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Prof Mendelsohn sues antizionist Choritz for defamation

TALI FEINBERG

When Professor Adam Mendelsohn took the University of Cape Town (UCT) to court over its anti-Israel resolutions, he showed that he is unafraid of standing up to discrimination. Now, he is suing Jewish antizionist agitator Megan Choritz for defamation.

The sheriff of the court served Choritz on Thursday, 18 June. Choritz is a member of antizionist hate movement SA Jews for a Free Palestine, which calls for the obliteration of the Jewish State. The summons refers to two instances in which Choritz allegedly defamed Mendelsohn, in response to his inaugural lecture at UCT in April.

In the first incident, she alleged in a TikTok video that Mendelsohn is “a supporter of Israel’s genocide” and “an Islamophobe”, and asked why he is “allowed a voice” and is not “criticised, stopped, and deplatformed”.

In the second, Choritz said in an article on the blogging platform Substack that “there is no word for what Mendelsohn and his friends are ... these Zionists do not fear Muslims, they hate them. Their hatred looks and sounds exactly like antisemitism.”

She stated that “letting his lecture happen without protest gives him and his hateful, racist views legitimacy” and that “Mendelsohn’s Zionist paranoia, fragile feelings, and bad faith slurring of antizionists needs to be challenged at every opportunity”.

Also in the Substack post, she wrote that “According to them [Mendelsohn and ‘friends’], every Muslim is Hamas. Every antizionist is a Hamas supporter.”

The summons states that both claims were published for the general public, and would have been seen by a considerable number of people. It says the statements in their ordinary meaning are defamatory of the plaintiff, Mendelsohn.

According to the summons, people reading or hearing Choritz’s statements would understand that Mendelsohn is supportive of the crime of genocide; that he fears, hates, and discriminates against Islam and the people of the Muslim faith in general; and that he is the kind of person who should not be permitted to speak in public, including at UCT.

They would understand that Mendelsohn believes every person who is opposed to Zionism is a supporter of Hamas; that he is a racist and holds hateful, racist views; and is paranoid, acts in bad faith, and is irrational.

The summons says “the statements were published by the defendant wrongfully and with the intention of injuring the plaintiff in his reputation”.

It states that Mendelsohn has suffered damages in the amount of R500 000, which Choritz, despite demand, has failed or refused to pay.

Mendelsohn is claiming R250 000 per claim, and interest on these amounts from the date of judgment to date of payment at the prescribed rate of 10.25% per year.

He is also asking the court to order Choritz to make

an unconditional apology, which is to be published in a manner and form to be determined by the court. Further or alternative relief would be legal costs.

Choritz has called for Zionists to be “made unsafe”, “isolated”, and “kicked out of spaces”, and said they are “Nazis” who must be “made uncomfortable” and “unwelcome”. She has stood next to a banner with the words “We are All Hamas” and said that Zionists are “not real Jews”.

She stated that Nova festival victims were “getting shitfaced alongside the walls of the prison of Gaza”.

Choritz has said, “It is impossible to separate racism from Zionism. Zionists are racists. Zionists are supremacists. Zionists only value Jewish lives. Palestinians are just problems that need to die, including innocent children.”

In the post on Substack described in the summons, Choritz stated that Mendelsohn would use his lecture to “generate more hate and division”.

On the same day that she was served, she wrote on Substack that she encountered “Jewish parents of Herzlia kids,” at a theatre, and that the Jewish parents have “an absolute inability to be human beings”.

Emma Sadleir, an expert on print and electronic media law, including the disciplinary and reputational consequences of social media use, told the *SA Jewish Report* that “there’s no question that there is defamation” in Choritz’s content targeting Mendelsohn.

Sadleir explains that to successfully sue somebody for defamation, you must show three things. The first is the statement must have been published, that is, seen by another person. “So even if it’s on a WhatsApp group, we treat it as if it’s on the front page of a newspaper. Clearly, this content was seen by a lot of people.”

Continued on page 3>>



Megan Choritz (holding a ‘Cape Town is not Tel Aviv’ placard) at the protest outside the Cape Union Mart court case last week

Photo: Tali Feinberg

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Starmmer showed how to fight left-wing antisemitism



JACK LUBNER

OPINION

As British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer made his resignation speech on the steps of 10 Downing Street and set out his legacy, tackling antisemitism in the Labour Party was the first thing he mentioned.

It echoed his first ever address as Labour leader, in which he vowed to rip out anti-Jewish racism by its roots in his party. Six years later, Starmer can look on that part of his legacy with pride – a promise solidly delivered.

Starmer's election as Labour leader had a surreal quality to it. The latter phase of his campaign was overshadowed by the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdown. His victory speech was delivered to a camera in his living room and uploaded to Twitter. I joined a Zoom call of Jewish Labour campaigners to watch

the results come in, unable to mark the moment together. Looking back, it feels like a different world.

But the politics of Britain in April 2020, and certainly of the Labour Party, were of a different world too. The leadership election came just three months after Labour's worst election defeat since 1935. As Starmer said in Monday's resignation speech, the party was bankrupt – politically, financially, and morally – under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) had begun its investigation into institutional antisemitism and by October that year, it would find the party guilty of unlawful acts against its Jewish members. Those members, including myself, had been abused and harassed, and our disciplinary cases were the subject of political interference. High-profile Jewish parliamentarians had left in disgust. In April 2020, the Labour Party itself was on the brink.

Here, Starmer's personal leadership cannot be overstated. It was at his insistence that eradicating antisemitism was treated not only as a political issue, but a moral mission, a battle for the very soul of the Labour Party. And so, it was under his direction that internal processes were overhauled, antisemitic members expelled, antisemitic groups proscribed, and the EHRC's report adopted in full. Even Corbyn was suspended and denied the opportunity to run again for Parliament. The result was the wholesale change in the culture of the Labour Party. By early 2023, it had been given a clean bill of health. At last, it was

antisemites who felt unwelcome and left, and Jews who felt Labour was their political home once more.

But it would be remiss not to acknowledge the tensions between

significant sections of the Jewish community.

Yet, as Starmer prepares to leave Downing Street over the coming weeks, he will have delivered record

funding for Jewish communal security and policing, the incoming ban on the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, Holocaust education in every school, and stronger powers for police to tackle antisemitism on marches. That is not something to be taken for granted.

But I think in years to come, Starmer's legacy will be broader in scope. Working with Jewish Labour leaders, he delivered the blueprint for tackling antisemitism in left-wing political parties.



Photo: screenshot

Outgoing United Kingdom Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer

Starmer's government and parts of the Jewish community since his election as prime minister. Hamas's barbaric terrorist attacks of 7 October saw an immediate spike in antisemitism across the world, and the United Kingdom was no exception. The culmination of this in the deadly Heaton Park synagogue attack on Yom Kippur last year, the Golders Green stabbing in April, and the spate of arson attacks earlier this year saw fear reach new heights and, at times, anger towards the prime minister boil over. While always defending Israel's right to exist and defend herself, the government's decision to suspend some arms licences to Israel and to recognise a Palestinian state caused an outcry across

As the Green Party of England and Wales now succumbs to its own antisemitism crisis – some of it emanating from people expelled from Labour under Starmer – the contrast in moral leadership has never been greater or starker. With anti-Jewish hate becoming an epidemic in many left-wing spaces across the world, Jews can look to Starmer's leadership as a model for how to fight back. Amid all the political woe of being a British prime minister in the 2020s, this is certainly one part of his legacy he can be proud of.

• Jack Lubner was the organiser for the Jewish Labour Movement and national chair of Young Labour during the 2024 United Kingdom general election

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It's good to be together

My friend L loves to greet everyone with the words, "It's good to be together." Whether we are sharing a meal at a *simcha*, bumping into one another at a supermarket or restaurant, or finding ourselves in the same shul for a service, he always elevates the meeting with this trademark phrase.

Every interaction between two individuals creates a synergy. Neither walks away the same. Sometimes the change is significant; sometimes it is subtle and imperceptible. But it takes place at some level or another. It can bring out the best in both or, sadly, the converse. So, it is powerful to acknowledge that a meeting is good.

This Shabbat, it is going to be good to be together with the Jews of Israel. We will still be in the diaspora and they will still be in the Holy Land, so it is not a meeting in a physical sense. Please G-d, if Moshiach arrives by then, we will literally be one nation in one place!

For the past few weeks, we have been reading different weekly portions in shul. You will recall that Shavuot fell on a Friday and Shabbat. When a *chag* occurs on Shabbat, the regular cycle of Torah reading is paused and a section related to the festival is inserted instead. This is exactly

what happened in the diaspora. In Israel, however, Shavuot was only one day, Friday, so the cycle of Torah readings was not disrupted. Since then, in effect, Israel has been ahead of the rest of the world by one portion.

That is disconcerting. The pulse of the Jewish people is the weekly Torah reading. We study it, discuss it, debate it, and expect our rabbis to deliver sermons and *shiuim* related to it. There is definitely a sense of disconnect when all of world Jewry is not on the same page.

At this difficult time for the Jewish people, being and remaining united is of the utmost importance. When our friends in high places let us down to best serve their own political and diplomatic agendas, we, diaspora and Israeli Jews alike, must stand proud, tall, and united.

The last few weeks were indeed disconcerting. The pulse of our nation was displaying signs of arrhythmia. Yet, that realisation in itself made us feel that we were one.

In Israel this Shabbat, the portion will be *Balak*.

Torah Thought

Rabbi Yossi Chaikin, Rabbi Oxford Shul and SA Rabbinical Association chairperson



In the diaspora, we will read a double portion, combining *Chukat* and *Balak*. Henceforth, we will be in sync. One again. My friend L will certainly exclaim, "It's good to be together."

For it truly is.

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On the 3rd of Tammuz, 3 299 years ago, a miracle occurred as Joshua led the Jewish people into battle. As darkness was about to fall, the heavenly bodies halted their progress across the sky until the battle was won.

*Please note that Israel time is 1 hour ahead

Was Montreal shooting an attack on Jews?

LEE TANKLE

What started as a normal day of work for Saul Emanuel, a South African expat in Montreal, Canada, quickly evolved into chaos as a shooting on 22 June left three people dead around the corner from his offices.

While some news outlets are claiming that this was an antisemitic attack, Emanuel, the executive director of the Montreal equivalent of the Beth Din, insists it was anything but that.

The shooting took place outside a building in Côte-des-Neiges whose tenants include

Aylo, the multinational parent company of website Pornhub. The neighbourhood is home to several Jewish institutions, schools, synagogues, and community organisations.

In a statement on X on 23 June, Emanuel maintained that while people might rush to assume it was an antisemitic attack, no such conclusion had been established by law enforcement and no evidence had yet been made public.

“This reaction may be understandable, but it remains erroneous. We therefore invite everyone to resist the temptation to be the first to comment and instead prioritise accuracy and caution. The facts will eventually be established. The investigators will determine the perpetrator’s motives for this attack. In the meantime, both citizens and community leaders must allow the authorities to do their work,” he wrote.

“Everybody knows that it wasn’t targeted towards the community at all,” Emanuel told the *SA Jewish Report*.

“This wasn’t an antisemitic attack, and people should be careful in calling it that because antisemitic attacks are serious at any time, and if one just calls every attack antisemitic, then obviously

it dilutes, G-d forbid, when there is one, and this was not an antisemitic attack,” he said.

“He chose a concentrated area of the community in which to carry out his shooting but it appeared that it was not directed at the Jewish community.”

