

THE WEEKLY PRINT

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DECEMBER 14, 2023

Voices against Hamas growing louder as war in Gaza continues

While much of the anger in Gaza is directed at Israel, many residents of the Strip are also not fooled by Hamas' propaganda and are starting to hold the group responsible for provoking the war

By Ruth Marks Eglash

Perhaps it was the recent chaotic images of Hamas terrorists using sticks to beat back desperate civilians at a Gaza hospital, or the short clips circulating of armed terrorists trying to make off with vital aid meant for starving children that first prompted some residents of Gaza to speak out against their leaders.

And maybe it was the videos from the past week posted on social media of stripped and blindfolded Hamas terrorists throwing down their arms, or the massive Israeli flag flapping over a flattened central square in Gaza City that emboldened those voices.

Whatever the reasons, after 68 days of a war that has changed – and even destroyed – the lives of many of Gaza's 2.3 million residents, a growing number of ordinary civilians in the Palestinian enclave, analysts suggest, are beginning to show their anger against Hamas – the brutal regime that has dominated their world for the past 16 years and which on Oct. 7 unleashed an unforgiving war in their territory.

"It's a silent and gradual revolution that is spreading and brewing among displaced and suffering civilians in Gaza who hold Hamas, the nihilistic criminal enterprise

that has governed Gaza since 2007, responsible for their annihilation, suffering, misery and displacement," Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib, an American political analyst originally from Gaza, told *Jewish Insider* in a recent interview.

Alkhatib, who has been posting daily video clips on X, formerly Twitter, added: "I see dozens of videos, messages, comments, outbursts and outcries daily by Gazans who are detesting Hamas, challenging its propaganda, condemning the consequences of its actions."

He said many are accusing the militant

Islamist group “of hiding themselves underground while civilians are being obliterated above ground.”

While the dissenting voices are coming from various sectors of Gazan society, many are ordinary civilians struggling to stay alive as Hamas refuses to release 135 hostages, including women, children and the elderly, and continues to fight back against the unwavering advancement of Israeli troops.

In one clip from Dec. 6, an elderly Palestinian woman angrily tells a journalist from the Qatari-owned Al Jazeera network that the people in Gaza are starving. When the reporter answers that it’s because no aid is coming in, the woman responds boldly that it is “all going to the tunnels underground.... Hamas takes everything to their homes.”

In another video shared on X, a woman, who says her husband was killed in the war, cries saying she can’t find food for her children. She blames Hamas for dragging Gaza’s people into this war with Israel.

“The people of Gaza are dying of hunger and on the brink of a genuine humanitarian catastrophe,” she says in desperation.

But the criticism of Hamas is not only coming from ordinary people. This week, the Shin Bet, Israel’s internal security agency, released 14-minute video of Yousef Mahmoud Hamad Al-Mansi, a former Hamas minister, telling interrogators, “They destroyed us – we must get rid of them.” Al-Mansi, who was arrested by Israel on Dec. 5, was referring to Hamas and its current leader, Yahya Sinwar, the man who is believed to have masterminded the Oct. 7 attack.

“These anti-Hamas voices have always been there,” Alkhatib said, describing how people tried to speak up against the Iranian-backed group since it violently took control over the coastal enclave in 2007. “These voices were visible on social media, in local newspapers, and, at times, on the streets in the form of large protests against miserable living conditions and no promising prospects.”

Alkhatib, who now lives on the West Coast, said that over the years there have been attempts to protest against Hamas and its prohibiting policies, with unprecedented demonstrations taking place over the dire economic situation just last summer.

Hamas’ response to the protests last July and August was similar to previous times, he added. “They quickly cracked down on the protesters, beating and jailing many and unleashing its members and thugs to stage counterprotests.”

Due to such tactics, Alkhatib explained, many of those who oppose Hamas and its policies, “have stayed silent out of fear for their safety or concerns for their social, professional and humanitarian prospects.”

“Given Hamas’ dominance over society, resources, politics and other aspects of life in Gaza, it can be challenging to be an outspoken critic of the group,” he said.

The situation is different now, however.

“The current war has brought unprecedented levels of suffering, death, destruction, hardships and horrors upon the people of Gaza,” said Alkhatib. “While they direct much of their anger at the IDF and the excessively violent counterattack, most are not fooled by Hamas’ propaganda and directly hold the group responsible for provoking a war with Israel.”

He predicted that the anti-Hamas voices would continue to grow “especially as people are reaching previously unimaginable levels of desperation, such that many are no longer fearful of Hamas.”

Indeed, alongside the videos coming out of Gaza condemning Hamas and blaming it for their ultimate misery have also been clips of civilians fighting back against the armed militants, particularly at places where aid and essential items are being distributed.

In Israel, the pushback on the streets of Gaza is being seen as a sign that Hamas’ hold over society in the enclave is cracking.

Speaking at a Hanukkah candle lighting in the south with Nahal Brigade troops, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi said this week that the military was beginning to see the collapse of Hamas’ governing system in the Strip.

“I see the achievements every day,” he said. “We are seeing every day more and more terror operatives killed, more and more terror operatives wounded, and in recent days we’re seeing terrorists surrendering — a sign of the disintegration of the system.”

Khaled Abu Toameh, a Palestinian Affairs analyst, told JI, “The deeper the Israeli army pushes into the Gaza Strip, the more we are likely to see people speaking

out against Hamas.

“We’ve seen it increase in the last few days, especially on social media,” he said. “There’s a feeling that the barrier of fear has been shattered and that Hamas has been weakened as a result of the military offensive.”

Abu Toameh also noted “that many Palestinians in Gaza have always been unhappy with Hamas,” particularly those who are members of rival Palestinian political factions such as Fatah and who were afraid to speak out for fear of being punished by Hamas.

“I don’t believe that Hamas is in a position to crack down on those critics right now while it is still fighting Israel,” he said.

Another reason critics of Hamas stayed quiet, said Abu Toameh, was “because there are no foreign journalists in Gaza – Al Jazeera and other Arab media outlets have not allowed Palestinians to voice their anger with Hamas or with Qatar,” one of Hamas financial backers.

