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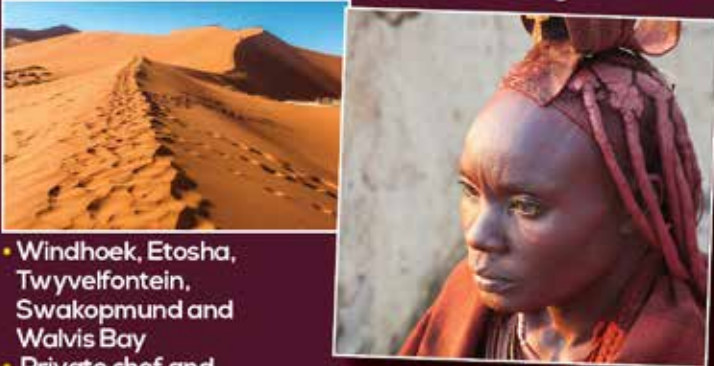
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UK probes mistreatment of Israeli survivors by airport security

British authorities said on 25 March they were investigating an incident in which two Israeli survivors of the 7 October attack were detained and harassed at Manchester Airport.

Brothers Daniel and Neriya Sharabi told news outlets they were held by airport security for two hours after mentioning that they had survived Hamas's massacre at the Nova festival on 7 October. They said one security guard told them, "I don't want you to do here what you do in Gaza."

The two had travelled to the United Kingdom at the invitation of a Chabad centre and Jewish business council in the Manchester area to raise money for other survivors of the attacks.

"We don't tolerate antisemitism or any form of discrimination," United Kingdom Home Secretary James Cleverly wrote on X in response to a request from the Jewish Representative Council of Greater Manchester &

Region to look into the claims. "This incident will be handled in line with our disciplinary procedures."

The brothers, who were flying in from Brussels, were eventually released and allowed to enter the country.

The Sharabis have

been celebrated as heroes in Israel for taking action on 7 October that saved dozens from Hamas fighters. The two reportedly fended off Hamas using spare weapons they found in a tank, while receiving instructions over the phone from their former Israel Defense Forces officer.

Shema for hostages takes off globally

Tens of thousands of Jews around the world joined in a collective recitation of the Shema on Thursday, 21 March, broadcast from Jerusalem's Western Wall to support the more than 130 Israeli hostages still held by Hamas.

The event was organised by the Hostage and Missing Families Forum along with Aish HaTorah, a haredi Orthodox yeshiva and outreach movement. They timed it to the Fast of Esther, which commemorates the threat Jews of Persia faced from their persecutor, Haman, in the Purim story.

The call for participation took off in Jewish communities around the world, with synagogues of all denominations encouraging members to join in and Jewish schools pausing their lessons to have their students say the Shema. Jewish influencers also exhorted their followers to participate.

The YouTube livestream from the Western Wall registered more than 150 000 viewers, but there were signs that far more people participated. Google

registered a massive spike in queries about the Shema at 11:00, just before the planned prayer time.

At the Western Wall, speakers wearing tags marked "167" for the number of days the hostages have been captive compared the plight of the hostages to the Jews of Persia in the Purim tale.

Ahead of the prayers, soldiers on leave from the front and the families of hostages appeared, including the parents of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who was abducted on 7 October from the Nova festival.

Shmuel Rabinovitch, the rabbi of the Western Wall, led prayers for the hostages and for the soldiers fighting the war launched by Hamas on 7 October.



The Shema being broadcast from the Western Wall on behalf of Israeli hostages in Gaza

Photo: Screenshot

He culminated with the Shema, a passage from Deuteronomy that serves as the signature prayer affirming the Jewish belief in one G-d.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

The truth about questions



Rabbi Alon Friedman
Yeshiva Mizrahi

A recent study came out that doesn't seem very shocking: children are more likely to ask Google a question than a parent.

Most will agree that there's nothing wrong with looking up a word in an online dictionary as opposed to a physical dictionary. What's concerning is the notion that technology is being used as the authoritative place to go for information, not only to look up the meaning of trivia words, but for all types of information that a child might have asked a parent about. It's difficult to sift out real information from pseudo-information, and this certainly applies to children.

Moreover, there's an additional concern about children consulting Google instead of their parents. The learning experience, certainly when it comes to Torah, isn't just about getting the information. There's something valuable about the interaction between two or more people discussing something of interest. Google isn't going to help children make sure they understand the information they've just read. Google isn't going to help make the message personal. Consulting Google doesn't contribute to the child's relationship with Google, and certainly not the relationship with the parent.

This week we read about the Parah Adumah, a mysterious law that involves taking the ashes of a particular animal – a completely red heifer – and mixing it with water to produce a potion that, when sprinkled on a person defiled by death, made him or her pure again. This is an example of law in the Torah which is considered completely above human comprehension.

What are we achieving by reading this section? I believe the Torah is teaching us that we need to continue asking questions, seeking truth even when it

seems not to make sense.

Questioning is a human trait and vital component of Judaism.

One should seek to understand by delving deeper into the profundities of the Torah. There are, however, certain limitations. One must know what to ask, when to ask, and whom to question.

The type of question one asks and its presentation reflects the character of the questioner. Knowing when to speak and when to remain silent also indicates one's motivation. Is one truly seeking an answer or merely making a statement in order to echo one's own opinion? Whom one asks is equally critical. Some individuals ask questions only of those who will offer

them an anticipated desirable response. They won't ask if they expect that they won't like the particular answer.

There are a number of reasons why people don't ask questions. Complacency, ignorance, apathy, self-consciousness, and insecurity seem to be superficially valid reasons for not inquiring. Perhaps the most destructive reason for failure to question, however, is refusal to accept the answer. The individual with this trait doesn't desire to develop intellectually.

The red heifer teaches us about the need to question. In order for an individual to find the truth, he needs to learn to listen.

Torah Thought

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Our patriarch Jacob had 12 sons, whose families grew into the 12 tribes of Israel. Jews identify as a **Kohen** (a descendant of Aharon), a **Levi** (from the tribe of Levi), or simply an **Israelite** with no particular tribal identity.

‘I’ll never be silent again,’ says Nova survivor

GILLIAN KLAWSANSKY

“I have to run, but it’s towards bullets because now they’re everywhere. You just see people falling down, you’re a statistic, you take one step to the right or to the left and that will determine if you’re going to be murdered now or survive another minute.”

These are the words of Millet Ben Haim, one of the two female Nova festival massacre survivors in South Africa this week to share their devastating stories to counter the toxic narrative espoused during Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW), an annual hate fest held at universities around the world.

“Every time I think about it, my brain wants to shut down. There are no words to describe how scary it is,” Ben Haim said.

However when she and Mazal Tazazo tried to tell their agonising personal stories at the University of Cape Town, they were faced with hatred from a multitude of Hamas supporters.

“We tried to talk and explain, but they were only yelling and didn’t want to listen, saying, ‘You’re lying!’” Tazazo said. “We need to fight really hard. There are many who protect Hamas.”

“We saw a lot of hatred, but we also saw such an amazing community,” Ben Haim told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression, Ben Haim said she had lost the person she once was. “I’m mourning many people, but I’m mourning myself too,” she said.

Travelling around the world to share her experience has become her life’s mission. “I

justify this brutality.”

After running for her life, hiding from terrorists, and fighting not to cry lest they heard her, Ben Haim is now determined to use her voice. “I was silent for hours hiding under a bush, and I’ll never be silent again,” she said. “In every place that tells me to hide my identity, I’ll know to speak louder.”

That’s why she and fellow survivor, Tazazo, came to South Africa for IAW when the non-government organisations the South African Jewish Board of Deputies usually asks to send Israeli representatives were too nervous to do so.

Ben Haim recounted to the *SA Jewish Report* that she hid with her friends under a bush that provided little concealment, and

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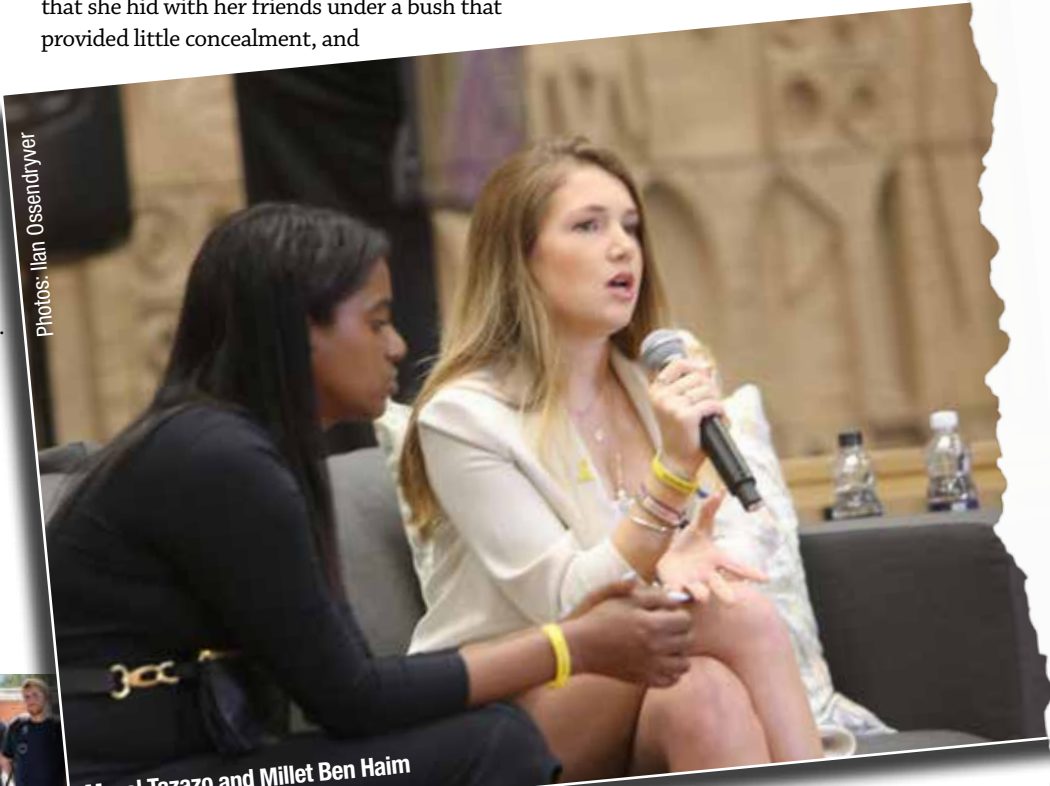
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they saw us, they would rape us, so I started to pray that a rocket would hit me. But by some crazy miracle, they just didn’t notice us.”



Mazal Tazazo and Millet Ben Haim

Before heading to South Africa, the two women had heard only about how this country had taken Israel to the International Court of Justice. “So, it’s been important to meet the community,” said Ben Haim. “When you witness the people that are blindly hating us, it only makes our trip more meaningful.”

Sharing her story, Tazazo said she attended the Nova festival with two friends. Living in Netivot, a city bordering Gaza, she was used to rockets and so didn’t panic when they began flying after the festival’s famous sunrise. Yet, as the barrage continued, Tazazo realised that this wasn’t a regular attack. She and her friends tried to leave the festival by car, but couldn’t do so as traffic stood still. Unbeknownst to them, those who left the festival first had been shot and killed by terrorists waiting in both directions.

“We started to hear gunshots,” she recalled. “As the shots got louder, we got out of the car

and I saw two policemen shooting terrorists, which meant they were right there. I heard screams in Arabic. I was thinking, “This isn’t true, this isn’t real, this isn’t happening.”

Running and crawling under cars while dodging bullets, she and her friends decided to hide. They lay down, with Tazazo on her stomach covering her head. “Seconds later, they come,” she recalls with a chilling immediacy. “In English, they tell us to get up. They hit my hands and the back of my head with the butt of a rifle. There are seconds where I don’t hear, I don’t see anything. When I regain consciousness, I feel someone scrape my leg. They tie my legs with big ropes, and I know I need to play dead.”

As a terrorist approached her, she held her breath. “My eyes are closed, and he lifts up my face and looks at me. Then they take the ropes off my legs and go. I don’t feel relieved though. I talk with G-d, but it’s not real. I don’t think about my son or my family – the idea that I wouldn’t come back wasn’t an option.”

Losing consciousness, Tazazo awoke two hours later to find that both her friends had been killed. A girl who had also lost her friends soon joined her. Then, the fire started. The terrorists’ plan was to shoot survivors as they escaped the flames. Growing hotter, Tazazo ran to the road, and hid in the back of an abandoned car under a blanket as bullets flew past. “After some hours, an angel called Itai opened the car door and I lifted my head and saw him with the girl who was with me in the bushes.” After reaching safety, Tazazo underwent surgery.