Emanuel, who has lived in

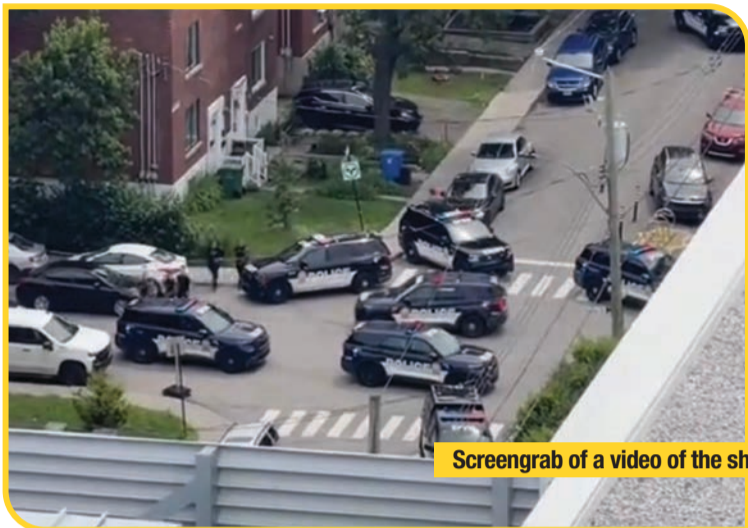
were not really coming in our direction, immediately the concern was of the surrounding area and of all the people in the area because there’s a very large Jewish community presence here,” he said.

All buildings, including his, were placed on lockdown until police could secure the area.

“There was an assumption that there was more than one shooter and everybody was told to stay inside in the surrounding areas. Alerts were sent out on cellphones that no one should be leaving their houses, everybody had to stay put. It was only after six hours that we were allowed to leave,” he said.

“There was complete mayhem during the first hour as the situation unfolded. Police didn’t know exactly where the shooter was and were unable to secure the perimeter. At one point, they believed he had moved to another area beneath our offices and were concerned he might have entered a different hotel. The shooting had started at the hotel next door to us, so there was a great deal of confusion. It was total chaos until authorities were finally able to bring some order to the area.”

Emanuel was able to get video feeds of



Montreal since leaving South Africa in 1998, explained that at around 11:00 on Monday, people in his building heard multiple gunshots and headed to windows to see what was happening on the road below.

“I looked outside and saw two police officers crouching behind their cars with their guns drawn. And then from all directions there were cop cars coming. Eventually there were more than 100 police cars in the area, then the SWAT [Special Weapons and Tactics] team and the canine unit were called and they called for backup from the Quebec police department,” he said.

“Police were coming from all directions. Patrol cars were driving on the wrong side of the road and even on the pavements because they couldn’t get through. Roads were being closed, and the highway that runs beneath our offices, a major artery in the city, was completely shut down for six hours. People were trapped in their cars and unable to leave.”

When Emanuel had heard the gunshots, he had been concerned it could be a targeted attack.

“I didn’t really think that we were being targeted, although our building has been targeted before. However, since the gunshots

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what was happening down below through people filming from the rooftops of the buildings around the scene. They were also able to get eyewitness reports of what was happening.

“We were therefore able to get some information and assumed that there was more than one shooter ourselves, as many did, but it became clear that it was only one shooter,” he said.

Montreal police officer Mohamed Lamine Benredouane, 34, and local Jewish resident Michel Mizrahi, 68, were killed, and the shooter was gunned down by the police. Another police officer was seriously wounded but survived.

Authorities later revealed that the suspect had left behind a 104-page manifesto blaming feminism, liberalism, and capitalism for the loneliness, isolation, and social degradation that he believed men face, beliefs commonly associated with the incel (involuntary celibate)

movement.

The manifesto lists what the shooter claimed were “valid potential class A targets”, including large investment banks, powerful politicians, “influential Zionists”, corporate executives in private healthcare, companies involved in environmental destruction, plastic surgeons, and cryptocurrency speculators. The manifesto mentions targeting “the headquarters of international pornography companies”. It ends with the words “Be unflinching, go forth, and KILL THEM ALL!”

Investigators are still determining the motive for the shooting.

The death of Constable Benredouane was particularly significant as he is the first Montreal police officer killed in the line of duty in 24 years.

Although there was so much commotion, Emanuel was able to return to the office the next day, with a large police presence still in the area.

Prof Mendelsohn sues antizionist Choritz for defamation

>>Continued from page 1

The statement must refer to the person or company directly or indirectly. In Choritz’s content, “the professor is named, so this requirement is met”, says Sadleir.

The third requirement is that it must be defamatory. “To say that somebody supports ‘genocide’ and is an Islamophobe – no question that’s defamation.”

Sadleir explains that the person defending the comments needs to prove that what they’ve said is true and of benefit to the public. “It’s not just what’s interesting to the public, it’s actual public benefit.”

“It’s not for the professor to come and show that what has been said about him is not true,” says Sadleir. “The onus is on Choritz to explain and show proof that what she said is true, and I think that that’s going to be difficult to prove.”

She says that Choritz styled what she said as factual, so she would have to prove truth and public benefit. “The other [possible] defence is fair comment, but she would have to show that what she said is an opinion, and I don’t think she styled it like that. She would have to show that it’s her opinion based on a true event, and that she’s not motivated by malice. I think she will struggle to do that.”

Sadleir says social media might feel like an unregulated space, but the same laws apply.

Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies (Cape SAJBD) executive director Daniel Bloch says that while the courts will determine the merits of this case, “we support the principle that all individuals are entitled to the protection of their reputation and dignity under the law. Those who unlawfully defame others should be held accountable through the appropriate legal processes.”

He says that in recent years, some Jewish antizionists have been “prominent voices in targeting members of the Jewish community, communal institutions, and organisations through harmful allegations”.

Regardless of who makes such allegations, “when statements are alleged to be false and defamatory, those affected are entitled to seek appropriate legal remedies through the courts”, says Bloch.

The Cape SAJBD condemns all forms of hatred, intimidation, and discrimination. “We remain committed to promoting respectful public discourse and to ensuring that disagreements, including those relating to the Middle East, are conducted within the bounds of the law and with respect for the rights and dignity of all people.”

Mendelsohn told the *SA Jewish Report* he is unable to comment.

The *SA Jewish Report* also asked Choritz to comment, but didn’t receive a response by the time of going to press.

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DA Gauteng veteran Bloom tipped for GNU post

CLAUDIA GROSS

Veteran Democratic Alliance (DA) Member of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature Jack Bloom says he sees a potential move into national government as a continuation of his life's work in public health.

This after party leader and Cape Town Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis recommended him for a position in the Government of National Unity (GNU), as deputy minister of water and sanitation.

It follows significant changes in the DA leadership and renewed speculation about a possible reshuffle of its representatives in the GNU. Political analysts have linked the changes to the growing influence of Hill-Lewis, now DA leader, within the party and ongoing debates about its role in national government.

Bloom – who was first elected to public office in 1994 – told the *SA Jewish Report* that he was surprised by the recommendation but viewed it as an opportunity to tackle one of South Africa's most pressing problems. "I think it's a marvellous opportunity," he says. "I see it as a continuation of my health mission because primary healthcare and clean water and sanitation are absolutely vital."

Bloom has spent decades as a vocal opposition politician, particularly through his oversight of Gauteng's Health Department. He played a central role in exposing the Life Esidimeni tragedy, in which 144 psychiatric patients died after being transferred from specialised care facilities, and has consistently highlighted corruption, mismanagement, and service delivery

failures in the province.

Hill-Lewis says Bloom possesses qualities urgently needed in government. "Jack Bloom brings exactly the kind of experience, integrity, and tenacity that government needs." The mayor points to Bloom's role in uncovering the circumstances surrounding the Life Esidimeni disaster. "He pursued the truth when others wanted to look away, and he fought for justice for people who had been failed by the state in the most devastating way," Hill-Lewis said.

The proposed portfolio is understood to be water and sanitation, a department facing mounting challenges as municipalities across South Africa struggle with ageing infrastructure, water shortages, pollution, and service delivery failures. For Bloom, the issue is deeply personal. About 15 years ago, he spent nights in informal settlements to better understand the realities facing residents there. The experience later became the basis of his book *30 Nights in a Shack*.

He says those visits exposed him to the daily struggles many South Africans face in accessing basic services. "I was sensitised to the key issues of sanitation and water," he says, recalling settlements where thousands of residents shared only a handful of taps. "People had to queue with containers. I thought, 'How difficult is it to put another five taps in and make life so much easier?'" On one occasion, he says, he personally bought replacement parts from a hardware



Democratic Alliance Gauteng politician Jack Bloom

store to repair broken taps.

While water shortages are increasingly affecting suburban residents, Bloom says the crisis has long been a reality for people living in informal settlements and rural communities. "Water is literally elemental. Water is life and we need to get it right."

The move into national government would represent a significant shift for Bloom. "It's an executive position and I'm used to being in opposition, so I have to change my mindset" However, he stresses that his approach would remain unchanged. "That doesn't stop me complaining, pointing out inequities, and having zero tolerance for corruption. I've always been a corruption buster and where there's corruption, I will expose it."

Hill-Lewis told the *SA Jewish Report* that this insistence on accountability is precisely why Bloom would be an asset in government. "For too long South Africans have become used to politicians who defend failure, explain away collapse, or protect systems that don't work. Jack is the opposite. He asks difficult questions, follows the evidence, and stays with an issue until there is movement."

The DA leader says such qualities are particularly important in portfolios where service delivery failures have direct consequences. "Failure isn't abstract. It affects households, hospitals, businesses, farms, and entire communities."

Bloom acknowledges that leaving Gauteng's health portfolio would be difficult after decades of involvement in the sector. "It's a bit of a wrench, to be honest," he says, describing receiving messages from members of the public who had turned to him for help with hospital-related issues over many years. "It does touch you because you touch people's lives."

Bloom remains concerned about the state of healthcare in Gauteng and believes many of the lessons from Life Esidimeni remain unlearned. "The fact is that nobody has been convicted," he says. While the National Prosecuting Authority has announced plans to pursue charges, Bloom notes that court proceedings have yet to begin.

He also points to ongoing concerns about mental healthcare, treatment backlogs, cardiac surgery outcomes, and corruption. "The root cause of our problems is poor management and massive corruption," he says, citing

examples ranging from personal protective equipment scandals during the COVID-19 pandemic to procurement irregularities involving hospital infrastructure projects.

Resources for patient care continue to be diverted away from their intended purpose, he says. "The real lesson is that we need to treat all patients with dignity and use the available budget in the best way possible. Don't waste it and don't let it be stolen."

Despite these concerns, Bloom remains optimistic about South Africa's future. "There are extraordinary people labouring away in our civil service," he says, pointing to doctors, nurses, and technical experts working in difficult conditions serving communities.

From his initial examination of the water and sanitation sector, Bloom says, "There are excellent initiatives out there that just need recognition and support."

Hill-Lewis echoes that optimism. "The people of South Africa" are what give him hope. "Everywhere I go, I meet people who aren't waiting for government to save them. They're building businesses, raising families, teaching children, serving communities, creating jobs, and refusing to give up on this country."

Whether or not Bloom ultimately joins the national executive will depend on the outcome of ongoing GNU negotiations and decisions within the DA. For now, however, one of South Africa's longest-serving political watchdogs appears ready for a new challenge. "I do have a sense of unfinished business in health," he admits. "But this is a tremendous opportunity that I think I'll have to dive into and make a splash."

Extortion of foreign domestic workers and gardeners?

LEE TANKLE

Amid xenophobia and threats to foreign nationals, an incident in Johannesburg's northern suburbs has sparked alarm among residents. A domestic worker was allegedly detained by men in a police van and forced to pay for her release.

On 22 May, the Malawian employee of freelancer and mother Montanna Shapiro was on her way to work, walking past Genesis in Fairmount, when individuals believed to be police officers in a van stopped her.

They questioned her about her occupation and employer before allegedly taking her into the vehicle and driving her around for hours.

"The so-called officers never asked for identification, nationality, or any official documentation. Instead, they asked strange questions such as what her profession was and whether she wears a uniform," said Shapiro.

Once inside the vehicle, she says, the woman was driven around and told to contact her employer to request a payment of R1 500 for her release. She was reportedly not taken to a police station and was told that payment should be made to meet halfway.