He said he also felt this might be changing.

“I’ve been hearing a growing number of Palestinians who are now holding Hamas responsible for the destruction of the Gaza Strip,” Abu Toameh said, adding, “some are questioning whether the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7 was worthwhile.” ♦

Judaica sales surge as community members seek 'a little Jewish joy' during a difficult time

In a burst of Jewish pride and personal statement-making following Oct. 7, sales of jewelry, mezuzot, the Israeli flag and even prayer books are rising, Judaica shop owners report

By **Tori Bergel**

In any given year, the months leading up to Hanukkah are their own kind of Super Bowl in the world of Judaica sales, as *hanukkiot* purchases typically spike and retailers see their largest influx of business.

This year began similarly, with shop owners stockpiling supplies and logging orders ahead of their busiest quarter. Then came Oct. 7. and, in a burst of Jewish identification following the deadliest day in Jewish history since the Holocaust, sales of jewelry, *mezuzot*, the Israeli flag and even books of reflection are rising in Judaica stores across the country.

"We have people, definitely on a daily basis, that are coming in looking for Star of Davids, looking for *chais*. They feel as if they need to have a physical way of showing support," David Cooperman, owner of Shalom House in Woodland Hills, Calif, told *Jewish Insider*. "Sometimes people will buy a small Star of David to pair up with a larger piece of jewelry that they might already own. So they're wearing multiple pieces of jewelry, and they want to make sure that they're wearing a star or *chai* as well."

Mezuzot, Magen David necklaces, any public-facing symbol, are all signs to the outside world of the resilience of Jewish life.

"I think there's an aspect of like, looking for joy in Judaism and culture right now," Jordan Diatlo told *JL*. With his wife, Diatlo runs the online Judaica site Modern Mensch, known for its distinctive Nosh Menorah. His biggest seller so far this year is a new sleek, rainbow-hued mezuzah the shop calls the Sunrise Sunset Mezuzah. Modern Mensch only just released its new product line and color option at the end of the summer, making their popularity all the more surprising to Diatlo.

"If I tie it back to the feelings after Oct. 7, I feel like this one says the most about like,

'here I am, I'm Jewish,' like there's a pride element to it," Diatlo said. "I do think that just a big part of this one being the top seller is the boldness of it."

Additionally, a number of shop owners interviewed by *Jewish Insider* noted an increase in Tehillim (Psalms) sales.

"Many people [are] just not wanting to be without a sefer Tehillim easily accessible. At home on the shelf wasn't good enough. People were buying several sizes that they can carry in their purse, in their wallet, in their briefcase," Moshe Udashkin, manager of The Judaica House in Teaneck, N.J., told *JL*. "A lot of people who previously didn't feel the need to have an English-translated Tehillim were buying a lot of English-translated Tehillim, we couldn't keep them on our shelves."

Yitzi Gruen, COO of Brooklyn-based store The Judaica Place, said that not only were Tehillim sales up wildly, but he's also been seeing "a huge increase in people getting books of self-development, introspection, things like that."

Buying pieces crafted in Israel, as an additional show of support, has taken on a greater importance for many customers. Josh Zwelling, owner of Rosenblum's World of Judaica in Skokie, Ill., was at first hesitant to bother his Israeli vendors with such mundane requests, but they quickly assured him of their need for his business.

"Many of our vendors have called and said, you know, tourism is down [in Israel], whatever you can do to continue to order, we'll get it out to you," he recalled. "I said, OK, you know what, we're going to place our orders [and] whenever you ship, you ship. Hopefully we can have it for Hanukkah time and things like that, but in the meantime, just know your orders are gonna continue to come in."

Amy Kritzer Becker, co-owner of online retailer ModernTribe, had similar conversations with her own vendors in Israel, and now has an entire section on her site dedicated solely to Israeli-produced products.

"I've made it a point to keep purchasing items from the artists we work for in Israel and to promote them on our website and via emails and social media," she said. Becker also sells a number of charitable items, including a highly requested "Bring Them Home" necklace that splits all of its proceeds between Magen David Adom and The Hostage and Missing Families Forum, the largest and most prominent civil society organization supporting and advocating for the families of those abducted by on Oct. 7.

Judaica sales in the U.S. have fluctuated from store to store, with some shopkeepers reporting a rise in overall numbers in comparison to years past and others noting little change, but all of them are seeing an increase in sales of items that symbolize Jewish identity and pride.

"The ongoing war and certainly the rise in antisemitism, at least within our community, people are not afraid of showing that they're Jewish and they don't want to shy away from it," Cooperman said. "There have been reports of different places urging Jewish people to not wear their jewelry, to take down their mezuzahs and maybe just put the mezuzahs on the inside of the house, but fortunately in our community here it's just the opposite."

"People want to find a little Jewish joy during this horrific time," Becker told *JL*. And it's not just observant Jews who've been turning to religious practice. Becker and others noted that many unaffiliated and formerly-affiliated individuals have also been showing up, looking to start practicing

anew.

Udashkin described many such customers in Teaneck. One man, he said, bought a pair of tefillin for a Jewish stranger on his bus who wanted to start wearing them in support of Israel and the hostages, while another shopper, an elderly woman, purchased a menorah for the first time since she was a child.

"We saw a lot of [people] coming in who were not affiliated and just wanting to get affiliated," Gruen said of his clientele at The Judaica Place. "[We had] people coming in really not knowing anything and just wanting to put up a mezuzah, wanting to identify as Jewish in any way possible."

"The most beautiful thing is the fact that Jews want to connect to our roots,"

said Choni Cohen, owner of Cohen's Judaica in Boca Raton, Fla. "Every Jew feels what's going on, and they're coming in to connect with the roots of Judaism by lighting Shabbos candles and, of course, representing by wearing the Jewish star, the *chai*."

"We are a lone nation in the world, and people want to connect to one another via doing what our tradition, our way of life is, and be united and uniting via doing these traditional things," he added.

