

## THE WEEKLY PRINT

*Calling for moral clarity on antisemitism, Pa. governor slams UPenn's president; Long Island special election could feature two candidates with deep Jewish community ties; 'Mission impossible': Gaza humanitarian envoy David Satterfield's high-stakes diplomacy; CAIR executive director 'happy to see' Oct. 7 Hamas terror attack; Gideon Sa'ar: 'No practical value' in push for PA to control Gaza; Jayapal sister's congressional candidacy alarming Portland Jewish leaders; Calling for genocide of Jews doesn't violate school policy, university presidents tell Congress; and Maccabee Task Force looks to screen Oct. 7 footage at several campuses in coming weeks, more later.*

DECEMBER 6, 2023

## Calling for moral clarity on antisemitism, Pa. governor slams UPenn's president

*Gov. Josh Shapiro, a Democrat, addresses Israel, antisemitism and divides in the Democratic Party after a visit to Goldie, a falafel shop targeted by antisemitic protests*

By Gabby Deutch

Pita with falafel, chips (the Israeli kind — French fries) and hummus: that's Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro's standard falafel order, in Israel or in Philadelphia. That's what he purchased during a Wednesday morning visit to Goldie, a kosher falafel shop that over the weekend was harassed by a large group of antisemitic protestors.

After his visit to the Rittenhouse Square restaurant, Shapiro, in his most detailed comments yet on the rising antisemitism

on college campuses, forcefully called for moral clarity from leaders in their response to antisemitism.

According to Shapiro, such moral clarity was absent in yesterday's Capitol Hill committee hearing when the presidents of Harvard, MIT and the University of Pennsylvania were asked whether calls for genocide against Jews violated their schools' codes of conduct.

Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY) asked UPenn President Elizabeth Magill on Tuesday if

students calling for the genocide of Jews violate the university's code of conduct. Magill equivocated in her answer. "If the speech turns into conduct, it can be harassment," Magill responded. "It is a context-dependent decision." Stefanik pressed her to say "yes" or "no," but Magill would not.

"The simple answer," Shapiro noted, "is yes, that violates our policy."

"Leaders have a responsibility to speak and act with moral clarity, and Liz Magill

failed to meet that simple test,” he added. “That was an unacceptable statement from the president of Penn. Frankly, I thought her comments were absolutely shameful. It should not be hard to condemn genocide.”

Shapiro called for Penn’s board to “meet soon” to decide whether Magill’s testimony “represents the views and values of the University of Pennsylvania” but said he would wait to see what action they take before taking action himself.

“I’ve made concrete recommendations to them on the kind of steps that I thought they needed to take to make sure that all students feel safe on their campus,” said Shapiro, who has spoken to Magill numerous times since the Hamas terror attack in Israel on Oct. 7. “They have seemingly failed every step of the way to take concrete action to make sure all students feel safe on campus. And then the testimony yesterday took it to the next level.”

He praised the leadership of other Pennsylvania universities, including Carnegie Mellon and Penn State, calling Magill “the exception.”

Shapiro sat down for an interview with *Jewish Insider* at a Philadelphia café after his visit to Goldie, which garnered international headlines after a video of the antisemitic mob went viral. A pro-Palestinian demonstration amassed outside the restaurant on Sunday evening, with protestors chanting, “Goldie, Goldie, you can’t hide, we charge you with genocide.”

That the protestors targeted a Jewish-owned business, after boycotts earlier this fall of other restaurants owned by Jewish Philadelphians, “conjures up images of 1930s Germany,” Shapiro said.

“To come to the restaurant simply because it’s owned by a Jew and hold that Jew responsible for Israeli policy — that’s the definition of antisemitism,” said Shapiro, a Democrat.

Shapiro told *J* he is in touch with local law enforcement about the incident at Goldie but declined to say whether any cases have been opened. “Rest assured they would have all the support they may request from our state police should they need it,” he said.

Political leaders ranging from President Joe Biden to local city council members, among them progressives who have been deeply critical of Israel’s military campaign

in Gaza, have weighed in to condemn the protest against Goldie.

“Leaders need to speak with moral clarity,” said Shapiro, who added that he did not talk to the White House before they issued a statement boosting his own condemnation of the incident. “To see that response from the president of the United States, and from leaders on the left and the right, I think shows the kind of moral clarity that we need, that we did not see from the mob when they were outside of that building this week.”

Shapiro, whose campaign for governor last year highlighted his Jewish faith, extended his call for moral clarity to the Oct. 7 attacks.

“There is a lot of room for nuance when it comes to Israeli policy, both pre-October 7, and the manner in which they’ve responded post-October 7,” Shapiro explained.

“I think that there can be no debate, no nuance, when it comes to really two key aspects here of the situation: Number one, Hamas is a terrorist group that launched an unprovoked brutal attack in Israel, raping women, assaulting and killing children and taking 240 hostages, including at least 10 Americans,” he continued. “The second thing there should be no debate and no nuance on, is that we do not tolerate antisemitism or Islamophobia, and we have to call that out.”

He offered his clearest comments to date about Israel’s political system and the American response to the Oct. 7 terror attacks.

“I’m someone who personally thinks Benjamin Netanyahu is a terrible leader, who has been leading Israel down a really dangerous, destructive path. I’m someone who favors a two-state solution, someone who believes the Palestinians should have their own state and live peacefully side by side, assuming they of course acknowledge Israel’s right to exist and forego violence against Israelis,” Shapiro said. “I’m someone who appreciates the nuance of that debate, but also recognizes that it’s pretty black and white when it comes to combating terror, speaking out against terror and speaking out against hate and bigotry and antisemitism.”

A savvy political operator who is widely believed to be a potential presidential contender in the future, Shapiro expressed

astonishment at some activists and political figures on the left who have sought to minimize Hamas’ brutality to promote the Palestinian cause.

“I’m not sure how we lost our way in this country, where some people are trying to twist themselves up like a pretzel and somehow not condemn Hamas’ actions,” he said. “Here in this country, we should be on the side of the hostages, not the hostage takers. I’m not quite sure why that’s hard for some people to grasp.”

Shapiro acknowledged the free speech rights of Pennsylvanians to speak out about the situation in the Middle East, regardless of which side they come down on.

“There is a place for peaceful protest,” he said, “certainly in the birthplace of our democracy.” He pointed to Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis’ attempt to ban pro-Hamas student groups — which faced litigation by the ACLU — as going too far.

“As for what Governor DeSantis did in Florida, I think that’s the wrong approach. I don’t believe in either criminalizing or banning peaceful free speech,” Shapiro said. “We of course know it crosses a line when it incites violence, and that we can’t tolerate. But we want to protect free speech.” At the same time, he added, “we can’t have large groups of students feeling unsafe as a result of those protests, or having chants of ‘genocide’ screamed at students on campus.”

