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Pandor redoubles her attack on Israel

TALI FEINBERG

Since the outcome of the South African government's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was announced, International Relations and Cooperation Minister Dr Naledi Pandor has doubled down on condemning Israel and the Jewish community, and has backed President Cyril Ramaphosa's conspiracy theory of a "fight back" from Israel and other nations.

"The obsessive zeal displayed by the minister and her department in the diplomatic war being conducted against Israel is in large part aimed at resurrecting an international-relations track record in tatters," says South African Jewish Board of Deputies National Director Wendy Kahn.

"Pandor has exploited the ongoing tragic conflict as a way of covering up the hypocrisy, double standards, and embarrassing foreign policy missteps of recent years. We continue to point out that there's one set of principles for how South Africa generally relates to conflict zones, where it tries to facilitate and support dialogue, and another when it comes to Israel, which is overtly partisan and punitive."

On 3 February, Pandor said she was "shocked" by "how much the Zionist Federation in South Africa [SAZF] is attached to Israel, and to the same thinking as Israel". She implied that the SAZF didn't care about the democratic principles of South Africa's Constitution and the historical experiences of South Africans.

Benji Shulman, the director of diplomacy and public policy at the SAZF, says, "The African National Congress [ANC] government continues to traffic in conspiracy theories to explain its support for Hamas. At the beginning of the war, it claimed that the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] had fired on a Gazan hospital, when in fact it was Palestinian Islamic Jihad. It has yet to retract this statement.

"Pandor has also defended UNRWA [the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees] instead of condemning the role it plays in furthering the conflict, its attacks on Israel, and its support of Hamas. This is in line with the way that the ANC continues to aid Iran and Hamas as part of its proxy campaign against Israel and the democratic world.

"The SAZF is the oldest Jewish community organisation in the country, far older than the ANC, and doesn't need civic lessons from a corrupt and failing movement whose senior officials and their government representatives meet with war-rapists like Hamas," says Shulman. "Unfortunately, the only people who suffer from this distorted worldview are South Africans, who stand to lose out on life-affirming technology from Israel, including more than one million who get water thanks to the Jewish state."

Regarding Ramaphosa's conspiracy theory, Pandor said, "The president was in a realistic manner alerting the ANC leadership and the alliance to be aware that there will be this kind of mischief – we have seen it elsewhere. He said it may even straddle our own national processes in the country, so we need to be alert." She said she had spoken to Police Minister Bheki Cele because she was concerned about her safety.

At the Masjidul Quds Mosque in Cape Town, campaigning on the last election registration weekend, Pandor portrayed South Africa as a saviour that had uncovered Israel as a sinister force by taking it to the ICJ. "Having failed to deflect attention from its crimes or justify its unfolding genocide, it's now naked to the world for the first time," she said. "For the first time in 75 years, Israel is held accountable by an institution and by the global community. We have now, as South Africa, broken a dangerous culture of impunity that has characterised the illegal occupation of Palestine. For the first time, we've opened up for the world to see. We, South Africa."

At that event, Pandor also said, "There's a law which prohibits South Africans from engaging in a conflict in another country. I alerted South Africans that are conducting themselves in that way that it's the intention of the justice department that action will be taken in terms of the Act that prohibits South Africans from participating in mercenary activities. The government must identify these people and take action."

This follows a statement made by the department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco) on 18 December last year, that "the South African government is gravely concerned by reports that some South African citizens and permanent residents have joined or are considering joining the Israel Defense Forces [IDF] in the war in Gaza and other occupied Palestinian territories.

"Such action can potentially contribute to the violation of international law and the commission of further international crimes, thus making them liable for prosecution in South Africa," the statement read. "In terms of the Regulation of the Foreign Military Assistance Act, 1998 [Act No. 15 of 1998], any person wishing to render foreign military assistance in Israel must first apply to the National Conventional Arms Control Committee [NCACC] which will make a recommendation to the minister of defence and military veterans that such an application be granted or refused.

"Any person joining the IDF without the necessary permission of the NCACC is breaking the law and can be prosecuted,"

Continued on page 6 >>

Olim standing with SA Jews

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

See story on page 11

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Pope Francis denounces increased attacks on Jews

In an open letter addressed to the Jewish community in Israel on 2 February, Pope Francis decried the "terrible increase in attacks against Jews around the world" in the wake of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, calling it a "piecemeal world war" that has created "divisive positions, sometimes taking the form of antisemitism and anti-Judaism".

"Together with you, we Catholics are concerned about the terrible increase in attacks against Jews around the world," Francis wrote. "We had hoped that 'never again' would be a refrain heard by the new generations, yet now we see that the path ahead requires ever closer collaboration to eradicate these phenomena."

In the United States, reports of antisemitic incidents have increased rapidly since Hamas's invasion of Israel, according to the Anti-Defamation League, with two-thirds of the incidents including "verbal, written, or contextual references to Israel or Zionism". Over the course of one weekend in December, hundreds of synagogues received bomb threats, and college campuses have become a flashpoint for federal civil-rights investigations over their handling of antisemitism.

In Europe, too, antisemitic events have been on the rise since 7 October – Holocaust memorial plaques in Italy were repeatedly vandalised between October and November; a Holocaust research centre in London was vandalised in November with the word "Gaza"; and a synagogue in Portugal was defaced with pro-Palestinian graffiti.

Francis called for prayers for the return of the approximately 100 remaining hostages, and said, "We must never lose hope for a possible peace, rejecting every form of defeatism and mistrust."

In November, Francis drew criticism from Jewish groups after he appeared to accuse both Israel and Hamas of acts of terrorism. "This is what wars do," the Pope said at his general audience in St. Peter's Square on 22 November. "But here we have gone beyond wars. This isn't war. This is terrorism."

Francis's latest comments followed meetings with the families of hostages held by Hamas and Palestinians with family in Gaza. It also followed an open letter signed by hundreds of Jewish academics and leaders calling on the Pope to use his influence to urge Catholics to advocate for the hostages and show solidarity with Jews.

"Together, Jews and Catholics, we must commit ourselves to this path of friendship, solidarity, and co-operation in seeking ways to repair a destroyed world, working together in every part of the world, and especially in the holy land, to recover the ability to see in the face of every person the image of G-d, in which we were created," he said in his Friday remarks.

Francis echoed similar sentiments as he marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day at the end of his weekly general audience on 27 January.

"The remembrance and condemnation of that horrific extermination of millions of Jews and of other faiths helps us all not to forget that the logic of hatred and violence can never be justified because it denies our very humanity," Francis said.


Pope Francis

NYPD reports surge in antisemitic incidents

The New York City Police Department (NYPD) reported 31 antisemitic hate crimes in January, as a surge in anti-Jewish incidents continued four months after Hamas's 7 October invasion of Israel and the ensuing outbreak of war.

Since the start of October, there have been 193 antisemitic incidents reported to police, nearly double the 100 incidents reported during the same four-month period last year.

Antisemitic incidents spiked immediately after 7 October, with 69 reported in October and 62 in November. The rate has declined since then, with 31 incidents reported to police in both December and January.

January's figure was far higher than the same period last year, however, when police recorded 17 antisemitic incidents. If not for the spike in Jewish incidents, the rate of hate crimes in the city would have declined slightly year over year.

Hate crimes targeting Jews accounted for 69% of the 45 total bias incidents in the city last month. There were also three crimes targeting black New Yorkers; two motivated by sexual orientation; three motivated by "religion"; one anti-Hispanic incident; one motivated by gender; and none against Muslims.

• *All briefs supplied by JTA*

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Blessings and resilience

Torah Thought

Rabbi Danny Sackstein
Sunny Road Kehilla

This remarkable journey called life is made up of peaks and valleys, triumphs, and disappointments. King David writes in Psalm 92, "It's good to thank Hashem; to relate your kindness in the morning, and your faith in the nights."

There are times when we enjoy the kindness of Hashem in the form of good health, prosperity, and *nachas*. Those times are referred to as the morning, when G-d's blessings are clearly visible. There's also night time. Those difficult periods of darkness.

As Jews, we don't believe in any old system. G-d has a perfect track record. G-d took us out of Egypt 3 336 years ago with supernatural miracles and appeared to the entire nation, three million people, at Mount Sinai. Every other religion is based on the revelation of one single person.

In addition to this watertight tradition, we see G-d every moment of our lives. Whether we focus on the breathtaking detail of every organ in the human body functioning in harmony as a magnificent single organism, or we look at the vast world we live in from the great nuclear reactor in the sky to the exquisite natural world, especially here in Africa. It's obvious to the rational mind that all of this isn't a random accident, but the deliberate design of an intelligent creator.

Just as the world isn't arbitrary or coincidental, so too everything that happens in our lives both individually and communally is tailor-made by G-d. Everything is an opportunity for the development of the soul. Most of what happens to us is out of our control. It's up to us to choose how to react to our circumstances. We could be filled with arrogance and self-aggrandisement during the good times, and bitterness and resentment during the darkness.

Sometimes the darkness is thick and debilitating. We can lose our way and become consumed with despair. Our holy tradition teaches us that our suffering is purposeful.

It's a necessary part of our journey that we don't understand. G-d said to Joab after a life of tragedy and suffering, "Where were you when the world was created?"

Our lives are a brief blip in the long timeline of the soul. We're here for five short minutes in a three-hour movie. Our souls have been to this world before. This life is an opportunity to rectify those deficiencies in our souls that need perfection. We don't have access to the divine computer. Our perspective and understanding is extremely limited. Our challenge is to accept that which we don't understand.

One of our primary goals in life is to train ourselves to thank G-d for the abundance of blessings showered upon us – "to relate your kindness in the morning" – and to develop resilience in faith in times of darkness – "and your faith in the nights".

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Gqeberha	18:15	19:51
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East London	18:15	19:40
Jerusalem	16:44	17:59
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A Jewish leap year has 13 months. It occurs seven times in a 19-year cycle so that the lunar-based Jewish year (354.37 days) remains aligned with the solar year (365.25 days). This is so that festivals retain their positions relative to the seasons.

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No hostage deal without soldiers, says Perez

NICOLA MILTZ

The head of World Mizrachi, South African-born Rabbi Doron Perez, whose son is believed held hostage in Gaza, is imploring top decisionmakers to ensure that no hostage deal takes place without the inclusion of soldiers.

His son, Daniel, 22, who grew up in Johannesburg and attended Yeshiva College before making aliya 10 years ago, is a tank commander in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). He was stationed at the Nahal Oz army base, close to Gaza, when it's believed he was taken hostage by Hamas terrorists who savagely invaded Israel on 7 October. Unbeknown to Daniel at the time, his older brother, Yonatan, 24, also a soldier, was shot and sustained moderate injuries during intense fighting nearby.

The family received heart shattering news several weeks later that Daniel, too, had been injured during the attack as blood samples were found in the vicinity of where he was last seen. The extent of his injuries isn't known.

"The knowledge that Daniel was taken hostage, that he was injured, and the lack of any sign of life or where he may be is incredibly harrowing," said Perez in a recent address to the Yeshiva Mizrachi community.

It has been 124 days of torment since the family last heard from Daniel. Perez has become a beacon of resilience and steadfast faith for countless families of hostages and those who have lost loved ones in the war. Encouraging many to hold onto hope in this time of profound doubt and uncertainty, he's now more than ever focussing his activism on efforts to release all hostages, including the soldiers.

"There cannot be any more differentiation between civilians and soldiers. Soldiers are civilians. Our sons put their bodies on the line, and did everything they could to protect," he said.

"We know Hamas wants to leave the soldiers to the end – if at all – and our job as people and as parents should ensure that in any deal going forward, soldiers need to be part of it. Because if left to the end, we don't know when that end will be," he said.

"Our biggest fear is that soldiers are seen as the extension of the state, the price of doing war."

For this reason, he and many others meet regularly with all leading decision makers. "We need to be supported in this, and ensure that the United States supports us until the last hostage has been returned. This is my focus," Perez said.

It's been four months since the Hamas terror onslaught that killed about 1 200 Israelis and took another 253 people hostage.

This week it was reported that at least 32 hostages held in Gaza, nearly a quarter of the estimated 136 remaining hostages held captive in the Hamas-run enclave, are dead. In addition to these, the IDF is assessing "unconfirmed intelligence" that at least 20 additional hostages may have also been killed, according to a *New York Times* story quoting four military officials who spoke on condition of anonymity.

This news came amid ongoing efforts by negotiating parties to secure the release of the remaining hostages and a new temporary truce in the fighting in Gaza, a war in which Israel has vowed to eliminate Hamas.

It has been a "never ending seesaw of emotions" for the families of hostages as negotiators swing back and forth. Though negotiating parties have said that they are optimistic about a deal coming to fruition, they have cautioned that there's still a way to go.

In spite of this, Perez, whose entire family is heavily involved in one way or another in war efforts, remains hopeful. "We have hope. Many do not," he told the *SA Jewish Report*.

