

## THE WEEKLY PRINT

*South African Jews sound the alarm as government reaches out to Hamas; Israel grapples with country's biggest internal displacement in history; The retired Navy admiral making the case for Israel in the White House briefing room; In London, Jews hiding in plain sight; Gun control activist Fred Guttenberg raises concerns over left-wing antisemitism; American cowboys lend a hand to Israeli farms in the West Bank; House censures Tlaib for anti-Israel comments, with support from 22 Democrats; Brandeis becomes first private university to ban Students for Justice in Palestine on campus; Israel's former U.N. Ambassador Danny Danon keeping up personal diplomacy; and National Library of Israel launches 'unprecedented' effort to collect everything it can about Oct. 7 attacks.*

NOVEMBER 9, 2023

## South African Jews sound the alarm as government reaches out to Hamas

*Pretoria's stance "reprehensible," Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein tells Jewish Insider, as government says Israel has no right to defend itself*

By Lahav Harkov

South Africa's Jewish community is on a collision course with the country's government, following official expressions of solidarity with Hamas after the terrorist group massacred more than 1,400 people in Israel on Oct. 7.

Pretoria announced that it would recall all of its diplomats from Israel on Monday in protest of the war with Hamas and threatened to expel Israeli Ambassador to South Africa Eliav Belotsercovsky — a move that came after the government said Israel has no right to defend itself using military means. Naledi Pandor, South Africa's international relations minister spoke on the phone last month with Hamas head Ismail Haniyeh and traveled to Tehran to meet with her Iranian counterpart, as well as President Ebrahim Raisi, in recent weeks.

Domestically, South Africa's government has been lashing out at supporters of

Israel, threatening the leadership of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD), the umbrella organization that represents the more than 50,000 members of the country's Jewish community, for criticizing what it said in a recent statement was Pretoria's "ill-considered, immoral and ultimately self-defeating stance."

South African Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein gave a fiery address condemning the government at a pro-Israel rally the week after the Hamas attack. After Pandor's diplomatic outreach to Iran and Hamas, Goldstein changed the Prayer for the Republic of South Africa — said regularly at congregations across the country — from asking God to protect "the president and the deputy president all members of the government," to asking for protection for "all the people of this country," a measure, he wrote in a letter to South African rabbis,

that was taken in "extreme situations, for government violations of morality so grotesque they undermine the integrity of praying."

On the day that Hamas killed over 1,400 people in Israel and took over 240 hostages, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation, known as DIRCO, called "for the immediate cessation of violence" and criticized Israel for "illegal occupation of Palestinian land, continued settlement expansion" and more. The statement neither referred to nor condemned the terrorist attack, referring only to Israeli ills.

The SAJBD and South Africa Zionist Federation accused DIRCO and Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor in October of laying "the blame and justification for Hamas's heinous crimes at the door of the Jewish State...As a community, we are appalled and deeply saddened that DIRCO was unable

to show the slightest bit of empathy for the callous murder of Jewish life.”

After Pandor’s call with Hamas and the terrorist organization’s claim that she expressed support for their attack on Israel, Zev Krengel, vice president of SAJBD, argued in media interviews that Pandor was “taking orders” from Iran and that South Africa’s government “has been hijacked by Islamic jihadists.”

“She’s making it easier for babies to be murdered and massacred,” Krengel said

DIRCO, however, said that Pandor “reiterated South Africa’s solidarity and support for the people of Palestine and expressed sadness and regret for the loss of innocent lives, both Palestinians and Israelis,” in her call with Haniyeh.

Pandor did not express “sadness and regret” for the loss of Israeli lives to Israeli officials, whether in the Israeli Embassy in Pretoria or to anyone in the government in Jerusalem, Israel’s Foreign Ministry confirmed to *Jewish Insider* this week.

Krengel also noted that Pandor had not publicly called for the return of South African-born hostages held by Hamas in Gaza nor helped 800 South Africans evacuate from Israel when the war started. Though Israel’s official numbers state that Hamas is holding one South African in Gaza, JI found that at least three were born in South Africa: Chana Peri, 79, of Kibbutz Nirim; Aviva Siegal, 64, of Kfar Azza; and Daniel Peretz, 22, an IDF soldier.

Goldstein told JI that there are “a lot of community efforts around all of the hostages to raise public awareness...to keep the story top of mind, in community and broader society.”

In an Oct. 30 statement titled “South Africa calls for the International community to hold Israel accountable for breaches of International Law,” DIRCO doubled down on its rhetoric against Israel and threatened the Jewish community with legal action.

DIRCO said that “Israel does not have the ‘right to defend itself’ using military means... The notion of Israel’s right to defend itself through military means has been used...to justify the unlawful use of force by Israel on people of Palestine.”

“Those that have encouraged and materially supported the unlawful use of force by Israel...should therefore be

investigated for aiding and abetting the breaches of international law,” DIRCO stated.

The South African government ministry condemned Krengel for “unethical” statements, “disinformation... related to the beheading of children in Israel” and “dehumanization tactics...which has resulted in the huge casualties we see today.”

“Given the potentially libelous nature of his utterances, more commentary on this will be done at a later stage,” DIRCO warned.

SAJBD pointed out in a statement that “instead of campaigning for Hamas to release the hostages, something that could make a ceasefire possible, Minister Pandor has attacked the South African Jewish community.”

The Jewish organization also noted that “the beheading of Jewish babies is confirmed. It was documented and publicized by Hamas themselves...The accusation feels reminiscent of Holocaust deniers requiring the Jewish community provide proof that six million really did die during the Holocaust.”

“If [Pandor’s] attack on the Jewish community intended to silence and intimidate us, it will not work,” the SAJBD said.

In an interview with JI, Goldstein called DIRCO’s position “a betrayal of Nelson Mandela and everything he stood for.”

After Oct. 7, the South African government had “no natural horror at all at what they witnessed, only justification,” the chief rabbi said. “There was no moral clarity at all.”

Goldstein is the chief rabbi of The Union of Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa. Whether personally observant or not, about 85% of the South African community is affiliated with Orthodox synagogues, 8% with the Progressive (Reform) movement, and fewer with the Masorti (Conservative) movement.

The chief rabbi argued that, while post-apartheid South Africa has always supported the Palestinians, “this is not about the Palestinian cause. This is about Iran’s attack on Israel through its proxies, Hamas and Hezbollah.”

More broadly, Goldstein said that there is “a whole new world order emerging with Russia, China and Iran [on one side], and for

South Africa, a constitutional democracy, to be aligned with these thugs is an unacceptable betrayal of our constitution, of our bill of rights, of everything Mandela dedicated his life to...It is utterly immoral, supporting evil in the world...Either they are useful idiots, or complicit.”

Goldstein pointed out that while his government reaches out to Hamas and Iran, it has mostly ignored jihadism in Africa.

“Hamas is the ideological brother of Boko Haram and ISIS operating in Africa,” he said. “The story of jihadi terror in Africa is not being told at all in Western media. Some of the statistics are horrifying...The West African group, ECOWAS, reported that there were over 1,800 terrorist attacks, killing more than 4,600 people this year. Across the border of South Africa, in Mozambique, ISIS is waging a war.”

“Where are those marches and protests?... That makes South African support for Iran and Hamas all the more reprehensible. What about black African Christians on this continent, who are being murdered?” the chief rabbi asked.

Goldstein was optimistic that the average South African is more sympathetic to Israel’s cause. He argued that the African National Congress, which has dominated the country’s politics since its first democratic elections in 1994, is “completely out of step with the South African people,” and that the party, plagued with corruption scandals as well as chronic electricity blackouts and water shortages, could lose next year’s national elections.

“Most Black South Africans are Christian, conservative and politically moderate. They have a deep, natural Zionism,” Goldstein said. Black South Africans make up over 80% of the country’s population.

When SAJBD and SAZF displayed posters of some of the 239 hostages along with red balloons on Johannesburg’s bustling Nelson Mandela Bridge, they were “not defaced, not removed, which is also an expression of where society is,” the chief rabbi said.

Asked if the Jewish community needs to be concerned about DIRCO targeting its leadership in an official statement, Goldstein defended the strength of South Africa’s democratic institutions and constitution.

“In a real democracy, you don’t have

to worry about that,” he said. “I threw down the gauntlet to the government and I have done that in the past...When [former President] Jacob Zuma was at the height of his corruption, I joined civil society protests against him.”