The result, Shapiro argued, should be more education on antisemitism and on hate. But even more than that, he said, students should learn how to read news critically and how to make sense of the morass of information they encounter on social media.

“Given the fact that so many people, especially younger people, are getting information, getting their news through social media, we need to make sure that they are careful consumers of that information,” he said.

Some Democratic activists within the Muslim community have threatened to stay home in 2024 rather than supporting Biden, given his support for Israel. Shapiro, who has already appeared on the campaign trail for Biden, largely brushed those concerns aside. He expects them to come around in the end.

“I think when push comes to shove,

and folks have a choice between Joe Biden and the chaos of Donald Trump — Donald Trump, who's peddled all types of Islamophobia and antisemitism over the years — I don't think we want to go back to that chaos," he said. "I would hope that, notwithstanding this momentary difference, that when people have to make a judgment next year about the direction of this country that they don't want to go back to the chaos that Donald Trump brought."

Shapiro is believed to harbor his own

presidential ambitions, and in September he was the keynote speaker at the New Hampshire Democratic Party state convention. A Philadelphia sports fan, Shapiro acknowledged that it's not a typical destination "for people who hate the Boston Celtics."

"They gave me a platform to talk about President Biden and also to talk about the progress we're making here in town," said Shapiro.

On Thursday, Shapiro will celebrate the

first night of Hanukkah at Penn, where he will participate in a public menorah lighting. He plans to meet with Jewish students "to make sure they know that we see them, we're here for them [and] we want them to feel safe, because many of them do not feel safe on campus right now," he said.

"I think any university president's really top responsibility is to make sure students feel safe and secure on campus." ♦

DECEMBER 4, 2023

## Long Island special election could feature two candidates with deep Jewish community ties

*Democrats are likely to pick Tom Suozzi, a moderate pro-Israel Democrat, as their candidate, while Republicans are eyeing Ethiopian Jewish IDF veteran Mazi Melesa Pilip*

By Marc Rod

**T**he expulsion of now-former Rep. George Santos (R-NY) is setting up the likelihood of a highly competitive special election in a battleground New York district. The Long Island and Queens district previously represented by the accused fraudster has a significant Jewish population, and both of the emerging candidates are strongly positioned to make a play for those votes.

"What is most key to watch is the Jewish vote," said Jon Reinish, a Democratic strategist in New York. "I think you're going to see Jews voting on Israel, Jews voting on fear of antisemitism. I think you're going to see a huge play for the Jewish vote."

Democrats are expected to pick former Rep. Tom Suozzi (D-NY), the ex-congressman who gave up the seat to mount a primary challenge to Gov. Kathy Hochul. Suozzi would bring a strong pro-Israel Democratic voice back to the House, at a time when the party is grappling with its internal divisions over Israel policy.

Suozzi was outspoken, in his time in office, about calling out colleagues over anti-Israel comments — at times he was the most outspoken non-Jewish member on the issue. And he otherwise bucked his party

when he believed it wasn't sufficiently pro-Israel. He was also a leader on pushing the administration to take a harder line on Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah.

In the aftermath of the Oct. 7 attack, Suozzi said in a statement, "I have always stood with Israel. Today I am asking you to stay united with Israel in the difficult days, months, and years ahead... Now is the time for America and the global community to redouble our commitment to Israel, employing every means necessary to dismantle Iran-backed Hamas, and put an end to their reign of terror. Our support must be unequivocal."

"There is no place for second-guessing Israel's efforts moving forward," he continued.

In a 2020 event with Democratic Majority for Israel, Suozzi said he considered himself "one of the most reliable non-Jewish Democratic votes in the House of Representatives" and said, "you can always count on me on every issue related to Israel."

Suozzi's first floor speech in the House after he was first elected was on condemning U.N. Resolution 2334, which condemned Israeli settlements, a move the Obama administration declined to veto.

"I think it would be monumental, it would be huge," to have Suozzi back in Congress at this point, a Democratic insider told JI. "He was one of the most pro-Israel Democratic members of Congress... He's got strong pro-Israel ties in this community dating back to his time as mayor of Glen Cove... There's very few Democratic members of Congress or candidates who are more pro-Israel and a stronger defender of the Jewish people than he is."

On the GOP side, several Republicans had declared primary challenges to Santos, but buzz has centered around Nassau County legislator Mazi Melesa Pilip, an Ethiopian Jewish refugee who served as an Israeli Defense Forces paratrooper and has strong ties in the local Persian and Orthodox Jewish communities. She's been seen as a top GOP pick for the seat since the earliest days of the Santos scandal.

"I don't want to hear Israel has a 'right' — Israel has an obligation to protect her people," Pilip, whose family members are currently serving in the IDF, said in a Fox News interview on Oct. 31. "There's no other choice. We saw enough. We cannot allow anything like this to happen ever again."

Even Democrats see Pilip as potentially

well-placed to pose a real challenge to Suozzi on Israel policy.

"If I'm the Republicans, that makes sense," the Democratic insider said. "Especially now in light of the war, she's really made this her issue and made this a huge part of her identity."

Pilip, in the Fox interview, called the current wave of antisemitism "frightening" and "out of control," praising the White House for the steps it had taken to that point but calling for further action.

Suozzi, too, is apparently concerned about running against Pilip.

"There is an undercurrent out there that Suozzi is concerned about running against Mazi," a source told JI. "He keeps calling around to find out, 'Is it going to be her, is it going to be her?'"

Pilip attended a rally at Columbia University to push back against antisemitism and support for Hamas on the Ivy League campus, calling it "shocking" that Jewish students had to demonstrate to ask for support from their school.

"I spoke with students — they're scared, and I feel they are alone. To be honest, nobody's doing anything," she said on Fox. "It took them, what, 25 days to react? Even for Gov. Hochul? I'm happy, but it took too long... It's unfair. I can't see all the students suffering this way. Terrified. Why? Why do we deserve that? We are the victim here. Why is the world confused?"

Pilip said that she got into politics in the U.S. in part because of her experience advocating for fellow Ethiopian immigrants in Israel and through her advocacy in response to antisemitic comments her child faced in a local public school.

Pilip's husband, whom she met in Israel and with whom she moved to the U.S., was born in Ukraine and is the grandchild of Holocaust survivors.

One of the biggest factors in the special election, expected to be held in February 2024: Will the embarrassing Santos scandal hurt the GOP's chances in a district where the party has been making inroads?

Rep. Anthony D'Esposito (R-NY),

another freshman Long Island Republican who helped lead the charge on the GOP side against Santos, dismissed concerns that the scandal would jeopardize Republicans' chances of holding onto the seat.

