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# South African Jewish Report

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VERSION

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## SABC silences journalist over Holocaust question

**TALI FEINBERG**

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) has suspended one of its seasoned presenters because she dared to challenge anti-apartheid struggle veteran Dr Mamphela Ramphele, who said that the Gaza war was like the Holocaust.

The SABC bowed to anti-Israel extremist groups' bullying tactics, taking Juliet Newell off air indefinitely. In response to her on-television interview, the local anti-Israel lobby insisted that the SABC had to describe the Gaza war as a "genocide", and called for her to be punished and silenced.

"Danger arises when comparisons are made not to illuminate understanding, but to elevate the suffering of one group while diminishing or ignoring that of another," said the director of the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre, Jakub Nowakowski.

The current "selective moral outrage" is striking, he said. "The same vocabulary and intensity are not used against Vladimir Putin [for the Ukraine war], nor against terrorist groups responsible for the starvation of hundreds of thousands in Somalia, or against Bashar al-Assad's use of chemical weapons against civilians."

A local political commentator is calling on the United States (US) to revoke Ramphele's visa in light of her comments comparing Gaza to the Holocaust. She is there on a sabbatical.

Newell conducted the

interview on 27 August with Ramphele, who as chairperson of the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Intellectual Property Trust, had published a statement a few days previously expressing the sentiment that the Gaza war was like the *Shoah*.

Ramphele told Newell in the interview, "We are using this comparison particularly because the atrocities are being committed by descendants of survivors of that Holocaust." She also said

that the "genocide" was being committed in the "name of protecting Jews" but instead was "aimed at clearing Palestine of every Palestinian".

When Newell emphasised that the war and the Holocaust were different, Ramphele asked, "Why can't I compare them? The Holocaust will continue to happen in different forms. It is a Holocaust by any definition." She told Newell not to "quibble" over the

differences.

She said that "deliberate attacks on women, children, and unarmed citizens" as well as "starvation" made the Gaza war a Holocaust. "It is more than a genocide because it is a deliberately drawn-out war that is a war on civilians with the intention to exterminate a people," said Ramphele.

The presenter said she was not "quibbling" over which was worse, but was considering that they are different, and that words have meaning. She emphasised that "what is happening in Gaza is horrific" and even leaned towards calling it a "genocide", but asked Ramphele to separate the events because of the need for nuance. Twice, she said that Ramphele's comparison undermined what happened in the Holocaust, but she agreed with Ramphele that every life lost is a tragedy.

However, Newell condemning the suffering in Gaza wasn't good enough for local extremists. In a statement on 28 August, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign said it was "unacceptable that a public broadcaster would consistently adopt language that mirrors Israeli talking points. Even more concerning is the SABC's editorial reluctance to use terms like 'Holocaust' when referencing mass atrocities. Such linguistic gatekeeping is morally and journalistically indefensible."

They said the SABC had a "duty" to describe the Gaza war as a genocide, and called

### Choosing the light



Photo: Ilan Ossendrywer

See story on page 14>>

Rabbi Doron Perez speaks at Miracle Drive in Sandton on Monday night

## &gt;&gt; Continued from 1a

on the public broadcaster to “take immediate steps to rectify its coverage”.

Extremist Hamas-supporting local website, the Media Review Network, stated that it was “outraged” at Newell’s “unprofessional attempt to delink the horror of Zionist genocide in Gaza from being viewed as a Holocaust”, and called on the SABC to “persist [with] remedial action”.

In response, the SABC released a statement saying it “took immediate action”, and that Newell was “currently not scheduled” to present. However, it also said it was “enjoined to ensure a plurality of views”.

Nowakowski says the Holocaust’s “scale, the technology of killing employed, the totality of destruction, and the participation of multiple groups far beyond the government of the Third Reich and the German population makes it unprecedented.

“Palestinians, of course, have the right to name the current conflict in a way that reflects their experience, pain, and suffering,” says Nowakowski. “What is deeply inappropriate, however, is to apply the historical names of other genocides to new conflicts. This constitutes appropriation, and risks obscuring both historical truth and moral clarity.”

Nowakowski says Ramphele is correct in that “we do not need to wait to call for an end to the violence. But the problem arises when such discussions lack proper knowledge and sensitivity, and when they are treated, as in this case, as a segue for assigning collective responsibility to all Jews worldwide.”

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) spokesperson Rolene Marks says the SAZF “strongly condemns” the SABC’s removal of Newell from air after her interview with Ramphele, calling it “an attack on editorial independence”.

Marks says Ramphele’s description of Gaza as a Holocaust “is an extraordinary and provocative claim. The Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa code requires that controversial statements be tested for accuracy and context.

Ms Newell did exactly that: she challenged the assertion, signposted the existence of opposing views, and sought to inform viewers rather than inflame them. That is correct journalistic practice, and punishing her for it amounts to censorship by proxy.”



**BY SIDELINING NEWELL, “THE SABC HAS CHOSEN APPEASEMENT OVER PRINCIPLE”, SAYS MARKS. “THIS CAPITULATION CHILLS FREE ENQUIRY AND NARROWS THE SPACE FOR HONEST DEBATE IN A CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY.”**

By sidelining Newell, “the SABC has chosen appeasement over principle”, says Marks. “This capitulation chills free enquiry and narrows the space for honest debate in a constitutional democracy.”

She says the silence of the South African National Editors’ Forum (SANEF) “makes matters worse”. So does the *Sunday Times*’ “public ridicule of Ms Newell”.

“When industry bodies and leading titles fail to defend a reporter who upheld basic standards, they signal that intimidation works. The message is stark: do not challenge incendiary claims, it could cost you your job. The message to those making extreme anti-Israel or antisemitic statements is equally clear: say what you like, there will be no pushback,” says Marks.

For Marks, “That dynamic is dangerous. It normalises prejudice; corrodes the marketplace of ideas; and fuels a climate in which Jewish South Africans and other minorities face heightened risk. Words have consequences. A free press must test them against evidence.” Furthermore, “The Holocaust is not a rhetorical device to be repurposed for contemporary conflicts.”

The SAZF has called on the SABC “to correct course, to subject this decision to a transparent and independent review, to issue a public apology, and to affirm that editors, not lobbyists, set newsroom standards”.

It also called on Communications Minister Solly Malatsi “to make clear that the public broadcaster may not adopt partisan positions under external pressure. We urge SANEF and the wider journalistic fraternity to defend the right and duty of journalists to interrogate inflammatory claims. South Africa deserves a public broadcaster and media that informs with integrity and courage, not one that bends under pressure.”

South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) national director Wendy Kahn says, “While we are concerned about the Holocaust distortion and the perceived attempts to silence other narratives, what we find particularly disturbing is the SABC’s editorial decision to display a banner at the bottom of the screen [during the interview] that stated, ‘Jewish humanity buried in the rubble in Gaza.’

“This statement, which was not made by Dr Ramphele in the interview, is a defamatory editorial addition that attempts to demonise our community. The SAJBD has requested a meeting with the SABC to address these issues.”

Local commentator Tim Flack called on the US to revoke Ramphele’s visa, saying that she was “making these pronouncements while enjoying the hospitality of a country that has made solemn commitments to fight Holocaust denial, distortion, and inversion. America does not need to bankroll the sabbatical of a woman who goes on television to declare Jews the new Nazis.”

The *SA Jewish Report* reached out to Newell, but she was unable to comment because of a confidentiality clause in her contract.



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## Torah Thought

# The righteous soldier



**Rabbi Matthew Liebenberg  
Claremont Wynberg Shul**

**A**mong the laws of warfare in this week's *parsha* is a short passage that contains three *mitzvot*: first, the prohibition for an impure soldier to enter the camp; second, the designation of a place outside the camp for use as a lavatory; and third, the inclusion of a shovel in the soldier's gear so that he will be able to cover his excrement.

Ramban comments, "The soundest explanation regarding this commandment is that the scripture gives a special warning concerning that time when sin is common. For it is known about the norms of military camps that they eat all kinds of abominations for food; they rob and seize things; and are not ashamed even to commit adultery and all kinds of disgusting acts. Even someone who is one of the most upright among men by his nature will don the traits of cruelty and rage when he goes

out to war against his enemies. Therefore, the scripture warned concerning [the battle camp], 'You shall guard against anything evil.'"

Ramban notes that soldiers in battle often forget the norms of morality and human decency. They will loot, pillage, and rape even though they would never dream of acting in such a way at home. There are thousands of examples of this throughout history.

Consider the war in Bosnia from 1992 to 1995. It's estimated that between 30 000 and 50 000 women were raped during the conflict.

In contrast to the above is the behaviour of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Notwithstanding the libellous claims against it, I believe that the IDF is the most moral army in the world and possibly in all of history. It goes to great lengths to warn civilians to vacate war zones; to limit the number of civilian casualties; and to behave, in general, with morality and humanity. I have in



**WE OUGHT TO BE PROUD THAT WE HAVE SOLDIERS WHO ENDEAVOUR TO MAINTAIN THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF RELIGIOSITY, MORALITY, AND INTEGRITY IN THE MIDST OF AN EXISTENTIAL WAR.**

my library two contemporary halacha books that are dedicated to the laws of warfare. They contain questions as diverse as how to make a *minyán* in a war zone in a way that doesn't endanger the lives of the soldiers; handling a weapon on Shabbat; and many other topics including the permissibility of confiscating property from a terrorist.

I think one would be hard-pressed to find books of this nature in any other culture. In effect, these volumes are a response to the problem raised by Ramban: how do we maintain morality in the immoral environment of war? Since 7 October 2023, there have been hundreds of questions posed to leading rabbis from soldiers on the front. For example, a soldier whose unit was staying in a commandeered house asked if he was permitted to plug his cellphone into the house's electric supply! This was a relatively simple matter, but there have been extremely complex questions that touch on life-and-death scenarios. We ought to be proud that we have soldiers who endeavour to maintain the highest levels of religiosity, morality, and integrity in the midst of an existential war.