“To the credit of all South Africans, our constitution is supreme and the courts are independent and whatever the courts say is obeyed. We have a bill of rights and the complete freedom to say and do whatever you wish,” the chief rabbi emphasized.

Goldstein reiterated the message he conveyed at the pro-Israel rally, that “the government is not the country.”

Pretoria’s position on Israel is “outrageous, enraging, disgraceful and shameful but not dangerous” to South African Jews, he insisted.

This week, for the first time since the war began, SAJBD also began to express concern about antisemitic attacks on South African Jews in its official statements.

“In uncritically endorsing everything Hamas has been claiming, the government endangers its own Jewish population,” SAJBD warned. “In recent days, we have seen incitement to hatred against the community reach such levels as to comprise explicit calls on public platforms for Jews to

be attacked in their homes, their places of work, and, perhaps most chillingly of all, in their schools.”

Goldstein, however, said he is not aware of any threats.

“We have a hostile government, but a very welcoming society,” he said. “There have been a few marches and tension around them...but to the best of my knowledge, there has not been one single incident of physical violence against a Jew since the start of this war. There are [problems] on social media and some cases of verbal assaults.”

“We have crime, but as a Jew you’re safe,” Goldstein added. ♦

NOVEMBER 6, 2023

## Israel grapples with country’s biggest internal displacement in history

*The head of Israel’s National Emergency Management Authority said a quarter of a million Israelis are displaced*

By Ruth Marks Eglash

From a distance, Ein Bokek, Israel’s popular vacation spot on the shores of the Dead Sea, looks as picturesque and peaceful as ever. Yet the lowest point on earth – some 60 miles away from the deadly war now raging in Gaza – shows its own signs of war, serving for the past month as a shelter for thousands of Israelis displaced following Hamas’ brutal terror attack on Oct. 7 and Israel’s military response.

At the David Hotel, one of the larger hotels in the tourist area, some 900 members of Kibbutz Be’eri – one of the communities hardest hit by Hamas’ atrocities on Oct. 7, with around 100 people murdered and at least 30 held hostage in Gaza – mill about with an energy that belies the usual serene mood of a luxurious resort.

A month after their world was literally blown apart, there is no rest or relaxation happening among those staying at the David. In the expansive hotel lobby, a heartbreaking display of photographs of friends and loved ones, including many children, kidnapped by Hamas reminds those who arrive of the sober reality here.

Outside, beside the pool, therapists have set up a Zulu healing booth, offering the hotel’s new residents a respite from the nightmare. In the conference hall, volunteer psychologists offer more intensive therapy behind makeshift partitions, and opposite, racks of donated clothing and other goods sit ready to help the people here to rebuild their shattered lives.

“We are refugees,” Ayelet Hakim, 55, told *Jewish Insider*. “It’s true that we are not on the streets, but we have nowhere to go back to, everything we had was destroyed.”

“The clothes I’m wearing are not mine, everything is donations,” Hakim, whose older sister, Raz, and brother-in-law, Ohad, are among the 241 hostages, added. “Me, my husband, and my two kids live in one room – we are in limbo with no certainty about our future.”

Hakim is one of roughly 30,000 residents of the *kibbutzim* and *moshavim* who were quickly evacuated from their homes by the Israeli military after the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks targeting their communities.

In the days that followed, the Israeli

government formally evacuated an additional 100,000 people, starting with the 20,000 residents of the southern city of Sderot and then a further 60,000 people from the north when Iranian-backed Shiite militia Hezbollah began firing rockets and mortars from Lebanon. In addition, the government estimates that a further 100,000 people evacuated themselves from homes that sit slightly beyond what is now an active military zone.

On a visit to the north last week, JI found a ghost town in Kiryat Shmona and nearby Kibbutz Dafna, where the only people present were soldiers on alert to defend Israel’s borders from a possible Hezbollah attack and dedicated farmers who stayed behind to tend to crops and animals. Along the main thoroughfares and at the entrance to almost every community there were concrete barriers and military checkpoints.

Israel’s Tourism Ministry, which has helped facilitate the exodus of civilians from their homes, told JI that some 88,000 people are now living in hotels across the country, with an additional 87,000 being hosted on

*kibbutzim* or in residential areas. A further 73,000 – mostly those who chose to self-evacuate – are staying with relatives and friends or in temporary accommodations.

Out of some 56,000 hotel rooms available around Israel, the ministry said, 52,723 were identified as suitable to accommodate evacuee families and so far, around 47,501 of those rooms were currently being utilized, leaving 5,222 additional guest rooms available if needed.

The vacation towns of Ein Bokek, Eilat and Tiberius are serving as a temporary home to the bulk of the internally displaced, while hotels as well as private apartments and houses in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Netanya and elsewhere are also providing shelter.

Brig. Gen. (res.) Yoram Laredo, head of Israel's National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA), said that the number of evacuees could be close to a quarter of a million and that Israel was grappling with a new challenge: internally displaced people.

"This has never happened before in the State of Israel," he said, describing how residents of the 20 or so communities that faced direct assaults from Hamas terrorists were evacuated immediately, with many fleeing in their pajamas and leaving everything behind as their homes burned to the ground.

"We do not see any of these people moving back home before the end of the year," he said, adding that for some communities the return home would take much longer, if ever.

The devastation in places such as Be'eri and other *kibbutzim* nearby is vast. In Nir Oz, for example, few homes remain intact. The kibbutz's famous paint factory was totally destroyed. In other places, like Be'eri, many of the communal buildings, as well as critical infrastructure, were also so badly damaged that reconstruction could take up to two years or more, slowed by Israel's ongoing war to destroy Hamas in Gaza.

At the David Hotel, the strain of the past month and uncertainty about the future is clear.

"People here are only just starting to talk about what happened to them," said Shachar May, press officer for IsraAid, an Israeli nonprofit that responds to emergencies all over the world and was in place to help with

Israel's internal displacement crisis just days after Hamas' massacre.

May said approximately 16,000 displaced people were now staying in about a dozen hotels in Ein Bokek and Eilat. IsraAid, she said, has been working to set up counseling and therapy services, as well as kindergarten classes and other activities for the surviving children. In addition, she said, the NGO helped to establish an elementary school, which opened last week in the nearby Ein Gedi Field School.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, which has struggled to bring order to an unprecedented and chaotic situation, has faced criticism from the survivors and families of victims over its slow response. On Thursday, nearly a month after the attack, Netanyahu and his finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, announced a series of concrete economic measures aimed at helping the evacuees and the displaced.

Michal Pinyan, whose parents, Mati and Amir Weiss, 69, were murdered by Hamas – their bodies were discovered inside Gaza two weeks after the attack – said that the kibbutz members were only just beginning to discuss their next steps and what they might do when they can no longer remain at the hotel.

"We're dealing with this question now," she told JI, adding that most members wanted to stay together as a community and would most likely move together to a town close to Be'eri or set up a kibbutz in a temporary location.

Be'eri, like many of the other *kibbutzim* located on the Gaza periphery, was founded in the 1940s, prior to the establishment of the State of Israel as part of the Jewish Agency's "11 points in the Negev plan." Named after Berl Katznelson, one of the intellectual founders of Labor Zionism, whose nickname was Be'eri, the kibbutz, with some 1,200 members before the Oct. 7 attack, was the largest and most successful in the area, running one of the country's biggest printing factories. On Oct. 6, kibbutz members said, the community celebrated its 77th anniversary.

Nir Shani, whose 16-year-old son, Amit, was kidnapped and taken to Gaza by the terrorists, told JI that the majority of kibbutz members wanted to return to Be'eri, despite

the horrors of what happened there.

"There are three views," he surmised. "Most are very proud and say that the minute the army allows us to go back and live there, they will go; there are others who don't feel safe and want to recreate the community elsewhere; and I am sure there will be a few who never want to go back."

"I will definitely go back to Be'eri and live there until I die," stated Hakim, who was born on the kibbutz and has lived there her entire life. "I will rebuild my life there, for me and for my family. There is no other home for me in the world."

Hakim's niece Yuli Ben Ami, whose parents, Raz and Ohad, were kidnapped to Gaza, said that she is suffering from severe stress and anxiety over the fate of her parents but is also painfully aware that she can't stay at the hotel for much longer.

"This is not our home," said the 27-year-old. "We can't cook here. We don't have any of our things. We don't have anything."

