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South African Jewish Report

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A4 PRINT VERSION

SA expat flies hostage flag high at Glastonbury

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Tarryn*, a London-based South African expat, proudly flew Nova festival and yellow ribbon hostage flags at the Glastonbury Festival this past weekend in the face of blatant antisemitism. Glastonbury, the United Kingdom’s largest summer music festival, held this year from 25 to 29 June, faces criticism following the performances of Bob Vylan and Kneecap, who used the event as a platform for hate speech.

Speaking of Glastonbury’s immense size – more than six million square metres with more than 200 000 people in attendance – Tarryn

says the festival is like a mini city with multiple stages. “Just like any big city, there are some places you need to avoid,” she says. “Everyone I spoke to who was Jewish made sure to give Kneecap’s performance a wide berth.”

Still, when Tarryn caught the tail-end of people leaving the performance of this pro-Palestinian Irish rap group, it “wasn’t entirely pleasant”, she says. “As I was walking to another stage, there was a group with Palestinian flags, and when it dawned on me where they had just come from, it made me feel uneasy”.

Tarryn says she and her friends weren’t directly exposed to English punk rap duo Bob Vylan, who chanted “Death to the IDF [Israel

Defense Forces]” during their performance. Countless attendees echoed their calls as the incident was streamed live on the BBC. Facing backlash, the BBC expressed “regret” over the “unacceptable” incident, and Glastonbury organisers say the chants “very much crossed a line”.

“Most of us didn’t really know there were people vying for our blood until friends and family from around the world texted to check up on us,” Tarryn says. “It felt like a dark cloud had suddenly set upon our magical festival.”

Since their controversial performance, Bob Vylan have been dropped by their agents, UTA Agency, and the United States State



Tarryn in a Batman costume commemorating the Bibas family flies the hostage flag at Glastonbury

>> Continued from 1a

Department revoked their visas ahead of their upcoming US tour. Bob Vylan has also been dropped from the lineup at upcoming music festivals in Manchester and Cologne.

Allowing Kneecap to perform at Glastonbury after a member was charged with terrorism for the public display of a Hezbollah flag in 2024, also sparked debate. When Kneecap took to the stage, they led chants of “Free Palestine!” and unleashed expletives at British Prime Minister Keir Starmer. Both Bob Vylan and Kneecap’s performances now face a criminal investigation.

Tarryn first attended Glastonbury in June 2023, but she and her friends considered cancelling their 2024 tickets in the wake of the 7 October 2023 massacre. However, they soon realised that showing up and waving flags was vital. “There has never been a more important time in my life for Jewish people to find their voice,” Tarryn said at the time. She was speaking at a London-based weekly vigil for the hostages, one she attends regularly.

Tarryn says she and her friends were blown away by the response they received at last year’s festival. The images of their double flag went viral, she says, “signalling to people around the globe, that though Glastonbury refused to acknowledge a massacre at a music festival, we weren’t going to stay silent”.

“It also got so much love from a community which was still reeling from the pain yet had to face overt hostility at the festival. This year, we wanted to replicate this positivity and make sure that the hostages remain front and centre of everyone’s minds.” Pictures of her flags again went viral.

Though she and her friends decided that an Israeli flag would be widely recognisable and therefore too risky, Tarryn says their hostage flags received only love and gratitude. “We even found a few allies, which was wonderful and



made me remember the silent majority.

“One of them told us how he was brainwashed at university and used to be anti-Israel until he started scratching below the surface. He was taught that Israel was an apartheid state but was confused to learn about the two million Arabs living there. He said the major turning point was on 7 October.” Seeing terrorists livestreaming the attacks on social media turned him into a staunch overnight advocate. At Glastonbury, he wore a Batman T-shirt in memory of the murdered Bibas family.

Aside from the hate speech spewed by Bob

Vylan and Kneecap, Tarryn says a more direct festival encounter brought her to tears. “What finally broke me was when I came across a man with a gas mask holding a ‘Free Palestine’ flag. Of course, I want the suffering of innocent Palestinians to end. Yet, when in the past century millions of us were sent to gas chambers while the world turned its back on our genocide, this inversion was all too much.”


Tarryn says she’s only now learning about what happened on stage and how nothing was done to stop it. “It makes me sick. You’ll see posters plastered across the festival about inclusivity, but apparently, that’s not for us. The organisers knew they were giving a mouthpiece to a band that openly promotes terror. And we all know this would never be allowed to happen to any other ethnic minority.”


Nevertheless, she didn’t feel physically at risk. “Apart from a very noisy and hateful minority, most people are there to leave their worries behind and enjoy the magic that the festival brings,” she says.

Though she felt let down by those who allow antisemitism to fester and disgusted by those pretending to care about humanity “except for us”, Tarryn says there’s no space for hate, only hope. “So, I wiped away my tears, stood up, held onto that flag tightly, and reminded myself that 50 hostages and their families are going through unimaginable suffering.

“Since 7 October, I have seen how antisemitism can be cloaked as anti-Zionism. With such a small Jewish population and so much hateful propaganda, we all need to stand up. And we need our allies to join us. We all know the Holocaust didn’t start with gas chambers, but words.”

**Tarryn asked that her surname be withheld to protect her safety and future career prospects.*






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G-d's supra-rational plan

Torah Thought



Rabbi Yossi Chaikin
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"I thought I could fathom it, but it eludes me." (Ecclesiastes 7,23) King Solomon, the author of these words, could have been describing our times. Nothing is making sense. Every morning, we wake up to a new reality, to a shift in world dynamics, to events we couldn't have predicted 24 hours earlier. None of us can grasp the meaning of this whirlwind.

It's an unsettling place to be. As rational, intellectual beings, it's important for us to understand matters. Our ability to think, analyse, and internalise concepts is what sets us aside from other creatures Hashem placed in this world. When things appear irrational and inexplicable, we're inherently uncomfortable.

Obviously, King Solomon wasn't discussing 2025 in his writings. The Talmud explains that the "wisest of all men" was referring to one precept in the Torah which he was unable to comprehend: the ritual of the Red Heifer, the subject of the first chapter of this week's Torah reading, *Chukat*. Seemingly he could appreciate the deeper reason for 612 of the 613 commandments, but struggled with this particular one.

For good reason, indeed. The Red Heifer is a process that enables ritually impure people to reach purity once again. The entire concept of pure/impure is beyond us. This isn't a physical state that can be removed through cleansing or sterilising. The purification ritual itself is filled with inexplicable paradoxes. For instance, the individual who prepares the mixture is himself rendered impure in the process, though what he has produced can then be used to purify those who have been defiled. So the wise king admitted that he couldn't explain this one.

Our minds can grasp the rationale behind most of the 613 precepts of the Torah. Some are rules that are logical and necessary for the proper functioning of society. Others are symbolic or refer to our history and we can clearly appreciate how they raise our spirituality and enhance our relationship with G-d.

Then there are *mitzvot* known as *chukim* – the plural for the

name of this week's Torah portion. Those are the commandments that appear to make no sense at all. They are hard for us because they don't resonate with our intellectual side.

We need to remember that they aren't

irrational rules, they are supra-rational. There's a reason, it's just beyond us. Though we may be thinking human beings, our power of comprehension has its limits. The performance of these *mitzvot* actually strengthens our bond with our creator in a way that other commandments don't.

We're living in a world we don't understand. What's happening is, however, not irrational but rather supra-rational. There's a reason, a method, and a design in what Tevya so aptly called "the vast eternal plan".

The events of the past few weeks have catapulted us ever closer to the Messianic era, when the course of Jewish history, from that perspective, will be clearly rational and logical. We are waiting.



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Trump administration accuses UN Palestinian rights envoy of 'virulent antisemitism and support for terrorism'

The Trump administration has called on the United Nations (UN) to remove Francesca Albanese, the UN rapporteur on Palestinian rights, alleging "virulent antisemitism and support for terrorism", according to a letter obtained by *The Washington Free Beacon*.

The letter, dated 20 June and addressed to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, also alleges that Albanese claims to be an "international lawyer", but isn't licensed to practice law.

Albanese, an Italian national, regularly accuses Israel of genocide in Gaza, and has said that the 7 October 2023 attacks by Hamas must be put in a "context of decades of oppression imposed on the Palestinians".

The administration's warning comes on the heels of a new report by Albanese titled, "From economy of occupation to economy of genocide."

In the report, Albanese recommends that corporate entities "cease all business activities" linked with "human rights violations and international crimes against the Palestinian people", and calls on them to pay reparations to the Palestinian people.

"It shows how corporations have fuelled and legitimised the destruction of Palestine. Genocide, it would seem, is profitable. This cannot continue, accountability must follow," wrote Albanese in a post on X announcing the report on Monday, 30 June.

In the administration's letter, acting US representative to the UN, Dorothy Shea, accused Albanese of waging "an unacceptable campaign of political and economic warfare against the American and worldwide economy".

The World Jewish Congress (WJC) also condemned Albanese's new report, saying it was "yet another example of her repeated misuse of her mandate to advance a political agenda rather than uphold the universal principles of human rights," according to the WJC's executive vice-president, Maram Stern.

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Unilever cuts funding for Ben & Jerry's foundation as it audits giving to progressive and pro-Palestinian causes

Ben & Jerry's parent company, Unilever, is cutting off millions in funding to the ice cream company's charitable foundation after a probe begun in part due to the company's donations to pro-Palestinian organisations, according to *Semafor*.

Unilever, ahead of plans to spin off Ben & Jerry's along with its other ice cream brands, said the ice cream maker was impeding an audit of the foundation, which funds hundreds of left-leaning groups.

Peter Ter Kolve, who runs Unilever's ice cream business, told Ben & Jerry's executives in an email seen by *Semafor* that the foundation's trustees "have continued to resist basic oversight" and allegedly refused to provide audit documents.