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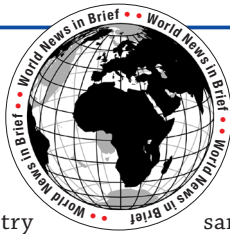
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**Belgium will recognise Palestinian statehood at UN meeting, adding to pressure on Israel**

Belgium has become the latest country to announce plans to recognise Palestinian statehood at the United Nations General Assembly this month in New York City.

In an announcement on X on Sunday, 31 August, Deputy Prime Minister Maxime Prévot said the recognition was intended to “increase pressure on the Israeli government and Hamas terrorists”, adding that Israel had violated its international obligation to “prevent any risk of genocide”.



Photo: Klaudia Radecka NurPhoto

**Deputy Prime Minister of Belgium Maxime Prévot**

Prévot stipulated that the move would become official only once “Hamas no longer has any role in managing Palestine” and all the Israeli hostages are released.

Belgian Prime Minister Bart de Wever had previously joined German leaders in saying that recognising a Palestinian state before Hamas’s deposal would be “pointless”. But his government faced fierce

pressure for further action from its centrist and left-wing member parties.

Prévot outlined 12 “firm” sanctions that would be implemented against Israel and Hamas, including bans on importing products from Israeli settlements; and designating some Israeli ministers, violent settlers, and Hamas leaders “persona non grata”.

Belgium will also support the European Union suspending co-operation with Israel, including its trade pact as well as research programmes and technical co-operation.

The announcement makes Belgium the latest country to add to a growing list of planned support for Palestinian statehood at the General Assembly, following similar declarations from Australia, France, the United Kingdom, and Canada. More than 140 countries recognise Palestinian statehood, making up three quarters of UN members.

Prévot said the announcement would be joined by an “equally firm commitment” to European measures to target Hamas as well as antisemitism within Belgium.

In response, Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, told Associated Press, “Self-righteous European countries that are being manipulated by Hamas, at the end, they’ll discover terrorism on their own flesh.”

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\*Please note that Israel time is 1 hour ahead

# Pandor justifies *jihad* as sometimes 'necessary'

TALI FEINBERG

**A**frican National Congress (ANC) veteran Dr Naledi Pandor, and previous minister of international relations and cooperation, shocked South Africans by proclaiming on 23 August that “we are permitted to engage in *jihad* when necessary” and that “we must ensure that all young Muslims embrace these values and become true activists in the protection of all who need protection support”.

While she may no longer be a minister, she still has stature and influence, especially as the new chairperson of the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF) and as a new honorary professor of education at the University of Pretoria.

Observers were astonished when she said this, considering that “*jihad*”, which can mean a spiritual struggle, generally refers to a struggle against the enemies of Islam, often justifying terrorism. Pandor is a Muslim convert, and she made the statement at a fundraising gala dinner at the Langa Masjid in Cape Town. Wearing a *keffiyeh*, Pandor said that she previously expressed these sentiments about *jihad* when she was in the United States (US).

She said that “Muslims are a peace-loving people, but were permitted to engage in *jihad* when necessary”, and went on to say, “social justice, and our belief in it, as well as our belief in the values in the Quran, means that we should be ready to protect these values when they are threatened”. Earlier in her speech, she said that “the beauty of Islam is that it does not choose to promote oppression or discrimination against any person, except those who advance hatred and injustice”.

She also said that Israel has been an “apartheid state” for its entire existence; that the land is “illegally occupied”; and that Israel began its “genocide” on 8 October 2023. On that date, Israel was still rescuing Israeli civilians and fighting Palestinian terrorists in its own country. Pandor said that Muslims “do not hate Jews”, and that they must fight for anyone who is oppressed, including Jews.

Political analyst Steven Gruzd says Pandor’s support for *jihad* matters. “Here, you have a former minister calling for *jihad*. When she was still in office, she called for protests outside US embassies. This speech will not help South Africa repair relations with the US. This is not toning down the rhetoric, quite the opposite.

“In some ways, she is yesterday’s story, but this is still incitement to violence, no matter who says it,” says Gruzd. “Perhaps being out of government has freed her to dispense with diplomacy. Whatever the context, justifying *jihad* is inciteful.”

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) spokesperson Rolene Marks agrees that Pandor’s remarks “cross a red line. When a former minister of international relations

says South Africans are permitted to engage in *jihad*, she is normalising the language of holy war in a country scarred by political violence and rising antisemitism. Such words embolden extremists, endanger South African Jews and other minorities, and shred our diplomatic credibility.”

Marks points out that in the immediate aftermath of 7 October, “Pandor sent messages of support and solidarity to Hamas. That speaks volumes. It comforted extremists and deepened fear.”

In her Cape Town speech, Pandor said she hated oppression, however, said Marks, “she repeatedly aligns with movements that target Jews. That is reckless populism, and a betrayal of constitutional values of dignity, equality, and freedom of religion.”

Dr Hussein Solomon, professor in the department of political studies and governance at the University of the Free State, says he thinks Pandor’s comments come from a place of wanting to return to government, especially after her recent criticism of the ANC and President Cyril Ramaphosa. “She wants back in, and senses

Continued on 3b>>



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## &gt;&gt; Continued from 3a

Ramaphosa is very weak now. She wanted to continue as international relations minister.”

“*Jihad* does not equate to terrorism,” he says, “but in this context, it threatens the US with violence or war.” In light of worsening relations between Pretoria and Washington, “This is unwise, to say the least.”

Marks says talk of Pandor returning to government, with some hoping she would be a future president, “should alarm the country. It would isolate South Africa even further. It would deter investment, damage jobs and trade, weaken public health partnerships, and inflame communal tension. South Africa cannot afford a head of state who speaks the language of *jihad*.”

South African Jewish Board of Deputies national director Wendy Kahn says Pandor continues to “pursue an agenda that is unapologetically pro-Hamas, an organisation with which she has a long-standing and well-documented relationship”.

Her statement “reinforces her extremist views, which make no contribution to finding resolution, and alienate and offend not only South Africans, but also our most important trading partners”, says Kahn. “This call for *jihad* constitutes an incitement to violence.”

Benji Shulman, the executive director of the Middle East Africa Research Institute, says “calling for violence, which Pandor effectively does by implicitly endorsing *jihad*, is unacceptable. She seems also to have internationalised these views by making these statements in America. Officials in that country should be made aware of her stance so they can take appropriate action.”

Shulman says her words are also concerning “because of the roles that she plays in South African society, including being attached to various universities and as chairperson of the NMF.”

They’re also concerning “because Africa has increasingly become the centre of *jihadi* violence”, says Shulman. “People being murdered because of this ideology, particularly Christians, deserve better than having a person of this stature endorsing these forms of violence.”

Michael Walsh, senior research consultant at nonpartisan think tank, the Foreign Policy Research Institute, whose focus is on relations between the US and South Africa, says Pandor’s public defence of *jihad* isn’t surprising.

During the Biden administration, he says, Pandor gave a talk in the US

reflecting on South Africa’s experience of apartheid, in which she “she stressed that protests may not be enough to achieve liberation. When protests fail, she suggested that it was permissible to resort to other means.”

He says it’s interesting that Pandor chose to make the remarks “when there is a risk that US agencies will be asked by US President Donald Trump or the US Congress to determine whether Pandor and her husband, Sharif Joseph Pandor, meet the criteria for US sanctions.”

Similar to Mcebisi Jonas, “these specific

remarks suggest that Pandor has no intention of trying to mitigate that risk”, says Walsh. “This is despite the fact that such comments will provide ammunition for US sanctions on the South African government and ANC.”

Meanwhile, the SAZF has called on responsible leaders across parties and faiths to repudiate Pandor’s rhetoric. “Affirm the safety and dignity of every community,” says Marks. “Choose leadership that unites the country and restores South Africa’s standing in the world.”



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## SA Zionist Fed library's future an open book

LEE TANKLE

For decades, the South African Zionist Federation's (SAZF) library in Johannesburg has been a quiet treasure trove – shelves stacked with history, politics, religion, and culture, preserving generations of Jewish thought and Zionist heritage. Now, as the library faces downsizing, questions arise about what it means not just to lose books, but part of a community's collective memory.

As a result of a tenant of the Beyachad complex requiring the entire second floor, the SAZF has been asked to relocate its offices to the first floor, in the area occupied by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) archives. The SAJBD archives, in turn, will relocate to the space presently occupied by the SAZF reference library. This new location offers improved environmental conditions, shielding the archives from natural light and heat. Consequently, the SAZF reference library will need to be downsized significantly to fit the new design and spatial constraints.

For many decades, it served as a lending library at its previous home on De Villiers Street in Johannesburg's CBD, before relocating to the Beyachad facility in 1994. Today, it functions primarily as a reference library, housing more than a century's worth of Zionist archival material, books, periodicals, and audiovisual resources. It continues to serve the community for research and historical inquiry.

David Saks, associate director of the SAJBD, said that in its day, the SAZF library was popular and heavily used by the community. "There was constant high activity, it had an audiovisual component, it had at least three librarians and activities," he said. "It's a jewel of Jewish history. It has a big focus on the history of Zionism and Israel, but it includes wider topics of Jewish interest and general interest. It accumulated quite a big collection of general history like the history of Rome and Greece and biographies of United

States presidents and things like that. It was a lovely library, and it looks like it's in good condition."