The eldest of three sisters, Ben Ami recounted how Hamas terrorists and hundreds of non-combatants who followed the terrorists into Israel during the hours-long attack rampaged through her parents' home, stealing everything of value before setting it on fire.

"They put a bomb in the house and literally exploded our lives," she said. "The only thing I have left is my community, the kibbutz members. They are around me, helping me all the time." ♦



# The retired Navy admiral making the case for Israel in the White House briefing room

*As calls for a cease-fire have grown more pronounced among the hard left, John Kirby has become one of the loudest voices espousing the president's commitment to Israel's security*

By Gabby Deutch

Last month, after a reporter pressed the White House to apologize for President Joe Biden's remarks that the deaths of innocent civilians in Gaza are the price of war, the sharp response from National Security Council's strategic communications coordinator, John Kirby, quickly went viral among pro-Israel advocates and within the Jewish community.

"Don't you think it's insensitive, there being very harsh criticism about it?" asked Raquel Krähenbühl of Globo News, a Brazilian news channel. "Would the president apologize, and does he regret saying something like that?"

"No," said Kirby, speaking less than three weeks after Hamas terrorists killed more than 1,400 people in massacres across southern Israel.

"What's harsh is the way Hamas is using people as human shields. What's harsh is taking a couple of hundred hostages and leaving families anxious, waiting and worrying, to figure out where their loved ones are. What's harsh is dropping in on a music festival and slaughtering a bunch of young people just trying to enjoy an afternoon. I could go on and on. That's what's harsh," said Kirby, who went on to blast Hamas for not allowing Gazans to leave the besieged Palestinian enclave while Hamas militants sheltered in tunnels beneath their homes.

As calls for a cease-fire have grown more pronounced among the hard left, Kirby has become one of the loudest voices espousing the president's commitment to Israel's security. Even as he and other Biden administration officials publicly caution their counterparts in Israel to work to avoid civilian casualties in Gaza, Kirby also offers clear statements about the danger Israel

faces from Hamas.

"His genuine outrage and sadness for what the Jewish people are going through really came through to me as very real and very evident," said Morgan Ortagus, who served as the State Department spokesperson under former President Donald Trump. "I think that's why he has connected with so many Jewish Americans across the political spectrum."

Kirby, a retired U.S. Navy rear admiral, served as the top spokesperson for the Defense Department and then the State Department — the first person to perform both jobs — in the Obama administration. (While Trump was president, Kirby became a CNN analyst; Ortagus said he used to call or text her or even send handwritten notes to apologize whenever he criticized Trump on TV.)

After Biden was elected, Kirby returned to the Pentagon to serve as press secretary, this time as a civilian. Last year he was tapped by Biden to come to the White House for an unusual position: explaining the country's military and foreign policy positions to the American public. Historically, the White House press secretary has handled both domestic and foreign policy.

"The president had seen John [Kirby] brief at the Pentagon and had known John from the Obama-Biden administration, and specifically by name said, 'I want him working at the White House,'" said Jeremy Bash, who worked closely with Kirby when he served as chief of staff at the Pentagon in the Obama administration. The White House declined to comment.

Kirby joined the National Security Council staff in May 2022, three months into the Ukraine war and not long after Biden's first press secretary, Jen Psaki, left

for a gig at MSNBC. Like Kirby, Psaki had held the spokesperson role at State; her replacement, Karine Jean-Pierre, lacked similar experience communicating on matters of foreign policy.

"I think with the advent of the Ukraine war, there was a feeling that, given how involved the U.S. military and our diplomats would be in supporting Ukraine, that having — and given the fact that most Americans weren't closely following events in Ukraine before the war — it was going to be very important to have somebody who could spend almost their full time focused on explaining the national security issues to the press and to the American people," said Bash of Kirby's new role.

In previous roles, Kirby's audience was the cadre of wonky journalists who covered the Pentagon and Foggy Bottom, reporters who were responsible for following complicated explanations about the movement of military personnel and making sense of diplomatic jargon. Now, he has to explain the same concepts in more straightforward language.

"I don't know that I would describe it as diplomatic. When I was at State, when we used that sort of language, I called it gobbledy-gook," said Ortagus. "That's where I think Kirby shines amongst all of the administration officials, because he's been much more clear, whereas others are clearly very nervous about what's going to happen with the far left and their political base, and so they put in all of these qualifying words."

His clear language supporting Israel has earned Kirby some vocal detractors. A number of videos from far-left activists, including the anti-war organization Code Pink, have compared Kirby's language when speaking about Palestinians to his language

about the death of Ukrainians. “When some people are ‘human beings’ and others are ‘collateral damage,’ it is the language of genocide,” Code Pink said in a video. (Kirby did not describe the deaths of Palestinians as “collateral damage.” Last week, he said, “We’re not accepting of any single civilian death in Gaza. They’re all tragedies.”)

Kirby has addressed this criticism head-on: “Unlike Russia and Ukraine and unlike what Hamas did on the 7th of October, the killing of civilians is not a war aim of Israel.

I’m not denying that it’s happening,” Kirby said last week. “Of course it is, and it’s tragic. But it’s not the goal of Israeli forces to go out and deliberately take innocent civilian life. And they have tried to make efforts to minimize that.”

While Kirby might be adept at speaking earnestly and off-the-cuff about the war in the Middle East, he does not speak for himself. He speaks on behalf of the president, a self-proclaimed Zionist whose post-Oct. 7 speeches about the Hamas

attack earned him widespread adoration among Israelis.

“We do believe that Hamas can’t be the future of governance in Gaza. They can’t be. They just can’t. We can’t go back to October 6th,” Kirby said last week in response to a question about the future of Gaza. But this wasn’t him making such a proclamation, Kirby made clear: “You heard the president say that.” ♦

NOVEMBER 3, 2023

## In London, Jews hiding in plain sight

*Students are taking off their yarmulkes and families are taking down their mezuzahs as the war in Gaza intensifies and antisemitism soars*

By Lianne Kolirin

In the nearly four weeks since Hamas attacked Israel, Amy’s teenage son has been going to school in the loosest version of his school uniform. It is not just his yarmulke that he no longer wears, but his sweater, blazer and anything connecting him to the Jewish secondary school where he is a pupil.

Amy’s younger children, meanwhile, now barely bat an eyelid at the increased security and occasional police presence outside their primary school. Games of “sleeping lions” — where pupils stay perfectly still under their desks while hiding from “burglars” — are now a regular occurrence.

“Personally, I’ve never felt so scared,” said Amy, who asked not to give her full name to protect her children’s privacy.

The Community Security Trust (CST), a charity protecting British Jews, has recorded at least 805 antisemitic incidents since Oct. 7 — a 689% increase from the same period last year.

The incidents include assaults, desecration of Jewish property, online abuse and mass production of antisemitic literature.

Liverpool Street Station, a key transport hub — and where Jewish children escaping Nazi Germany arrived on the

Kindertransport in the late 1930s — was brought to a standstill at rush hour on Tuesday night as hundreds of protestors staged a sit-in, waving Palestinian flags and chanting, “From the river to the sea” while police looked on.

The protest came days after an estimated 100,000 people descended on London for the third consecutive weekend of pro-Palestinian demonstrations. Once again, they came waving flags and brandishing hate-filled banners supporting Hamas, which have sent shockwaves through the city’s Jewish community.

Many, including Amy, feel the authorities have been slow to act.

“The amount of people at that march made me feel sick,” she said. “How can it be allowed for people to stand there and chant about killing all Jews and nothing be done?”

“I’m scared for our kids and have lost all faith in humanity.”

Polling carried out by the UK-based Institute for Jewish Policy Research underscores why the crisis in Israel impacts so closely on this community. More than 7 out of 10 British Jews have family in Israel, while 90% have visited there at least once.

Its research also revealed that 12% of adults across Britain “harbor deep

ideological hatred towards Israel,” while 56% “hold at least one anti-Israel idea” that many Jews would perceive as antisemitic.

Rabbi David Meyer, CEO of Partnerships for Jewish Schools (PaJes), has been working closely with the government to guarantee the security of Jewish students.

“It’s a very sorry situation when advice is given to children to hide any signs of their Jewish identity,” he said.

Schools, like all Jewish institutions, are at increased risk of attack, but students often also feel unsafe on public transportation, as highlighted by the recent case of a subway operator suspended for leading a chant of “free Palestine” onboard.

