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Muslim Council employee spews antisemitism

TALI FEINBERG

“I always used to wonder what it was about Jews that made people throughout history despise them.” This introduction to a Facebook post justifying antisemitism wasn’t shared online by a fringe fanatic, but by Nabeweya Lukie, the head of media and communications at the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) of South Africa, in her personal capacity.

The MJC is the leading umbrella body of the Muslim community in South Africa and

often takes part in interfaith forums. However, Lukie’s naked hatred for Jews brings into question if the MJC supports her views, and if it’s possible for Muslim and Jewish communities to continue to engage on interfaith platforms.

Lukie shares endless antisemitic content on her own Facebook page and on other forums on social media. She shared the post justifying antisemitism on 21 December 2023, quoting one Jayne Gardener: “I suddenly recognised that if Hitler had

developed a Final Solution to the Jewish question, then there had to be a Jewish problem,” she quoted. It went on to say that “Jewish claims about the Holocaust were in fact fraudulent.”

Daniel Bloch, the executive director of the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies, says, “We have written to the MJC recording our concerns, requesting a full investigation into Ms Lukie’s conduct, and we are awaiting its response. We are exploring all options to protect our rights

as South Africans and as Jews. Hatred of this kind cannot be allowed to go unchecked.”

In April, Lukie wrote that “Israhell [Israel] and the Jews are behind assassination of world leaders; manipulation of media creation of lobby groups that control countries; and [is] the safest country for paedophiles. The list of evil by a small group of protected people is mindboggling. Amongst their projects are the assassinations of the Kennedys; 9/11 [the September 11th terrorist attacks]; weapons of mass destruction; and ISIS [Islamic State]. A truly sick and murderous people.

“Their crimes currently being witnessed – not heresy or propaganda – is evidence of their cold-hearted and demonic nature,” she said, “which they are proud of and clout about. Has the world witnessed any nation more evil?”

The SA Jewish Report asked the MJC if Lukie’s views aligned with those of the organisation and if she would face disciplinary action for her statements. The MJC didn’t respond, but Lukie removed her job title from her Facebook profile in late August. She also “locked” her profile after members of the



Zambia and Israel strengthen ties

New Israeli ambassador to Zambia, Ofra Farhi, speaking at the opening of the Israeli Embassy in Lusaka

See story on page 5

>> Continued from 1a

South African Jewish community began to question the content she shares on social media. This means that social media users can no longer see her content unless they are Facebook friends with her.

In another post in September 2024, Lukie wondered, “If the Nazis did not kill Jews, would Zionists have killed the Nazis, like they kill the Palestinians?” She believes that Europe, the United States, and Germany are “all guilty because of their own need to find a solution to the Jewish problem”.

Lukie recently posted an image of an Orthodox Jewish man saying, “I do something evil, but you’re guilty because you found out, and that makes you an antisemite.” On 10 October 2024, she stated, “Jewish terrorism is at the core of global war and conflict.”

Another image she shared in July showed images of a white, Orthodox Jewish man alongside a black man. The Orthodox white man is labelled a “converted Jew” who is “Jew-ish”, while the black man is labelled an “actual Jew”.

In November 2023, Lukie wrote a post stating, “If the world wants to witness how human animals behave, look at what Israeli soldiers do to the corpses of Palestinians. I would like all the rabbis to answer for the killing of every single innocent baby and woman. Shame on you Israel with your Jewish blood money and financial support! Shame on you for calling out Hitler for his crimes while you commit worse. Did Hitler horrify you? Well, you horrify us. You shameful nation.”

In August 2024 she stated that the “Jewish ‘holy’ [Lukie’s inverted commas] scriptures promote killing and advocate

for genocide. While they kill, their forked tongues accuse others of hate speech that could potentially lead to them being harmed. Hypocrites, Nazionists [Nazi Zionists] hiding behind the cloak of piety.”



MUCH OF WHAT LUKIE EXPRESSES IS SIMPLY PERVERTED HISTORY. BUT RED LINES ARE CROSSED FROM TIME TO TIME, AND SIMPLE JEW-HATRED IS UNVEILED.

In February she posted that Israel “boasts about their inhumanity while Hitler kept it a secret. They are the height of evil.”

In May she wrote that Jews “have ruined their reputation with their lies. They have ruined their humanity with their mass killing and genocide. They have ruined their faith with their immoral behaviour, lies, propaganda, and occupation of another’s land. They have ruined the sympathy we once had for those killed by Hitler. They are a doomed people, destined for the punishment that is due to them.”

Milton Shain, antisemitism expert and emeritus professor of history at the University of Cape Town, says, “The optics of Gaza have shocked many observers. This isn’t altogether surprising. But there are appropriate ways to express one’s feelings. Much of what Lukie expresses is simply perverted history. But red lines are crossed from time to time, and simple Jew-hatred is

unveiled.”

For example, “To suggest that Zionists are paedophiles; that Jewish scriptures support killing and genocide; and to introduce the notion of ‘Jewish blood money’ – a well-worn trope – is crude, ugly and antisemitic. Not surprisingly, this all emerges from a head filled with fantasies.”

For Shain, “The proof of what really motivates Lukie is her endorsement of Jayne Gardener, who presents herself as a ‘new-born’ Jew-hater. Gardener dresses her feeling up as someone who has given much thought to the issue and has now had the veil lifted, to arrive at Holocaust denial. And Lukie presumably agrees. Need one say more?”

Bloch says that in her range of posts, “Lukie describes Jews murdered by Hitler as ‘immoral liars’; accuses Jews of assassinating world leaders; labels ‘Jewish terrorism’ – in capital letters – as the cause of global wars; and circulates classic antisemitic tropes, including images of religious Jews portrayed as inherently evil.”

In some instances, “she is explicitly antisemitic. In others, she disguises antisemitism under the guise of anti-Zionism, something we have repeatedly seen used to mask hatred of Jews”, says Bloch. “Anti-Israel organisations often insist that though they oppose Zionism and the state of Israel, they harbour no ill-feelings toward Jewish people.”

If that is indeed the case, Bloch says, “then the MJC and the broader Muslim community must condemn Ms Lukie’s words unequivocally and recognise them for what they are: antisemitic, hate-filled lies aimed at inciting violence against Jews”.

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Two weeks left for Jewish Achiever Awards nominations

STAFF REPORTER

Excitement is fast building for this year's Jewish Achiever Awards in partnership with Investec, which will be held on 2 November 2025.

While we have less time than usual for our nomination period, nominations are still coming in fast and furious. So far, in just two weeks, we have had 450 nominations, and hopefully many more to come.

We have only until 18:00 on 12 September – only two weeks left – to get all the nominations in, which doesn't



Milton Weinberg and his son Josh, who won the Rising Star Award in 2024

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give us much time at all. So, make sure not to think too hard before nominating those people who stand head and shoulders above for the incredible work they do as business leaders; entrepreneurs; women in leadership; rising stars; humanitarians; people in the arts, sports, and science arena, among others.



Wits Vice Chancellor Professor Zebnon Vilakazi and David Teeger

When we launched the Rising Star

Award two years ago, it was for an emerging leader in the community under the age of 25 who demonstrated exceptional achievement and potential in their field such as entrepreneurship,

humanitarian work, or community service. This criteria still exists, but we have moved the eligible age to under the age of 30. So, the winner of this award must be 30 or under on 2 November 2025. Nominations

for any of the Jewish Achiever Awards are simple to do. Use the QR code

in the adverts on these pages; nominate via the bit.ly link, bit.ly/jaa25nom; or email nominations@jewishachievers.co.za and give your personal contact details, the name of the person you are nominating, a brief or long reason for your nomination, and as many contact details for the nominee as possible. The Jewish Achiever Awards team will do the rest.

So, get nominating, because nominations come to an end at exactly 18:00 on 12 September. There's little time left.

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Who's guarding your gates?

The opening line of this week's parsha, Shoftim, says, "Appoint judges and officers in all your gates." On the surface, the Torah is talking about national leadership – a justice system to maintain law and order in the Jewish community.

But the Lubavitcher Rebbe taught that Torah always speaks to us personally. "Your gates" aren't only city entrances; they are the gateways into your own life – your eyes, ears, mouth, and mind. And just as we in South Africa understand the need for proper security, a Jew needs to understand that without gates and security, without personal judges and officers, he is leaving his or her most valuable treasure – the *neshama* – wide open.

In South Africa, we know all about gates, electric fences, beams, armed response, and still, we check twice before going to bed. Why? Because when something is valuable, you think about how best to protect it.

The Torah says our spiritual life deserves no less vigilance.

A *shofet* (judge) is your inner decision-maker, the part of you that uses Torah and Yiddishkeit as the standard.

Before something gets through your "gates", your judge should ask: will this strengthen my connection to Hashem? Will it uplift my home, family, and community?

A *shotair* (policeman) is the enforcer. Without one, even the wisest judgement remains a theory. The judge says, "This isn't the right kind of conversation to join." The policeman says, "We're walking away now."