“I still can’t lift some of my fingers, and my head hurts, but I’m here,” she said. “I came back but my friends didn’t. This cannot happen again. I don’t feel safe because I’m a Jew, because I’m Israeli, and that’s not right or fair. It’s difficult, but I have to tell my story.”

Ben Haim urged us all to speak up. “Radicals make the loudest and most hateful comments, and that’s ok, that’s who they are. But the majority are either silent or softer, and we’re also here speaking to them. Things are never as bad as they seem, we just need to stay united and have faith.”



Mazal Tazazo and Millet Ben Haim at Wits University

feel obligated to make sure that the death we experienced isn’t in vain, to bring back the hostages, and to fight antisemitism.” She’s also raising awareness about the sexual violence experienced on 7 October, which the hostages are continuing to endure. “We have to speak out about it. The world cannot allow this to happen. They have to get back home. There’s no way to

then they saw two terrorists. “You just hold your breath,” she said. “We were all dressed up because you feel safe going to these festivals. It’s a such a supportive community that you’ll never be harassed or objectified, so you can feel completely comfortable wearing whatever you like. But at that moment, I felt like I was dressed up for them. It was clear to me that if

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UCT's Jewish students stand up to campus vitriol

LEE TANKLE

"We've all seen online hatred towards Jews, especially recently, but it's a completely different thing to hear this hatred, when it's directed at you personally, with people looking you in the eye and chanting, 'Death to Israel!'"

These are the words of a University of Cape Town (UCT) student, who asked not to be named for fear of being targeted, describing her experience on campus during Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) from 18 to 20 March.

She was just one of the many brave Jewish students who stood together on the Cape Town campus, singing "Am Yisrael Chai", and trying to communicate in the face of shouted abuse and threats from hundreds of Israel haters.

They stood bravely in spite of the fact that their own student representative council (SRC) had sent out an email calling on all students to support the Palestinian Solidarity Forum (PSF) on campus during IAW.

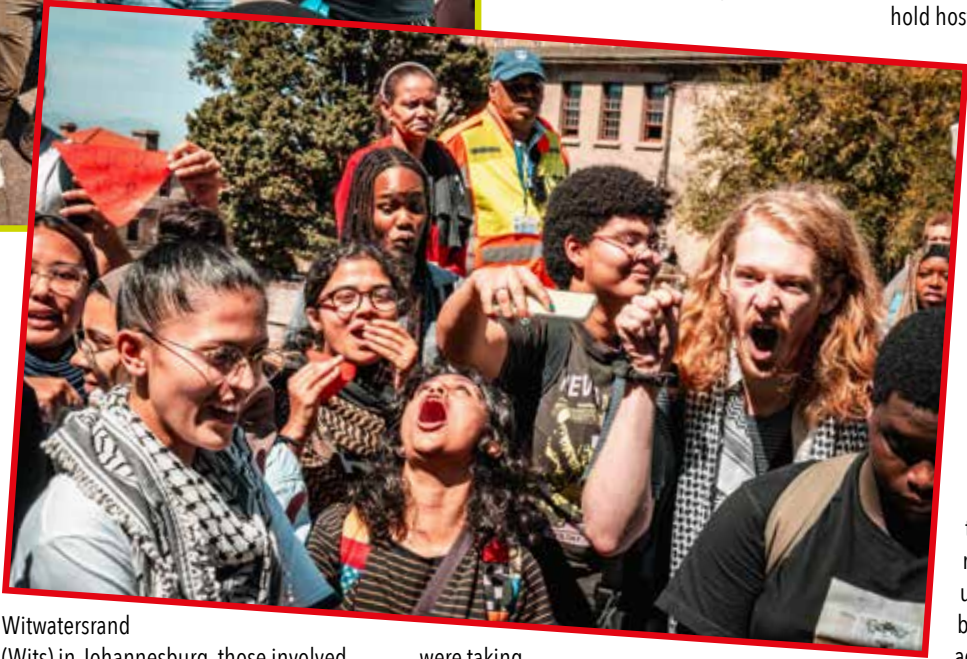
"A university is supposed to be a safe space for young students to learn, debate, and discuss things," said Daniel Bloch, the director of the Cape South



Photos: @gingervithagopro

African Board of Jewish Deputies. "The UCT PSF and its anti-Israel supporters including the African National Congress, Al Jamah-ah, and others, violated that space and used innocent students to push their selfish narrative. And these people call themselves leaders in the community! They should be ashamed."

While the environment at UCT was extremely hostile towards Jewish students, at the University of the



Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg, those involved described IAW as extremely constructive. The students aimed to reclaim the truth of what happened in Israel on 7 October, with visiting survivors of the Nova festival massacre telling their stories.

There were times on UCT's campus outside the Sarah Baartman Hall on 18 and 19 March that discussions were held peacefully and respectfully, according to Ruby Kapeluschnik, the vice-chairperson of the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) Western Cape. "However, in some of the conversations I had, I was just being shouted at. Someone said to me at one point, 'I'm not talking to you, I'm talking at you,'" Kapeluschnik said. "It's overwhelming to have so many people come up to you with such anger."

One student described an incident where another Jewish girl engaged with a group of Israel haters, and the group started to surround her and shout, shutting down anything that she brought up to defend Israel. At one point, the girl walked away and broke down because of the aggressive behaviour she was confronted with.

Said another female student, "The worst part about that Monday was when PSF members had finished painting Palestinian flags with their hands, they came over to the SAUJS stand and showed us their red hands. They then went to put their red-painted hands on an Israeli flag that we had made."

On Wednesday, 20 March, she said, "People just started coming towards the stand *en masse* with signs saying things like 'Blood on your hands' or 'Fuck Israel',

and screaming things, like 'genocidal psycho maniac' and 'coloniser' at us."

Eden Lipshitz, a member of SAUJS's religion and politics committee said, "We knew we had to come out in full force that Wednesday because the night before, we had received the email from the SRC calling all students to support the PSF."

"That morning, a group of us

pointed at me, and shouted 'Shame on you!' I felt so angry that he was shouting that to me while standing with a group of people on the sidelines chanting 'Death to Israel!' All we were doing was standing in a circle singing in Hebrew, praying, and holding signs that said, 'Bring the hostages home'.

"I was there to show that I have the right to be on campus as a proud Jew as much as anyone else. In 24 hours, I saw people who had been afraid decide to stand up and hold hostage posters," said Lipshitz.

"The response from the Jewish community was beautiful to watch. We all just made a circle and started singing. At one point, as they were screaming, we were singing *V'Hishamda*, and it was louder than their screaming," said Kapeluschnik.

Another student said, "You could see that our response was angering them, because it was obvious they were trying to get a rise from us. They wanted us to start shouting back because they want us to look aggressive so that they could say, 'Look how aggressive these Jews are.'"

were taking pictures holding photos of the hostages, and there was quite a large group of people off to the side cackling at us," Lipshitz said. "When it was my turn, a girl came up and pulled a middle finger in the background. This girl then stood next to me, put her arm around me, and said, 'You look like an absolutely fucking idiot' while pulling zap signs at me."

"Campus security did their best to protect our space from intruders, but didn't

say, 'Look how aggressive these Jews are.'"

"They wanted us to start chanting back so that they could drown us out, because at this point, there were about 300 of them and about 30 of us," he said.

"They tried to disrupt us, screaming, but we stood together," said Sasha Said, the national vice-chairperson of SAUJS. "As we were being screamed at and vile language was coming out of their mouths, we linked arms in a circle. We sang, we laughed together, we smiled, and we were there for each other."

SAUJS National Chairperson Shmuel Kregel said that at Wits University, it was a totally different story. "Due to unbelievable fairness by the Wits administration, IAW was a much more pleasant affair for everyone involved on both sides. Everyone was allowed to do



what they wanted to do that week without letting each other torment and humiliate and intimidate one another."

Gabriella Farber-Cohen, the project co-ordinator at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies said, "It was a moving moment to see SAUJS stand with posters of the hostages singing *Acheinu* and 'Am Yisrael Chai', while the Palestinian Solidarity Committee protested aggressively opposite the SAUJS stand. SAUJS was able to turn the hate against it into an environment of relationship building. It chose to reclaim the truth, and engage in meaningful and educational conversation with the general student population."

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Pandor’s call for protest outside embassies causes alarm

TALI FEINBERG

Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Dr Naledi Pandor has called on South Africans to protest outside foreign embassies that she claims support Israel in its war against Hamas.

“If you have a few hours, could you take your time and just make a poster? The poster should read ‘Stop genocide’, and go and stand outside five embassies,” Pandor told a Palestinian solidarity event in Laudium, Pretoria, in March.

“There are five primary supporters of Israel I’m not going to name them for you, you must do your work. As the women in black did for us when we were fighting apartheid, stand up and petition, stand up and protest, stand up and be visible, every day.”

Political analysts were shocked at the audacity of her statement.

“I’ve been studying international relations for almost 30 years, and I’ve never encountered something like this,” said Hussein Solomon, senior professor in the department of political science at the University of the Free State. “It almost seems like Naledi Pandor doesn’t know if she’s an activist or the South African foreign minister. Moreover, beyond Gaza, at a time when our foreign relations with key trading partners are at its lowest point, she seems to be jeopardising these trade relations. Let’s not forget that we need these trading partners even more so now because of the state of our economy.”

“Mrs Pandor is charging full steam ahead in her delusional way, causing more damage to South Africa, the African National Congress

[ANC], and her own reputation,” said Dr Glen Segell, the visiting professor and research fellow at the University of the Free State and research fellow at the Ezri Center for Iran and Gulf States Research at the University of Haifa.

“No doubt she’s motivated to pursue her attack to distract from the ANC’s slide in popular support after 31 years in power and

And she said there wasn’t “a shred of evidence” that United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) employees committed atrocities, and urged her audience to keep sending money.

She also unapologetically stated that as a diplomat, she couldn’t stand with Hamas, and she had to call for the release of the hostages, but claimed Hamas’s actions

were understandable as “resistance”. In addition, she said the Palestinians were the same as the “freedom fighters” who fought apartheid.

However, the comment that caused the most alarm was her call on her large audience to protest outside foreign embassies every day.

It’s assumed she meant the embassies of the United States, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and Canada.

Daily Maverick reported that some foreign diplomats have protested to the department of international relations and cooperation (Dirco), and will formally request police protection in accordance with the Vienna Convention. One foreign diplomat said that by encouraging protests at embassies, Pandor had created the potential for violence against them.

“Not even Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf, Saddam Hussein’s former foreign minister and propaganda minister, or even Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi minister of propaganda, could have stooped so low as to threaten

foreign embassies in their own country by having protests outside them,” said Segell.

“Should one be damaged or a diplomat injured, there would be a mass exit from South Africa of all diplomatic staff from all embassies for security reasons. Tourism would plummet, and the economy would suffer.

“Mrs Pandor has now gone beyond antisemitism or anti-Zionism,” he said. “If she was in any European country or the United States, she would be charged criminally with incitement and provocation. I’m afraid that if the ANC loses the May elections, Mrs Pandor’s call for protest infers that the ANC won’t go quietly into opposition.”

Steven Gruzd, political analyst and the head of African Governance and Diplomacy Programme and the Russia-Africa Project at the South African Institute of International Affairs, said, “It’s highly unusual for a minister of state to be telling people to go and protest outside other embassies. There’s the potential for diplomats or their premises to be affected, or something worse. It’s irresponsible.

“This may be another incident that pushes South Africa further away from Western countries, and there’s always the threat that our trade concessions through the African Growth and Opportunity Act [AGOA] could be withdrawn by the Americans. We don’t know what the last straw is going to be, but this has the potential to really irritate Western countries and their embassies in South Africa.

“This has the potential to draw South Africa even closer to countries of the Global South that oppose Western values and actions, especially on the Israeli-Palestinian issue,” said Gruzd.

Professor Karen Milner, the national

chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, said, “Pandor’s comments are indicative of her obsessiveness with Israel. They are also highly inappropriate. As the minister of foreign affairs, she has plenty of tools at her disposal to engage with parties with whom she disagrees. Instead, she’s rabble rousing and attempting to interfere with other countries’ foreign policy. Her inability to put South African interests before her own personal crusade never fails to amaze.”

Benji Shulman, the director of public policy at the South African Zionist Federation, said, “Minister Pandor continues to embarrass South Africa. Not only has she attacked Israel, she’s putting our relationships with all our democratic country partners at risk.