"The SAZF library holds thousands of books that together, tell the story of Jewish life, history, culture, religion, Zionism, and Israel," said SAZF spokesperson Rolene Marks. "The collection is a mix. While some titles are widely available, there are also rare, out-of-print, and specialist works that make the library a unique and important resource."

Marcia Parness, who has been involved with the library for four decades, described it as a treasure trove, and said she had never understood why it wasn't more popular. "I've never been able to understand why the people of Johannesburg don't support a library, where the Cape Town one is so vibrant. I know that today, people believe that everything is available online, but it isn't. We have the most incredible, valuable archives and material that are out of print. For example, there are Leon Uris books



Joy Kropman and Yvonne Jawitz in the SAZF library in the mid 1980s

Continued on 4b>>

### The Johannesburg and Reef Branch of the South African Jewish Ex-Service League and The South African Zionist Federation

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>> Continued from 4a

that are out of print, and you can't get them anymore."

Said Marks, "As tenants, we had no choice but to pack and store the collection carefully. This step has also created an opportunity to ask the community how best to reimagine the library's future so it can better serve scholars, students, and the wider public."

A team of people is going through every book and document in the library to make sure that nothing is lost with the move.

"The archives go back long before the state of Israel, but those are going to be kept to the best of our ability. The newspaper cuttings are harder to keep as newspapers don't preserve themselves well," said Parness, "They have to be kept in optimum condition. We're going to try and preserve that. Similarly with the library, we will retain as many books as we possibly can."

Parness said she was absolutely heartbroken to have to go through the library and determine what books were worthy of keeping and preserving for generations to come.

"It's been my baby for a long time, and it's hard to see. I remember the vibrant days, when people came in, we had a membership, and it was like a meeting place," she said.

However, the SAZF said it was going to preserve as many of the books as it could, and get rid of only duplicates in the collection.

"We intend to preserve the collection in its entirety because it represents a valuable communal asset," said Marks. "We will consider giving away duplicate copies only where appropriate. The overarching goal is to safeguard the books and ensure that they continue to serve the Jewish community and future generations."

But there are no concrete plans for what exactly will happen to the books, and the SAZF is open to any suggestions. It is working to digitise the documents in its archives, including CVs, press cuttings, and photographs, to allow them be a part of the archives of the World Zionist Organization in Israel so that anyone from around the world can access them.

However, with the state of the library, "Every option is on the table, with the guiding principle that the books remain accessible, respected, and properly cared for. We want the collection not only to be preserved, but to be used and appreciated by the community," said Marks.

"Ensuring access is at the heart of this process. What that access looks like will be shaped by the outcome of our consultation.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the library has mainly functioned as a reference and study space, but this moment gives us the chance to reinvent it. Our commitment is to find a way to make the library more open, relevant, and accessible than before."



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# Freed hostage Or Levy rebuilds life, honours Einav

LEE TANKLE

Every day since Or Levy was released from Hamas captivity, he has apologised to his son, Almog, for not being there for him for 491 days during which he was effectively an orphan. Since his release on 8 February 2025, Levy has dedicated himself to being a parent to his son as well as doing what he can for orphans.

This is why on his recent trip to South Africa, he along with the Jewish National Fund SA (JNF SA), and the Israeli embassy went to the Bramley Children's Home in Pretoria on 31 August to give teddy bears to the children in honour of Levy's late wife, Einav.

"I was approached about how to make something in memory of my wife," he said, "And orphans are really a soft spot for me. My son is the reason I survived. And the fact that there are people without parents really makes me sad."

Levy told the SA Jewish Report that he and Einav wanted to have one more music festival experience before moving away from that scene. They tucked Almog into bed at Einav's parents' home on 6 October, and headed for the Nova festival.

"We woke up at 05:00, drove the car, and arrived at the Nova parking lot, at approximately 06:28," he said, "And everything started just a minute afterwards. We got out the car, walked a few steps, and then we saw what we thought were fireworks. We quickly discovered it wasn't the case, these were rockets."

Or and Einav found a small 1m<sup>2</sup> shelter near them in the parking lot and hid from the terrorists. This shelter was meant to hold only five to 10 people, yet on this morning, 27 festivalgoers were hiding there.

In the shelter, Levy and others fought back, throwing grenades out as terrorists hurled them in. Eventually, the attackers fired a rocket-propelled grenade, stormed the shelter, and began dragging people out, including Levy, Eliya Cohen, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, and Alon Ohel.

"I begged for my life. I told the terrorists that I had a baby. They lowered their guns, and dragged me from the shelter," he said. "The last picture I see is this terrorist shooting inside the shelter, but my wife is still there. I didn't know what happened to her, but I decided I didn't want to know. I decided to wait until I came back."

After getting dragged out of the shelter, Levy quickly realised that he and the others had been kidnapped.

For the first 52 days of captivity, Levy was in an apartment with Cohen and Ohel. "We lived with our captors. They treated us like dogs," he said, "We spent 52 days in that apartment without the ability to speak. And when they allowed us to speak, it was to whisper."

Levy said that after a certain point, he forgot what his own voice sounded like and hid under a blanket and tried to speak, but nothing came out.

Then, Hamas terrorists handed them oranges and told them that

they were in for some good news, but it was anything but. They were taken to a tunnel where they would spend the rest of their captivity.

"In 2024, I saw the sun only once. It was on 4 January, when our tunnel was bombed and we had to flee. I was outside for 10 minutes, but it felt like forever."

While in the tunnel, Levy met Goldberg-Polin; Ori Danino; Almog Sarusi; and Eli Sharabi. They would share stories, cry, laugh, and keep each other sane.

Levy adopted Goldberg-Polin's mantra "If you have the why, you'll find the how", which is a

mistranslation of Viktor Frankl and Nietzsche.

"Hersh became a mentor. My life was my first 'why' every day. My family, my son, and my friends would need to be my strength."

Levy spent just three days with Goldberg-Polin, Danino, and Sarusi before they were led away under the pretence of release, only to be murdered. "I remember seeing them for the last time," he said. "Ori smiled at us, saying, 'See you soon.' When I came home, my mother told me the truth."



Or Levy distributing teddy bears to children from Bramley House in Pretoria

Continued on 5b>>



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>> Continued from 5a

Levy said that while in captivity, he was shackled the entire time, and was able to take a shower only once every two months, and even then, it wasn't a real shower as it was with a bottle of water and he had to put the same clothes back on.

"I didn't really take a shower for the whole 491 days," he said. "But the worst part was the fear and the starvation."

He lived in constant fear – of his captors; Israeli strikes; or starvation, with just one pita shared between four men. To survive, he distracted himself with cards, sports trivia, and thoughts of the meals he'd eat once free.

"Before 7 October, I was a picky eater," he said. "In captivity, all I could think about was food – everything I'd refused; everything I couldn't make. It haunted us every day, more than the fear of dying."

Levy described the area he was kept in as a waiting room in the worst possible sense – you wait for your sentence, either you get to live and are released, or you are left to die.

"People would go to sleep on the floor, change, drink salty water, and eat one meal a day," he said.

He also said that one day, each of the four men in the tunnel were given two dates by their captors and, "I don't really know how to explain to you the sugar rush we felt. It's like, right away, I stood up, thinking my brain was working. It lasted an hour, but it was quite amazing."

Levy said his worst day in captivity was his son's third birthday on 25 June. "I sang to him. I was 50m underground, crying all day, promising I would do everything in my power to survive and celebrate his next birthday and not to lose any more birthdays."

Levy described the day of his release as both the worst and best day of his life. This is because he found out the fate of his wife, Einav, and because he was able to see his son after nearly 500 days. The first thing he did when he saw the Israel Defense Forces was ask where Einav was. He was told that she had been murdered, probably immediately after he was taken out of the shelter.

"Only then was I properly able to mourn her," he said. "Then I was asked if I wanted to see a video of Almog. I saw this smiley boy, with curly hair, saying, 'Aba Or'."

The first thing that Almog told Or when they were reunited was, "Dad, why did you take so long to come home".

Levy had missed almost two years of his son's life. In captivity, he calculated how

much of his son's life he had missed, which amounted to just about half.

"As soon as I hugged him, he started asking me questions, and the hardest one was, 'Where is mom.' I started crying. I had no words. He said mom was dead. It's the hardest sentence to hear from a child."

Celebrating Almog's fourth birthday was the best day of his life.

"When I came back, I mourned, I cried. The thing is, I know bad things happened to me. I know, and I see the look on the faces

of people that hear my story. I don't want to feel sorry for myself. I told this to my mom – if I cried every day and became a shadow of myself, I would wish that I had died on 7 October. My son doesn't deserve a parent who isn't really a parent."

But he said though he cannot think about the future while there are still 48 hostages still in Gaza, including Ohel, he intends to "live every day; hug my son; and smile, even though it's hard".



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# south african Jewish Report

## Keep smiling

**W**e all have our problems, some bigger than others. However, when someone whose life was a living hell reminds us of the need to smile and cherish what we have, it's time to sit up and listen.

Last Sunday, 31 August, the idea of going to hear Or Levy, another former hostage, tell his story of what he went through in Gaza was less than appealing. I know that sounds harsh, but I have been to quite a few, and Or wasn't someone I immediately felt a kinship with. This, despite knowing that he had been incarcerated for 491 days and his wife was murdered on the day he was taken, leaving their two-year-old son at home.

I went because intrinsically, I believe it's vital to bear witness to their experiences because they are us. We are one people, and this could just as easily have happened to our loved ones. They have lived through worse than our worst nightmares for no other reason other than because, like us, they are Jews.

Or, telling his story, gave me a well-needed wake-up call.

First, the fact that this man – who has literally survived on a quarter of a pita a day and salty water – makes an effort to smile every day and appreciate what he has is astonishing. It made me realise that no matter our hardships and challenges, anything is possible and achievable.