The judge says, "Enough scrolling; it's time to learn something uplifting." The policeman physically puts the phone down.

The Rebbe pointed out that most people struggle on one of these two fronts.

Either they don't have clarity about what's right – a weak internal judge – or they know what's right, but lack the discipline to act on it – a weak internal policeman.

The Torah demands both: constant clarity and consistent enforcement.

The verse says, "*Titen lecha*" (you shall appoint). It's a job only you can do. No-one else can be the ultimate gatekeeper of your soul. Friends, family, or rabbis can guide, but the daily appointments, the real-time

Torah Thought

Rabbi Levi Lipskar
Chabad
Hyde Park



decisions, are yours alone.

Think of a few real-life examples:

- In traffic: someone cuts you off. The internal judge reminds you about *savlanut* (patience). The internal policeman holds back the words you were about to shout;
- At work: a tempting shortcut in business ethics presents itself. The judge recalls the Torah's standards for honesty. The policeman refuses to act; and

- At home: a conversation drifts toward *lashon harah*. The judge rules, "Not appropriate." The policeman changes the topic.

Security in our city is never "set and forget". Systems need maintenance; guards need training; alarms need testing.

The same is true spiritually: yesterday's good habits won't necessarily hold up against today's challenges.

Our judges and policemen must be constantly reappointed and retrained, and this is something only we can do for ourselves.

Upon Moshiach's arrival, the whole world will run on truth and holiness, but that begins with each of us living that way now. When we guard our gates, we help build the world we want to see.

As we enter the month of Elul and begin preparations for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, do a spiritual security check. Who's guarding your gates? Are your judges wise and your policemen strong? Because the most valuable property you own isn't behind your driveway gate, it's inside you.

As we enter the month of Elul and begin preparations for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, do a spiritual security check. Who's guarding your gates?

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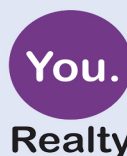
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The daily Elul shofar blasts have begun.

We follow a custom of blowing the shofar every day, except on Shabbat and the day before Rosh Hashanah, as a way to prepare for the high holy days. This tradition calls for reflection, repentance, and spiritual renewal.

*Please note that Israel time is 1 hour ahead

Saudi-born linguist creates dialogue for peace

STEVEN GRUZD

He calls himself a Muslim Zionist, and has gone from being an Israel hater to supporting the Jewish state as a matter of principle and integrity, despite how unpopular this may make him.

Since 2012, Loay Alshareef has used YouTube and other platforms to spread deeper understanding between Jews and Muslims, advocating for peace in the Middle East. His study of languages – Hebrew, Arabic, and Syriac – has emphasised to him that there is more similarity than difference between cultures.

“After all,” he said, “there are 1.8 billion Muslims, with many named after Jewish prophets, kings, and heroes”. He acknowledged that his message is a minority view in the Muslim world, but fervently hopes that will change.

Alshareef was brought to South Africa in August by the Academy of Jewish Thought & Learning for a series of speaking events.

His father is Egyptian, his mother Saudi, and he was born and raised in Saudi Arabia. He now lives in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. Since 7 October 2023, he has been travelling around the world to promote peace in the Middle East. He’s preached his message in Austria, France, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States, among others, and now in South Africa.

“Growing up, I had very negative views of Jews and Israel. I learned hate. I was a radical,” said Alshareef. He went to live with a family in France in 2010 that happened to be Jewish. “Many of my ideas were challenged in France. This traditional Jewish family was also from the Middle East. I developed a set of answers to debunk misinformation about Jews. We had very fruitful discussions, which spurred me to dig deeper. I was

open to understanding more and making a positive change. I discovered there was no real reason behind the hate and indoctrination. I discovered hope, and that people can change if we conquer the roots of hate. When I got back to Saudi Arabia, I started to study Hebrew and Judaism. I left behind the hate, but still remain a practising Muslim”.

it up to become a peace advocate. “I’m an extrovert and wanted to communicate with people, not be locked in a room solving software problems,” he said. He has a flair for languages, and created his own public relations company.

“Languages open lots of doors to anyone who learns and speaks them,” Alshareef said. “They can bridge gaps. Hebrew and Arabic are similar, as are the cultures. They show how stupid we are to be fighting. We must use common languages for peace.”

He looked at the text of the Quran in the context of when it was written to understand how Muhammad the prophet was caught up in the geopolitics of the day. This included hostility to Jews living in the Arabian peninsula. “Many Muslims still have the mentality of the seventh century. We need to fight against extremists on both sides who hijack the discussion.”

Alshareef believes education is the key tool to solving this intractable conflict. “The orphans of Gaza could be the greatest tool to defeat Hamas, or they could be the next generation of terrorists. The Arabs should take these children and give them education, healthcare, work on their postwar trauma, and give them pathways to professions. Teach them not to cherish Hamas, but bury Hamas.”

He said G-d made him go through a transformation to allow him to have empathy and work on changing hearts and minds. “I try to see the full picture. We have to expunge hate.”

He denies that he is doing *hasbarah* – the Hebrew word both for “information” and “propaganda” – for the government of Israel. “I’m pro-Palestinian, and I’m pro-Israeli” Alshareef said.



Loay Alshareef

“I believe in Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state, and for the Palestinians to live in dignity and honour. The land belongs to two peoples. I love Israelis and Palestinians,” said Alshareef.

Alshareef studied as a software engineer at The Pennsylvania State University in the United States. He worked in the industry for a long time, but gave

Continued on 3b>>

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Famed Jewish dealer's art spotted in Nazi daughter's real estate ad

TOBY AXELROD – JTA

An investigation by Dutch journalists has led tantalisingly close to the recovery of a painting looted from a Jewish art dealer 85 years ago.

But no sooner was the work by the Italian painter Giuseppe Ghislandi glimpsed in a real estate advert for a luxury property in Argentina, than it promptly disappeared.



Now, Interpol and Argentine police have joined the search, urgently trying to prevent *Portrait of a Lady* from disappearing once again, perhaps for good. But when they raided the home that had gone up for sale on Tuesday, 26 August, the

painting wasn't found.

The search is focusing on the seller of the luxury property: the daughter of a high-ranking Nazi who took refuge in Argentina after Germany lost World War II. Friedrich Kadgien, a close advisor to Reichsmarschall Herman Göring, died in Buenos Aires in 1978, and his two daughters still live there.

Portrait of a Lady was one of nearly 1 000 works bought in a forced sale in 1940 by prominent Nazis, including Göring, after the untimely death of their owner, the prominent Jewish collector Jacques Goudstikker.

Goudstikker died at sea in an accident while fleeing the Netherlands with his family, who ultimately settled in the United States.

After the war, parts of his collection – which he recorded in a book he was carrying when he died – were found and displayed in Amsterdam's Rijkmuseum. In 2006, after a decade-long battle over

restitution of looted art, more than 200 works were restituted to Goudstikker's only surviving heir, his daughter-in-law Marei von Saher, now 81.

But the Ghislandi portrait, of Contessa Colleoni, painted in the early 18th century, wasn't in the trove.

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A reporter at the Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad*, Cyril Rosman, began searching for the painting about 10 years ago, after receiving a tip from retiree Paul Post of Driehuis in North Holland. Post's father had worked at the National Diamond Bureau in Amsterdam during the war. The occupying Nazis had extorted Jewish diamond traders.

Post traced how looted diamonds were used to support the German war industry. A key figure in this scheme was Kadgien, whom Post learned had fled Germany with some diamonds and two paintings, one of them the portrait by Ghislandi.

After the painting was spotted, *Algemeen Dagblad* reporter Peter Schouten in Argentina contacted one of the daughters by phone. She told him to send his questions by email. "I don't know what information you want from me, and I don't know which painting you're talking about," she said.

After receiving the questions and a photo of the painting via WhatsApp, she responded that she was "too busy to answer right now". And then, silence.

The real estate advert was pulled from the site. According to the newspaper, the daughter reportedly has also changed her name on Instagram.

Saudi-born linguist creates dialogue for peace

>> Continued from 3a

"Because it's not mutually exclusive. I'm not pro-Hamas. They are radical extremist fanatics who rule by the sword and want a caliphate. They will never survive."

"I believe this war should end, all the hostages should be released, and Hamas needs to lay down its arms and not threaten another 7 October. The Jewish state has every right to exist. It's a democracy. There are almost 50 Muslim states. No one ever argued about that."

But he also believes that Israel is losing the information war, and that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent comments on a "greater Israel" aren't conducive to peace. "There is a lot of bad noise coming from his Cabinet. That government

isn't helping the cause," Alshareef said.

"I want the people of South Africa to know that there are amazing people [in the Middle East] with good hearts, and that you can support the Palestinian people without supporting radical fanatics like Hamas. And, listen to the people in the region, they know better.