PaJes is working with others in the community and beyond — as well as with parents — to both guarantee the security of children and support their mental health.

“Their well-being is a very big issue,” he said, adding that parents as well as children should be aware of the impact of social media.

“We are living in a safe society where the vast majority of people are supportive of the Jewish community,” Meyer said. “It is incumbent on us to be cautious and understanding of the dangers present at this time, but at the same time it’s

really important for us not to create an unreasonable sense of fear or discomfort.”

But the reality is that in 2023, London has become increasingly inhospitable to Jews. Leading academics are calling for “intifada until victory,” reporters on the BBC refuse to refer to Hamas as a terrorist organization, anti-Israel hate is common at soccer matches and kosher restaurants have been vandalized.

So it’s hardly surprising that many parents of schoolchildren feel vulnerable. Jamie, a father of two who does not want to give his full name, lives near his children’s school, where he says there has been an atmosphere of distress and anxiety since the Hamas attacks.

And parents’ concerns are not just about the Jewish school being subject to reprisals.

“I’ve taken our *mezuzah* down,” said Jamie. “We get a lot of deliveries and you just don’t know who’s dropping off a package or delivering a takeout.”

There have been many occasions this year when Sharon Shochat proudly surrounded herself with Israeli flags in central London.

An Israeli citizen who has lived in London for almost two decades, Shochat organized London’s pro-democracy protests — in solidarity with those in Israel — against the Israeli government’s planned overhaul of the judiciary.

She no longer feels so confident in her public Jewish expression, however. “My son received very clear instructions from me not to speak Hebrew out in public,” she said.

Shochat’s stance as a volunteer organizer shifted dramatically after Oct. 7.

“The whole movement around the world pivoted overnight,” she said. Now, Shochat is busy mobilizing supporters for a different cause.

Today, she is the U.K. voice for the Hostages and Missing Families Forum. She has been instrumental in staging vigils, ensuring press coverage and keeping the stories of the distraught families in the media.

“The transition was very natural,” she said. If before we were defending Israeli democracy, we’re now defending Israel. The efforts are more humanitarian in nature, but we are still holding the Israeli government responsible for this tremendous failure in

security and support for civilians.”

Shochat and others have also helped hundreds of Israelis — with everything from accommodation to childcare — who have fled the conflict for Britain.

Just steps away from where an empty Shabbat table was set up in north London for the hostages last week, there are remnants of the posters of the missing hostages, callously ripped down.

Sadly, that response is not wholly unexpected.

“I think there’s a heightened sense of vulnerability in the community,” said Shochat. “The first 48 hours, I think, everyone was in shock in the community but also globally.”

“When Israel responded and there were casualties on the Palestinian side, that is when we usually see a rise in pro-Palestinian activism in Europe and the U.K., and that’s when the sense of unsafety started.”

Shochat said the pro-Palestinian demonstrations “sent waves of concern and more shock because there was no condemnation, not just by Palestinians but also by their supporters. Worse than that, we saw glorification of Hamas’ actions and a call for the eradication of Israel with slogans like ‘from the river to the sea.’”

One group that has been particularly bearing the brunt is students. In an interview with *Times Radio*, Edward Isaacs, president of the Union of Jewish Students (UJS), revealed that he and several others have received death threats.

“We are seeing Jewish students who are deeply anxious about loved ones who have been taken hostage by Hamas. And this is all happening in the wider context of many of their peers being part of student societies and glorifying and celebrating the actions of Hamas,” he said.

While Isaacs applauded the government for backing the Jewish community, he said much needed to be done on campus and called on universities to show “zero tolerance.”

The vulnerability is not new. Just a few years ago, the community felt deeply threatened when the opposition Labour party was led by Jeremy Corbyn.

“I thought it couldn’t get any worse,” said Stephen Silverman, director of investigations and enforcement at the Campaign Against

Antisemitism (CAA).

“But what we’re seeing now is off the scale. I have never known such a sense of fear and isolation within the Jewish community. There’s such a sense of abandonment by institutions — news organizations, policing, doctors, the legal profession — it’s affected the way Jews interact with the rest of society.”

Silverman added: “We have seen everything from complete callous disregard for what actually happened to outright hatred.

“This isn’t just happening in the U.K. — it’s happening in Europe and the U.S. and elsewhere. It’s all connected. It feels like part of the same thing and nobody feels that it couldn’t happen here.”

The advent of the internet, and specifically social media, has been key, said Silverman.

“That radicalization on social media has been going on for as long as social media has been in people’s lives. Now it’s pouring petrol on the fire,” he said.

Emma Sosnow, who returned to London after more than 20 years living in India, knows all about that.

It was while in India that Sosnow became a regular on the psychedelic trance scene. As such, she felt closely connected to the horrifying Nova music festival massacre in southern Israel. Some of those killed at the festival were her friends.

Sosnow has been regularly posting about the terror attack, as well as commenting on other people’s updates — until a non-Jewish friend began to message her privately about her posts.

Sosnow said it led to a conflict after she realized her friend was “imagining that actually I was responsible for what was going on in Israel and I was responsible for what the Israeli army was doing in Gaza... and the whole thing just became crystal clear: This is what antisemitism is.”

Sosnow said she tried to explain how she was feeling to her friend, who had lost her mother. She said: “It’s like you’re sitting in the room, your mother’s died, and someone’s run into the room and said, ‘Why are you crying for your mum? There’s a woman who’s just died down the road.’ And you’re [saying], ‘Sorry, how can I possibly be caring about that woman right now? I would

on any other day, but right now I'm sitting in my grief."

Michelle Rosenberg, community editor of the *Jewish News*, has been working with her colleagues around the clock to cover the crisis.

"There has never been a more important time to be doing this," she said. "It's a profound responsibility."

She added: "There was life before October

7 and life after — everything else seems so utterly frivolous and I don't think things will ever be the same. What's out there is so ugly and so violent. It's a Pandora's box and nobody knows how we're going to close it."

But for all the tragedy and sadness, Rosenberg highlights the slimmest of silver linings.

"Amid all the stress and horror, we have also been inundated by uplifting

and heartwarming stories of unbelievable community support and togetherness. The Jewish communities have rallied together like nothing any of us has ever seen."

She added: "The vigils that I've been to have been phenomenal. I think the mood here is that people have never been so proud or so scared to be Jewish at the same time." ♦

NOVEMBER 10, 2023

## Gun control activist Fred Guttenberg raises concerns over left-wing antisemitism

*In an interview with JI, Guttenberg says: 'I spent the past five-plus years fighting with these people for safety in America, and I'm realizing it's not the same when we're talking about Jewish people.'*

By Tori Bergel

After his 14-year-old daughter Jaime was murdered alongside 16 of her classmates and teachers at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., on Feb. 14, 2018, Fred Guttenberg emerged from the tragedy as one of the nation's most vocal gun control activists.

Guttenberg, who is Jewish and has long been a supporter of Israel, has also emerged in the last month as a leading voice calling out hard-left politicians and activists who failed to denounce Hamas' terrorist attack and criticized Israel's military response in Gaza.

*This interview has been edited for clarity and length.*

**Jewish Insider: As a Democrat, how concerned are you that some left-wing lawmakers in your party have come out against Israel?**

**Fred Guttenberg:** I'm extremely concerned, I'm extremely upset and I'm extremely offended. I am concerned, because I spent the past five-plus years fighting with these people for safety in America — and maybe this hits to why I'm offended — and I'm realizing it's not the same

when we're talking about Jewish people. I've spent the past five-plus years going to communities in America, standing with groups across America, working to reduce gun violence and violence in communities across America, and I believe everything, but here we are now, and I need those same lawmakers and those that they represent, to stand with me, and they're standing against me, and that is hard to deal with.

**JJ: Does it change your view toward the party?**

**FG:** Not toward the party, toward those who choose to represent themselves this way. Listen, when I think of the party, I still think of the work that our president is doing, and he's been terrific, and he's been strong. I think of former Speaker Nancy Pelosi just, I think, a day or two ago, having a chance to respond to this and being very strong. I think of members all across the party, of [House Minority] Leader Hakeem Jeffries, of so many who have stood strong for Israel and against antisemitism. This isn't the party, this is a radicalized group that have chosen to run in this party, but they don't represent this party.