"It represents a marked departure from the norms of charitable organisations, for whom transparency is typically a bedrock principle," Ter Kolve wrote.

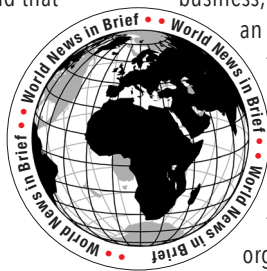
The Ben & Jerry's foundation distributed more than \$5 million (R88.1 million) of Unilever's money in 2022, according to *Semafor*. The audit focused in part on its grants to pro-Palestinian groups, including the Oakland Institute, a California-based non-profit organisation whose founder is a trustee of the Ben & Jerry's Foundation.

The company, founded but no longer owned by two progressive Jews, has long wed the ice cream business to its left-wing politics. The cut to Ben & Jerry's charitable donations marks the latest in tensions between the ice cream company and Unilever, which escalated in 2021 when Ben & Jerry's announced that it would stop selling its desserts in "occupied

Palestinian territory". Last month, the board of Ben & Jerry's called Israel's war in Gaza a "genocide" in a statement.

In April, Ben & Jerry's co-founder Ben Cohen attempted to gather investors for a potential buy-back of the company ahead of its spin-off, but Unilever rebuffed Cohen's efforts, saying that it wouldn't sell Ben & Jerry's as a stand-alone business.

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International thinktank challenges Israel's 'autocratic' government

PETA KROST

British-South African business leader and proud Zionist, Sir Mick Davis, said growing up in apartheid South Africa, he stayed silent in the face of what he knew was wrong. But, watching the Israeli government being what he described as "autocratic and reckless", he believes he must stand up against it.

"Cynical and reckless leadership is distancing Israel from its liberal and consensual founding vision," wrote Davis in a recent opinion piece. "It's actively sowing division, undermining the unity and resilience of Israel and the Jewish people when it's most needed. Israel is therefore imperilled not only from outside, but from within."

Davis, Lifetime Achievement Award winner at the Jewish Achiever Awards in 2019, is spearheading a movement called The London Initiative (TLI) to bring liberal democracy back into mainstream Israeli and world Jewish politics. For this, he said, he had been dubbed crazy, demented, and a self-hating Jew.

However, he maintains, "We are a majority not a minority who believe in responding to the existential crisis that Israel and the Jewish world is facing. We recognise that the real crisis for Israel and the Jews is from within."

He and TLI co-founder Briton Mike Prashker aim to gather 360 powerful Jewish leaders from all walks of life in Israel and the Jewish world to work toward the necessary change. "We are creating a partnership with those who believe in the principles of liberal democracy, fairness across Israeli society, and a secure peace as the basis of Israel's future security and resilience. Together, we want to find a way to drive that agenda effectively," Davis said.

TLI initially held a successful 60-strong member thinktank in February 2024, and has since approached additional leaders to join its network's second retreat in October this year, according to Davis. They plan to have further retreats in

February and October from then on. Davis said that the idea of gathering 360 people was to have a significant number of influential people involved, but not so many that it would become unmanageable. Together, they hope to debate these issues and see how they can create the change they believe necessary within Israel and the Jewish world.

"The London Initiative is essential now because Israel is at an existential crossroads. We don't need to debate the challenges Israel faces with its external enemies," he said. "We have seen the threat from Iran and its acolytes in the most extreme form recently, but I believe the existential challenge is internal not external. We will successfully deal with Iran, but my biggest concern is the internal corrosion of the foundations of Israel as conceived in the Declaration of Independence."

Davis, a committed Zionist and Israeli citizen, said it was because of his commitment to the Jewish state that he believed he must stand up against what the Israeli government is doing. "I don't want to be a bystander again in a situation which is even more acute for me than living in South Africa. I want to act. I'm not a radical or controversialist. I just speak up for what I think is truth and what I think is right," he said.

All too often, those of us who see problems in Israel don't speak up, Davis said. "If you verbalise a dissenting view, many believe you are adding a language and a narrative to the enemy of the Jewish people and Israel, enabling them to attack us more effectively. This isn't the case.

"Antisemites don't need my language or narrative. They are going to hate us irrespective, and will do what they are going to do irrespective. We're not enabling our enemies, nor giving them ammunition. Antisemites were always there, and they will be there no matter what we say or do.

"However, we want a resilient Israel that will grow and prosper, continuing to be the nation state of our people for the rest of time. In this, we all have a role to ensure that the country is underpinned by democratic foundations in which every citizen has equal rights and where we are at peace with our neighbours. We need a country where the basis is that everyone contributes and receives fairly. We shouldn't be scared to vocalise it," Davis said.

He said that he hoped TLI's 360 would find ways to give voice to vital issues, sharing with others and leveraging off each other's capacity and heft. An example he gave the SA Jewish Report was a letter they wrote to the Israeli government criticising the NGO Bill, which is before the Knesset. The bill attempts to strangle non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that the government doesn't approve of

Continued on 3b>>



Sir Mick Davis

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>> Continued from 3a

by making it almost impossible to get international funding.

"Any money coming in from foreign governments would be taxed at 80% unless that NGO was exempt or was already receiving funding from the Israeli government," he said. Davis said he believed the letter influenced the retarding of such legislation. He understands why the Israeli government doesn't want NGOs it doesn't agree with to survive, but Israel is a democracy and so the government can't do that.

"Creating a non-democratic solution to a problem that's inconvenient for the government undermines everything, and it's the thin edge of the wedge," he said.

Davis said he supported the Israel Defense Forces targeting Hamas and Hezbollah and trying to destroy their leadership. He also supports Israel attacking Iran's nuclear might. "But we mustn't think we can ever get rid of extremists unless we deal with the environment that gives oxygen for extremism to flourish. If we don't have a strategy for the day after, that has a clear picture of an appropriate alternative dispensation to Hamas in Gaza, you cannot address the problem of extremism and the threat Israelis will continue to face. We should be thinking of a political dispensation that has a technocratic type of leadership and which is associated with the rebuilding of Gaza.

"Hamas and its military capability today has been destroyed," Davis said, "and I'm struggling to see what a full-scale war of aerial bombardment, of flattening whatever houses and buildings are left in Gaza does to reduce Hamas's military capability beyond what it has already been reduced to now. Juxtapose that to the devastation it's causing the people of Gaza. That's a very serious issue, and it doesn't negate our right to defend ourselves or the legitimacy of our defence. Nor does it negate the horrific things that took place on 7 October 2023 and the promise of Hamas to do more."

He said it was "totally unacceptable" for Israel to use food and aid to fight the war even if Hamas was stealing the food and reselling it. "There are people out there who are really struggling and really need help, and we shouldn't be seen to be impeding that in any way," he said.

"There's a difficult road from where we are today to where we should be," he said. "One thing I'm convinced of is that managing the conflict in the way we have done for the past few years has not worked, and we need to get involved in finding the right way forward."

He admitted that he didn't have the answers, but believed what was needed was "courageous leadership in Israel and from among the Palestinians to find the way forward". He spoke about having to take small steps forward, rather than shrugging shoulders and ignoring the problems, hoping they would go away.

In the past, there was a belief in the myth that Israel could find ways to manage conflict, Davis said, however, "7 October blew that out the water, showing that conflict cannot be managed, it has to be resolved".

Davis reached out to South African Jews to help.

"South African Jews should speak up strongly in defence of the legitimacy of the state of Israel, the nation state of the Jewish people. It has legal and historical legitimacy," he said.

"South African Jews should also hold the Israeli government to account for undermining the

democratic mandate of Israel; for not addressing the divisions within Israeli society; for not promoting greater fairness; and for being tardy in seeking solutions to provide a secure peace with all our neighbours.

"Finally, they should robustly criticise the government of South Africa for its inconsistent and illogical approach to the complexity of Israel, the Palestinians, and the Middle East. Also, for its selection of Israel as the only country that it holds to account. South African Jews should call it out on that every single day," Davis said.



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Warnings about UCT's anti-Israel gatekeeping bear fruit

TALI FEINBERG

When the University of Cape Town (UCT) adopted two anti-Israel resolutions a year ago, commentators warned that they would have dire consequences on diversity, academic freedom, and freedom of association.

Now, those warnings have become reality for participants at the IAMHIST (the International Association for Media and History) 2025 Conference, which took place at UCT from 30 June to 2 July. Ahead of the event, Israeli applicants were "requested to provide sworn statements confirming that they had no ties – direct or indirect – to the Israel Defense Forces [IDF] or the broader Israeli military establishment."

This is according to an article published by concerned UCT alumni and staff on local news site *Politicsweb* on 29 June. The demand comes in light of one of the so-called "Gaza resolutions" adopted by the university's Council – its highest decision-making body. According to these resolutions, "no UCT academic may enter into relations, or continue relations with, any research group or network whose author affiliations are with the IDF or the broader Israeli military establishment."

A member of the legal community speaking anonymously to maintain neutrality says this incident "highlights the ambiguity of UCT's anti-Israel boycott policy. In court papers, the university maintains that the restriction applies only to academics who list the IDF in their author affiliation. Yet, in practice, UCT is asking Israeli academics who don't list the IDF whether they are members of it.

"This divergence from the legal arguments advanced in court creates uncertainty about the policy's application," he said, "and results in Israeli scholars being singled out for differential treatment. Such conduct may amount to unfair discrimination under the Equality Act."

He is referring to arguments made in an affidavit by UCT Council Chairperson Norman Arendse, submitted in May. These arguments were made in response to a case filed in the Western Cape High Court by UCT's Professor Adam Mendelsohn in 2024, which asks for the resolutions to be reviewed or set aside because he says the university didn't follow its own processes when adopting them, and they have a negative impact on research, academic freedom, and fundraising.

The demand of the Israeli academics "was made outside any formal university disciplinary process; wasn't extended to participants of other nationalities; and wasn't rooted in any binding IAMHIST policy", stated the *Politicsweb* article.