D'Esposito highlighted conservative wins across Nassau County and Long Island in recent years — "we won seats in towns that we haven't had in 25 years," he told reporters on Friday after the expulsion vote — and described Long Island as "a bright shade of red."

"George Santos is not going to be the anchor around anyone's neck," he said. "Voters are smart, and they are going to see that we're going to find a great candidate." He predicted that many Republican House members from across the country would be visiting the district to campaign on behalf of the GOP's nominee in the coming months.

*Jewish Insider reporter Matthew Kassel contributed reporting.* ♦

DECEMBER 1, 2023

## 'Mission impossible': Gaza humanitarian envoy David Satterfield's high-stakes diplomacy

*Washington thinks Israel has an obligation to both fight Hamas and protect Gazan civilians. That leaves Satterfield walking a tightrope*

By Gabby Deutch

Soon after the first Israeli hostages held by Hamas were released last week, President Joe Biden held an impromptu press conference at a Nantucket, Mass., hotel to address the U.S.-brokered deal that encompassed the releases of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners held in Israeli jails, and the delivery of additional humanitarian aid to Gaza in exchange for a pause in Israel's ground war. His brief remarks mentioned just one American official by name: David Satterfield, the U.S. special envoy for Middle East humanitarian issues.

"I've asked him to monitor our progress hour-by-hour and keep me personally

informed," Biden said of the increased humanitarian assistance that would be delivered to Gaza during the pause in fighting.

A longtime senior diplomat who has held high-ranking positions across the Arab world, Satterfield has become an indispensable part of the Biden administration's handling of the war in Gaza. He was named to the post just eight days after the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks, tasked with leading "a whole-of-government campaign to mitigate the humanitarian fallout of Hamas' terrorist attack against Israel," Secretary of State Tony Blinken said in a press release.

This framing was important: It laid the blame for the impending humanitarian crisis at Hamas' feet, and bolstered Washington's argument that considering Gaza's humanitarian needs was not just morally right, but also a strategic component of Israel's response to the Hamas attack. The administration's thinking held that by easing the suffering of Palestinian civilians, Israel would have a longer runway for its military campaign.

"It's not as though the humanitarian aspects of this are just something that they do on the side to do for PR for the world," said Washington Institute for Near East Policy Executive Director Robert Satloff,

who has known Satterfield for decades and has been in touch with him about his current role. “No, it is an essential element of being able to have the time and space to achieve the strategic mission. So the deployment of Satterfield by the president, and what he represents in terms of the U.S. effort to coordinate this, is a huge advantage for Israel.”

But tying humanitarian concerns so closely to a military campaign means that Satterfield, more than any other American official, is walking a tightrope: His work is both crucial to Israel’s war effort and, sometimes, at odds with it.

“If we back [Israel’s] campaign to eliminate Hamas, that means quite likely there will be more combat. So then that’s in tension with the humanitarian aid situation for Gazans,” said Brian Katulis, vice president of policy at the Middle East Institute.

That tension became even clearer this week. As the weeklong humanitarian pause in fighting appeared to be nearing an end, Biden administration officials were warning Israel that it should not begin its planned campaign in southern Gaza until more had been done to account for the huge population of Palestinians who fled there from northern Gaza earlier in the war.

“We don’t support southern operations unless or until the Israelis can show that they have accounted for all the internally displaced people of Gaza,” John Kirby, the National Security Council’s coordinator for strategic communications, said on Tuesday.

Blinken relayed this message to Israeli officials during his Thursday visit to Tel Aviv.

“In my meetings today with the prime minister and senior Israeli officials, I made clear that before Israel resumes major military operations, it must put in place humanitarian civilian protection plans that minimize further casualties of innocent Palestinians,” Blinken said. “That means taking more effective steps to protect the lives of civilians, including by clearly and precisely designating areas and places in southern and central Gaza where they can be safe and out of the line of fire.”

Blinken added that, even with extra care taken to avoid harm to civilians, “all of this can be done in a manner that still enables

Israel to achieve its objectives,” he said.

Satterfield is not focused on litigating Israel’s conduct in the war, although that factors into how, when and where humanitarian aid can be delivered into the logistical mess that is Gaza. (Satterfield was one of four American officials who, with Blinken, attended a Thursday meeting of Israel’s war cabinet.) Working mostly behind the scenes, he has had a hand in the reopening of the Rafah border crossing and the delivery of much-needed food and fuel to Gaza.

“He has helped develop solutions to difficult challenges and achieve breakthroughs that are making a real difference for Palestinians in need,” National Security Council Chief of Staff Curtis Ried told *Jewish Insider*.

Aaron David Miller, who worked on Israeli-Palestinian issues at the State Department for more than 20 years, highlighted Satterfield’s “capacity to actually act to make the trains run” in a complex arena.

“What’s required now is somebody who knows both sides well, who has the confidence of the president and the secretary, and who can facilitate and try to make things happen against the backdrop of what I would think is an almost mission impossible,” Miller, now a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said.

Starting in 2009, Satterfield spent several years as the director-general of the Multinational Force and Observers, the international peacekeeping body that enforces the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel — the two countries that now are most directly involved in getting aid to Gaza. He has also served as ambassador to Turkey and Lebanon, along with high-level stints at Foggy Bottom.

“The guy is incredibly capable. They call him the ‘walking talking point.’ He speaks in full paragraphs. It’s remarkable,” said David Schenker, who served as the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs during the Trump administration, a position he took over from Satterfield, who held the role in an interim capacity. “He’s the consummate diplomat.”

But Satterfield’s prowess as a diplomat was met with skepticism by the former

mission director of USAID in the West Bank and Gaza, Dave Harden.

“I think he just signals into the foreign policy establishment that confidence and competence, but he doesn’t have any humanitarian bona fides, as far as what I know,” said Harden. He urged Satterfield, who rarely speaks publicly about his work, to more frequently appear before the media to highlight what Washington is doing.

“The messaging has to be that we care about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and here’s our guy,” said Harden, who is also worried that the humanitarian assistance secured by Washington so far is still coming up short of what’s needed. “There’s a humanitarian catastrophe and it doesn’t seem like anything’s working and the risks are really high and there’s going to be deep-seated grievances that could extend generations.”

Washington’s approach to the humanitarian situation in Gaza and its admonitions that Israel do more to protect civilians have rankled some of Israel’s more hawkish supporters, who think that such public language plays into the hands of Israel’s opponents.

“I think that in pursuing this balancing act of allowing Israel to eradicate Hamas [and] at the same time [provide] aid to civilians, the United States should do the aid provision, but also not feed the narrative that Israel is using disproportionate force to knock out a terrorist infrastructure embedded within civilian living areas,” said Sander Gerber, who was heavily involved in drafting legislation that restricts American funding for the Palestinian Authority due to its financial support of terrorists.