"During this time we tried to establish her exact location. We sent airtime and data so she could share her live location with us, but communication became difficult and at times was interrupted. My husband attempted to follow the vehicle while staying in contact with her. Her husband was also able to communicate with her and provided limited location updates," said Shapiro.

Eventually, her husband sent an eWallet payment, and after it was withdrawn at

a nearby First National Bank ATM, the domestic worker was dropped off at the Sandringham Spar and walked back to Shapiro's home.

"She was extremely frightened and distressed throughout the experience. From our communication with her, she sounded scared, confused, and unsure of what would happen next," said Shapiro.

"This is a scam by people taking advantage of the confusion surrounding the employment of foreign workers who, typically, have a visitor's permit but not a

supported, and not alone in processing what happened. We have remained in close contact with her and immediately reported the incident to the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Hotline for guidance and documentation," she said.

After the incident, Shapiro shared a warning in a Jewish community Facebook group for families with domestic workers, gardeners, and other staff in the area. She received close to 60 responses detailing similar incidents that had happened to other families.

"Many of the reports shared with us involved foreign nationals from neighbouring countries who come to South Africa to work and support their families," she said.

One gardener allegedly had to pay R3 500 in a similar incident the previous week.

"This was especially concerning because for many workers this amount represents a large portion of, or even an entire month's salary," said Shapiro. "Some community members also reported similar alleged incidents involving their staff around the same time, including claims that multiple workers may have been involved."

Another family reported an incident the week prior, allegedly in a different area.

"These are accounts shared by members of the public and have not been independently verified by us, but the consistency and

volume of reports have been deeply concerning," she said.

One anonymous employer of a Zimbabwean domestic worker explained that her worry was fed by the rising tensions lately, with a looming deadline of 30 June set by several anti-immigration groups demanding that undocumented migrants leave South Africa.

Her domestic worker and husband are both undocumented. "From what I understand, it's too late. There's nothing you can do, and you shouldn't employ them," she said.

She had offered for her domestic worker to stay at her home, but the woman had opted to go back to Zimbabwe and wait things out.

This employer said the situation is ringing alarm bells for her.

"What's happening is that foreigners are being made scapegoats. This isn't being driven by government policy but by groups that have united around an anti-immigrant agenda. They argue that foreigners are taking jobs, but my concern is that they're being blamed for broader social and economic problems. The government has made it clear that people cannot simply take the law into their own hands, yet these actions continue.

"They are doing this now and then one little hop, skip, and a jump to the Jews. That's what we've seen; that's why all our grandparents fled this. Now it's happening to Africans, who are in our homes," she said.

"What has been most distressing is how vulnerable domestic workers, gardeners, and other labourers are while travelling to and from work. They often have limited resources and limited protection and are easily targeted because of their circumstances," said Shapiro.



AI-generated illustration. This image does not depict any actual police officer or incident and is used to illustrate the issue of police corruption.

work visa," said Johannesburg attorney Roy Bregman. "It is a criminal offence to employ someone who is not South African and who does not have a work permit."

Shapiro said the incident shook the whole family. "It was extremely distressing and overwhelming. The most difficult part was not knowing where she was and trying to ensure her safety while the situation was unfolding. We have ensured she is safe,



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South African Jewish Report

Water and safety are human rights

Safe, clean, and affordable drinking water is not a commodity, a gift, or a matter of charity. It is also not something we should be hugely grateful for. It is a human right, designated as such in our Constitution. It is a legally binding entitlement essential for the full enjoyment of life and all other human rights.

More than that, the United Nations General Assembly explicitly recognised the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation on the international stage in July 2010.

This is as it should be. In fact, it sounds obvious, doesn't it? Why would we even need to think about it? Why, indeed?

On Monday, we had no water in the building that houses our office. We weren't alone. A number of areas in Johannesburg had no water. I write that as if it is surprising, but it isn't. Not if you live in Johannesburg. I cannot begin to tell you how many times we haven't had water at home for days and sometimes more than a week.

In an office block, where many strangers are sharing toilets and ablutions, this is a surefire way to make people sick. If you cannot flush the toilet and wash your hands after using it, you are inevitably spreading germs. Do you know how many illnesses are directly caused by simply not washing hands after using the toilet? Way too many!

And yet, this problem continued for days. And once the issue that created it was fixed, there will inevitably be another outage in another area soon. I'm not being cynical, just realistic and speaking from experience. That is just what happens in Johannesburg, the economic capital of South Africa.

The truth is, water management failures and systemic corruption are widespread across the country's local government sector. Earlier this year, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) formally declared the water crises in several provinces a "man-made disaster". The SAHRC maintained that infrastructure neglect, tender manipulation, and mismanagement are behind these crises. In many municipalities, they've also been attributed to sabotage, corruption, and governance collapse.

The Eastern Cape, Limpopo, the Free State and what used to be the Vaal Triangle are in a sorry state, with water stoppages for weeks on end.

What is being done about it, you may ask? Well, it sounds like a lot is happening on a national government level. It is apparently deploying structural takeovers, multibillion-rand infrastructure funds, and legislative overhauls.

Sounds great, but I need a lot more than promises before I believe it. I want to see a real difference and that hasn't happened. In fact, the situation seems to have worsened.

It's a bit like the pothole problem, which is so very visible wherever you go, except in the Western Cape. Seriously, there are believed to be around 25 million potholes in the country. Well, word has it that there are massive plans to fix them, including a combination of military-style repair rollouts, private sector involvement, and digital tracking apps.

Again, I have seen nothing yet that even gives an indication that potholes are being repaired.

Frankly, until we see evidence that changes are happening, I believe the promises are simply the African National Congress (ANC) trying to win votes in the coming local government elections. To be honest, anyone who still votes for the ANC needs their heads read.

The truth is we desperately need change in this country. We need a new government that is going to focus on upgrading infrastructure, getting rid of corruption, and turning our economy from a downward spiral to the up and up. We need government leaders who actually care more about the country than themselves.

Any political party that can give the assurance of that deserves our vote. Anyone else, cannot and should not be trusted.

Also, we need a government that when a country, like Israel, offers assistance with water problems, doesn't throw a brick at it, but rather accepts the help to build this country.

This is not rocket science. It is simply looking out for the people of this country rather than lining one's own pockets.

Right now we have a xenophobic war bubbling up, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal (see Alana Pugh-Jones Baranov and Wendy Kahn's OpEds on this page and page 10. Also read the story on page 4.)

The fact that this has been allowed to escalate to the extent it has is unforgivable. And now, on 30 June, the government will spend R600 million to prevent xenophobic violence. That amount is just for extra police deployment on the day! I am sorry but how does one day of policing cost that? It seems way too much! I believe we should be seeing some transparency on what that the money is really being used for.

I agree violence must be stopped at any cost. However, I have to ask where this money is coming from? We have such hardship in this country, unemployment, people living below the poverty line, and many of our municipalities are effectively bankrupt. So, where are we finding this extra R600 million?

I know hindsight is 20/20, meaning it's easy to look back and see the error of our ways. And I am sure those in power can see that the xenophobia has been growing and growing and there are many at fault. It could have and should have been stopped years ago, but it wasn't.

I do understand we have illegal immigrants in this country. It is a reality. However, it is never acceptable to harm, harass, or be violent with anyone.

As Jews, we understand xenophobia and people wanting us out of their country. We understand irrational hatred because we are different. We cannot and dare not stand by and watch anyone harmed. We need to do whatever we can to stop it. See the advice that Alana offers in her piece (alongside this) to help guide you in doing the right thing. Stand up and be counted!

Shabbat shalom!

Peta Krost
Editor



SA's pandemic of hate and our responsibility to act

OPINION

ALANA PUGH-JONES BARANOV



"Every morning, when you wake up, you see a traumatising video telling people that they're going to kill you before 30 June. When people say they're going to kill you, you can't sleep."

Those words belong to Tino Maclean, who has been assisting Zimbabwean nationals fleeing the wave of vigilante violence sweeping KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and was recently interviewed by AFP. He is one voice among thousands. There is the 43-year-old Cameroonian shop owner in Durban who built his business here over nearly two decades, only to watch 10 men break down his locked door during April protests, confiscate his goods, and destroy in minutes what took him 20 years to build. There is the Congolese mother who hasn't left her home in weeks, too terrified to step outside, and the Somali trader whose shop was looted and then set alight. The Malawian domestic worker dismissed on the spot by an employer frightened of the mob gathering at the gate.

These are not abstract stories; these people are our neighbours. What is being done to them on the streets of KZN, and quickly spreading across South Africa, is a humanitarian crisis that demands we name it for the hate that it is – and that we act.

This disaster did not begin overnight. South African society has long had a dark undercurrent of xenophobia and Afrophobia bubbling just beneath the surface. This recent wave began building, step by deliberate step, over the past few years when vigilante groups began blockading government hospitals and clinics across KZN and Gauteng, demanding to see South African identity books before allowing entry. Pregnant women, mothers with sick babies, the elderly, all were turned away despite their right to healthcare being protected by our Constitution. This was just the opening act of what activists on the frontlines call medical xenophobia, and what we warned at the time would not end there.

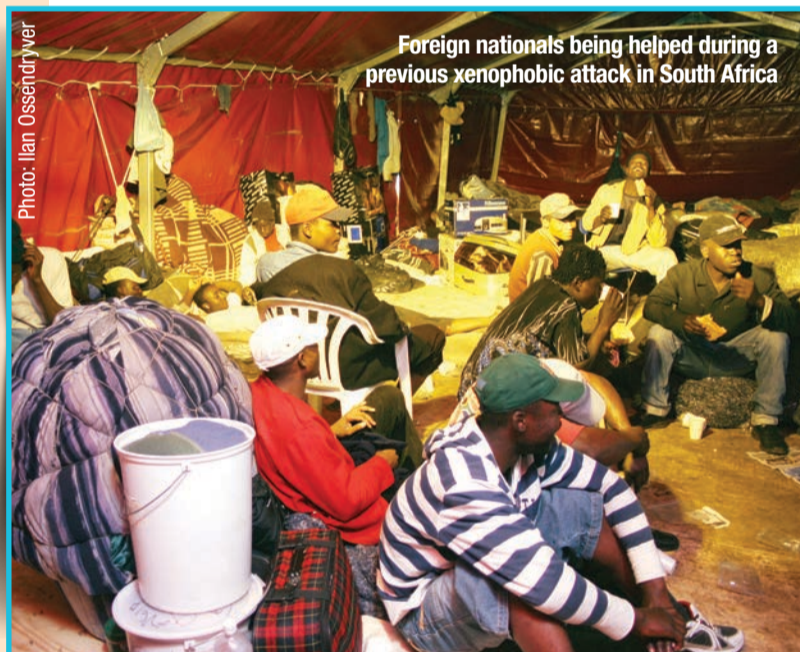


Photo: Ian Ossendryver

Foreign nationals being helped during a previous xenophobic attack in South Africa

Sadly, it didn't.

In January this year anti-immigrant vigilante groups blockaded schools in KZN and foreign national children were denied entry. Then came the March for March movement and its organised protests snaking through our central business districts, and entering places of work to demand that employers dismiss all foreign national staff or face the consequences. Now the violence has moved into people's homes. I've had numerous frightened refugee community leaders approach me to share that photographs of them and their families, as well as their home addresses, are being shared in WhatsApp groups and on social media pages calling for retribution against them. Just a few weeks ago, a group of refugees and asylum seekers were so scared of attacks that they sought safety outside the Durban Central Police Station only to be dispersed with rubber bullets and tear gas. After sleeping on the street outside the Diakonia Centre and Durban Refugee Reception Office, they were taken to the Department of Home Affairs. eThekweni officials say that the overwhelming majority were found to have valid documentation allowing them to live and work in the country.