However, conference organisers told the *SA Jewish Report*, "We are convinced the [*Politicsweb*] article misrepresents several events and the work we are

doing. As an organisation that wants to promote international exchange and dialogue, we don't share any resolution that prohibits scholars from attending academic conferences as long as they accept universal human rights, academic standards, and our conference etiquette.

"Given that none of the Israeli scholars who submitted their proposals had direct relations with the Israeli military, the opportunity for them to attend remained open."

But Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape SAJBD) Executive Director Daniel Bloch says asking Israelis to complete an affidavit "disclosing their personal or political affiliations, while other nationalities weren't asked, is clear discrimination. This raises serious concerns that some within UCT's leadership are advancing a narrow anti-Israel agenda."

It has become increasingly evident, Bloch says, "that the anti-Israel narrative in South Africa is driven by a minority group. We cannot allow this small but vocal minority, which supports internationally designated terrorist organisations, to hold our academic institutions hostage or undermine the principles of open inquiry and fairness."

Bloch says the Cape SAJBD remains in constant communication with UCT regarding "the academic boycott and its damaging impact on the institution. We continue to engage proactively to protect the well-being and rights of Jewish students on campus."

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) spokesperson Rolene Marks says the SAZF is "deeply concerned" by this "exclusion and obstruction of Israeli academics".

The SAZF formally raised its concerns with the UCT Centre for Film & Media Studies "regarding the exclusionary implications of this conference, and the broader academic boycott environment fostered by the university.

Disappointingly, our communications were ignored," Marks says.

For Marks, what is particularly alarming is the "ideological purity test" imposed on Israeli participants – "a demand that they disassociate from the IDF, the only military force charged with protecting the Jewish people. No such condition is applied to academics from other countries or conflict zones."

It's "especially hypocritical that UCT academics continue to travel and collaborate freely with Israeli scholars, while Israeli academics are told to renounce a core part of their national identity to participate in academic engagement hosted by UCT", Marks says.

David Benatar, emeritus professor of philosophy at UCT, who has written extensively about the deterioration of the university, says that though this may be the first publicised application of UCT's resolutions, it's unlikely to be the last.

"Nor should we think that all the manifestations of the policy will become public," he says. "Many will be covert, including quiet boycotts by those too fearful to risk the ire of UCT's activist ideologues who believe that, of all the armies in the world, the only one to single out for boycott is Israel's."

UCT spokesperson Elijah Moholola told the *SA Jewish Report* that UCT is "working on a clear policy for the uniform implementation of the Gaza resolutions. UCT acknowledges the deep complexities involved, and regrets any inconsistencies on this matter."

Meanwhile, in an affidavit filed in June at the Western Cape High Court, Advocate Kessler Perumalsamy stated that he and other members of the UCT Council had been kept in the dark about the implications of the "Gaza resolutions".

He wrote that the debate on the resolutions "suggested that Council was seeking to rush a decision. It became clear that some Council members sought to forge ahead despite legitimate concerns



A student with Palestinian and Palestinian Islamic Jihad flags on UCT campus

about inadequate information before Council."

The anonymous lawyer says Perumalsamy "reveals that UCT's Council wasn't informed of the serious consequences [of adopting the resolutions]. His affidavit provides a compelling foundation for the view that the Council's decision was irrational, and should be set aside."

Perumalsamy said that other Council members "have indicated that they would like to share their perspectives with the court, but are fearful of doing so. They are concerned about their tenure being called into question; retaliatory conduct by other members of Council; and being labelled 'pro-Zionist'; 'anti-

New York's likely next mayor is fervent anti-Zionist

STEVEN GRUZD

The 33-year-old Ugandan born Zohran Mamdani, who went to school in Cape Town, clinched the Democratic Party's nomination for New York City mayoral elections in a primary vote. He's now widely tipped to win the mayorship in November.

He comfortably beat former New York State governor, Andrew Cuomo, who may still run as an independent, as might the unpopular incumbent Mayor Eric Adams. Mamdani, the son of academic Mahmood Mamdani and filmmaker Mira Nair, is unashamedly an anti-Zionist. Liberal, woke Jews have flocked to support him, but mainstream Jewry is sounding the antisemitism alarm.

Over the weekend, Mamdani again refused to condemn the slogan "globalise the intifada", saying that he wouldn't police free speech, as he says United States President Donald Trump seeks to do.

Larry Haas, senior fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council said, "Mamdani has declined to support Israel's right to exist, and supports boycotts and other measures against Israel. There's a very thin line between anti-Zionism and antisemitism and since I can't find any evidence that he's spoken out against human rights violations by Hamas in Gaza; by the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank; by China; by Russia; by Iran; by Venezuela, he seems to be crossing the line when it comes to antisemitism because he's holding the world's only Jewish state to a singular standard.

"And, by refusing the condemn such language as 'globalise the intifada', essentially a call for violence against Jews all around the world, he is providing high-profile legitimacy to anti-Jewish hatred and, in turn, anti-Jewish violence. So, Jews have every reason for concern."

Milton Shain, emeritus professor of Historical Studies at the University of Cape Town and an expert on antisemitism said, "Only a few years ago, it would have been inconceivable to have an avowed socialist and a pro-Palestinian candidate take poll position in the race to be New York City mayor. By all accounts, Mamdani

ran a brilliant campaign, aided by an astute social media strategy and youthful supporters – among whom there were many college-educated Jews – knocking on doors."

Said Haas, "Democrats are nowhere near as sympathetic to, or understanding of, Israel or Jews as they should be. In fact, the most activist wing of their party dabbles in both anti-Zionism and antisemitism. It's a serious problem, politically and morally."

What's Mamdani's attractiveness for the electorate? Former US diplomat and writer J Brooks Spector said, "Mamdani comes from the Democratic Socialist wing of Democratic politics, and has been running on a

campaign platform that speaks to 'the affordable city', a nod to the high cost of living and astronomical cost of housing in the country's largest metropolitan. His campaign appealed to many voters, with plans for city-run supermarkets, a free bus network, and free pre-schools." He's unclear on how this would all be funded. "He's proposing higher taxes

on the wealthy and corporations, but has failed to take into consideration that his tax measures must gain the buy-in of New York State's government, and this is likely to be a gruelling fight.

"By and large, the Jewish establishment is shocked," said Shain. "Is this the Democratic Party that they have supported for generations? Many Jews are especially concerned about Mamdani's views on Israel and his understanding of the Zionist idea. It would appear that while he accepts Israel as a reality, he may not accept it as a Jewish state."

"More problematic to some has been his provocative statements on the Israel/Gaza fighting, and his strong support for Palestinians," Spector said. "This may come to alienate him from the city's large section of voters who are Jewish" despite unappealing alternative candidates.

"An endorsement by the controversial Reverend Al Sharpton may – or may not – also be problematic for Mamdani once the actual election comes round, if Sharpton's appearances and statements reflect harshly on Jewish voters. Ultimately, his success in the election will probably depend on how adroitly he can thread his disparate support base without antagonising other groups, and how well he can demonstrate how his ideas can become reality without harming the city's economy. Mamdani will learn, soon enough, the old political adage that campaigning is like reciting poetry, while governing is like reading the tax code."

John Stremmler, honorary professor of International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand, said, "Mamdani would share the views of liberal Jews who oppose the brutal policies of Benjamin Netanyahu towards the Palestinians. I would expect Jewish New Yorkers to be divided in their opinions of him, depending on where they stand on Israel. My reading of his background is that he is anti-Zionist, but not antisemitic. Mamdani is the counterpoint to Donald Trump, tapping into the real concerns of most New Yorkers."

The rise of Mamdani has significance beyond New York City politics. Michael Walsh, visiting scholar at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of California, Berkeley said, "For the past couple of years, there has been considerable attention paid to the fact that Democrats and Republicans have very different interpretations of reality. However, there are sharp differences in interpretations within both parties as well. This was manifest earlier this week in the reaction to the primary win of Mamdani and the public confrontation between Senator Thom Tillis and President Donald Trump.

"These events shouldn't be viewed in isolation. They demonstrate that neither political party has tents that are big enough for their own political elites anymore. They are starting to burst at the seams. In a two-party system, that risks dissatisfaction and disenfranchisement across the broader electorate. That, in turn, creates the opportunity for candidates to run as independents, hoping to seize on the extreme polarisation. To compound matters, it can lead to monumental defections across party lines.

"I wouldn't be surprised if lots of Jewish Democrats who didn't vote in the Democratic primary decide to vote in the general election in the hope of defeating Mamdani," Haas said.

Expect a concerted effort to thwart an almost certain Mamdani win.



Zohran Mamdani

Warnings about UCT's anti-Israel gatekeeping bear fruit

>> Continued from 4a

Gaza; or 'Zionists with a political agenda' on Council."

Perumalsamy described a Council meeting on 15 March 2025, where the vice-chancellor said that the resolutions had "created a risk of UCT being specifically targeted by the United States", and that UCT staff "may be targeted through visa denials and restricted participation in US activities".

He reports that the vice-chancellor said that "UCT had become a pariah institution with donors" because they are concerned about antisemitism and

freedom of speech, and that the resolutions could lead to job losses.

Ultimately, "the vice-chancellor asked Council to rescind the resolutions. He said that if Council didn't do so, it was asking the executive to do its work with its hands tied behind its back." However, Arendse defended the resolutions.

Moholola says UCT has noted Perumalsamy's affidavit, but "isn't in a position to comment further on a pending legal matter".

From bomb shelters to brunch, expats struggle to adjust

LEE TANKLE

With the flick of a switch, life in Israel has gone back to normal. However, for some, the trauma endured over 12 days of having ballistic missiles fired at them is hard to overcome.

For Cape Town-born Marisa Sarfatti, life hasn't gone back to normal after a ballistic missile exploded metres away from her Tel Aviv apartment, destroying it and not allowing her to return home.