The wedding of Galya and Yonatan Perez in November 2023 with Rabbi Doron Perez next to Yonatan

"The real hero in our family is my wife. On so many levels, there's that deep experiential intuitive connection of a mother. While I don't want to undermine what I'm going through, for all of us it's harrowing, but for a mother it's unimaginable."

One of the most difficult moments for Perez was when he received boxes of Daniel's personal belongings from the army including things like his glasses, Tefillin, and clothes.

"I haven't been able to go through it, it's been one of the hardest things for me," he said.

Daniel's siblings stumbled upon his journal among his possessions, and urged their father to peruse it, knowing it would provide comfort and unveil a new aspect of their brother.

"I was really gobsmacked," said Perez. "On the first page, he wrote about the things he thinks about before he goes to sleep, first amongst which was the privilege of being an Israeli soldier.

"He spoke about a school trip he had made to Auschwitz, where he saw the horrific price paid for not having the ability to defend ourselves, and how he now had the privilege of being a soldier and an officer in the Israeli army to look after the national home and the family."

He wrote about being the best role model he could be for the soldiers under his command; how best to lead, motivate, and inspire; and whether his soldiers were ready for war.

The writing presented a different side of Daniel, whom Perez described as a "high octane, adrenalin seeking" energetic, and sporty person who loved serving his country and community.

While the negotiations continue, Perez continues to clutch onto hope.

"I believe that we human beings are much stronger than we think we are. I know the strength is coming from Hashem, and it's coming from all the love and support. We're going through an historic stage in our redemption, with so much pain. Somehow, blood and challenge seem to be part and parcel of Jewish life and Jewish redemption. Although this is incredibly painful for our family and so many other families, the fact that we're going through this together and not alone is redeeming."

Montana Tucker puts hostages front and centre

PHILISSA CRAMER – JTA

An influencer who travelled to Israel to bear witness after Hamas's 7 October attack walked the red carpet at the Grammys on Sunday, 4 February, in a dress meant to call attention to the Israelis who remain hostages in Gaza.

And the chief executive of the Recording Academy, Harvey Mason, paid tribute to the hundreds of victims of the attack at the Nova music festival, heeding a call made last week by the chief executive of the American Jewish Committee (AJC).

"Music must be our safe space. When that's violated, it strikes at the very core of who we are," Mason said from the stage at the awards ceremony, held at the Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles.

"We felt that at the Bataclan concert hall in Paris. We felt that at the Manchester Arena in England. We felt that at the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival in Las Vegas. And, on 7 October, we felt it again, when we heard the tragic news from the Supernova Music Festival for Love, that more than 360 music fans lost their lives and another 40 were kidnapped."

Some survivors of the Nova festival, a trance festival held at a kibbutz just miles from the Gaza border that underwent hours of assault by Hamas terrorists, compared their experience to the Holocaust.

Said Mason, "That day and all the tragic days that have followed have been awful for the world to bear." Mason didn't name Israel, Gaza, or Hamas in his comments.

Social media influencer Montana Tucker's dress featured a large yellow ribbon at its centre, in a nod to the more than 100 Israelis who have been held hostage in Gaza since 7 October. Tucker, who is Jewish, visited Israel in December, one of a number of influencers to do so, and organised a flash mob there with a survivor of the Nova festival.

The hostage family movement didn't publicly make a push for displays of support at the Grammys, but AJC Chief Executive Ted Deutch did. "While our hearts continue to ache for those who were lost, we take comfort in tonight's stirring tribute," Deutch said. "Music can be a great source of healing."

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Moshal scholar among 21 fallen heroes in Gaza

TALI FEINBERG

Rafael Elias Mosheyoff, one of the 21 soldiers tragically killed in Gaza on 23 January, had the world at his feet after a disadvantaged upbringing because of South African philanthropist Martin Moshal.

He was one of more than 1 000 young people from challenging, disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds in South Africa and Israel who were given an unparalleled opportunity as Moshal scholars to turn their lives around through higher education.


Rafael Elias Mosheyoff

Mosheyoff was the perfect example one such young man who went on to achieve greatness because of the Moshal Program. After growing up in difficult circumstances, he had a rewarding job and a beloved wife and child.

But then 7 October happened, and Mosheyoff enlisted in the reserves to defend Israel and the Jewish people.

Moshal Program chief executive and programme manager, Tali Barash-Bouskila, says, "Rafael was tragically killed in the Gaza Strip at the age of 33, and with his death, one of the impressive and promising individuals who joined the Moshal Program had their life cut short.

"Throughout our shared years, we were impressed by his talent, determination, and extraordinary life path," she says. "If we were to describe Raphael in a few words, we would say that he never gave up.

"Rafael didn't give up on hope when he immigrated from Colombia to Israel in his childhood, with a single mother and two younger siblings. He didn't give up when he had to support his family financially during his teenage years; and he didn't give up on his professional future when he chose to complete high school in spite of many challenges. After high school, Rafael enlisted in the Israel Defense Forces for meaningful military service in the Givati Brigade.

"In 2016, Rafael started an academic preparatory programme with the goal of being accepted into engineering studies. He excelled in the programme, and was admitted to one of the top engineering colleges in Israel, the Braude Academic College in Karmiel. We met Rafael during his preparatory studies and realised immediately that he was an exceptional young man with a challenging life story, determined to work hard and change his and his family's life for the better.

"In the Moshal Program, students are committed to investing time and effort in their studies, just as Rafael did," she says. "His unique energy, determination, inspirational charisma, and drive for success made Rafael one of its shining stars. He dedicated himself to his studies and excelled, ultimately securing a position at the Rafael Defense Company – yes, the names are the same – upon completing his studies. Parallel to his emerging career, Rafael didn't settle for being a self-made success story, he decided to embrace one of the core values of our programme: to pay it forward and have a positive impact on others.

"Rafael therefore became a mentor to young children coming from challenging backgrounds. He supported them, shared his life story, and served as a source of inspiration and a role model.

"The Rafael Defense Company is a leading Israeli government-owned company that accepts only outstanding students after a rigorous selection process based on professional and personal interviews," says Barash-Bouskila. "Rafael succeeded in all these challenges, and was highly respected and beloved in his work.

"The values that Rafael grew up with in his home and developed on the Moshal Program were honour, responsibility, hard work, and a commitment to excellence, all of which he applied to his career. Witnessing his personal and professional development was remarkable. He not only excelled in his work, but remained an active member of the Moshal Program's community, contributing to the growth and well-being of fellow students and alumni."

Knowing that he was serving in Gaza was harrowing for all who knew him. "We're immensely proud of the dedication of our students and alumni in protecting the well-being of our citizens," says Barash-Bouskila.

"Rafael, along with hundreds of our 1 500 Moshal students and alumni, was called up for reserve duty on 7 October 2023. He set aside his personal and professional aspirations, just as he had done his entire life, for the greater good. The Moshal Program team, which kept in touch with all students and alumni on the programme, prayed for their return, and we continue to do so. Unfortunately, Rafael, who was in our thoughts and prayers, won't return."

Upon hearing that he had been killed, she says, "There's a famous Israeli song often played during memorial days titled *A Single Human Tissue*. Its lyrics go, "*Because all of us are just a living human tissue. And if one of us fades away, something from us dies along and something else stays within him.*"

"We're all a single human tissue," she says. "Losing an alumnus of the Moshal Program is like losing a child, a child we nurtured, loved, and gave everything to. Rafael was an extraordinary young man, and with his death, part of us also died."

Her words were echoed in the condolence letter that Moshal sent the family, which he shared with the *SA Jewish Report*. "I feel no words can begin to do justice to the tragic loss of Rafael. He embodied all that we wish to see in our students – diligence, commitment, hard work, and leadership. His own future was tragically cut short. However, I believe all that he achieved in the short time allocated to him was greater than so many others given more time. He may no longer be with us, but he continues to pay it forward with all that he has achieved and his ultimate sacrifice."

"Thousands came to pay their last respects and offer condolences to his grieving family," says Barash-Bouskila. "Rafael deserves to be remembered for generations to come. In collaboration with his family, we're working on the most dignified and sensitive way to commemorate him.

"The war that Israel embarked on in early October is a war of necessity," she says. "Along with the hundreds of thousands of brave reserve soldiers, Rafael went to defend the Jewish people and our homeland – the only one we have – to prevent the horrors of 7 October from happening again, not only in Israel, but anywhere in the world.

"In facing the ruthless enemy that fate has thrown upon us, our soldiers are sacrificing their lives. We mourn Rafael's death – a young and promising man with a bright future ahead of him – and we pray with all our heart for the swift return of the 136 captives still held by Hamas. *Am Yisrael Chai*!"

Mosheyoff leaves behind a young wife and a one-year-old child. "It's crucial that his wife, Hadass, who is now left to raise their child alone, doesn't bear the full economic burden alone," says Barash-Bouskila. To enable Hadass to live a dignified life, support her family, and cope with the imminent loss, Rafael's family has initiated a fundraising effort. Donations to support the family can be made at: https://giveback.co.il/project/77618

Jewish-owned businesses feeling the pinch

OPINION MICHAEL BAGRAIM

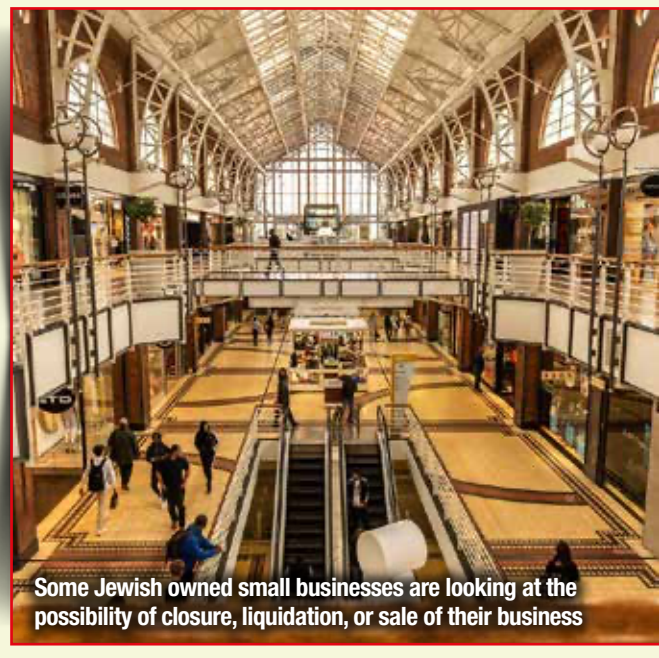
Over the past four years, I have witnessed in my labour-law practice more and more interference from political forces in the business world and in particular in its labour relations and employment.

A scourge of individuals from the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) have taken up the cudgels against employers on behalf of staff who have either been dismissed or who have not received expected increases. The EFF has tried to usurp the duties and jurisdiction of trade unions and legal representatives.

This insidious practice hasn't gone away and in spite of my reports to the department of employment and labour and to the official adjudication bodies who have condemned the practice, it continues. This was the first warning sign of negative interference in the business sector.

Subsequent to 7 October 2023, I have been presented with numerous complaints from business owners that a new type of labour practice has emerged. Ostensibly Jewish-owned businesses both large and small have been subjected to external pressure because they are either Jewish-owned or were previously Jewish-owned.

Some of these businesses, in fact, aren't Jewish-owned but were historically. This doesn't come without political encouragement. One need only look at the statement recently put out by President Cyril Ramaphosa, which was reported in *Daily Maverick* on 31 January 2024.


Some Jewish owned small businesses are looking at the possibility of closure, liquidation, or sale of their business

Ramaphosa warned of a fight-back and regime-change agenda. This type of address given at the National Executive Committee lekgotla last week is almost like a call for action against those who don't support South Africa's stance in its completely unfounded case before the International Court of Justice.

The president's words ring loud. "We're aware that there will by systematic fight-back campaigns, and I say this so that we are aware of it. There will be no doubt that these forces will do anything in their power to prevent South Africa from concluding its case on the merits of the matter."

Ramaphosa goes on to say that those "forces" will try and somehow affect the African National Congress negatively at the polls. With this sort of war talk, one can understand that antisemites might feel this is the opening for action.

I believe this has emboldened antisemites, who are now doing everything in their power to encourage trade unions and staff representatives to put pressure on so-called Jewish businesses. We've seen this play out in bigger businesses, and these stories have all been carried in previous editions of the *SA Jewish Report*.

However, the pressure on smaller businesses who are getting this type of negativity on a daily basis from their staff is becoming so negative, some of the owners are talking about closure, liquidation, or sale of the businesses.

Of the approximately two dozen businesses I've spoken to over the past few months, none openly stated their support for Israel or made any negative comments about South Africa's stance.

These entrepreneurs, some of whom have been in that business their entire lives, merely want to ply their trade in a fair and respectful manner.