For Or, sleeping in a bed is something he is now grateful for. He even cherishes the fact that he can eat a meal and is no longer a fussy eater. Being able to see the sunshine is a gift he never thought he would experience again, considering that he saw sunlight once in 2024. He even remembered that it was on 4 January. For Or, seeing his four-year-old son laughing makes his whole life worthwhile.

Nothing can bring back the love of his life, Einav, who was murdered in a shelter at the Nova festival on 7 October, a fact that Or found out only when he was released in February this year. Nothing can give him back the days he spent in hell, nor remove the nightmares and the wounds that experience inflicted on him. But he pointed out that he survived despite every physical and mental torture, and for that he will smile. He will not allow Hamas to take his life from him. Not now that he is out.

"I try to smile every day, even though it's hard, because during that time [in Gaza] we chose to live. So to smile is my victory," Or said.

As Or opened his heart to all of us, I felt like I was with him in the tunnel. I had a small sense of living day in and day out in a small, dark space without being able to move around for all that time. Not being able to shower, and when finally getting a chance to wash, Or had to put his filthy clothes back on. Being shackled all day, every day, tortured, and despised by life-threatening jailers

isn't even something in our sphere of imagination, but his words hit home.

Despite all this, today Or smiles and tells his story. As he said, he would much rather have been celebrating birthdays and anniversaries this month, but that is no longer his reality.

He clearly doesn't enjoy standing in front of a crowd and opening up. Both he and his wife were shy, private people. But he takes all that he is and stands tall to tell his story. "I know bad things happened to me. I see the look on people faces when they hear my story, which doesn't make me feel good. I don't want anyone to feel sorry for me, and I don't want to feel sorry for myself. If I were to be a shadow of myself now, then it would have been better for me to have died on 7 October."

The thing that gives Or the ability to stand and speak like he does is knowing that this the only thing he can do to help bring his friend, Alon Ohel, and the 48 remaining hostages home. Alon was with Or throughout his incarceration, and is still a hostage in Gaza. More than 200 days have passed since Or was freed, and his friend is still there and most likely on his own.

"It haunts me day and night that he is alone in those tunnels and starving. I'm not sure that I would have survived on my own," Or said. For his friend and the others, he stands up bravely and shares his soul with us.

Just knowing this makes me ashamed that I hesitated to go and hear Or speak. For the same reason he gets up to speak, we need to be there to hear former hostages bear their souls to us.

Or also shared how Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who was with him for much of the time in the tunnels before he was murdered, used to encourage them all to be positive with the following words, "He who has a 'why' to live for can bear almost any 'how'." Or said how much these words meant to him during his time in Gaza, and that his son was his clear 'why'.

Only when he told Hersh's parents back in Israel about this did he find out that these words were used in Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl's book, and they explained how *Shoah* survivors survived. It's yet another wake-up call for all of us. Having a compelling purpose for living gives us all inner strength and motivation to overcome any of our difficulties, no matter how severe.

Or reminded us all to keep smiling because "they [our enemies] won't win if we continue doing so".

So, for him, I will smile and recognise all that I have to smile for, but I also won't think twice about going to hear former hostages and helping wherever I can to get those remaining hostages home. Thank you, Or!

**Shabbat shalom!**  
**Peta Krost**  
**Editor**



Or Levy speaking at the JNF SA event in Johannesburg on Sunday evening

Photo: Joshua Lipman

# Why journalists don't have free rein in Gaza



OPINION

ROLENE MARKS

Over the past two years, we have heard many indignant media personalities – yes you, Piers Morgan, who has yet to step foot in Israel – castigate Israel for not allowing journalists into Gaza and demand immediate access to cover what's happening there. What's the reality? Is Israel hiding something and purposefully not allowing journalists in to cover it up?

The reality is a lot more simple – and complicated. Israel has let journalists into Gaza since the start of the war, albeit in embeds with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). As early as November 2023, international media including teams from Fox News, NBC, CNN, and others entered the Gaza Strip to file stories with the IDF.

There are two ways that the press can enter Gaza. The one way is to be embedded with the IDF; and the other is as a Hamas-sanctioned reporter. It's easy to guess which option would be the safest. Many have forgotten that in 2007, BBC journalist Alan Johnston was kidnapped in Gaza by the Army of Islam, an offshoot of a powerful criminal clan in Gaza known as the Doghmush. He was released after 114 days.

During 2014's Operation Protective Edge, Italian journalist Gabriele Barbati said he was able to speak freely about witnessing a Hamas misfire that killed nine children at the Shati camp, confirming the IDF version of events, but only after leaving Gaza, "far from Hamas retaliation".

How do they think Hamas, whose strategy is predicated on as many civilian casualties as possible, will treat journalists going in on their own accord? How do they think Hamas will treat civilians, who will be undoubtedly "coerced" into parroting their propaganda?

The frustration for many journalists is that they want to go into Gaza of their own accord. The reality is that the battlefield in Gaza is unprecedented. Densely concentrated urban warfare with booby-trapped buildings and a subterranean tunnel system to rival any metro, combined with a terrorist organisation that uses the civilian population as human shields, has turned the entire Gaza Strip into a frontline. Going in with the IDF is the only safe assurance that they will exit, life intact.

Those who call the lack of access "unprecedented" aren't speaking factually. Military experts and former officers who served in Iraq and Afghanistan have assured me that under no circumstances would they allow journalists on the frontline. This is evident in Ukraine as well. The issue is that the density of the Gaza Strip essentially means that the entire area is the frontline. Soldiers have told me that there is barely a house without a tunnel or weapons cache inside, usually situated in children's bedrooms. We cannot forget that the bodies of the "beautiful six" who were taken hostage and murdered by Hamas were discovered in a tunnel under a child's bedroom.

This week I witnessed unnerving activity on X by Palestinian journalist Omar Abd Rabou. For weeks, he has been begging for help to get out of Gaza, including approaching Morgan, who blocked him.

Abd Rabou has often criticised Hamas. On 27 August, he issued this apology: "I extend my sincere apology to Hamas for any previous posts or comments that may have contained criticism, offence, or could have been misunderstood as such. I have deleted all related posts, and affirm my commitment not to publish anything against the movement or engage in matters related to the war on Gaza."

Abd Rabou now just appeals for help to get his family out of Gaza – any references to Hamas are gone.

I have been into Gaza.

Several weeks ago, I was part of a small press contingent taken into the Gaza side of the Kerem Shalom crossing to document the thousands of pallets of humanitarian aid that the United Nations (UN) and various aid agencies have been slow to collect, while routinely accusing Israel of initiating a policy of mass starvation. Aid trucks with their drivers inside waiting for the green light from the UN idled nearby, and a UN vehicle was stationed in the vicinity. Journalists were given free rein to walk around and document what they were seeing. While we were under the watchful eye of the IDF, there to protect us and answer any questions we may have had, none of the soldiers inhibited us in any way or told us that we had to share any specific information. What we witnessed spoke for itself. It spoke to everyone, it seemed, except for the two correspondents from ABC.

Standing among the towers of aid marked "UN"; "UNICEF" (United Nations Children's Fund); and "World Food Programme", with a solemn face, the ABC journalist said, "This is the face that Israel wants you to see – how it is prosecuting the delivery of humanitarian aid." The reporter continued with his scathing report, trying to cast doubt on Israel's claims.

Several takes were needed to make it sufficiently withering in its



Rolene Marks in Gaza

delivery. One wonders what journalists left to their own devices in Gaza would be forced to say by Hamas and their supportive thugs.

Could Israel do better? Definitely. Perhaps more frequent embeds need to be arranged and definitely more frequent briefings with more information should be given to the media.

With all this outrage directed at Israel's granting of access to Gaza for journalists, I cannot help but wonder where the international community's outrage is that Hamas still holds 48 hostages, or that the Red Cross hasn't given any food or medicine to starving hostages. I guess outrage is selective.

• Rolene Marks is a Middle East commentator often heard on radio and TV and is the co-founder of Lay of the Land and the SA-Israel Policy Forum.



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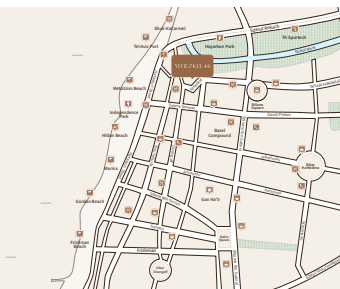
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# Associate rabbi brings renewal to historic Great Park

LEE TANKLE

**G**reat Park Shul has started a new chapter by welcoming its newly appointed associate rabbi, bringing fresh energy and vision to one of Johannesburg's most vibrant Jewish communities.

Rabbi Aron and Rebbetzin Sarah Levitin have joined Great Park Shul after leading the vibrant Chabad on Campus at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), where they were known for their warmth, energy, and ability to inspire young adults. Their move continues a commitment to nurturing Jewish life and it represents renewal for the Great Park community as they bring their vision of inclusivity, heritage, and spiritual growth to the shul.

Great Park Shul is one of Johannesburg's oldest and most cherished Orthodox congregations, its history reflecting the evolution of South African Jewry. Founded in the late 19th century as the Witwatersrand Goldfields Jewish Association, it first held Rosh Hashanah services in 1887 at the Rand Club, with more than 500 worshippers. The President Street Synagogue followed in 1889, and after various schisms and reunifications, including the creation of the United Hebrew Congregation in 1915, the Great Synagogue on Wolmarans Street emerged as the "crown jewel of Orthodox Judaism" in South Africa, serving as the chief rabbi's seat and the hub of Jewish life through much of the 20th century.

In the 1990s, shifting demographics led the community northward. The historic Wolmarans Street synagogue closed in 1994, and by 2000, Great Park Synagogue in Houghton Estate was consecrated. Modelled on the original and retaining cherished elements like chandeliers, the *bimah*, pulpit, and *Ner Tamid*, the building serves as a bridge between tradition and contemporary community life.