“Recently, on a tour of the United States, she denied that Iran was an authoritarian state and continued to defend South Africa’s support of Russia,” he said. “The ANC-led government continues to act as the legal arm of Hamas and Iran, wasting taxpayers’ money and ignoring the spread of Islamist extremism on the African continent.”

The SA Jewish Report reached out to all five embassies in question. David Feldmann, the spokesperson at the United States Embassy in South Africa, declined to comment. However, German Embassy spokesperson Dr Christopher Schmidt, said, “We’re following the situation closely. We trust that the security of the embassy will be guaranteed by Dirco and the relevant authorities in accordance with the Vienna Convention.”

Spokespersons from the United Kingdom, Canadian, and French embassies didn’t respond by the time of going to print.



Photo: diplomaticinformers.com

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Don’t cancel the truth

On the night of 6 October last year, more than 3 000 young, vibrant partygoers in Israel went down south to dance, hang out with friends, make new friends, and generally just have a great time at the Nova festival. At 06:30 the following morning, hell was unleashed on them when an unknown number of Hamas terrorists descended and began a killing and raping spree in which 400 lives were brutally taken and 40 innocent people kidnapped and forced into Gaza, where many are still being held. I’m fully aware that all of you already know these horrific facts, but there are so many in this world who simply refuse even to hear about it. Worse, they won’t acknowledge the devastation caused by what happened at this festival on 7 October. I cannot understand how so many people around the world condemn the death and destruction happening in Gaza but won’t even listen to the occurrences that led to it.

Last week, two brave young women, Millet Ben Haim and Mazal Tazazo, came to South Africa to share their horrific experiences of 7 October at the Nova festival. They lived through the horror, the fear, the anguish of that morning that will be indelibly imprinted in their minds forever.

Being willing to come to this country and share what happened to them has got to be one of the most courageous things to do, especially when they knew they would be confronted with people who either dismissed what they experienced as irrelevant because they are Jews, or called them liars. Can you imagine having to face that?

But these two women, brought out by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), came to help spread awareness of 7 October in Israel and to tell the world the truth behind Israel’s war with Hamas and why there’s a need to ensure that such depravity is never allowed to happen again on Israeli soil. Also, they are pleading with the world to help get Israeli hostages home.

The way these two traumatised women were treated by Israel haters on the University of Cape Town campus was inexcusable (see page 3), but when the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) – our national broadcaster – cancelled an interview with Ben Haim because of pressure from haters, I saw red.

As a journalist who has been in the media for close on 40 years, there’s no excuse for that. Our task is to seek out the truth. Our task is to ask the questions and get the answers. Our task is never to be pressured by one side not to hear another side. We give people a right to respond. We give our audiences all sides to a story. In some cases, like the situation in South Africa around Israel, some of us must give the side being ignored because it simply isn’t being told elsewhere.

What kind of journalists or media company refuses to hear a personal story by someone who survived a massacre? Ben Haim had no plans to discuss what’s right or wrong about fighting in Gaza. She had no plans to respond to issues around Israeli or Middle East politics. She’s neither a politician, an active soldier, or someone who wants to give their opinion about war and politics. She’s a young woman who went to have fun almost six months ago, and is now here to tell of her horrific experience, nothing more or less.

It’s an important story to tell – how her friends were murdered in front of her eyes, and how she dodged bullets and prayed to survive and not be brutalised by Hamas terrorists. It’s not an easy story to tell. It’s painful, but she was determined to bear witness to that day for all those who were murdered, raped, brutalised, and abducted.

But her interview on Metro FM last Thursday, 21 March, which had been set up in advance, was cancelled. Just like that.

Why? It’s unfortunately no longer a surprise when organisations bow to pressure from Israel haters. Another young woman, Mmabatho Montsho, who is described as a South African fine artist, actress, writer, and film director, according to the SAJBD, cancelled her upcoming interview on the station because of Ben Haim’s interview. This same woman on Instagram refers to herself also as a lover and a fighter. Well, the latter I can see clearly, but I’m not seeing any love emanating from her.

The point is, Montsho is fully entitled to cancel her interview, that’s her choice. That shouldn’t have influenced the national broadcaster to cancel an interview with an international visitor about a massacre she had survived. That’s despicable behaviour!

The SABC has consciously silenced this testimony. The national broadcaster, like so many other media houses, has refused to hear the truth. Yes, I understand that Israel’s war on Hamas is controversial. I understand that there are many who condemn Israel for the lives lost in Gaza. But surely it’s incumbent on the media to hear all sides of the story? Surely, we don’t succumb to pressure from haters and silence a survivor of a massacre?

There are hard truths in this world and some we don’t want to hear or believe, but it’s our role as journalists to hear them. We may not agree, and we may not like what they are saying, but we need to hear and tell all sides.

I understand that there’s an investigation into this at the SABC, but I’m not holding out too much hope as there has already been so much evidence of this unacceptable bias in our media. It’s a slippery slope, one we have already started to descend.

I hope our journalists don’t all become parrots of the same speech, refusing to hear anything that doesn’t fit their belief system. I understand that this war has polarised people, but it’s vital to be able to hear and read all sides of the story so that the audience, listeners, or readers can make up their own mind. They should never be forced to agree with you because that’s the only side they are hearing.

May this be a lesson for all us in the media about what not to do.

Shabbat shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor



Captives of conflict: hostage dynamics in modern warfare

OPINION

DR DAVID BROCK KATZ



Taking hostages is an age-old military practice that stretches back for as long as humans have engaged in warfare.

Hostages served strategic and political purposes in medieval warfare, where they could be used to exert pressure and force compliance or help negotiate favourable terms. In a practice that has long been discontinued, both sides could occasionally offer up their own as hostages to ensure that treaty terms were complied with. Then, there was the quaint practice of taking hostages to guarantee ransom payments or meet certain obligations. It could range from acts of pure defiance or intimidation to securing a potential ally or political alliance. In medieval warfare, hostages were often viewed as necessary and pragmatic. Centuries later, one would have thought that the barbaric act of taking hostages for leverage was out of place in sophisticated modern society.

Unfortunately, the seizing of hostages is all too prevalent in modern times, although the context and the dynamics may have changed. Criminal gangs and terrorists make good use of hostages for political, ideological, or financial goals. Modern warfare must factor in the doctrine of dealing with hostage scenarios through complex diplomatic negotiations, intelligence operations, military interventions, and humanitarian initiatives. All the odds are stacked with the hostage takers, as no matter what the outcome, their nihilistic purposes are usually fulfilled. The terrorist organisation can gain much capital through the collateral damage suffered by the surrounding civilian population during efforts to release the hostages. The tragic death of hostages during attempts to free them can also benefit terrorists.

Due to the “hostage exchanges” that have taken place between Israel and Hamas, it’s necessary to define the term “hostage”. The fact is that Israel has mainly exchanged criminals or prisoners for Israeli hostages in spite of the world press depicting these exchanges as a “hostage exchange”.



Photo: Screenshot

There’s a vast difference between an incarcerated criminal, a prisoner of war (POW), and a hostage. POWs are typically captured during armed conflict during hostilities, and are members of a recognised armed force. They are entitled to certain legal protections under international humanitarian law, including humane treatment, protection from violence, and the right to be repatriated at the end of hostilities. An incarcerated criminal has been detained after a fair trial and is subject to fair and humane treatment under the law. Hostages are unlawfully seized or detained for political, strategic, or ransom purposes. Unlike POWs, hostages aren’t necessarily combatants, and their capture violates international law.

Hamas has labelled the Israeli practice of incarcerating those who have committed acts of terror or serious public disturbances after the due judicial process as “hostage-taking”. The recent hostage exchanges involving those Israelis kidnapped on 7 October 2023 have resulted in

the release of thousands of convicted Palestinian criminals for a hundred or so Israelis that Hamas holds illegally. No stretch of the imagination can find equivalency in the methods that both sides have used to detain their prisoners, nor the culpability of those detained. Besides the small number of members of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) captured on 7 October, most of the hostages

are innocent civilians.

The same cannot be said of the criminals, ranging from murderers, maimers, and insurrectionists that the Israelis have been forced to release.

Taking hostages is a powerful weapon in asymmetrical situations. The IDF possesses a huge advantage over Hamas in terms of fighting power and firepower. Hamas

uses its Palestinian civilian population as human shields – a form of hostage in combat situations – to curb Israeli fire power. Using civilians and Israeli hostages to diminish the IDF’s fighting power is a highly effective means of curtailing Israeli ground and air operations. Every civilian death is a propaganda victory for Hamas, as the IDF must go to extraordinary lengths to limit collateral damage and ensure that the Israeli hostages come to no harm. Circumstances have required the IDF, attempting to at least free some of the hostages, to conduct its operations around enforced ceasefires, which favour Hamas.

Urban warfare, war at its most nightmarish, has gained precedence in the 21st century. The urban environment, which heavily favours the defender, has become the refuge of the weaker force. The use of civilians as human shields and the taking of hostages act as powerful force multipliers for

the weaker side in asymmetrical warfare. Modern warfare demands that modern armies adapt to the new normal, and build a doctrine to neutralise a determined and ruthless enemy in the urban environment. New technology such as drones and guided munitions will be used to gather intelligence and to direct fire more accurately to limit collateral damage. The new urban warfare doctrine must include ever higher levels of combined and joint arms operations. The dissemination of information surrounding the conduct of the operation demands the utmost professionalism to produce a fit-for-public product

with full co-operation with those conducting the operations. The Israeli information efforts have been amateurish at best, and downright harmful at worst. The propaganda war has assumed a new significance and heavily favours the “victim” or “weaker side”.

The tragedy of this conflict is that Hamas can even use dead hostages as bargaining chips. Common sense demands that one should never negotiate with terrorists, as this will encourage similar behaviour in the future. However, it’s impossible to ignore the plight of hundreds of Israeli hostages, allowing the whole process to become one of damage control and choosing the unpleasant path of least havoc.

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

The war we need to talk about

ROLENE MARKS

Hardly a day goes by without the ubiquitous beeping of incoming rockets or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in Israel’s north, a border area under immense threat from Iranian sponsored proxy Hezbollah. While the world focuses attention on Israel’s military operations in Gaza following the atrocities committed by Hamas on 7 October, the north is heating up. Hezbollah started firing anti-tank missiles and rockets on Israeli homesteads and positions in the north on 8 October.



Hezbollah fighters in southern Lebanon in May 2023

Israel has long anticipated that should war break out on one front, it will inevitably break out on others as well. Israel isn’t only fighting Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in the north, it’s also dealing with increased tension in the West Bank, especially during Ramadan; opportunistic Iranian attacks; the transfer of weapons from Syria; and the Houthi threat in the Red Sea.

Hezbollah poses a significantly greater threat than Hamas. The Iranian proxy has unequivocally violated United Nations Resolution 1701, which calls for Hezbollah to remain north of the Litani River. The UN Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) recently had its mandate extended, yet has done nothing to rein in Hezbollah aggression.

Hezbollah is Hamas on steroids.

Hezbollah’s equivalent of Hamas’s Nukba fighters, known as the Radwan forces, are a lot more sophisticated and better trained, and Hezbollah’s arsenal of rockets is estimated in excess of 160 000. These rockets, which are significantly more sophisticated than those fired by Hamas, have the entire state of Israel covered. It’s a terrifying thought.

As the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) evacuated southern communities in preparation for the military operation into Gaza, so northern communities evacuated as well. Towns and kibbutzim on the border are ghost towns, and

the impact of this on farms and the regional economy has been massive.

Lebanese residents in the south of the country have also been evacuated, and an estimated 91 000 have fled their homes.

Hezbollah has fired thousands of rockets at Israeli positions, causing a massive amount of damage to hundreds of buildings and homes. In recent days, it caused widespread destruction on a wine farm and to chicken coops. Hezbollah has also fired towards IDF military positions, and Ziv Hospital sustained a direct hit. Several soldiers and civilians have been killed.

To date, there has been no condemnation from the international community, but diplomatic efforts are in place

to try prevent a widespread war from breaking out. Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant has repeatedly warned Hezbollah not to test the Jewish state, saying, “The noses of our fighter jets are pointed north.”

Hezbollah is recognised as a terror organisation by several countries, and has been described as a “state within a state”, having representation in the Lebanese government.

Najib Mikati, the prime minister of the interim government in Lebanon, said the Lebanese government would continue to work for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and to return south Lebanese residents to their towns. He said he was certain the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip would include the countries of the region, and they would have “long-term stability and peace”.

Hezbollah is a proxy of Iran, and is unlikely to take directives from the interim government.