Unfortunately, as can be seen in Cape Town, the majority of these business are trading in areas where the majority of their customers are of the Muslim faith. Customers have continued to purchase, and have had no hand in the negativity the businesses are getting from staff representatives. In fact, the feedback I've been getting from Muslim customers has been sympathy for the troubles that have been experienced.

I don't believe 7 October created more antisemites, it merely emboldened them to come out of the shadows. Furthermore, emboldened antisemites have been given a feeling of immunity because of our government's behaviour, especially the statements made by the president.

• *Michael Bagraim is a labour lawyer.*

Magen David tie unlocks antisemitism in Joburg Council

LEE TANKLE

"If they have a problem with Jewish religious symbols, let them say it outright," Ward 72 Councillor Daniel Schay said in the first Johannesburg council meeting this year on 31 January.

For Schay, putting on a South African-made tie with the design of the Israeli flag that he had asked his aunt to send from Israel was an obvious decision.

"The whole point of [wearing the tie] was to tell Jews around the country and around the world to be proud of who they are, to be proud Zionists, and never be ashamed of their beliefs. I put it on knowing that it was going to cause a stir. But the point is there should be no room for anyone to tell us what we can and cannot believe," Schay told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

Schay said that since 7 October 2023, Johannesburg council meetings have felt like Hamas rallies. "The Economic Freedom Fighters, African National Congress (ANC), and Al Jama-ah were dressed in full Palestinian regalia, while regularly singing 'Free, Free Palestine'."

Schay knew he was scheduled to address the council on 31 January on the development of Orange Farm, but even before he began, he was met with chants by the ANC, Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), and Al Jama-ah.

In his speech, Schay brought up the quote by Nelson Mandela, "A nation shouldn't be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones." This is what set the ANC and EFF off on a crusade against him.

Schay's fellow Democratic Alliance (DA) councillor, Belinda Kayser-Echeozonjoku, says, "[Schay] was told by one of the ANC councillors that he mustn't use Nelson Mandela's name, he must rather use Jan van Riebeeck's name.

"I felt that it was racist even to tell Schay that he shouldn't mention Nelson Mandela. Tata Madiba was a bridge builder. He brought everybody together. So, it's unacceptable to tell a councillor representing a diverse group of residents and who is also the shadow MMC [member of the mayoral committee] for development planning that deals with the city's spatial planning that he can't mention Mandela, especially when he's dealing with an issue that is actually building bridges," she says.

After that, another councillor questioned the religious symbols he was wearing, saying they were unacceptable, Kayser-Echeozonjoku says.

Schay continued his speech after the "Mandela-issue" interruption, but an EFF member stopped him, asking the speaker if the tie, which "had an emblem on it" was allowed in the chamber. The emblem was a Magen David.

Councillor Daniel Schay at the Johannesburg City Council

Kayser-Echeozonjoku immediately responded, saying, "Freedom of religion is protected by the Constitution. This is the first time that somebody's religion and expression of religion has been questioned in this chamber. This is unacceptable".

Schay told the *SA Jewish Report*, "He wanted to be right for his trouble, and so he asked, 'Are we allowed to have these emblems?' That's an implication that we shouldn't be proud of who we are as well."

Kayser-Echeozonjoku says she felt the need to address the speaker about this because "none of us will be immune if it's not addressed now. And the issue at hand, if I were to come in with a cross tomorrow, could also then be questioned at a later stage. I'm of the view that if Schay wasn't white and was wearing the Star of David, it would have elicited a different reaction.

"The comment was racist because if it were someone who wasn't white, they wouldn't have been treated with such disdain in chambers. For me, it was a matter of principle that needed to be addressed," she says.

"We know these people are antisemitic," Schay says. "They've got prejudices. They've expressed them before in council to me. It's not the first time that an incident has occurred in the council. This one just happened to be with marks on it. It's not a surprise. I'm used to it.

"But as a community, we shouldn't accept these things," Schay says. "We should be stand up [against] them. Which is why we need to publicise the amounts of hate going on in government circles."

Founding DA leader and the former leader of the Progressive Federal Party, Tony Leon says, "I was profoundly disturbed by the video clip I saw of the incident. It was naked racism, religious intolerance, attack on freedom of expression – a toxic cocktail stirred by the most hate-filled racists around in an overcrowded field here – the EFF.

"The Johannesburg City Council event also gives the lie to the fatuous interview by Justice Minister Raymond Lamola on *BBC Hardtalk* recently in which he said that there's no antisemitism in South Africa. Sure, we can argue on the merits and demerits of the Israel Defense Forces' actions in Gaza, but to claim, as the minister did, that South Africa's recent stances, it's exemplary calling out [and worse] of Israel here and before the International Court of Justice, and implicit support for Hamas and Iran hasn't poisoned the well of communal relations and inflamed sentiments towards the Jewish community is another lie."

Wendy Kahn, the national director of the South African Board of Jewish Deputies says, "Religious intolerance in a city council has no place in our country. We've always prided ourselves in upholding our diversity. Underlying this is the respect for different views and appreciation of symbols of significance for different people. Though members of the city council arrive in a vast array of dress, wearing varying scarves and other accessories, this has never presented a problem before.

"Only now, when the symbol was of a Jewish nature, was there a problem," she says. "We congratulate Daniel Schay and Belinda Kayser-Echeozonjoku, the chief whip of the DA, for standing up not only for Jewish rights, but also for the basic constitutional rights of freedom of religion and expression in our country."

Michael Bagraim, the national shadow minister for employment and labour, told the *SA Jewish Report*, "Should an individual wish to wear a Christian cross, I will respect their beliefs and their wishes. Likewise, should a Jewish person wish to wear a Magen David either on their attire or on a lapel or around their neck, that must be rightfully recognised and respected. There seems to be an accepted practice in the South African Parliament for members of the ANC to show their allegiance to Palestine by wearing a specific type of scarf. This has nothing to do with the ANC members of Parliament and their religion."

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Vote them out

It's enough of all this talk of us being unsafe here and what a dreadful future we have. Do we all honestly believe that? I don't.

South Africa has lots of problems, and I'm the first to get aggravated by potholes and extended loadshedding. Our economy is up the creek, and I'm not blind to any of this.

But it all boils down to this government needing to go.

Yes, President Cyril Ramaphosa and his merry band of African National Congress (ANC) comrades aren't our friends. They have proved this recently by making it clear they feel no allegiance to us. But the reality is that I don't believe they have allegiance to anyone in this country. They certainly don't show it. If they did, would they honestly let this country suffer the way it is?

I mean, consider all their rantings about how Palestinians live. What of South Africans?

They seem to go to great lengths at huge cost – even if they don't pay for it themselves – to make a noise about how horrific the plight of the Palestinians is, while ignoring their own people.

I'm not for one second saying Palestinians in Gaza are having it easy, they aren't. However, we have such high unemployment. We have so many people who are literally starving. In 2020, we had as many as 30.3 million people, which amounts to 55.5% of the population, living in poverty in our country. The most up to date unemployment figures are 32.9% of the population, which is almost one-third of the country.

And that's just the basis of where we're at as a country. However, the ANC government is looking north to Israel's war with the terrorist organisation that rules Gaza, and has everything to say about that. Our government is furious about the deaths of innocent civilians in another country. Well, I'm furious about the deaths of innocent civilians right here. I wish no harm on anyone, but for goodness sake, if you're a government that cares about your country and people, help your own home and people first. What's that proverb that puts it in a nutshell? People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones! The ANC government is doing just that.

So, while us Jews may feel the discomfort of them turning on us, this government turned on the rest of its people a long time ago, neglecting to focus on upliftment, wealth generation, jobs, industries, and I could go on. I guess it was too busy looking north – or east – and giving free rein to corruption.

The most important thing all of us can do as South Africans is to vote that party out and vote in a government that will truly look out for all of us. A government that will put us on a path of growth, progress, and to being a country that others admire. How wonderful it would be to have a government that put its people, economy, and future first before individual members' pockets and livelihoods!

We aren't visitors here. We're South Africans, and have as much right as anyone else to be here and thrive. We don't need to consider running away when our government does something we don't agree with. We don't need to head for the hills. We don't need to get depressed and downhearted. We need to make the change that needs to happen, come what may.

It's our country and, along with all our people, we need to make it better, not leave.

Our children go to top schools and universities. We have exceptional private medical care, and we have a good life here in our country.

And, as the chief rabbi keeps reminding us, we live in a democracy. The ANC may be the government now, but it's only in place because it was voted in. It can just as easily be voted out. In our democracy, we live with many freedoms and are actually able to live the way we want to.

So, while our Shabbos tables over the past few weeks may have been about all our woes, emigration, backstabbing governments, etcetera, perhaps we need to stop being so easy to scare.

Perhaps it's time to recognise our rights as fully fledged South Africans who want to remain here and develop and build our country. We have no reason to run. We have every reason to stand our ground and do what we need to do to make all our lives better.

As far as I'm concerned, a government that uses another country as a scapegoat for its own problems is a desperate government trying everything to hold onto power. It's a failed government trying to find a way back into the hearts and minds of people.

Now, if anyone in this country honestly believes that because the South African government took Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) it will be a great government to vote in again, they need their heads read.

Realistically, I cannot believe anyone in their right minds can overlook all the damage the ANC government has done to this country simply because it agrees with it taking Israel to the ICJ. Surely not? How does challenging another country's methods at war mean it is adept at looking after its own people?

If that was the case, then our country wouldn't be in such a bad state.

Really, anyone voting for the ANC would be voting for more poverty, unemployment, loadshedding, failing infrastructure, and so it goes on.

I believe we have enough thinking people in this country, be they black, white, coloured, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, atheist, male, female, young, and old, who recognise what we as a country need. And it's not more time under an ANC government. It's a new government that will show us what it's like to have leaders that care for their people.

So, if you're thinking your vote doesn't count, stop. Every vote counts. More than anything, South Africans abroad need to register and vote in the elections. It's vital. You can do so, and what's more, it's your right and privilege.

In the same way as people in this country died to have a vote, let's not waste our rights as South Africans, whether you're here or abroad. Register to vote, and if you believe you're registered, check that you, in fact, are. Go to: https://registertovote.elections.org.za/

Shabbat shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor

UNRWA's 'Nobel Prize for Genocide'

OPINION DR DAN DIKER

George Orwell, one of Britain's greatest gifts to Western literature, warned his readers about the deceptive use of language, particularly in the realm of politics. Political language, Orwell wrote, "Is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind."

So, it is with Norwegian Labour MP Asmund Aukrust's recent nomination of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to receive a Nobel prize "for its long-term work in providing vital support to Palestine and the region as a whole".

UNRWA's nomination, like hundreds made annually to the Nobel committee, has no operative meaning. And the Nobel committee permanently stained its noble name in 1994, when it awarded the prize to arch terrorist, Palestine Liberation Organization Chairperson Yasser Arafat, a long time African National Congress (ANC) ally. But the message in the recent UNRWA nomination does matter. It's another weapon in the deception-driven global disinformation war the Iranian regime and its terror proxies are waging primarily against Israel, the Jewish people, and the West. Psychological warfare is consequential in a world shaped by feelings over facts and in which iPhones and social networks sire instant alternative realities for billions of people.

The recent UNRWA nomination is yet another case of Orwellian "double speak". It comes as the world bears witness to incontrovertible evidence of UNRWA employees' direct role in the Hamas mass terror invasion, massacre, rape, and kidnapping of Israelis and other nationals on 7 October 2023.


Photo: UNRWA Facebook Page

UNRWA personnel transporting aid in Gaza

UNRWA's crimes were well documented. On 30 January 2024, UN Watch Executive Director Hillel Neuer testified before the United States Congress, documenting UNRWA employees' incitement of the murder of Jews and glorification of the Hamas 7/10 massacre.

Neuer said, "Just in November 2023, we sent a report to the UN on 20 teachers who celebrated the October massacre. In March, together with the organisation Impact-se, we identified 133 UNRWA teachers who promoted hate and violence on social media." Neuer summarised his congressional testimony, observing that, "the core problem with UNRWA is that the very purpose of the agency is to perpetuate the war of 1948, and to send the message to Palestinians that the war of 1948 isn't over".

Neuer isn't a lone voice. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken characterised as "highly credible" evidence provided by Israel proving UNRWA staffers participated in Hamas's 7 October terror onslaught. Even UNRWA, albeit tacitly, admitted the culpability of its employees by terminating their employment pending a hearing.

UNRWA isn't the only worthy nominee for the "Nobel Prize for Genocide". The South African government is another leading candidate for its abominable and unforgivable referral of Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on charges of genocide. This "award winning" Orwellian perversion of justice reflects what Mary Kluk, the vice-president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, characterised as "a pornographic and sycophantic romance between [South African] government ministers and Hamas". It's also become clear to many in Israel that the South African government and Hamas serve at the pleasure of the genocidal Iranian regime.