Judaica shop owners also noted an uptick in traffic from non-Jewish customers looking to buy pieces for themselves or for Jewish friends in a show of solidarity. Many also spoke of individuals sending messages or stopping by their storefronts to share

condolences. It's happening "more so than we've ever noticed" Cooperman said of Shalom House, while Zwelling recounted several church officials who came into his store asking for his largest Israeli flags, "as large as the American flag," so they could display them during their services.

"A lot of people are trying to show that they're still connected, and regardless of what you're seeing online, and on social media, American Jewry still stands very strongly with Israel, and people are just trying to do what they can," Udashkin said. "If it's just saying a little private prayer, if it's taking up a ritual that they haven't done in 40 years... they're trying to do something personally meaningful for the Jewish people." ♦

DECEMBER 12, 2023

Northern Israel a 'waking nightmare' amid efforts to push Hezbollah from border, says resident and security analyst

Israel has some hope France, U.S. can convince the Iran-backed terrorists to retreat, but northern Israel residents fear a repeat of Oct. 7 as Hezbollah continues to attack, Sarit Zehavi tells JI

By Lahav Harkov

On Oct. 7, as Israelis and Jews across the world watched Hamas' massacre with horror, Sarit Zehavi opened a map.

"The first thing I did when I heard Hamas entered Ofakim is to look at how far it is from the Gaza border," Zehavi told *Jewish Insider* this week. "It's 12 kilometers [7.5 miles] away. I live 9 kilometers [5.6 miles] from the Lebanon border."

Zehavi is the founder and president of the Alma Research and Education Center, where she and her team research and write about security on Israel's northern border. Alma's headquarters are in Tefen in the Western Galilee, just a few minutes drive from her home.

As she hears the daily booms of battle between Israel and Hezbollah, and the U.S.

and France try to persuade Lebanon to force the Iran-backed terrorist group to retreat north of the Litani River about 29 kilometers (18 miles) from the Israel-Lebanon border, Zehavi is worried that Israel is making a "big mistake."

The U.N. Security Council approved Resolution 1701 in August 2006, putting the Second Lebanon War to an end.

The resolution calls for "the establishment between the Blue Line" – the demarcation line between Israel and Lebanon – "and the Litani river of an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of [the UN Interim Force in Lebanon]...deployed in this area...There will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than of the

Lebanese State." The Lebanese government "authorizes UNIFIL to take all necessary action...to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind," the resolution continues.

But not only did Hezbollah continue to hoard weapons and grow its arsenal in the subsequent 17 years, while getting on-the-ground military experience in the Syrian Civil War, the Iran-backed terror group continued to entrench itself in the Lebanese government, in parliament and as part of the governing coalition. Hezbollah streamed more and more terrorists onto the Lebanon-Israel border, digging tunnels and even crossing into Israel, and UNIFIL did not stop them. Israel noted this annually at the U.N. Security Council meetings reviewing the resolution, to no avail.

After Oct. 7, the world watched to see if Hezbollah would join its fellow member of the Iran-backed “Axis of Resistance” in attacking Israel. President Biden’s one-word warning to other adversaries not to get involved (‘Don’t’) and the U.S. aircraft carrier moved into the region deterred Hezbollah from launching a full-scale war, but air-raid sirens go off almost daily in Israel’s north, with the Iranian proxy militia frequently shooting rockets and missiles. Israelis living in the towns closest to the border have been evacuated.

Hezbollah shot at least six rockets into Israel on Sunday morning, and the IDF responded with artillery fire. Hezbollah warned that Israel had significantly escalated its airstrikes, with the Lebanese newspaper *Nidaa al-Watan* claiming that “an entire neighborhood has been destroyed” in the town of Aitaroun near the border with Israel.

Israel has called on its international allies to ensure Lebanese compliance with Resolution 1701 to avoid a war. Foreign Minister Eli Cohen wrote a letter to the U.N. Security Council and mentioned it when U.K. Foreign Secretary David Cameron and other foreign dignitaries visited Israel. Defense Minister Yoav Gallant noted the importance of implementing the resolution to his French counterpart, Sebastien Lecornu, in a call last month.

Meanwhile, France and, to a lesser extent, the U.S. have been using diplomatic channels in Lebanon to try to get Hezbollah to back away from the border. A senior French security and intelligence delegation visited Lebanon and Israel late last month in an attempt to stabilize the situation.

Asked about a possible agreement with Hezbollah about a buffer zone in southern Lebanon, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said in a briefing on Monday that “one of our goals from the beginning of this conflict has been to prevent it from widening and that, of course, includes widening from northern Israel into Lebanon. We have had conversations about that with the Israeli government and said that we very much do not want to see the conflict widen... We would support steps that would achieve that goal.”

Gallant told a group of mayors and local council leaders from the north last week

that a diplomatic arrangement enforcing Resolution 1701 would be ideal, but barring that Israel will “act with all the means at its disposal” to force Hezbollah north of the Litani River so that Israelis can return to their homes near the border safely.

A source in the Prime Minister’s Office told JI this week that “clearly, the reality after the war needs to be different. Thousands of people who were evacuated will need to be able to return to their homes with a sense of security – they will have such a sense when there is security.”

One way of bringing security to the north, the PMO source said, “is to implement 1701 or something similar, that would verify Hezbollah and any other terrorist organization is north of the Litani.”

There is not much hope among officials in Jerusalem that diplomacy will work, but several told JI they’re willing to try. Israeli retaliatory strikes in southern Lebanon since Oct. 7 may have improved the chances of Hezbollah retreating north of the Litani, in part because Israel destroyed some of the terrorists’ positions, and in part because of increasing pressure within Lebanon.

While the Israeli public broadcaster Kan reported that Israel set a deadline for the diplomatic efforts to push Hezbollah back from the border, an Israeli diplomatic source told JI that there has not been an ultimatum, though it’s clear that the current situation is unsustainable and residents of border towns cannot remain evacuated for months on end.