In response to escalating attacks on Israeli sovereign territory, Israel is striking Hezbollah targets, some as far into Lebanese territory as Baalbek, 265km from the border.

On Tuesday, 26 March, Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese media outlets *Al Jadeed* and *Al Mayadeen* reported that Israel had struck terror targets north of Baalbek for the first time since the Gaza war began. The strike, near the north eastern town of Zboud, was in response to the missile fire carried out by the terror group against the Mount Meron air traffic control base.

In spite of rumoured cautions from Iran for Hezbollah not to enter into a full-scale war with Israel, there’s growing concern that

Israel will inevitably have to enter the south of Lebanon in order to push Hezbollah north of the Litani River, in compliance with UN Resolution 1701.

Israel wants quiet on its northern border and for residents to return to their homes. I’m sure

Lebanese civilians want the same for their residents of the south. Let’s hope Hezbollah wants that as well, but emboldened by Hamas’s invasion of Israel on 7 October and its sworn solidarity with its ideological brothers, it seems less likely by the day.



T"וב

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Pandor’s pandering fails to douse US ire

>>>Continued from page 1

on everything, and so to seek to punish South Africa because there’s a disagreement on particular policy areas is a most unfortunate response,” she said.

According to DIRCO, Pandor was in the US to “affirm the very positive relationship between South Africa and the United States of America, to continue to advocate for a greater economic partnership ... as well as the continued participation of South Africa in the African Growth and Opportunity Act.”

“We will see how this pans out,” Gruzd said. “But cutting South Africa off from AGOA might have the opposite effect – driving it into the arms of Russia, China and Iran.”

“The ANC is attempting to shift its orientation towards BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates] countries, to more radical revolutionary players in the world, while at the same time trying to placate and pacify existing Western markets,”

said political analyst Daniel Silke, who described Pandor’s Washington stint as “an attempt at damage control”.

“South Africa needs to wake up to what these legislators are saying,” he said. “The damage to South Africa’s economy can be substantial. At the same time, however, it’s not in the interests of the US to act punitively against South Africa but to keep it engaged with the West ”

In his weekly newsletter released on Monday, 25 March, President Cyril Ramaphosa said South Africa had “deliberately avoided aligning our country with any of the major powers or blocs”.

Ramaphosa said the Bill provided an opportunity for discussion, through which South Africa could clarify its foreign policy positions.

Contrary to what the Bill posits, Ramaphosa maintained that South Africa was a neutral state that promoted peace, security, and development on the African continent and across the world.

DISCOVER YOUR HIDDEN LITHUANIAN PASSPORT: 9 OUT OF 10 SUCCESS STORIES START WITH ZERO DOCUMENTS

The idea that reclaiming Lithuanian citizenship requires an extensive paper trail has deterred many from exploring their ancestral roots. However, the truth is surprisingly encouraging – a lack of documents is not a deal-breaker. Dainius Ambrazaitis, a legal expert in Lithuanian citizenship from IN JURE, reveals a striking statistic: "9 out of 10 of my clients do not have such documents. This is completely normal and definitely not a problem".

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The simplified process

Initiating the journey merely requires booking a free consultation with the legal expert, Dainius Ambrazaitis, who specializes in Lithuanian citizenship. The success rate is astonishing, with the vast majority of cases leading to positive outcomes, debunking the myth that a lack of documents is a roadblock."

"I had never thought that I would say that I am a Lithuanian citizen. With minimal information around my maternal and paternal Lithuanian background, Dainius had assured me that my application would be valid." G. Saben, SA

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SA was bought cheaply but will pay dearly, says Murray

PETA KROST

The South African government is throwing away its post-apartheid moral capital because “it’s up for hire”, British journalist and author Douglas Murray said on a visit to South Africa recently.

“South Africa is doing what incompetent governments often do when they can’t fix the most basic problems,” he told the *SA Jewish Report* on 14 March. “If you can’t fix electricity supply, don’t tell me you’re interested in policing a conflict on another continent.”

Murray, who has been covering the Israel-Hamas war since 7 October and the Middle East conflict for two decades, was a guest of the *SA Jewish Report* at an event on 14 March.

“If they [the government] were really interested in conflict resolution or taking the perpetrators of genocide to the ICJ [International Court of Justice], they should go for the Fulani militia who are trying to commit genocide among the Christians in northern Nigeria. They should also focus on the 300 000 people killed in Yemen, but they don’t give a damn about that, do they? It’s all about what they can get out of it,” he said in a one-on-one interview with the *SA Jewish Report* before he spoke to a crowd of almost 600 people in person and more than 20 000 online.

Murray said he firmly believed that the South African government had been paid for what

they had done against Israel. “Clearly, they have been promised money by Iran, which is why your foreign minister travelled there straight after 7 October,” he said.

“The moral capital that this country does still possess from the overthrow of apartheid, and the example this country gave to the world in the aftermath of that, is being spent by Iran.”

He said he was appalled to see how the Iranians were having their way with South Africa, getting it to talk about a genocide that isn’t a genocide and apartheid that isn’t apartheid.


“It shows that the ANC government has a clear price for anything, and their price is quite cheap. The cost is this country’s reputation. It’s so shameful.”

Murray, who has been in Israel since days after 7 October, has been outspoken in condemning Hamas for what it has done and continues to do. For him, Hamas’s guilt was clear, having witnessed the aftermath of 7 October and interviewed hundreds who were caught up in the day of terror.

Saying that he had a “low tolerance threshold for lies”, Murray said that in covering the Israeli-Palestinian crisis over the years, he was always amazed by the fact that “what I saw with my own eyes was so different to what was being reported elsewhere. This really got under my skin.”


Not being Jewish, he said he had an “emotional attachment” to Israel and the Jewish people. “I’m moved by the situation and story

“THE MORAL CAPITAL THAT THIS COUNTRY DOES STILL POSSESS FROM THE OVERTHROW OF APARTHEID, AND THE EXAMPLE THIS COUNTRY GAVE TO THE WORLD IN THE AFTERMATH OF THAT, IS BEING SPENT BY IRAN.”



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Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

of Israel and the Jewish people, and by the horrible motivations that people have to attack them,” he said.

Often a lone voice in a sea of anti-Israel media, Murray said, “I wouldn’t care if I was a minority of one. I’m determined to speak the truth no matter what.”

On 7 October, he was in New York and realised there was something terribly wrong in Israel when he saw an image sent to him of Hamas firing an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) down the main road of Sderot, a town on the Gaza border.

The next day, when he saw what he thought was an anti-Israel protest in Times Square only to find it was a celebration of the massacre in Israel, he was determined to get to Israel fast. “We who cared weren’t even given 24 hours before they celebrated what they did to Jews,” he said.

“I needed to see for myself what happened, and I did, which made me obliged to pay testimony to it.”

He went to all the sites of the massacre, collected testimonies from survivors, people in hospitals, and first responders. “The head of United Hatzalah said that what he saw in one hour on 7 October was far worse than everything he had seen in 30 years doing this work.”

Murray went on to say that while there were many horror stories, there were as many of heroism.

He told of one man in his 30s who woke up in Jerusalem, realised what was happened, took guns, and drove down south, leaving behind a farewell message to his wife and family because he didn’t believe he would survive to return.

For 24 hours, he fought terrorists down south before returning.

Murray’s regular Israeli cameraman went down south to visit a friend in Kfar Aza on the day, and landed up fighting and killing a number of terrorists. “He’s a civilian, not a fighter, but he was caught in the crossfire and came out fighting,” Murray said.

“There are heroes everywhere, not least of all the men and women who re-enlisted and have been fighting to defend their country since 7 October. I’m encouraged by their bravery and commitment to their country.”

Murray said he was astonished at how incredible the youth had been since 7 October, and insisted that young leaders were emerging stronger than ever. “They will be the legacy from this war,” he said.

He maintains that those who deny what happened on 7 October in Israel are making far more of a statement about who they are and their values than those of Israel. “I simply won’t debate with them, much like I won’t debate with Holocaust deniers,” he told the *SA Jewish Report*.

Murray said he found it hard to believe that people “suck up the lies” put out by Hamas. “How is it that directly after a hospital is hit by a missile, they know exactly how many people

were killed? It took Israel months to work out who was killed or kidnapped on 7 October. It’s simply not that simple,” he said.

Then, he said, there’s the issue of Hamas propagandists regularly getting their stories mixed up. “On the one hand, they speak about Gaza being a ‘concentration or prison camp’, and then simultaneously say, ‘It had been a set of fine Arab cities before Israel attacked.’ How can it be both?”

“Then, Hamas has been claiming genocide for 15 years, first in 2009 and then 2014, but how does it reconcile that with saying that the majority of Gazans are under 30?”

He’s certain Israel will destroy Hamas, but not so sure what will happen after that. “Hamas has been in charge in Gaza for 18 years, which is exactly how long it takes for a generation to undergo formal education and to create a society of sociopaths who celebrate the massacre of innocent people. Such people worked with and for Israelis, and then gave information to Hamas to brutally slaughter them,” he said.

“I’ve seen the maps from the bodies of terrorists, which show exactly where specific people live and who they live with. These are the Palestinian neighbours with whom people demand Israel makes peace. This, to me, is not only unfair but crazy.”

According to Murray, in the West Bank, 75% to 80% of the population would vote for Hamas if there was an election.

He insists that Israel has no choice but to eradicate Hamas, but it also needs to re-establish its military and intelligence deterrents. “The Israelis are still asking how 7 October was possible. This is a big trauma because Israelis must feel safe in their home.”

He went on to say that it was also vital to ensure that Iran – which he said was 100% behind the terrorists – didn’t come out with a win. This also meant, he said, that the 160 000 higher grade missiles facing Israel from its northern border must be destroyed. “This war cannot be over unless those rockets are gone. Israel cannot live peacefully with them there.”

Murray said he believed that though many want to blame Netanyahu for the ongoing war and death, any Israeli leader would lead the war the same way he did. “Israel had no choice but to go to war with Hamas and to eradicate it,” he said.

Netanyahu will never take personal responsibility for what happened, he said, because as a leader, he knows it would be used by his opponents, making it impossible for him to govern.

Though Murray wouldn’t say who he believed would be the next Israeli leader, he said, “A new generation of political leaders have shown themselves in the past five months, which is as it should be.”

The younger generation of Israelis had proven to be brave, strong, and wise, he said, and he’s sure they will be taking a healthy Israel into the future.

DA double speak: Steenhuisen trips over Gaza question

TALI FEINBERG

Democratic Alliance (DA) party leader John Steenhuisen shocked the Jewish community when he put his weight behind the South African case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Steenhuisen's response to a question about whether what was happening in Gaza was genocide was, "We've got international organisations [like] the ICJ which is tasked with adjudicating these things. I've said very clearly from the beginning that we must respect the processes of the ICJ. We must respect the outcome because that's international law. And as a party that supports international law, we'll abide by whatever the outcome is."

He was answering questions during a discussion at *Daily Maverick's The Gathering* event on 14 March.

However, Steenhuisen told the *SA Jewish Report*, "We're not backing the ICJ case. The point I made was that it's the appropriate forum for genocide to be determined. It's not up to politicians or social media opportunists to declare whether something is a genocide."

"The 7 October attacks were heinous, inhumane, and barbaric," he said. "This is why we issued a number of statements condemning them." He believes Israel has the right to defend itself, especially after the massacre, and in addition, "any ceasefire, temporary or permanent, will have to be preceded by the release of all hostages held by Hamas. No pathways to peace are open while the hostages remain in captivity."

It was the DA which has questioned the motivation, backing, and funding of South Africa's case against Israel at the ICJ.

However, Steenhuisen told *The Gathering*, "We don't need to wait however long it's going to take for the ICJ to make a decision about whether it's genocide, to agree that what's happening there needs to stop immediately. We need a ceasefire. We need parties to come to the table, and we need to work towards finding a lasting peace. Let's get humanitarian aid in there. But let's also

start looking for mature leadership in Palestine and in Israel to come together like we did in South Africa and negotiate a way forward."

Asked at *The Gathering*, "If we wake up tomorrow and the DA has the majority, would you continue to pursue the ICJ case?" Steenhuisen responded, "Well, the case has to continue because it has been laid and due process has to follow. I don't think it would be in anyone's interest to withdraw the case, nor would you be able to do so. But what I would do is make sure that South Africa plays a constructive role in trying to bring people together."

To the *SA Jewish Report*, Steenhuisen said, "The case cannot be withdrawn as it was accepted by the ICJ and argued by both sides before the ICJ. The process now awaits judgement. The case could have been withdrawn only prior to a hearing."