**JJ: Would you support a Republican running against a Democrat who is embracing anti-Israel rhetoric?**

**FG:** Well, I'll start by saying, a) I would support that Democrat being primaryed first. If that Democrat doesn't lose in the primary, then I would support that, yes. I think people need to understand, I'm not an ideologue. I'm a moderate, pragmatic person. I want to reduce gun violence. I am a fierce defender of Israel and its right to defend itself. And any member of Congress who stands against Israel's right to exist and its right to defend itself and incites antisemitism here at home, whatever it takes, they should be fired from Congress.

**JJ: More personally, how are you feeling as an Israel supporter in the U.S. today?**

**FG:** Worried. I see not just what's happening in the U.S., but across the globe, and I'm worried about Israel's future security, but as a U.S. citizen, I am truly worried about the level of discourse, the way we talk to one another, and the amped-up rhetoric and hate that comes from it. I'm worried about the incitement to violence



on college campuses and in communities. I worry that a Jewish man was killed [earlier this week] in California, and how that might drive more Jewish people to feel this need to defend themselves, and that's only going to bring more violence. I'm worried.

**Jl: What are your thoughts on Gov. Ron DeSantis' banning of Students for Justice in Palestine chapters on Florida's public campuses?**

**FG:** It is rare, in fact almost never, that I find myself in agreement with Ron DeSantis, but I do on this.

**Jl: You said on these second anniversary of your daughter Jaime's death in 2020 that her murder had caused you to question your relationship with God and even to leave your synagogue. Has your faith changed since Oct. 7 and your continued activism?**

**FG:** My faith hasn't. I still struggle with the reality that I have to visit my daughter at a cemetery, and why, and the environment that exists that made that possible. However, the other part of what I said and have said since is, my faith always rests in some of the amazing people who I know and get to know, who are like minded, who want peace, and I still believe that. I believe as hard as things are today, as challenging as things are today, there's too many great, amazing people who are going to show us a path forward, and that we're going to be OK.

**Jl: You've shared on social media the comments and messages that you've received from former allies and supporters now taking issue with your stance on Israel. Were you surprised by that response?**

**FG:** I was. Listen, the comment that I got a lot the past month was, "I used to like you," and there's multiple ways to take that, but many of the people who did it I just don't know and they could just be trolls, but there are people there who I know I've stood with in other instances over the past years. And, you know, when they say "I used to like you" because I'm a defender of Israel and I stand against antisemitism, that's a hard, hard pill

to swallow. And so I was surprised.

I was surprised at how easy it was for some people to turn against support of me and defending me and the Jewish people the way that I felt I stood with them over the years. It did surprise me. I hope that we can all pause, lower the temperature and remind ourselves that we all stand for peace, that we all stood together for the right reasons in the past, and I'm asking for anyone to stand with me now against antisemitism in this country, and I hope we can find a path forward to talking again.

**Jl: What has been the most disheartening to see?**

**FG:** Misinformation that is fueling hatred. It is the same thing I saw in the fight against gun violence. The level of misinformation that was driving gun sales and gun violence was incredible, and seeing misinformation now about what's happening in this country, about what something like "the river to the sea" actually means, about the history of Israel and how we ended up in this conflict, about what happened on Oct. 7, literally seeing people forget the fact that hostages are still being held and trying to explain it away. It is the way people use information, or misuse information, that has just been the most shocking thing for me.

**Jl: The Sun Sentinel put out a story about Jewish individuals who have purchased firearms in response to rising antisemitism, which you were critical of. How instead do you feel communities should be protecting themselves or responding to increased threats?**

**FG:** The Sun Sentinel did, but there's been national stories about this too, and mostly focusing on the same couple of gun shops down here in South Florida, which I fear these gun shops are profiting off of people's fear and anxiety, as the gun lobby always has.

And the truth is, in 20 years we've more than doubled our arsenal of guns in this country, and it's always been driven by the gun lobby overstating people's ability to defend themselves from anxiety and fear. And the same thing is happening here. Jewish people who are concerned about

antisemitism running to gun stores, isn't going to make them safer. In fact, the data is clear, in most instances where those people own a gun, it's more likely to be used on them than by them. I am not telling people you shouldn't be concerned about antisemitism, that you shouldn't worry about where this could lead, what I am telling people is there are other ways to engage in the fight against antisemitism and hate, and running to a gun store to buy a gun, preparing to engage in public shootouts, is not one of them.

**Jl: Is there anything else people should know?**

**FG:** I'll leave it here: in America, hate is not a path forward. And I hope people take the time to calm the rhetoric and to find people who they agree with or who they disagree with, and talk. This is a moment in time where this could get away from us, and we need to step in front of it now. ♦

# American cowboys lend a hand to Israeli farms in the West Bank

*HaYovel, an evangelical Christian volunteer-based operation, which this week brought 20 farmhands from Montana and Arkansas to Israel, has raised close to \$2 million worth of supplies, with a goal of at least \$29 million*

By Haley Cohen

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Photos of men in cowboy hats and plaid shirts making their way to Israel, with captions indicating they were going to help with Israel's struggling agriculture sector, spread widely on social media this week both in Hebrew and in English.

"American farmers and cowboys en route to Israel to help farmers in the [Gaza] periphery," according to one Hebrew-language Facebook post, which was shared nearly 1,000 times.

Indeed, farms in southern Israel have been among the hardest hit by the war, as both foreign workers have largely left the country and many of their Israeli employees have been called up to the reserves. The Agriculture Ministry calls southern Israel, specifically the area closest to the Gaza border, the "vegetable barn" because it supplies at least a third of Israel's vegetables, and all those potatoes, carrots, cucumbers and tomatoes were suddenly at risk.

In recent weeks, thousands of Israelis have pitched in to help with harvesting, planting and culling produce, and this week Birthright Israel launched a volunteering program to encourage its alumni to come help, offering free accommodations in exchange for farmwork. (Participants would have to pay for flights and travel insurance.)

But the cowboys and farmhands were not, in fact, going to the Gaza periphery. From Ben Gurion Airport, they made their way to the West Bank to work on olive groves in and around Israeli settlements with an evangelical group, HaYovel (the harvest), which brings hundreds of American

Christian farmhands each year to "confirm Israel's right to their ancestral homeland," as it writes on its website, referring specifically to the West Bank.

Following Hamas' attack, HaYovel, based in the West Bank settlement Har Bracha, launched Operation Ittai — which this week brought 20 farmhands from Montana and Arkansas, some of whom were already scheduled to come to Israel later this month.

"Everyone can help Israel right now with whatever their God-given gifts are," John Plocher, a 24-year-old volunteer from Montana, told eJewishPhilanthropy.

Zeke Strain arrived in Israel on Monday, his fourth time volunteering through HaYovel. The 20-year-old, also from Montana, was already planning — before the war broke out — to help with farming in the West Bank. But he pushed up his flight by a few weeks after Hamas' massacre in southern Israel. "We decided to come early because they are in desperate need in these little communities in Judea and Samaria," Strain told eJP, using the biblical term for the West Bank. "We'll help out in any way we can."

So far, the volunteer-based operation has raised close to \$2 million worth of supplies, with a goal of at least \$29 million. "We're procuring supplies in the United States," HaYovel's director of operations, Joshua Waller, told eJP. "The [mayors] of these areas requested us to bring the equipment in. Our first airlift arrived yesterday and will be clearing customs this week. The guys will be delivering supplies to the communities as well as working on the farms."

The volunteers have been sent to groves around the Shiloh settlement in the northern West Bank. Earlier this year, Israeli security

forces uprooted dozens of olive trees planted by Israeli settlers in the Shiloh Valley, two years after Israel's Supreme Court ordered that a farm stop operations on the grounds that they were located on privately owned Palestinian land. The Court mandated the eviction of 42 acres of olive groves, which is one of the largest agricultural businesses in the West Bank settlements that produces olive oil and wine.

The West Bank, which Waller referred to as Judea and Samaria and called the "biblical heartland" of the Jewish people, holds special significance to evangelicals, some of whom believe a modern-day return of Jews to the area could lead to Jesus' Second Coming. Waller noted that HaYovel volunteers don't chalk up their connection to Israel to Jesus' Second Coming. "Our guys are more pro-Israel than that. We're not promoting a Christian theology to Israel," he said. "We're Christian Zionists. We don't follow the lines of a mainstream world and we fully back a Jewish understanding of Israel."

