora were always close to Ofir's heart. He dedicated himself to bridging communities in Israel with communities abroad. He was the chairperson of the global Habonim Dror movement, and was involved with leadership programmes including Kibbutz Ulpan and Hamsa," said Liebshtein.

"Although he may not be with us physically, in soul, he will continue to implement his vision of bringing people together and doing good for our country and the world," said Liebshtein.

Liebshtein and the children from the centre for integration in Sderot sang *Loh yihyeh* as the words "*Am Yisrael Chai*" (the people of Israel live) were projected onto the building behind them.

The ceremony ended with the words, "The war isn't over. Shake off the dust, rise from the ashes. Terrorism will be defeated."



Candles being lit to mark one month since the Hamas attacks on Israel

JEWISH CARE CAPE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MONDAY 4 DECEMBER 2023 | 17H00 VIA ZOOM

AGENDA

- Notice convening meeting
- Apologies
- Confirmation of previous AGMs minutes
- Adoption of Annual Reports & Audited Financials
- Election of Office bearers
- Any General Business

JCC holds a joint AGM with its member organisations:

Astra Centre • Cape Jewish Seniors • Glendale home
Highlands House • Jewish Community Services
Oranjia • Nechama

ZOOM registration details and access to Annual Reports & Audited Financials will be circulated to all members via e-mail.



The Hands That Support The Community

The Li Boiskin Jewish Social Justice Fellowship

The Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town invites applications for an annual fellowship intended to advance the Jewish community's engagement with social justice and equity.

Named in honour of **Li Boiskin** for her lifetime of commitment to bettering the Jewish community and the wider world, the fellowship is made possible by generous **support** from the **Mauerberger Foundation Fund**.

The Mauerberger Foundation Fund's support for this fellowship arises from the fundamental principle that the **Jewish community is an integral part of the wider South African society**. The fellowship is intended to encourage and **advance social cohesion**: evidence of strong collaboration with the wider community is an essential element of such work.

Projects may, inter alia, conduct research and fieldwork, identify and promote best practice, evaluate the impact of existing initiatives, explore the application of lessons from Africa and elsewhere to the South African context, offer workshops and other forms of programming, and provide thought leadership on issues central to social justice in South Africa. The fellowship is open to NGOs, postgraduate students, and academics.

To apply, submit a **proposal** that outlines the rationale of the project, outlines how it will achieve these aims, describes the outputs it will produce, and provides a budget for up to R100,000 by 22 December 2023 to **kc@uct.ac.za**.



Aliya interrupted, but not cancelled

SAUL KAMIONSKY

The war in Israel has made Osher Favel strangely more convinced to make aliya from South Africa than she was before it started.

Favel is one of the 18 out of about 20 people who were scheduled to make aliya since the start of the war but had to postpone their plans.

“I was meant to go in October, but I’m hoping to go in December. I feel like even if the war is still on, I’m tired of the unknown, of not knowing what’s going on,” says the Israel-born Favel, who has lived in Johannesburg since arriving in South Africa as a baby.

“Before the war happened, I was anxious about leaving my entire life behind in South Africa and starting afresh in Israel, where the culture is quite different to South Africa. However, waiting these past two months and seeing everything that has been

happening, especially on social media, where so many are against Israel, it sort of makes me want to go even more. I feel way more confident now about going to Israel than I did before. Since the war, with so many people being against Israel and so much antisemitism, it’s sealed the deal and makes it clear that Israel is where I need to be.”

Favel’s aunts, uncles, and cousins live in Israel. “I can’t wait to see them and be with them, *b’ezrat Hashem* [with the help of G-d]. My one aunt’s home was invaded by Hamas on 7 October but *baruch Hashem*, she wasn’t at home and was at her daughter’s house for the holidays.”

Favel also has a job awaiting her in Israel. Having worked in IT, admin, and sales in South Africa, she’s now doing freelance work because, she says, “I don’t want anything to hold me back when it’s okay to make aliya. It’s just the fear of the war that’s holding me back. I’m hoping the situation doesn’t cause me to

lose that job.”

Liat Amar Arran, the outgoing director of the Israel Centre in South Africa, says some of the 18 people have put making aliya on hold until further notice. “Some are waiting until the end of November, and some want to hear about changes on the ground in order for them to make aliya,” Amar Arran says.

Most of the 18 decided in the first week of the war to postpone an aliya. Amar Arran and her colleagues have been in regular contact with them. “Mainly we’re telling them that to make aliya in times of war isn’t easy,” she says. “People need to understand where they’re coming to, what the situation on the ground is, and make sure that they have what they need to support themselves and feel safe.”