At *The Gathering*, he said, "We've got a unique offer to make to the Middle East because we, too, were on the brink of a war situation in South Africa. Continuing the bombardment isn't going to get the hostages released. Negotiation is going to get the hostages released."

Though his comments imply that the Middle East conflict simply needs to follow a similar path to resolution as apartheid South Africa, Steenhuisen told the *SA Jewish Report*, "I've never once compared the situation in Israel to apartheid. I did, however, say that South Africa could play a far more constructive role in easing the conflict. This is largely because many thought the divisions and political situation in South Africa was intractable yet we were able to overcome it through peaceful negotiations."

For him, the ideal situation in the Middle East would be a "secure, flourishing Israel living alongside an independent Palestine with a democratically elected government, working together to promote peace and prosperity in the two countries and the region".

Asked by the *SA Jewish Report* what his approach was to antisemitism and virulent anti-Israel hatred in this country, he said, "I've spoken out consistently against discrimination, stereotyping, and hatred in all its forms, and will continue to do so."

Local political analyst Daniel Silke believes Steenhuisen was "caught somewhat off guard by the nature of the question put to him, and his response was what I would regard as a fairly messy response, clearly ill-prepared for the question. But of course, the questioner was also looking to put the DA on the spot and seeking to continue the theme that the DA is more supportive of Israel than the African National Congress [ANC] or many of the other South African political parties."

"This was clearly an attempt to continue to extract as much oxygen as possible out of the Israel/Gaza situation and to try and catch Steenhuisen off guard, which I think the questioner did manage to do," said Silke. "I don't believe his answer necessarily backed the ICJ [case] in any substantive way. He tried to wiggle his way out of the question, not being particularly clear on the answer, and I don't think this necessarily reflects any kind of substantive shift in the DA's more nuanced approach to the Middle East."

"I don't think, therefore, that this would alienate the DA's backers or funders or even the Jewish community for that matter, which is probably more likely to vote for the DA than most of the other parties. One shouldn't get carried away by the statements from Steenhuisen, but it did reflect how easy it is for a politician to get derailed by a tough question, particularly on this very emotive issue. This issue is still playing itself out in Western Cape politics and could very well have further resonance. The DA therefore must tread quite carefully, and needs to provide detailed speaking notes to Steenhuisen and its other public representatives in how to handle such awkward questions."

Economic and political advisor Dr Frans Cronje said, "I understood John to say that if his party found itself in a post-election government, that government would inherit the case from its predecessor, which is correct. The full make-up of that new government would determine how it chose to proceed with the case and similar cases. This may be a very difficult issue to navigate, and shouldn't be allowed to scupper the chances of success for that government. I further understood John to say that South Africa's experience in brokering a domestic democratic dispensation might be valuable in the Middle East, which is again correct."

Said Professor Karen Milner, the national chairperson of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, "There should always be an acknowledgement that a ceasefire would be impossible while Hamas is still holding hostages in Gaza. We would hope that calls for the release of civilian hostages being held in unspeakable conditions by Hamas should be uppermost in all comments on the war."

Benji Shulman, the director of public policy at the South African Zionist Federation (SAZF), said, "The SAZF reaffirms that the fastest and most effective way to end the fighting and further loss of life is for Hamas to release the hostages and lay down its arms. Only a Gaza Strip free of Hamas dictatorial rule, its use of human shields, civilian infrastructure, and theft of aid can move towards a pro-peace regime and a better future for all inhabitants of the Middle East."

"The ANC-led government continues to act as the legal arm of Hamas and Iran, wasting taxpayers' money and ignoring the spread of Islamist extremism on the African continent," Shulman said. "It also imperils South Africa's relationships with our trading partners and major trade deals such as AGOA [the African Growth and Opportunity Act] which are worth billions of rands to our economy."



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Israel boycott motion fails at UCT

TALI FEINBERG

A motion put to a vote by the University of Cape Town (UCT) senate calling for an academic boycott of Israeli institutions and research entities failed on 13 March, after being voted down by a narrow margin.

It was one of three motions regarding Israel put to the senate on 8 March. According to reports, after vigorous debate, it was decided that the first motion should be an anonymous online vote to prevent intimidation. Sixty senate members voted in support of the motion, 75 voted against, and 15 abstained.

The motion, put forward by Professor Susan Levine, stated that, “The University of Cape Town resolves to not participate and co-operate in any events, activities, agreements, or projects involving Israeli academic institutions, research entities, lobby groups, corporations, foundations, academic forums, and entities that accept funding from Israel.

“This stance will be maintained until these institutions clearly condemn the ongoing genocide of Palestinian people at the hands of the Israeli state; until these institutions categorically condemn violation of Palestinian human rights and violations of international law; and, until they announce their commitment to safeguarding Palestinian people’s right to life, equality, and dignity.” The motion was seconded by Associate Professor Tracey

Naledi.

Adam Mendelsohn, the director of the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and a member of the senate, said, “The implications of a pro-boycott vote were potentially calamitous”. David Benatar, emeritus professor of philosophy, said, “The university would have paid a heavy price if it had adopted the resolution, which would have required the approval not only of senate but also of [higher body], the council. The risk of that has been mitigated, at least for now.”

Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape SAJBD) Chairperson Adrienne Jacobson said, “The Cape SAJBD

senate is the top body for determining academic matters at UCT, and it’s academic matters that are at the heart of such a significant decision.” Mendelsohn said the senate’s membership included all full professors, heads of department, members of the student representative council (SRC), and other representatives.

In response to the vote, the UCT SRC, which is mostly made up of members of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) student organisation, said it was “disgusted” at the outcome of the vote, adding that “this speaks to the regressive attitude of this institution in protecting the privileged. In this instance, Israel is the aggressor and the Palestinian people are the oppressed and have been for over 75 years. The EFF Students Command-led SRC will be communicating with students, progressive student formations, academics, and staff on steps to be taken in making the Palestinian voice heard and in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle against colonial Israel. From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.”

Mendelsohn said the decision to take the vote online “was made at the end of a very long meeting. After more than two hours spent debating a single motion, senate was exhausted and divided. Senate typically votes by a show of hands, but for very contentious matters can opt for a paper ballot or an online poll. In this instance, the

call for an online poll was broadly supported.

“The senate meeting was heated,” he said. “Only three motions were on the agenda, all relating to Israel. Attendance was relatively poor. Many of the loudest voices at the meeting were highly critical of Israel. Their arguments relied on emotion. Most of the counterarguments called for consideration of potential costs to the university. In such an environment, it was difficult to tell what the majority felt and thought until the results of the ballot were in.”

Gon believes “the online, secret vote was significant. In the febrile atmosphere that UCT often finds itself in when anti-Israel protests erupt, this is how it should be done. And it proves this by virtue of the high levels of intolerance at UCT due to the Israel/Hamas war. Any other way would have been a farce.

“The immediate assumption [of the outcome of the vote] would be that within the virulently antisemitic and anti-Israel sentiment, and the activities of the pro-Palestinian lobbies at UCT, the vote would easily be against Israel,” she said. “However, most interesting and positive is that the very same conflict also invoked a sense that Israel deserved more support than its detractors would consider. With anonymity, senate could vote without fear of intimidation.”

Another motion that was put forward to the senate by Professor Leslie London and seconded by Associate Professor Fatima Seedat, and is yet to be voted on, states, “The manipulation of the definition of antisemitism to include any criticism of Israel or Zionism is both intellectually without foundation and a violation of academic freedom.”

It calls for a rejection of the definition of

antisemitism by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, which states that “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” is antisemitic, as is “drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis”.

This motion also states that “the evidence suggesting that the destruction of Gaza’s education systems was a deliberate plan of the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] must be examined by the ICJ [International Court of Justice] in its determination of genocidal intent”. It also called for “an immediate ceasefire, the passage of humanitarian aid, and the return of all captives”.

Gon believes this motion is “so sweeping and all-encompassing, it’s unlikely to pass unless it’s radically amended. It’s trying to ‘out-ICJ’ the ICJ.”

A third motion put to the senate, proposed by Professor Lydia Cairncross and seconded by Associate Professor Ruchi Chaturvedi, which is also yet to be voted on, states that “UCT senate resolves that no UCT academic may enter into relations, or continue relations with, any research group and/or network that includes members of the Israel Defense Forces, and/or any member of the broader Israeli military establishment.”

Gon believes this motion “may succeed just as a sop to the anti-Israel lobby, as it probably means little in reality to UCT”.

“The fact that the vote was defeated first time round suggests that UCT at the top levels hasn’t welcomed boycott resolutions,” Gon said. “It hasn’t, for probably a variety of reasons, wanted to be an outlier in academia.”



Pro-Palestinian supporters show their disappointment in the failed academic boycott of Israeli institutions

is pleased that calm and rational minds prevailed. For the second time in five years, the UCT senate has rejected an academic boycott, and we welcome the decision. Academic freedom is sacrosanct, especially at a world-renowned educational institution like UCT. Our political views, no matter what they are, shouldn’t compromise this.”

Sara Gon, who has written extensively about academic boycotts at UCT, said, “The



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OPINION

DANIEL YAKCOBI



The year 2024 will be remembered as the year that opened people’s eyes. The average person is so confused when it comes to geopolitical affairs, it has become difficult to share our point of view on matters that ultimately affect our life and our children’s future.

But instead of feeling victimised, you should know that you have the power to create whatever future you desire. In Africa, I learned the phrase “*ubuntu*”, which means “I am because you are” – we’re all connected, and what’s happening on the other side of the world has an effect on me and vice-versa. In simple language, we know it as being aware of one’s thoughts, speech, and actions.



What’s happening in the geopolitical arena that affects global commerce, our ability to provide for our families, and the safety and security of our loved ones?

Is the global community on the brink of World War III due to authoritarian regimes and their relentless pursuit of power at all costs? Do we as average people on the street have the power to be the cause of world peace and a common future?

Let’s try to understand the forces behind the global situation.

The common denominator among Russia, China, Iran, and other authoritarian regimes is their relentless desire to maintain power at all costs. This fixation on retaining control often leads to a disregard for the well-being and aspirations of their citizens, resulting in various domestic and international conflicts and crises.

In Russia, Putin’s regime is driven by fear of losing power, as is shown by its aggressive actions in Ukraine to prevent its drift towards the European Union. The Kremlin’s narrative revolves around preserving Russian influence and preventing the spread of Western ideals that could threaten Putin’s grip on power.

Similarly, the aspirations of the Islamic Republic of Iran – as articulated by its leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei – to spread Islam globally, has profound implications not only for its own citizens, but for the broader international community. Khamenei’s declared desire to export the Islamic revolution underscores Iran’s commitment to promoting its version of political Islam beyond its borders, often at the expense of stability and peace in the region. Sadly,

the resources expended on exporting the revolution divert attention and funds away from addressing domestic challenges such as economic stagnation, social inequality, and political repression.

This pattern of authoritarian leadership which prioritises personal interests over the greater good of citizens has profound implications for global stability. In South Africa, the ruling African National Congress appears to be following a similar path of prioritising its interests over those of the people, underscoring the universality of this phenomenon. When leaders become more concerned with retaining power than serving the greater good, the consequences are dire for democracy, human rights, and global stability.

The conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, as well as China’s expanding influence in Africa, and Iran’s extremist Islamic jihadist ideology which transforms peaceful societies into terror hubs, are symptomatic of a world where autocratic regimes pursue power and resources with little regard for the consequences.

Does the average person on the street have the power to influence the outcome? Can we be the cause rather than the effect?

In times of uncertainty and challenge, the role of community leaders and media influencers becomes even more crucial in shaping the narrative and fostering positive change. Today, anyone with a smartphone can lead from the front, reaching out with a heartfelt appeal to stand together and advocate for a common future built on education, equality, and the development of a society that thrives on shared values and acceptance of diversity.

We’re living in a world where the voices of division and hatred often seem louder than those advocating for unity and progress. However, it’s precisely in these moments that our collective voice must rise above the noise, echoing the values of inclusivity, respect, and understanding.

As brothers and sisters for *ubuntu*, community leaders, and media influencers, you possess a unique platform and influence that can spark meaningful conversations and inspire action among your audience and congregation.

I urge readers to use their platforms to encourage followers and listeners to stand firm for a society in which everyone, regardless of their background, culture, or region, is treated with dignity and respect.

I implore you to join me in rallying our communities and audiences around the common values that bind us together. Let’s demonstrate that the real power lies in our unity and unwavering dedication to create a better world for generations to come.

Be the cause rather than the effect.

• Daniel Yakcobi is the chief operations officer of the SA – Israel Chamber of Commerce.