The heart of this violent movement was never about documentation. It was never about being tough on crime or protecting jobs for South Africans. The targeting of people who have papers and have built their lives here lawfully exposes the lie at the heart of this campaign. Hatred does not check your permit.

What distinguishes the current wave of xenophobia from previous years is its sophisticated and coordinated use of

social media to manufacture fear, create division, spread disinformation, and translate words of hate into organised physical action in real time. These anti-immigrant groups have imposed a 30 June deadline on foreign nationals to leave the country. This has no legal basis whatsoever.

Many of the claims driving this campaign have been repeatedly debunked. Studies show that migrants contribute to our economy rather than drain it. Our health and education systems are indeed under strain and have been failing for years, but that failure belongs squarely at the foot of government and not at the door of a single mother from Congo. The current state of our refugee and asylum system makes it incredibly difficult for foreign nationals, many fleeing horrific conflicts and already deeply traumatised, to apply and be granted asylum or refugee papers. Unfortunately, facts have no traction when hatred has a hashtag.

South African Jewry descends largely from people who fled – Lithuanian Jews who escaped persecution, pogroms, and poverty, who arrived in a country that did not always want them, and who were accused of taking jobs, flooding services, and refusing to assimilate. Our community was built by strangers seeking refuge. So, when mobs march through our streets demanding to see papers and deciding who can stay, when people are hunted in their homes and told they do not belong, we recognise the chilling pattern.

South African Jews haven't stood on the sidelines since xenophobic violence first erupted at scale in 2008. Our community has consistently spoken out, supported civil society and government initiatives to seek solutions, and been at the forefront of founding groups like the Hate Crimes Working Group to build a more just response to all forms of hate in this country.

When HIAS South Africa opened its national office in Durban in October 2023, it was an expression of that commitment. The international Jewish humanitarian agency

that stands for a world in which forcibly displaced persons find welcome, safety, and opportunity, HIAS is rooted in the Jewish values of *tzedeq* (justice) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). HIAS South Africa has worked with its local partners to provide free legal assistance to refugees and asylum seekers; run attorney training workshops and "know your rights" campaigns; run mental health and psychosocial support workshops to uplift refugee women, youth and LGBTQIA+ refugees; and helped advocate against xenophobia. Here in Durban, at the epicentre of this crisis, that work has never mattered more.

In recent weeks, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies KwaZulu-

Natal Council has partnered with HIAS South Africa on an emergency fundraising campaign, raising money for food parcels to be distributed through refugee-led organisations to refugee and asylum-seeker families in desperate need.

The 30 June deadline is days away. Here is what each of us can do:

- Donate to refugee organisations like HIAS South Africa that are working at the coalface of the crisis. Every rand makes a difference.
- Speak out. Write to your municipal councillor and mayor to ask what they are doing to clamp down on vigilante action and assist those affected by xenophobia.
- Challenge the lies. When you hear someone claim that foreign nationals are flooding services or stealing jobs, push back with facts.

Tino Maclean cannot sleep. The Cameroonian shop owner is rebuilding from rubble. The Congolese mother is still inside her home, waiting.

This is no longer about what could happen if hate goes unchecked. It is about what is already happening. And all South Africans are responsible for taking a stand.

• Alana Pugh-Jones Baranov is the country director of HIAS South Africa and president of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies KwaZulu-Natal Council. She is a steering committee member of the World Jewish Congress Jewish Diplomatic Corps. To learn more about HIAS South Africa, visit its Facebook page at <https://web.facebook.com/hiassouthafrica/>

Israel-Somaliland – part of a geopolitical chess game



ALON SACKSTEIN AND DR ROIE YELLINEK

OPINION

"We asked the world: Do you see us? Israel answered first." So wrote Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi, president of a republic that has governed itself for 35 years without the world's permission, on the morning he landed in Israel last week for the first state visit any leader of the Republic of Somaliland has ever made anywhere.

What followed wasn't the thin courtesy a small unrecognised territory might expect. It was a full state programme, including President Isaac Herzog receiving Abdullahi at his residence in Jerusalem with an honour guard and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sitting down with him.

The question is why Israel – at war, stretched, and watching its own alliances strain – chose this moment to roll out the honour guard. With Trump visibly desperate for a deal, and his public position flip-flopping by the week, the reading in Israel is that the Iranian regime's leadership was struck but endured. That this isn't the silence after a victory. It's the dangerous hour after a blow that didn't land cleanly enough, or that's been softened by capitulation and prowess in the diplomatic arena.

Look at the sea if you doubt it. Since February, Iran has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, the artery through which a quarter of all seaborne oil once moved. That is the demonstrated capability. Now listen to what comes next. An adviser to Iranian leader Mojtaba Khamenei has promised that its allies can shut Bab el-Mandeb as Tehran has shut Hormuz. On 8 June the Houthis once again declared a total ban on Israeli navigation in the Red Sea. Two of the planet's great chokepoints, threatened at once, by an enemy that believes it is winning or has won.

And there, on the African shore of that very threat, in the vicinity of Houthi launch sites, at the mouth of the strait they have sworn to close, sits Somaliland. Its port at Berbera, which was expanded in recent years by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Herzog, standing beside his guest, named the logic: a shared exposure to radical extremism, a shared stake in the stability of the Horn of Africa, a shared interest



Israeli President Isaac Herzog meeting with President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi of Somaliland

in protecting maritime freedom. It wasn't only about a common enemy. It was a description of two states that each carry a burden the other needs to carry – and that is a sturdier basis for partnership than fear alone.

The exchange is plain and honest on both sides. Israel gains forward defence, a set of eyes and reach a few hundred kilometres from missiles aimed at its ships, on the waterway its enemies have promised to strangle. It gains an additional moderate Sunni-Muslim partner in the Horn at the very moment its normalisation track has stalled.

Somaliland gains the one thing 35 years of quiet competence could not win it. Recognition. Israel was the first and only member state of the United Nations to grant it. For Hargeisa, recognition is the key to borrowing, to treaties, to guarantees, to existence itself in the eyes of the law. Around that comes investment, security, the water and farming technology Israel sells better than anyone, and a friend in Jerusalem with a voice in Washington. A friend already at work: American senators now call for the United States to join Israel and Taiwan in recognising Somaliland. Hargeisa has already signalled its price – a trade deal and mineral rights on its territory – and declared willingness to join the Abraham Accords.

Accession to the Accords would fold Somaliland into a wider American-anchored framework alongside Gulf states, converting a single relationship into membership of a bloc. This is a country choosing a camp.

Taiwan. The word belongs in this story from the outset, because Somaliland's visit is one expression of a wider pattern: an informal grouping of unrecognised or partially recognised democracies that happen to sit on strategically valuable ground, and that have begun to acknowledge one another precisely because the international system won't. Somaliland on the Gulf of Aden; Taiwan astride the first island chain.

China grasps the symmetry perfectly. Here, then, is the whole contest in miniature. The same politics of recognition that decides whether a harbour on the Gulf of Aden tilts west or east is a working model of the question hanging over the Pacific. Israel's recognition of Somaliland is a sentence Beijing is reading very carefully, against the day it tests how the West treats Taipei.

And understand how China prefers to work. It rarely arrives in the Horn with a fleet; it arrives with a loan, a road, a fibre-optic cable, a stadium, a scholarship, a port concession dressed as development. This is statecraft by infrastructure, and Djibouti, a short sail up the coast, has been courted, financed, and now hosts China's first overseas military base. Berbera would slot perfectly into the maritime-logistics lattice Beijing has been threading from the South China Sea to the eastern Mediterranean. It wants the port, has dangled money for roads, but the one obstacle it cannot buy its way past is Somaliland's hand clasped with Taipei's. Beijing will not build up a port whose owner recognises the island it intends to swallow. And abandoning Taipei is the one invoice Hargeisa has

refused to pay.

In recognising Somaliland, Israel has quietly reinforced this refusal. To keep one small democracy out of the Chinese lattice, on the strength of its loyalty to another, is a soft-power victory of a kind the West rarely manages and almost never plans.

None of this is to pretend the ground is empty or the road is smooth. In January, Somalia tore up every agreement it had with Abu Dhabi – port operations, security, defence – convinced, with reason, that the UAE had quietly midwived Israel's recognition of the breakaway it claims as its own. Saudi Arabia is bankrolling Mogadishu to check Emirati reach and Turkey is entrenched in the same capital.

But Israel has watched its great patron fight beside it and then turn to bargaining over its head. A state in that position doesn't wait on the terms of someone else's deal. It gathers ground of its own: relationships no settlement can sell, footholds no ally can withdraw, recognitions that need no permission.

The test is whether the months that follow turn a ceremony into an instrument: a working port, a standing presence on the Gulf of Aden, a partnership that holds when Mogadishu protests, Washington loses interest, and the cameras have long since moved on. Recognition was the gift Israel gave Somaliland. What Somaliland offers Israel in return is the chance to prove it knows how to plant something and wait for it to grow.

- Alon Sackstein is an adviser at the Geopolitics Laboratory and a former strategic research team lead in the Research and Analysis Division of Israel Defense Intelligence.
- Dr Roie Yellinek is co-director of the Geopolitics Laboratory. He has served as a geopolitical consultant to Israeli government bodies and as a researcher at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies and the Middle East Institute in Washington, DC.



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Sugihara the hero, and the sporting mouse that roared

OPINION

DR VIC ALHADEFF



It's the greatest show on earth, featuring the world's most popular sport and five billion television viewers. The participants this year incorporate an extraordinary tale of courage, humanity, and one of the most remarkable escape sagas of the Holocaust.

We're talking the Fifa World Cup, of course, which is well under way. And the remarkable escape saga? It's about the minuscule Dutch island of Curaçao, located in the Caribbean off the coast of Venezuela.



Chiune Sugihara

With a population numbering just 156 000, Curaçao wrote one of the most sensational underdog stories in the history of sport when its soccer team became the smallest nation to qualify for the 2026 World Cup. And incredibly, the island served as a fragile pathway that unlocked a dramatic escape route for thousands of people fleeing the German Army during World War II.

So let's go back to 1940s Kaunas, Lithuania, which was under the control of the Soviet Union. Nazi Germany has overrun much of Western Europe, inflicting cruel measures against the Jewish communities in its path and signalling the beginning of the Holocaust.

Diplomat Chiune Sugihara runs a tiny Japanese consulate in Kaunas, supported by his wife, Yukiko, and clerical staff. German forces are approaching and exit routes out of the Soviet Union are closing, which means the situation for the Jews of Europe is dire.

Word gets out that a lifeline may be at hand. Early one morning, before the consulate has opened, Sugihara hears unusual murmuring noises outside the building and is taken aback to discover thousands of people lined up in the street, suitcases packed. They are Russian Jews, come to apply for visas to enable them to flee the Soviet Union.

Sugihara sends a message to the Japanese Foreign Ministry, requesting authorisation to grant the visas. The response is swift: permission denied, unless the applicants meet certain criteria. Most do

not. Sugihara submits a second request; identical response. His third request elicits an unambiguous instruction – close the consulate and return to Japan.

Sugihara has a dilemma: to follow his orders or to follow his conscience. Obey his superiors' command or act on what he knows instinctively to be the right response. He wrestles with both options and reaches a decision. Risking diplomatic disgrace and his career, he spends the next six weeks at his desk for up to 18 hours a day, writing visas by hand until he can no longer hold a pen, affixing his official stamp, and naming Curaçao as the travellers' destination. This will enable them to cross the Soviet Union on the trans-Siberian railway.

The rationale for specifying Curaçao as the end-goal is that the honorary Dutch consul in Kaunas, Jan Zwartendijk, has made it known that one can access the island without a visa, even though its governor might need to grant approval. It's a legitimate gateway, without which thousands will be at the mercy of the German Army.

Sugihara seizes on the bureaucratic loophole and issues an estimated 6 000 visas, even though entry to Curaçao is not guaranteed and even though few of the visa-holders intend going there. He reportedly keeps writing visas as he is literally vacating his post, throwing life-saving scraps of paper to desperate refugees as his train leaves the station.