She said that since she can't return home, she is staying in a hotel and trying to do everything she can to rebuild her home.

"There's a lot of bureaucracy that you have to navigate, so it's frustrating," she said, "it's frustrating in terms of trying to get things moving in the right direction, like compensation. All of it is sticky and slow, which is pretty frustrating when you just want to get back into your home. I'm driving things pretty fast compared to others. Especially as I have a great circle of friends and a community helping. But it's still too slow."

Though many like Sarfatti have been able to return to work, there's still an unshakeable feeling of exhaustion throughout the country.

"A lot of people feel exhausted because their adrenaline is so high," she said. "A lot of people are just sort of crashing down. It's a bizarre reality – one minute you're under threat, and the next, there's a ceasefire and you're supposed to get back to normal – so it's quite complex."

Sarfatti said moving into a hotel room with her three cats has been an adjustment.

"You don't realise that you have systems in place when you live in your home. You've got a system of running things, and something happens and suddenly, that system, even something like doing laundry, falls to the wayside. You've got to reconfigure the way your life works."

Clinical psychologist Serenne Kaplan said that Israel's relationship with trauma is as old as the nation itself.

"There's a certain paradox that defines daily life in Israel: the oscillation between the chaos of war and the calm of ceasefire," she said. "The 12-day war with Iran brought a new brand of fear and uncertainty as the playing field expanded. For many Israelis,

Searching through what's left of Marisa Sarfatti's apartment



moving from bomb shelters to beach cafés isn't a contradiction, it's a coping mechanism."

Tammy Swisa, who recently made aliya to Jerusalem, said that though life has gone back to normal, there is a quiet tension throughout the country. "What's most surprising is how quickly life bounced back. The day after the ceasefire, restrictions were lifted, people returned to work, flights resumed, and the streets filled up again. Life just continued. Of course, the war affected people, especially those who lost loved ones or have soldiers on the frontlines, but there's this deep sense here that life must go on. People carry that tension quietly."

Tali Stern said that throughout her 15 years of living in Israel, she had seen her fair share of rocket fire, and once they stopped, it was a quick switch to go back

to normal. However, this time is different. "The anxiety doesn't dissipate with the signing of an agreement. Every ambulance, every motorcycle, certain tones of the wind blowing, a cellphone rings, the builders across the street have my heart racing as I think I have heard a siren," he said. "The exhaustion is overwhelming – two weeks of random sleep and of being pulled from our beds every night to take shelter.

The country

is open, and things are "normal", but my body isn't willing to co-operate."

Similarly, Shira Jackson Snapper said that though her home in Ra'anana wasn't directly affected, she is still seeing the effects of the 12 days under fire in her children. "Our children wake up in the night with nightmares," she said. "They also have extreme anxiety at night, and we all jump from loud noises. We all went back to life, but the dread that something is coming lingers."

Said Stern, "The confusion, the brain fog, and hyper-awareness are still rampant. There's also the disappointment and anticlimax of knowing we went through all of this and we didn't get the ending we expected. It feels futile, like a game with our lives. With the expectation that we will pick up and move forward, and with

>> Continued from 5a

the anxiety from weeks of war, a sort of depression sets in. It's not easy just to pick up where we left off before our homeland was hit, before our people died, and before our lives were upended for what now feels like an unclosed event."

Jess Lurie, who made aliya in November 2024, said, "It's like someone pressed the pause button for 12 days and then pressed play. During the 12 days, the streets would be empty, and shops would be closed. Now, it's like nothing happened. Things are back to normal at night and as lively as ever. It's been difficult as it feels like there was no closure. We went from one extreme to the next. Life continues, but I guess that's also one of the strongest parts of the Israeli nation. It makes a way to continue life."

Michelle Essers said that though she has lived in Israel for 15 years, the recent attack by Iran was the worst she had ever experienced, and she is struggling to get back to the sense of



Marisa Sarfatti's apartment after the missile hit

life being back to what it was. Essers said she still had her bag packed with necessities for the shelters. "It's put away safely, but maybe at the back of my head, I don't believe that the war with Iran is over."

Said Kaplan, "The surreal transition from crisis to calm can be just as psychologically jarring as the onset of war. Suddenly, the hypervigilance that served as a psychological shield must be dismantled. This isn't seamless.

"Peace, even if temporary, isn't just the absence of war. It's the presence of life. Israelis understand this better than most. And from the shelter to the sidewalk café, their journey back to normality is a testament to the enduring strength of the human spirit."



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south african Jewish Report

Right to voice your views

In the past few weeks, every day has aged the news of the day before. So, while one day, we were writing about people being devastated by ballistic missiles from Iran, just days later, that feels like history. Perhaps, that is, for us on the southern tip of Africa.

For so many people living in Israel, this isn't necessarily the case. The war is certainly not over for those whose homes were demolished or those who had to be evacuated because of their building's structural damage.

For those who were impacted by the war in any way, it's not so simple for life just to move on. Trauma doesn't just go away. Ever heard of post-traumatic stress disorder? Well, much of Israel is living with it, albeit making the best of their situation and still grateful they are living in their homeland.

We, on the *SA Jewish Report*, try to keep our eyes open to this because, as we are well aware, Israelis do their best to make light of their trauma. Not because it doesn't exist, but because they feel the need to keep going strong no matter what.

It's true that Israelis are incredibly resilient. They have no choice. But don't for one moment believe that they don't feel pain when engulfed in it. Don't assume that because they are Israeli, life simply goes back to normal after trauma. They are, after all, only human – strong, tenacious, but still human.

But like all of us, no two people are the same. Brothers and sisters deal with things in different ways. That's natural. While I may lose my cool, yelling and screaming and letting it all hang out, others may appear to feel nothing but hold onto the anger and pain for years. That's just two ways of reacting to a situation. There are many others.

We all also have different political religious, social, and other views. In terms of politics, some of us believe that you dare not say anything negative about the Israeli government or Israel. Others, who may not be happy about everything the government does, will keep quiet because they believe it's dangerous or simply unacceptable to speak out against the government. Still others believe it's fine to argue about this among family and friends, but we must keep *shtum* with other people. Then, there are those who recognise that everyone is entitled to their opinion and just like it's okay to be critical of the South African government and still love South Africa, you can do the same for Israel.

So, though there are many in our

community who believe Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is a phenomenal leader, there are many others who have various other beliefs about his leadership. There are also those who believe he should have been replaced the day after 7 October 2023.

What's important to note is that everyone I'm speaking about is 100% Zionist. They all believe intrinsically in the state of Israel and its right to exist. They all believe that the Jewish people have a right to national self-determination in their ancestral homeland, which is Israel.

They are firm in the belief that they can criticise the Israeli government because the government of the Jewish state is important to every Jew in the world. If the government should destroy the country, it would fall on the shoulders of every single Jew in the world. Now, I'm praying this will never happen, however, it's for this reason Jews around the world have the right to be critical of something that happens in Israel.

Much like in South Africa, we're fully entitled to criticise our government and we do so *ad nauseum*. If we have a problem with what the government or our president does, why should we be quiet?

Now, when it comes to Israel, many in our community believe that by criticising Israel, we're playing into the hands of our enemies. On that note, I resonated with something that Sir Mick Davis said (See page 3).

He insisted that our haters aren't waiting to see what we say or what we do. They hate us already, and have made up their minds about us and Israel. So, though we're cautious about baiting them, they don't care what we're doing. Their plans are already made, and are not waiting for us to put them into action.

Many people have been critical of what Davis has said in recent times, specifically about Israel. I get it. He has been quite scathing of this particular Israeli government, and is deeply worried about what it is doing to Israel. He believes it's a bigger threat than Israel's outside enemies.



So, some will and have called him a "self-hating Jew" because he's critical of Netanyahu and his government. But, as he clearly states, it's because he loves Israel so damn much that he doesn't want to see it implode or be damaged beyond repair.

He is quite open about respecting the decision to retaliate against Hamas in Gaza following 7 October. He also agrees with Israel firmly hitting Iran's nuclear armament. He does, however, have a

real problem with the government losing its liberal, democratic way.

Now, if Davis lived permanently in Israel and was saying all of this, he would be criticised by some, but most would accept that he has a right to his views, left, right, or centre. Every Israeli has different views. Most Jews have different views. That's who we are as a people. And we really have no reason to hide them.

So, when you read Davis's views, can I ask that instead of lambasting him because you don't agree, put pen to paper – or get onto your laptop – and write your personal views, not about him, but about pertinent issues pertaining to our community, and become part of our National Jewish Dialogue.

Davis is the perfect person to start this dialogue because he isn't afraid to speak out and be counted. He believes he must. He told me he regretted not standing up for what he believed when he grew up in South Africa. He doesn't want to be guilty of saying and doing nothing about Israel, which is so vitally important to him and all of us.

Join him in giving your views. See the criteria for participating in the National Jewish Dialogue on our website bit.ly/sajrdialogue in Howard Sackstein's letter last week, put your views down, and send us your opinions.

Shabbat shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor

Israel's AI versus the ayatollah

OPINION

AMIR MIZROCH



In just 11 days, Israel and Iran engaged in what might be remembered as the world's first true Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enhanced state-on-state war. But only one side showed up, Israel. The ayatollah brought a Structured Query Language query to a Python fight. Iran was fighting like it's still 2022.

This wasn't a conflict defined by territory or troop movements. It wasn't even about nuclear facilities or missile interceptions. It was about tempo. Israel didn't just move faster, it thought faster. This war showed clear AI asymmetry: Israel didn't just dominate Iran's sovereign airspace, it dominated its cognitive space. Israel's algorithms were writing death sentences faster than Iran's generals could read their morning briefings.

At the heart of that dominance: Artificial Intelligence fused with data intelligence, human intelligence, and tactical cunning. AI didn't replace soldiers or spies. It augmented them. It extended their reach, amplified their speed, and stripped the friction out of kill chains. That's what AI can do.