In a Nov. 9 call with reporters, Satterfield made the case for his work.

“We wish to see Israel able to achieve a goal which is not just its right, but its responsibility: to end the threat which this terrorist group poses to Israelis, to end the threat that they pose to the civilians of Gaza, for whose welfare they care not a whit,” Satterfield said. “But how it is done makes all the difference in the world, and humanitarian assistance is a vital, vital requirement throughout.” ♦



DECEMBER 7, 2023

## CAIR executive director ‘happy to see’ Oct. 7 Hamas terror attack

*Nihad Awad, co-founder of the Muslim civil rights organization, defended the Oct. 7 attack while claiming Israel has no right to self-defense*

By Gabby Deutch

The co-founder and executive director of a major American Muslim civil rights organization characterized Hamas’ Oct. 7 terror attacks in Israel in which more than 1,200 were killed as Gazans “break[ing] the siege, the walls of the concentration camp.”

“Yes, I was happy to see people breaking the siege and throwing down the shackles of their own land and walk free into their land that they were not allowed to walk in,” Council on American-Islamic Relations Executive Director Nihad Awad said at a November conference hosted by American Muslims for Palestine. Audience members cheered Awad’s remarks.

Awad characterized the Oct. 7 attack as “self-defense,” which he said Palestinians have a right to — while Israelis do not.

“Yes, the people of Gaza have the right to self-defense, had the right to defend themselves,” said Awad. “Yes, Israel as an occupying power does not have that right to self-defense.” Awad did not mention Hamas in his speech; he did not differentiate between “the people of Gaza” and the perpetrators of the Oct. 7 attack.

“Gaza became the liberation source, the inspiration for so many people,” said Awad. “The Gazans were victorious.”

“No power on earth will break them or defeat them,” Awad said. “The Israeli enterprise — aided, abetted, financed, armed and excused by the United States and the hypocritical Muslim powers — they could not even come very close to the sense of pride and confidence that the people of Gaza have.”

He employed an antisemitic trope to explain American support for Israel.

“They have paid millions of dollars for corrupt members of Congress not to condemn its atrocities against Gaza,” he said. “AIPAC and its affiliates have been controlling the United States government and the United States Congress ... Unless we free Congress, we will not be able to free Palestine.”

Awad ended his speech with a call to action, urging the audience to contact their elected officials: “We have to free so many people from the shackles of AIPAC and its affiliates who have sold the soul of America,” said Awad.

Awad’s remarks were first publicized by the Middle East Media Research Institute. ♦

DECEMBER 7, 2023

## Gideon Sa’ar: ‘No practical value’ in push for PA to control Gaza

*In an interview with JI, Sa’ar, a member of Israel’s war cabinet, says ‘it would be arrogant to decide who will rule there.’*

By Lahav Harkov

Just a few months ago, Gideon Sa’ar was a prominent right-wing critic of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the Knesset.

For years, Sa’ar was considered the front-runner to be Likud’s next leader. Yet, after he ran against Netanyahu in a party primary in 2019 — after Netanyahu failed

to form a coalition twice in one year — the rupture between them widened. Sa’ar left with four other Likud lawmakers to form his own party that got into the Knesset in 2021, running a year later as part of Benny Gantz’s National Unity list.

But wartime politics make for strange bedfellows, and Sa’ar is in a position that

was once familiar to him: a member of Netanyahu’s security cabinet. Now, he says that the differences between him and the other members of the coalition do not eclipse the need for national unity, “an important element of our power during this war,” Sa’ar told Jewish Insider this week.

A former cabinet member from Likud’s

right flank, Sa'ar, who was behind some of the right's early judicial reform efforts, had years earlier resigned as party whip over the 2005 Gaza disengagement.

Now, as part of the emergency government formed after Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, Sa'ar has kept up his conservative positions, and repeatedly told *Jewish Insider* that Israel needs to see the world as it is, not as it or its allies like the U.S. want it to be.

"The most important thing is first of all to understand what stands before us, and not be fooled by delusions. That is the condition for acting in the way we need to act," Sa'ar said, applying his reasoning to Hamas, Hezbollah, the Palestinian Authority, Iran – and even Russia.

*This interview was edited for length and clarity.*

***Jewish Insider:* We're speaking at a time of increased U.S. pressure for Israel to curb the war effort and increase humanitarian aid – how will Israel handle it?**

**Gideon Sa'ar:** We will handle it because we have no other choice.

**JI:** Then what is the proper balance between Israel's war aims and what our most important supporter and ally wants from Israel?

**GS:** The answer is in the question. We cannot compromise on reaching the goals of the war as the cabinet defined them. At the same time, you can give a humanitarian response that comes not just from the fact that our allies or friendly countries are telling us to do it. It also comes from our need to do it.

It's a question of how much, the necessary amount. That is a topic of discussion. We have to make our own decisions, like any sovereign state.

**JI:** One of the major questions Israel gets from Western allies is what will happen in Gaza on the day after the war. The Biden administration wants a major role for the Palestinian Authority. What is Israel's position?

**GS:** Notice that they're not talking about Israel's strategic position, under general assault by all of the jihadist forces throughout the Middle East with Iran guiding them, and the significance of that. They're not talking about the significance of Russia backing them, which we see openly. I am not taking the strategic questions [on the future of Gaza] lightly, but I think that there are much more dramatic questions for Israel in the coming years, not just in the coming days.

As for the day after [the war] in Gaza, beyond the problems of the Palestinian Authority paying terrorists and families of terrorists for attacks against Israelis, beyond the systemic incitement in its schoolbooks and media, we need to understand that the PA doesn't have the practical capability to control Gaza on the day after the war.

It doesn't even control the territory that it's supposed to control, like Jenin and Tulkarem. We saw the execution, which happened in public and lasted a long time. Hamas hanged men on electrical poles because they claimed they collaborated with Israel. It happened completely undisturbed. It's clear that the PA does not control the territory under their authority.

They're also corrupt and not accepted by the public.

I see the whole discussion as theoretical. It has no practical value.

**JI:** Someone will have to control Gaza after the war. Will it be moderate Arab states?

**GS:** I think it would be arrogant to decide who will rule there. We have to stand up for our principles, that it must be people who are not connected to terror and incitement. If people meet that criteria, I don't have a preference for this or that person. We must stand up for those principles.

I am very aware of the history of Gaza and that it is a very challenging goal, but if we want change, we have to ensure that the people who take responsibility [for Gaza] are not connected to terror and incitement.

**JI:** Do you think Israel should have announced publicly that it wants to assassinate the heads of Hamas? Does that not take away an important element

**of surprise?**

**GS:** It's true that in war, it's better to act, there is no need to speak too much. But whoever thinks that the heads of Hamas needed our statements in order to hide – they knew what they did on Oct. 7 and what it means. They built the whole underground system in Gaza for scenarios like this, even before recent events.