The refugees undertake the daunting journey across Siberia, some families splitting up, anxious that at least some members should survive. A large number settle in Shanghai, which is under Japanese control and where they spend the war years in crowded ghettos. Some go on to the United States or Israel (then called Palestine), while a few do settle in Curaçao, which is home to a tiny Jewish community and houses oil refineries that are crucial to Allied supplies and a target for German submarines.

Most never set foot on Curaçao, yet all owed their lives to documents that named it as their destination. Zwartendijk authorised 2 345 visas and he and Sugihara were both subsequently declared Righteous Among The Nations by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem.

It is estimated that the descendants of the Curaçao visa recipients currently number 40 000. Some reside in Australia, every one of them beneficiaries of the extraordinary courage and rare humanity of two men who refused to look away.

• *Dr Vic Alhadeff OAM is former chairperson of Multicultural NSW and former chief executive of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies in Sydney, Australia.*

The enormous cost of SA's 'genocide' case

OPINION

GRANT GOCHIN



I was born in South Africa. In 1986 the Security Police arrested me for anti-apartheid activity, and I left.

I write now from California, as an American, a Jew, and a South African by birth. I am watching the country that arrested me for fighting apartheid invoke the Genocide Convention to protect Hamas and Iran. It is spending money it doesn't have, burning relationships it cannot replace, and consuming diplomatic capital it took decades to build, to prosecute a fraudulent genocide case against the only Jewish State.

Consider the bill. Not the legal bill, though that too comes from public money, but the one paid in clinics, jobs, trade access, and the safety of African migrants on South African streets.

In February 2025, US President Donald Trump signed an executive order cutting aid to South Africa. The order cited several grievances, among them Pretoria's decision to accuse Israel, not Hamas, of "genocide" at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The connection was not incidental. Washington said so.

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Pepfar) was disrupted. South Africa has roughly eight million people living with HIV, the largest such population on earth, and had received more than \$8 billion through the programme. The Trump administration now plans to wind it down and close it by early next year.

UNAIDS reported that about 40 health projects funded by the US Agency for International Development received termination letters on 26 February 2025, halting services from roughly 8 493 Pepfar-funded staff. Testing fell, treatment support collapsed, and the cuts struck the people least able to absorb another failure.

The hypocrisy is no longer theoretical

Pretoria then celebrated a six-month R2 billion bridge plan as if temporary resuscitation were a victory. Its own Cabinet confirmed it ran only from 1 October 2025 to 31 March 2026.

That is not stability. That is a ventilator.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act (Agoa) tells the same story. The trade programme expired on 30 September last year, revived only by a retroactive one-year extension in February that runs until 31 December 2026. South Africa didn't secure a future. It received a reprieve.

The diplomatic bill is no smaller. The US expelled and declared South African ambassador Ebrahim Rasool persona non grata in March 2025. It also expelled Los Angeles Consul General Thandile Sunduza. In July 2025, the US-SA Bilateral Relations Review Act advanced through the House Foreign Affairs Committee, calling for a full review and for identifying officials and African National Congress (ANC) leaders eligible for sanctions.

No names yet. But the warning was clear. Those who turned The Hague into a stage may find that Washington has doors too, and that doors shut. Now, look at what South Africa's case produced. Israel filed its counter-memorial to the ICJ case in March 2026. South Africa has until November 2027 to reply,

and Israel until May 2029 to file its rejoinder. Oral hearings on the merits, if they come, are years away.

Meanwhile South Africans need medicine, jobs, certainty, and safety now.

The ANC didn't bring this case to protect Palestinians. It brought it to perform moral authority after squandering its own at home. The ICJ isn't justice. It's theatre with a filing stamp.

The hypocrisy is no longer theoretical. While Pretoria invokes the Genocide Convention in The Hague, vigilantes hunt African migrants at home. Human Rights Watch reported that a movement calling itself March and March staged demonstrations against undocumented migrants in Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Durban in April and May, with violent and sometimes fatal results, and insufficient police response. Anti-migrant groups have set a 30 June deadline for foreigners to leave. President Cyril Ramaphosa warned South Africans not to scapegoat migrants for the country's failures.

He was right. He was also indicting his own government.

Zimbabweans, Mozambicans, Malawians, Nigerians, Ghanaians, and Ethiopians came because South Africa was supposed to be the continent's promise. They are being beaten, looted, threatened, and repatriated while Pretoria lectures Israel about "genocide".

The ANC scapegoats Israel in The Hague for the same reason vigilantes scapegoat migrants in Durban. The machine has run out of explanations. It needs enemies.

South African Jews know this pattern. We know what happens when governments manufacture external villains to explain domestic failure. We know how fast moral language becomes camouflage, and how easily "justice" becomes a

weapon aimed at Jews. What did South Africa get for this case? Name the Palestinian life saved by Pretoria's filing. Name the hostage freed. Name the ceasefire secured.

Name the child fed.

Now name the South African cost. Pepfar damaged. Agoa unstable. Washington alienated. The ambassador expelled. Sanctions language moving through Congress. HIV services disrupted. African migrants terrorised while the government poses as the moral conscience of the Global South.

I was born in South Africa. I love it the complicated way you love a country that shaped you and then arrested you for caring about it. I want the Jewish community there to thrive. I want South Africans with HIV to live, and migrants in Durban to be safe. I want the country of my birth to stop confusing performance with morality.

None of that is served by the ICJ case. Not one clinic. Not one job. Not one migrant. Not one hostage.

The bill is real. The result is theatre. And ordinary South Africans are paying for both.

• *Grant Gochin is the Emeritus Special Envoy for Diaspora Affairs for the African Union. He has spent more than 20 years documenting and restoring signs of Jewish life in Lithuania, and challenged Holocaust revisionism within the Lithuanian government. He is author of Malice, Murder and Manipulation, which documents his family's oppression in that country.*

Jewish community has its say on rising xenophobia

OPINION

WENDY KAHN



The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), like many South African civil society and faith groups, is concerned about the worsening rhetoric and threats against foreign migrant communities. We have played roles in responding to the Afrophobia, both on an advocacy basis and by providing practical relief, since this issue became a national crisis in 2008.

The current uptick in anti-migrant sentiment in the country led President Cyril Ramaphosa to convene a discussion with the faith community to address this serious issue.

I represented the Jewish community at this important conversation at the Union Buildings. President Ramaphosa, Minister in the Presidency Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, acting Minister of Police Firoz Cachalia, and Home Affairs Director-General Livhuwani Makhode briefed faith leaders about the challenges they are facing and the measures being put in place to address them. Also in attendance were Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Ronald Lamola, acting Social Development

Minister Sindisiwe Chikunga, and as other members of the Presidency.

I was chosen as one of five representatives of faith groups to speak on the specific concerns of their communities. I spoke of the threatening and hateful rhetoric that is currently arising on various platforms, including social media. I raised not only the scapegoating of refugees, but the worrying conspiracy theories that have been circulating. I was referring to libellous allegations made about third forces that have

been propagated and repeated by some prominent South Africans.

I was reassured to hear that, unlike in 2008 and 2021, the government is taking the threats against foreign migrants very seriously. In previous xenophobia outbreaks, the rising hostility and aggression were ignored, and there was horrific violence on our streets. From the briefing, it is evident there are serious moves to avoid an escalation.



Wendy Kahn at the Presidency

President Ramaphosa acknowledged that the climate of high unemployment, poverty, and hardship in our country exacerbates the situation and is the broader context in which it occurs.

The openness and directness of the meeting was appreciated, with faith leaders raising practical and real issues that their communities are experiencing. Xenophobia is not an abstract notion but something that is affecting people.

The forum dealt honestly with the fear and anxiety experienced by South Africans.

As a leader who was integrally involved in addressing the disasters that occurred previously in our country when anti-migrant hatred was ignored, I felt relieved that now there is a realistic understanding of the situation. What was evident was that the country has activated numerous departments, civil society, and faith-based organisations so the xenophobia is dealt with collaboratively and effectively.

This is no guarantee that a crisis will be averted. The SAJBD continues to monitor the situation, working with CSO and other communal bodies to put in place any measures should it be required, whether within the community or in supporting those impacted by these threats.

• *Wendy Kahn is the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.*

How Eli Kay's legacy grew into a vineyard in the desert

CLAUDIA GROSS

Avi Kay, the father of South African-born Israeli Eli Kay, who was murdered in a terrorist attack in Jerusalem in 2021, has shared his family's journey from devastating loss to renewal.

Speaking at an event hosted by the Women's International Zionist Organisation Cape Town and the Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation, Kay reflected on his son's life, the impact of his murder, and the projects established in his memory.

He traced the family's move from South Africa to Israel, Eli's service as a lone soldier in the Israel Defense Forces Paratroopers Brigade, his work in agriculture and education, and the family's efforts to transform grief into purpose.

Johannesburg-born Eli, 26, was walking to work in Jerusalem's Old City on 21 November 2021 when he was shot in a terrorist attack. His murder drew widespread attention in Israel and South Africa, and thousands attended his funeral in Jerusalem.

His father began by describing an ordinary family moment that had taken place shortly before he addressed the audience. His wife had gone to collect their grandson from nursery school in Jerusalem. "I watched a ping pong match between me and the digger," he said, recalling how the toddler's attention had shifted between his grandfather on a video call and construction vehicles working nearby.

The scene reminded him of biblical prophecies about children playing in the streets of Jerusalem and older generations watching over them. For Kay, the image represented continuity, renewal, and the future that Eli had believed in.

The family moved to Israel in December 2020 after years of Zionist commitment. Eli had arrived earlier. Kay recalled attending his son's military ceremonies and watching him pledge allegiance to Israel. "We knew from that moment," he said, describing the occasion on which Eli received his rifle, "that this was who he was." After

completing his army service, Eli worked on agricultural projects and later moved to Jerusalem, where he became a guide at the Kotel.

Kay recounted the hours after the attack and the difficult process of learning what had happened. "Eli was shot in the back by machine gun fire," he said. He contrasted the brutality of the attack with the compassion shown by medical staff, volunteers, rabbis, friends, and strangers who helped the family navigate the aftermath.

Among the decisions the family faced was choosing the wording for Eli's gravestone. Kay said they wanted the inscription to reflect who Eli was rather than simply their own grief. Although Eli had held strong views about Israel, he had also cared deeply for everyone who lived in the country.

"We put the words that he loved," Kay said. "All the residents, all those who live in Israel."

Kay spoke candidly about the psychological impact of losing a child. He described overwhelming anxiety, particularly about his wife's safety. "I became pure fear," he said.

He told the audience that he sought professional help and spent years working through the trauma. The experience gave him a deeper appreciation of the

Avi Kay addresses the WIZO event in Cape Town



different ways mothers and fathers process grief. "I can't appreciate what a mother goes through because I'm a father," he said.

Yet from the beginning, the family made a conscious decision not to allow tragedy to define them. "Life will go on," Kay said, recalling a principle that guided them after Eli's death. That determination eventually led to the creation of the Eli Kay Project.

Knowing how much Eli loved agriculture, education, the desert, and bringing people together, the family searched for a meaningful way to continue his legacy. A year after his death, they visited farms in southern Israel and met people who had known him personally. One conversation with a farmer proved transformative. "The long and the short of it is I told him our story," Kay said. "He looked me in the eye and said, 'We're going to plant a vineyard.'"

The result was the planting of 3 500 vines on previously uncultivated land. The project brought together agricultural experts, educators, donors, and

volunteers. When soil samples were first tested, the verdict was discouraging. "The answer came back, dead," Kay said. "Nothing."

Yet after extensive preparation and cultivation, the vines flourished. "We expected three months later to be at 50 centimetres," he said. "We were at more than a metre." For Kay, the vineyard became a symbol of renewal.