"Our Great Park Synagogue is designed architecturally to marry the culture and the legacy of the old Great Park that was built in Wolmarans Street," said Greg Solomon, the chairperson of Great Park, "And much of the furniture that you find in Great Park Shul today is hundreds of years old. Our seats are all the original seats, our *bimah* and Aron *Kodesh* is still the original *bimah* and Aron *Kodesh*. While we are transforming and modernising for the youth of our community, it

does have some rich history."

After heartfelt feedback from the Great Park community, Rabbi Dovid Hazdan will continue to serve as spiritual head for up to three more years. However, Solomon and other members wanted to ensure that they started succession planning.

"We're lucky to have

somebody of his calibre and his skill, and that's why we are bringing in Rabbi Aron Levitin, who comes in as associate rabbi," said Solomon, "Together, they step into day-to-day leadership, and are shaping the congregation's future from 1 September 2025."

Levitin comes from the vibrant community he built while at Wits, and in his short time there, he amassed a massive following.

"Rabbi Aron and Rebbetzin Sarah bring a unique blend of tradition and innovation. Sarah, a native South African and Torah Academy alumna, is deeply rooted in local Jewish heritage as the granddaughter of Rabbi Kovel Bacher and daughter of Rabbi Shalom Bacher. Rabbi Levitin's journey, from London to Jerusalem to *semicha* in Pretoria, adds a rich global and scholarly dimension. Together, they have been deeply involved in nurturing Jewish youth across the city, forging connections that turn acquaintances into family, and supporting faith to flourish through genuine engagement," said Solomon.

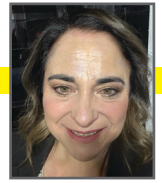


Rabbi Aron and Rebbetzin Sarah Levitin with their children

# Divorce doesn't have to break the family

OPINION

CHANTAL KUR



Divorce is often described as one of life's most painful experiences. In our Jewish community, it can carry not only personal and family heartache but also layers of cultural, religious, and social complexity. Yet what troubles me most, and what I hear echoed in conversations with rabbis, therapists, and community leaders, isn't that couples separate, but how they separate.

Too often, divorce becomes a battleground. Parents fight bitterly, extended families take sides, and the children, who had no choice in the matter, absorb the deepest wounds. Instead of transition, it becomes devastation.

Children don't suffer simply because their parents are divorced. They suffer because of the conflict surrounding the divorce. A child can thrive in two loving

them deeper into pain that was never theirs to carry.

There is another way forward. When parents commit to protecting the dignity of the family, even if the marriage ends, the process looks different. It's slower, kinder, and focused on solutions rather than point-scoring.

divorce in Jewish life not as a shameful failure, but

as a moment that calls for our highest values: compassion, dignity, and responsibility.

We owe our children and our community divorces that are handled with the same care and holiness with which we entered marriage.

Divorce will always be difficult.

But the ugliness isn't inevitable. Parents can

choose to shield their children; to honour one another despite the hurt; and to seek guidance from mediators, rabbis, and professionals who prioritise peace.

In the end, the legacy we leave our children isn't that we divorced, but how we divorced. And that choice is ours.

• *Chantal Kur is an accredited divorce and family law mediator, parenting co-ordinator, and the founder of The Mediation Clinic® and Divorce Mediations®.*



Mediation and respectful negotiation offer frameworks where both voices are heard, faith values are respected, and the child's needs are kept at the centre.

Instead of bitterness, there's closure. Instead of fractured families, there's a redefined family structure that still honours the children's right to love both parents.

Divorce isn't just a private matter; it ripples through our shuls, schools, and circles of friendship. Rabbis, teachers, and community leaders experience the fallout. That's why it's time for us to reframe

homes, but struggle in one torn apart by constant hostility. Every harsh word between parents, every time they're asked to choose sides, every court battle drags

## Associate rabbi brings renewal to historic Great Park

>> Continued from 10a

As associate rabbi, Levitin will be second in command to Rabbi Hazdan. This means that he will be involved in the shul full-time on a day-to-day basis, including all of the rabbinical roles, community responsibility, and will also be involved from a general management standpoint, handling the day-to-day affairs of the shul.

Though Rabbi Hazdan will still be the leader of the shul, the appointment of Levitin shows the shul's commitment to ensuring that its legacy continues despite recent trends of migration away from the area, Solomon said.

"We have witnessed immigration and movement to Cape Town, and at the same time, we are delighted to welcome new members who have recently joined our community," said Solomon. "We are grateful that our numbers remain strong, and we continue to

explore meaningful ways to connect and enrich our Shabbos and overall community experience."

Under both Rabbi Hazdan and Rabbi Levitin, many exciting programmes have emerged, from moms and tots, to Barmitzvah and Batmitzvah programmes, to young adult initiatives, and beyond.

"We believe that you have to build a shul with the younger generation. The older generation is there to support, to mentor, and to help the younger generation of the future," said Solomon. "This transition is carefully crafted to honour Great Park's legacy and embrace renewal. Rabbi Hazdan, Rabbi Levitin, and the shul committee have charted a course that merges continuity with fresh energy, believing that it will usher in a period of growth, unity, and revitalisation."

# The kippah and the cap: a tale of two failed states



OPINION

DANIEL SCHAY

I've recently returned to South Africa after a few weeks in France and Spain. And to be honest? I feel relieved. I feel alive again. That might sound strange. Most people think of leaving South Africa as an escape from dysfunction. But sometimes dysfunction is better than suffocation. Sometimes the chaos of home is still a better bargain than the polished brutality of Europe.

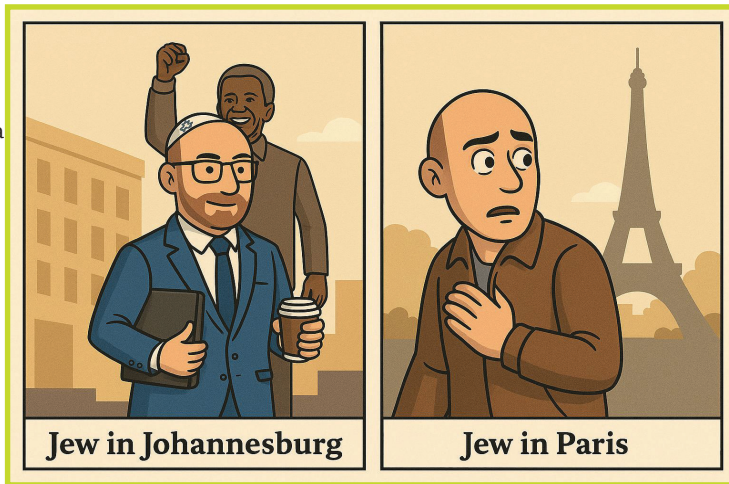
Before we left Johannesburg, I made a quiet but deliberate choice. When I packed my bag, I included a cap, not a kippah. Not because I'm scared. Not because I'm ashamed. Because I'm realistic. I read the news, I follow the trends, I know the score. For every single day in Europe, the cap stayed firmly on my head. My yarmulke never saw daylight.

And two moments in Toulouse showed me exactly why.

The first was in a quiet kosher restaurant. Just us, the owner, and his staff. It felt normal, almost homey. For a moment, I could almost forget the undercurrent. But as we got up to leave, I noticed something. The owner, a man who had been confidently running his business, welcoming customers, wearing his kippah, reached up, removed it, and only then walked outside. No drama. No speech. Just

instinct. A reflex as old as persecution itself.

The very next day, it happened again. The manager of a kosher grocery store. Same routine. Yarmulke off before stepping onto the street. Not a word said, no need to explain. Because everyone already knows the rule: Jewish visibility is dangerous.



Jew in Johannesburg

Jew in Paris

That's Jewish life in France in 2025. A life of constant calculations. A life of self-erasure.

Finding kosher food isn't like popping down to Pick n Pay. You hunt for it. You search for specialist stores, tucked away, hidden, anonymous. Because there's no easy, public Jewishness in France. You are either invisible or you are a target.

And it doesn't stop at France. The same feeling followed us to Spain. Spain, the country that once expelled its Jews entirely, now boasts a Jewish community supposedly the size of South Africa's. But you'd never know it. The infrastructure is a ghost. Kosher food exists, technically, but you'd better be in Madrid or Barcelona, and you'd better know exactly where to look. Beyond that? Forget it.

The cap stayed on.

Even in London, at Heathrow – the great crossroads of the world – I kept the cap on. And I wasn't alone. We bumped into another family from our Johannesburg community. All of them wearing caps. They knew the drill. The same silent rulebook applied. In Europe, you blend in. You mute yourself. You reduce yourself to survive.

And then, OR Tambo International.

You know you're home when an entire A380 full of passengers is being funnelled through just three working passport counters. The dysfunction greets you like an old friend. The queues snake endlessly, the kids are grumpy, the lack of planning for predictable flight schedules is staggering. It's South Africa in one moment.

But in that queue, I saw something else.

The family from Heathrow. The caps were gone. The kippot were back. And so was mine.

On the plane, just before landing, I'd done the same. Shed the cap. Put the kippah back on. And suddenly, in the middle of the chaos, in the middle of the brokenness, in the middle of the maddening inefficiency, I felt at home. Visible again. Jewish again. Alive again.

And that's the paradox I can't shake.

We all know Cyril Ramaphosa's government is an antisemitic disgrace. That's not news. His speeches, his grandstanding on the world stage, his open hostility toward Israel, it's all there. But here's the thing: Ramaphosa isn't



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South Africa. He doesn't speak for the people on this.