"With United States President Donald Trump, I'm hopeful that the Abraham Accords can be extended to other Muslim countries," Alshareef said. "But the Saudis won't join the Accords until there is peace. This war has to end first."

The cold peace between Israel and Egypt and Israel and Jordan he described as "ceasefire agreements" or "security agreements", while he said

the Abraham Accords with the United Arab Emirates had led to a lot of people-to-people connections, mutual travel, and considerable business ventures. The situation had changed slightly since 7 October 2023, but relations had held.

On the issue of genocide, Alshareef said, "It's clear that Israel had the might to commit it in the first week of war if it wanted to, but it didn't. Whereas Hamas wants to commit genocide, but it can't."

"My message is that peace is the only way forward in the Middle East," he said, "and we must understand each other's history. Jews, Christians, and Muslims must live side by side. Wars aren't the solution."



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South African Jewish Report Peace at end of the tunnel

Loay Alshareef is a breath of fresh air! This proud Muslim has been in South Africa this week, espousing peace in the Middle East, something that for so many of us seems so far away. (See story on page 3.) It's so refreshing to hear someone who grew up hating Jews recognising Zionism and its importance.

Most of us are in the doldrums what with rising antisemitism and this seemingly endless war in Gaza, wondering how and if it will end. Alshareef is firm in the belief that it will end well, with Jews and Muslims understanding each other and working together.

This man, whose views many would like to discard by saying that he lives in cloud cuckoo land, has risked his life again and again to stand up for Israel and Jews. Alshareef, who said he was indoctrinated to believe that hating Jews was in the Quran, when it wasn't. He had never met a Jew until he was in his late 20s. His experience of Jews then made him realise that Jews and Muslims have more to be connected over than disconnected.

He is an advocate for Palestinians and Jews, and believes both nations have the right to self-determination and to live side by side. He despises Hamas, believing it to be the heart of the problem in Gaza.

However, for me the most profound thing he said when I heard him speak at The Base on Sunday evening concerned genocide, which he described as the deliberate act of wiping out a nation. While so many in the world demonise Israel for allegedly committing genocide in Gaza, Alshareef dispels that myth instantly. He clarified that with all Israel's military might, it could have committed genocide in a matter of days in Gaza, but it chose and still chooses not to. Instead, it does whatever it can do to prevent civilian deaths, like dropping leaflets before an attack, virtually giving away its tactics in doing so. On the other hand, Hamas wants to perpetrate a Jewish genocide, but it can't make this happen. And the reason he gives for the continued war is that after Hamas did its best to destroy Israel on 7 October 2023, but Israel has to ensure it never gets that chance.

Alshareef is clear that Hamas has to be destroyed, not least of all because Gazans must be freed from it. He maintains that most Gazans aren't fans of Israel for obvious reasons, but despise Hamas and don't want to be ruled by these terrorists. They are well aware, he says, that Hamas doesn't care about them, and uses them as cannon fodder. He believes if Hamas has its way, it won't stop with destroying Israel. It would take on the West, and then any Muslims like himself who don't follow its cause.

He maintains that those "ignorant people" siding with Hamas around the world haven't read the Hamas charter in Arabic, in which it is apparent that its aim is the total annihilation of Israel and the Jews. He insists that the charter makes it clear that Hamas even hates Jews who don't believe in Israel.

Like most people, he desperately wants the war to end so that there can be a path to peace. He believes the Abraham Accords represent the way forward – building partnerships and working relationships

between Israel and the Arab states.

As a prominent Saudi-Emirate influencer, he actively promotes these agreements and their message of Muslim-Jewish coexistence and understanding. He is aware that the war has put strain on the Accords, but believes that will sort itself out once the truth is out about the war.

He believes that the relationship between Gazans and Israelis can be mended through the orphans of this war. He has a deeply entrenched belief that honest education is the way to change their views. He said that open minded Arabs need to teach orphans – the future leaders of Gaza – the truth about Judaism, Jews, and Israel. This education needs to take over from the indoctrination that exists in the West Bank and Gaza today, which he says is not dissimilar to what he learned as a child in Saudi Arabia.

What I so respect about this man is that though he isn't blind to the horrors of this war, he is able to see past the ugliness to a place where people respect one another. I don't know if he has a magic wand, but I sure hope he's right.

It's tough to see a path that leads to a peace in which Palestinians and Israelis live side by side, but I want to believe that he is right.

The world this week has come down hard on Israel for striking Nasser Hospital in southern Gaza, which killed 20 including five journalists and aid workers. Israel has claimed responsibility for it, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu describing it as a "tragic mishap". He has called for an investigation into what happened.

I appreciate that our haters blame everything in the war on Israel, but in this case, Israel took responsibility for it. While I'm not at the coalface of this war, and cannot tell you what's really happening, I respect the fact that when Israel is in the wrong, it accepts responsibility and calls for an investigation in order for justice to be done.

It won't bring anyone back. It won't undo the damage. But accepting responsibility is the beginning of justice being served. I have yet to hear Hamas accept responsibility and call for an investigation into anything it does.

Suffice to say, war is horrendous, and this one must end now. Here's hoping Alshareef really has a crystal ball and is seeing into the future.



Shabbat shalom!

Peta Krost
Editor

Crazy tango of talking peace with sworn enemies



OPINION

PAULA SLIER

Every time you think the hostage and ceasefire talks between Israel and Hamas are edging towards a breakthrough, the rug gets pulled out. The rhythm is cruel and familiar: two steps forward, three steps back. For Israeli families with loved ones in captivity, every delay is torture. For civilians in Gaza, every collapse means more bombs, more hunger, more death.

Just last week, Hamas accepted a 60-day ceasefire proposal brokered by Egypt and Qatar with American support. The deal included releasing about half the remaining hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners. On paper, it looked like progress. But Israel has yet to respond, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ordered his negotiators back to the table even while preparing for a major operation in Gaza. This unfortunately is the pattern: a deal dangled, hope rising, then a pause, hesitation, or reversal.

At the centre is the cruellest bargaining chip – human lives. Israel insists on bringing its hostages home. Hamas knows they're its last leverage. So the cycle repeats, and just when an outline for a deal is nearly agreed, Hamas shifts the goalposts, demanding longer ceasefires, more prisoners, broader concessions. Israel pushes back. After 7 October 2023, Jerusalem cannot risk looking weak, not when Israelis are still being held captive and the country is still coming under rocket fire from Gaza. Any concession feels like a betrayal of those who died. The result is paralysis – talks that move, but only in circles.

"Netanyahu is juggling his political survival," says Israeli political commentator Neil Lazarus. "He has in his coalition two partners who are effectively dictating policy on Gaza – Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich. Ben-Gvir comes from the Kahanist far right, and Smotrich is messianic and believes in the repopulation of Gaza by Jews. In order for Netanyahu to keep his coalition, he is balancing policy with these two so they remain in the coalition and guarantee he has a majority.

"He also has a court case that has been conveniently delayed because of security reasons. Then there's the question of conscription of the ultra-Orthodox. Ironically the longer the war lasts, the bigger the problem of conscripting the *haredim* becomes. Israel does not have enough soldiers, it is short by about 10 000, and either Netanyahu can extend the reserve duty of those already overstretched, or he can conscript the ultra-Orthodox, which is already creating a major dilemma for potential coalition partners. The religious parties left the coalition over conscription."

Then there's the choreography of the mediators. Cairo, Doha, Washington – each with its own script. Egypt worries about its border. Qatar wants to remain indispensable. The Americans are juggling Israel's demands with pressure from their own public. What this means is that no single channel controls the pace. An agreement struck in one place unravels in another. What's promised in Doha gets diluted in Cairo, then doubted in Jerusalem. And so, mistrust deepens.

"There has been a contentious Qatari Egyptian competition as to who is the main mediator in the two-year Hamas Israel war," observes Dr Dan Diker, president of the Jerusalem Centre for Security and Foreign Affairs.

"Despite ideological alignment with Hamas, Qatar appears a more attractive mediator for the United States due to Qatar's massive financial muscle that reaches deeply into the US economy. Egypt is a poor country and a top beneficiary of US aid reducing its leverage with Hamas and the United States.

"Qatar is Hamas, and so the idea that Qatar would prevail on Hamas has proven to be a pipe dream. The only way that could have happened is if the US had laid down the law in the first weeks of the war and threatened to move its Al Udeid Air Base from Qatar to either Saudi Arabia or the Emirates. Similarly, Egypt could have prevailed on Hamas, but for Cairo, Gaza has become a business in the billions of dollars each year. The only way to defeat Hamas is to defeat Hamas. You can't negotiate with evil. You can't negotiate with Al-Qaeda, you can't negotiate with ISIS [Islamic State] and it's quite impossible to negotiate with Hamas even though we did get some hostages back in the beginning when Hamas felt it was victorious. Now that it feels it is being wiped out, it is holding onto the hostages as its last bid to stay in power. The West has to learn that when you're

dealing with a radical Islamic death cult, it's next to impossible, no matter who the mediators are, to get it not only to come to the table, but to return your hostages."