Throughout the talk, he returned to the idea that people have a choice in how they respond to suffering. He described meeting survivors of terror attacks, wounded soldiers, and families carrying their own painful stories. What struck him was not their grief, but their determination to keep building. "Not a cloud of pity, not a cloud of shame, not a cloud of anger," he said. "Not a political slogan, not an us and a them, but a we and what can we do to go forward?"

The person at the centre of these stories remained Eli. According to Kay, his son possessed a rare ability to connect with people regardless of background, beliefs, or circumstances. "Eli could relate to anybody," he said.

That quality continues to shape the projects established in his memory and the people drawn to them.

As Kay reflected on the journey from loss to renewal, he returned to the image of children playing in Jerusalem and new life emerging from barren ground.

The grief of losing a son will always be part of his family's story. So too will the conviction that life must continue. In a vineyard planted in Eli's memory, the family sees proof that even the most damaged ground can produce growth. For Kay, that is his son's legacy.

What South Africans want to know about aliya

CLAUDIA GROSS

For some people attending this year's Aliyah Expo, the biggest question was how to transfer a pension. For others, it was whether their professional qualifications would be recognised in Israel. Some wanted to know about jobs in the technology sector. Others were looking for reassurance that they could successfully start over in a new country.

These conversations took centre stage at Aliyah Expo South Africa 2026, which brought about 30 Israeli experts to Johannesburg on Sunday 21 June and Cape Town on Monday 22 June. While the annual expo has become a familiar fixture on the communal calendar, attendees said this year's event helped turn a broad idea into a practical plan.

Avi Kagan, director of the Israel Centre, which represents the Jewish Agency for Israel in South Africa, said one of the expo's strengths was exposing people to a spectrum of practical aspects of aliya. "Things like where you're going to stay, what job you're going to do, financial help, shipping, all the stuff that you don't think about," he said.

According to Kagan, some exhibitors felt that Cape Town attendees were particularly serious about their aliya plans. "While Johannesburg had a bigger turnout, those who came in Cape Town really enquired about themselves and not just as an idea."

For Sarah*, a 32-year-old occupational therapist from Cape Town, the expo provided answers that months of online research could not. Having visited Israel twice and begun seriously considering aliya after 7 October and rising antisemitism internationally, she wanted to know more about transferring her professional qualifications and the employment opportunities in the healthcare sector. "I'd spent months reading Facebook groups and WhatsApp chats, but speaking to people face to face answered questions I didn't even know I had."

She found it particularly valuable hearing directly from South Africans who have already made aliya. "What struck me most was hearing South Africans talk honestly about both the opportunities and the challenges. The reality is that life in Israel is expensive and moving countries is hard, but it seems there is a lot of effort being made to welcome and integrate olim, which attracts me to aliya."

Sarah said she gained a clearer understanding of what it would take if she and her husband eventually move. "I left feeling less overwhelmed. I still haven't decided whether we'll move, but now I know what steps would actually be involved."

For David*, a 74-year-old retired accountant from Johannesburg, the questions were different. A widower whose two adult children already live in Israel, he has been considering aliya for several years. He attended the expo seeking information about retirement planning, healthcare, and pension transfers. "My children have been

encouraging me to move for years, but I needed practical answers before making such a major life change," he said.

Healthcare is a particular concern. "At my age, healthcare becomes one of the biggest considerations. I was pleased to find people who could explain the system clearly," he said.

The event also challenged some of his expectations. "I expected a lot of idealism. What I found was very practical advice."

For younger attendees, career opportunities were often front of mind. Rachel*, a 26-year-old software developer from Johannesburg, went to explore employment prospects and networking opportunities in Israel's technology sector. "I expected to gather information. I didn't expect to make so many connections in one day," she said.

Rachel was particularly interested in Israel's start-up ecosystem but came away with broader information. "The tech opportunities were definitely a draw, but I was equally interested in hearing about everyday life."

She said she has been thinking about aliya for years but political issues have held her back until now. "Hearing that elections will soon take place in Israel is a major drawcard for me. I am hoping that Israelis will vote wisely, and a change of government will definitely inspire me to submit my aliya application," she said.

This sentiment was echoed by several delegates who shared with the *SA Jewish Report* that they are excited for the opportunity that Israel's coming elections presents. They believe aliya figures will increase substantially once Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is no longer at the helm. "I think the government is putting people off, but I am optimistic for the future," one delegate said.

Joshua Schewitz, from the South African Zionist Federation Cape Council, said the event demonstrated the strength of local engagement with Israel. "The Aliyah Expo 2026 was a powerful expression of just how deeply Zionist the Cape Town community is," he said.

The strong turnout and the large delegation from Israel showed that South Africa remains an important aliya community, Schewitz said. "It is a clear sign that our community is seen and noticed, that despite our small size, our impact on Israel is felt and heard."

The variety of questions raised at the two events suggested that South Africans are increasingly approaching aliya as a practical life choice rather than simply an aspiration. Whether attendees were considering retirement, professional opportunities, family reunification, or a new start, many were seeking answers to specific questions about their future.

For some, the answers may have confirmed existing plans. For others, they may have planted the seed for a future move. Either way, the conversations in Johannesburg and Cape Town suggest that interest in aliya remains strong, even as the questions South Africans are asking continue to evolve.

*Interviewees requested anonymity for privacy reasons.



Marc Reiss and Avi Kagan at the Aliyah Expo in Cape Town

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The Clegg legacy: music and family men

CLAUDIA GROSS

For years Jesse Clegg kept his father's music at arm's length. The son of the late Johnny Clegg built his own career as a singer-songwriter, determined to forge an identity separate from one of South Africa's most beloved cultural figures. But time changes relationships, especially after loss.

Now, nearly seven years after Clegg's death, Jesse is leading Scatterlings, a tribute project that brings together some of South Africa's leading musicians to reinterpret songs from his father's catalogue. The project includes a tribute album and the Scatterlings Music Festival, which will take place in Johannesburg in August.

For Jesse, the project is about more than music. It's about memory, inheritance, and the responsibility of carrying a legacy forward. "When someone passes away, you feel the sense of their presence," he says. "They fill a different role in your life. After my dad passed, that feeling took hold of me about two years later. There was so much love for who he was and the music that he made. I wondered if there was something I could do that could be a catalyst for that."

The idea eventually grew into a large-scale collaboration involving artists from across South Africa's musical landscape. Jesse invited musicians to choose Johnny Clegg songs and reinterpret them in their own styles. The result is an album that spans multiple genres and generations.

"Music has become so formatted by genres," Jesse says. "This album will be 14 songs in 14 different genres, including Maskandi, Afro-tech, folk, pop, and many others. It is a uniquely South African celebration."

The diversity is intentional. Clegg spent his career breaking down barriers between musical traditions, languages, and communities. Through bands such as Juluka and Savuka, he helped introduce many South Africans to cultural worlds beyond their own. His songs became associated not only with political change, but with the idea that music could bring people together. "My dad understood music as a uniter of people and as a celebration of diversity," Jesse says. "His music moved beyond the limits of genre."

The project has given Jesse a fresh perspective on the impact his father had on artists who grew up with his music. Every musician involved brought their own story. One that stands out for him involved award-winning artist Tresor, who grew up in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. "He told me he had been playing *Cool, Crazy, Beautiful World* since he was a teenager," Jesse says. "Somehow my dad's music found him in the Congo."

"There was something universal about the music my father and Sipho Mchunu made," he says. "Very few artists become a focal point that people from so many different spaces can come back to and say, 'Yes, we connect with this.'"

Listening to fellow musicians speak about his dad's influence was



Jesse and Johnny Clegg during Johnny's final tour, *The Final Journey*, 11 November 2017

an emotional experience. "It was this beautiful generational conversation," Jesse says. "To speak to artists I respect and feel that reverence was beautiful for me as a son."

Yet behind the public legacy is a more private story. For millions of South Africans, Johnny Clegg remains a cultural icon. For Jesse, he was simply dad. "He was a really good dad to me," he says. "He was an amazing father."

Jesse remembers a man who managed to create a sanctuary for his family despite the demands of a high-profile career. "He had a very big life. He was travelling and there were always different things coming at him. But he had an amazing capacity to shut the world out and create a very special place for his family."

One lesson stands out above all others. Clegg never tried to present himself as a superhero. "He was always willing and open to be vulnerable with us," Jesse says. "He showed us his shortcomings, his anxieties, and his fears. He didn't want us to think he was some kind of Superman. Instead, he wanted his children to understand that strength and vulnerability could exist together. He was saying, 'I'm trying my best. I have strengths and I have weaknesses. You must see both.'"

Today, Jesse reflects on those lessons from a different perspective. He is now a father himself. His daughter is already becoming acquainted with the grandfather she never had the chance to know personally. "My daughter is already aware of him," Jesse says. "She sings his songs and does Zulu dancing in the living room."

But he wants her relationship with Clegg's memory to be grounded in family rather than fame. "I don't want her to see him as an icon or celebrity, but as her grandfather. A funny, quirky, fun-loving happy guy."

Becoming a parent has deepened his appreciation of what his father achieved. The man many South Africans remember for his music, activism, and cultural influence was also balancing the ordinary challenges of raising a family.

Looking back, Jesse sees someone who was committed to his art and his loved ones while remaining humbler. "He was really just an honest, good man trying his best," he says. "Sometimes succeeding, sometimes not succeeding."

That understanding has shaped

the kind of father Jesse hopes to be. "I want to have that relationship with my daughter. I want her to be able to ask me questions, and I want to have the answer and sometimes not have the answer."

Perhaps that is why Scatterlings feels less like a tribute and more like a continuation. For years, Jesse deliberately kept his career separate from his father's. "This is my first

time recording my dad's music," he says. "I used to keep my career very separate in the beginning because I was forging my own path. Now that I'm established, I've earned it."

The statement carries the confidence of someone who no longer feels overshadowed by a famous surname. Instead, he appears comfortable inhabiting two roles at once: a son preserving a legacy and a father passing it on. In that sense, Scatterlings is not only about remembering Johnny Clegg. It is about ensuring that the conversations his music started continue into another generation. Through songs, stories, and family, the legacy remains alive.

Limit screen time, whether children are ADHD or not

LEE TANKLE

"Brains don't like it. It's not a healthy, happy thing for a brain to have too much screen time."

So said Dr Jess Meddows-Taylor, a Johannesburg-based psychiatrist with a special interest in child and adolescent mental health, in a webinar about the effects of screentime on children with or without Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) on 18 June.

She explained that mental health professionals are concerned that childhoods have gone from being play-based to being screen-based.

"There are big problems with that because our kids aren't taking risks, they're not learning social skills, they're not developing resilience. And I, for one, can look at the world around me and think we pretty much need resilient people if we're going to survive," said Meddows-Taylor.

"So when they're much younger, it's all about cooperative play and emotional regulation. The older they get, the more it's about conflict management, independence, learning to take turns, how to manage engaging with people when they're in your presence, the social nuances, resilience in social experiences, and emotional management and autonomy," she said.

But as a result of too much time on screens, many adolescents from 11 to 14 years old don't have social skills and would rather stay at home on a screen than be out with other children their age.

"That's a disaster for humankind because they don't know how to relate to each other. They don't know how to make conversation. And it's what's making them sad and depressed because we are supposed to be social creatures, and we are choosing not to be."

Meddows-Taylor explained that while screen time affects all children, its impact can be more pronounced in children with ADHD because of differences in how their brains regulate dopamine and process rewards. ADHD is associated with challenges in the prefrontal cortex and limbic system, which can affect concentration, memory, impulse control, and the ability to manage behaviour. As a result, children with ADHD may be particularly vulnerable to the highly stimulating and rewarding nature of digital devices.

"As a result, our kids sometimes battle with impulsivity because the brakes of their brain aren't working properly. So we don't stop to think before we do things. We don't stop before we jump up and shout out in class or say something blunt and sometimes hurtful to our friends," she said. "We can be involved in risk-taking behaviours, and with that we can become quite dysregulated emotionally because the frontal lobe isn't putting the brakes on how we respond and how we control our emotional state."