**JI:** Could there be another pause in fighting to get more of the hostages out?

**GS:** We have a commitment to bringing back the hostages, and we have to do what we can to advance the cause through different channels. There is also great importance in continuity in the war.

It would be wise, under these complex circumstances, not to corner ourselves with declarations. This is a complicated event, and if there are realistic possibilities, we will have to weigh them.

I certainly must say that I don't see it happening now.

**JI:** What do you think about the argument that Israel lost momentum in the war because of the week-long pause?

**GS:** There are also arguments that it helped us. It doesn't go one way. I think we did the right thing because we have a deep commitment to rescuing our hostages. In this case, it was women and children who were kidnapped to Gaza, and I think the decision was the right one. I voted for it and I think it was the right thing.

**JI:** You mentioned Russia earlier – Israeli cabinet ministers usually avoid criticizing Russia. What do you think Israel's approach should be?

**GS:** We need to judge them by their actions. The fact that Russia decided to practically express support for Hamas, including hosting a Hamas delegation during the war, after what happened on Oct. 7, shows that they chose a side.

It doesn't surprise me because I saw in the past nearly two years, since the war in Ukraine started in February 2022, that Russia-Iran relations were growing closer.

Iran aided Russia in several ways, including with weapons systems, intelligence and directly in the war itself. I didn't think that aid would go one way.

I said those things when I was chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Subcommittee on Foreign Policy [in 2019-2020], and I think that we see it openly in the war. We don't need to cover it up.

**Jl: Does this threaten the deconfliction mechanism between Israel and Russia so that Israel can strike Iranian targets in Syria? Will the strikes be able to continue?**

**GS:** We can continue. Israel has to do what is necessary for its security. We can take several factors into account and still act for our security.

The most important thing is first of all to understand what stands before us, and not be fooled by delusions. That is the condition for acting in the way we need to act.

**Jl: There seems to be pretty broad agreement that Israel had misjudged Hamas before this war. Could it be that Israel is falling into the same trap with Hezbollah, thinking that it can deter them?**

**GS:** Israel's security policy in the past was mistaken about Gaza and the north,

and we paid a price for it. Just because there were mistakes does not mean we have to act now on all fronts and against all threats at the same time. That is not the necessary conclusion.

In the theory of war, there is a principle called "concentration of force." We decided to concentrate our forces on the southern front to defeat the enemy. It does not mean that we will not have to deal with a challenge on the northern border.

We are ready on the northern border. There is fighting; we respond to the attacks on us, but we are not letting it sway us from the decision to focus our efforts on Gaza. We will have to act in the appropriate way at the right time. That takes judgment.

Eight or nine years ago, I wrote a long article about the need for a preventative strike against Hezbollah. I thought, at the time, that with Hezbollah busy together with Iran and Russia in the Syrian civil war to preserve the Assad regime, it would be a good time to strike at its precision weapons factory, which was in its infancy.

In strategy, there are opportunities and different situations, and we have to use our judgment.

However, we can't assume that a growing threat against us will not be realized. We cannot wait for it to happen. At this moment, whatever happens in the north, we won't be surprised. We are totally ready.

**Jl: Israel thought it was protected from Hamas in Gaza, yet there were so many warnings about Gaza, from IDF lookouts and intelligence officers. How did Israel miss them?**

**GS:** That will be investigated after the war. Clearly there was a massive failure. But right now our priority is to succeed in the war, and the time will come after for all these things to be checked in depth.

**Jl: The agreement Netanyahu and Gantz signed to form an emergency government said the coalition will only deal with war-related issues, but the coalition is putting forward unrelated budgetary items. What is the National Unity list going to do about it?**

**GS:** I think the adjusted budget that [Finance Minister Bezael Smotrich] submitted is wrong, and we expressed that by voting against it in the cabinet and the Knesset.

I don't think that the differences on this topic would justify breaking the national unity government in a time of war. Therefore, we acted and voted according to what we believe, but I do not think this requires us to break up the national unity that is an important element of our power during this war. ♦

DECEMBER 5, 2023

## Jayapal sister's congressional candidacy alarming Portland Jewish leaders

*Days after Oct. 7, Susheela Jayapal declined to sign onto a statement condemning Hamas and standing with Israel*

By Matthew Kassel

Pro-Israel activists in Portland, Ore., are bracing for what could be a bitterly divided House race as longtime Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) prepares to retire at the end of his current term, opening up a rare vacancy in one of the state's most progressive districts.

The Democratic primary field, which is expected to grow in the coming weeks, has so far drawn two candidates, most prominently Susheela Jayapal, a former Multnomah County commissioner whose younger sister, Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), leads the Congressional Progressive Caucus

and is among the most outspoken critics of Israel in the House.

While the elder Jayapal, 61, had no discernible history of public engagement on Middle East policy until recently, her approach to the war between Israel and Hamas suggests there is little distance



between the two siblings on such matters — fueling concerns among local pro-Israel advocates who have yet to coalesce behind a viable candidate.

One major source of contention stems from an emotionally charged county board meeting days after Hamas' Oct. 7 terror attack, when Jayapal, who stepped down as commissioner last month to launch her campaign, voted to reject a resolution seeking to show unified support for lighting a Portland bridge in blue and white.

"I don't think I can acknowledge [the] loss of one group when there are Palestinian lives being lost as well," Jayapal said of the resolution, even as she endorsed illuminating the Morrison Bridge in solidarity with Israel.

Later that day, Jayapal drew heightened scrutiny from Jewish and pro-Israel leaders after she chose not to include her name on a joint statement — signed by two commissioners and the county chair — condemning Hamas and standing with Israel as well as Portland's Jewish community.

"We were disappointed that she didn't sign on," Bob Horenstein, the director of community relations at the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, told *Jewish Insider* in a recent interview. "I can only surmise that she didn't feel like it was balanced."

Sharon Meieran, the lone Jewish commissioner on Multnomah County's board, who led the statement, said that Jayapal had initially seemed open to adding her name but ultimately pulled out "at the very last minute," even after some of the language had been revised at her behest during a strained editing process.

In written comments to JI last week, Meieran alleged that Jayapal had also tried to remove a Holocaust reference from the draft statement, creating further tension behind the scenes. "I was somewhat reassured when Commissioner Jayapal indicated she would consider signing on to the statement," Meieran said. "But then I heard that she had sought to remove reference to the Holocaust."

"I refused to remove the reference," Meieran said, noting that the request had been conveyed by her communications director. "As someone who had numerous

family members murdered in the Holocaust, one of the most terrifying aspects of the Hamas attack was the scale and targeting of innocent civilians because they were Jewish. No one affected by the Holocaust could fail to feel the connection."