Throughout her life, Favel has been “drawn to Israel” and the idea of going back to her birthplace. “Finally, it



Osher Favel

Jewish educators honoured for excellence

HANNA RESNICK

Rabbi Dovid Hazdan; Rabbi Menachem Mendel Popack; Hannah Ben Moshe; Isla Feldman; Darren Bass; Mazal Sacks; and Sheila Sklaar are some of the gold award winners in the inaugural Excellence Awards in Jewish Education.

More than 300 participants, supporters, graduates, nominees, and educators from around the country attended the ceremony on Sunday, 5 November, hosted by the Academy of Jewish Thought & Learning, along with the Pincus Foundation, and the South African Association for Jewish and Hebrew Professionals (SAJEP).

The ceremony celebrated graduates of advanced degrees and courses run by the academy, including Masters degrees in Jewish Education and Hebrew teaching courses.

More than 100 educators were nominated in seven categories of excellence to receive awards for their contributions to the local Jewish community, namely Excellence in Zionism and Israel Education; Experiential Jewish Education; Hebrew Teaching; Educational Leadership; Adult Education; Jewish Studies Education; and Lifetime Achievement in Jewish Education.

“At this point in time, during our crisis in Israel, who does our community turn to for inspiration, for guidance, for strength?” asked Rabbi Ramon Widmonte, the co-founder and dean of the academy, which marks its 10th anniversary. “It’s you, our educators. You give us the information, the inspiration, and the dedication to withstand the fierce storms of antisemitism, and beyond that, to stand proud.

“Someone asked me during the week, ‘What’s today for?’ It’s not about who got the most votes. It’s not about who’s most popular. It’s about two words: thank you,” Widmonte said.

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, referring to a

verse from Proverbs, said, “If you want to know about the values of an individual, then the way to do it is to see what they value, what they pay tribute to, what they praise, what they acknowledge, and what they give awards to. And then, if we apply that to a community, we must ask ourselves as a community, what do we truly value? Who do we praise? Who do we give the highest levels of acknowledgement and status to within our community?”

The chief rabbi also spoke of a parsha which described Yitzchak as a *na’ar*, meaning a young man or youth, which he said we all want to be. “A *na’ar* is curious, interested, striving to change, to grow, to see the world with fresh eyes. That produces a striving for excellence and personal growth. That’s what is being celebrated today – the people who have undertaken to advance their education, taking on further studies, finding ways of self-improvement, and looking for opportunities to grow and excel.”

Stacey Dembo, the chairperson of the academy and executive director of the South African Zionist Federation, introduced the Saltzman Award for Excellence in Zionism and Israel Education. “Our community is one of the most strongly Zionist communities in the world,” she said. “We have always placed huge importance on educating our children. And now, more than ever, education in Zionism and Israel is absolutely integral to the survival of the Jewish nation. Israel education provides a positive connection to our Jewish heritage, culture, religion, and language, as well as a sense of collective Jewish responsibility.”

The gold award for Excellence in Zionism and Israel Education was shared by Hannah Ben Moshe and Isla Feldman.

“Excellence in informal and experiential education is something that our community has been blessed with for several decades,” said Widmonte. “Programmes such as Shabbatonim and Encounter make

an indelible impact on the Jewish identity of our children.”

The gold award for Excellence in Informal/ Experiential Education was given to Darren Bass.

Craig Norwich gave a speech about his biggest regret, which is that he didn’t learn to speak Hebrew. “Hebrew isn’t just a language spoken by Jews,” he said. “It’s who we are as a people. It’s our history.” He thanked the Hebrew and Jewish Studies educators, saying, “The impact that you make is massive. It has far-reaching benefits and results that many students don’t realise at the time”. The Gold Award for Excellence in Hebrew Teaching was awarded to Mazal Sacks.

“One of the core areas which we focused on as an academy in our very first partnership with an overseas university was to create an educational leadership programme for Masters in Educational Leadership,” said Widmonte, introducing the Eric Samson Award for Excellence in Educational Leadership. The gold award for Excellence in Educational Leadership was given to Rabbi Hazdan.

“We’re incredibly privileged in our community to have amazing Jewish adult educators,” said Widmonte. “They are the people who take over the reins when our children graduate from school and [they] shepherd the next generation onwards.” The gold award for Excellence in Adult Education went to Rabbi Menachem Mendel Popack.

The gold award for Excellence in Jewish Studies Education was awarded to Sheila Sklaar.