"We noticed that if the child has more than two hours of screen time a day and they're younger than seven years old, there's a significant clinical worsening in impulsivity and mood dysregulation. Now, imagine we've got an ADHD kid, who's already got challenges in that area, just how problematic it becomes," she said.

The more children use screens and are bombarded by loud colours and sounds, the more dopamine is being released, she explained.

"The issue is that [devices] have been made to produce dopamine. They've been developed to be as loud and busy and interactive and pleasure-producing as they possibly can be. We know that the more pixels that you have per square centimetre, the more vivid the imagery is, and we know that the more vivid the imagery is, the more dopamine gets produced."

She said the worst offenders are anything with a reel – YouTube Shorts, TikTok, and Facebook and Instagram reels.

"Reels are the worst. Interestingly, we all think that YouTube Kids is quite innocuous. It's made for kids. But there are lots of bright lights and noise and busyness. Lots of dopamine," she said.

Next on the list are any video games on a console, then other games and other apps. Short video streaming like Netflix is second from the bottom. And TV streaming is the least likely to cause dopamine release.

"Interestingly, books don't necessarily give you a huge amount of dopamine, although you should be enjoying them. But in relation to something like TikTok, you can see the changes in dopamine in the brain," she said.

"Dopamine systems in children's brains are particularly concerning because their brains are very dopamine sensitive. This isn't just ADHD kids; these are children in general. They have huge and very high receptor densities for dopamine receptors in the brain," said Meddows-Taylor.

Once that dopamine rush stops and a screen is no longer available, children immediately get bored. However, Meddows-Taylor asserts that boredom is actually extremely important for development.

"Boredom is the seed of huge creativity for children. But what happens is that if kids are used to having lots of dopamine, not having enough doesn't feel nice. It's an uncomfortable feeling. How am I going to entertain myself? This feels a little bit unsettling for me," she said. "Kids need to be bored. They need to learn how to entertain themselves because when they learn how to do something and entertain themselves, the wonder of accomplishment and creativity is incredibly important."

She said weekday screen use should be limited where possible for children with ADHD, as the highly stimulating nature of digital devices can make it more difficult for them to transition to tasks that require sustained focus and motivation, such as homework.

Meddows-Taylor said parents should focus on shared activities rather than passive supervision of screen-based games and should give children a warning when it's time to stop using devices. Abruptly ending screen time can leave children dysregulated and frustrated, so she advises parents to remain calm during transitions.

She also stressed the importance of encouraging children to spend more time playing and connecting with friends in person. Above all, she recommends delaying the introduction of personal devices for as long as possible, as younger children's brains are particularly sensitive to their effects.

"All is not lost because this neuroplasticity means that we have the capacity to rechallenge that brain, to teach it to do things differently. So wherever possible, we need to make the changes early. We're not going to beat ourselves up if we don't get it right every day," she said.





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Only three athletes to fly SA flag at Maccabiah

LEE TANKLE

When thousands of Jewish athletes gather in Israel for the Maccabiah Games in July, South Africa's presence will be unusually small. Although the country has a proud history of sending large delegations to the event, this year just three athletes will carry the South African flag.

Often dubbed the "Jewish Olympics", the Maccabiah Games is the largest Jewish sporting event, bringing together athletes from around the globe every four years in Israel. To date, Team Maccabi South Africa has sent 3 486 people to 19 Maccabiah, winning an impressive total of 827 medals, including 288 golds.

But Maccabi South Africa decided in May to withdraw its junior delegation from the Games due to security concerns, international withdrawals, and mounting logistical challenges, thereby losing three-quarters of the delegation.

Only masters tennis player Jacqui Boyd and padel partners Yechiel Hummel and Chad Gaddie are now hoping to make South Africa proud.

Maccabi South Africa chairperson Cliff Garrun said the withdrawal of delegations from some countries, as well as travel and insurance restrictions, had had a significant impact on the viability of several tournaments. Because a minimum of three countries is required for an event to take place, several competitions were ultimately cancelled.

"The Australians, the Canadians, and the Brits pulled out, and they play very similar sports to our guys, so a lot of the competitions didn't become viable," he said. Although South

Africa had selected open rugby and cricket teams, those tournaments fell apart after competing nations, including Great Britain, withdrew from the Games.

"Even though the Brits and the Australians had a lot more Opens and Masters, they would probably have a few more people drifting in for those age groups. We have always traditionally concentrated on taking juniors," said Garrun.

Roy Hessing, chief executive of Maccabi World Union, explained to the Jewish News Syndicate that despite ongoing regional tensions and travel challenges facing some international delegations, the Games are still going forward, with an estimated 3 100 athletes from abroad and 2 000 from Israel to compete in 45 sports from 1 to 14 July at venues across Israel.

"The only time the Maccabiah was ever cancelled was during the Holocaust," Hessing said. "This is an important message for Israel, the Jewish community, and our neighbours that it must go on."

Boyd is getting ready to compete in her sixth Maccabiah. Her legacy began more than three decades ago when she

first represented South Africa as a wide-eyed 14-year-old at the 1993 edition of the Games, making her the country's youngest competitor at the time. Since that unforgettable debut, she has been a fierce, proud competitor.

Over five appearances, spanning from her youth to the open category and later transitioning into the masters, Boyd has established herself as one of South Africa's most decorated tennis players, with a total of nine medals to date.

For Boyd, competing this year goes far beyond sport. It is a vital opportunity to show unwavering solidarity, resilience, and support for the State of Israel during

one of the most challenging chapters in its history.

For Hummel and Gaddie, this is their first Maccabiah competing as a pair in padel.

"It is our biggest international event in Israel since 7 October," Hessing said. "It sends an important message that Israel is a safe place and that we are happy to host all teams and performers – and that we are waiting for you to come to Israel."



Jacqui Boyd will be playing at the Maccabiah Games 2026

Sex for the curious

No-holds-barred sex coach **Nicki Brivik** has launched her first book, *SEXponential: Transform Your Sex Life*, a practical guide to revving up things in the bedroom. The *SA Jewish Report* talks to her.

How does a nice South African Jewish girl end up becoming an outspoken sex coach?

I started my career as a personal injury attorney and always saw myself as someone who helped people. But I've also always been able to talk about sex very easily, and over time I realised that this was actually quite unusual. Friends, colleagues, and even acquaintances would seek me out to talk about their relationships, their sex lives, and the challenges they were facing. I realised that sex is such an important part of our lives, yet it's something most of us never really work on. We invest in our careers, our finances, and our health, but somehow expect our sex lives to take care of themselves.

So, I started guiding people through these conversations, first informally and then professionally. What began as curiosity gradually became a calling. In truth, I feel like this work found me at exactly the right time in my life, when I had the experience, confidence, and language to help people navigate this often difficult topic.

Was there a defining moment when you realised this was your calling?

It was more of a gradual dawning that became impossible to ignore. The more people spoke to me about their relationships and sex lives, the more I realised how few places there are where people can safely explore these conversations. So many people carry shame, confusion, and self-doubt around sex, often believing they are the only ones struggling.

Over time, I realised I wanted to be part of changing that. I became passionate about creating a space where people could talk openly, learn, grow, and experience more pleasure and connection in their lives. It wasn't one moment that convinced me. It was hundreds of conversations that pointed me in the same direction.

You traded legal briefs for bedroom confessions. What was it about sex, relationships, and human intimacy that fascinated you enough to leave law behind?

What fascinated me was that sex is never really just about sex. When people come to see me, they think they're bringing me a sexual problem. But very often

we're talking about communication, confidence, vulnerability, self-worth, trust. Sex sits at the intersection of so many parts of what makes us human, yet most of us receive very little education about how to navigate it successfully.

You dispense advice one conversation at a time. So why a book, and why now?

There are only so many people I can fit into my office. The reality is that many people seek help only when they feel they're in crisis, but I've always seen myself more as a performance enhancer than a crisis manager. When it comes to sex, small changes can reap enormous relationship dividends. So often people pathologise perfectly normal experiences like differences in desire, changes in arousal, the impact of stress on long-term relationships. Sometimes a single conversation can completely change how someone sees themselves and their relationship. So, I wanted to put those conversations into a book. In many ways,

SEXponential is a coaching session in paperback.

What are the biggest lessons, surprises, and uncomfortable truths readers can expect to take away from it?

One of the biggest lessons is that a great sex life is available to almost everyone. The uncomfortable truth is that it doesn't usually happen by accident. We have this idea that great sex should be effortless and that if the chemistry is right, everything should just fall into place. But like most

worthwhile things in life, a good sex life takes intention, practice, and a willingness to learn. You don't get fit by lying on the couch, and you don't build a thriving sex life by hoping it will somehow take care of itself.

The couples having the best sex are rarely the luckiest couples. They're the ones who remain curious about themselves and each other, who are willing to grow, evolve, and adapt as life changes around them.

Perhaps the biggest surprise is that there is nothing wrong with needing to work on your sex life. In fact, that is exactly what the happiest couples are doing.

You help people undress emotionally as well as physically. What truth about yourself did writing this book force you to confront?

Writing the book forced me to confront just how deeply I care about this work and how important it is to me to get this message into the world. One of the biggest challenges was finding my author voice instead of my lawyer voice. As a lawyer, I was trained to be precise, analytical, and careful. Writing a book about sex required something very different. It required warmth, vulnerability, and the courage to speak directly to people about some of the most intimate parts of their lives. I realised that my purpose is to help people live with more passion, connection, and pleasure. If I wanted to reach more people, open up conversations around sex, and normalise these discussions, then I had to be willing to do something difficult myself. For me, that difficult thing was writing the book. It wasn't always easy, but it reminded me that growth often begins on the other side of discomfort. It's a lesson I ask my clients to embrace every day, and this book was my opportunity to live it too.

Are your kids and husband on board with you talking publicly about sex?

Absolutely! My husband and I have always raised our children to understand that sex is a natural and beautiful part of being human, not something to be ashamed of or afraid to talk about. But even more importantly, I have taught them that if you're willing to work hard, take risks, and follow your purpose, it is possible to build a meaningful career doing something you're passionate about. I think that is a lesson that extends far beyond sex.

Any awkward Shabbat-table conversations along the way?

Honestly, there are very few conversations that make me feel awkward. One of the things I've realised over the years is that my comfort tends to rub off on the people around me. That's probably my superpower, making uncomfortable conversations feel comfortable.

Having said that, our Shabbat-table conversations are probably a little more lively and varied than in some households. Let's just say there aren't many topics that are considered off-limits, and dinner guests quickly learn that you never quite know where the conversation is going to go next.

In an age of dating apps, pornography, and endless distractions, are people becoming more sexually liberated or more disconnected from genuine intimacy?

I think both things are happening simultaneously. We have more information, more access, and more

freedom than previous generations. That's positive. But we also have more distractions, more comparison, and more unrealistic expectations.

Many people know more about sex than ever before and yet feel less connected. Technology can help us find each other, but it can't teach us vulnerability. Intimacy still requires presence, communication, and emotional risk. Those things can't be downloaded from an app.

You're making a career out of saying the unsayable. What's the one conversation South Africans are still awkward to have about sex, despite pretending to be far more open-minded than they really are?

The conversations we're still avoiding, but need to be having, are the ones about desire, pleasure, vulnerability, and what actually makes sex meaningful and satisfying. Those are the conversations that change people's lives, yet they're often the hardest ones to have.

The public is getting to know the fearless, flamboyant, no-filter sex coach. Who is the woman behind that persona, and how much of what we see is authentically you?

I think what you see is pretty much what you get. The public version of me isn't a character I've created. I'm outgoing, I care, I love people, I have tons of energy, and I have a great love for life. I have never been particularly good at blending into the background. My children have a theory that my hair is the perfect reflection of my personality. It's wild and untameable, likes to make a statement, can be slightly outrageous, and you never quite know what you're going to get.