But it can't do everything.

Israel, for all its technological supremacy, absorbed significant damage, and the ayatollah remains unbowed. Israel's rocket interceptor stockpiles are running low. The new Jewish Space Laser isn't yet battle ready. Ballistic missiles got through, causing death, destruction, and displacement. A tiny country 80 times smaller than Iran and already at war on seven fronts, Israel cannot sustain a protracted war of attrition, especially one more than 2 000km away. As for the stated aim of this war, no-one knows with credible certainty if an Iranian atomic bomb is now more or less likely.

This war will be benchmarked

The opening shots of the war were all about tempo and precision. At 04:30 on Friday, 13 June, without warning and without visible operators, Mossad's pre-assembled missiles came alive. Iranian air defence systems, and the sense of security that came with them, were erased in seconds. The strike reportedly used commercial-grade components like Moxa ioMirror E3210 controllers – hardware you could buy off eBay – combined with thermal cameras and pre-programmed self-destruct routines. Once used, the communications boxes were obliterated. The cameras, conspicuously intact. Message received: we see you, and we leave nothing behind but your confusion.

This was IKEA + AI warfighting: pre-assembled, sleek, modular, self-guided, and disposable.

Next, Iran's top military brass and nuclear

scientists were assassinated, many within the first 15 minutes. Most of them were taken out at home or in their offices. Next came a wave of precision bombings against the country's air defences, rocket launchers, rockets, and key units. Within a few hours, Israel delivered the kinds of blows previous armies took years to achieve, if ever.

This isn't simply about military capacity, it's about the speed of perception and the paralysis of the adversary. While Iran was still counting how many generals it had lost,



Israeli fighter planes about to take off during Operation Rising Lion

Israeli analysts were training the next model on new data on the generals' replacements.

Every Iranian move became training data. Israel's AI was in a reinforcement learning loop. Each Iranian response and movement taught the algorithm something new about Iranian capabilities, decision-making patterns, and vulnerabilities.

Israel was fighting a war to dominate the other side's OODA loop (observe, orient, decide, act), and turning it into a loading screen. And while Iran's Revolutionary Guards still believes in flags, parades, martyrs, and sacred fire, Israeli forces swear by latency, inference, and proprietary chipsets. Kill chains are now written in Python, not Persian.

Israel's advantage wasn't just algorithmic, it was architectural. While Iran's command structure still relies on human-in-the-loop decision trees, Israeli systems have moved to human-on-the-loop automation. The difference: milliseconds versus minutes; inference versus deliberation. Israel sees the battlefield as a training dataset where engineers push updates in real time. The result was clear to see.

But here's where things get messy and AI isn't able to flip the script. While the cost of attacking is collapsing, the cost of defending is skyrocketing.

Iran reportedly fired off about 20%

of its ballistic missile stockpile, yet its attacks were relentless, forcing millions of Israelis into bomb shelters day after day, night after night. It was nerve-wracking, exhausting, and damaging. And though Israel and the United States intercepted about 90% of the incoming rockets, the hit rate was dropping. Israel's missile defence systems – the Arrow, David's Sling, and Iron Dome – aren't cheap. And they were running hot. You don't need a degree in

economics – or warfare – to see the problem.

Despite its abilities, AI's blind spots are glaring. Algorithms excel at pattern recognition but struggle with strategic surprise. Iran's asymmetric responses – proxy warfare, cyber-attacks, and diplomatic pressure – don't fit neat training datasets. AI can predict where a missile will land, but not why a leader might suddenly sue for peace or double down on destruction.

AI can win battles, but it can't win the peace we crave. Israel has achieved something extraordinary: real-time kill chains; pre-emptive targeting; multi-domain tempo control. But turning that into a strategic endgame is a human political problem. Israel just executed the first modern war of inference. But even with the fastest systems, peace remains a decidedly analogue affair.

This war will be studied, not just by military tacticians, but by AI ethicists, technologists, and policymakers for years to come.

• *Award-winning writer, editor, and host of The DeJargonizer podcast, Amir Mizroch was born in Israel and raised in Krugersdorp, South Africa, studying journalism at Rhodes University. He worked at the Mail & Guardian before making aliya in 2000. In Israel, he worked at The Jerusalem Post and Israel Hayom, and was later director of communications at Startup Nation Central. See his Substack: Israeltechinsider.com*



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Coming home after war in awe of Israelis

PERSONAL STORY

MENDY GRAUMAN



A few weeks ago, I found myself stuck in Israel during a war. What began as a short work trip for a conference in Tel Aviv turned into a two-week stay in a country under fire. But unexpectedly, I didn't feel afraid.

After spending a week in Tel Aviv, I headed to my friend's house in Tzafaria to relax for a few days before flying home. I had barely arrived when, at about 02:30, the sirens started blaring. News broke that Israel had launched an attack on Iran. Within seconds, we were in the bomb shelter.

That moment marked the beginning of 12 intense days, not just of conflict, but of resilience, clarity, and deep pride in the systems that keep Israel functioning under unimaginable pressure.

Throughout those two weeks, we were woken multiple times in the middle of the night by sirens warning of incoming rockets. We would rush to the *mamad* in our pyjamas, children in tow, and sit there listening to the distant and not-so-distant thuds of explosions. Sometimes the walls shook. On more than one occasion, we saw flashes of light streaking across the sky – fiery debris from intercepted rockets, glowing against the darkness. It was real. It was raw. It was war.

Yet I didn't feel afraid.

What I felt was awe, not just at the scale of the conflict, but at the systems Israel has in place to manage it.

From the outside, war feels chaotic, unstable, and helpless. But from inside Israel, it feels incredibly organised, deeply prepared, and – above all – focused on the safety of every individual. The Home Front Command app sent alerts with military precision, giving us exact times and locations for every siren. The network of bomb shelters, private and public, meant that people always had a safe space to run to.

Every system worked. The sirens worked. The alerts worked. The shelters worked. And, for the most part, the Iron Dome worked, intercepting rocket after rocket in mid-air with breathtaking efficiency. Tragically, some missiles still got through. Not everyone was as lucky as I was. Homes were damaged and lives were lost. Even the most advanced technology can't offer perfect protection. Every casualty is a tragedy, and each one underscores the terrifying reality Israelis live with – that war can come to your doorstep at any moment.

As a South African, I couldn't help but compare what I was seeing to the reality back home. I'm used to a government often embroiled in corruption scandals, with basic services collapsing and public trust at an all-time low. Loadshedding, broken infrastructure, and mismanagement have become part of daily life. Experiencing a country where the government has gone to such lengths to protect its people – not just in word, but in deed – was deeply moving. It was the kind of care and accountability I had never seen at a national level before.

But it wasn't just the technology or the government systems that left an impression. It was the people.

I witnessed ordinary Israelis jump into action, not just

for each other, but for the thousands of foreigners who suddenly found themselves stuck in a war zone. WhatsApp groups sprang up within hours with people offering spare rooms, transport, food, anything they could. Strangers connected with strangers to make sure everyone had a place to stay and someone to call if they needed help.

And the most extraordinary thing? They did all of this while their own lives were being upended. These weren't acts of charity done from a place of comfort. These were people responding to crisis while living through one themselves. They helped others while their own kids were being rushed into bomb shelters. While their own flights were cancelled. While their own relatives were being called up for reserve duty.

I was fortunate to have friends to stay with throughout this period. I joined them and their children in many middle-of-the-night sessions sitting on the floor of the *mamad*, wrapped in blankets, waiting for the all-clear while the windows and doors rattled from nearby blasts. The days were oddly quiet, almost surreal, punctuated by moments of tension, updates, and preparation. In those two weeks, I experienced a version of Israel most people outside its borders never get to see: a country under fire, yes, but also a country bound together by purpose, preparedness, and solidarity.

Yet even as I felt protected and supported, a growing concern loomed over many of us: how were we going to get home?

When the airspace reopened, the first commercial flights were routed through Europe. For South Africans, those flights weren't an option. Our passports require visas for many European countries, and we didn't have them. It meant we were effectively stuck, even as the skies opened for others.

That's when the South African Jewish Board of Deputies stepped in, while our national government stayed silent. It worked with Ethiopian Airlines to expedite flights, lobbying tirelessly behind the scenes to get earlier departures and more seats for South African citizens. Its efforts resulted in flights that enabled hundreds of us to return home quickly and safely, myself included.

Sitting on the plane to Addis Ababa, I finally exhaled. I was going home – physically, at least. But emotionally, something had shifted.

Yes, I had just lived through a war. Yes, I had heard the walls of my temporary home shake with explosions. But I had also seen what it means to truly care for your people – from government infrastructure to grassroots kindness. I had seen a Jewish state, a Jewish community, and a Jewish global network come together with quiet strength to keep its people safe, connected, and supported.

And I felt proud.

• *Mendy Grauman is the youth programme consultant at the Israel Centre, and runs a video and photography company.*

Airlift from Israel: Board gets South Africans home

As June 2025 came to an end, South Africans stuck in Israel due to the war who were desperate to get home, returned safely. **South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) National Director Wendy Kahn** looks back on her diary from the day Operation Rising Lion began, and can now heave a sigh of relief.

Friday 13 June

Iran-Israel conflict began. SAJBD convened a meeting of 54 communal leaders from around the country to discuss the consequences of the strikes for South African Jewry. One of the issues discussed was South Africans in Israel in light of the skies closing.

Saturday 14 June

The South African government issued a statement offering consular assistance to South Africans in Iran. No such offer was made to those in Israel, where civilians were being directly targeted by Iranian missiles.



South Africans waiting at Ben Gurion Airport to go home

Sunday 15 June

The SAJBD started receiving desperate calls from South Africans who urgently needed to return to South Africa. Emergency cases included people struggling financially; community members whose medications were running out; and a woman who was in an advanced stage of pregnancy and wouldn't be able to travel much longer.