Lastly, the gold award for Lifetime Achievement in Jewish Education was shared by the Wolf family and Rabbi Avraham and Rebbetzin Marcia Tanzer. “These are people who have dedicated their lives to our community’s education for decades,” said Widmonte. “They have made a massive impact within their schools, their communities, their organisations, their cities, and nationally. We’re truly indebted to them.”

reached the point where I put my money where my mouth is, and I got everything ready to make aliya. It seems like the next chapter in my life is to go to Israel, start a family there, and work. I’ve also got my dog, which I’m taking with me. I really love Israel. I feel connected to it and that’s basically the reason I want to go back. Even if the war carries on for a few months, I’m not going to wait for it to end. I would like to go this year.”

Amar Arran says it’s incredible that no-one has cancelled aliya due to the war. “People just want to postpone it, and this is the strength of the Jewish people. This is something that gives a lot of strength to the people of Israel, knowing that there are brothers and sisters around the globe who are still going to be making aliya and coming to build this country.”

Amar Arran says aliya is continuing around the globe. “If you’re coming to family or if you have someone waiting for you here in Israel, I think it makes things easier.”

She says some of the people who were going to make aliya have already sold their houses in South Africa and are staying with friends or family. Favel has already sold her car in South Africa.

“Some sent their belongings to Israel, some left their jobs in South Africa, or haven’t sent their kids to school for a few months,” Amar Arran says. “I told them, ‘You need to balance how much your life is hard in South Africa compared to how much your life is going to be hard here. If you sold your house, you’re sleeping on a couch at someone’s house, you have no money, you have already found a job in Israel, all your stuff is already in Israel, and if the current situation in South Africa is so hard to bear and you’re feeling like you need to go, then go. But take into consideration that it’s not a normal time of aliya.”

Favel says the Israel Centre and Telfed have been “amazing” in helping her ahead of her aliya. “With their help, I don’t feel alone. I feel like I’ve got a strong support system. If I have a question or doubt, I can speak to them.”

War raises everyone’s anxiety, Amar Arran says, “no matter if you have a home and job. Some people are taking it easier; some people are taking it harder. For some people, it’s really paralysing. We’re telling them, ‘It’s a hard time in Israel, nothing is functioning. All the effort is aimed at the war and the people fighting.”

Amar Arran wouldn’t recommend making aliya during a war. “The system is kind of broken, and we don’t know when it will be back to normal. Kids usually can just go out and play in Israel, but that’s not the situation in some places at the moment.

“Most government offices in Israel aren’t functioning like they used to,” Amar Arran says. “Schools aren’t really working, and nobody is dealing with how to integrate new kids properly. Men are away, and women are staying at home without their spouses.”



Rabbi Ramon Widmonte and Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein

SA fielding expert keeps ball rolling for Afghanistan

SAUL KAMIONSKY

As Afghanistan takes on South Africa in the ICC Cricket World Cup, one person integrally involved with the team is likely to have mixed emotions, namely Afghanistan fielding coach South African Ryan Maron.

“I haven’t been involved in an international team against South Africa before,” he says. “I’m excited about it and maybe a little bit emotional, especially during the anthems. But I’m here to do my best for Afghanistan, and to get a win for us,” Maron says.

So far, he’s witnessed the Afghani team have an incredible 2023 50-over World Cup campaign in India.

In his third World Cup with Afghanistan, the team has won four out of its eight group games to stand a chance of qualifying for the semifinals for the first time. The only time Afghanistan previously won a World Cup game was in the 2015 World Cup against Scotland in Dunedin, New Zealand.

“The players love me in the team,” says Maron, who also served as Afghanistan fielding coach at the 2015 50-over World Cup in Australia and New Zealand, and the T20 World Cup last year in Australia. “They treat me with the utmost respect. They love my energy, they love my passion, they like the way I work. I’m a team player and I want to get my hands dirty and always be hands on deck. I’m pretty well respected among players and staff.”

Maron can see the belief the players have in themselves following their victories against reigning champions England, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Netherlands at the ongoing World Cup. Maron says it was “heart wrenching to come close” to beating five-time champions Australia on Tuesday but losing by three wickets after a sensational double hundred by Glenn Maxwell.

Maron says there are no secrets behind Afghanistan’s good performance at the

World Cup so far. “The players just do the fundamentals right and well. They are working with the right methods in the right way so they can perform on the international scene against top players around the world.”

He says the team has also progressed nicely thanks to the experience of head coach, Cape Town-born Jonathan Trott, who

played for England between 2007 and 2015, winning the International Cricket Council; England and Wales Cricket Board; and Wisden Cricketer of the Year awards in 2011. “He’s using his playing experience over the years, and he was the number one player in the world at one

stage,” Maron says. “He has influenced the players in the way they train and the way they practice.”