After listening to what people reveal behind closed doors, what about human beings has surprised you most?

Probably how rarely our struggles are as unique as we think they are. People often arrive convinced that there is something wrong with them or their relationship, only to discover that what they're experiencing is actually a very normal part of being in a long-term relationship. Differences in desire, changing bodies, periods of disconnection, boredom, these are incredibly common human experiences.

What has also surprised me is that most people aren't having bad sex. They're having repetitive, predictable, sometimes slightly dull sex. The good news is that those are very different problems. Most people don't need fixing; they simply need new tools, new conversations, and a little more curiosity. That's one of the reasons I'm so optimistic about this work. So often, the gap between where people are and where they want to be is much smaller than they think.



Nicki Brivik

Errol Musk is a tough crowd

When I asked whether it surprised him in any way that his son Elon had not only become the world's richest man, but had also reached, quite literally, stratospheric heights, he told me how smart his other son's children are. Apparently they achieved a lot of distinctions in matric.

When I probed about the secret ingredient that made Elon who he is, he explained, in so many words, that the man was hardly the world's greatest conversationalist.

And I thought I had it tough.

The discussion fascinated me. Not because it was obvious that the relationship between Elon and his father is complicated. Whose isn't? We all have our stories, dynamics, and unresolved versions of reality. What struck me was something else. It reminded me that every family has its own measure of success.

To the outside world, Elon Musk is a once-in-a-generation figure. He has changed industries, built companies that most people struggle to explain, let alone create, become the wealthiest person on earth, and somehow found time to influence politics, communication, transportation, and space exploration.

But to his father, he is also the guy who could probably work on his communication skills. Which is remarkable when you consider that he owns X.

And the more I thought about it, the more I realised that this is not really an Elon Musk story at all. It is a family story. One that every parent knows.

Our child can become a surgeon, a judge, a chief executive, or an astronaut. They can win awards, build businesses, run marathons, or appear on television. And yet, somewhere in the back of our minds, they remain the child who couldn't find their school shoes. Let alone tie them.

Or the teenager who left wet towels on the floor. Or the young adult who insisted they knew everything before discovering that they did not.

INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



Families have a wonderful ability to ignore the achievements in the headlines. The world might see the public figure. But families remember the private one.

Perhaps that is why success is such a strange thing. Most of us spend our lives chasing recognition. We want to be respected. We want to be admired. We want somebody, somewhere, to notice what we have accomplished. We all too often measure our success in the reflection we see in the eyes of strangers.

And then we go home. Where nobody cares that you closed the deal, gave the speech, won the award, or appeared on the front page. At home, the only question that matters is whether you remembered to take out the rubbish. Or feed the dog.

There is something wonderfully healthy about that. Because if the people closest to us become too impressed by our achievements, we risk becoming impressed with ourselves.

Which means that families are often the last line of defence against our own mythology. Siblings remind us that however important we think we are, we still always lose at Monopoly. And cricket. Spouses remind us that we can't parallel park and that we get lost on the way to the kitchen, and our children, through rolled eyes and shared glances, let us know that we really aren't cool. And that we shouldn't go around thinking we are.

And thank goodness for that. Because success has a way of convincing us that we are the person everyone else sees. Families remind us that we are also the person they see. Perhaps that is one of the greatest gifts a family can give us. Not admiration. Perspective.

In Elon Musk's case, apparently, that perspective is that he should work on his conversational skills. Which I suspect is exactly the sort of feedback that only a father could give.

Community steps up again to help persecuted migrants

There is a sense of anxiety that has gripped not only our community but all of South Africa this week. The fear that xenophobic violence will erupt again, as it did in 2008, 2015, and 2019, sits heavily with us all. Against that backdrop, the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) was invited to an interfaith meeting convened by President Cyril Ramaphosa to brief religious leaders on the government's strategy for managing the situation. Our national director, Wendy Kahn, attended on behalf of the community. She returned guardedly reassured that the national government is treating this with the seriousness the moment demands.

What makes the current situation more troubling still is the conspiracy theory that has surfaced about "Zionists" sparking the tensions and deliberately damaging South Africa's reputation abroad. This is not a new form of antisemitism. It is a very old one, the ancient trope of Jews wielding hidden, malevolent power, now dressed in political language. It is false, it is offensive, and it carries real risk for our community. It must be named for what it is.

Leviticus tells us, "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." We Jews understand the plight of displacement and landlessness well, it is ingrained viscerally in our history, both ancient and contemporary. As a community, we have always stood for the rights and dignity of asylum seekers, refugees, and other displaced peoples, because we know, precisely and viscerally, where anti-foreigner sentiment leads.

That is why HIAS, the global Jewish

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

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner



humanitarian organisation operating in South Africa under the leadership of SAJBD KwaZulu-Natal chair Alana Pugh-Jones Baranov, works on the frontlines of this crisis every day. HIAS ensures that undocumented foreigners can access the constitutional rights to which they are entitled and receive the care they are owed. This work is not peripheral to our identity as Jews. It sits at the very heart of it, connecting our own historical experience of displacement directly to the lives of those who are displaced today.

This commitment is not abstract. In 2008, when xenophobic violence erupted across the country causing thousands of displaced people to seek refuge, our community mobilised. Its members worked tirelessly at several refugee camps set up at police stations where displaced people sought shelter. As examples, the Union of Jewish Women took over the cooking at camps, youth movements came in to keep terrified children occupied, and donations of food, clothing, money, and essential goods poured in from across the community. When the moment demanded it, we showed up.

The SAJBD has been approached by vulnerable foreign migrants seeking assistance, and we have heard that call. We will be running a campaign to raise funds to alleviate the suffering of those affected, wherever they may be in the country. I encourage everyone to give generously, and assist in a small but meaningful way for those most in need at this time.

KosherWorld at 16

GILANA LAB

When KosherWorld first opened its doors 16 years ago, nobody could have predicted what it would become.

It's grown far beyond being a supermarket, evolving into a bustling community hub that is home to a diverse range of kosher food outlets, speciality retailers, service providers, and gathering spaces for many Johannesburg Jewish families.

KosherWorld's defining characteristics. What began as a retail destination is now a space where people shop, meet, eat, celebrate, and connect.

Over the years, new tenants, services, and offerings have been added in response to changing communal needs. At the same time, it has become a platform from which small businesses, entrepreneurs, and community organisations engage directly with the public.

For Back, the story of KosherWorld

continues. "It's like a roller coaster," he says. "We never know where it's going."

That sense of ongoing evolution makes the 16th anniversary less of a finish line and more of a milestone.

To mark the occasion, KosherWorld is

holding a week of birthday celebrations from



During the building of KosherWorld

As KosherWorld prepares to celebrate its 16th birthday this week, co-founder Joel Back reflects on a journey that has been shaped as much by the needs of the community as by any business plan.

"We had no idea where this was going to go," Back says. "We still don't know where it's going."

KosherWorld's growth has been organic. "It's been in incremental steps," says Back. "We didn't have the vision of exactly where it was going. We hoped it was going somewhere, but we didn't really plan it. As it's evolved, we've grown and developed together with the community."

That relationship has become one of

24 June to 1 July, featuring specials, competitions, and giveaways across participating stores. The celebrations will culminate in a community birthday event on Sunday, 28 June, with entertainment, family activities, food vendors, community organisations, and tenant activations throughout the day.

Beyond the festivities, the anniversary offers an opportunity to reflect on what KosherWorld has come to represent. Sixteen years after opening, its story is inseparable from the story of the community it serves and the people who walk through its doors every day.

The next chapter is still to be written.



TENDER INVITATION

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CLOSING DATE 31 JULY 2026

Furman still firmly on players' side

LUKE ALFRED

For Dean Furman, being a former Bafana Bafana skipper brings a host of small advantages. People recognise you on the street and ask you to pose for selfies. They ask your opinion and follow you on social media. *Bobbas* put their hands to their mouth and, much to their young grandson's profound embarrassment, exclaim, "Wasn't he in Bafana Bafana!"

Furman, you sense, takes such things in his efficient stride, balancing sundry intrusions with the upside of being recognised by strangers. Having played 58 times for the national team provides another advantage, this time a subtle one: the privilege of having seen a Bafana Bafana dressing room from the inside.

As a result, he isn't quick to criticise or apportion blame when it comes to Bafana Bafana's slightly disappointing World Cup run. He prefers to look on the bright side of the ball, forgiving, explaining, hoping that things are rescued in the match against South Korea.

"After a poor start against Mexico we had another one against Czechia," he says. "They defended deep and it's never easy to break down a team who sit behind the ball."

"At times I thought we needed to be a bit more patient in the final third, but we got our breakthrough, which keeps our dream alive. The great thing going into the South Korea game is that we know exactly what we have to do. I'm hoping that we will play Oswin Appollis and Relebohile Mofokeng from the start."

Looking back, rather than forwards, Furman singles out Teboho Mokoena

for his fine performance in the 1-1 draw against Czechia. "He was fantastic. His absence against South Korea will be sorely felt."

In a more general vein, Furman is undecided on a 48-team World Cup. He thinks the expansion is "great" but wonders if it hasn't correspondingly meant a dilution in quality. One of the themes of the tournament so far has been that of heavy defeats. He mentions Tunisia, but might also have mentioned Curaçao, Qatar, and Sweden, all of whom have shipped too many goals.

"I like the look of France and Spain to be there at the business end," he says. "I wonder if we won't be looking at a South American team at the end because they'll adapt to the heat."

As far as the twilight of his own football career is concerned, Furman says, with what you imagine is a grin, that he's still "clinging onto the dream".

He still plays, turning out semi-professionally nowadays in the Northern Premier League for Warrington Rylands, the seventh tier of football in England, where he rubs shoulders with teachers, window fitters, electricians, and accountants.

"We're semi-professional," he says. "We train two nights a week and play on weekends with guys who are good

footballers but went on to pursue other careers. Warrington [which is about 25km west of Manchester] is really rugby league country, so football has to compete with league. Our dream at Warrington Rylands is to get ourselves into a position where we can be a full-time professional club."

Furman turned 38 on Tuesday, 22 June – he says his birthday tends to get overlooked in a welter of family

birthdays and anniversaries – so although "the body feels good", he recognises he can't carry on playing forever. "I'm in talks with the club to plot the way forward but at the same time we have two young children and I've got a responsible day job, so we're looking to see how we can manage that."

Furman works as a player services executive for the Professional Football Association (PFA), the

professional players' union, a job he loves. The transition from full-time playing to a more formal working environment wasn't always easy but he's been doing the job for three years and is now finding his mojo. "Football is quite a closed environment and trust is key. At the PFA we understand what players are going through because

we've experienced the same things ourselves."

What services does the PFA offer its 6 000 members? Among other things, appropriate support and advice, whether this be related to contracts, being out of contract, or, more extremely, what a player should do when, say, he or she fails a drug test.

It also provides mediation services and education opportunities. "We protect players' rights, represent their views, and provide support through a wide variety of educational, financial, and well-being services," says the PFA website.

"I can't tell you that as a player I ever bothered to read the fine print of a contract," says Furman. "But that's what we help with and encourage players to do at the PFA. At the moment we're in pre-season and some players might find themselves out of contract, so we offer a course at Champneys Spa in the [English] Midlands for 40 players a week to keep them fit and motivated so if they do get a trial, they're in the best possible shape to take advantage of it. Everything is subsidised by the PFA."

Although Furman doesn't use the word "existential", he is sensitive to the fact that we must all find meaning in life, something he calls "a purpose". "You have to find a reason to get out of bed in the morning," he says. "I needed to refashion myself out of playing and into something else. It wasn't always easy."

True enough, but you rather feel that Furman is now on the right side of the halfway line, moving towards goal with the ball at his feet. Who wouldn't be in his boots?



Dean Furman

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