The families of the hostages are left hanging between despair and hope. Some demand that Israel do "whatever it takes" – swap prisoners, grant pauses, just bring their loved ones home. Others worry that giving in too much will invite future kidnappings. Both are right. Both are desperate.

Lieutenant Colonel (Reserve) Dr Amir Blumenfeld, the co-founder of BO'U (Come Together), an initiative aimed at rescuing the hostages and preserving Israeli society, and the former Israel Defense Forces (IDF) chief of trauma, is adamant that the government isn't doing everything necessary to bring the hostages home.

"The proof is clear: it has been 692 days since 7 October, and 50 hostages are still languishing in Hamas captivity. During this time, there have been multiple opportunities to secure their release, but none have materialised. The vast majority of the families of hostages support an agreement to bring their loved ones home, and naturally a ceasefire as well. Seventy-five percent of the Israeli public consistently supports ending the war and prioritising the return of the hostages. The government doesn't command a majority in any poll, and elections will be inevitable once the hostages are returned and the war ends."

The government's only path to survival is to prolong the fighting at the cost of the hostages' lives, the erasure of those who died in captivity, and the continued heavy toll in IDF soldiers killed and wounded."

This is why progress feels like it's forever slipping away. Fragile outlines agreed, then unravelled. Families bracing themselves for release, only to be crushed again.



The families and tens of thousands of protesters in Tel Aviv on Tuesday

Photo: Sharon Ben Porath

Mediators holding up "breakthroughs" that vanish in the next round. Each gain is fragile. Each new demand sets the bar higher.

Still, we can't dismiss the partial wins. A few hostages returned is everything to those families. A pause in bombing saves lives, even if only for days. These may not change the war, but they matter.

From here in South Africa, and especially in the Jewish community, the frustration feels raw. We want certainty. We want the hostages home. We want the killing to stop. But the truth is, this process was never going to be neat. It's messy, political, and cruelly slow. So yes, it is two steps forward and three back. But in this brutal dance, even one step forward can mean life instead of death. And that's why the talks, however maddening, cannot be abandoned.

• Paula Slier is an international journalist, media trainer, and public speaker. She founded Newshound Media International and Newshound Academy, and has reported from conflict zones for more than 30 years.

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Israel opens embassy in Zambia after 52 years

LEE TANKLE

After more than two decades of diplomatic quiet, Israel has reopened its embassy in Lusaka, marking a renewed chapter in its relationship with Zambia and the wider African continent.

The Israeli embassy in Zambia officially reopened on 20 August, marking the first time its flag has flown over Lusaka in 52 years.

Israel and Zambia first established diplomatic ties in 1966, two years after Zambia gained independence from the United Kingdom, with a large presence of Israelis in the country in the 1960s and 1970s. But relations were severed at the behest of the Organisation of African Unity in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur War between Israel and several Arab countries, and Israel's diplomatic presence across Africa became greatly reduced.

Ambassador of Israel to Zambia, Ofra Farhi, said that Israel began reestablishing diplomatic ties in Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with Zambia and Israel reestablishing their relationship in 1991.

"In the 1960s and 1970s, we had about 30 Israeli embassies around Africa. Now we have 11," she said, "So the distribution of embassies was a bit different, and Zambia was taken care of for a while by South Africa, then by Kenya. Then, the decision was that Zambia would get more attention if [the job] was done by a non-resident ambassador from Israel."

For four years, Farhi served as Israel's non-resident ambassador to Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana, working to strengthen ties with Zambia, which though it re-established relations with Israel in 1991, opened an embassy in Tel Aviv only in 2015.

Farhi has served as a career diplomat for more than 30 years, where she worked in the United

States, Italy, and finally Zambia, which fulfilled a childhood wish of hers.

"I have been in love with Africa since I was a child. My uncle and my aunt used to live in Zambia, of all places," she said, "They were emissaries of an Israeli international co-operation organisation. My uncle was an emissary in the 1960s in Zambia. When I grew up, I always heard good stories about Africa, specifically, Zambia. It was a personal mission to close the circle."

"I thought there was a need for Israel to have a greater presence in the southern part of the continent," she said. "I was glad to see that the current foreign minister, Gideon Sa'ar, also liked the idea of establishing more embassies, and so Zambia was chosen."

Farhi said Zambia had been home to a strong Jewish community. Litvak Jews first came to Zambia at the end of the 19th century, and many settled in the capital, Livingstone. Reaching about 1 000 Jews at its peak, its members included significant figures in Zambia's economic and political life. "One of the most prominent people was Simon Zukas," she said, "Simon was very active in the liberation movement of Zambia."

Similarly, Harry Wulfohn left Latvia for Zambia in 1929 at just 14, with £10 in his pocket and no English. Under the mentorship of Harry Susman, he built a vast business empire of farms, cattle, butcheries, retail stores, and Zambezi Sawmills. His son, Edwin Wulfohn, later partnered with the Lusaka Jewish community to link Tel Aviv University

(TAU) with the Council for Zambian Jewry, leading to the creation of the Zambian Jewish Community Public Health Wing at TAU's Sackler Faculty of Medicine.

"Today, the community is really small, very few people are left from the original community, and you have a few dozen Israelis that are living in Zambia and working," said Farhi.

South African Zionist Federation spokesperson Rolene Marks, said,

shortages, and the collapse of our healthcare system."

Sa'ar led the inauguration ceremony, joined by Zambian Foreign Minister Mulambo Haimbe. Together, they signed a memorandum of understanding to deepen bilateral ties across fields like agriculture, health, and diplomacy.

"It's an honour and a privilege to be here in Lusaka and open Israel's embassy," Sa'ar said during his speech at the opening ceremony, alongside Haimbe. "It's a truly emotional moment to raise our flag – the Israeli flag – and to hear *Hatikvah*, here in Zambia, after 52 years."

Sa'ar said that the new embassy marked the beginning of a new chapter between their nations. "Relations between our countries aren't only based on common interests," he said. "They are also rooted in shared values.

These are relations between two nations of believers: believers in ancient traditions based on the holy Bible. I know that together, we will do great things."

Farhi believes that through the reopening of the embassy, Israel will become instrumental in Zambian society. "Zambia is suffering from drought, and Israel has strengths in agriculture and water management. Last year, after the national disaster was declared, we immediately had a course in Israel for water engineers to come to see how we are dealing with the lack of water. A second course is supposed to start at the beginning of September," she said.

"We're trying to be active also in the health sector, where we're strong. We started a project that will be inaugurated in 2026 for an intensive care unit at the hospital in Livingstone. Now that I'll be sitting here, the sky's the limit."



Zambian and Israeli foreign ministers, Mulambo Haimbe and Gideon Sa'ar, with Wendy Kahn and Israeli ambassador to Zambia Ofra Farhi

"Zambia has chosen partnership, progress, and innovation. By welcoming Israel back, it has unlocked opportunities in life-saving medical technology, agricultural expertise, water solutions, cyber security, and economic growth.

"We warmly welcome these growing ties between Israel and Africa. They represent not only a strengthening of diplomatic relations but a future of shared progress, development, and mutual benefit across the continent," she said.

"South Africa, meanwhile, has chosen isolation," Marks said. "Driven by ideology rather than the interests of its people, our government rejects the very partnerships that could help fight unemployment, hunger, energy

US scrutiny spells trouble for MTN and South Africa

STEVEN GRUZD

As relations between Pretoria and Washington continue to sour, South Africa's ties to Iran are coming under increasing scrutiny. And the heat is being turned up on South African telecoms company MTN, previously chaired by President Cyril Ramaphosa. It's now chaired by Mcebisi Jonas, South Africa's special envoy to the United States (US), who has apparently been barred from travelling there.

Having fought bribery allegations in the South African courts for almost 20 years from losing bidder Turkish company Turkcell for the lucrative Iranian cellphone market, MTN now faces two new legal headaches from the US. If the cases are proven, the consequences are dire.

First, US prosecutors are involved in grand jury proceedings investigating MTN's Iran dealings. The MTN Group acquired a 49% stake in Irancell in 2005, with partners strongly linked to the Iranian government holding the majority shares. It's alleged that this was a crooked deal, beginning under Ramaphosa's watch. If proven, it will demonstrate that state capture wasn't rife only during Jacob Zuma's presidency.

Former US diplomat and writer J Brooks Spector said, "There are new investigations and possible indictments against MTN and its officers claiming the telecommunications firm's corrupt involvement with Iran that may be pursued in the American judicial system. Given Mcebisi Jonas's dual role as MTN board chairperson and South Africa's special envoy for trade and tariff negotiations with the US, this may have rendered the latter appointment less than fortunate at this sensitive time in South Africa-US relations. Jonas has, in fact, apparently been unable to secure a diplomatic visa to the US and thus has, so far, been unable to pursue direct discussions and negotiations with the Trump administration in Washington."