Meieran said she could not speculate about Jayapal's reasons for backing out of the statement but explained that she was "surprised" and "deeply saddened" by her former colleague's decision. "The situation in the Middle East is complicated beyond measure at every possible level," she acknowledged. "But issuing a statement seemed like the least our board could do."

In a statement shared with JI on Sunday, Jayapal said it was "unequivocally false" that she had sought to excise the Holocaust reference. "In fact, I had suggested the language that was ultimately used (the deadliest day for Jewish people since the Holocaust) as an alternative to the original language, which I feel made an equivalency with the Holocaust, which is a singularly horrific event on an incomparable scale," she countered.

"While working on edits with my colleagues, it became clear that the urgency of the moment superseded the time it would take for us to agree on what words to use to describe our strong condemnation of terror and violence against civilians," Jayapal continued. "That's why there were separate statements. My views then and now are largely shaped by my conversations with Jewish community members in Multnomah County."

Jayapal's response, which was more broadly worded and released the same day as the joint statement, denounced Hamas while expressing support for the bridge lighting as "a symbol of our absolute condemnation of violence in all its forms, and of our solidarity with the people of Israel in this moment of their grief."

"My heart breaks for all those across Israel and Palestine who are living in a state of war and continued violence," Jayapal said in her Oct. 12 statement, which did not mention the Holocaust or explicitly cite the Jewish community, "and for the loss and fear that all their families and friends here in Multnomah County are experiencing. It is unimaginable."

Despite her opposition to the board

resolution, Jayapal insisted in a separate statement to JI last week that she had been "clear and consistent" about her support for lighting the bridge. "I said so from the dais in the public meeting, I said so in my statement afterwards, and I said so in local news interviews."

Hannah Love, Jayapal's campaign spokesperson, clarified in an email to JI that the former commissioner's "position was that lighting the bridge was within the county chair's authority, not the board's."

As Israel's war against Hamas shapes the trajectory of several Democratic primaries across the country, Jayapal's recent maneuvering — and the resulting fallout — underscores the perils some progressive candidates are now facing as they navigate a politically charged issue that is sowing increasingly sharp divisions among party members.

"What I make of it is that she is running for Congress and is weighing the political implications of what she might say," said a person familiar with some of the deliberations behind Jayapal's recent comments on the Hamas attack, who requested anonymity to discuss a sensitive topic. "She was going to try very hard to issue a statement that she hoped would appease both sides."

The Portland contest is among a few House races in the Pacific Northwest that Democratic strategists and Jewish activists in the region expect to draw spending from leading pro-Israel groups, even as they have yet to disclose their plans.

"There are strongly felt perspectives on both sides of the conflict here locally," said Jake Weigler, a Democratic strategist in Oregon, speculating that Portland's activist community may push candidates "to stake out a clear position that could then drive national groups to get more involved in the race."

But while pro-Israel groups are already setting their sights on House races where far-left incumbents have been among the most strident critics of Israel, it is unclear how such organizations are assessing a growing number of open-seat races fueled by a new burst of impending retirements.

Democratic Majority for Israel is "closely" following the Portland race but is still weighing where it will direct its resources,

according to a source familiar with internal deliberations. A spokesperson for AIPAC, meanwhile, said in an email to JI that the group is “in the process of evaluating congressional races” but has “made no decisions at this time.”

With six months to go until the May primary, the race is almost certain to draw more candidates, setting up a potential clash between “an anti-Israel progressive and a pro-Israel progressive,” as one pro-Israel leader in Portland who opposes Jayapal put it in a recent conversation with JI.

One likely candidate who could possibly gain traction within the pro-Israel community is state Rep. Maxine Dexter, who has been characterized as a pragmatic progressive but does not appear to have issued any statements on Middle East policy. In a recent email to JI, Dexter, who is expected to launch a campaign soon, said she has received “strong encouragement” to run and will be announcing her plans this week.

While Dexter did not address questions on her approach to Israel — and local Jewish activists surveyed by JI were unaware of her positions — Meieran said she is “excited about her potential candidacy.”

“I can’t speak to her views on Israel, but I was impressed that she attended an event hosted by Congregation Beth Israel in Portland last night to learn about the Zioness movement,” Meieran told JI on Saturday. “The focus was on intersectional identities and how standing up for social justice and Zionism are not mutually exclusive, but rather are inextricably linked. Showing up and being willing to listen and learn matters, now more than ever, and Maxine walks that walk.”

Eddy Morales, a Gresham City councilman with ties to national Democratic leaders, is also running for the seat held by Blumenauer — who has embraced more critical positions on Israel — for more than 25 years.

In an email to JI last week, Morales, who has visited a kibbutz that was targeted during the Oct. 7 attack, shared his own views on the Israel-Hamas war, which he addressed on social media days before Jayapal released her own statement.

“We must do everything we can to prevent any further atrocities and crimes

against civilians, no matter what they look like or where they live,” he said. “Today, as people in Palestine and Israel mourn and seek safety, we must demand that our leaders support immediate steps to help those in danger, like continuing to bring hostages home, preventing and stopping massive civilian deaths and restoring food, water and electricity in Gaza.”

He added that the U.S. “must also demand long-term solutions for people of the whole region, whether they’re Palestinian or Israeli, and support those who simply want to live their lives and raise their families in peace.”

As the race unfolds, the pro-Israel leader in Portland, who asked to remain anonymous to protect his privacy, said there is growing concern among other like-minded local activists that Jayapal’s Middle East policy positions “will not differ that much from her sister,” who faced bipartisan backlash last summer for calling Israel “a racist state,” remarks she later walked back. The progressive leader also drew scrutiny on Sunday for comments that some House colleagues accused of equivocating over Hamas’ use of sexual violence against Israeli women.

For her part, Jayapal’s rhetoric as an aspiring congresswoman has been more carefully worded than that of her sister, who has endorsed her campaign. Still, her comments so far have indicated that they are aligned on hot-button issues including calls for a cease-fire and conditioning aid to Israel.

In a statement shared on social media last week after JI had reached out to her campaign for comment, Jayapal voiced hope that the now-broken truce between Israel and Hamas would be “a step towards a more long-term and mutual cessation of hostilities, or ceasefire.”

During an interview with a local TV station last month, Jayapal, a former corporate lawyer, also suggested that she is in favor of reconsidering the continuation of U.S. funding to Israel, noting that she supports humanitarian and military assistance “where necessary and with appropriate conditions.”

Morales, for his part, did not address requests for comment from JI regarding his positions on such issues. Dexter declined to weigh in on specific policy questions until

she makes a decision about whether to run.