"Israel is important to us," Plocher, who is scheduled to stay through the end of December, said. "We believe the Bible and that Jewish people have a right to this land." Back home in Hamilton, Mont., Plocher said there is "a lot of pro-Israel support."

"A lot of people feel for the Jewish people and care but don't necessarily know how to help. Sometimes being that far away from a situation, you feel like there is nothing you can do."

Waller said, "Everybody in the world is calling for a proportionate response [to the Oct. 7 terror attacks]. We're asking that the Christian world give a proportionate response to Jewish massacre." ♦

# House censures Tlaib for anti-Israel comments, with support from 22 Democrats

*The vote represents a tougher line from those Democrats, who have been resistant to supporting formal rebukes of Tlaib and others over anti-Israel and antisemitic comments*

By Marc Rod

The House voted to censure Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) over comments she has made in the weeks since the Hamas attack on Israel, including describing the attack as “resistance,” refusing to retract debunked claims that Israel bombed the Al-Ahli hospital in Gaza and defending a phrase seen by many as calling for the destruction of Israel. Twenty-two Democrats voted with most Republicans in favor of censuring Tlaib.

The vote represents a tougher line from those Democrats, many of whom have been resistant to supporting formal rebukes of Tlaib and others over anti-Israel and antisemitic comments. Earlier this year, for instance, they voted in lockstep against removing Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) from a committee seat over her own anti-Israel and antisemitic comments.

Reps. Steve Cohen (D-TN), Jim Costa (D-CA), Angie Craig (D-MN), Don Davis (D-NC), Lois Frankel (D-FL), Jared Golden (D-ME), Dan Goldman (D-NY), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Greg Landsman (D-OH), Susie Lee (D-NV), Kathy Manning (D-NC), Jared Moskowitz (D-FL), Wiley Nickel (D-NC), Chris Pappas (D-NH), Marie Glusenkamp Perez (D-OR), Pat Ryan (D-NY), Brad Schneider (D-IL), Kim Schrier (D-WA), Darren Soto (D-FL), Ritchie Torres (D-NY), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL) and Frederica Wilson (D-FL) voted in favor of the censure.

The phrase Tlaib defended, “From the river to the sea,” the full phrase being “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,” is a slogan “used by the PLO in 1964 before there was an occupation of the West Bank or Gaza, of Hamas when it was founded in 1987, of so many people who seek the destruction of the state of Israel,” Schneider told *Jewish Insider* on Tuesday. “They know

exactly what it means and any effort to try to persuade or gaslight folks that it means something else needs to be called out.”

He added in a statement after the vote that the censure resolution is “not perfect” but is “the only vehicle available to formally rebuke the dangerous disinformation and aspersions that Rep. Tlaib continues to use and defend,” also describing her comments about the hospital explosion as “blood libel” and “amplifying Hamas propaganda.”

GOP Reps. Ken Buck (R-CO), John Duarte (R-CA), Thomas Massie (R-KY) and Tom McClintock (R-GA) voted against the resolution; Buck had cited free speech concerns. Reps. David Joyce (R-OH), Donald Norcross (D-NJ), Abigail Spanberger (D-VA) and Susan Wild (D-PA) voted present.

This was the second attempt by House Republicans in the past two weeks to censure the Michigan congresswoman.

Some lawmakers who voted against censure had offered direct rebukes of Tlaib over her comments. Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), who did not vote for censure, offered a direct condemnation of Tlaib in a statement to *JL*.

“Rep. Tlaib’s comments are reprehensible. No amount of explaining detracts from the fact that the phrase means eradicating Israel,” Gallego said. “Securing peace and saving civilian lives will be done only through the returning of hostages and the elimination of Hamas.”

Earlier Tuesday, Schneider and Torres, along with Reps. Hillary Scholten (D-MI) and Norma Torres (D-CA), led 64 other Democrats on a statement rejecting the “river to the sea” slogan without specifically naming Tlaib.

“We reject the use of the phrase ‘from the river to the sea’ — a phrase used by many, including Hamas, as a rallying cry

for the destruction of the State of Israel and genocide of the Jewish people,” the statement reads. “Hamas started this war with a barbaric terrorist attack on October 7, 2023, and neither the Palestinian nor Israeli people can have peace as long as Hamas still rules over Gaza and threatens Israel.”

The statement also endorses a humanitarian pause “of limited space and time”; and calls for the end of Hamas rocket attacks, the release of hostages and the “release of all Palestinian civilians being detained by Hamas as human shields in Gaza”; and condemns Hamas’ “complete disregard” for humanitarian law.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) released his own statement in which he also condemned the slogan without naming Tlaib. He also called for “respect” for fellow members of Congress and President Joe Biden, whom Tlaib accused of supporting genocide. Democratic leadership urged lawmakers not to support censure.

“Israel, a safe haven for Jews, was viciously attacked on October 7. Echoing slogans that are widely understood as calling for the complete destruction of Israel — such as from the River to the Sea — does not advance progress toward a two-state solution,” Jeffries said. “Instead, it unacceptably risks further polarization, division and incitement to violence.”

Jeffries also rejected “ad hominem attacks against colleagues.” He said that “the ongoing effort to decisively defeat this brutal terrorist regime must succeed” in order to achieve peace and said, “people of goodwill should unequivocally condemn this vile terrorism, as well as the deeply disturbing rise in antisemitism and Islamophobia in America.”

In a heated, bitter House floor debate yesterday, which included shouted barbs

from multiple lawmakers, Tlaib tearfully accused colleagues of trying to silence her and any criticism of Israel, and of distorting her words, which she said are in support of a cease-fire.

“Let me be clear, my criticism has always been of the Israeli government and [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu’s actions,” she insisted, describing herself as speaking for “millions of people across our country who oppose Netanyahu’s extremism, and are done watching our government support collective punishment” and “war crimes.” She did not address the “river to the sea” slogan or her comments about the Gaza hospital.

“I can’t believe I have to say this, but Palestinian people are not disposable. We are human beings just like anyone else,” she continued.

Her campaign doubled down after the censure vote, sending out a fundraising email alleging the House “just voted to censure Rashida for calling the Israeli military’s attacks on Palestinian civilians what it is: genocide.”

Several Democrats who spoke in Tlaib’s defense, led by Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD), argued that she should not be censured for protected free speech, which they said would set a dangerous precedent for the House. Others also defended her comments and accused Republicans of trying to silence Palestinian perspectives in particular.

Republicans, led by Rep. Rich McCormick (R-GA), argued that Tlaib’s rhetoric had undermined U.S. interests, incited antisemitic hatred in the U.S., downplayed the horrors of the attack on Israel and offered support for Hamas.

Rep. Jamaal Bowman (D-NY) said that Republicans, “because of your lack of diversity... lack the cognitive and emotional ability to recognize diverse opinions when they speak truth to power.”

Rep. Pat Fallon (R-TX) taunted Bowman to “pull a fire alarm,” referencing recent criminal charges against him. At another point in the debate, as Rep. Cori Bush (D-MO) continued her shouted remarks after the expiration of her speaking time, Rep. Warren Davidson (R-OH) yelled at her to “shut up.”

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) ultimately pulled from consideration a competing censure resolution that would likely have faced an uphill battle to passage. She accused House leadership of failing to properly coordinate the efforts. ♦

NOVEMBER 6, 2023

## Brandeis becomes first private university to ban Students for Justice in Palestine on campus

*Brandeis President Ronald Liebowitz: ‘Chants and social media posts calling for violence against Jews or the annihilation of the state of Israel must not be tolerated.’*

By Haley Cohen

**B**randeis University on Monday became the first private university to ban the campus chapter of National Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), *Jewish Insider* has learned.

SJP’s open support for Hamas, which the U.S. has designated as a terrorist organization, was the driving factor in the decision, according to a source familiar with Brandeis’ plans. The source noted that the National SJP has called on its chapters to engage in conduct that supports Hamas in its call for the violent elimination of Israel and the Jewish people.

The crackdown comes on the same day that Brandeis President Ronald Liebowitz published an op-ed in the *Boston Globe* saying that student organizations that participate in antisemitism should “lose all privileges associated with affiliation at their

schools.”

“Specifically, chants and social media posts calling for violence against Jews or the annihilation of the state of Israel must not be tolerated,” Liebowitz wrote.

“This includes phrases such as ‘from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free’ — which calls for the erasure of the Jewish state; ‘there is only one solution’ — which echoes the Nazi strategy of killing all Jews; and ‘intifada, intifada’ — an incitement to violence against Israeli civilians.”