Monday 16 June

We wrote to President Cyril Ramaphosa raising the difficult circumstances of South Africans stranded in Israel and pointing out the hypocrisy of offering consular services for those in Iran but not in Israel.

Tuesday 17 June

The Presidency responded that the correspondence would be forwarded to the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco). Two weeks later, Dirco is yet to respond.

Wednesday 18 June

The SAJBD's leadership realised that when the skies reopened, especially for foreign carriers, there wouldn't be capacity to bring home the large number of South African citizens that were continuously reaching out to the Board. We began to embark on a strategy to get additional flights to repatriate South African citizens.

I engaged extensively with fellow international Jewish communities to understand their preparations for repatriation, and the steps other governments were taking. We chose to abide by the Israeli recommendation not to recommend land routes through neighbouring countries.

Thursday 19 June

Given the close working relationship with Ethiopian Airlines borne out of similar repatriation efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic, we decided to approach the airline for assistance.

Friday 20 June

The SAJBD together with travel agent Ingrid Zahavi approached Ethiopian Airlines, which immediately agreed to help, ensuring us that even if it needed to add flights, it would assist. It requested that

we put together a list to understand how many needed to be accommodated.

We immediately posted on social media asking for people wanting to join flights to contact us. The link made it round our community and further.

Sunday 22 June

We engaged with youth groups, gap-year programmes – Bnei Akiva; Habonim; and Ohrsom – to include participants who wanted to return home. A list was finalised with well over 250 people. Those that could afford cruises or who were brave enough took land routes, the others waited anxiously for feedback.

Monday 23 June

Non-Jewish South Africans approached us to include them in repatriation flights. They had reached out to Dirco, and had received no response.

Wednesday 25 June

The skies started opening on a limited basis. A WhatsApp group was created to communicate with travellers in anticipation of Ethiopian Airlines resuming flights. Negotiations with the airline's headquarters intensified to finalise logistics around flights.

Thursday 26 June

We advised our passengers, "On June 25, the first full day of reopening, only 12 000

passengers flew on 88 international flights – that's just 20% of the usual traffic. The airport is slowly ramping up, and though Israeli airlines have increased their schedules, many foreign airlines are still waiting for clearance.

"Israel has suspended normal noise restrictions and curfews to allow round-the-clock flights, but foreign carriers, including Ethiopian Airlines, need special approval before resuming services. International safety agencies like EASA [the European Union Aviation Safety Agency] have issued warnings about missile threats, and some regulators, like Russia's, are still restricting night flights.

"Ethiopian Airlines, which normally flies daily to Tel Aviv, suspended operations after the May missile strike, and hasn't resumed services yet. It has formally applied to restart, and aims to resume flights by 30 June, but that depends on final Israeli clearances. In short: this isn't a delay caused by the airlines. They are ready to fly, but the authorities are reopening very cautiously. It will take a few more days to normalise."

Israel agreed that as soon as permissions were in place, it would accommodate those on our list.

Late into Thursday night, the Jewish Agency For Israel and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked with us to ensure that Ethiopian Airlines repatriation flights be added before the official resumption on 1 July. Flights from 1 to 4 July were fully booked, and we had well over 200 passengers who would never be able to be accommodated on that schedule.

Friday 27 June

At 09:49, we received the go ahead for three additional Ethiopian Airlines flights: one on Saturday, two on Sunday. Our staff members called every person on our list to ensure that any person needing repatriation be booked on one of the flights. By 15:30, everyone had been sorted.

Saturday 28/29 June

Ethiopian Airlines flights brought more than 200 South African citizens home to their families, friends, doctors, workplaces, maternity hospitals, and universities.

One repatriated individual shared the profound anxiety experienced during this ordeal, describing a tumultuous period marked by uncertainty and the potentially daunting prospect of navigating escape routes through neighbouring countries. She described the period as a desperate rollercoaster of emotions, and said that psychologically speaking, knowing that the SAJBD was "looking after us and feeling that we were being heard and taken care of in our time of need was wonderful".

1 July

Still no peep from Dirco.

Zach Margs' Israeli antics bring joy to global Jewry

LEE TANKLE

Once you hear the words “Kapara, where you from?” said in an Israeli accent, you know that you’re going to spend the next minute laughing at a video made by comedian Zach Margolin, otherwise known as Zach Margs.

From being an Israeli waiter on a Tel Aviv beach to an El Al security agent, to an irritable shawarma vendor, to the family gathering around the seder table, there’s no element of Israeli – or Jewish – life that Margolin hasn’t joked about.

Margolin, born and raised in a Jewish family in London, has spent many family holidays in Israel. He started making videos while in lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, and has since amassed more than 225 000 followers on Instagram and more than 124 000 on TikTok.

His most popular videos are the ones that poke fun at Israeli and Jewish culture. In June alone, he had more than 40 million views.

“I always say [that] if an Israeli tells me they like my videos, it’s the number-one compliment because I’m kind of making fun of them,” he said. “It’s great because Israelis have the best sense of humour ever, so they’ll tell you straight up it’s not funny or it’s hilarious”

Margolin was recently in South Africa with Jewish Food Fund Yad Aharon & Michael, where he performed a stand-up comedy show for the Yad

Aharon Young Ambassadors programme for young adults in their 20s and 30s who are beginning their professional journeys.

Margolin has always been interested in comedy, even being part of a comedy troupe while he was at university. So it felt like a natural step for him to start doing stand-up comedy, which brings in elements from his videos but also stories from his childhood and travels.

“I love doing live stuff. It’s fun because I get to meet the people who are seeing the videos,” he said “It’s a completely different beast doing live



Zach Margs



the aroma iced coffee; schnitzel on the beach; or going to Shalvata,” he said.

“Everyone’s doing the same stuff. It’s so funny that everyone’s just copying each other. So, I created a character named Zacharia, who would teach you what to post on Instagram when you’re in Israel. And it was me speaking in an Israeli accent, saying, ‘Today, the rule of Israel is to do the Ben Gurion walkway. Okay, when you get to the airport, you have to post the walkway. You also have to write home. If you don’t write home, it doesn’t count.’ Then I would screenshot people’s actual Instagram stories and post them in my story.”

It was only a while later, in August 2023, that he decided to try posting a funny video of himself in Israel, impersonating an obnoxious waiter at a restaurant at the La La Land beach in Tel Aviv after receiving less-than-great service.

“He just was so bad that I started impersonating him because he kind of looked like me because we were both wearing a white t-shirt and black shorts, and then he was wearing a tank top, so I rolled up my sleeves, and then he had a bucket hat on and I went to the kiosk in the

shows compared to video, but I was doing the live stuff before I was doing the social media stuff.”

His comedic Jewish videos started as a private joke among him and his friends, where he would make fun of the things he saw people do when travelling to Israel, and would share the experiences he had there.

“I used to do this thing on my Instagram account when it was private called ‘the Instagram rules of Israel’. I noticed that everyone in Israel was posting the same Instagram stories, like the Ben Gurion walkway;



>> Continued from 9a

beach and bought the same bucket hat, picked up a tray, and just started impersonating him,” he said. “My friend Emma said, ‘This is funny, let’s film it.’”

He then thought it would be fun to poke fun at the interrogation at Israeli airport security and family Shabbat dinners, with those videos also going viral.

He said the events of 7 October 2023 and the subsequent rise in antisemitism gave him a sense of responsibility to share Jewish pride and humour, even in dark times.

“I wanted to bring joy to Jews. You know, we all saw antisemitism. So I said I’m gonna be so out there and proudly Jewish on my Instagram and try to make people laugh, and I’m not gonna be political and try to get into politics. My role in this war, because there is a social media war as well, is to bring joy.”

Though his content started by making fun of people coming to Israel, the more time he spent in Israel, the more he started to



understand the nuances of Israeli culture and started to play with it.

“I’ve done one video where it was Israelis reacting to the siren versus reacting to the rain. Israelis, when they hear the siren, they’re chilled, but then the rain, they’re terrified. And I did another one where it was like trying to make plans with Israelis in advance because if you try and make sure we do something next Wednesday, they’re like, ‘Ask me Wednesday, whatever, today’s Sunday, mah [what].’”

He said that since his videos have gone viral, especially within the Jewish community around the world, it made him want to

continue to share his Jewish pride and comedy despite the hate.

“Once it starts going viral within Jewish communities, you forget how many people have seen it,” he said. “I love to meet people and see someone that says you’ve made me laugh this year, and you’ve made this year a little bit better. It’s the best feeling in the world.”



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South Africa – ‘not nearly as antisemitic’

LULA PENCHARZ

American-Israeli activist, social media influencer, and basketball trainer Barak Swartz says he wants Jews around the world to “wake up” and recognise that “the boots on the ground reality” is that it’s a “bullshit narrative that so many people hate us”.

Swartz came to South Africa recently to see for himself the situation for Israelis and “to bring Israel to the people”. He has been astonished at the warmth he has received from everyone.

He put out an Instagram video a couple of weeks ago while bungy jumping off the Bloukrans Bridge on the border of the Eastern and Western Cape. The facilitators, South Africans who have never left their home country, were sprouting Israeli slang phrases like “big *balagan*” (mess) and “*chaval al hazman*” (waste of time) to him with good humour.

“It can’t be that I’m put into a situation where I’m interacting only with people who are pro-Israel,” he said. “I’ve been to touristy and non-touristy places. I’ve been in urban settings and non-urban settings. I’ve been with locals and non-locals, and I haven’t come across one person who has given me an issue about this [Magen David] necklace, about me being an Israeli or Jewish.”

“Change your mindset. We have South Africans in the southernmost part of Africa, who have never left South Africa, speaking to me in Hebrew. They welcome me with no issues in the place where we all thought they would give us the most issues,” he said. Swartz wants people to know that he hadn’t once felt “unsafe, targeted, or received any form of antisemitism” in South Africa.