Gaza War – a painful echo of hubris of 1973

OPINION

ITZHAK BROOK MD



I was a battalion physician in Sinai during the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Those who fought and survived hoped that the bitter lessons of that war had been learned and that Israel would never experience a similar catastrophe. Tragically, one day after the 50th anniversary of that war, history repeated itself with the devastating Hamas attack of 7 October. The similarities between these events are chillingly striking.

The Yom Kippur War began with an attack by Egypt and Syria on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar. There were many signs that war was imminent. Both countries visibly massed hundreds of thousands of soldiers on their borders with Israel. Substantive warnings came from Israeli intelligence services, as well as Jordan’s King Hussein and the spy Ashraf Marwan, the son-in-law of the late Egyptian president, Abdel Nasser. Notably, a week before Yom Kippur, Russian military advisors in Syria and Egypt sent their families back home. Israel’s front lines were poorly defended – there were only 500 reserve soldiers stationed on the Suez Canal facing Egypt, and only 3 000 on the Golan Heights facing Syria.

After the victories of the 1967 Six-Day War, when the Arabs had been quickly and soundly defeated, both the Israeli military and the general population were still collectively steeped in hubris. They ignored the costly War of Attrition of the early 1970s, and seemed to ignore the rearming of Arab armies which had acquired new anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles, thereby erasing both the air and armoured corps superiority of Israel.

By 1973, the military defence of Sinai was based on a line of fortification called the “Bar-Lev Line”, as well as a plan to ignite gasoline over the Suez Canal should the Egyptian army try to cross it. The Israeli army had also installed a sophisticated system intended to provide early warning of an incipient attack. None of these worked as the Egyptian army attacked on Yom Kippur. The Bar-Lev Line was overrun within hours; both the plan to set fire to the canal and the early warning system were complete failures.

The Israeli government was held captive by the premise created by the chief of military intelligence that the Arabs, lacking sufficient military aircraft, were incapable of mounting an attack against Israel.

Similarly, on 7 October 2023, Hamas lured Israel into believing that it wasn’t planning to attack. Rather, as the entity holding power in the government, it projected the illusion that its resources were focused on the economic rehabilitation of the Gaza Strip. The plan to invade Israel was kept secret by Hamas leadership, and wasn’t even revealed to its own invading forces until the morning of the attack.

The attack on 7 October took place on the Jewish holidays of Shabbat and Simchat Torah, which occurred on the same day, when relatively few soldiers were stationed on the border with Gaza. The reduced number of soldiers reflected the belief of the commanders of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) that Hamas was incapable of mounting an effective attack and that any potential invasion would be prevented by both a fortified security wall and a system of automated weapons. The IDF had erected

observation towers and relied on surveillance balloons to monitor activities in Gaza. Meanwhile, it diverted troops from the border to deal with the growing unrest in the West Bank. As has been extensively documented, Hamas bulldozed and bypassed the supposedly impenetrable Israeli wall by flying over it and attacking from the Mediterranean Sea. It destroyed the observation towers and the military communication systems, thus overwhelming poorly defended Israeli settlements and military installations with thousands of attackers. The renowned IDF was powerless to stop the catastrophic onslaught.

In hindsight, there were multiple warnings for months, if not longer, that Hamas had been planning an attack on Israel. First, its attack plan, known as “Jericho Walls”, was known to Israeli intelligence. Second, both the Egyptian and the United States intelligence agencies had warned Israel about the risk of an imminent assault from Gaza. Third, Hamas fighters had been viewed practicing the takeover of Israeli military and civilian locations using models of Israeli communities. Finally, analysts and spotters trained to analyse border irregularities warned that Hamas had begun preparations for an attack.

Just as in 1973, neither the military high command nor the political establishment took these warnings seriously, belittling the capabilities of Hamas and dismissing the warnings from other intelligence sources as well as their own border spotters.



Itzhak Brook during the Yom Kippur War

And, as in the Yom Kippur War, those on the frontlines were sacrificed and those who rushed in to assist them were outnumbered and outgunned. While only Israeli soldiers took the brunt of the attacks during the Yom Kippur War, on 7 October, the full range of the Israeli population was victimised, including children and the elderly.

The 7 October massacre shook Israel to its core; its long-term effects are yet to be realised.

It’s critical that for Israel to survive and fulfil its promise of being a democratic and safe haven for all its citizens, it must engage in a thorough and painful investigation to unearth the roots of this massive failure in strategic intelligence and display of national arrogance, to learn, understand, and incorporate the bitter lessons of 7 October. History mustn’t be allowed to repeat itself.

• Itzhak Brook MD is professor of paediatrics at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. and the author of “In the Sands of Sinai – A Physician’s Account of The Yom Kippur War”.



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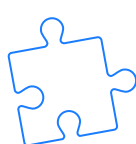
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Mishloach manot for my ‘brother’, imprisoned in Gaza

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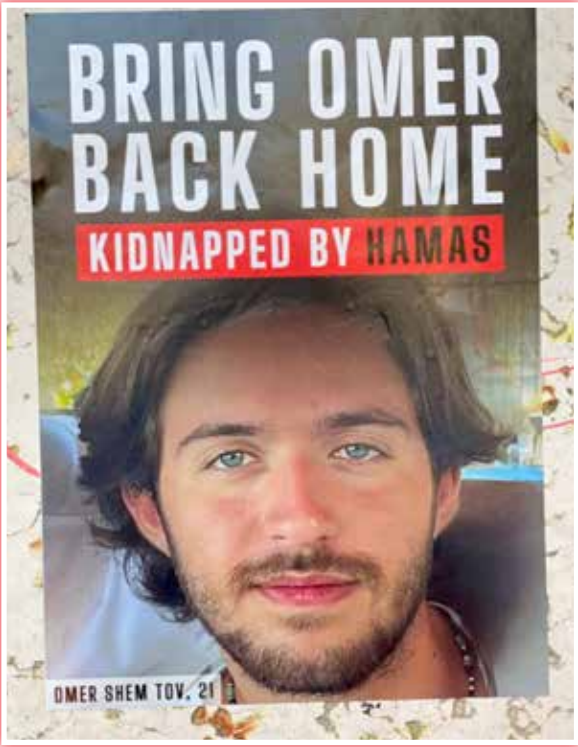
For South African BCom Marketing student Kayla Lowenstein, the call for the return of the hostages is personal. One of the young men still being held hostage by Hamas, along with 132 others, was her host brother when she was in high school at Naale Elite Academy and was living at its boarding school. Omer Shem Tov, her host brother, was taken hostage by Hamas on 7 October, and she used her sense of panic about him to create awareness of his and the other hostages’ plight over Purim through an initiative led by the Jewish National Fund (JNF). On her initiative, the JNF organised a *mishloach manot* – gifts sent to friends or family members for Purim – swap dedicated to the safe return of the hostages. “It’s about taking a happy thing and a happy holiday and being able to connect it to such a dark time,” said Lowenstein. “And to be able to do something on behalf of the hostages who can’t do this *mitzvah* or give back. It’s good to be able to keep their names in memory and to remember them every single day

as much as possible.” Through this initiative, members of the community get a package along with the name and picture of a hostage in Israel for whom they will be performing this *mitzvah*. Lowenstein was paired with the Shem Tov family – Shelley and Malki and their three children, Amit, Dana, and Omer – to be her home from home while she was far from her own family in South Africa. “They made me feel so welcome and at home. I even had a room there. They honestly are my other family, my home away from home,” said Lowenstein, “Omer was the first member of the family that I met when I got there. He would pick me up from the boarding school, and we would chat. We had a sibling relationship.” Lowenstein was at home in Johannesburg on 7 October when she awoke to the horrific news of Hamas invading Israel.

She immediately tried to contact everyone she knew in Israel from her school days, including the Shem Tov family. “A million things were going through my head,” she said. However, the Shem Tov family didn’t respond, and her heart sank when she heard that Omer was

declared missing. “That’s when panic set in,” she said. “We knew he was at the Nova festival, but we were hoping that maybe he had run off somewhere, escaped, and was hiding, but he was there,” Lowenstein said. She later heard from the Shem Tov family that once Hamas militants had entered the music festival, Omer had called his parents to let them know what was happening. As time went on, their ability to communicate with Omer dwindled. Omer shared his location with his family while he was at the music festival, and his parents were able to see his location moving towards Gaza. Later, Omer was declared missing. His family and friends found out only days later that he had been taken hostage by Hamas from a Telegram video showing Omer lying on the ground with one of his friends. His parents were able to recognise Omer

because of his tattoos. Omer’s family told her they had dedicated themselves to bringing Omer and all of the other hostages home. His two sisters, Amit and Dana, have travelled all over the world to bring awareness about his and the others’ plight, and to fight every second they can so they can bring them home. “He’s just such a lively person,” said Lowenstein. “Whenever Omer’s in a room, everyone is laughing and smiling. There’s just no negativity around him. He loves music. He loves being behind a DJ stand. “Whenever I was at the house, I would always hear him singing from my room, whether he was in the shower, the kitchen, or his room. He loved to be with his friends. He loved to be with his family. He and his family have such an incredible bond. They love him so much. He’s just the light of the family. There’s not one bad word that can be said about Omer. He’s just like that happiness in the darkness,” said Lowenstein. “I won’t stop talking about Omer and the other hostages, no matter how difficult it might be, until they are brought home.”



Shembe bring blessings to Sydenham Shul

BENJI SHULMAN

Shabbos at Sydenham Shul took on a very different flavour on Friday, 15 March, when 250 senior members of the Shembe Nazareth Baptist Church and a delegation from the South African Friends of Israel (SAFI) joined the congregation. The Shembe’s demonstration of support for the Jewish community of South Africa and Israel was an indicator that though the African National Congress (ANC)

feet, and our community made them feel at home and welcome. It certainly made a change from what we as Jews experience daily in the media and on social media, which is overwhelming negativity towards Jews and Israel.” “Friday night was a testament to the fact that South Africa Jewry and our friends aren’t our government, and our government doesn’t speak for us,” Lipshitz said. “There was an incredible turnout by our community, which was there to show

on a Friday, the buses and the trains stop operating. It was inspiring to see the Sabbath being practised in this way, so we wanted to come visit the Jewish community to be part of a Sabbath celebration here in South Africa.” As a Christian, he believes being connected with Israel is a source of blessing for his community. “It’s not an accident that the ANC is having so many problems where we come from in KwaZulu-Natal,” he said. “It brought Israel to the ICJ [International Court of Justice] and now, all of a sudden, it has [Jacob] Zuma acting as a thorn in its side with his new party. It’s losing out on the blessings of Israel.” The Shembe is a religious group which, according to Shembe, has more than nine million members in the country and two million in Gauteng. It forms part of African independent church formations that mix Christian observance with traditional Zulu rites. Bafana Modise, the spokesperson for SAFI said, “This meeting shows



different religious communities. Rabbi Yehuda Stern of the Sydenham Highlands North Hebrew Congregation addressed the congregation, touching on the importance of observing Shabbat and the significance of Israel in the Bible. An education session was held with the Shembe delegation including an update about the current political situation, and a discussion with Daniel Yakcobi of the South African Israel Chamber of Commerce about Israeli innovation in Africa. Messages of support were also received from Rowan Polovin, the national chairperson of the South African Zionist Federation, who emphasised the importance of fostering positive relations between South Africa and Israel. Amichai Chikli, Israel’s minister of diaspora affairs, conveyed gratitude for the unwavering support extended by South African communities, emphasising the shared values that unite us. SAFI Chairperson Shaun Zagnoev said, “South African Friends of Israel looks forward to continuing efforts to build bridges across communities, and the promotion of peace and understanding in South Africa and beyond.”



government continues its hostility towards Israel, this doesn’t reflect the view of all South Africans. Nkosi Phakama Shembe, Gauteng leader of the Shembe Nazareth Baptist Church, and the priests of his congregation, attended a Friday night service and dinner hosted by SAFI and made their support known. Simone Lipshitz, a visitor at the shul that night, said, “It was quite overwhelming to see the Shembe, in full garb, participating by clapping and singing along to the Sydenham Shul Choir. They also showed their enthusiasm and appreciation by dancing in the aisles. “Kids and adults alike were on their

support to those who were making an effort to show up for the Jewish community in South Africa. I felt enormous pride in being Jewish that night.” In his address at the Shabbat dinner afterwards, Shembe expressed solidarity with the Jewish community and affirmed the significance of supporting Israel for the betterment of all South Africans. He said many millions of South African citizens supported Israel, and discussed the connections between Sabbath observance in the Jewish and Nazareth Baptist traditions. He said that when he visited Israel, “It was incredible to see that at 14:00



that South Africans don’t all support the government’s stance on Hamas and its anti-Israel position. South Africans support Israel and peace, and by coming together at events like this, we can unite for a better future for our country.” Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein greeted the group and spoke of the importance of interfaith dialogue, solidarity, and mutual respect among

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Q1: How have recent events in Israel impacted Israel's property market?