There is some support in Lebanon, as well, for pushing Hezbollah north of the Litani. Samy Gemayel, leader of the Kataeb – a party representing the country’s Christian minority, which has cooperated with Israel in the past – emphasized “the necessity of protecting Lebanon from all conflicts in the region and promoting the implementation of international resolutions, particularly Resolution 1701, to prevent the conflict from spreading to Lebanon.” Gemayel made the remarks on Sunday at an event of the American Lebanese Policy Institute in Washington, D.C., attended by Reps. Darrell Issa (R-CA) and Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA).

Zehavi, the Alma founder, is not opposed to diplomatic efforts, but she said that basing them on U.N. Security Council Resolution

1701 is “very dangerous.”

The resolution “is not really a system that can bring security to the residents of northern Israel and southern Lebanon,” she said. “It’s not clear from the resolution who is supposed to enforce it; Israel says it’s UNIFIL and the rest of the world says it’s the Lebanese Army. It’s worded problematically and everyone reads it differently...The Lebanese Army doesn’t enforce it and UNIFIL doesn’t help. That’s the situation on the ground.”

“There is no functioning state in Lebanon to enforce it. Iranians are everywhere and Hezbollah is everywhere, in the institutions of the state, controlling the borders and the airport,” she added.

If Israel thinks calling for the enforcement of Resolution 1701 will help, “we’re fooling ourselves,” Zehavi said.

“The resolution could have been fulfilled for 17 years,” she said. Instead, “it allowed Hezbollah to get significantly stronger.”

Even if Israel is allowing the diplomatic process to run its course to have greater legitimacy if a war breaks out in the north, Israel is not doing enough to draw attention to Hezbollah’s constant violations of Resolution 1701, Zehavi argued.

“We [the Alma Center] are the ones doing it. We publicized Hezbollah’s actions in Lebanon...but I’m sure the IDF has much more information,” she said.

Interviewed four years ago, Zehavi was adamant that she saw growing threats across the Lebanon border that others discounted.

“There are tons of think tanks doing excellent work either in Washington, D.C., or Jerusalem or Tel Aviv. But we see the borders every day. We see the changes. Everything that is happening affects us and our family and friends,” she said at the time.

So much so that Zehavi only hires locals to work for Alma: “Only people who live here can understand. Something happens here every day. It’s a part of our life.”

This week, when asked if she relates to the IDF intelligence officers and lookouts who warned of a Hamas attack and were ignored, Zehavi said that the Alma Center reported in the past that Hezbollah planned an invasion of northern Israeli towns much like the one in Israel’s south on Oct. 7.

“Every day, 10 anti-tank missiles are shot.

That does not make sense. Neither does one missile a week,” she said. “We can’t leave an opening like that – an opening for [missiles] is an opening for a massacre.”

Residents of the north fear that when the country is no longer on high alert, Hezbollah terrorists will cross the border and murder scores of Israelis like Hamas did, Zehavi said.

“We’re very scared and very worried. We don’t sleep well at night,” she said. “It’s

unreasonable that [the government] will only understand our security needs once something happens... Residents of the north won’t compromise or risk that the same thing will happen to us. It’s not like Hezbollah is more humanitarian or moral. Hezbollah has the same culture of death as Hamas.”

Zehavi and her family were not evacuated as residents of towns abutting the border were, but she can “hear all the

battles” between Israel and Hezbollah from her home. It may not be official, but “the northern border is at war,” she said.

“It’s not a normal life. I open my eyes every morning and say the nightmare is when we’re awake, not when we’re asleep,” she said.

Jewish Insider Washington correspondent Gabby Deutch contributed reporting. ♦

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Suspended groups at Columbia University continue to hold anti-Israel campus events

The unauthorized events include protesters chanting ‘intifada, intifada, long live the intifada’ and ‘from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.’ Administrators have declined to stop the events

By Haley Cohen

Just weeks after Columbia University announced a temporary suspension of the campus chapters of National Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) as official student groups through the end of the fall term, both groups have continued organizing on-campus events.

According to witnesses, some of the unauthorized events by the anti-Israel groups have included holding protests featuring chants of “intifada, intifada, long live the intifada” and “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.” Deans have done nothing to stop the events the school claimed were canceled, students on campus tell *JL*.

“It feels like [JVP and SJP] have ramped up more [since the ban],” Alon Levin, a Columbia School of Engineering graduate student, told *Jewish Insider*. “We’re seeing it now almost on a daily basis,” he said, adding that some of the events are held under different names associated with JVP and SJP, such as a protest he witnessed on Monday that was sponsored by Student Workers of Columbia, held on Barnard’s

campus. Barnard College is affiliated with Columbia University and Barnard students are part of Columbia clubs.

“I’ve been to a few of these events so I can document what’s going on, and usually it’s not overtly under SJP or JVP but other groups that are under the banner of Columbia University student organizations that say they will pick up the slack for those groups by doing things like booking rooms,” Levin said.

Other events, such as a menorah lighting held throughout the week of Hanukkah, are still advertised as being sponsored by JVP and SJP, despite the ban, which runs through Dec. 22, the end of the fall semester.

JVP Columbia advertised for the event on its Instagram page, writing “@SJP. Columbia will join us to meditate on the parallels between the Hanukkah story and current events, the importance of grassroots activism, and the significance of solidarity in the face of oppression and suppression.”

In a statement to *JL*, Samantha Slater, a Columbia University spokesperson, didn’t outline any attempts made to prevent the groups from sponsoring campus events.

“We have communicated with JVP that this is an unsanctioned event by an unsanctioned student group. The university supports students who wish to commemorate religious holidays, including by lighting menorahs and celebrating the festival of Hanukkah. Our event policies are in place to ensure that group gatherings are as safe as possible, and to minimize any disruption of ongoing instruction, research, and other activities taking place on campus,” Slater said.

Immediately after the Oct. 7 Hamas terrorist attack against Israel, National JVP released a statement declaring: “The Root of Violence Is Oppression,” laying the blame for the massacre on Israel. SJP has declared open support for Hamas. At Columbia, both groups have demanded that the university call Israel’s ground offensive in Gaza a genocide and to boycott business partnerships with the Jewish state.

Columbia University Apartheid Divest, a coalition formed in 2016, has gained renewed support since Oct. 7, with at least 80 student groups at Columbia joining the coalition.