Swartz said he had been warned to “be careful” and “on guard” as he left for Spain, Morocco, and South Africa. “I was told I was visiting three hotspots, not only in terms of what they told me, but in terms of what the media has pumped into our brains for so long,” he said.

“I’ve had the opposite experience. I’ve received a warm welcome, and incredible hospitality,” Swartz said. “I’m not saying that it [antisemitism or anti-Israel sentiment] doesn’t exist in South Africa. The videos and experiences I’ve seen online are definitely not fake. These antisemitic protests and events exist, but they exist in concentrated pockets and include a small percentage of people.” he said.

In another of his videos, *The Soweto Horseman*, a local South African band started singing “*Am Yisrael Chai*” to him on the street.

Swartz said he knows there are people who would want to hurt him if they could, but not on the scale we all believe it to be. “I’m trying to open people’s eyes to not continue to have their lives dictated by the negativity of the media, which tries to convince us that this is the scary reality and there’s no alternative,” he said.

He’s determined to show that what people see on social media and in the news is put there intentionally

to make them feel certain emotions. “We hide and we’re afraid, which is what the media intends to provoke. That’s how they make money,” he said.

Swartz was born in the greater Boston area in the United States (US) to a household with two rabbis. “My father is a Reconstructionist rabbi, and my mother a Reform rabbi. The Judaism I grew up with was one based on inclusivity,” he said.

In 2001, at the age of six, Swartz and his family moved to Israel. He studied at an Israeli school for two years before moving back to the US. Their short stint in Israel was at the same time as the second intifada.

“I was exposed to Israel at its core and grew a thick skin even then,” he said. “At a young age, I had already experienced the reality of war in the Middle East with sirens, bomb shelters, even a car bomb on the street we lived on at the time.”

Back in the US, Swartz dedicated himself to playing basketball, but had to deal with many injuries. Through his ongoing commitment to basketball, he said he learned the power of resilience and teamwork.

He had attended a Birthright trip to Israel as a college student, and soon became a frequent flyer between Israel and the US, acknowledging his strong connection and sense of belonging in Israel. He then moved to Israel as a basketball strength and conditioning coach. There, becoming an Israeli citizen, he trained many top national and international basketball players.

Having not served in the Israel Defense Forces, he felt he wasn’t doing enough for Israel after the 7 October 2023 massacre.

“I decided to change the content I was creating online from basketball and fitness to telling stories and talking about my life in Israel as an American,” he said. “Not from a political perspective, but from a truth and storytelling perspective. I wanted to contribute towards the greater good because I felt I needed to contribute in some way as my own voluntary army service because I didn’t have any requirement.”

The response to his YouTube videos was remarkable and many of them went viral. Over the past two years, he has grown his platform, and now reaches 10 million people across the world monthly.

On top of advocacy on social media platforms, Swartz is a public speaker. He has travelled to various

communities outside of Israel. By incorporating his love for basketball in his talks, he finds that he can create a “safe space and establish common ground to speak about Israel”.

“I understood early on that it’s important to be around people who are from different backgrounds, cultures, and religions. The differences didn’t matter if you established human connection. That’s what I always found on the basketball court. In between those four lines, all that mattered is that we had one common goal, basketball,” Swartz said.

During his trip to South Africa, he spoke to the South African Friends of Israel and King David School students



Barak Swartz talking to primary school students at Herzlia Weizmann

in Johannesburg.

“I try to create a lot of nuance in conversation when I’m speaking to people about Israel, especially Jewish communities when I attend private schools. The students aren’t exposed to the nuances of what it’s like to be on the ground. I can see the shocked response of people when they see me, an American Ashkenazi Jew, whom they didn’t expect to provide this nuance, but it’s needed.

“We need to wake up to the boots on the ground. I’m showing you the bullshit narrative that so many people hate [Jews]. Change your mindset, and don’t let negative media dictate how you live your life. Take yourself along with Israel to the people,” Swartz said.

Swings and roundabouts of sibling or solo childhood

GILLIAN KLAWSKY

There are many stereotypes surrounding being an only child versus one of many, but the reality is often far more nuanced.

Nonetheless, sibling dynamics or the lack thereof do have an impact on who we become in several ways, says counselling psychologist, Lisa Hirschowitz. Younger siblings often model older children's behaviour, which helps in social situations, she says. "Older siblings also develop skills like empathy and patience by engaging with younger siblings."

And, you learn how to navigate conflict through sibling interactions, she says. "Research has also shown that individuals with siblings tend to have a greater sense of self due to increased support at home, which can pave the way for success."

That's not to say that there aren't potential drawbacks to growing up in a larger family. "Parents of multiple children must ensure that each child feels equally loved and valued and has equal opportunities," Hirschowitz says.

Though this applies to parents of even two children, those with bigger households may need to work that much harder to follow such advice. Rebbetzin Estee Stern, who grew up as one of nine siblings, says her parents were particularly good at making each child feel special. "My parents did an amazing job at making each child feel like they were the only child," she says. "There was a lot of love in the house."

Stern says she's always loved being part of a big family. "There's always something happening; there was always somebody to play with; and there was always excitement." Today, she's one of four that still live in South Africa while the rest of her siblings are spread across the world. However, their bond remains.

That's why when her turn came to start a family, having many children was more than just a *mitzvah*. "I always wanted my kids to have that concept of a large family," Stern says. "I really do see it as the greatest blessing." Today, she and her husband, Rabbi Yehuda Stern, have eight children aged between two and 19 years old. Her two oldest are studying in Israel.

"I love a busy household," she says. "I often laugh and say that with only six kids at home, the house is very quiet. The dynamics change when one child

isn't at home. Of course they fight, especially the younger ones, but just watching the relationships between each of the siblings evolve as they mature is special."

While Sigal Josselowitz has only one younger brother, she says she never felt like



Sigal Josselowitz (circled) with her extended family

she came from a small family. Her mother is one of five siblings, all of whom have children. "The big extended family was always together for Shabbos or weekend braais at my grandparents," she says. "There was always someone around. I also lived in my grandparents' house for many years and a few of my aunts aren't that much older than me, so we were close. They still often 'mistake' me for a sibling," she says.

Though she and her brother have always been close, she says her cousins also felt like siblings as they all grew up together, which she loved. "The only drawback is that everyone always knows what's going on with you, whether you like it or not," she laughs.

Being an only child may be different to being one of many, but it also comes with benefits, including "having undivided parental attention which might mean that a child's emotional and physical needs are met quickly", according to Hirschowitz. "It also means not having competition in the home,

whether it be for attention, academic success, or sporting pursuits." Only children learn how to be independent, which can cultivate confidence and comfort in one's skin, she says.

Only child Danny Dee echoes this. "As the only child for my parents to love and teach, the bond with my parents became tighter," he says. Although he acknowledges that it could get lonely at times, friends became important and were almost like family. Though his parents could have only one child, Dee also points to the financial and educational privileges that came with it.

An only child who requested anonymity agrees that her upbringing gave her a heightened sense of independence and made her self-reliant. "I was happy with my own company, and didn't feel a need to fit in," she says.

However, she says being an only child does come with increased responsibility. "You have to take care of parents on your own when they're sick or old. While it's a privilege to be able to care for a parent, it's difficult and intense not to have support."

Hirschowitz also points out the lack of support during family strife. Additionally, she cautions that it may take longer for only children to develop the social, emotional, and cognitive skills that come with having a sibling to practice such skills on. That's why ensuring that your child receives appropriate social interaction with kids their own age, giving them emotional support, and cultivating empathy is so important, she says.

Amanda Blankfield-Koseff essentially grew up as an only child as there was a big age gap between her and her two older half-sisters, and they never lived in the same house. "I loved being an only child because I got to spend more time with adults and got more attention," she says. "Yet, I was lonely at times too."

While growing up, she looked up to her half-sisters who were kind to her, but she says they didn't have much in common until she was older. "Having them in my life has definitely enhanced it and now that we are all mothers, even more so, as their advice provides comfort and support," she says.

"The bond between siblings is special, and I see it with my sisters' children, as both have large families. I love being an aunt, and I'm glad my child has extended family who adore her. I definitely missed out on that growing up."



Amanda Blankfield-Koseff with her father and sisters

Youth groups decide on Israel trips

GILANA LAB

Many young South Africans head for Israel during the July holidays, especially on organised youth or religious trips. This year, however, there was a lot of confusion about the status of these trips, with the skies around Israel closing due to the Iran-Israel war from 13 to 24 June.

It was a situation of guessing whether it was on again or off again, until final decisions were made. And parents and youth organisations' security concerns came into play.

During Israel's strike against Iran, dubbed Operation Rising Lion, many youth trips were cancelled when there were no flights in or out of Israel, but since the skies have reopened, there's the chance to rethink later trips that hadn't yet been cancelled.

Do organisations take the risk and go to Israel for their planned trips,

or cancel with so much uncertainty in the air? It has been a rollercoaster journey for all involved. Many organisations tried to delay cancelling as they hoped things would change in Israel. The strategy worked for Bnei Akiva, as its last-minute decision to keep its annual Hadracha trip going has made its *channichim* happy.

Dina Diamond, a mother of two, both going to Israel on Bnei Akiva's Hadracha programme, said, "I think it's safer now than it was before the 12-day war with Iran."

Diamond said that before making her decision about her children's trip she did what she does best – research. "I phoned all of my friends in Israel and asked them what they thought," she said. She got a positive

response overall, with people saying that life had gone back to normal and



Hadracha 2023 participants at the top of Masada

suggesting that she come for a holiday as well. "Now, not only are my two kids going to Israel on Hadracha, I'm going for a holiday," Diamond said.