A: Undoubtedly, recent events in Israel have stirred uncertainty and volatility in the property market, impacting both buyers and sellers. However, the Israeli real estate market remains stable despite global economic turbulence. The resilience of the Israeli economy, along with a thriving property market, underscores its appeal for long-term capital growth. Israel's real estate sector continues to display remarkable strength, driven by a significant shortfall of housing units amid overwhelming demand. Challenges such as land allocation for development and labour shortages exacerbate supply shortages. Additionally, rising aliya numbers and foreign investment in Israel further drive property prices upward.

Q2: Why should investors consider investing in Israeli real estate now?

A: There are several compelling reasons to invest now. First and foremost, the demand for property in Israel exceeds the supply. Unfortunately, since October 7th and the slowdown in construction, this trend has not improved. Over the last three months, we have witnessed increased demand for property from foreign buyers. Additionally, major developers are now offering incentives to buyers who can structure excellent payment terms. With the market's steady growth and stability, now is an opportune time to explore real estate investment in Israel.

Q3: What is the minimum down payment for foreign buyers?

A: For an existing property, a foreigner purchasing a property in Israel would need to fund 50% of the purchase price and a mortgage of 50%, subject to bank approval. However, if buying a property that is part of a new development or a pre-construction project, 10 - 20% will secure the deal with linear payments payable during the development cycle. Once 50% has been paid, the balance of 50% can be funded with a mortgage, which is due on completion. This is how many investors get a foot in the door without having to come up with all the cash at once.

- Property Search
- Project Management
- Interior Design
- Sales Administration
- Legal Services
- Property Management

Q4: What are the additional costs associated with purchasing property in Israel?

A: It's important to remember that there are additional costs, often referred to as "closing costs," which are due upon purchasing your property, whether it's a new project or an existing property. The purchase tax for foreigners is payable on a property; it is typically set at 8% of the property value and scales up according to the purchase price. Note that a reduction is available for Israeli citizens living in Israel and new immigrants buying their first homes. Other costs include legal fees (1% to 1.5% + VAT) and realtor/promoter fees (2% to 5% + VAT).

Q5: What is a building index?

A: This cost only applies to buying a property that is still in the development phase. The building index is government-published; it is an additional amount the government allows developers to charge on any outstanding funds to protect developers and buyers from fluctuations in building costs over the period of development.

Q6: What are the advantages of purchasing in a new development?

A: Purchasing in a new development offers financial "breathing space" as payments can be staggered until the project is developed (3-5 years typically). Historically, this has been very good for capital appreciation. Buyers have more time to arrange the necessary funds, and developers may offer attractive incentives. If you're considering property investment and don't require immediate occupancy, opting for a new development provides the flexibility of additional time to gather the required 50% equity needed. Moreover, many buyers appreciate the opportunity to customize layouts and select finishes according to their preferences. However, it's crucial to ensure you're dealing with reputable developers whose projects are backed by guarantees from financing banks.

Q7: Can buyers purchase property remotely, and what steps are involved?

A: Absolutely. The purchasing process, including opening bank accounts and completing mortgage applications, can be completed remotely. Legal representation and power of attorney facilitate transactions.

Q8: How do you select the projects that you market and sell?

A: For close to 30 years, our team has been locating attractive real estate opportunities in Israel, focusing on high-demand and urban renewal areas where we believe long-term capital appreciation will occur.

Q9: What rental income can a buyer expect from renting out the property?

A: The average rental yield for apartments in Israel typically ranges from 2,5% to 3,5%.

However, this can vary based on location, property type, and market conditions. Some investors may achieve higher yields, especially in high-demand areas or through short-term rentals like Airbnb. It's essential to conduct thorough research and consult with real estate professionals to determine the expected rental yield for specific properties in Israel.

Q10: What costs does the Tenant cover?

A: Tenants typically cover electricity, water, gas, and internet expenses, paying these directly to the relevant service providers. Additionally, they are responsible for the Municipality Tax (Arnona), building Maintenance Fees (Vaad Bayit), and minor repairs and maintenance.

Q11: How did you get involved in Israeli real estate?

A: I speak from experience because before making Aliyah in 2017, I bought my first property from Hold Real Estate. It was a wonderful experience as an investor, and as my relationship with the Hold Real Estate team developed, I recognized the potential in the market, especially for investors abroad. Of course, the investment turned out to be very good.

Q12: What is the first step for someone considering a property purchase in Israel?

A: Firstly, it's important to clarify how much money you want to invest and for what purpose. Is it purely for investment, or holidays, or will you be living in the property? The next step would be to find a partner who can assist you in finding the right opportunity at the right price. Lastly, my advice is not to procrastinate too long, as deals are not on the table for long, and demand is growing. If you find a good deal and trust your partner, don't wait!



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Distiller brings *Pinocchio* to life

LEE TANKLE

Eleven-year-old King David Primary School pupil Caiden Distiller has no strings to hold him down, to make him fret and make him frown as he has been cast as one of three children to play Pinocchio in the Peoples Theatre production of Disney’s *My Son Pinocchio* running from 12 March to 21 April.

In the production, audiences are given a chance to hear the story of the Marionette puppet Pinocchio, brought to life by the Blue Fairy, who is changed into a real boy through bravery, honesty, and selflessness in a series of wild adventures.

This isn’t the first production that Caiden has been involved in, but it’s his first leading role. Caiden was in the production of the Dr Seuss musical *Seussical* and *Shrek The Musical* at the Peoples Theatre, and *Winnie the Pooh* at the National Children’s Theatre.

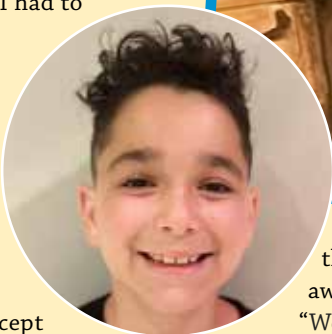
“I didn’t go to formal speech and drama classes, but when my school put on mini-plays in assembly, I always participated and sang. So I’ve always loved performing,” said Caiden. Caiden has been going to singing

lessons at Elizca Coetzer Whiteside for a few months.

“I was excited when I heard I was going to be playing Pinocchio. I didn’t tell anyone because I didn’t want to jinx it. But then when I knew I was guaranteed the part, I told everyone,” he said. “They were excited for me. And the school said they wanted to come watch it.”

Caiden said the hardest part of preparing for the role was memorising his lines. “Pinocchio has quite a few lines. So, there was lots of practising and making sure I get them right. I’m still not 100% sure of them. But in all the shows I’ve done so far, I’ve got them correct. I had to practice the dances and the songs I had to sing.

“My main teacher has been so helpful, so has my Hebrew teacher. I’ll have a lot of schoolwork to catch up, but they send it home for me. And they make sure I understand every concept



Caiden Distiller in *Pinocchio*



they’ve covered while I’m away.”
“We’re extremely proud of our very own

Caiden Distiller who will star as Pinocchio,” King David Primary School Linksfield told the *SA Jewish Report*. “We wish him the best of luck for his performances.”

Caiden said that to prepare for the role, he had read the book *Pinocchio* a few times and watched a few short clips from the movies. “I haven’t watched the most recent *Pinocchio* movie because I heard it was quite scary,” he said. However, through being Pinocchio in this production, he has found new appreciation for the story, “Pinocchio’s a magical show for everyone in it. Everyone has big parts. And it’s a nice show,” he said.

“I’ve learned that if you put 100% of your energy into something, you get the result you put in. But if you put in 25% of your energy, then you get 25% back,” he said.

Caiden’s favourite part of being Pinocchio is at the end of the show, when he turns from a puppet into a real boy who knows “that I must always tell the truth and how important family is”.

King David crowns stage with Queen anthems

REVIEW

HANNA RESNICK



King David High School Linksfield’s production of *We Will Rock You*, directed by Debra Mizrahi, underscored the power of technology, while drawing upon the nostalgia of the rock and roll age. Ben Elton’s jukebox musical, featuring songs from Queen’s iconic discography, was performed from 17 to 19 March, bringing electric energy to the school hall.

The opening group number, a rendition of *Radio Gaga* introduced a group of subservient, robot-like students, along with their teacher, played by Ariella Hirsch, living on the futuristic, dystopic “iPlanet”, controlled by the corporation “Globalsoft”. Within this fictional world, individuals are forced to consume the same computer-generated media and think the same thoughts. Instruments are forbidden, along with anything else that promotes creativity and free thought.

As the mass of students left the stage, the audience met the young outsider, who goes by the name Galileo Figaro (Luke Mostert). After being scolded by his teacher for wanting to make music, he broke out into an emotive performance of *I Want to Break Free*. Mostert’s voice shone in Freddie Mercury’s vocal stylings, an impressive feat for any actor, let alone a high school student.

As the story progressed, it was soon discovered that there were many more nonconformists



The cast of *We Will Rock You*

on iPlanet. The young goth schoolgirl, Scaramouche (Demi Cohen), who later became the love interest of Galileo, sang a passionate take on *Somebody to Love* as other classmates mocked her for standing out.

The young misfits were confronted by two “bohemians” trying to make music, Oz (Leah Kerr-Phillips), named after Ozzy Osbourne, and Brit (Jaxon Cohen), named after Britney Spears. After giving a standout performance of *I Want it All*, the pair took Galileo and Scaramouche back to their own haven, The Heartbreak Hotel.

The rest of the bohemians at the hotel, whose names are also eponyms of various rock legends, were led by Buddy (Eliana Mervis) in their quest to fulfil a prophecy and bring back “real rock and roll”.

The group welcomed the newcomers, explaining their mission and backstory with a moving rendition of *No-One But You (Only the Good Die Young)*, after which the group remembered the true reason that music was made through the song *Crazy Little Thing Called Love*.

The villain of the story, Killer Queen (Jessica Defries), exuded extravagance and provided ample comic relief in her performance of the Queen song by the same name. At the end of act one, however, Killer Queen’s right-hand man, Khashoggi (Gadi Crouse), and other Globalsoft officials raided the Heartbreak Hotel, killing Brit and arresting the rest of the bohemians, leaving behind only Galileo and Scaramouche.

The second act of the play involved more tension and higher stakes, with the rest of the group having been detained and the young couple fighting. However, there were comic moments interspersed throughout, such as a reference to Taylor Swift’s *We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together* and many other modern

hits as well as classic rock songs.

The intricate set design laid out the world of the play, with TV screens with repeated images, representing the Globalsoft corporation, dominating one side of the

choreography not only highlighted the talented cast, but also conveyed the concept of cyberspace and widespread control versus creativity and individualism. The dancers moved as one in the opening scenes of each act, which took place inside Globalsoft’s headquarters, while dances at the Heartbreak Hotel were a lot more fluid and unique to each character.

The costumes furthered this juxtaposition, with dancers wearing matching white and silver outfits in the world of Globalsoft, as opposed to crimped hair, mismatched band tees, fishnets, and leather boots at the Heartbreak Hotel. Killer Queen’s costume embodied the futuristic atmosphere with its rigid structure and blingy details.

The triumphant ending was followed by an encore of *Bohemian Rhapsody*, featuring the entire cast on stage. The cast remained full of energy and ended the night with a high-spirited performance that left audiences cheering and singing along.

• *Hanna Resnick is a former intern at the SA Jewish Report now doing a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of the Witwatersrand.*



Leah Kerr-Phillips and Jaxon Cohen



stage. The other side contained more retro technology, such as radios and older TVs, a motorbike, colourful graffiti, and platformed staging, which contrasted the conformity of the cyber corporation.

Hannah Rudnicki’s



Luke Mostert and Demi Cohen

No lentils or pilchards in this danger zone

As much as I might be a fan of the CSO (Community Security Organisation), I'm not a fan of pilchards. Or lentils. I also avoid drinking Coke at all costs and would hate to have to start doing so during the 2024 national elections. Which is one of the many reasons that I'm uncomfortable with the communicate that this community organisation distributed on Monday evening, 25 March, two months ahead of South Africa going to the polls.

The intention was no doubt pure. Communicate, inform, and allow people to be prepared. And yet the number of messages that I received about the email reflects how it was received by the community. A community, that like Jews around the world, is traumatised, isolated, and hypervigilant already. And which is now being advised to stock up not only on water but also on a "medium-sized bag of red speckled sugar beans (500g)".