Levin said that the school's "administration has lost control of the situation."

This isn't the first time Columbia University failed to implement its suspension of campus events from unauthorized pro-Hamas groups.

Columbia Social Workers 4 Palestine, which has expressed support for SJP but is not directly affiliated, organized a teach-in and discussion last Wednesday titled "Significance of the October 7th Palestinian Counteroffensive" in the lobby of the Social Work Building. The event, which was originally planned to be held inside a classroom, had previously been canceled by the School of Social Work administration following online backlash.

Photos obtained by JI show Columbia faculty members not affiliated with the School of Social Work, including deans, attended the event.

In a statement to the *Spectator*, a member of Columbia Social Workers 4 Palestine said that the group was never directly told that the event had been canceled. Organizers told the *Spectator* that they found out about the cancellation from a School of Social Work official Instagram post on Monday containing a statement from Melissa Begg, dean of the School of Social Work.

"This is not a CSSW-sponsored event. The students who organized the event did not seek approval for the fliers and text as required by CSSW processes," Begg wrote. "CSSW supports free speech but does not condone language that promotes violence in any manner, which is antithetical to our values. This event will not go forward at CSSW."

The group "decided to go ahead with the event as planned," despite the statement from Begg, a Columbia Social Workers 4 Palestine member wrote in a statement to the *Spectator*.

Members of the student group gathered in the lobby to give speeches, according to the *Spectator*. "On Oct. 7, the Palestinian Liberation fighters demonstrated their refusal to be dominated," a speaker from Columbia Social Workers 4 Palestine said. "They showed the world that the Palestinian people will fight for freedom instead of quietly adapting to subjugation. They showed us that through creativity,

determination, and combined strength, the masses can accomplish great feats."

"The matter is under review under University procedures," according to a statement from Columbia School of Social Work.

Natan Rosenbaum, a sophomore studying American studies and Talmud, echoed that the "frequency of JVP and SJP protests have virtually gone unchanged, about once or twice a week."

"The size is also pretty similar," he continued. "Maybe not what it was at its height but just today there was one that was 200 or 300 people on the Barnard campus," Rosenbaum said, noting that he can hear the protests while studying in the library.

Ari Shrage, a Columbia alum and board member of the newly formed Columbia Jewish Alumni Organization, told JI: "Columbia put out a statement that said that they 'will not tolerate antisemitic actions and are moving forcefully against [them]'. Yet in the last few days students continue to send us videos where students call for genocide [chanting 'from the river to the sea']. We have photos of suspended groups holding events and distributing hate imagery. We have videos of deans standing and doing nothing to stop events that they claim were canceled.

"Allowing students to chant 'from the river to the sea' for an hour is not acting forcefully. Deans standing for over an hour doing nothing to stop a 'canceled' event is not forceful," Shrage continued. "Suspended groups handing out hateful images is not forceful. President [Minouche] Shafik should be asked under oath how these events continue despite making statements that they won't allow them."

JI has seen the videos and confirmed their existence.

Columbia University suspended SJP and JVP on Nov. 10 due to the holding of an unauthorized event that "included threatening rhetoric and intimidation."

Gerald Rosberg, Columbia's senior executive vice president, said in a statement at the time that the "decision was made after the two groups repeatedly violated University policies related to holding campus events, culminating in an unauthorized event... that proceeded despite warnings and included threatening

rhetoric and intimidation."

Rosberg explained in the statement that suspension means "the two groups will not be eligible to hold events on campus or receive University funding."

"Lifting the suspension will be contingent on the two groups demonstrating a commitment to compliance with University policies and engaging in consultations at a group leadership level with University officials," he continued.

It is not clear whether the administration is aware of other events going on under the radar or if the suspension is set to be extended into next semester.

SJP and JVP said in a Nov. 13 statement on Instagram that "the university has repeatedly changed event approval policies and been deliberately vague about these changes."

Rosenbaum called the suspension a "symbolic gesture."

"I have yet to be made aware of any formal punishment or action from the administration besides that one suspension which was quite short anyway," he told JI. "It makes the administration come off as weak." ♦

Speaking to President Gay, Harvard Chabad rabbi blasts school's handling of antisemitism

Rabbi Hirschy Zarchi: 'We in the Jewish community are longing for a day that we can refer to the president and all of Harvard as ours.'

By Gabby Deutch

Standing next to a large menorah in front of Harvard's historic Widener Library, Harvard Chabad Rabbi Hirschy Zarchi delivered a blistering speech on Wednesday castigating the school for a lack of leadership on antisemitism and bemoaning the difficulties faced by Jewish students in recent months.

Zarchi spoke to a crowd of several dozen students and community members, but the most important person in the audience was Harvard President Claudine Gay. Just a day earlier, Harvard's governing board had voted to keep her as president after her disastrous handling of congressional questioning about whether calls for the genocide of Jews violate Harvard's code of conduct.

"The email referred to you as 'Our President,'" Zarchi said, referring to the subject line of the university-wide email sent on Tuesday by the Harvard Corporation that affirmed Gay's service as president. "We in the Jewish community are longing for a day that we can refer to the president and all of Harvard as ours."

Days earlier, the board of the University of Pennsylvania had voted to oust President Liz Magill following her own similarly bungled response to the question about Jewish genocide. Meanwhile, a couple miles away, Massachusetts Institute of Technology had — like Harvard — decided to keep in place President Sally Kornbluth, who had also appeared at the Capitol Hill hearing about antisemitism.

In a 15-minute address, the usually upbeat Zarchi offered a sober assessment of the state of Jewish life at Harvard since Oct. 7. He described an atmosphere of fear for Jewish students and for his own family, who he said had been advised by Harvard's police department to obtain private

security last week after Harvard Chabad hosted a screening of IDF footage from the Hamas terror attacks in Israel. "We were being accused of hosting a war criminal," Zarchi said, presumably referring to Israeli ambassador to the United Nations Gilad Erdan, who introduced the screening last week.