The Jewish federation in Portland is planning to organize a forum to hear candidates’ views on Israel and other subjects of interest to Jewish voters in the coming months, according to a spokesperson for the organization.

Elizabeth Mazzara Myers, a Democratic strategist in Portland, said she assumes that the war in Gaza will “play a role” in the race, especially if candidates stake out contrasting views. “I expect many of the candidates in this district are going to be shades of gray in terms of progressive Democrat policy differences,” she told JI last week, “so that actually may be a space where there are differences.” ♦

# Calling for genocide of Jews doesn't violate school policy, university presidents tell Congress

*Jewish MIT student, on the hearing: 'Mostly it was just lip service — it was the same lip service that we've heard the whole time.'*

By Marc Rod

Pressed by lawmakers Wednesday, presidents of three top universities all refused to say that calling for the genocide of Jews was inherently a violation of their campus policies on harassment and bullying.

The presidents of Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who have come under scrutiny for their responses to antisemitic incidents on their campuses, testified about antisemitism on their campuses before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce yesterday.

Rep. Elise Stefanik (R-NY) pressed each leader on whether calls for Jewish genocide — which she said were embodied in “intifada” chants heard on campuses across the country — violated their schools’ policies. None of the three presidents offered a direct or affirmative answer.

“If the speech turns into conduct, it can be harassment, yes,” Penn president Liz Magill said. “It is a context dependent decision.”

“Conduct meaning committing the act of genocide?” Stefanik shot back, incredulous. “The speech is not harassment?”

Harvard President Claudine Gay also said “it depends on the context” and MIT President Sally Kornbluth answered that it could constitute harassment “if the speech turns into conduct.”

Stefanik described the answers they provided as “dehumanizing” Jewish students.

The presidents’ responses echoed answers that they had provided throughout the hearing. They disavowed antisemitism and hateful conduct, but generally said that hateful speech is protected by their campus

policies and the First Amendment unless it crosses over into action.

They often declined or refused to offer specific details on how or whether they had disciplined or would discipline students involved in antisemitic activity that appeared to violate their policies. They also evaded direct questions about what sorts of comments would be unacceptable on their campuses.

Students from the schools said their administrators’ responses were insufficient.

Talia Khan, a graduate student at MIT and president of the MIT Israel Alliance, told *Jewish Insider*, “mostly it was just lip service — it was the same lip service that we’ve heard the whole time.”

Khan, who attended the Tuesday hearing, said that Kornbluth’s responses to Stefanik’s question were “horrendous” and “crazy.”

“If anyone were, God forbid, calling for the genocide of any other ethnic group, for sure those people would be kicked off campus,” Khan said. “The only time it’s a controversy is just because it’s Jewish people. And it was textbook dehumanization of Jews.”

Khan said the school is doing “nothing” currently to make Jewish students feel safe, and said some of the responses Kornbluth had given to the committee about disciplinary procedures did not reflect the realities on the ground.

She said that in direct conversations with Kornbluth, the MIT president had even evaded questions about committing to applying all of the school’s rules equally to all student groups and individuals.

“We’re so tired of fighting, and then just hearing this... lip service. You heard it today, in the hearing,” Khan said. “We really need

these presidents to act now.”

Khan also spoke alongside students from several other schools at a press conference with House Republican leaders on Tuesday morning before the hearing about her experiences on campus. She said it was “sad” to talk to the students from other universities and hear that they’ve had similar experiences on their own campuses.

Khan said she was hopeful that the hearing would prompt further and stronger action by Kornbluth “because all they were really getting were students constantly complaining and clearly that wasn’t working.”

Jacob Miller, the president of the Harvard Hillel, told *Jewish Insider* he was “very disappointed” by Gay’s “refusal to condemn calls for genocide against Jews as harassment and bullying.”

“I thought that aspect of her testimony was very disconcerting,” Miller said. “That [response] to me indicated that the decision not to discipline these students [chanting for intifada] didn’t result from a generous interpretation of what the students have been calling for. It stems from an inability from the school to confront this issue head on.”

In a subsequent statement, Miller and Harvard Hillel Rabbi Getzel Davis said Gay’s testimony “fails to reassure us that the University is seriously concerned about the antisemitic rhetoric pervasive on campus.”

Contrary to Gay’s testimony on the various steps she and campus administrators are taking, Miller said that students have few opportunities to interact with her, and he’s been disappointed with how slowly the school has responded to antisemitism on campus at an institutional

level.

"I think she has a very good group of people advising her," he said regarding a new antisemitism advisory group, "but I'm concerned she's not taking the matter as seriously as she should.... She has been very good at saying the right things. But there hasn't been enough of a follow up."

ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt said in a statement to JI that the campus presidents' testimonies were "as disastrous as it was disheartening."

"Jewish students are facing a tsunami of antisemitism on campus, and it is long overdue for universities to enforce their own codes of conduct and to suspend students who violate them. While we appreciate the steps administrators are taking to make their schools safer for Jewish students, I would still give university leaders an 'F' for their failure to protect their Jewish students," he said. "If campus presidents are incapable of demonstrating moral leadership, we will use every legal and financial tool available to us, including Title VI, to ensure the safety and civil rights of all Jewish students."

Gay and Magill did offer stronger personal condemnations of "intifada" chants at other points in the hearing.

Gay said that *intifada* chants are "evil" and "personally abhorrent to me," describing such rhetoric as "thoughtless, reckless and hateful" and "at odds with the values of Harvard," although she again would not say it inherently violates the school's code of conduct.

Magill said she had found a video played by Republicans, which featured clips from anti-Israel protests at Penn, "very hard to watch."

"The chanting, I think, calling for 'intifada, global revolution,' [was] very disturbing. And I can imagine many people's reaction to that would be one of fear," she said. "At a minimum that is hateful speech that has been and should be condemned. Whether it rises to the level of incitement to violence under policies that Penn and the City of Philadelphia follow... I think is a much more difficult question. The incitement to violence is a very narrow category."

They said that they view antisemitism as being part of the responsibility of their campuses' DEI offices — although they also said these efforts need to extend beyond the

DEI offices and must be improved.

Kornbluth particularly said that MIT plans to ensure that DEI staff are trained on the subject. Khan said that Kornbluth's response on DEI flies in the face of Jewish students' experiences with those staffers.

She said that the school's DEI and discrimination and harassment and response offices have told Jews that they are not a protected class and that they don't feel that protecting them is part of their responsibilities. One DEI staffer denied the Hamas atrocities on social media, according to Khan.

Gay sought to brush aside criticisms that she was too slow to respond to the Oct. 7 attack, claiming that she had been busy focusing on ensuring students and faculty in Israel were safe.