In Europe, it's the opposite. Emmanuel Macron used to say all the right things. He played the part of defender of the republic. He gave the speeches. He posed as the shield against antisemitism. But the reality on the ground tells another story. The streets tell the truth. And now, with Macron pushing recognition of a Palestinian state, even the mask is gone.

I know this contrast personally. In the Johannesburg Council, I'm arguably one of the most publicly targeted Jews in South African politics. I've had the word "Hitler" hurled at me across the chamber, not whispered behind my back, but spat out in the record of a formal meeting. And yet I stand there. Kippah on my head. Values on display. Because here, the rhetoric of the political class doesn't translate into the physical endangerment you can taste in the air in Europe. Here, the threat is loud, ugly, brazen, but not yet in your bones.

And so, you're left with this choice: one country with a president who despises us, but a society that still allows us to live visibly. Another country with a president who pretends to protect us, but a society that quietly demands that we disappear. That says everything.

It makes you ask the harder question: what's a failed state?

Is it just broken infrastructure? Non-functioning traffic lights; endless power cuts; water outages; collapsing roads; theft; or corruption? If that's the definition, then South Africa is the poster child. But maybe failure runs deeper. Maybe the truest sign of a failed state is when your oldest minorities are forced to erase themselves in order to survive. When your public spaces are no longer safe for a kippah, when your so-called freedom exists only on the condition that you amputate a piece of your identity. That's failure at its most profound.

France still parades around under the banner of "liberté, égalité, fraternité" (liberty, equality, fraternity). But it's a sick joke now. A hollow slogan. You can chant "freedom" all you want, but if you have to slip off your kippah to buy groceries, your republic is already dead.

That's why the small things matter. The sheer fact that in the middle of the Karoo, you can walk into a supermarket and buy kosher cheese is a deeper measure of freedom than all of Europe's efficient trains put together. That little act of normality means more than the polished infrastructure of a continent where Jews survive by hiding.

South Africa is failing, yes. But it's failing in ways we can fight for. It's failing in the ways that are visible, material, infrastructural. Broken things can be rebuilt. Corruption can be rooted out. Power grids can be fixed. Those are battles of governance, and governance can be changed.

But when a society has decided that you cannot exist openly as who you are? That's not failure you can fix. That's death.

The return of the kippah at OR Tambo wasn't just a wardrobe change. It was a reclamation. An act of breathing out. The

irony is savage, but also undeniable: I had to leave a so-called third-world country to know what it feels like to be a second-class citizen in the first world. And I came back knowing exactly which fight is worth having.

This one. Right here.

• *Daniel Schay is a member of the City Council of Johannesburg and is on the committee of Jewish National Fund South Africa. The views expressed are the views of the author alone, and don't represent the views of any organisation or political party.*

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# SA winemaker brings kosher brandy to market

LEE TANKLE

For the first time in South African history, a kosher brandy made entirely on home soil will hit the shelves. From grape to glass, the new spirit not only meets the strict standards of kashrut, but marks a major milestone in South Africa's growing kosher industry.

Essa Potstill Brandy, aged for three years, was launched on 28 August as the first locally made kosher brandy.

Essa Wine Company, a Cape Town winery owned and run by Josh Rynderman and his wife, Chana, has already established itself as a top-tier producer, getting the highest score out of five kosher wines in a blind taste test by leading wine critic Michael Fridjhon, in a *Business Day* feature on 5 February 2025.

Rynderman, who has been making wines for more than 10 years, sought to expand the Essa Wine brand to include other spirits, and since brandy is made in a similar process to wine, it seemed like a no-brainer.

"When I came to South Africa in 2018, I wasn't very impressed with the wine offerings. The longer I've stayed, I've grown to feel like there's room to level up, at least for the kosher consumers here. It wasn't a project that anyone was doing," said Rynderman.

This is why three years ago, Rynderman started the process of creating a Cape potstill brandy, a type of brandy made using a traditional copper pot still, which is the same method used to produce high-quality spirits like cognac, and that would rival some of the best cognac at a fraction of the price.

"First, you must make the wine, then you've got to distil the wine, then make proper decisions for maturation, blending, and the like for three years down the road," said Rynderman, "South African law requires that any Cape potstill brandy be aged in a barrel, so it's an investment in time and it's an exercise in patience, but all of those things kind of go into making a legitimate Cape potstill brandy."

From the beginning of Essa Wine's journey, Rynderman made sure that the wines were kosher. The wines that Essa produces are "non-meshuval" wines, meaning that they have to be handled by a *mashgiach* (kosher supervisor) and only Shabbat-observant Jews. This means that the wines that Essa produces don't undergo a process known as flash pasteurisation, where they are heated to 85 degrees Celsius, and then cooled down before fermentation.

"For anything grape-based, any liquid that comes out of grapes, whether it's grape juice, wine, balsamic vinegar, or brandy, from the moment the grapes start to emit a liquid, there has to be Jewish involvement for it to be kosher," said Rabbi Dovi Goldstein, the managing director of the Kosher Department at the Union of Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa (UOS). "We would require from our perspective at Kosher SA that a certified *mashgiach* is involved."

Similarly, Rabbi Yochi Ziegler, who is in charge of *shechita* (the Jewish ritual method of slaughtering animals and birds for food) and wine production at Kosher SA in Cape Town, said that when it comes to making a kosher wine or brandy, "the *mashgiach* becomes the wine maker, and no-one else is allowed to do any processes with the wine, grapes, until

the later stage. But the initial stages have to be exclusively done by the *mashgiach*," he said.

"Although normally a *mashgiach* will just go to check that everything is done kosher, when it comes to wine, brandy, and all grape juices, they have had to essentially become the wine maker," said Ziegler.

Rynderman said that in the process of creating a kosher brandy, since brandy is just a distilled wine, Essa follows the same process of creating its wine but distils it.

"We just take all of that work that we've done to make a kosher wine, albeit a very low alcohol kosher-for-Passover wine, and we distil the wine and capture the alcohol vapours that come off of the potstill and mature it."

Rynderman believes the reason why Essa Wine was the first to launch a locally made kosher brandy is that no-one else had the drive to do so.

"Someone's got to say, I want to make a kosher brandy. Most manufacturers in South Africa, whether it's food or drink, don't specifically want to produce a kosher product just for the hell of it. Someone has to want to do it. From a financial aspect, that's a very important part. There has to be impetus to do it."

For Rynderman and Essa Wines, the making of a kosher brandy is the first step in creating more kosher spirits like gin and vodka.

"We've got an incredible wine industry in our country, and it's never been fully appreciated or used in the kosher industry," said

Goldstein. "This has been a strategic mission of ours – to get kosher South African wines onto the global stage. Some fantastic wines are now showing up, like Essa Wines, Sydney Back Wines, and others that you can now find in great stores all over the world. There are also some great local spirits that you can find on the shelves. But having a locally made kosher brandy has been a mission of ours, and was the natural next step in trying to find ways to expand this market, which makes sense because it falls under the same laws in the manufacturing process as wine. It's almost like a natural progression."

"We're not going to stop there. We're going to find other products to make that are kosher for Passover, like vodka, limoncello, and gin. These are all things that the distillery itself has had experience with," Rynderman said. "We're going to experiment, and we'll just have fun with it."



Josh Rynderman

# What winning a Jewish Achiever Award meant to me



RAELENE TRADONSKY

PERSONAL STORY

In 2023, I was honoured to receive the Mann Made Community Service Award at the Jewish Achiever Awards. To be recognised by our Johannesburg Jewish community – renowned worldwide for its warmth, care, and support – was a privilege I will never forget.

For me, the award was less about personal achievement and more about recognition of the collective effort behind the King David Schools' Foundation. It gave me the opportunity to pay tribute to the many people who have played a pivotal role in the foundation's success, and to showcase the impact of our work in sustaining Jewish education of excellence.

As executive director of the foundation, I have had the privilege of reconnecting with alumni across the globe. No matter where I travel, I see how we are bound together by a common thread – our King David education and our proud South African Jewish roots. Our alumni are community leaders, innovators, and proud Jews making a difference around the world. Many carry with them a deep sense of gratitude, and a strong desire to give back, acknowledging where their journey began.

I owe much of my own inspiration to my late colleague and mentor, Elliot Wolf. He understood the power of education to open doors, transform lives, and unite communities. His dream of connecting alumni worldwide to create a financial legacy for King David schools continues to guide our work. Receiving this award gave me added credibility, particularly when engaging with international donors, and I hope we have made him proud.

The award also touched me on a deeply personal level. As a child, I was the beneficiary of a school fee subsidy. A donor invested in my Jewish education, and it changed the course of my life. I can testify to the lifelong impact of funding a Jewish education – it instils pride, values, and identity. That gift helped shape me into the proud Jewess I am today.

In today's world, where antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment are on the rise, the importance of Jewish education cannot be overstated. It does more than provide academic excellence, it grounds our youth in Jewish history, ethics, and values, strengthens Jewish identity, and ensures Jewish continuity.

The Jewish Achiever Awards play a vital role in our community. It not only honours individual contributions but shines a light on the collective strength of South African Jewry. It inspires the next generation, celebrates role models, and reinforces the pride we all feel in belonging to this extraordinary community.

Being part of this journey, and being recognised in this way, has been humbling and affirming. It's a reminder of the power of



Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Shayne and Mic Mann with Raelene Tradonsky at the 2023 Jewish Achiever Awards

education, the importance of giving back, and the privilege of belonging to a community that values both.

I remain grateful to have been a recipient of this prestigious award, and proud to be part of a Jewish community whose impact is felt far beyond Johannesburg.

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• Raelene Tradonsky is the executive director of the King David Schools Foundation.