South Africa's ICJ claim didn't develop in a vacuum. Just months before the petition was submitted, the ANC teetered on the verge of bankruptcy. Almost magically, following South Africa's minister of international relations, Dr Naledi Pandor's, 23 October 2023 visit to Tehran, it was reported that the ANC ruling party's finances had "stabilised". Pandor's visit was almost immediately followed by South Africa's full-throated accusation of genocide against Israel. Soon after, the South African Parliament voted in favour of severing diplomatic ties. It was a perfectly timed political-warfare operation.

Deception, disinformation, and psychological warfare are tentacles of the Iranian "octopus" in its mission to sow global destruction. Though Iranian officials remain in the background and often unseen, their presence is constantly felt, pulling on the strings of state puppets and terror proxies. Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, Syria, the Houthis and even South Africa do Teheran's bidding, while the mullahs rub their hands in satisfaction.

Alfred Nobel must be turning in his grave.

- *Dr Dan Diker is president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.*

Pandor threatens action against SA 'mercenaries'

>>Continued from page 1

read the statement. "In addition, the South African Citizenship Act, 1995 [Act No. 88 of 1995] provides that any person who obtained South African citizenship by naturalisation in terms of that Act shall cease to be a South African citizen if he or she engages under the flag of another country in a war that the republic doesn't support or agree with.

"It's in this context that South African citizens should be made aware of the consequences of joining the IDF or any foreign armed forces involved in conflicts with a view to preventing inadvertent complicity in international crimes or violations of domestic law," concluded the statement.

As Pandor flew back and forth to The Hague and other destinations, the Democratic Alliance (DA) noted on 15 January that her department had spent more than R47 million on luxury travel since 2019.

Emma Louise Powell, a member of Parliament and the DA Shadow Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, said "a reply to a DA parliamentary question by the minister of international relations and cooperation, Naledi Pandor, has revealed that together with her staff, they have blown more than R47 million in travel, accommodation, and related costs since 2019.

"This staggering figure equates to travel and accommodation spending of close to R1 million per month over the past five years. The return on investment for the South African taxpayer on this out-of-control spending is non-existent," said Powell. "The question is why South Africans should continue to spend tens of millions of taxpayers' rands flying and accommodating Pandor and her staff in expensive hotels when the ANC's stewardship of the country's foreign policy is single-handedly focused on propping up rogue regimes."

Pandor also denied allegations that Iran had financed South Africa's legal battle against Israel, describing it as "fake news". She implied that this and the questions about UNRWA were part of the "fight-back" campaign espoused by Ramaphosa.

She also twisted Jewish history against Israel, saying, "The Genocide Convention was enacted following the Second World War, and its intention was to ensure that never again would we see the atrocities that were part of the Holocaust against the Jewish people in Europe. Those who were to be the beneficiaries of the convention are today the ones we believe are committing genocide."

The minister brushed off the fact that a few Israeli supermarkets had decided to stop buying South African grapes. "Let's look at other trade partners, let's look at East Asia for example, and use it as a platform for expanding trade," she said.

South Africa's international law inversion

OPINION

JOEL BLOCK

Photo: Screenshot

Ambassador Vusi Madonsela presenting South Africa's case at the International Court of Justice

The South African government's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has served us with a total inversion of international law. Though it's clear that Israel is aware of modern military law manuals and tactics, such knowledge was painfully nowhere to be seen in the factually incomplete and legally incorrect ICJ application document.

Prior to the judgement, I published three articles to debunk dumb bombs, hospital attacks, and starvation, which were listed as compelling circumstances for provisional measures in the genocide application.

I argued that according to the modern-day restatement of the laws of war in an air and missile context – drafted way back in 2009 – much like ballistic missiles, unguided bombs can be used.

Hospitals may also lose their protection in certain circumstances when linked to military purposes. They are no longer protected when used to conceal military items, used to shield combatants, or to commit harmful acts outside their humanitarian function. Civilians, of course, ought to be evacuated by the party subject to attack.

I further argued that the laws of war prevent bounties on live Israeli hostages and dead Israeli soldiers. Such unlawful practices unveil Gaza's violence economy, in which acts of terror are seemingly rewarded with $10 000 (R189 868) payouts and apartments. It's no wonder that by October 2023 80% of Gazans live in poverty.

The military law principle of proportionality requires that the expected incidental harm isn't excessive in relation to the anticipated military advantage. This means that collateral deaths of some civilians isn't only legally allowed, it's expected and simply not a war crime. It's against this well-established principle of law that the local media begins to run wild with anti-Israel genocide allegations.

Furthermore, radical jihad calls for residents to stay and fight, whereas the international law principle of precaution calls for civilians to be given advanced warnings to evacuate a conflict area. When civilian casualties accumulate, it's Hamas's unlawful building of military tunnel infrastructure underneath civilian areas and telling civilians to stay home which needs to be investigated. These deaths simply cannot be smeared upon the necessary operational activities of the Israel Defense Forces.

The root of all chaos is a staggeringly unlawful combination of rogue military tactics in Gaza.

Human shields and indiscriminate killing strategies are maximised to wicked extremes when hostages are taken unlawfully. It's glaringly obvious that Gaza is a radicalised society under Islamic law hiding under the cover of international-law arguments.

The desire for a martyr's death in battle seemingly permeates through all sectors of Gaza's society including childhood education. It's an inversion of morality when the application spearhead by Dr Naledi Pandor, South Africa's former education minister, adamantly supports a society where children are seemingly indoctrinated into terror tactics and Jew hatred as part of their localised developmental curriculum.

This is supposed to be democratic South Africa, a society in which academic exploration is encouraged and hate speech is disallowed. An array of local Islamic media stations have turned the word "Zionist" into some sort of inverted swear word, when it's fundamentally a 20th century social, religious, and political miracle. The Jewish people have an unbroken national, cultural, religious, and linguistic heritage spanning thousands of years, unbroken by the Holocaust and jihad.

How much more twisted can it get when a local body of Muslim professionals in the accounting, education, engineering, law, and medical fields are openly publishing about religious jihad in their membership bulletins?

I've written a letter to Clayson Monyela, the spokesperson for the department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco) and to President Cyril Ramaphosa to expose this and express my moral and professional disagreement.

I don't expect a reply. Our government's bias against Israel isn't new. In 2018, it labelled unlawful improvised weapon attacks at Israel's security fence as "peaceful protests".

It's therefore no surprise that our government wouldn't support the victims of 7 October, including severely disabled survivors who had limbs blown off by hand grenades at a music festival!

The reputational war waged against Israel in the ICJ after the Nazi Holocaust cannot be undone. We cannot go back in time and press "CTRL+Z" on a keyboard. The acclaim afforded to South Africa for "standing up to the West" needs to be discredited. The direct opposite is true, because the Nobel Prize hall once honoured me, a South African Jew.

• *Joel Block is an international law researcher originating from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He's an expert in international law as it pertains to missile defence systems like Israel's Iron Dome.*

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VENUE: The whole event is taking place at the University of Hertfordshire, 25 min from central London. Security will be a priority. All teams will stay on campus and most sports events will take place on campus. All food will be kosher and Shabbat will be observed. EMYG will also feature awesome Opening and Closing Ceremonies.

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COST:
Approx R55,000 per person, excluding flight, UK visa and playing kit. The final cost will depend on final team size and exchange rate – it could go up or down.

PAYMENT - please take note of the following important info:
- There are no bursaries for these Games. As per the Maccabi model, teams must fundraise for their own expenses and to pay for their coach/manager.
- Maccabi SA will assist with a Team SA raffle and prizes, as well as with sponsorship support.
- Once you are selected for the team and accept, you will have to pay a R5000 non-refundable deposit to Maccabi SA. The balance of the cost must be paid by May 2024.

NEXT STEPS:
- If you are keen, send us your name, age, school, sport and contact number to **emyg24@maccabi.co.za**. We will then send you the registration form.
- For team sports, we will let you know details for trials.
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Don't let haters turn us into haters

OPINION

MOSHE TARAGIN

Jewish identity delicately balances two opposing attitudes toward the non-Jewish world. We're a particularistic race, asserting an exclusive covenant with Hashem, which awards us His land of Israel. Distinctive dietary and marital customs, along with a rigid system of commandments and prohibitions, preserve our cultural insularity. The day-to-day experience of Jews is fundamentally unlike the daily routine of non-Jews. We're different, and we're chosen.

However, we weren't chosen for privilege or for luxury, but responsibility and mission. We're wardens of religious conscience, tasked with calling humanity to higher ground. To many, the phrase "chosen people" sounds bigoted and racist and, for centuries, our enemies invoked this term to accuse us of arrogance and condescension. Our haters didn't realise that our chosenness didn't entitle us but obligated us.

The Talmud considers a hypothetical scenario whereby a divine commandment applies only to a Gentile, but not a Jew. Prior to Sinai, G-d had delivered numerous commandments to a non-Jewish world, some of which weren't reissued at Sinai. Perhaps these pre-Sinai injunctions apply only to Gentiles.

The Talmud patently rejects this notion as it's inconceivable for Jews to have fewer commandments than Gentiles. As we're intended to showcase the nobility of a g-dlike life, we possess more commandments than Gentiles, not fewer. We model 613 commandments so that humanity, one day, appreciates the value of seven (Noachide laws). Given this historical assignment, it's unimaginable that Sinai reduced our level of obligation. We aren't chosen for privilege or pleasure but for greater devotion and commitment. A nation of priests, steadfastly guarding human conscience.

Ideally, Judaism blends nationalistic and universalistic experience. While our daily routines are particularistic, our mission is global. Our rituals, customs, and lifestyles are distinctive, and culturally, we're inward-looking. If we neglect our religious commitments and corrupt our moral integrity, we're no longer priestly, and our message expires. However, if we ignore our duty to inspire humanity, we betray the very reason for which we were chosen. Jews are both internalist and externalist, insular and outward.

The past few months have severely challenged our ability to merge these two cardinal values. It's not an easy time to be a Jewish universalist. On 7 October, we were brutally attacked by barbaric murderers who, astonishingly, received political support from much of the Arab world. Antisemites across the globe came out of the woodwork, supporting the rape, murder, and mutilation of Jews. We received a rude awakening that deep-seated animosity toward our people still lingers under the surface of a shiny and shimmering modern word. The monstrosity of antisemitism still lives.

More recently, our people and nation were publicly tried for genocidal crimes in a kangaroo court. It's particularly absurd and painful that Jews are now being falsely accused of the very crime which we faced only a generation ago. We've survived genocidal attacks for centuries and are being wrongly charged for the crimes which were ceaselessly perpetrated against us. History is ironic and painful, especially as it relates to our people.

While antisemitism worldwide is rife, there is still strong support for Jews and Israel in many countries

The United Nations (UN), supposedly a beacon of international co-operation, was exposed as an accomplice to murder. Ever since its inception, the UN has been hijacked by anti-Israel blocs weaponising it to concoct nonstop prejudiced resolutions against our people. We've now discovered that UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East), a UN agency intended to deliver humanitarian aid, has been, in fact, an essential cog of the Hamas murder machine. Always a chamber of hate toward Israel, the UN now has its hands stained with Jewish blood.

The past few months have provided a harsh reality check, reminding us that much of the modern world is still unwilling to accept us and our rights to Israel. In some ways, we have returned to the days of our ancestor, Avraham, who was dubbed *"ivri"* because he stood alone on one side opposing an entire pagan world which discredited his religious beliefs. Seventy-five years into our modern state, we, too, stand alone, defiantly upholding our moral cause and our historical license to our homeland.

This eruption of hatred and opposition has shocked many Jews of strong universalist orientation. Many, particularly those who reside outside of Israel, assumed that Jews had been warmly accepted into a modern and enlightened world of racial and religious equality. They assumed that our historical Jewish mission had now transformed into a shared universal agenda of promoting equality, education, and peace. The Jewish mission had now been conflated with a broader modern movement in which Jew and Gentile were equal partners. We could trust our new Gentile partners in this great mission of *tikkun ha'olam* (repairing the world) to protect Jews against hate and violence.

The hatred and antagonism of the past few months has revealed that Jews aren't always seen as equal partners crusading for common values. So many of the communities whose legitimate rights Jews valiantly defended, such as African Americans and LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning or queer), have viciously turned their backs on us while supporting our murderous enemies. Many "universalist" Jews have been shocked by the past few months. Anytime a conception crumbles an identity crisis follows.

More particularistic Jews haven't suffered the same crisis of identity since they never envisioned the same degree of partnership with the non-Jewish world. Though particularistic Jews feel comfortable participating in universalist agendas alongside non-Jews, this partnership with doesn't define their identity. Comfortable living among Gentiles, these Jews never viewed the *tikkun ha'olam* partnership with Gentles as a core value. For them, 7 October and the outburst of antisemitism didn't shatter their preconceived notions of society.