Second, as Spector explained, "There are already several civil damages cases under the Anti-Terrorism Act being pursued by families of American military personnel who were killed or wounded in Afghanistan and Iraq. The charges are being made against MTN that its funds were paid to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps that, in turn, financed the attacks on those American personnel.

"It is important to note that so far, no indictments have been filed against MTN in the US over its connections to Iran. At this point, the charges are still in the hands of prosecutors and a grand jury, rather than in a courtroom trial. The grand jury is convened to determine whether or not charges prepared by prosecutors are sufficient to be an indictment in order to pursue charges in a court. A grand jury can subpoena witnesses and phone records, and its deliberations and decisions carry real weight with prosecutors. Grand jury deliberations are generally not held in public."

Professor Hussein Solomon from the University of the Free State and an expert on terrorism said, "The MTN cases

are serious, because a sitting president was chairperson of MTN at the time. South Africa is becoming a mafia state, riddled with corruption. Mcebisi Jonas has come out saying this is a dirty tricks campaign, yet he cannot even enter the country to which he is supposed to be a special envoy."

Solomon noted that South Africa has been greylisted by the Financial Action Task Force for non-compliance with anti-money laundering rules. "We have Islamic State franchises getting their funding from South Africa. It's extremely problematic. Washington sees us siding with Iran, Russia, and China, or at least that's its perception."

"Can you imagine what happens if this case is proved?" he asked. "South Africa will be declared a state sponsor of terrorism and removed from the SWIFT international payments system, with terrible repercussions, not just from the US but many other countries. And in my view, the African National Congress is completely oblivious to all of this. South Africa has protected Iran diplomatically, for example in the United Nations and International Atomic Energy Agency, and got it into BRICS [the organisation comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates]."

Benji Shulman, the director of the Middle East Africa Research Institute said, "South Africa's relations with Iran really start to ramp up in about 2012 as a result of this deal with MTN." As the Americans focus more on South Africa-Iran ties, "this particular transaction and this particular relationship comes more into the spotlight", potentially implicating both Ramaphosa and Jonas.

Shulman said the relationship between the two states didn't make sense from a political, economic, or shared-values perspective. "As a country, we share none of Iran's values in terms of freedom of speech; political association; and freedom of religion. And yet we spend an enormous amount of political capital on this."

In 2012, two Reuters reports contended that MTN had used bribes to land this deal in Iran and channelled sensitive dual-use US technology to Tehran, circumventing sanctions. The Hawks also investigated these dodgy dealings after revelations of thousands of internal documents by a whistleblower who used to work for MTN. They allegedly detail how the company sought to outmanoeuvre Turkcell, but the case collapsed when an accused South African diplomat died during the investigations.

Michael Walsh, Affiliate of the Africa Program at the Georgetown School of Foreign Service said, "In Washington, some are now wondering whether the appointment [of Jonas as special envoy to the US by Ramaphosa] was simply an attempt to extend diplomatic immunity to Jonas in order to provide a partial shield against legal exposure in US courts."

Walsh added, "One of the most interesting aspects of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) cases is that they have led to repeated accusations that MTN Group misled its shareholders in official communications. Earlier this year, Professor Jeffrey Breinholt of George Washington

University suggested that MTN Group may have committed securities fraud in its characterisation of the risks associated with the ATA cases. Now, the amended complaints allege that MTN Group committed fraudulent concealment of its alignment with the Iranian regime. These sorts of allegations raise important questions about the oversight of MTN Group by entities such as the Bank of New York Mellon, Johannesburg Stock Exchange, and the government of South Africa."

The Trump administration clearly has South Africa in its sights, and Pretoria's close relations with Tehran aren't going to make things easier. The MTN cases could have disastrous consequences for the company and the country. MTN has denied any malfeasance or wrongdoing.



Mcebisi Jonas and President Cyril Ramaphosa

Photo: GGIS

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Mendelsohn cleared, but UCT drags out reinstatement

TALI FEINBERG

Professor Adam Mendelsohn has been cleared of any wrongdoing after being suspended as head of the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT) last year. This is after nine department colleagues complained about his leadership, saying that it was compromised by his legal application against UCT that called for the university to rescind its anti-Israel resolutions.

However, almost six months after being cleared, the university still hasn't reinstated him.

Furthermore, UCT commissioned an investigation into the matter, conducted by law firm Mcaciso Stansfield Incorporated. It showed that some history department colleagues wanted Mendelsohn to be suspended because they disagreed with his views on Gaza and his legal application. In addition, Mendelsohn alleges that UCT attempted to interfere with the investigation.

A UCT stakeholder, speaking anonymously because of a potential conflict of interest, said this week, "It's clear from the independent investigation that the removal of Professor Mendelsohn as head of department [HOD] was ideologically driven by certain members of the history department who opposed his stance against UCT's academic boycott of Israel. The report makes plain that there was no reason to remove him from his post."

In addition, the stakeholder said that the investigation exposed a series of questionable actions by UCT. "The Dean of Humanities, Professor Shose Kessi, was first interviewed as a witness, and she later pressed for changes to the report, some of which the investigator refused, others which he accepted," he said. "More troubling, when the investigator prepared an affidavit in the Mendelsohn litigation explaining what had occurred, UCT attempted to prevent him from filing it. Instead, the university's attorneys drafted a substitute affidavit on his behalf and sought to have him use that in place of his own."

However, "The investigator refused, insisting on his independence. That such coercive attempts were made to conceal evidence is a matter that must be denounced in the strongest possible terms."

Mendelsohn, who is director of the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at UCT, has been calling for anti-Israel resolutions adopted by the university in June 2024 to be reviewed or set aside. He says the Council – the university's highest decision-making body – didn't follow its own processes when adopting them, and they have a negative impact on research, academic freedom, and fundraising.

Department colleagues complained that this case compromised both Mendelsohn's leadership and the department. However, a thorough investigation



Professor Adam Mendelsohn

done by Zola Mcaciso, a lawyer at the firm, found that Mendelsohn did nothing wrong. The firm recommended that the suspension be lifted, and that mediation be conducted in the department to repair ties. Neither action has been taken.

UCT refused to share the full investigation with Mendelsohn, who therefore launched a Rule 35 interlocutory application, filed on 5 August, seeking to compel the university to produce the full report. In this application, Mendelsohn says, "The excuse proffered [for UCT's stalling in reinstating him and mediation] by UCT is that it 'considers it prudent to allow the mediation process first to be conducted before reintegration:'"

However, he said, "My suspension should have come to an end and I should therefore immediately again have become HOD when I was cleared of all charges. Any mediation process can take place thereafter. The current situation is unlawful."

The investigation found that "there was a clear ideological dimension to the dispute". The investigator ruled that political disagreement "isn't a justifiable basis to establish grounds of distrust in an employment relationship unless such views are unlawful or in breach of employment obligations".

The investigation further found that "there is no case made out by any of the complainants that the views and arguments advanced by the HOD in his court case are either unlawful or in breach of any policies of the university".

Mendelsohn says that Kessi told him in March that she had received the investigator's final report, but had asked for its language to be "softened" to be less critical of the complainants and to ensure they were

unidentifiable. "The request by UCT to reword the report was an improper attempt to interfere with the contents of the findings of an independent investigator," he says.

His Rule 35 application also describes UCT as allegedly misleading the court by saying Kessi believed the final report was just a draft, and that the investigation was still ongoing, which was why UCT hadn't reinstated Mendelsohn.

Furthermore, Mcaciso filed two affidavits on the matter, with the second saying that he refused to make one of the changes requested by Kessi, as he felt it would amount to interference. This change isn't recorded in court papers.

Sara Gon, the director of the Free Speech Union of South Africa, says, "It appears that UCT punished Professor Mendelsohn for exercising his legal right to review the June 2024 adoption of resolutions by the UCT Council. What's clear from Mendelsohn's version is that the outcome [of the investigation] was known by Kessi in March. At this point, UCT's position becomes untenable, and the implication that Mendelsohn was being punished for challenging the UCT Council becomes unavoidable.

"If UCT had a genuine commitment to freedom of expression and academic freedom, its management would have supported Mendelsohn and made it clear to the disgruntled staff that the process and their ideological intensity had to be separated," Gon says.

Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies Executive Director Daniel Bloch says Mendelsohn being cleared is a positive development not just for him, "but for the cause of academic freedom and future of UCT".

However, the investigator's findings "highlight how divisive political agendas are being allowed to interfere with academic life, and how these actions risk damaging UCT's reputation, harming research collaboration, and limiting opportunities for staff and students".

David Benatar, emeritus professor of philosophy at UCT, who has written extensively about the deterioration of the university, says, "While these shenanigans themselves are unsurprising given how UCT has been operating for the past decade, it's pleasantly surprising that Professor Mendelsohn has been publicly vindicated to the extent that he has, thus far.