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# Chief rabbi takes matchmaking mainstream

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

**N**o longer the sole domain of Orthodox Judaism, matchmaking has progressed beyond the shtetl and into the mainstream Jewish community, an evolution largely driven by the 2023 Netflix series, *Jewish Matchmaking*.

The series featured internationally acclaimed Jewish matchmaker, Aleeza Ben Shalom, which is why Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein believes it was important to involve her in his newly launched Matchmakers Network.



Photo courtesy of Netflix

Aleeza Ben Shalom meets a young Jewish single on *Jewish Matchmaking*

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"Until the show, many thought matchmaking belonged in the religiously observant part of the community," Goldstein told the *SA Jewish Report*. "Yet, it belongs to every Jew, and is something that we can all benefit from. Why should it be only in one part of the community and not in another?"

After all, he argues, matchmaking has happened naturally and informally for generations regardless of one's level of observance, whether it be through friends, relatives, colleagues, or acquaintances. "Now it's just a matter of providing that training, formalising the process, and creating awareness," he said.

Tova Goldstein, the executive director of the Matchmakers Network, agrees. "Traditionally, when there is less mixing in religious circles, you need a matchmaker to put people together. It's been incorrectly assumed that the less religious circles don't need that. But everyone can do with someone looking out for them."

These days, it's harder to meet people than it was in the past, she said. "People are more isolated, live more online, and are more wary. There's less community socialising and social groups mostly stick together, which makes singles feel that they know everyone. All these factors create a seemingly small pool. But if we open ourselves up to different communities and create opportunity for singles to meet or be matched up with prospective partners, we can change the narrative."

Ben Shalom agrees, discussing the irony of our times - that while we're increasingly mobile and connect through devices, we're more disconnected than ever before. "In small communities, the dating pool feels limited. In larger communities, paradoxically, people often feel lost in the crowd," she said. "Add to that the pressures of modern dating apps, unrealistic expectations, and the fear of rejection, it creates what many call a 'matrimonial crisis'. But I prefer to see it as an opportunity."

While she acknowledges the barriers to dating, whether they be distance, different religious

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levels, or even an overwhelming choice of partners, she argues that with the right guidance and community support, singles can undoubtedly still find their person. This is why she accepted Goldstein's invitation to become involved in his Matchmakers Network.

"I've dedicated my life to building a Jewish Matchmaking Movement around the world because I believe that no single person, or even one matchmaker, can carry this work alone," she said. "Communities thrive when they take responsibility for their singles, and this project is exactly that: empowering local leaders, rabbis, and community members to help people find their life partner. To me, it's not just matchmaking, it's building Jewish homes, continuity, and a future for our people."

Goldstein echoes this, saying that not only is introducing someone to their future husband or wife one of the greatest *mitzvahs* we can do, it's essential to ensure a thriving community. "A driving force here is the future of our community, which will ultimately happen in Jewish homes and the Jewish children born in those homes," he said.

The vision behind the Matchmakers Network is to harness the power of volunteers from across the community who will be trained and supported to create Jewish matches. While there are professionals involved, the multiplying force of volunteers is crucial, Goldstein said. "It's called the Matchmakers Network because it's about having a network of people, a movement of volunteer matchmakers from across the full spectrum of our community."

While she acknowledges that any form of setting people up has its flaws – as many of those who have had their fair share of disastrous blind dates can attest to – Tova Goldstein still feels it's a great way to meet people. "When there's a personal connection to the matchmaker, it's more likely to succeed, which is what we are creating with the Matchmakers Network," she said.

Having Ben Shalom, an internationally renowned matchmaker, kick off the programme in South Africa this month, and training volunteers online on an ongoing basis will set the project up for success, the rabbi said. With the pilot phase of the Matchmakers Network already running for a few months, more than 100 volunteers have already started their online training. This will continue following Ben Shalom's visit this month.

"It's about shifting the mindset to thinking, not just about, 'What can I do for myself, but are there people I know who need an introduction?'" he says. "If you could introduce two people to each other, what an amazing gift to them, and what a tremendous investment in the future!"

Though the primary focus of the Matchmakers

Network will be on the younger generation, Goldstein acknowledges that the desire for a match exists across different age groups. This is why it's important to become involved and help one another by adopting a matchmaking mindset, he said.

Ben Shalom said she's excited to experience the warmth and vibrancy of our community, and to give new matchmakers real tools. "This includes how to listen deeply; how to guide a first date; and how to spot potential when others might overlook it. My goal is to help them feel confident and supported so they can succeed not just in making introductions,

but in walking singles through the journey of dating to marriage."

Her key piece of advice for singles? "When in doubt, go out. Don't overthink. Don't wait until everything feels perfect. Give yourself the opportunity to meet and assess someone in real life, not just in your head. Stay open, stay curious, and remember, you're not looking for someone who is perfect, you're looking for someone who is perfect for you."



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# Ripple effect of kindness helps Perez family heal

LEE TANKLE

**R**abbi Doron Perez, the one South African father still waiting for his son, Daniel's, body to be returned from Gaza almost two years since he was taken, spoke for the first time back in South Africa at Chabad House Miracle Drive on Monday night, 1 September.

Perez, whose two sons spent most of their childhood here before the family made aliya, told

how for 163 days, his family endured unbearable uncertainty over Daniel's fate. Their worst fears were confirmed when Israeli forces revealed that he had been killed and his body was being held in Gaza.

"My wife's suffering was incessant for 163 days. I have never seen such human suffering," said Perez at the Chabad event, themed "Embrace the Ripple Effect", which raised R30 million.

He recalled waking up on Simchat Torah nearly two years ago with two sons serving in the Israel Defense Forces, one a paratrooper, the other in the tank corps. Their eldest, Yonatan, was moderately wounded by a gunshot to the thigh, but the family had no news of Daniel. Only on 17 March 2024 did they learn the devastating truth: Daniel had been murdered on 7 October 2023. Hamas continues to hold his body nearly 700 days later.

"Two weeks later, it was confirmed that he was being held captive in Gaza. We didn't know his fate, and we hoped and prayed that he was alive. It's the closest I've ever been to the depth of human suffering. That 163 days later, when we were informed that our son had been killed, and based on all types of video evidence, we now had to sit *shiva*, and mourn, although we didn't have his body."

During *shiva*, he asked his wife, Shelley, how she was doing, and her answer shocked him to his core. She said she felt relieved. "I now know that he didn't suffer, he isn't suffering, and he will not suffer," she said.

"During those 163 days, she could barely wash her hands in warm water because Daniel hates the cold. She was always worrying if Daniel was cold. She could barely swallow without crying and saying, 'Is Daniel eating?'" he said. "Therefore, the 163 days was the closest I had seen of a non-stop, one long night of suffering of a mother, which could only be, so to speak, relieved by the fact that she knew her son was no longer suffering."

However, Perez didn't feel the same way. His suffering and mourning started after Daniel's fate was confirmed.

For the first 163 days, Perez promised his son that he wasn't going to be with him in Gaza in head and heart, which demonstrated the theme of the evening, the "Ripple Effect". The ripple, he said, begins in the mind. It meant that while he was doing everything in his power to bring him home, he didn't watch any hostage videos or think about what he might be going through.

"I knew that if I was always thinking about him in Gaza, I wouldn't be able to function. I would be paralysed," he said, "I tried so hard. I called it 'my hostage deal' in my own mind. I said to myself, 'Why worry if Daniel's being tortured, because there's a reasonable chance that he's dead?' which turned out, unfortunately, to be true. And if he's dead, I've got nothing to worry about. He's not being tortured for a moment. Why waste time worrying, if in fact there's nothing to worry

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Rabbi Doron Perez and Rabbi David Masinter

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

had the immense relief that even though he didn't know where Daniel was, Yonatan was safe.

"You can hold some light and thanksgiving with so much pain and darkness," he said. "That shifted my perspective. I realised that comfort can come only when a person is able to rethink, recalibrate, and reframe their life and challenges. It has to be in their time. But it has something to do with our mind talk and how we choose to see the reality we live in."

### >> Continued from 14a

about? But if he's dead, I've got a lifetime to mourn."

On the day Daniel was confirmed dead, Perez broke, but instead of crumbling, he did what he knew best and what he felt comfortable with – he started doing.

"When we got that terrible knock on the door, there was nothing I could do. We still work to bring his body back for burial, and we hope and pray for it, but there was nothing I could do."

He said he reached a turning point, realising the true meaning of the word "comfort" while reading Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*. It was through this book that he realised the power of choice, and how the choices we make have a ripple effect on everything.

"Viktor Frankl, who survived the camps, said that we all have only one ultimate freedom. There's one freedom that nobody can take away from us. It's the freedom to choose," Perez said.

Throughout the evening it was emphasised that every good thing starts with a drop in the water, and one act of kindness ripples out.

Rabbi David Masinter, the director of Chabad House Johannesburg, said that between 1986 and 1992, people would line up every Sunday to go and get a dollar from the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

"The Rebbe believed that the promise of the prophets had to be fulfilled. That one day, *Moshiach* was going to come. There's going to be no more war, no more suffering, no more hatred, no more sickness. G-dliness is going to be revealed in the world. The Rebbe said the way we do that is by getting people to increase in acts of goodness and kindness, starting with ourselves. That's the ripple effect that today, we have more than 5 000 Chabad houses throughout the world."

Perez said 48 hours after 7 October, he

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# Mandatory Shabbat mealtimes would keep families from overheating

To live as a Jew has never been simple. For generations, external forces have tried their utmost to destroy us. They have waged wars, forced conversions, exposed us to pogroms and, well, the rest is history. What they've never quite understood is that there's actually a foolproof way to achieve their goals: just leave us alone. If that doesn't do it, then simply encourage us to host one another more often, especially on Shabbat, when phones are banned and no-one can confirm what time lunch was meant to start.