Though the war has severely challenged our

Continued on page 13>>

Fight, flight, pray: Jewish options in a crisis

OPINION

RABBI ARI SHISHLER

Jews and crises go back longer than gefilte fish and chrain. One of our earliest was the Israelites versus the sea in 2448 (Jewish calendar). With the Egyptian army on their backs and the tide coming in, they did what Jews do best – jostled about how to respond. In the Torah's account, they split into four factions.

One saw no way out, and recommended surrender and return to Egypt. Determined to go down fighting, a second group grabbed their swords and planned a desperate attack on the Egyptians. A third crowd, with a collective, "Oy vey!" advocated drowning themselves. The more pious turned their eyes heavenward, and started to pray.

As locals face – yet another – crisis, we find four types of South African Jews. First, we have the nostalgic South African Jew. He remembers when kids rode bikes on Jozi's streets, and you could catch a public bus to Hillbrow. Like the Israelites who knew they could never return to slavery, he knows there's no way back to the old days. But, like the Israelite who romanticised the free fish and squash the Egyptians served, he dreams of replicating the old days elsewhere. His family plans to relocate to Sydney. Or Boca.

Uncle Barry is the epitome of the second type of Jewish South African. At least once a week, he asks you to sign a "Change SA" petition. He writes to *The Star* about Eskom and to his local ward councillor about broken street lights. He steers left to block taxi drivers who drive in the emergency lane. He's furious with the leadership, but won't give up on the Rainbow Nation. Like the ancient Jews who wished to take up arms against Egypt, he'll fight this government until it falls. Ninety percent of petitions achieve nothing, and taxi drivers don't care for our roadside lectures. Still, he remains committed to galvanising Glenhazel for change.

Then there is Mrs Goldzweig and company. They know it's over. South Africa died three decades ago, and we're stuck here. Mrs G will remind you that we're in first class on the Titanic, and loadshedding is only the tip of the iceberg. She sends you every antisemitic soundbite from 702, and every video clip of political corruption and collapsing infrastructure. Her followers admit that, at 19-to-1 to the dollar, their chance to emigrate has sailed. Willing friends and relatives abroad feed their fears with sympathetic messages: "Are you still okay there?" and exclamations of "Shame!" Eskom has turned off the light at the end of the tunnel, and this group is drowning in darkness.

We also have a small contingent of those who pray constantly for a better tomorrow. You recognise them by their invitation to join yet another tehillim WhatsApp group. They realise that Cyril (Ramaphosa) isn't the Messiah of Mzansi, and only G-d can save us now. As the Jews sandwiched between the sea and the pharaonic cavalry, they have come to terms with the fact that we can only daven. Hard.

At the sea, G-d rejected all four approaches. Dreaming of greener grass elsewhere robs us of the now. Investing in battles we cannot win drains us. Living in despair sucks out our souls, and prayer without action is futile. Instead, Hashem told Moses to instruct the Jews to march straight into the swirling sea. As the nation waded neck-high into the waves, they discovered a fifth option: move forward, and make miracles.

> **SOUTH AFRICA HAS A LESSER-SPOTTED FIFTH GENUS OF JEWS WHO LIVE THIS WAY. THEY ACKNOWLEDGE THE OVERWHELMING CHALLENGES, AND PUSH AHEAD ANYWAY.**

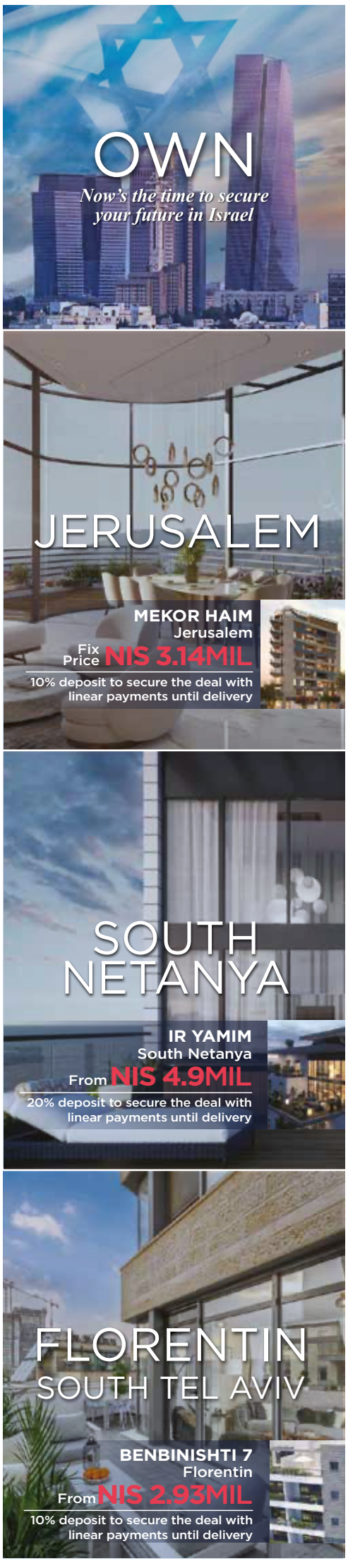
South Africa has a lesser-spotted fifth genus of Jews who live this way. They acknowledge the overwhelming challenges, and push ahead anyway. None of us knows what lies beyond those towering waves of our insecurity. Those who persevere through the swells discover unexpected blessings. When you march on, the perceived obstacles give way. As kids, we grew up with regular earth tremors and political quakes. We remember feeling relieved as those tremors subsided, knowing another would one day catch us unawares, unsettle us, and roll into the distance.

South African Jews have always lived in fear of the Big One. Moshe would advise us to become the Great Ones. He would urge us to face our fears, and focus on building a strong Jewish South Africa, which would benefit the country.

A 20th century Moses, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, told our community just that. He repeatedly stated that moshiach was en route, and that life in South Africa would be good until he comes. Which other Jewish community can boast similar reassurance from an exceptional spiritual leader?

Our ancestors had no idea that the sea would part. They knew only that the prophet had told them to move forward. They must have been terrified to enter the sea. When they did, their miracle happened. Please G-d, we can do the same, and bring this country's blessings to light.

• *Rabbi Ari Shishler is the rabbi at Chabad of Strathavon.*



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SA regime change coming – but not from outside

STEVEN GRUZD

Last week, two senior African National Congress (ANC) leaders declared that South Africa might be punished for its outspoken foreign policy positions. Facing blowback after taking Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on genocide charges, this prompted both President Cyril Ramaphosa and ANC Secretary General Fikile Mbalula to claim that outside powers were seeking "regime change" in the 2024 elections. Was this simply desperate electioneering, an undermining of democracy, or thinly veiled antisemitism, tapping into the ancient trope that Jews supposedly control the world?

Said Ramaphosa, "We're aware that there will be systematic fightback campaigns. There will be no doubt that these forces will do anything in their power to prevent South Africa from concluding its case [at the ICJ] on the merits of the matter … The fightback may focus on domestic politics and our electoral outcomes in order to pursue a regime-change agenda."


President Cyril Ramaphosa

Photo: MyANC Facebook Page

Mbalula parroted this warning a few days later, saying, "[We have] the proliferation of political parties in our country sponsored by certain interests out of the country, including with the interest of driving regime change … Those who are on the opposite side have undertaken steps, including using their powers economically and otherwise, to effect regime change."

Professor Emeritus Milton Shain from the University of Cape Town said, "There are two ways of understanding the ANC's explicit claim that South Africa [read the ANC] could soon be facing enemies who want regime change. The first is an old political ploy. Identify a hostile enemy, and corral your supporters into the laager against the putative challenge.

"BJ Vorster did it against Jimmy Carter in a general election decades ago. We could be seeing a rerun. The other way to understand the 'regime-change' warning is fear on the part of the ANC that awkward news will soon be breaking in which it will be shown that the ANC is close to Iran and Hamas, and has received secret funding from them to do their bidding at The Hague [at the ICJ]. Of late, there have been whispers in that direction. Either way, I don't see this as antisemitism other than that Israel and the West are easy targets and the ANC has a longstanding hatred of Zionism."

Disagreeing somewhat with Shain, Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation said, "One of the ANC's objectives with the ICJ affair, besides delegitimising Israel's right to self-defence and protecting Hamas, was to deflect attention from the ANC's significant domestic failures. With poor polling projections, Ramaphosa and others in the ANC have resorted to classic antisemitic propaganda. They claim that the Jewish state – and by implicit association Jews who support it – is working towards 'regime change' because the ANC's actions at the ICJ have created 'powerful enemies'." Polovin claims the ANC narrative is a continuation of antisemitic smears about alleged Jewish power from the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* through to modern conspiracy theories about clandestine Zionist financial control of the world. "The ANC's anti-democratic and antisemitic tactics should be widely condemned," he said.

Professor Karen Milner, the national chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, said, "This is absolutely conspiratorial and patently absurd. Statements like this are threats to our democracy, whoever they may be directed at."

Dr Greg Mills, who heads the Brenthurst Foundation, a Johannesburg-based think tank, said, "It's not unusual for foreign affairs to be used as a distraction for domestic policy. Karl Marx wrote of Louis Napoleon in the Crimean War that the emperor 'has no alternative left but revolution at home or war abroad'. Or as the Russian minister of the interior said after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, 'We need a little, victorious war to stem [the tide of] revolution.' Success might have helped in these adventures, but instead their failure portended even greater breakdown.

"South Africa is clearly using the ICJ to shine its radical credentials ahead of the election," Mills said. "Pointing a finger now at outside powers trying to remove the ANC is both part of that well-rehearsed victimhood and also a way of explaining why the ANC might do badly, or even a precursor to explaining why it has declared the election unfree and unfair. That might be coming next.

"As for the specific allegations, one has to assess the capability as well as the probability of this intervention by outsiders. While Israeli cyber experts have sometimes been accused of helping African authoritarians stay in power, this has never extended to the Israeli state. Certainly, the country possesses a powerful technology sector, but does it have the intent to do so? It's interesting that South Africa has never mentioned the role of outside powers when the ANC's authoritarian allies have gerrymandered elections to stay in power elsewhere. But it suits it now."

Dr Frans Cronje of the Social Research Foundation said, "There's regime change coming to South Africa, but it's not driven by the Americans, who don't look forward to the instability that may follow the ANC's defeat, or by the Israeli government which, if anything, will simply cut the country off if diplomatic relations fail to improve. Regime change will instead be driven by South Africans themselves – mostly black and poor and mostly former ANC supporters who are dismayed at the depravity with which their party has behaved in government and how that party has betrayed them. [Recent polls] indicate that the ANC may lose its national majority in a few months' time, and that it will certainly lose the Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal provinces by landslides. By the end of this decade, given current trends, the ANC's support may slip to well below 30% of which most will be concentrated in the rural north.

"What you're witnessing therefore is the desperation of [Ramaphosa] coming to terms with the realisation he has failed and it's now over for him and his party."

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Academic peddles prejudice in M&G

TALI FEINBERG

"Zionists have no moral claim to Palestine – certainly no more than the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] has to India, Afrikaner nationalists had to apartheid South Africa, Nazis had to the Third Reich, or the AfD [Alternative for Germany] has to a white supremacist Germany," wrote Professor Adam Haupt in an opinion piece published on the *Mail & Guardian* (M&G) website on 1 February 2024.

Haupt, a professor of media studies and the director of the Centre for Film and Media Studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT), provided a distorted view of history in his piece titled *Everybody Wants White Privilege*, saying that Zionism was created because "Zionists wanted to partake in systems that created racial hierarchies and white privilege. They, too, wanted to be settler-colonisers."

Haupt's comments come amidst a climate of rising antisemitism locally and internationally, and local media allowing untruths about Zionism and Judaism to flourish.

Haupt quoted an opinion piece on *Mondoweiss* by Muhannad Ayyash which says that Zionism took its lead from Nazism. "The problem with the answer of Zionism, is that instead of challenging the spurious and violent racialisation of Europeans into 'Semites' and 'Aryans', Zionism proposed an answer whereby they would join the project of colonial modernity."

Mondoweiss is the same website that published an OpEd stating, "Stories of atrocity on October 7 have been used to justify the ongoing assault on Gaza. But several of these high-profile claims have been found to be based on unreliable witnesses or even fabricated entirely." The article then goes on to blame the Israeli military widely for the deaths of Israelis that day.

"Intra-Jewish racism became a feature of life in Israel," continues Haupt in his *M&G* OpEd. "It's no wonder that the settler state of Israel found a friend in the apartheid state during the era of National Party rule in South Africa. Both states employed religious texts to create ethno-nationalist founding myths to justify their systems of racialised oppression and dispossession."

He then tied this to Jews in South Africa, saying, "We had Jewish South Africans both oppose and support the system of apartheid as the National Party tightened its grip in South Africa. Some saw apartheid for the unjust racist system that it was and opposed it, while those with Zionist sympathies saw the opportunity of supporting and benefitting from systemic racism. They saw a way to access white privilege and, therefore, supported the apartheid state."