"It remains to be seen whether appropriate action will be taken against the bad actors, but I wouldn't recommend that anybody hold their breath."

UCT spokesperson Elijah Moholola says, "UCT has noted affidavits filed by various parties in the Western Cape High Court case around the university's Gaza resolutions. This matter is currently before the courts. UCT is therefore not in a position to comment further on a pending legal matter."

Fighting for peace in fog of war

LEE TANKLE

Ittay Flescher believes that despite hatred and distrust, there is hope for reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians.

“At the moment, there are a lot of people in Gaza that aren’t fans of Israel, and they are going to hate us, not just for one year, for a thousand years. Because what we’ve done in Gaza is immoral and disgraceful,” said Flescher, the author of *The Holy and the Broken: A cry for Israeli-Palestinian peace from a land that must be shared*, at Limmud Johannesburg on 17 August.

“There are many Jews who will look at what happened on 7 October and look at the fact that Evyatar David is still digging his own grave in a tunnel. They will hate Palestinians not for 10 years or 50 years, but for a thousand years,” he said.

“We are going to build many museums that will tell the story of 7 October in the same way that we built Yad Vashem after the Holocaust,” he said. “And when this is over, in Gaza, they’re also going to build a genocide museum in Gaza City, and there are going to be genocide museums all over the world where people will learn about what Israel did to Gaza. It’s inevitable that that is going to happen. And those two museums and those two stories are going to fuel hatred between Israelis and Palestinians for generations to come in the future.”

Though Flescher believes there’s a good reason for people on both sides to hate, he thinks that by doing small acts to further peace, reconciliation can be possible. This is done through his book, as well as the work he does with the organisation Kids4Peace Jerusalem of which he is educational director. Kids4Peace Jerusalem creates spaces for religiously and socially diverse youth to connect, learn, and grow to become agents of peace in their communities. It unites Jewish, Muslim, and Christian youth in Jerusalem through weekly sessions to discuss different elements of their culture.

Flescher has had to grapple with running a peace organisation at a time when the nations of these two people are engaging in probably the most violent and lethal war in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Flescher shared a story of how, on 10 October 2023, he was talking to a friend of his who is Palestinian, and he noticed that his friend’s profile picture was a

paraglider. Flescher was a bit concerned because the paraglider was one of the vehicles that Hamas used to get over the border into Israel to massacre people at the Nova festival and kibbutzim.

When Flescher asked him about it, his friend said the way he saw it was that the people of Gaza had broken out of the prison that they had been locked up in for 17 years, and the paraglider was a celebration of that.

“On the news I’m watching, I’m being told that on 7 October, they’re killing people at a dance party and that they’re kidnapping children from their rooms in pyjamas and setting houses on fire. And he’s like, ‘No, that’s not happening. There was just an attack on army bases, and they kidnapped some soldiers who were guarding us and we’re trying to be free.’”

He has seen similar denialism among Jews in Israel about the situation in Gaza. “I’m speaking to my Jewish friends, and they’re telling me, ‘There’s no hunger in Gaza’; ‘There’s no innocent people killed’; ‘The people killed are terrorists’; ‘The Israel Defense Forces is the most moral army in the world’; ‘Food is abundant’; all of these sorts of things,” he said, “And I’m thinking, ‘Where are you getting your information from? Eylon Levy? What’s going on?’ If you’re looking at any reputable news source, you know that there’s a humanitarian catastrophe here.

“I’m living in a society that’s entirely in denial, and now I’m thinking, hold on, that’s what I said of the Palestinians after 7 October. Now I’m living in a world where my people can’t see what we’re doing to them in the same way that they can’t see what they did to us.”

Though he doesn’t judge the desire for revenge for what happened on 7 October, he doesn’t believe that this is the way to peace.

“You can go to a base in the south of Israel, and can sign a missile fired into Gaza, and a lot of people who lost loved

ones on 7 October autographed missiles and said, ‘This is in memory of such and such,’ and the missile is fired into Gaza. A lot of Israelis did that because it gave them comfort. This notion of, “I know that a missile will go into Gaza with one of the names of someone killed on 7 October.”

However, there are some who still believe in peace, like Yonatan Zeigen, who lost his mother, Vivian Silver, on 7 October, and has built a soup kitchen in Gaza in his mother’s name.

The idea of peace is made harder as both sides seem adamant about war, Flescher said.

One of the problems is incessant messaging that the war is necessary. “War



Ittay Flescher at Limmud

is normalised in both Israeli and Palestinian society,” he said. “So there’s a great deal of support for using extreme acts of violence against the other side to liberate yourself or defend yourself. That’s common. You get what I call pro-war messaging. You’ll get it 100 times a day. You’ll see it on billboards, on your social media, and on WhatsApp. And we’re giving a peace message maybe once a week or month.”

“We’ve given war a go so many times, and it hasn’t worked. And the threshold is so low for trying war again and again and again,” he said.

However, Flescher believes that through Kids4Peace and similar organisations, they are saying that they want to give peace a chance because war clearly isn’t working.

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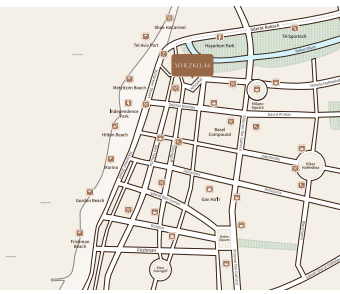


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Europe's 'snapback sanctions' would hit recalcitrant Iran hard

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Though Israel and the United States dealt Iran's nuclear programme a significant blow in June this year, there is heightened awareness of the risk its recovery could pose to the world. This is why European countries party to a 2015 nuclear deal with Iran are reportedly calling for snapback sanctions.

Reuters is reporting that the snapback sanctions process could begin as early as 28 August. Lahav Harkov, who spoke at Limmud Johannesburg on 17 August discussed what this would mean for Iran. Harkov is the Israel-based senior political correspondent for the Washington-based *Jewish Insider*. A former Knesset reporter and diplomatic correspondent for the *Jerusalem Post*, she has written extensively about the Iran nuclear deal reached between Iran and the West in 2015 and Iran's violations thereof.

"The European parties to the 2015 Iran deal, the E3, namely France, Germany, and the United Kingdom have threatened to use snapback sanctions on Iran if it doesn't come to an acceptable nuclear deal by the end of August," Harkov said. This gives enough time to implement them before the deal expires in October.

The snapback sanctions say that at any point, any country party to the original 2015 Iran deal can go to the United Nations Security Council to ask to bring back all those stipulated sanctions. This wouldn't be subject to a vote, and could therefore not be vetoed.

However, when the US attempted to evoke these sanctions in 2020, arguing that Iran was violating the deal, its bid was denied since it had formally left the deal in 2018.

And so, from about 2020 onwards, Iran rapidly increased its uranium enrichment. "By last year, it reached the point where it had large quantities of uranium, enriched to 60% purity," Harkov said. "You need 90% for a nuclear bomb. But if you have large quantities of 60% you could already use it to build a bomb. There were different estimates of how many bombs they could build. But as Iran's Supreme Leader has said in the past, Israel is a 'one-bomb country'."

While the Europeans have consistently threatened to call for snapback sanctions if violations continue, they have never acted. Now they are threatening to do so in a much clearer manner, Harkov said. If the sanctions are imposed, they will have a big impact on Iran's weakened

economy and put significant pressure on the country, she argued. "They would be respected by many countries, which wouldn't do business with Iran, although it's unclear if this would include China or Russia," she said.

Yet, Europe would prefer a diplomatic deal with Iran, Harkov said, largely because of its business and economic interests. "This preference is also rooted in Europe's strong belief that diplomacy will always prevent war. Historically, we've seen that that's not true."

Meanwhile, Iran continues to argue that it has a civilian nuclear programme, for research and for energy purposes, even though we all know that it's sitting on some of the world's biggest oil reserves, Harkov said. Yet, it has refused

to give up on the right to enrich, even during three months of negotiations with the Trump administration.

Within a few days of negotiations reaching that three-month mark, Israel struck Iran's nuclear facilities with greater success than it expected, Harkov said. Though 29 Israelis tragically lost their lives, Israel had been preparing for mass casualty events. Israel successfully hit multiple nuclear Iranian targets,

while Iran's air defences completely collapsed.

In Israel, buildings as well as multiple homes were impacted, yet overall, the damage was much less than anticipated.

Harkov also addressed the debate over when the US decided to bomb the underground nuclear facility at Fordow. "I travelled with [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu to the White House in April [as part of the press team] to Budapest to see Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán," she said. During their meeting, Netanyahu and Orbán decided to call United States President Donald Trump, who suggested that Netanyahu travel to Washington to continue their discussion.

"We were told that the talk was about tariffs," Harkov said. "I have reason to believe that we were lied to, and that Netanyahu brought up Iran on the call. And



Lahav Harkov at Limmud

TS Eliot's antisemitism no reason to reject his work

LEE TANKLE

TS Eliot is remembered as both a modernist giant and an antisemite. But his relationship with Jews was more complex than a simple label, shaped by prejudice, personal ties, and a legacy that still unsettles readers today.