Joshua Pimstein, Bnei Akiva national chairperson for 2025 said, "We are incredibly excited to be running Hadracha this year for Grades 10 and 11. Running Hadracha has been a challenge due to the recent war with Iran. After deliberating over the programme throughout the period of the war, we took the decision to proceed as a consequence of the ceasefire announced on 24 June, which has thankfully held.

"We're excited to be taking more than 300 participants split between *madrachim* and *channichim* to Israel this July for an unforgettable, meaningful, educational, and enjoyable life-changing experience," Pimstein said.

The Diller Teen Fellowship, an organisation of Jewish youth leaders, had to cancel its trip, which led to some of its Grade 11s applying for Bnei Akiva's Hadracha programme at the last minute.

Said Dani Sack, Diller programme co-ordinator for Johannesburg, "The decision to cancel Diller's Israel Summer Seminar [ISS] isn't a local one. Diller is a global organisation, with 32 cohorts around the world, including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Argentina, Australia, and Israel. The ISS is meant to be a global seminar spanning two weeks,

with more than 700 participants.

"When the war with Iran began, many Israeli Diller staff members were called up for reserve duty, and many others, as well as Israeli Teen Fellows – participants in the programme – were directly impacted by the destruction caused by ballistic missiles," Sack said.

"It soon became clear that running a programme on such a large scale was going to be impossible with so many Diller members affected, and Diller International made the difficult decision to cancel the Israel trip. As a result, cohorts around the world, including Johannesburg and Cape Town, are running local programming centred on Israel education, Jewish identity, and leadership development."

One of Diamond's daughters was set to go on Diller, but being a committed Bnei Akiva member, she was able to join Hadracha when the former was cancelled. Said Diamond, "For Diller, the complexities were a bit more involved because it was an international programme and it was co-ordinating multiple countries, whereas Hadracha is South African-based and it can manage it."

However, "I was devastated for my daughter when Diller got cancelled," she said. "It all worked out though, because she was meant to go on Hadracha last year, which was cancelled because of the war, so they did Hadracha for the Grade 10s and 11s this year instead." Diamond's daughter would have missed that completely because she was scheduled to go on Diller. Now, she has the opportunity to go on Hadracha.

Not all parents are feeling so content about their children's safety in Israel. One father who had two children scheduled to go to Israel on Hadracha and Ohrsom respectively, told the *SA Jewish Report*, "As long as Iran and/or its proxies are still firing missiles indiscriminately into Israel, we won't let them go. We, the parents, wouldn't travel to Israel in the current situation, and we would therefore certainly not allow our kids to do anything we wouldn't do." This family has decided to take a family trip elsewhere.

Feelings are mixed in the community. For some, the thought of sending their kids into a literal war zone seems absurd, others believe

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Board steps into consular services void

In a concerted effort, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), in close collaboration with Ethiopian Airlines and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MIFA), facilitated the safe repatriation of South Africans stranded in Israel due to the conflict with Iran and the resultant closure of Israeli airspace. A huge debt of gratitude should go to National Director Wendy Kahn and her team, and Ingrid Zahavi, the world's best travel agent. They took up the mammoth task of locating stranded passengers; collaborating with Ethiopian Airlines; interfaced with MIFA; and ultimately were able to see to it that every South African, Jew and non-Jew alike, was taken care of through this harrowing period.

It must, however, be said again that this task was necessitated by the void created by the lack of consular support provided to South African citizens in Israel. It's so regrettable that the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco) and President Cyril Ramaphosa bear responsibility for this gap, having ignored the SAJBD's explicit warning to them. In a letter that the Board sent to Ramaphosa following the "temporary" closure of the South African embassy in Tel Aviv, the Board cautioned, "It's possible that the current situation in Israel could worsen significantly and lead

to a need to evacuate South African citizens from Israel. If that were to occur, it may also be that flights out of Israel are significantly reduced or stopped altogether. It's thus essential that in Israel – an area which is presently a destination engaged in conflict – there be consular services and diplomatic assistance provided to those South African citizens who require it." I wish that these words hadn't proven so prophetic.

We are heartened that all 260-plus stranded individuals have been safely accounted for, and that the conflict with Iran has concluded. We further pray that the conclusion of this conflict will be the catalyst for an end to the Gaza conflict, and that it may herald a period of peace and security for Israel and for Jews worldwide.

In the coming months, a significant legal battle will unfold in the Western Cape, one that carries profound implications for our community. At its heart is the University of Cape Town's (UCT) controversial boycott resolution, now under scrutiny through a courageous challenge brought by Professor Adam Mendelsohn, the director of the Kaplan Centre at UCT. His case seeks to expose the procedural irregularities that enabled this resolution to pass.

The SAJBD has applied to serve as *amicus curiae* (a

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

friend of the court) in this case. Our involvement stems from the deep and troubling issues that have surfaced at UCT over recent months and years. These include a persistent lack of understanding about antisemitism, coupled with tangible hostility experienced by Jewish students and academics on campus. It's our concern that such incidents could continue and intensify if left unaddressed.

The SAJBD's application reflects our commitment to safeguarding the well-being of our community, particularly in Cape Town, where these developments hit closest to home. We will share key details of our submission as the case progresses, and keep the community informed. This case represents a stand for fairness, inclusion, academic freedom, and the right of Jewish students and staff to thrive in an environment free from prejudice.

• 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



Youth groups decide on Israel trips

>> Continued from 11a

their children will always be safe in Israel.

Ohrsom Student also cancelled its Israel trip, taking participants to the Kruger National Park instead.

Birtheright cancelled some of its trips, but not the ones scheduled for later in July. The organisation put out a message on 26 June, saying, "Following the recent ceasefire in Israel, we are closely evaluating the situation and preparing to resume trips. At this time, all trips scheduled to depart through 10 July have been cancelled. We'll continue to provide timely updates as the situation evolves."

Birtheright has put in extra precautions in place to make sure that the trips are as safe as possible. Having had a tour in Israel during the 12-Day War, it has first-hand knowledge about what it is getting itself into, making its decision to continue with its trips more accurate.

All the organisations that have gone ahead with their tours have built extra precautions into their itinerary. Extra security measures

are in place, including curfews and trained security personnel.

All *madrichim* are going through training for possible scenarios, which helps ease the anxiety for all involved. Birtheright and Bnei Akiva have made it clear that they will analyse plans each day to see if the activities are still safe and accessible for participants.

A Birtheright *madrich*, who is scheduled to leave in mid-July told the *SA Jewish Report*, "I was worried about the trip being cancelled because taking teenagers to Israel now is the best time!" He made it clear he wasn't worried about going, insisting that "Israel is still the safest country to be in. No-one should be nervous to go to Israel. At any time."

The *madrich* believes that even after everything that has happened, "Jewish people need to show the world that we aren't afraid. Continuing these trips shows the world exactly that, and Israel needs our support now more than ever."



Office Manager

Jewish National Fund South Africa (JNFSA)
Location: Johannesburg
Half day position

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Playing the Vylan – the curious fall of bellicose Bob

It was fun while it lasted. Bob Vylan, once a punk-rap provocateur, now appears to be slowly descending from the revolutionary heights of chanting, “Death to the IDF!” into the slightly less glamorous world of mall openings, Barmitzvah gigs, and gender-reveal parties. And honestly, it feels about right.

The artist – and I use the term loosely – seemed surprised when inciting violence on stage resulted in actual consequences, like losing his United States visa and being dropped by his booking agents. One might assume that someone bold enough to call for death publicly would also be bold enough to take responsibility. But no. Bob and his defenders have instead fallen back on the

tired script: “You’re offended by his words, but not by genocide?”

It’s a clever line, if you’re 12, allergic to facts, or both.

Still, in the spirit of optimism, perhaps this marks a new phase in Bob’s career. The angry chant circuit may be drying up, but the commercial space remains wide open. Word on the street is that Ben & Jerry’s has already approached him to front its new line of socially conscious vegan flavours: “Freezer Palestine Pistachio”; “Cancel Culture Cookie Dough”; and the experimental “Death to Dairy IDFudge Ripple.”

We might even see Bob Vylan open for drag queens at progressive toddler reading hour, or headline a limited tour through



INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman

coastal California synagogues, playing slightly censored versions of his hits under the banner, *Bneimitzvahs* for Justice.

Because if history teaches us anything, it’s that nothing says “revolutionary credibility” quite like performing next to a chocolate fountain while someone’s aunt brings out the gender-reveal cupcakes.

Continued on 12b>>

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KosherWorld



TRULY KOSHER

>> Continued from 12a

Of course, if music doesn't work out, there's always Piers Morgan. Not quite ripe, he does require some mentoring before going full time. Perhaps he can shadow Dave Smith, the other self-proclaimed "activist" turned cultural flatline, whose talent is matched only by his ability to misread a room. Together, they could form a duo: *Rage Against Reality* under the banner Artists without Talent.

Or maybe Bob could join Greta Thunberg on her next anti-carbon, high-carbon yacht voyage across the Atlantic. He could provide the soundtrack while she glowers meaningfully at passing container ships.

It would be remiss not mention the irony so rich it could headline its own comedy set: Bob Vylan, who calls for the death of Israeli soldiers, borrows his stage name from Bob Dylan, a Jewish icon who not only proudly



Photo: Screenshot - YouTube

embraced his heritage but spent time on a kibbutz in Israel and performed there multiple times. Dylan, the original voice of protest and poetic resistance, used his art to challenge

injustice without ever calling for blood. He embodied complexity, not crude sloganeering. That Vylan would co-opt Dylan's name while championing a cause that vilifies Jews and Israel is more than tone-deaf, it's the kind of unintentional satire even Dylan himself might have turned into a song.




Bob Vylan isn't a movement. He's a moment. And like all moments built on moral posturing and empty slogans, it fades, leaving behind nothing but a confused booking manager and a crate of unsold "merch". But lest he despair, I'm sure that he'll take comfort in the fact that he has so many new followers on X, there's always corporate consulting, or at the very least, a new flavour of ice cream to name.

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