JI obtained a copy of a letter that was sent to SJP on Monday informing the group that it had been banned.

“This decision was not made lightly, as Brandeis is dedicated to upholding free speech principles, which have been codified in Brandeis’ Principles of Free Speech and Free Expression,” the letter said. “However,

those Principles note that ‘The freedom to debate and discuss ideas does not mean that individuals may say whatever they wish, wherever they wish, or however they wish,’ and that, ‘...the university may restrict expression...that constitutes a genuine threat or harassment...or that is otherwise directly incompatible with the functioning of the university.’”

The letter continued, “The National SJP has called on its chapters to engage in conduct that supports Hamas in its call for the violent elimination of Israel and the Jewish people. These tactics are not protected by the University’s Principles. As a result, the University made the decision that the Brandeis chapter of the National SJP must be unrecognized and will no longer be eligible to receive funding, be permitted to conduct activities on campus, or use the



Brandeis name and logo in promoting itself or its activities, including through social media channels.”

The letter further states that students who choose to participate in conduct that supports Hamas

“will be considered to be in violation of the University’s student code of conduct.”

“Students who wish to express their support for the rights of Palestinian civilians may form another student organization, through established procedures, that complies with University policies,” the document continues.

The move comes on the heels of a letter jointly written by the Anti-Defamation League and the Louis D. Brandeis Center in late October to nearly 200 university presidents that claims SJP “provides vocal and potentially material support to Hamas, a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization,” demanding that schools “investigate the activities of your campus chapter of [SJP] for potential violations of 18 USC 2389A and B, and its state equivalents, that is, for potential violations of the prohibition against materially supporting a foreign terrorist organization.”

Brandeis, founded in 1948 as a nonsectarian Jewish university, has one of the highest concentrations of Jewish students at any college in the country — Jewish students comprise about a third of undergraduates. The school also has a large number of international students, including Palestinians.

In February, an SJP rally at Brandeis, organized as a response to an Israeli military raid in the West Bank city of Jenin, drew national attention for its antisemitic rhetoric.

Dozens of national Jewish groups and campus organizations have called on universities to withdraw their recognition and funding for groups affiliated with SJP. Most of the group’s chapters, which commonly go by the name Students for Justice in Palestine but have other names on some campuses, have celebrated or defended Hamas’ Oct. 7 terrorist attack against Israel.

SJP was outlawed last month by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis at the state’s public universities.

“Based on the National SJP’s support of terrorism, in consultation with Governor

DeSantis, the student chapters must be deactivated,” the state university system’s chancellor, Ray Rodrigues, wrote in a memo in October to university leaders.

The move marked the first time a state has outlawed SJP. The Florida university system said its SJP ban is based on a “toolkit,” issued by the national organization to chapters ahead of its Oct. 12 “Day of Resistance.” JI obtained a copy of the “toolkit,” which has since been removed from the internet. The seven-page kit referred to Hamas’ massacre of 1,400 Israelis on Oct. 7 as “the Palestinian resistance.”

A request for comment from Brandeis’ SJP chapter was not immediately returned.

A “Vigil for Palestine” planned for Monday night was canceled in an announcement on the chapter’s Instagram page. “With heavy hearts, we would like to announce that our chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine has been unjustly de-chartered,” the Instagram caption said. “This comes as a part of Brandeis University, an institution that values social justice, trying to silence us from speaking our truth... from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.” ♦

NOVEMBER 8, 2023

## Israel’s former U.N. Ambassador Danny Danon keeping up personal diplomacy

*Knesset Member Danon sits down with JI to talk about Israel’s military effort against Hamas, hostage negotiations and rising antisemitism abroad*

By Lahav Harkov

Danny Danon, Israel’s former ambassador to the United Nations, is on a mission. Since the Oct. 7 terror attack against Israel, Danon has given multiple interviews to the foreign media each day and taken delegations of ambassadors and social media influencers to Israel’s south to witness the atrocities.

A member of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and its secretive Subcommittee on Intelligence and Secret Services, Danon is privy to highly classified information on the current war.

Danon was also Israel’s deputy defense minister in 2013-2014, a job from which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu fired him after he publicly criticized Netanyahu’s handling of Operation Protective Edge, the largest operation against Hamas before this year.

Danon spoke with *Jewish Insider*, after taking former Prime Ministers Boris Johnson of the U.K. and Scott Morrison of Australia to the western Negev on Sunday.

*The interview was edited for length and clarity.*

**Jewish Insider: Why did you bring Johnson and Morrison to Israel?**

**Danny Danon:** A month after the massacre and atrocities by Hamas, some in the world have forgotten what happened. The discussion is shifting towards the quote-unquote humanitarian crisis of the Palestinians.

I think it’s important to bring leaders to see what happened and speak to the people here, so they can go back and echo what they saw.

That's what we did today with Johnson and Morrison. I'm sure they brought a lot of media from their home countries, and they will also speak up and send the message that Israel needs not only support but time to finish the job and to eradicate Hamas.

**JJ: Do you think Israel will have the time it needs to do that job?**

**DD:** I don't think we have any other option. We have to finish the job this time after many times that we postponed it.

Hamas is not an existential threat to Israel, but if we don't eliminate Hamas, it will become an existential threat, because others in the region will not be afraid of Israel. That will cause a major problem.

It would be better to do it with the support of the international community, which I believe we still have, but even if we have to confront our allies, I will still push the government and prime minister to eliminate Hamas at all costs. We cannot let them stay in Gaza to recover and rebuild its strength all over again.

**JJ: Israel's allies are pushing it to take "humanitarian pauses" to allow aid to get to southern Gaza. Do you think that should happen?**

**DD:** I don't think we should give any gifts to our enemies. We know that in every pause or cease-fire, they regroup and they can move to different locations. A humanitarian pause basically means increasing the level of casualties. They'll be better prepared and we will pay the price. I don't see a reason to do that.

We have to remind the world what I said on the tour: We had a cease-fire with Hamas until Oct. 7, when they chose to break the cease-fire to attack our communities in a barbaric way we had never imagined.

**JJ: Israel is allowing some humanitarian aid to get into southern Gaza, and some voices on the right oppose that. What do you think?**

**DD:** I think we should demand that for everything we give, we get something in exchange. It can be hostages or Red Cross visits.

I haven't heard the Red Cross say

anything about the 240 Israelis [held hostage by Hamas in Gaza]. They are usually very vocal. We haven't heard anything so far.

I think if we do give humanitarian support, we should demand from the rest of the world that our humanitarian issue be addressed.

**JJ: Would that humanitarian aid include fuel?**

**DD:** I hope not, unless we receive many hostages back to Israel. I won't say a number, but it has to be very significant. That would be fueling the enemy, who will use it for rockets and ventilation in tunnels. Fuel would give them more support for the next fight against our soldiers.

**JJ: What can you tell us about the conditions of the hostages? Are they still alive?**

**DD:** I am on the Subcommittee on Intelligence, but I can't share that information. I can tell you to just imagine the situation of a 9-month-old in captivity for a month, children not being able to see their parents for a month.

When we told Prime Minister Johnson the ages of people kidnapped, he was shocked to hear it.

**JJ: Do we know where the hostages are?**

**DD:** They are not in one location, but I can't go into details.

**JJ: Is there a chance for a rescue operation, like we saw for IDF soldier Ori Megidish last week?**

**DD:** That was an inspiring operation by our forces, but we should not expect it to happen in the other cases. It's very hard not only to gather the intelligence, but also to operate and bring hostages safely back to Israel.

**JJ: Are the negotiations with Qatar to free the hostages helping?**

**DD:** There were negotiations last week, but they weren't successful. Hamas is very cynical and they like to play games with us.

The more pressure we apply to them and the more they hear our bulldozers getting closer to their tunnels, the more likely it will lead to some kind of agreement regarding the hostages.

**JJ: Do you think Qatar is a fair actor in the negotiations?**

**DD:** Qatar developed an expertise in working with bad actors, going way back to the Taliban – the U.S. used them to send messages. Today, they talk to Iran and Hamas.

In the short term, we are going to have to work with them because they are connected to Hamas. We will do anything possible to release the hostages; we will work with anyone.

In the long term, I think not only the U.S. but all democracies should demand more from Qatar. We need more clarity. Do they want to support Hamas financially, and support ISIS-like terror...or do they want to become a member of Western civilization? I think it's about time we demand answers from them.