"We are gathering in a moment when the eyes of the world are upon us. Everybody is looking at Harvard now," Zarchi said. "It pains me to have to say, sadly, that Jew-hate and antisemitism is thriving on this campus."

"I don't feel that they had the back of me and my family and our community," said Zarchi, the Jackie and Omri Dahan Harvard Chabad Jewish Chaplain. "Twenty-six years I gave my life to this community. I've never felt more alone."

In a story that at first seemed inspiring, Zarchi shared how Harvard had first allowed a menorah to be set up in Harvard Yard more than two decades ago. But quickly, this story, too, took a turn toward the negative when he shocked the crowd by revealing that the menorah does not remain in the Yard at night.

"This bothers me until this very day. You know what happens to the menorah? After everyone leaves the Yard, we're gonna pack it up. We have to hide it somewhere," Zarchi said. Harvard "would not allow us to leave the menorah here overnight, because there's fear that it'll be vandalized."

He had never shared that fact publicly before.

"Think about that. We're trying to fix the world, teach the leaders of the world," Zarchi continued. "On our campus, in the shadow of Widener Library, we in the Jewish community are instructed, 'We'll let

you have your menorah. Make your point. OK. Pack it up. Don't leave it out overnight. Because there will be criminal activity here and it won't look good."

Change, he said, will happen "when we don't have to pack up the menorah."

Throughout Zarchi's speech, Gay, flanked by her husband, watched solemnly. He concluded by calling her up to help light the menorah for the seventh night of Hanukkah.

"It's my hope, and I know I speak for everyone here, that we can work together with you," Zarchi said. He implored her to speak up when she sees people on campus targeting Jews: "You don't walk by and say nothing. You speak. You don't remain silent."

Gay walked up and lit the *shamash*, the candle that is used to then light the rest of the flames. At the end of the event, she posed for a picture with the group. But she did not share any public remarks. ♦

Hostages' families find all the services they need in one Tel Aviv building

Volunteer therapists, diplomats, fundraisers and media experts have dedicated the last eight weeks to the Hostages and Missing Persons Families Forum – but their politics have repelled some whose relatives were kidnapped

By Lahav Harkov

The old Kibbutz Movement headquarters was bustling with activity this week. Like many other buildings in the center of the city that housed once-prominent organizations, this one was repurposed years ago into a high-tech office, with open-space work areas, lounges with beanbags and fancy coffee machines. And at first glance, the building looked like any other office in Tel Aviv's tech sector – but cybersecurity firm Check Point and all of its tenants moved out weeks ago.

Since then, all six stories of the building, as well as the basement, were repurposed as the headquarters of the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, the largest and most prominent civil society organization supporting and advocating for the families of those abducted by Hamas on Oct. 7. The forum is providing free therapy and assistance to the families who need it and sending them around the world to make their relatives' cases, filling a vacuum left by a mix of government inaction and slow action.

Yet, the politics of their public campaigns and the tactics and tone of the forum's advocacy for the hostages' release have pushed away a small group of hostages' relatives, who established their own, more hawkish group and publicly criticized the forum.

A massive, impressive operation, the forum has tried to help the families in every possible way, as evidenced by the signs outside the elevators on each floor of the building. Finance, therapeutic and medical staff are on a floor that has individual offices and isn't just open-plan. International relations and media are on another. There's a large legal department. A graphics team

puts together videos for social media, fliers and banners.

Former Labor MK Emilie Moatti was making herself coffee at the start of another day at the head of the Forum's diplomatic team.

"October 7 was a Saturday. This forum was founded on Tuesday, and I was working for them by Thursday. [Former Deputy Attorney General] Raz Nizri was already heading the legal department – I asked who's dealing with international affairs," Moatti told *Jewish Insider*, while looking for a fresh croissant to snack on.

Once a prominent political strategist who led, among other campaigns, Reuven Rivlin's successful bid for the presidency, Moatti was chairwoman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Subcommittee on Foreign Policy in 2021-2022.

She joined a team that was co-founded and led by one of the best-known political strategists in Israel, Ronen Tzur, who's known for his no-holds-barred style, and in recent years has been a leading figure guiding protest groups against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and before that advised now-war cabinet Minister Benny Gantz.

In a conference room with panoramic windows on one side and wallpapered with the iconic "Kidnapped by Hamas" posters on the other, Moatti described her team's efforts.

"It took me five or 10 minutes to get started. When I was chairwoman of the subcommittee, I already had a committee of former diplomats advising me, who I would talk to about the war in Ukraine, and things like that," she recounted.

Then, overhearing someone on the

phone outside, she interrupted herself: "Speak to him gently, he lost a son!" Moatti admonished another volunteer.

Moatti's husband, Daniel Shek, Israel's former ambassador to France and consul general in San Francisco who once ran for Knesset with Tzipi Livni's party, Hatnua, helped form Moatti's "wow" team, as she put it, of retired ambassadors, with members who include Colette Avital and J Street Israel Director Nadav Tamir.

"Our goal is to keep the hostages on the international agenda," Moatti said. "We met representatives of every country [with an embassy or office] in Israel, except for Egypt and Turkey. We met over 200 lawmakers around the world. We met 40 heads of state – some on Zoom, like Brazilian President Lula da Silva."

Shek, who was also in the forum headquarters that morning, pointed out that "some people are suspicious of government officials. This is coming from civil society, representing the people, so it brings a faster reaction, even more so if there's a personal connection," which many of the volunteering diplomats have with foreign government officials.

Moatti said she was "amazed" to see the ex-ambassadors "call a leader and say 'this is an emergency, help us,' and it works."

Another part of Moatti's team works on the delegations of hostages' relatives traveling abroad. Each team is accompanied by a therapist or social worker, as well as by a media adviser.

According to Orna Dotan, a medical management professional who heads the "*Hosen*" or Resilience Department, named for the Hebrew term for post-traumatic psychological care: "We prepare the families

before joining delegations abroad, we are present during the trips and we talk to them at the end."