He said he was referring to Steven Friedman's book *Good Jew, Bad Jew: Racism, Anti-Semitism and the assault on meaning* for this assessment.

He tied Zionism to "ethno-nationalism, bereft of morality" and wrote that "it's time for us to call time on systems of racialised privilege and oppression".

According to the widely accepted International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, it's antisemitic to make "mendacious, dehumanising, demonising, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective". Furthermore, antisemitism is "denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, for example, by claiming that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavour; and drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis."

"October 7 and reactions to Israel's military response have brought an undercurrent of antisemitism to the surface in many countries," says HonestReporting Editorial Director Simon Plosker. "South Africa's spurious International Court of Justice case has inflamed sentiments even further to the extent that the *M&G* evidently has no problem publishing Adam Haupt's vicious screed.

"If Haupt were to visit Israel, he'd see that more than half of the Jewish population traces their roots to the Middle East and couldn't possibly benefit from white privilege," he says. "Portraying Jews and Zionists as 'white supremacists' is simply nonsense. Just ask genuine white supremacists what they think about Jews, and it will become obvious why Haupt is being completely disingenuous.

"Haupt's implication that Zionism took its lead from Nazism, and comparisons between the two ideologies are really plumbing the depths," says Plosker. "As formulated in the IHRA definition, this clearly amounts to antisemitism, and should have no place in a mainstream media outlet.

"The false insinuation that South African Zionists benefitted from apartheid then and support apartheid now is dangerous and inflammatory," he says. "Haupt's piece, dressed up in pseudo-academic language, is simply a nasty attempt to revive the 'Zionism equals racism' charge. Shame on the *M&G* for publishing it."

Emeritus professor of philosophy at UCT, David Benatar, says, "Haupt's recent article is the kind of ignorant and ideological eructation to which he is prone. To consider just one example, he sets up the tendentious and false dichotomy between those Jews who 'saw apartheid for the unjust racist system that it was and opposed it' and 'those with Zionist sympathies' who 'saw the opportunity of supporting and benefiting from systemic racism'.

"In fact, most South African Jews were both Zionists and opposed to apartheid," says Benatar. "This applied to the rank and file who voted for the opposition, but also to leading anti-apartheid figures such as Helen Suzman, Benjamin Pogrund, and Isie Maisels. It wouldn't be worth paying attention to Haupt's piece were it not for the fact that his thinking is so typical of the intellectual level now dominating UCT discussion about Israel and Zionism."

South African Jewish Board of Deputies National Chairperson Professor Karen Milner describes Haupt's OpEd as "simply a diatribe that segues from a discussion of white privilege to an attack on Israel as an 'apartheid settler colonialist' state with no evidence other than vitriolic rhetoric. The arguments are designed to foment hate, based on an ignorant understanding of Zionism, South African history, and the history of the Jewish state. The assertion that opposition to apartheid amongst Jews was dependent on one's status as a 'Zionist' is just silly historical revisionism.

"The piece is an illustrative example of how doctrinaire anti-Zionism has become a *de facto* license to distort, manipulate, and in general rubbish Jewish history to position it within a predetermined ideological framework," says Milner. "In this worldview, facts are cherry picked and massaged to fit the theory. In this case, the writer casually disregards the history, heritage, religious traditions, culture, and identity of an entire people."

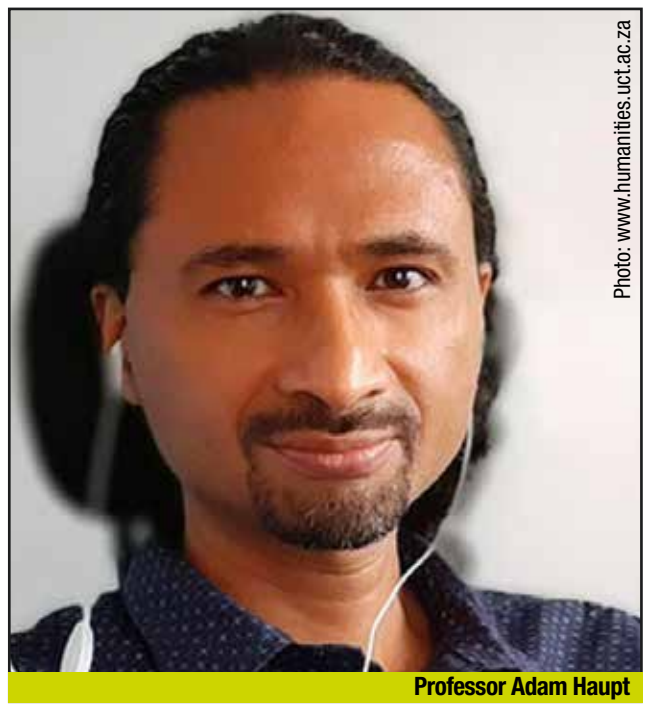
Photo: www.humanities.uct.ac.za

Professor Adam Haupt

Benji Shulman, the director of diplomacy and public policy at the South African Zionist Federation, says, "Since the start of the war, we've seen a proliferation of malicious comparisons in the press between Israel's actions to those of the Nazis. Another example is Zapiro's recent cartoon, in which he perniciously accuses Netanyahu of carrying out a 'final solution' against the Palestinians.

"These comparisons fall directly into the IHRA's working definition of antisemitism. Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, who are indigenous to the land of Israel, and any attempts to delegitimise the rights of Jews to self-determination and self-defence ought to be questioned and challenged."

The *SA Jewish Report* reached out to the *M&G* about the piece. Acting editor-in-chief Luke Feltham responded: "The article appeared in our Thought Leader section, meaning it was an opinion piece and was submitted by an external contributor. I cannot speak on the author's behalf or to their intentions.

"We employ a thorough vetting process to ensure that all Thought Leader pieces deliver fair, accurate, and critical argument," he says. "Our mission is to offer our readers a multiplicity of views from a variety of social and professional backgrounds. We welcome responses to articles that have appeared on our platforms."

The *SA Jewish Report* also reached out to Haupt, but had not received a response at the time of going to press.

Unsettled but not unsafe – Israelis in SA

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Living in a country that has gone out of its way to oppose their birthplace has left many Israelis in South Africa uneasy. Yet though they may question their future here, those we spoke to still feel at home in South Africa, especially within the Jewish community.

"I don't mind that the government is talking in the Palestinians' favour, but I'm angry that they're siding with Hamas at The Hague and calling what we do 'apartheid' or 'genocide'," says Dovid Eyal*. "It makes me want to explain, and become more involved but maybe it's better that I don't as I don't think it will make a difference."

Eyal and his family have lived in South Africa since 2020, when he was promoted to a position at his company's head office. Prior to that, they were based in Zambia for three and a half years.

"Though we're not religious, we decided from the get-go to take our kids to a Jewish school," he says. "The majority of our friends here are from the close Israeli and Jewish community. We feel at home here, especially on Fridays when you go to KosherWorld or the Sandringham Strip and it's almost like being in Tel Aviv."

Yet after 7 October, things became less rosy. "I lost some good friends in the attacks, so it was personal to me," Eyal says. "I was also in military service for 14 years before I joined the corporate world." In the days and weeks following the massacre, he says he felt embraced by friends, colleagues, and the community.

"But then, Sandton started to fill up with people with Palestinian flags," he recalls. "I knew about the connections that Hamas and the Palestinians had in South Africa, but when Hamas publicly thanked the African National Congress (ANC) and South Africa for their support just days after the attacks, I needed to take a breath to calm myself down," he says.

"Yet, I don't feel threatened. Even when a policeman stops you, looks at your license, and says, 'You're Israeli? What about the Palestinians?' It's not threatening." However, Eyal says he and his wife faced clear anti-Israel sentiment when they tried to sign their kids up for horse-riding lessons. "The lady in charge asked where we were from. When I said Israel, she just said, 'Oh.' I asked if something was wrong and she said no, but afterwards she didn't answer our calls."

Eyal admits the fact that his taxes are going to a government that opposes his nationality annoys him, and he says he's thinking about his future here. "I don't know if I'll take action, but the fact that I don't have an embassy here; that government officials aren't talking to each other; that they closed ELAL, even though it was for business reasons; knowing that it's not yet the end of story at the ICJ [International Court of Justice]; and that Israel may respond in some way to South Africa, makes me a bit edgy." Yet the strength of the community and the country's commercial and private sector remain positive, he says.

Having moved from Israel with her parents at the age of 11, Shirley Raz* has spent most of her life living in South Africa. "My mom and my brother moved back to Israel a few years ago, and I decided to stay here to finish my studies. Then I met my husband which delayed my departure."

She loves the Jewish community, and says the way its members rely on one another is amazing. "You don't get these things in Israel, maybe in the kibbutzim and moshavim, but in the city you certainly don't."

Since having kids here, Raz says South Africa has increasingly felt like home. Yet, though she hasn't been directly affected by the South African government's actions since 7 October, they have unsettled her. " I'm not a South African citizen, so with no Israeli embassy here I don't know where to turn should I need anything. It's concerning," she says.

With most of her family in Israel, Raz has always wanted to go back to the country, but the move hasn't been imminent until now. "I recently told my husband that I don't know how much longer I can be here, especially if things don't change quickly. It's not necessarily just an Israeli thing, a lot of Jewish people are feeling this. When you have kids, you start thinking more about where you are and what you're doing here."

Having a brother who has served in the army also makes it upsetting to hear words like 'murderers' being used to refer to soldiers, she says, especially when you know that's how our government thinks. But Raz says she doesn't feel like a victim or like she doesn't belong.

Having joined a friend to travel through South Africa in 1974 after completing his army service in Israel, Elan Avinir, now almost 70, says he's always had a fascination with Africa. "My friend left a few months later, but I met my first wife and stayed. I felt at home here. There was a big Israeli community in Johannesburg and I had many friends."

He says the ANC's attitude towards Israel doesn't affect the general sentiment of South Africans. "Lots of them tell me about their support of Israel, and I think it's more a question of birds of a feather with the ANC, which is trying to stay relevant as it loses support. I haven't experienced any anti-Israeli sentiment in my everyday life, and I don't feel vulnerable."

That being said, Avinir says three of his five children have left South Africa to live in Israel and England, and "the others probably will leave because of a failed-state situation". Considering his age, Avinir says he's likely to stay unless things become unbearable. "As a pensioner, I don't have many choices. I still love the country, and hope that more capable people will govern it in the future."

**Not their real name.*

SA *olim* stage protest against ANC government

ROLENE MARKS

"Justice is with us," former Knesset member Ruth Wasserman Lande told South African *olim* who gathered in Ra'anana on Friday, 2 February, to protest against the African National Congress (ANC) government's accusations that Israel was committing genocide against the Palestinians.

In the wake of the 7 October massacre and war against Hamas, the ANC and its supporters have grown increasingly more hostile towards the Jewish state, culminating in the court case at the International Court of Justice.


Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

South African *olim* at the protest

South Africans in Israel wanted to voice their anger at the ANC, but also stand in solidarity with Jews in South Africa experiencing a rise in antisemitism.

The master of ceremonies, Truth be Told's Dave Kaplan, made a point of saying, "The demonstration isn't against South Africa or its people, but against its disgraceful government. I'm proud to stand here as an Israeli, but I'm ashamed of the government of my homeland for stooping so low. It's a danger to Judaism."

In spite of the inclement weather, the protest attracted between 150 to 200 people outside Yad Labanim in Ra'anana. The display of metal hearts, each bearing the name and face of a hostage held in Gaza by Hamas terrorists, was an aching reminder that though we could protest freely, 136 men, women, and children are still in captivity. At the time of writing, it was confirmed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) that 32 hostages had been killed and their families had been notified.

> I'M PROUD TO STAND HERE AS AN ISRAELI, BUT I'M ASHAMED OF THE GOVERNMENT OF MY HOMELAND FOR STOOPING SO LOW. IT'S A DANGER TO JUDAISM.

Wandering among the flag-bearing crowd, many expressed anger at the ANC, but also great concern about the growing hostility of the ANC and its supporters, and how it would affect the Jewish community. "My elderly parents are there, they cannot afford to make aliya, and I'm really worried," said one flag-bearing protester who preferred not to reveal her name. Christian allies also showed solidarity at the gathering.

The outrage at the protest was specifically targeted at allegations of genocide. Many in the crowd have children or grandchildren serving in the IDF. Accusations of genocide are very personal to Israelis, who know their army follows the strictest code of conduct, and are still reeling from the "Black Sabbath".

For South Africans in Israel, the feeling of being betrayed by the country they were raised in was palpable. "My father was born in South Africa, he served his country, and he would be outraged at what has happened," said Harris Green of Truth be Told. "It's a betrayal of the Jewish community who fought to end apartheid and contributed so much to South Africa."