Maron’s journey with Afghanistan started in 2015, when the side’s then-head coach, Englishman Andy Moles, roped him in as fielding coach prior to the 2015 World Cup. “Then the coaching panel changed. Inzamam-ul-Haq came in and I wasn’t involved. I came back with them in 2017 as a fielding coach. Then from there, the West Indies national team asked me to come across to them.”

In 2019, he started working with Proteas legend Jonty Rhodes, travelling to about six countries to conduct high-performance coaching before being called back by Afghanistan in August 2022. He has also had spells as head coach of the University of Cape Town and Wynberg Boys’ High School, a fielding consultant for the Dolphins franchise in South Africa, and an assistant coach for the Quetta Gladiators franchise in Pakistan.

Maron says his speciality, fielding, is an important part of the game. “Players spend most of their time fielding. Many games are lost or won with good fielding.” He also focuses on stats and “all the information during the game – where we can get better

and where we’re slacking. Obviously, I have the other coaches assist me with the drills that I want to do with the players. But I try to chip in wherever I can with positive energy and my experiences as a player playing around the world and in provincial cricket.”

He says the World Cup has been “special” in “cricket-mad” India. “Wherever we go, fans want to meet and take photos of the players. The crowds have been amazing, and support for the Afghanistan team has been excellent.”

Maron says the team is in its seventh different city since arriving in India about six weeks ago. They stay in five-star hotels and streets are closed off when they travel on their team bus. “We also fly on charter aircraft.”

Maron, whose father was a good cricketer, attended Grove Primary School and

Rondebosch Boys’ High School. In addition to playing football and rugby, Maron played cricket for Western Province at school and went on to be a player-coach in England, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

“I won several trophies with different clubs in those countries,” he says. “In 1997, I was selected for the National Cricket Academy, which had the best up-and-coming cricketers who could go on to represent South Africa. Unfortunately, I didn’t go on to represent South Africa. But I was blessed to get the opportunity to travel around the world and play provincial cricket for Western Province senior side among people like Jacques Kallis and other Proteas.”

Cricket has taken Maron to many countries, but the downside is being away from his

wife and children, the latter still at school. He has never been to Afghanistan, as the team’s headquarters and home matches are in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Maron says playing in different leagues around the world has enhanced the cricket of Afghanistan players such as Rashid Khan, who plays in the SA20 and other global leagues. “It shows them the wider world,” Maron says. “A lot of our players also live in the UAE or London. The players who aren’t in the Premier League stage do stay in Afghanistan. There are high-performance academies around Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a cricket-loving country and it’s great for the country when we get these wins. The celebrations go on throughout the night.”



Shirley Ancer – the activist for whom everyone mattered

TRIBUTE

JONATHAN ANCER



Thousands of unionists and one Jewish mommy took to the streets of central Johannesburg in 1999 in a protest march.

In fact, the Jewish mommy was also a unionist, although she belonged to a different union to the other protesters. She was a member of the Union of Jewish Women (UJW).

That Jewish mommy was our mother, Shirley Ancer, who passed away on 18 October. She was 87 years old and a powerhouse of goodness.

At the *hesped*, Rabbi Azriel Uzvolk, whose mother, Rachel, was a friend of our mother, told the story about Shirley’s march with the unionists.

Shirley was involved with the UJW’s Friendship Club lunches, which served meals to elderly members of the community. Many of the guests used the pensioners’ free bus service to get to the lunches.

In 1999, the Johannesburg Metro bus service announced that there would no longer be free rides. Shirley was incensed, and wrote a sternly worded letter to the city council. The letter, which was published in the *Sowetan*, was seen by the president of one of the

trade unions. He decided to organise a march from Johannesburg Park Station to the bus company in Newtown to protest.

Only one member of

the UJW was brave enough to attend that march – that was Shirley. The bus service backed down, and elderly people could once again get to UJW’s Friendship Club lunches.

Shirley loved to nourish people, not only with food, but with love and kindness. She was a driving force behind Kosher Mobile Meals as one of the organisation’s founding members, and by literally getting into her car and driving out to deliver food to people in need all over Johannesburg.

For Shirley, Kosher Mobile Meals wasn’t just about delivering food, it was about delivering dignity and companionship to marginalised people.

That was her philosophy – every single person matters. Every person deserves to be looked after and loved.

Shirley was born in 1936. She was the oldest of four children. She lived with her parents and her grandmother in Doornfontein in Johannesburg.

Shirley’s family were immigrants from Lithuania. Her father worked as a manager of a Solly Kramer’s store, and her mother worked in a delicatessen.

The home was filled with books and people, and was always open to family and friends.