"Our Resilience Department was established eight weeks ago, with therapists, psychologists, social workers," Dotan said, sitting in a lounge area where two therapists were waiting to be interviewed so they could volunteer at the forum. Outside the window was a billboard calling to bring the hostages home. "At first, we proactively made daily contact with the families to find out their emotional and mental needs. We now accompany their changing needs week after week."

There are 92 volunteer therapists with the forum, who built trust visiting hostages' families over the past eight weeks, as they were "flooded with anxiety from waiting so long, and exhaustion," Dotan said.

"In all the uncertainty, we are a kind of an anchor," she said.

Asked whether her department also supports the returned hostages, Dotan said "our focus is on the families who are waiting for their loved ones to return."

Yet mid-interview, Dotan answered a phone call, and told JI it was from the family of a freed hostage: "They're saying the government isn't giving them what was promised. We'll make sure it happens."

"The hostages that return are getting care, so we said we would give them a week or two and after that we will map out all of the services they're getting from the state to see if something is missing," she added.

The department also provides hostages' relatives with six different types of alternative medicine, and as JI visited, a Shiatsu appointment opened up that was being offered to the forum's employees in lieu of the relative who was supposed to get the massage.

"The volunteers who work here are also exhausted," Dotan said. "The stories of the hostages have become part of their lives, and they also need individual and group support."

Bar Kozlovsky, who heads the forum's international media operation, said she has required her staff to speak to the volunteer therapists regularly, because of the "emotional roller-coaster" they have been on since Oct. 7.

Liat Bell Sommer, a producer and editor

of Israeli TV news programs, heads the forum's media operation and said she's seen her partner and two children "maybe for 10 hours out of the last two months."

There are 40 volunteers in the international media department alone, 10 of whom have taken leave from their jobs to be at the forum full-time.

"We need a vacation so badly, but we can't leave," Kozlovsky said.

Bell Sommer became involved in the effort in the week of Oct. 7, through Tzur, whom she knew because of her decades of work in journalism. "I sent him a message that I want to be part of this; that I would even make coffee for the families."

"Our main customer is the families. We want to give them a platform to relay their messages," she said.

Asked how they deal with the conspiracy theorists and atrocity deniers, Kozlovsky said they won't answer them directly and they will not send out videos of the hostages filmed by Hamas.

"We work with the facts," Bell Sommer said. "It's important. God forbid if we were caught in a lie...The situation is so delicate, sensitive and explosive. We check everything so many times before saying it to the world."

The forum works in cooperation with the families when releasing their details, and has produced videos featuring relatives and released hostages.

"We have a strategy," Bell Sommer said. "Nothing is spontaneous."

Bell Sommer got up to say hello to the sister and brother-in-law of hostages Eli and Yossi Sharabi who were walking by before continuing to describe the media training the forum provides: "These families didn't know how to give an interview before this happened. Now there are families who know very well...We make sure they're not alone and that everyone arrives prepared" for each interview, she explained.

During the week of the hostage releases, the forum was prepared. The moment they crossed the border into Israel, photos and short bios of each hostage were sent to local and international media. Team members were posted at every hospital to help the relatives, though the forum was not granted access to the hostages in their first hours in Israel, Kozlovsky said.

"We checked if the families wanted to

talk or not; sometimes they said they have an important message to relay," she recounted.

The forum's many workers are all volunteers, but it still needs a lot of money to run, and that is where Yossi Moatti — Emilie Moatti's brother and an expert on preparing companies for their IPOs — comes in. Moatti is the forum's CEO and chief fundraiser.

He started his work by finding a registered nonprofit for the forum to work under — the Merit Spread Foundation — and then began asking Jewish communities around the world, friends and acquaintances for funding.

"There are tens of thousands of people around the world volunteering, and 79 chapters abroad," Moatti said.

The forum also funded the biggest ad campaign emanating from Israel in history, according to Moatti, a billion-shekel effort to put the hostages on billboards around the world, in the U.S., Canada, Australia, across Europe and beyond, as well as advertising on social media, posters, stickers, presentations, demonstrations, events and more.

Other funding is "dedicated to giving the families all the aid they need, from psychological care, to iPads and iPhones, to people who don't have money to buy food, to flights from Eilat [where some evacuees from the Negev are staying] to here to meet with us and other families, to filing lawsuits at The Hague."

Asked how long the volunteer-based effort can continue, Moatti said, "on the one hand, we are working for the long term, but we're also living like tomorrow is the last day before they come back."

Kozlovsky, normally a marketing professional, said she is in it for the long haul.

"Once you do something with such a feeling of commitment and deep meaning, it's hard to go to regular work," she said.

Moatti said she once thought that being a teacher would be the most meaningful work she ever did, but "this is the most important thing any of us has done in our lives. Nothing will ever match it. We are privileged to be here."

Danny Miran, father of hostage Omri Miran, a 46-year-old father of two from Nahal Oz, visits the forum almost daily, along with a visit to "Hostages Square,"

around the corner in Tel Aviv, where there are art installations and banners calling to bring them all home.

On Oct. 7 at 6:40 a.m., Miran, who lives in the Upper Galilee, saw the news that there were rockets in the south and he called his son, who told him not to worry. Then, Miran saw the news that there are terrorists in the *kibbutzim*, and he called Omri again.

"He told me the whole kibbutz is full of terrorists and he doesn't have a gun, so he is taking two knives and going into the safe room with the family," Miran recalled. "We were writing to each other. I asked him what's happening and he said they're sitting quietly. At 10:40 I asked if he's still there, and he said yes. After that, I called – no answer. I wrote that I'm worried, answer me – there was no answer. In that moment, I was sure they were all killed."

At 6:30 p.m., Miran received a call from his daughter-in-law Yishai's mother that she was trapped in her home in Sderot, but that the army rescued Yishai and her 6-month-old and 2-year-old daughters Omri had been kidnapped.

"It was the happiest moment of my life to find out that they were alive," Miran said.