Other speakers included Telfed chairperson Maish Isaacson; South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) spokesperson, Rolene Marks (the writer); Simon Wiesenthal Center Chief Nazi Hunter Dr Efraim Zuroff; bereaved father Clive Chitiz; and a musical tribute to Israel's fallen soldiers by Richard Shavei Tzion and his daughter, Tanya Yuspov.

Wasserman Lande, who was raised in Cape Town and graduated from Herzlia High School before making aliya, spoke about her experience of speaking to South African media during these past few months and how it failed to broadcast an interview with her that explained the Israeli experience. Addressing the ANC's motivation for hostility against Israel, she said, "Justice is with us, the ruling party of South Africa has sold its soul to Iran."

Clive Chitiz, whose son, Yaron, fell in battle in Gaza, reading the last interaction between them, spoke about how his son had assisted civilians in Gaza, and how throughout his 82 days of service, not a single bullet had been fired. Accusing Israel of the crime of crimes, genocide, is an appalling insult to the IDF soldiers who take every precaution to save civilian lives, he said.

Zuroff compared the ANC's actions to the infamous United Nations declaration in 1975 stating that Zionism is racism. Marks challenged the crowd not to be silent, saying, "We weren't silent during apartheid, and won't be silent while the ANC acts as the legal arm of Hamas."

Messages from Zev Krengel on behalf of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and Rowan Polovin of the SAZF were read out to a crowd that appreciated the sentiment of solidarity. Polovin encouraged those eligible to vote in the upcoming elections to do so.

Jews of Lithuanian or Polish heritage eligible for EU citizenship

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I will be in Johannesburg 8, 9 and 15 February and in Cape Town 10 to 14 February.

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Top spy Sylvia Raphael honoured with street naming

LEE TANKLE

"One day, when true peace comes, they'll write books about her, name streets after her, and make movies about her life. If Israelis knew what Sylvia actually did, they would go every week to her grave to lay wreaths that would one day reach heaven," wrote Eitan Haber, the former chief advisor to Yitzhak Rabin, about the late South African-born Mossad agent Sylvia Raphael in *Yedioth Ahronoth* on her death in 2005.

On 22 January 2024, nearly 20 years later, those who knew Raphael and a number of South African *olim* in Israel gathered in the city of Rosh Ha'ayin to honour Raphael by unveiling a lane next to a river donning her name.

Said the mayor of Rosh Ha'ayin, Shalom Ben Moshe, "I was approached as mayor to consider naming 30 streets throughout Rosh Ha'ayin after people who contributed to the security and enrichment of the state of Israel – not familiar personalities or renowned generals or well-known fighters but ordinary people who performed extraordinary feats. Sylvia Raphael from South Africa was just one such person, working in the shadows as a field agent in the 1960s and early 1970s.

"She displayed incredible heroism in providing vital information for Israel in its fight for survival. This is how we value her contribution. People walking along this picturesque riverside lane named after her can know they are doing so in safety because of the service she performed."

Filmmaker Saxon Logan, who produced *Sylvia: Tracing Blood,* the documentary of Raphael's life, told the *SA Jewish Report*, "She's always been recognised by the intelligence community as being one of the best – if not the best – operatives that they ever had, but they've been secretive and protective of her legacy. It's now becoming more and more public, and more people are becoming aware of who this extraordinary woman was."

Sylvia Raphael Lane in Rosh Ha'ayin

Sylvia Raphael

Sylvia Raphael was born in 1937, and raised in Graaff-Reinet in a Dutch Reformed household. With a Jewish father, Zionism was a mainstay in her belief system.

In adulthood, Raphael went to Israel and spent time working on a kibbutz. While there, she was recruited by Unit 188 of Israeli intelligence – otherwise known as the Mossad – one night in Tel Aviv. Raphael piqued the interest of the Mossad as she wasn't Jewish, but could speak Hebrew, French, and Arabic, and was forthright about Israel's right to exist.

She was sent to Vancouver, Canada, where she would train to become photographer Patricia Roxborough, and then on to Paris, where she would keep a close eye on the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Raphael was known to have operated in Cairo, Mogadishu (in Somalia), Asmara (in Eritrea), Djibouti, Beirut, Amman, and Damascus. She's said to have replaced Eli Cohen in Damascus, who pierced the top echelons of the Syrian establishment and was publicly hanged for it in 1965. "Sylvia had to fool the best, and she did," said Logan.

Raphael babysat the current King of Jordan, King Abdullah II, at the time when the PLO was trying to take over the country. Fifty thousand Palestinians were killed by Jordanian forces in September 1970, and the PLO was forced to flee to Lebanon. Raphael met Arafat, and infiltrated the PLO.

After the Munich Massacre in 1972, where 11 Israeli athletes were taken hostage and murdered by the Palestinian terror group Black September, Prime Minister Golda Meir approved Operation Wrath of G-d to assassinate the perpetrators.

Raphael is thought to be responsible for the bombing that would kill the head of the PLO in France, Mahmoud Hamshari.

In 1973 in Lillehammer, Norway, Raphael was involved in a plot to assassinate Ali Hassan Salameh, the operations chief of Black September in Europe and considered to be the mastermind of the Munich Massacre. However, in a case of mistaken identity, Raphael and two other operatives fired 14 shots and killed Ahmed Bouchikhi, the brother of Chico Bouchikhi of the *Gipsy Kings*, next to his pregnant wife.

Raphael and the two other operatives were caught and arrested by Norwegian intelligence. On appeal, Raphael got a light sentence of five and a half years and served only 18 months. She quipped, "I went from 007 to 005 and a half." She was allowed to go shopping, and spent much time with the female warden in her office. Raphael later survived at least three assassination attempts by the PLO.

Raphael would marry her lawyer, Annæus Schjødt Jr., after her release in 1976, and moved to Pretoria. It was at that time that Raphael would connect with her nephew, the late Derek Watts of Carte Blanche fame, "She was warm and companionable, and had so many stories to tell," he said.

Raphael passed away from leukaemia in 2005, and was cremated in South Africa. Her ashes were sent to her kibbutz, Ramat Hakovesh, north of Kfar Saba, where she is buried with the inscription, "I am buried in the soil of my soul".

"She did what she did in reaction to how Jews were treated in the 1930s and 1940s," said Logan. "She was horrified, and made a private pact to protect the Jewish people and their homeland."

In addition to the lane honouring Raphael's legacy, Raphael was the subject of a book, *Sylvia Rafael: The Life and Death of a Mossad Spy*, the internationally-acclaimed documentary described above, and a square honouring her legacy in the town of Migdal on the shores of the Kinneret.

"My film can't even begin to portray what she did because so much is secret and even today, she's a secret because other intelligence services could potentially extrapolate from what she did from various operatives working today," said Logan, "So, they must have much under wraps, but, gradually, the wrapping is coming off. And one day, as is said, more than just a road and a square will be named after Sylvia."

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SAJBD
South African Jewish Board of Deputies

Chief rabbi praises SA letters to soldiers

JESSICA CONNÉ

Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein says the response by South African Jewish school students to his request to write letters to Israeli soldiers has been amazing and heartwarming.

"I arrived in Israel with a box of more than 1 000 letters from children of different ages from across the country. It was beautiful to read these letters the children wrote from the heart, with such love and admiration for the citizens and soldiers of Israel," Goldstein says.

Goldstein landed in Israel on Friday, 2 February, and visited soldiers in rehabilitation wards at the Shamir Medical Center in Tel Aviv. "These soldiers had stories of tremendous heroism and resilience. Some of them had been through multiple operations, some with months to a year to a year and a half of recuperation ahead of them. It was a humbling experience," he says.

In addition to letters from students, community members also sent messages to the soldiers and families of hostages. One person wrote "Dear *chayalim*, it's not lost on me that you're far from home, facing challenges and uncertainties most of us can only imagine. Your sacrifice, however, ensures that we can go about our daily lives with a sense of security and peace. Your commitment to the values we hold dear makes you a hero in my eyes, and I'm genuinely thankful for all that you do."

Another wrote, "Dear hostages' families. Know that your pain is shared by me. I wish you strength and fortitude for the days ahead. I pray that they will be with you soon."

Says Goldstein, "Most of the letters were actually distributed on Monday when we went down south to go and see what was left from the kibbutzim that were so savagely attacked on 7 October. We visited Kfar Azar, Kissufim, Nir Oz, and others. Seeing the devastation was heartbreaking."

With very few ways to offer help directly, many Jews outside of Israel have felt frustrated and helpless since the 7 October massacre. Turning to the tools at their disposal, the South African Jewish community offered its support and thanks. As Phyllis Grissum-Theroux wrote, "To send a letter is a good way to go somewhere without moving anything but your heart."

Testament to Grissum-Theroux's quote, Goldstein says, "Another part of the trip down south was to see the amazing initiatives by citizens, who have come forward to help support soldiers by providing beautiful food stations. I stopped at two of these places to meet soldiers, hear their stories, and give them the letters. All the soldiers I spoke to felt tremendous joy that children as far away as South Africa were thinking of them and were grateful to them for what they were doing for the Jewish people. It felt like they drew strength from these letters.

"It's important for diaspora communities to reach out, as the war Israel is fighting is a war which secures an independent sovereign Jewish state. This enhances the safety and standing of Jews throughout the world. It's so important to convey that support."

Letters to Israeli soldiers

Don't let haters turn us into haters

>Continued from page 8

universalism, we cannot allow it to make us too insular or to promote bigotry or racism. The war in Gaza and our battle with antisemitism can easily plunge us into ugly misanthropic hatred of "others". In the face of brutality and rabid hatred, it's easy to paint the entire world as our enemies. A battle of this magnitude can easily cause us to dig in our heels, stand alone, and dismiss humanity at large. It's specifically during this dark period of hatred and violence that we must reaffirm Jewish universalism.

Though it's true that we face sweeping global antisemitism, we also enjoy significant backing from a broad collation of countries who support our just and moral battle for Jewish survival. It's extremely symbolic that Germany has become a stalwart supporter of the Jewish state. Decades after threatening Jewish survival, it is among the strongest to defend it. We're not alone, and we shouldn't delude ourselves into believing that we have completely returned to the condition of Avraham *ha'ivri*. History has moved on.

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ANC like 'before' snapshot in *Extreme Makeover*

INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman

There's something alluring about extreme makeovers. Home renovations; a dramatic transformation of a homeless person into a potential employee; and hairstyle and make up before-and-after posts are some of the most popular on social media. Which is probably why, even as a bald bloke with no prospects of "regaining" my hair – see what I did there – unless I went to Turkey, I still find myself glued to those posts.

If there's a "before", I'll likely hang around until the "after".

This might explain to some extent why I'm uncomfortable with the, "Do Jews feel at home in South Africa?" narrative. A theme that features in Jewish dining rooms; in parking lots of Jewish schools; in Jewish-focused media; and now in mainstream South African media and even the global press. Like *BBC HARDtalk*.

The discussion is an important one. But so too is the narrative and perspective. And it will vastly depend on whether one views South Africa as a "before" or "after" photo.

No matter the perspective, the facts are the same. After displaying what was a fantastic transformation from the iniquitous apartheid regime to a constitutional democracy, South Africa showed the world how it could be done. Imperfect though it was, and challenges not to be understated, the potential was there.

Thirty years later, it looks bleak. Thanks largely to a corrupt African National Congress (ANC), South Africa is plagued by enormous difficulties that threaten many aspects of the magnificent country.

And then there's the "Jewish" problem. For the South African Jewish community, 7 October 2023 marked a significant point in its relationship with the ANC. Protestations that the party was anti-Israel and not anti-Jewish were seen to be insincere following the actions of International Relations Minister Dr Naledi Pandor and President Cyril Ramaphosa. In the history of the relationship, the just more than 124 days since that date have resulted in the lowest ebb.

So far has the relationship plummeted, that South Africa's chief rabbi has instructed the community no longer to pray for the party, but rather for the people of the country. The chief rabbi has also openly challenged the president and the party in terms of their links to Hamas and Iran, and questioned their motivation in taking Israel to the International Court of Justice.

Suffice it to say that Ramaphosa is unlikely to be a Shabbat dinner guest at the chief anytime soon.

And vice versa.

What's important about the stance of the chief rabbi is that he's not questioning whether Jews are "at home" in the country. He's not asking the president to love his people, and he's not begging for acceptance. His message is simply that Jewish South Africans are as South African as the president himself, and that as citizens of the country, we have the right to transparency, to answers, to honesty, and to decency.

Jews, like all South Africans, deserve better. Better than the ANC, which isn't South Africa.

South Africa needs an extreme make over. The ANC is a "before" photo of corruption and decay. And disinterest. Of course, we're not "comfortable" in the country. No-one is. Which is why it's time to change the furniture. To create a place that reflects the values of South Africans who care for each other and who are honest, wonderful people.

This is the snapshot of before. I look forward to developing the after.

Still waters run deep for Midmar swimmers

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Twenty-year-old Johannesburg swimmer Dani Furman pictures herself calmly awaiting her chance to dive into the Midmar Dam while a throng of other swimmers push and shove each other for a position close to the start line of the aQuellé Midmar Mile in Howick, KwaZulu-Natal, on 11 February.