**JJ: Were you surprised by U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' stance on the war, contextualizing the Hamas massacre in a way many Israelis saw as making excuses for terror?**

**DD:** I make a distinction between U.N. member states and the secretary-general.

For member states, it's business as usual. They're always against Israel and condemn Israel and are not willing to condemn Hamas or Iran even after Oct. 7.

What happened with the secretary-general is shocking. I brought him to Israel in 2017. I took him to see Hamas tunnels. He said that what Hamas is doing is inhumane. Now, when we need moral clarity, he became a Hamas spokesperson. At one stage, he justified this horrible attack in a disgraceful speech at the U.N. Security Council.

Then, he condemned Israel after we found out that Hamas was trying to use Red Cross ambulances to transfer terrorists. Instead of condemning Hamas, he condemned Israel. I regret it.

I think Israel should encourage the U.S. and other parties at the U.N. not to cooperate with the secretary-general until he retracts

his one-sided approach against Israel.

**JI: Do you think the U.N. has a role to play in this war?**

**DD:** We see that they are one-sided...I have no expectations from any organ of the U.N. We should prepare for the day we will have to act independently, even if there are U.N. resolutions against us, because we have seen the silence of the U.N. when Israeli babies are massacred and we realize we should not count on them.

**JI: What do you think should happen in Gaza after the war?**

**DD:** This is a legitimate issue to discuss. In the past, when I raised the idea of eradicating Hamas, people told me, "We have no one to hand the keys to." In 2014, when I was deputy minister of defense, I demanded that Prime Minister Netanyahu finish with Hamas, and he fired me. Back then, people also told me, "You have no idea who would take their place."

I said, listen, even if we have no one to give the keys to, we should eliminate Hamas and then deal with that. That's what's happening now, after we paid a very heavy price.

We have no intention of running the lives of the people in Gaza. There should

be some kind of regional cooperation with the international community to find a mechanism that will support the population but allow us the freedom to make sure we are not allowing another terror entity to take control. It should be similar to what we have in Judea and Samaria, with the possibility to go in whenever we need to and make sure we deal with the threats.

**JI: What would the Palestinian Authority's role be in Gaza?**

**DD:** I'm not sure because the PA is very weak. I don't see them managing the situation today in Judea and Samaria. In Jenin and other places, they are not capable of fighting terror, so it's very hard to see them now doing anything in Gaza. But maybe after the war, there will be a new reality and they would like to partner with a regional effort. I don't see them being capable of doing something major themselves.

**JI: You're a lifelong Likudnik. What do you think is in Netanyahu's political future?**

**DD:** I appear a lot in the media to try to strengthen the people of Israel and I am always asked about that. I say frankly, now is not the time to deal with politics. Now is the time to be united and work together. I spoke

with [National Unity Party leader Benny] Gantz before he joined the government, and I think it was a good decision. We should focus on victory now.

The time will come to have inquiries and ask the right questions of all levels: the government, military, Shin Bet – everyone will be accountable for what happened.

**JI: What do you think Israel's role should be in responding to the growing antisemitism around the world?**

**DD:** I know Jewish communities are now under stress. We see the demonstrations all around the world, the attack in Paris and I think the authorities of the governments abroad should take responsibility. They should not only speak about freedom and security for the Jewish community, but should also take proper actions to ensure the safety of Jews all around the world.

Israel is the Jewish homeland... We are open whenever they want to come, but we think the responsibility is on the governments and we should demand answers from them.

I speak with many leaders and they tell me, "We have legislation." That's true, but they don't have enforcement. We should demand more enforcement and concrete action, not just declarations...to make sure Jews can live safely anywhere in the world. ♦

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## National Library of Israel launches 'unprecedented' effort to collect everything it can about Oct. 7 attacks

*Head of collections says institution is working with groups and archives around the world to gather testimony, footage and documentation about the massacres and their aftermath, which will likely take years and cost millions*

By Judah Ari Gross

*The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.*

The National Library of Israel has launched a massive project, expected to take years and cost

millions, to collect and catalog all materials connected to the Oct. 7 attacks and ongoing war that resulted from them. It has already gathered more than 200,000 videos, and are only just getting started.

"The library both by law and by mission

is the repository of Israeli and Jewish collective memories," Raquel Ukeles, the head of collections for the library, told eJewishPhilanthropy this week. "Our mission is to document, collect, preserve and make available — in the broadest way

possible — Israeli culture and society, Jewish religion, traditions, history and society for our generation and for generations to come, so this work sits at our core mission.”

The scope of the collection project is vast, including almost anything you can think of: video footage, photos, audio recordings from the attacks; testimonies from survivors; news broadcasts; social media posts; sermons and *divrei Torah*; fundraising materials; information about volunteering efforts; letters written to Israeli soldiers; and much, much more.

“This is a massive, perhaps unprecedented, collection effort that we’re engaged in,” Ukeles said, estimating that the library will end up collecting “terabytes and terabytes” of data.

The National Library of Israel, which opened the doors of its new building last Sunday, has partnered with a number of organizations and other libraries both in Israel and around the world to collect this information.

“We see our role as leading a collaborative effort to — as broadly as possible — build a National Library archive of all the documents and all the materials related to October 7th, to the war and the ongoing struggles,” she said. “Our work is collaborative leadership. What does that mean? The responsibility and the mandate sits with us...but we recognize it doesn’t sit only with us and that there are many stakeholders here.”

In Israel, the library is working closely with Tel Aviv University, which Ukeles said was “the first one out the gate to start collection efforts,” and Hebrew University; the Israel Oral History Association; Association of Israeli Archivists; along with a group of oral history scholars who created the “Leadership Forum for War Documentation Initiatives”; a volunteer group of documentarians known as Edut (Testimony) 710, referring to the date of the attack as it is written in Israel, who have been recording testimonies from survivors and first responders; and several other smaller groups.

Outside of Israel, the library is working with the Yeshiva University Museum, the Association of Jewish Libraries, the Berman Archive at Stanford University and the USC Shoah Foundation, which launched a testimony collection project

last month. Ukeles said there were several other organizations that the library was in talks with but had not yet solidified formal partnerships.

Ukeles stressed the importance of collaboration in this collection project, both to prevent unnecessary anguish for survivors by having them share their ordeals multiple times with different organizations and to ensure that nothing gets missed or lost.

“Someone who works in Holocaust testimony told me that they did not succeed in doing this work, that egos and other reasons created silos, and that gets in the way of good research,” she said.

Having multiple libraries and archives involved also ensures that there are multiple copies of documents and testimonies, Ukeles said, citing the industry acronym LOCKSS, “lots of copies keep stuff safe.”

In addition to serving as a source for future research and study, the collection is also meant to serve as evidence in any trials related to the attacks and as a vehicle for survivors to give testimony, according to Sallai Meridor, chairman of the board of the library.

“I view this project as a threefold effort: it provides those survivors who wish to tell their story to have it remembered for eternity in the most respectful way; it will serve as an evidence resource for those wishing to seek some justice; and it will stand for generations, for young people who will wish to explore their heritage, and for future historians worldwide who will try to understand these events and their implications,” he said in a statement to eJP.

Ukeles said collection efforts began almost immediately as the organizations and individuals involved realized the enormity of the event and the importance of preserving what happened for the future.

The more than 200,000 videos that the library has already collected came from an initiative run by the Brothers and Sisters for Israel movement, which was overseen by Karine Nahon, an Israeli professor and media expert, whose team gathered the footage immediately after the attacks and used artificial intelligence tools to identify the last moments before people went missing in order to help families and investigators determine if someone was

killed or taken hostage.

“They worked on that day and night for two weeks and then they realized that they don’t need this material anymore, but somebody needs to save this so they reached out to us and they transferred 200,000 videos,” Ukeles said.

The collection work has been a major focus for the library over the past month, with a core team of 10 people working on it, from the library’s collections, technical services and digital content creation departments.

“[After the attacks], we all dropped what we were doing. And for the first few weeks, this is basically the only thing that most of us have been doing. But we realized that that’s not sustainable,” Ukeles said.

The current head of the project is only working on it part time, but Ukeles said this will require a full-time coordinator for at least the next few years.

“We’re looking at a timeline of an initial phase of two years and probably a five-year project all together,” she said. “And we’re talking about a several-million-dollars project.” ♦