She was involved in Habonim, and spent a year in Israel on Machon in 1958. When she returned, she started studying for a Bachelor of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). She left Wits when she ran out of funds, and completed her degree at the University of South Africa (Unisa).

While studying through Unisa, she met Bernard Ancer, whom she later married. Bernard, who qualified as an electrician, was studying law and became an advocate.

Shirley worked as a librarian, a high school English teacher, and a university lecturer. She taught at several schools, including what was then the Indian School and the Chinese School, and went on to

obtain an honours degree in English from Unisa.

In the late 1980s, she ventured into Daveyton township on a weekly basis to lecture English at Vista University campus.

She never stopped resisting the National Party, and fought quietly against apartheid under the radar, working in the Black Sash, where she forged friendships across the colour bar, and was involved in Operation Hunger and Operation Snowball, two important anti-poverty initiatives in the 1980s.

Shirley became involved in the UJW in the 1970s, leading its adult education division in the 1980s, and becoming chairperson of the Johannesburg branch in the 1990s.

In addition to being a committed and active UJW member, she also volunteered at Johannesburg General Hospital for many years and, when she was receiving treatment for cancer, she saw there was a need for a soup kitchen at the radiation department, so she set one up.

She used to take a group of Selwyn Segal residents out for lunch regularly, and arranged cakes for the children at the Johannesburg Children’s Home for their birthdays.

Shirley trained and volunteered as a counsellor for Nechama, a counselling organisation for the bereaved.

She wasn’t only a counsellor, she was a councillor. Shirley served two terms as a Johannesburg city councillor for the Democratic Alliance.

Unlike most politicians, she wasn’t attracted to power. She rolled up her sleeves and got her hands dirty. During one family meal, she received a call that the electricity of a pensioner on life support was about to be cut off. Shirley sprang into action.

She helped all sorts of people at all times of the day and night – principals, pensioners, widows, mothers with newborn babies, and even opposition party officials had her cellphone number on speed dial.

Shirley was specifically drawn to the UJW because it enabled her to work within the Jewish community and contribute to the broader South African community.

She compiled recipe books – about 10 over the years – to raise money for various causes that were close to her heart.

For her 85th birthday, she wanted to raise funds to cover 100 packs for Dignity Dreams, a non-government organisation that provides comfort and menstrual-health education for young women and girls.

She raised enough funds to buy 120 packs.

Shirley was also world famous for her eccentric soup concoctions, and would use us as her culinary guinea pigs.

Although she loved to feed us, there was a time when she forbade us to buy or eat Wilson Rowntree sweets and chocolates because of an outcry over how it treated its workers. The strike ended in 1982, but Shirley never relaxed the ban.

She instilled in us a love of reading, starting with weekly visits to Cyrildene library, and she would speed read her way through her pile of books in days. She introduced us to her loves – *Anne of Green Gables*, *The Story Girl*, *Katy of What Katy Did*, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*, and *the Bobbsey Twins*, and all the girls who went to boarding schools in the Enid Blyton books.

She adored John Mortimer’s *Rumpole of the Bailey*, and loved reading “a good murder” – it wasn’t the murder she loved; it was the bad guys receiving their comeuppance.

She was proud of us, and we’re so proud of her. To honour her memory and her legacy, we’ll live by her motto, “Everyone matters.”

• *Jonathan Ancer is an author and journalist. He writes this on behalf of his siblings: Judith, Ruth, and Charles Ancer.*

Social media battle rages alongside Israel war

>>>Continued from page 9

pro-Palestinian posts, that’s all you’ll find, she says, and the same is true if you look for pro-Israel posts, which simply reinforces people’s pre-existing narratives.

“I’ve been exposed to more antisemitism in the past four weeks than in my entire life,” says writer, radio presenter, keynote speaker, and analyst, Howard Feldman. From receiving messages about Hitler being right and being called “an evil apartheid loving baby killer” and “genocidal apologist” because he’s a Zionist, Feldman finds it hard to take such messages seriously. “I don’t mind engaging up to a point,” he says, “but not if it becomes harassment. Or if they keep sending me photos of dead babies. Those are always distressing to look at.”

In this context, his strategy has changed about publicly discussing Israel. “Whereas I didn’t want to focus on Israel and for it to become part of my brand, I realised that that’s not an option for me,” Feldman says. “I have a role to play, and that means speaking the truth, even though it will make me unpopular in a South African context.”

In a world where social media shapes perceptions about global conflicts, Feldman says it’s vital to get the message across. “Whereas we’ll never change a hater, there are neutral people who are flooded with anti-Israel messaging. Those are the ones who need to see the truth. This is more the focus.”

Silence and solidarity

Akiya Bome and Ella Trope

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