The specifics are too much, in my view, and guaranteed to raise anxiety levels of those of us already in the danger zone. Especially if we don't know what red speckled sugar beans are and where to buy them. I can only imagine the conversation on community forums like Joburg Jewish Mommies, where efficient shoppers will be advising those who left their lentil purchase to the last minute where to acquire these essentials. I imagine a desperate housewife writing, "I can't find the 500g bags anywhere. Do you think I should buy the 1kg and then decant them into 250g Tupperwares?"

And another asking how many people per household the calculation is based on. A listener to the ChaiFM Morning Mayhem show on this question suggested the following, "The recommended quantities were based on the requirements for four people for two weeks. Were the JCF (Jewish Consumption Factor) plus, in this specific instance, the JAB (Jewish Anxiety Bonus) considered?"

Another, "Agree about the CSO communicate. Unnecessary panic mongering in my

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



opinion. I clicked on the person who sent it to check if it was legitimate. Early April Fool's joke. On the positive side, if people do go stock up on the suggested supplies, then in June, Yad Aharon will have enough food!"

I also asked them to add suggestions to the list, which included "Chuckles, biltong, Gary Friedman, peppermint crisp pudding, and milk tart".

To understand the thinking behind the message, I chatted to Jevon Greenblatt, director of operations at the CSO. I began by repeating my morning mantra, "I love the CSO, I don't love the communicate", and posed the issue of anxiety and panic to him.

South Africa has had elections before, we've been through significant change, and aside from July 2021, we haven't experienced the events that it seems to be concerned about. He said that although there wasn't specific information about unrest, it believes it's prudent to be prepared.

It wanted to give people enough time to avoid "panic buying", and rather raise awareness now to allow them to do so.

Greenblatt said some years ago, many doubted the need for community security but now, given the incidents of antisemitism around the world, South Africa is excellently positioned to keep installations safe rather than scrambling to catch up like other communities.

There's little doubt that the CSO communicate came from the right place with the best of intentions. I remain of the belief that it was too non-specific about the nature of the threats and too specific about the details. That said, the advice is probably prudent and worth adhering to. Aside from the lentils and pilchards. Which are never a particularly good idea.

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Student courage, media cowardice

Given all that has happened over the past five months, there was always going to be an additional element of viciousness to this year's round of Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) events on university campuses. That was indeed the case, with Jewish students at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in particular being subjected to levels of vitriol and intimidation not seen for many years. The University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), thankfully, was well controlled.

As in the past, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies worked closely with the South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS), the South African Zionist Federation, and others to run effective parallel campaigns to ensure the Jewish presence was visible and our voices heard throughout this always stressful time. A core plank of this was bringing out Mazal Tazazo and Millet Ben Haim, survivors of the Nova festival massacre of 7 October, to speak to Wits and UCT students. Through the Board's head of communications, Charisse Zeifert, a packed programme of media interviews was put together for them, and time was also made for them to engage with the local Jewish community including at King David and Herzlia schools. We're grateful to Tazazo and Ben Haim for coming out at this time and sharing their harrowing stories, thereby helping to remind our society at large how and why this tragic conflict began, and the true nature of the enemy confronting the Israeli people.

Interestingly enough, at both Wits and UCT, the actual IAW displays were sparsely attended. Instead, the primary focus of the demonstrators was to attempt to confront noisily and disrupt what SAUJS was doing. That itself was telling. IAW supporters were entitled to push their narrative within their own space, but it was the opportunity of being able to hurl ugly abuse at their Jewish fellow students and try to shut down whatever they wanted to say that really seemed to animate them. At UCT, it was observed that the worst offenders weren't

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



students but adult political agitators from off-campus. Alongside these in-your-face attacks against anyone expressing even mild solidarity with Israel, there have been continual waves of cyber-abuse, stalking, and doxing on social media platforms.

For all the outrage and anxiety these vile attacks are causing, we're proud and inspired to see the resilience of our Jewish youth in standing their ground and doing so, moreover, with such dignity and restraint. In response to the multiple foul-mouthed insults, threats, hateful accusations, and sometimes even physical intimidation they, as the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies' statement put it, "sang songs of peace, waved posters of innocent men, women, and children who continue to be held hostage by the murderous terrorist organisation Hamas, and displayed phenomenal unity". Our students at Wits similarly refused to be cowed by the thuggish attempts by the other side to silence them.

Unfortunately, if predictably, not everyone was capable of displaying the same intestinal fortitude. One of the media platforms scheduled to interview Nova survivor Ben Haim was the South African Broadcasting Corporation's Metro FM, but in the face of a media backlash, it capitulated to the bullying by cancelling the interview. We have since confronted Metro FM – which as a division of the national broadcaster has no authority to push a particular ideological line while censoring those it doesn't like – on this betrayal of its own core mission and values (see our Facebook page to read our full statement).

• 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

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Purim around the country



Gan Tamar holds Purim Seuda fit for royalty

Non-profit organisation Gan Tamar transformed its premises for its Purim Seuda in Johannesburg on Sunday, 24 March, into a festival of sights, sounds, and flavours.

In just four hours, staff set up 15 tables in the organisation's garden area, transforming it into a venue fit for royalty. More than 180 *mishloach manot* bags of all colours were packed, containing delicacies and *matanot le'evyonim*, and the buffet table literally squirmed under the weight of the seemingly bottomless amounts of food and donations from the generous community. A party isn't a party without music and, with balloons waving in the wind and the delicious aroma emanating from the braai, it was all systems go.



Gan Tamar Purim Seuda

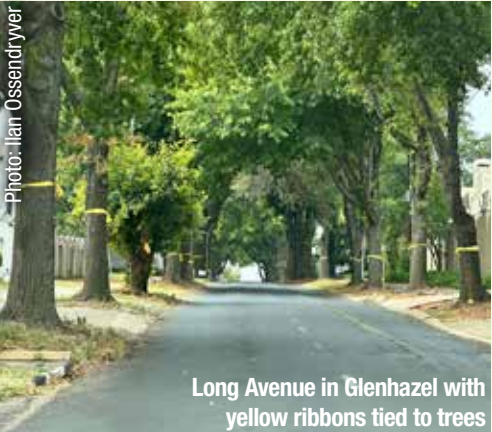
The ease and sense of togetherness demonstrated by the recipients was witnessed by donors and visitors. Many people arrived in fancy dress, but that didn't deter meeting up with friends who hadn't kept up contact for ages. Residents in the building couldn't help "checking out" the scene from their balconies, blown away by the outpouring of *chesed* and camaraderie. It didn't take long for word about "the amazing Purim Seuda at Gan Tamar" to spread beyond the confines of the premises, and needy people who arrived at our door were ushered in to join the party and didn't leave empty-handed.

A donor said on WhatsApp, "It's a privilege and honour to contribute to this organisation. May it grow in stature, and keep our fellow families secure in the knowledge that we have organisations and people who care deeply for their well-being."

Johannesburg forest turns yellow on Human Rights Day

In spite of the extreme anti-Israel position of the African National Congress (ANC) government, Johannesburg Jews turned several suburbs yellow in support of the hostages on Human Rights Day last Thursday, 21 March.

Ribbons were tied around trees on the national holiday marking South Africans' struggle against apartheid in a city that has been described as the largest man-made urban forest.



Said Michael Kransdorff, the chairperson of the Jewish National Fund South Africa (JNF SA), "On Human Rights Day, we highlight the plight of the 134 hostages who are being denied their human rights, without access to medicine, access to the Red Cross, and whose families still don't know whether they are dead or alive."

The campaign, initiated by the JNF SA and the Base community, went viral. The trees of Weinberg Family

Park, named for the family involved in the struggle for liberation of South Africa during the apartheid years, were ribboned and #BringThemHome posters put up by the community.

Many South African Jews feel that the ANC has turned its back on the human rights of Jews in spite of the fact that a disproportionate number, like the Weinbergs, fought for human rights and liberation in South Africa.

A banner highlighting the plight of the hostages was also hoisted over Johannesburg's busy M1 highway by Israel supporters.

In spite of the ANC government taking Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and its close relationship with both Iran and Hamas, it has made no effort to secure the release of the hostages, which could end the war. The immediate release of the hostages was specifically called for in the ICJ order of which South Africa is a party.

"It began as a campaign to rally the community for the return of hostage Daniel Perez who was raised in South Africa," said Saul Jassinowsky, the driving force behind the yellow-ribbon campaign. "Unfortunately, the community received heartbreaking news last week that Perez, a division commander in the Israel Defense Forces, had been killed on 7 October while defending our homeland from the Hamas invasion."

Said Orna Toeg, the director of the South Africa desk at KKL (Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael)-JNF, "It's a great initiative of the Jewish community of South Africa, supporting Israel in the current situation and raising the importance of bringing all the hostages home."

Hundreds of hamantaschen baked for elderly

King David Life and the Union of Jewish Women (UJW) teamed up at Frangelicas on 19 March for a Purim hamantaschen bake for the elderly.

Hundreds of hamantaschen in all sizes were proudly made and baked by children from King David Primary School and their families. These, together with items collected by the primary school, were packed by the UJW and its volunteers into *mishloach manot* – nearly 400 in total. As part of the *mitzvah* of Purim, UJW and volunteers delivered the *mishloach manot* to members of retirement villages across Johannesburg, who were happy to receive them.



Bev Cohen and Norma Hesselsohn

Jewish students take lead in mini city council

Jewish students' strong leadership skills and their prioritisation of giving back to the community has come to the fore with a number of them being recently appointed to the Johannesburg mini council for 2024. Three King David students were elected to the executive council, and two students from Yeshiva College.

Mazaltov to Mayor Julia Levine, from King David Primary School Linksfield; Tamra Sweiden, the chairperson of the leadership committee, from King David Sandton; and Eden Cane, the deputy chairperson of special projects, from King David Ariel. Mia Kalmek and Jacob Froom represent Yeshiva College on the council, with Kalmek appointed chairperson of the welfare committee.



Julia Levine

WIZO's AGM prays for October massacre victims

The Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) Johannesburg began its 110th annual general meeting and Rebecca Sieff Award ceremony with a minute's silence for fallen soldiers and victims of the 7 October massacre, as well as a prayer for the return of the hostages.

The guest speaker (who asked not to be named) at the event, held at West Street Shul on 12 March, is an expert on child abuse in South Africa. She recently returned from Israel, where she worked with victims and witnesses of the massacre. She made the terror and trauma suffered in Israel immediate for those present, and painted a picture they will remember for years to come.

The WIZO Johannesburg executive committee re-elected Joceline Basserbie as chairperson; Jenni Strous as vice-chairperson; and Andrea Wainer as treasurer.

Representatives from communal organisations brought messages of support, thanking WIZO for being

the voice of Israel's women in South Africa, and for flying Israel's flag high.



Wizo members at the annual general meeting

Rabbi Michael Katz blessed the proceedings with an interesting and topical *dvar Torah*, giving the women dignity and upliftment.

Rebecca Sieff recipients were as follows: Gail Joffe and Ruth Lazarus for 50 years of service; Gertie Feinstein and Marcia Parness for 60 years of service; and Hazel Crown for 70 years of service.

ORT Jet mentors bring 650 years of business savvy

ORT Jet's recent Mentor Forum brought together 650 years of business and professional experience in one room via the organisation's 13 mentors.

Several shared their insights at the breakfast held at the beginning of this year. Author, performer, musician, and voice artist Lynn Joffe noted the energy and intelligence as well as the immense potential she observed.

John Kransdorff, an independent financial consultant, discussed the structure of the mentorship programme, saying that the induction of a new business begins with identifying the core issues affecting that business, whether they be legal, financial, personnel, or marketing.

Inna Orlanski, a business and executive coach, emphasised the importance of communication between mentors and mentees, saying, "We're here as coaches, not to prescribe to them what to do."

Ellis Falkof, the owner of Retail Plus Consultancy,

said the core aim of a mentor was to aid mentees in discovering solutions.

ORT Jet, a division of ORT SA, celebrates almost 20 years of operation this year, having assisted more than 2 500 businesses through mentorship, training, and networking opportunities. Its mentors add value in various ways, from one-on-one mentoring sessions to running boot camps and talks about business success.

ORT SA Chief Executive Ariellah Rosenberg, shared the ORT Jet manifesto, "LARGE" which encapsulates the values of the ORT Jet mentorship: life-long learning; active listening; respect; guidance (not directives); and end in mind (being goal-oriented).



MENTOR FORUM With Ariellah Rosenberg, ORT SA CEO

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