There were times when this very scenario threatened to rip my own family apart. We would gather, in impressive numbers, at my parents' home for Shabbat meals. And as the herding of bodies toward the dining table began, it would dawn on us that one person, always my younger brother, had yet to arrive. A repeat offender, he seemed utterly at peace with us starting without him. In fact, I sometimes suspected he preferred it as it meant there was less pressure on him to perform punctuality.

But my father was never convinced.

Reluctantly, he would agree to start, though not without employing his masterstroke of strategy: slowing the *kiddush* process down to the pace of an arthritic tortoise. Wine poured in theatrical slow motion, hand hovering just a little longer than necessary over the challah cover, all in the faint hope that the prodigal son would walk through the door.

Of course, by the time he eventually did,



## INNER VOICE Howard Feldman



disguised as theological disagreements. We could all arrive in peace, knowing that somewhere in Sydney, London, or Glenhazel, Jews are sitting down to their chicken soup at precisely the same moment.

Of course, there would be complications. We all know that no universal Jewish system can survive without at least 17 exceptions and a subcommittee to argue about them. Which means, inevitably, there would have to be a separate calendar for Chabad. And possibly another for Sephardim. And probably a third for that one family who insists that “we always eat after early *mincha*”

## Letters

### FEDERATED GOVERNANCE MODEL PREFERABLE TO TWO-STATE SOLUTION

Israel needs to articulate a vision for itself and its immediate neighbours, who are interdependent.

I propose a one-state solution with a tricameral Parliament comprising Israel, Gaza, and the Palestinian Authority in Judea and Samaria. A House of Representatives if you like. Such a Parliament would be inferior to the Knesset, the Senate if you like.

Security and indirect civilian control would reside with Israel.

This is no two-state solution. This is no Palestine. The rest is detail, whether you call it a federation or not; how elections are held in the Palestinian territories; who represents them and so forth; and how they set up or continue, in the case of the Palestinian Authority, to provide services to their constituents. — **Alison Goldberg, Johannesburg**

he arrived not to a warm welcome, but to an environment so hostile, it made Pharaoh's Egypt look like a Club Med holiday.

And that, right there, is why I believe the Jewish world needs something radical: a universal table-time calendar.

Just as we have candle-lighting times published meticulously for every Shabbat of the year, so too should there be mandated meal times. If candle-lighting is 17:37, then Friday night dinner should be declared a global constant at, say, 18:48. Lunch the next day? 12:45 sharp. No arguments, no debates, no frantic glances at the clock wondering whether Auntie Bev meant “around noon” in Joburg Standard Time or in her usual “fashionably late” time zone.

Think of the unity it would bring. No more clandestine WhatsApps before Shabbat asking, “What time do you guys usually eat?” No more family feuds

even though no-one remembers when early *mincha* actually ends.

Still, imagine the potential: a neat little booklet with global “Shabbat Meal Times”, issued annually along with the candle-lighting guide. Friday night dinner at 18:48 this week. Lunch at 12:45. Third meal at 17:15. Unless you're Chabad, in which case: dinner whenever the *farbrengen* winds down, lunch when the *farbrengen* continues, and third meal ... well, sometime before *havdalah*.

Still, I believe the idea has merit. It could save families. It could save friendships. And if nothing else, it would give us one less thing to fight about. Because let's face it: Jews will survive persecution, pogroms, and exile. But turn up late to a Shabbat lunch one time too many? That might be the end of us.



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# Stifling voices and promoting antisemitic tropes



## ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

will safeguard our voices from suppression; to counter unchecked Holocaust inversion tropes; and to prevent any recurrence of antisemitic rhetoric from its editorial teams.

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

We find ourselves amid a troubling controversy stemming from a contentious interview conducted by South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) journalist Juliet Newell with Dr Mamphele Ramphele of the Desmond Tutu Foundation. During the exchange, Newell challenged Ramphele on her claim that Israel was perpetrating a “Holocaust” in Gaza. This regrettable incident casts a stark light on two deeply concerning trends: the rise of Holocaust inversion; and systematic efforts to stifle voices that dare to challenge entrenched anti-Israel narratives.

Holocaust inversion inverts reality – portraying Israelis as aggressors and Palestinians as the “new Jews”; and morality, framing the Holocaust itself as a moral failing of the Jewish people. As historian Deborah Lipstadt describes it, this is a form of “soft-core denial” that inflates any perceived Israeli wrongdoings by an astronomical factor while diminishing the horrors inflicted by the Nazis to a comparable degree.



**BY INSINUATING THAT “JEWISH HUMANITY” IS DAMAGED BY THE SITUATION IN GAZA, THE SABC EDITORIAL TEAM HAS OVERSTEPPED THE LINE.**

The subsequent suspension of Newell is alarming for our community, as it forms part of a greater campaign to silence and censor voices who would oppose the accepted anti-Israel base position. This has been evident throughout the media, and the SABC is no exception. Though the broadcaster professes dedication to “a plurality of views” and “universal access to credible content”, this commitment appears selective, often amplifying fringe anti-Israel perspectives within our community while sidelining the mainstream Jewish voice.

With all that said, the most egregious element of the interview with Ramphele was the SABC’s editorial decision to display a banner at the bottom of the screen that stated, “Jewish humanity buried in the rubble in Gaza.”

This inflammatory statement, which was not made by Ramphele in the interview, is a defamatory editorial addition that dehumanises and demonises our community. This interview thus holds Jews collectively responsible for

a falsely labelled genocide in two ways, first, through the opinions of Ramphele, and second, through this banner. It bears emphasising that holding Jews collectively accountable for Israel’s actions crosses unequivocally into antisemitism. By insinuating that “Jewish humanity” is damaged by the situation in Gaza, the SABC editorial team has overstepped the line.

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies will therefore engage directly with the SABC on these issues, advocating for measures that

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

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# From Instagram to *Ever So Lovely* cookbook

Johannesburg foodie **Romi Rabinowitz** has made a name for herself by sharing her delicious recipes. She's now bringing out her first recipe book, *Ever So Lovely*. We chatted to her before the launch.

**What inspired your love of cooking?**

I've loved cooking for as long as I can remember. Growing up, Shabbos and *yom tov* were always big, festive celebrations in my family. I was inspired by watching my mom and grannies in the kitchen – their warmth, creativity, and love for bringing people together around food shaped my passion and made cooking meaningful to me.

**What does delicious food mean to you?**

It means more than just good taste, it's a mix of flavour, aroma, texture, and even the memory or feeling it brings.

**What's your favourite kind of food?**

Definitely fresh and healthy. I love lots of salads, fresh vegetables, and clean proteins like chicken or a good scotch fillet. For me, it's about clean eating that feels

nourishing and satisfying.

**When did you decide to write a recipe book, and why?**

I decided to write the book during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since I couldn't have family and friends over, I started posting recipes on Instagram every day. Then Dina Diamond invited me to do a cooking demonstration for one of the *SA Jewish Report* webinars, and that experience inspired me to gather my



recipes and bring them together in a book.

**What makes it unique?**

It's a collection of tried-and-true recipes I've collected and perfected over many years, dishes that are always loved and requested. It's full of nourishing, delicious food that brings family and friends together, and I made sure that it was accessible to cooks of all levels.

**Which audience are you catering for in the book?**

It's for cooks of all levels, from beginners to seasoned chefs. It's for anyone who loves good food and enjoys creating memories

Continued on 16b>>

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>> Continued from 16a

around the table with family and friends.

**Take us through your process from inspiration to publication.**

This book has been an absolute labour of love. It's the result of collecting and curating recipes from more than 20 years of home cooking. The journey really began when I hosted the launch of Nida Degutienė's recipe book at my home for a Women's International Zionist Organization event. Degutienė – who has written and photographed five award-winning cookbooks – and I connected instantly over our shared love of food and beautiful presentation.

I've always loved entertaining, and friends often asked me for recipes and meal ideas, so after that event, the seed was planted in my mind that I would share my recipes in a book one day. Later, I had the opportunity to tour Lithuania with Degutienė, and as our friendship grew, so did the idea of collaborating on a cookbook.

During the pandemic, we appeared on a SA Jewish Report webinar together, and that was the

turning point, we decided it was time to create a beautiful book filled with recipes that have always been loved by family and friends.

The process was a team effort. The wonderful ladies from the Chevrah Kadisha fundraising department came to my home, and together, we went through my recipe files, choosing dishes we knew people would want to cook. They helped type up my handwritten notes and refine them. Degutienė then flew to Johannesburg for three weeks, where we cooked day and night while she photographed every dish you'll see in the book. She introduced me to Kristina Karnilaviciute, who is a brilliant artist and graphic designer from Germany. She did all the graphics and layouts. Afterward, Kate Thomson came on board to edit, and finally, Caryn Sher guided the book through its final stages into print.

It's been a huge undertaking, but truly a labour of love, and I couldn't be more proud to share it with the world.

**How did you choose its name and why?**

The name *Ever So Lovely* was inspired by my late

grandfather, Max Brozin, who affectionately called me his 'ever so lovely', or 'ESL'. He was the beloved patriarch of our family, and to honour his memory and legacy, I knew that was what I wanted to call my book.

**What was the toughest part of putting this book together?**

The length of time it took to bring the book to completion was a challenge. From start to finish, the process stretched over five years, and at times, it felt like it would never be ready for printing. Patience was hard.

**What was the most joyful part of it?**

The moment Caryn Sher handed me the very first copy of the book. Holding it in my hands, I could hardly believe it was finally real. Another highlight was seeing my children's excitement when they spotted their favourite recipes included. That made it all the more meaningful.

**Where can people get it?**


The book will be available at the launch on 14 September. After that, at various kosher locations or directly from me.

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