This is according to Aviva Dautch, the executive director of *Jewish Renaissance* magazine and the first scholar-in-residence for Oxford University's Vera Fine Grodzinski Jewish Women's Voices Programme, who spoke at Limmud Johannesburg on 17 August.

Dautch emphasised that Eliot was antisemitic, however, she said that we shouldn't rule him out, as the context in which he lived and wrote reveals more to the story, and it can deepen our understanding of his poetry.

Eliot ran in many circles rife with antisemitism, especially when he was in Paris studying. However, when he was in London and spent time with the Bloomsbury Group, Eliot started to see what it was like to be an outsider as he was an American and worked at a bank.

"There is a class difference between Bloomsbury and Eliot," said Dautch, "He's obviously ignorant of England, and imagines that it's essential to be highly polite, conventional, decorous, and meticulous. He's wearing three-piece suits. The Bloomsbury Group is becoming the modernist of its age. He's trying to fit in. And, you know, that thing when you don't quite fit, you try harder."

"That antisemitic thinking doesn't go away, but while he has that in the back of his head, he also has this idea of, 'I'm a foreigner now; I'm a stranger; I'm a Jew. I'm beginning to understand what that experience is like,'" she said.

Because of this, Eliot searches for another literary salon to join, and manages to find one run by a Jewish couple, Sydney and Vera Schiff, who host the poor, the Irish, and foreigners.

"This Jewish couple will introduce Eliot to the people who begin to make his career to the point where Bloomsbury brings him back into its world and accepts him," she said, "Meanwhile, he keeps writing to his mother. And it's really with his mother's milk that he got his early antisemitism."

However, Sydney and Elliot had a meeting of minds. The Schiffs invited him into their home, helped fund him, and introduced him to patrons.



Said Dautch, "One of them is Lady Rothermere. They tell her that he would be a great editor of a new literary magazine. In terms of levels of charity, it's a much more Jewish way of operating – you give people the power to help themselves."

Through this, Eliot becomes the editor of *Criterion* magazine, which in its first issue has solely Jewish contributors. "I can't find any other publisher from this period whose magazine is entirely Jewish," said Dautch.

However, Eliot's pre-war poetry shows a possibly different side to his view of Jews before working with the Schiffs. He writes, "The rats are underneath the piles. The Jew is underneath the lot. Money in furs."

Similarly, his correspondence with publishers and lawyers tells a different story as he uses antisemitic tropes.

"To the corporate lawyer, he complains about Jews as capitalists. To the ultra-conservative critic, he complains about Jews as Bolsheviks," she said.

"The poetry, I would hope, is probably the purest articulation of what he feels. Maybe it's also, to some extent, pleasing an audience. But I don't think you write the way he writes without drawing something from inside you."

Many defend Eliot's antisemitism by saying that he wasn't as bad an antisemite as his friend and fellow poet, Ezra Pound. But that doesn't take away from his antisemitic actions, Dautch said. "Does that mean there isn't antisemitism? Of course not. But he doesn't broadcast publicly supporting Hitler."

Said Dautch, "He begins to learn what has happened in Europe. And it changes him. In fact, a couple of people sent him manuscripts, which are early accounts of people's memoirs or diaries because he's the big publisher of the time. So it's not just that he's seeing it on screens like everyone else, he's beginning to read accounts earlier than many other people. So he knows what's happened, and he's profoundly affected by it."

Dautch said Eliot published some of the most notable war poets of his time, including Jewish poet Isaac Rosenberg.

"The important thing for me now isn't who Elliot is, but not to throw the greatness of his work away," Dautch said. "It's for him not just to be read by people who go, 'His antisemitism doesn't matter,' but actually to have Jews read him and view him through a Jewish lens."

Europe's 'snapback sanctions' would hit recalcitrant Iran hard

>> Continued from 10a

basically, Trump said, 'I don't want to do this over the phone and with Viktor Orbán there. So come, let's talk.'

Though the media contingent knew that Netanyahu had deep concern about the Iranian nuclear threat, it thought Iran would be discussed only briefly. Yet the tariffs perhaps took 10 minutes, and Iran was probably the main topic discussed, Harkov said. "Israeli defence minister Israel Katz said Trump told Netanyahu, 'I'm not giving you an answer. Let's see how this goes for you, and if it's going well, then maybe I'll help out. If it's going badly, I had nothing to do with it.'" As it ultimately worked out better than expected, the US joined

Israel in bombing Iran's nuclear facilities.

While Trump said that the nuclear sites were "obliterated", there are no independent sources who can go underground and see what's left, Harkov said. Yet satellite images didn't reveal any significant movement of trucks that could have moved hundreds of centrifuges from an underground facility to another safe location, so most were likely bombed.

"Obliterated is probably not the right word, but there are numerous indicators that Iran's nuclear programme has been rolled back years. This is one of the ways in which Israel is much safer now than it was on 6 October 2023."

Nonetheless, there is also still infrastructure that Iran could use to enrich uranium to continue its nuclear programme, Harkov said. This is why the Trump administration wanted to enter talks with Iran to lift some sanctions in exchange for it agreeing to give up the nuclear programme completely. To date, Iran hasn't agreed to return to the table.

"As we don't have any independent first-person analysis other than satellite photos of what's left of the nuclear programme, Europe finally seems to be taking things seriously," Harkov said.

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Hell hath no fury like an Elul Jew

The Jewish year offers something for everyone. Matza lovers rejoice come Pesach, wannabe vegetarians come into their own over the “Nine Milk Days”, while Jewish handymen count down with glee to the moment they can unpack the hammer and nails for sukkah-building.

None of these, however, compare a jot with the Elul people. And as luck – or divine irony – would have it, I’m married to one. For the past 30-something years.

Elul people are a breed apart. They derive no pleasure from the month in the conventional sense, no crunchy matza, no cheesecakes, no carpentry projects. Instead, they relish the absence of enjoyment. For them, Elul isn’t a time of laughter or indulgence, but of furrowed brows, sombre reflection, and the sudden urge to remind everyone else that “the king is in the field”.

You’ll recognise an Elul person immediately. They sigh audibly at inappropriate moments. They drop hints that you should perhaps be “taking things more seriously”. They listen to shofar blowings with the same enthusiasm that normal people reserve for Coldplay concerts.

They will never say, “Let’s grab a drink,” but they will absolutely suggest a deep dive into *vidui* (confession prayers) while you’re still digesting your breakfast oats.

For me, the soundtrack of Elul isn’t the shofar blast at *shacharit*, but a steady refrain I hear daily, “Howard, it’s Elul.” It comes when I am about to repeat something devastatingly interesting, in lurid detail. When I skewer someone with harsh words. Or when I watch Netflix on my phone instead of opening a *sefer*. Three simple words, “Howard, it’s Elul” in equal parts: a warning, a reminder, and a spiritual cattle prod. If I had the musical talent, I’d release it as a remix and put it on Spotify. (Not that I’d be allowed to dance to it. Because, well, Elul.)

Living with an Elul person means that from the first day of the month, the atmosphere in your home shifts. Where others might be planning a spring getaway, Elul folk are plotting spiritual stock-takes. Shopping lists for Rosh Hashanah meals are quickly replaced with soul-accounting spreadsheets. The home hums with the constant low-grade vibration of repentance.

And yet, there’s something admirable, even enviable, about them. While the rest of us

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



stumble toward the high holy days, clutching honey cakes and hoping for the best, Elul Jews arrive prepared. Spiritually gym-hardened, spiritually cross-fit, they’ve been training for this all year. They’ve already checked their moral cholesterol, repented for things you haven’t even thought of yet, and are polishing their shofars like Olympic athletes polishing their gold medals.

Meanwhile, the rest of us are still wondering whether “offending a Twitter bot” counts as a sin worth mentioning.

So here’s to the Elul Jews: may they continue to brood, repent, and gently terrify the rest of us into spiritual shape. As for me, after three decades of marriage, I’ve learned the secret. When my wife reminds me that “Elul is a time for serious introspection,” I nod gravely, and then quietly make myself another coffee. With full cream milk. Which, if you ask her, is probably another thing I’ll need to repent for.

Letters

DIASPORA JEWS PAY THE PRICE FOR ISRAEL’S DEFIANCE

The killing of Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza has once again placed Jews in the diaspora in the crossfire of global opinion. Israel’s long-standing position, namely, “We will do what we must, regardless of what the world thinks” may have been sustainable in an era of traditional diplomacy. But in a world dominated by social media, that stance is no longer tenable.

For Jews outside of Israel, the consequences aren’t abstract. Every controversial incident amplifies a narrative in which Jewish identity is inseparable from the Israeli state. The distinction many activists claim, “This is against Israel, not against Jews,” collapses quickly under the weight of lived experience. Whether in universities, workplaces, or online spaces, Jews are increasingly cast as proxies for the conflict in Gaza.