"Had I known that the statement issued by the students would have been wrongly attributed to the university, I would have spoken sooner about it," Gay acknowledged, referring to a controversial statement by student groups describing Israel as "entirely responsible" for the Hamas attack.

Kornbluth had come under fire for earlier comments, following a disruptive campus protest, that suggested that the school was withholding disciplinary action against some students involved because they could lose their visas.

She said on Wednesday that the disciplinary process for that protest is still in progress.

Gay testified that all students "irrespective of their citizenship are held accountable for following our policies," and would be held accountable if they violated those policies.

Magill was pressed on Penn's hosting, prior to the Oct. 7 massacre, of a Palestine Writes Festival which featured numerous speakers accused of antisemitism.

She argued that canceling the conference would have violated the school's commitments to freedom of speech and free expression, but acknowledged that she would have had the authority to cancel it if campus security officials deemed it a security issue. She also largely dodged questions about the specific antisemitic speakers.

"Canceling that conference would have been very inconsistent with academic

freedom and free expression, despite the fact that the views of some of the people who came to that conference I find very, very objectionable," she said.

The presidents would not commit to suspending or banning chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine, or similarly affiliated groups, on their campuses, while stating that all student groups are accountable to their schools' conduct policies.

Some lawmakers also asked the presidents if donations, particularly from Qatar, are influencing their policies, statements and curricula on antisemitism or Israel, which all three denied.

Gay insisted that Harvard would not accept gifts that would create a "conflict of interest" or be "inconsistent with our mission," and that gifts do not impact administrative decisions. Kornbluth said that MIT maintains full control over research funded by outside grants and has an extensive review process, including considerations of economic and national security.

Magill said that Penn has received only small donations from alumni living in Qatar.

Some of the college presidents and Democrats on the committee repeatedly called during the hearing for additional funding to the Office of Civil Rights in the Department of Education. Republicans are seeking to cut funding to the division.

The university presidents also each testified to their personal opposition to antisemitism and acknowledged the need for stronger educational programming on their campuses to combat antisemitism.

*Miller is a former Jewish Insider editorial fellow. ♦*



# Maccabee Task Force looks to screen Oct. 7 footage at several campuses in coming weeks, more later

*Organization's director says showing the grim footage is meant to combat attempts to deny the atrocities; 'as ugly as it is, I'm afraid that ugliness is now part of our reality'*

By Judah Ari Gross

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Maccabee Task Force is working to screen the raw footage of Hamas' atrocities at a small number of universities in the coming weeks and more schools later on, in an effort to combat attempts to deny or minimize the Oct. 7 massacres, its director, David Brog, told eJewishPhilanthropy.

"We decided that it's something we needed to do," Brog said. "Of course, we wouldn't force anyone to screen it. We wouldn't force anyone to attend. Everyone has to make up their own minds. But I think the truth of these atrocities has to be shared in the face of so many lies about what happened."

On Monday, Harvard became the first university to host a screening of the footage, which was open to students, faculty, administrative employees and community members affiliated with the university. That screening was organized by Harvard Chabad at the urging of Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Gilad Erdan and Bill Ackman, a billionaire investor and Harvard alumnus who has been critical of the school's response to antisemitism on campus. At the screening, a spokesperson for Erdan said his office was working to organize similar events at other Ivy League schools.

Brog said his organization, which works to combat boycott, divestment and sanctions efforts on college campuses, has reached out to the 75 universities where it operates to see which would be interested in holding a screening.

While MTF is trying to facilitate the events, the ultimate decision of where the video will be shown is up to the Israeli

Embassy or a nearby consulate, which provides the video. In order to ensure that the raw, graphic footage is not widely distributed, the digital file is brought in on a physical drive, and attendees are required to forfeit their phones and any other device that can record images or audio.

"We're in the early stages. So we have a bunch of campuses, in the 8-10 range, that have said that this is something that they're going to try to host in the next few months or so," Ben Sweetwood, MTF's national field director, told eJP.

"And then we have a couple campuses that are very serious about moving forward soon... within the next month," he said.

Brog said that he expects that "once they see that it was successful on a small number of campuses... others will line up pretty quickly."

As the screenings have yet to be fully approved, Sweetwood and Brog would not say which universities had expressed an interest.

The compilation, which runs roughly 45 minutes, is made up of videos collected from GoPro cameras used by the Hamas terrorists as they committed heinous acts of violence, as well as from cellphones, dashboard cameras, law enforcement officers and first responders and CCTV.

The footage is exceedingly graphic and chilling, featuring scenes of murder and mutilation as the perpetrators laugh and banter. The disturbing nature of the video has driven some attendees — including lawmakers on Capitol Hill — to leave screenings midway and others to openly weep throughout.

Brog said that despite the emotional and psychic toll that viewing the footage takes, his organization believed it was critical to

screen the video in order to combat efforts to deny the atrocities. He compared it to the decision by then-Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe Dwight Eisenhower ordering U.S. soldiers and German civilians to see Nazi death camps at the end of World War II.

"Eisenhower made the decision to make sure the soldiers saw the death camps. The soldiers were the same age [as these students] to witness a very difficult thing in life, to witness that evil exists and to internalize it," Brog said. "So as ugly as it is, I'm afraid that ugliness is now part of our reality."

Brog said this was particularly needed in light of the large number of students who consume news by following the social media accounts of fellow students.

"Not everyone is as well-read as I would have hoped. Not everyone is aware of the attacks as I would have hoped," he said. "If we want to win over campuses, we need to make allies beyond the pro-Israel community and make sure that those allies are as well-equipped as possible to share the truth with their fellow students."

Sweetwood cited a recent Harvard-Harris poll, which showed that nearly half of 18-24-year-olds support Hamas over Israel in the war and that 32% of them do not believe that the Oct. 7 attacks occurred, which he credited to ignorance, not necessarily malice.

"It's not just because they're diametrically opposed to believing [they happened]," he said. "If you look at other questions, you see that a lot of them are... confused and unsure, and they are very often looking for resources. And this is just one more tool that we can offer."

The audience for the screenings —

and for Maccabee Task Force's work in general — is not the Jewish and pro-Israel community on campus, which are not likely to need convincing that the atrocities of Oct. 7 indeed occurred.

“Part of the reason that the Israeli government was interested in coming to us to do this at scale is two-fold — one, because they desperately want to connect to college

campuses in America; and two, Maccabee Task Force specifically has connections to non-Jewish groups and non-Jewish students of import, and we can mobilize those connections,” Brog said.

The exact audience makeup of each screening would be left up to the Hillels and universities to decide, if they would open it just to faculty and administrators or to

students as well.

Sweetwood said MTF is working with the universities to develop a full plan for the event, which would include not only a screening of the footage but also a discussion with a survivor or another relevant figure.

“We’re going to be as sensitive about this as we possibly can,” he said. ♦