"Hopefully, the water isn't too choppy when the chance comes," says this former Eastern Gauteng Aquatics swimmer.

Furman will be one of thousands of swimmers competing in the 51st edition of the world's largest open-water swim event, held annually at Midmar Dam.

Thirty-five of those swimmers will be the King David High School Linksfield (KDHSL) students going on the school's traditional tour to the event. They will be accompanied by three members of staff: head of sport, Kirsty Forssman; head of swimming, Samantha Michau; and head of Jewish Studies, Rabbi Ilan Raanan, a regular Midmar Mile swimmer.

Forssman expects the students will do relatively well in their respective one-mile (1.6km) races at the event, the swimmers being assigned to a race based on their qualifying time in a previous event. "Last year, we had somebody in the top 10 in one of the Midmar swims for the first time," she says. "Taine Lunt, preferably our fastest swimmer, places in the top 10 for his age group."

Dani Furman with her dad Gary Furman at the Midmar Mile in 2021

KDHSL student Noa Nerwich is passionate about the Midmar tour, and has been appointed captain of the touring group. "I've been swimming Midmar since Grade 8, and have hopefully played a role in encouraging as many people as I could to join and be part of this incredible opportunity," she says.

"I'm not a natural swimmer, but I love being part of the King David team and the Midmar experience, so it requires a lot of time and dedication. I've been training with my school at 06:00 four times a week, which is a big commitment during matric, but the comradery and teamwork, as well as sense of personal achievement, make it worthwhile."

Furman has been training three to four times a week for Midmar. She swims laps in the pool at Virgin Active Balfour, sometimes with her dad, Gary. She has also followed the Midmar training programme offered through the event's website, and partakes in horse-riding, for which she does a lot of core and leg work.

Furman hasn't trained in dams as she's terrified of them. "The only dams I've swum in are Midmar and the Vaal Dam. That's about it with dirty water for me."

As captain of the KDHSL group heading to Midmar, Nerwich will be supporting the coach and teachers. She also hopes to build the team's morale, keep its confidence high, create team spirit and school pride, and try to be a role model. "What's so special about the King David Midmar tour is that it's a team comprising many different ages. My role is to continue to build the team and facilitate connections between its members and ultimately create a once-in-a-lifetime experience and make our school proud."

On a personal note, Nerwich is hoping to beat her time from last year. "This is my last opportunity to swim Midmar for the school, so I would like it to be special. More importantly, I hope that our team leaves feeling proud of its efforts, connected as a team, and brings pride to our school, teachers, and coaches. We're fortunate that our school affords us this opportunity, and we appreciate and acknowledge the effort from all the teachers in making this happen."

Furman, on the other hand, isn't expecting to beat her previous Midmar time of 35 minutes in 2021. "That was when I was fit many years ago in high school doing club training," she says. "I did exceptionally well, in my opinion. This year, I'm hoping to do [it in] 45 minutes because of my fitness levels. I actually just started swimming again towards the end of last year to do Midmar. I just want to finish at the end of the day, get to the other side, and get the medal."

Unlike in 2021, her dad won't be swimming this weekend due to a hip injury.

The Disney movie *Moana* is KDHSL's Midmar tour theme this year as it seamlessly intertwines with the school's cherished Jewish values, says Forssman.

"Moana's unwavering determination mirrors the *koach* within each of our swimmers, empowering them to partake in such a prestigious swim. The movie showcases various ways in which we are guided by our own *neshama,* and how we need to use our spirit to create a collective heartbeat of enthusiasm and passion in everything we do. Moana's reliance on ancestral knowledge has a parallel in our students drawing strength from the wisdom of Torah and Israel."

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

'Hear no antisemitism, see no antisemitism'

ABOVE BOARD
Karen Milner

The last person in government one would expect to declare publicly that there's "no antisemitism in South Africa" and that claims of antisemitic incidents in the country having risen sharply in recent months weren't "based on any facts" would be the minister of justice. That, however, was precisely what Ronald Lamola stated during an interview on *BBC HARDtalk* last week. Had he chosen to do so, Lamola could easily have acquainted himself with the facts he mentions. Indeed, only the previous month, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) met President Cyril Ramaphosa and gave him a thorough briefing on the issue. Lamola's neglect to do so is arguably already to his discredit given the kind of position he holds, but it was presuming to make definitive pronouncements on the matter in spite of his obvious ignorance that was so objectionable. Worst of all, though, was how the minister casually disregarded the voices of the very people directly impacted by the issue – this country's Jewish citizens.

Following Lamola's comments, the Board was again deluged with enquiries from the media seeking to ascertain the true position. It was an opportunity for us to educate the public at large about what can be considered antisemitism, the different ways it can manifest, and what the SAJBD does to monitor, investigate, and where necessary, respond to incidents of that nature. From the kind of online comments that predominated, there's obviously a general lack of awareness of anti-Jewish prejudice in our society. What was more surprising and disquieting was the aggressive scepticism expressed by a great many of those weighing in on the subject, including even certain seasoned journalists. We've become accustomed, unfortunately, to claims that Jews purposefully fabricate antisemitism charges to further their own immoral agenda, and of course, we saw a great deal of that on this occasion. Beyond those discredited voices, however, was the flat refusal of many others even to countenance the notion that levels of antisemitism in South Africa had indeed increased, to the point of those claiming otherwise being charged with disloyalty.

In our media statement, interviews, and published articles, we made sure to set the record straight, showing with reference to meticulously compiled records and statistics how antisemitic incidents in South Africa had spiked over the past three months. This, I emphasised, shouldn't have been dismissed by either Lamola, under whose ministry these incidents will be prosecuted where appropriate, nor by the journalists, who mocked the very possibility. At the same time, we made sure to stress that in relative terms, these antisemitism statistics remain significantly lower than other countries, largely due, in our view, to the lack of anti-Jewish sentiment among the majority of peace loving South Africans, who reject intolerance and hatred.

Election season returns

With the imminent announcement of the date of the 2024 national and provincial elections, the Board has, as in previous years, been conducting a voter-registration drive encouraging locals and expatriates to check that they are on the voters roll and that their details are correct. One of the slogans we've adopted is, "Vote for a South Africa you can believe in." Another is, "You can't *kvetch* until you check." The message is that the future is in our own hands and if we citizens of this country want change, it's up to us to use our democratic rights to bring this about. We urge everyone – particularly first-time voters – to go to registertovote.elections.org.za.

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

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

WHAT'S ON

Sunday 11 February
Chevrah Kadisha Bereavement hosts its *Growth from Grief* support group. Time: 10:00. Venue: The David Lopatie Auditorium, Sandringham Gardens. Contact: sheilaf@jhbchev.co.za or 011 532 9653

Sunday 25 February
The Jewish Women's Benevolent Society hosts a talk by Gareth Cliff. Time: 18:00. Cost: R350. Contact: 011 485 5232 or gloria@jwbs.co.za

Thursday 15 February
ORT SA hosts a talk by Tracey Bosch on *The Mastery of Microsoft Word.* Time: 17:30. R200 (R100 members). Contact: 011 728 7154 or admin@ortjet.org.za

Sunday 3 March
The Jewish Women's Benevolent Society host its R30 book sale. Venue: Genesis Shopping Centre. Time: 09:00 to 14:00. Contact: 011 485 5232 or gloria@jwbs.co.za

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"We are collaborating on multidisciplinary projects with research impact that span multiple sectors, and which involve elements of entrepreneurship and commercialisation, for the benefit of humanity," says Dr Adam Pantanowitz, the Director of the Wits Innovation Centre, who also holds the Angela and David Fine Chair in Innovation. An Artificial Intelligence expert, technologist, and entrepreneur, Pantanowitz is well-known for initiating and leading the first group in the world to connect a human brain to the internet in a project called the 'Brainternet'.

Prof. Benjamin Rosman
Wits School of Computer Science and Applied Mathematics, Faculty of Science

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MACHINE LEARNING

"Africa cannot afford to take the back seat in one of the most important pursuits of modern science," says Professor Benjamin Rosman, who runs the Robotics, Autonomous Intelligence and Learning Laboratory in the Wits School of Computer Science. "Behind buzzwords such as 'data science' or 'fourth industrial revolution' is the promise of major disruption to every aspect of our lives, powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI)."

The technology underlying AI is the field of machine learning, which affects how computers can learn to improve their own performance over time, by being exposed to an increasing amount of data. This is in stark contrast to former generations of software, which relied on humans to programme how they should operate.
Several breakthroughs in this field in recent years have led to exciting applications like real-time translation of languages, automatic captioning and tagging of images, diagnosing cancers from medical tests, and autonomous driving.

Read more about Wits Innovation at www.wits.ac.za/innovation

Underdogs shoot lights out at Africa Cup of Nations

SAUL KAMIONSKY

At the time of going to press, Bafana Bafana had reached the semi-finals of the 2024 African Cup of Nations (AFCON) in Ivory Coast, and the team has been followed every step of the way by South African mentalist and sports commentator, Michael Abrahamson.

Bafana Bafana take on three-time champions Nigeria in the semi-finals on 7 February following their penalty shootout win against Cape Verde in the quarter-finals.

Abrahamson, a commentator on the tournament for the South African Broadcasting Corporation, says the fact Bafana Bafana went into the tournament without massive expectation stood them in good stead. He cites the team being drawn in a tough group consisting of Mali, Namibia, and 2004 champions Tunisia.

"Once they got out of the group, they had to play against Morocco [the semi-finalist at the 2022 FIFA World Cup]. Everybody was tipping Morocco to win quite comfortably, so it was like a free hit for Bafana Bafana. They turned in an incredible defensive performance. Morocco had only two shots on goal in the entire match," he says.

Abrahamson and others in the football fraternity say another secret to Bafana Bafana's success is the fact that eight of their starting line-up, which has been the same in the past four matches, play for Mamelodi Sundowns, the winner of the past six top-tier league titles in South Africa.

Abrahamson says this year's AFCON has more than lived up to its expectations, with upsets by the underdogs and the high quality of football standing out for him.

Having commentated on AFCONs since the 1990s, Abrahamson says the edition in South Africa in 1996 was incredibly special. "It was South Africa's first appearance in the tournament, first hosting of the tournament, and they won it.

"This year's edition has been as good as any previously. The main reason for that is the way the referees have refereed the game. They've used the VAR [video assistant referee] system correctly for the most part, and their officiating has been excellent compared to what we see elsewhere in the world. On my radio show on SAfm, I get a lot of high-class former referees from around the world, and all of them have said that the standard of refereeing has been brilliant.

"What's also good is the small nations who've done very well, nations that aren't big footballing names like Mauritania, for example." They beat an Algeria team ranked 75 places above them on the FIFA rankings at the beginning of February.

"Then you have Cape Verde, who had a brilliant tournament. Angola was one of the lowest-ranked teams who made it through to the next round. They have also been brilliant so far.

"Most of the big names are out – such as Egypt, who won the title seven times before; Cameroon, who won the title five times before; and defending champion Senegal. Plus Ghana, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. We've lost all these big names and some of the smaller names have survived, which makes the tournament interesting because anyone can beat anyone."


Bafana Bafana celebrating after beating Cape Verde in the semi-finals

Photo: Facebook

Bafana Bafana's quarter-final against Cape Verde ended goalless after extra time, sending the match into penalties. Six out of nine penalties were missed as Bafana Bafana won the shootout 2-1. "Let's say six hours ago I was 71, now I'm 75," Bafana Bafana coach Hugo Broos quipped after the match.

"Bafana Bafana's game against Cape Verde was a tight, tactical game between two nations very close together on the world rankings even though South Africa have a much bigger population," Abrahamson says.

"For periods in the first and second half, South Africa moved the ball quickly and looked good. The key chance happened just before the end of 90 minutes – Ronwen Williams' brilliant save. When the Cape Verde striker was one-on-one with him and fired in a shot that looked as if it was going to be a goal that would eliminate South Africa, Williams somehow got a hand on it and pushed it onto the post.

"Williams went on to become the first goalkeeper to save four penalties in a shootout in an AFCON match, and he almost saved the fifth as well. Some of South Africa's penalties weren't great, but Mothobi Mvala took the fourth penalty excellently because there was pressure building."

Abrahamson says Bafana Bafana are looking for revenge against Nigeria. "In the 2019 tournament, Nigeria beat South Africa and knocked them out of the tournament. Ironically, Bafana Bafana's last appearance in the AFCON semi-final ended in a 2-0 loss against the same opponents. Nigeria are a very strong team. They've done well through this tournament, although they only just beat Angola by one goal to nil in a tight match.

"I'm just worried about fatigue levels because South Africa have one day fewer to prepare for the match than Nigeria did. South Africa will certainly go into this match as underdogs, but they proved that they are playing fantastically defensively."