This isn’t without precedent. Greek and Turkish Cypriots abroad were once pressured to

“take sides” in their homeland’s conflict, while Armenians during the Nagorno-Karabakh wars faced hostility in places aligned with Azerbaijan. History shows us that diaspora communities consistently carry the stigma of actions they cannot control.

But the Jewish case is different in one crucial way. Zionism, as both ideology and identity, ties world Jewry to Israel in a manner unparalleled among modern diasporas. This means that when Hamas embeds itself among civilians and broadcasts the resulting tragedies to the world, the cost is not only borne by Israel’s image. It reverberates through Jewish lives in Cape Town, Johannesburg, New York, and London.

The old tools – press releases, fact sheets, even formal diplomacy – cannot counter a TikTok video or a viral meme. When people are confronted with contradictory information, they rarely change their

minds; instead, they double down. Correcting the facts is no longer enough, it probably does more harm than good.

If we are to defend Jewish identity in this hostile digital climate, a new approach is required. The battlefield isn’t only Rafah or Khan Younis, it’s Twitter, Instagram, and the comment threads of every major news site. Virtual technology and innovative strategy must be applied with the same seriousness we give to physical defence.

Jews in South Africa understand more than most the dangers of being cast as oppressors in a society that venerates liberation struggles. If we are to protect both our dignity and our future, we must adapt. The physical Israel Defense Forces protect borders. The Jewish diaspora must now consider how to protect identity. Israel is not going to do it for us. – **Sidney Peimer, Cape Town**

A column of the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Desperate Dangor's anti-Zionist rant

In recent weeks, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies has observed a rise in increasingly hostile efforts to challenge the perspectives of our community organisations and silence “mainstream” Jewish voices. In this case, “mainstream” Jewish refers to community members who are traditionally Jewish in observance – be it Orthodox or Progressive – and Zionist in orientation. Yet, the discourse has shifted, increasingly framing Zionism itself as beyond acceptable bounds, thereby deeming aligned groups inherently problematic. What stands out, however, is that the campaign against mainstream Jewry is increasingly desperate, incoherent, and too often driven by a quest for attention rather than substantive dialogue.

The latest and most notable attempt to silence us has emerged from Zane Dangor, the director-general of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco), published in *Daily Maverick*.

This week, we were privileged to welcome Loay Alshareef to our community, whose compelling message of peace and mutual respect has resonated deeply. Among his key insights is the peril of allowing extremist voices to dominate discourse as it erodes the foundations essential for true peace building. It's therefore profoundly regrettable that *Daily Maverick*, once renowned for its rigorous journalism, has permitted its platform to be overtaken by an unrelenting fixation on anti-Israel rhetoric.

Dangor has been a key ideological engine in Dirco, and has steered its obsession in ways that neglect the pressing needs facing South Africans. In the interview, Dangor presumes to interpret Zionism on our behalf, identifying and praising anti-Zionist groups which he finds palatable. Additionally, Dangor, as a public employee with a very key role in the international relations of our country, has absolutely overstepped the line in his anti-democratic attempts to silence citizens of this country.

It is deeply offensive that Dangor assumes upon himself the moral and academic authority to redefine Zionism, Judaism, and antisemitism for our community. Dangor's claim that Zionism is a Christian concept detached from Judaism is not just historically inaccurate, it represents an attempt to redefine our heritage, our chosen beliefs, and political rights. In fact, the historical and religious connection of the Jewish people to Israel, and the legitimate political belief that the Jewish people have a right to political self-determination in this land – “Zionism” – is irrelevant in this case. As a government official, Dangor lacks any standing to

prescribe which beliefs are permissible for an entire segment of South African society.

We in the Jewish community are all too aware that when Dangor and those like him target “Zionists”, they are, in truth, targeting Jews. The fact that not all Jews are Zionists doesn't sanitise the malice, nor does it validate the veneer of anti-Zionism as a shield for anti-Jewish sentiment, especially when supported by faux claims that the history of Zionism is detached from Judaism or lacks Judaic roots.

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

We can clearly see how the construct and criticism of antisemitism have morphed into the more societally acceptable idea of “anti-Zionism”. We are not fooled.

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Why peace isn't a zero-sum game

LEE TANKLE

Educator and social media content creator Yirmiyahu Danzig told Limmud Johannesburg on 16 August that though many believe reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians has become impossible, it's simply not the case.

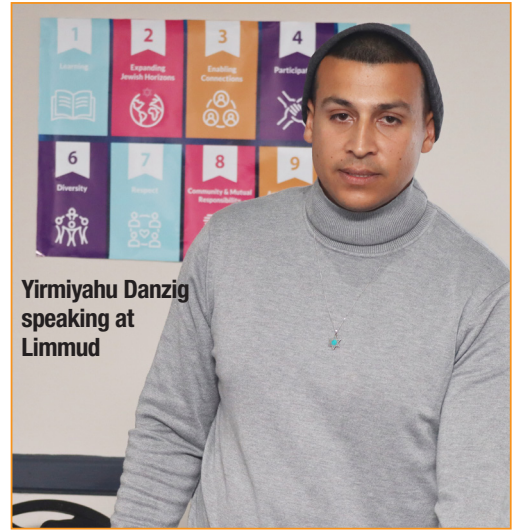
"Various chapters of this conflict, certainly the most recent, have indicated to Israelis and Palestinians that it's not an issue of the material conditions," he said. "It's not about disputes over potential borders, or certain resources. Essentially, there's something about our identity that is a zero-sum game, that the one identity negates the existence of the other identity."

Danzig said that without having some sort of humanisation, or empathy for the other side, there would

never be any semblance of peace in Israel. And he said empathising with the Palestinians doesn't take away any of our Jewishness or our connection to Israel, especially in the wake of 7 October 2023.

"I have friends in Gaza. I have friends in Ramallah, and in Hebron, and in Shechem. And they're sending me messages after 7 October to see if I'm okay. So, I'm not going to send them a message, three, four, five months into the war to find out what's going on, how they're dealing with getting food? Of course I am. It doesn't make me any less of a proud Jew."

Danzig's upbringing was full of the contradictions that plague the Middle East today. He had an Israeli father whose family lived in the land of Israel, specifically the Jewish quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, for at least nine generations, and would spend time in Arab spaces.



Yirmiyahu Danzig speaking at Limmud

Continued on 12b>>

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>> Continued from 12a

"It was normal for me to hear my grandfather growing up speaking not only Hebrew fluently as a mother tongue, but also Palestinian Arabic, which he heard his father speak," he said, "Whenever I spent time with my grandfather, he almost exclusively took me to Arab restaurants, Arab cultural spaces."

Danzig said he felt like he had to navigate between different identities. However, he was able to realise that two things which are very uncomfortable can be fundamentally true at the same time.

"I had to hold two fundamental truths. Number one, I was a Jew, I was an Israeli, deeply connected somehow to Palestinians, to Arabs, to Muslims. But on the other hand, one of my earliest memories as a child was watching my father break down crying when he found out that his pregnant cousin was murdered by a Palestinian terrorist."

Danzig also draws on the stories of his grandfather and great-grandfather, who lived in the Old City of Jerusalem under Ottoman occupation, when people say that Jews and Arabs got on well before the establishment of Israel.

People either say that everything was peaceful, or everything was horrible, he said. The reality is that it was a little more complicated.

"There were horrible stories of oppression, and I share these with Palestinians," he said. "They tell me that they cannot deny the fact that my great-grandfather was jailed because he tried to resist a regime that sexually abused his sister and wanted to let them get away with it because she was Jewish. And yet there were so many stories of brotherly love, compassion, and support for each other."

Danzig also said the only way to have a constructive conversation about the founding of Israel is to acknowledge the hurt that came as a result for many Palestinian families.

"How can I ignore the story of a Palestinian grandma in 1948? Who had never left her village in her life. Hadn't met the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, had never heard him speak. And then all of a sudden, an army comes up and says, 'You need to leave,'" he said. "Regardless of who is to blame and the fact that there was war, and war is

brutal and it's complicated, that's still a tragedy. For the family, for the grandchild of that person, as a Jew with my tragedies, I cannot turn a blind eye to that experience."

Danzig posed the question of how to commit to your story without apology. He said the way discussion is going is that you have the most intensely proud members of the Jewish people invite some Palestinians who completely reject their story and identity to come and join them; and on the other, extremely proud, unapologetic Palestinians that condemn anything the Jews and Israel stands for invite token Jews to join them on their side. However, real change comes when you stand on your own.


"Be unapologetically Jewish. Be unapologetic about your relationship to Israel. A relationship can be defined by intense criticism, but it's a relationship. And in my experience, that has been one of the most empowering ways to actually break the cycle, because I found that my counterparts on the Palestinian side tend to have a lot more respect when you stand on your own."

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