He drove to Kramim, the kibbutz in southern Israel where Yishai and the girls were staying, and he learned that not long after he got his last message from Omri, a child named Tomer knocked on their door and said "Omri, open up or they'll kill me." Omri opened the door, and the terrorists took the whole family to a neighbor's house, where they had killed the oldest daughter, who lay dead on the floor. The family sat quietly on the kitchen floor for several hours, and were allowed to feed the children. Then, in the afternoon, the terrorists told the men to come with them, or the women and children would be killed. Omri was taken to Gaza barefoot, in his underwear and a T-shirt, with his daughter screaming "*Abba! Abba!*" — the Hebrew word for father — after him. The terrorists told the women and children to stay in the house quietly and no one would kill them. IDF soldiers rescued them in the early evening.

Miran took part in a vigil to free the hostages on the first Saturday night after the war began, and heard about the forum. Now, he comes to its headquarters and to Hostages Square daily and takes the

time to help others in his situation. He recounted visiting the divorced husband of a woman who was kidnapped along with their grandchildren; without any official recognition since he was no longer married to the hostage, no one knew about him until Miran encouraged him to come to the forum.

"The only place where anyone is working for the families is here, nowhere else," Miran said.

Miran said he told the government's coordinator for hostages and the missing, Gal Hirsch, "not to talk to us anymore unless they have information. To gather 600, 800 people who want to hear something and then have nothing is not helpful. Get to work."

Sitting in a conference room with Emilie Moatti and Shek, he said they connected him with the Hungarian Embassy; while Miran's family hails from Iraq, his deceased wife was Hungarian and Omri holds a passport from the EU state.

Last week, one of the released hostages told him that Omri is still alive.

"Now that we know that he is alive and healthy, we asked the Hungarian Foreign Minister [Péter Szijjártó] to write a letter to Hamas to demand his return. Hungary is a friend of Israel," Miran said.

The Resilience Department provides what relatives of hostages need the most, Miran said, "someone to listen to us. They really hear us. When they can help, they do as much as they can. And when they can't, they tell us. We don't have that anywhere else.

"Look how many floors there are, how many people there are at work. If the government was like this, the country would look different," Miran said. "The smiles I get here, the empathy, the love, is unmatched."

Shek said he admires Miran for "his courage and his way of looking at things. It's hard for him like everyone else, but he has the ability to help others, take an interest in others, and to remember that sometimes we need to have a sense of humor. He is someone I will never forget."

"There's something very destabilizing about the randomness" of the hostage-taking and massacre, Moatti said. "If it were my girls in Gaza, I know Danny would be one of the first people I would meet here."

Miran was forceful in his criticism

of the government who he said is not communicating with the hostages' families enough. Shek, on the other hand, tried to focus on other things.

"It's not just about criticism of the government," he said. "The power of this place is how fast it can react; when there's a problem you can get answers within hours. When you have institutions, you have to print out a form, start a committee – it can take two weeks."

This week, however, politics moved to center stage.

Much of the chatter around the offices of the forum when JI spent the day there at the beginning of the week was about the families' push for a meeting with the war cabinet. That meeting ended up taking place on Tuesday.

Netanyahu told the families that there is no deal that Hamas would accept in exchange for all of the hostages, other than Israel guaranteeing its survival "while it promises to do what it did on Oct. 7 again and again. We won't agree to that and you wouldn't either."

"The fact is that the powerful ground operation led to freeing the hostages that were returned, and the operation is the key to bringing back the rest," he said, according to *Israel Hayom*.

Quotes and recordings of hostages' relatives shouting at the cabinet members, leaked to the media: "How do you sleep at night? Do you know the mitzvah of redeeming hostages?" one father said. "Don't turn us into bereaved parents," a mother said.

"You said you would get all of the women and children out," a relative of a young woman hostage said. "We were quiet, we were respectful...Where are the young women? Why aren't they out? They're being tortured and raped and drugged."

"I was right-wing my whole life; don't disappoint me," one said.

Yet, at least some of the hostages' relatives did not like the others' behavior in the meeting, and a fight among them over the right way to bring back their loved ones has been brewing for weeks.

Tal Gilboa, a pro-Netanyahu activist known for appearing on the Israeli reality TV series "Big Brother," whose nephew Guy is a hostage in Gaza, accused the families

shouting at the prime minister of arriving with scripts and having been trained by the forum's Tzur.

"They didn't let the prime minister talk. It was totally political," she said. "My sister and her husband are apolitical and just want Guy home...A mother stands there and says 'I trust you,' and she's shouted at by the other families. It's just unbelievable. Is one person's pain worth more?"

When Eliyahu Libman, mayor of Kiryat Arba, near Hebron, and father of hostage Elyakim Libman, thanked the government for the work it has done, other hostages shouted him down and called him a "plant" from the government.

Zvika Mor, another Kiryat Arba resident whose son Eitan is a hostage in Gaza, has received similar treatment in hostages' meetings. Mor believes that "the cabinet has to make cold calculations and not follow emotions," he told Kan, Israel's public broadcaster.

He said he felt the Hostages and Missing Persons Families Forum silenced his view, so he established a platform of his own, the Tikvah Forum, whose page on X (formerly

Twitter) said it "gathers families of hostages, acting to help bring about the release of every last hostage along with national responsibility and trust in the resilience of the State of Israel and the IDF." The forum held a mass prayer rally at the Western Wall and put up billboards with photos of the hostages and the message that "the IDF is on the way to you!" and "Be strong, we are coming!"

The Tikvah Forum even spoke out against the deal in which 110 Israeli hostages were released, saying on the one hand that it proves "that the offensive pressure works and is pushing Hamas into a corner," but that Israel must continue military pressure on Hamas so that every hostage is released.

While the Tikvah Forum's spokesman would not provide numbers, its photos and videos seem to indicate that only a small fraction of the hostages' families have joined Mor, perhaps because he and Libman are settlers, while less than 10% of the residents of *kibbutzim* near the Gaza border, from which many of the hostages hail, voted for the right. That leading figures in the forum are affiliated with the Labor party, Gantz and

the mass protests against Netanyahu has not gone unnoticed by the prime minister's supporters.

Speaking on the morning after the war cabinet meeting with hostages' families, Mor told Kan that the meeting should not have happened at all, and the people who shouted at the ministers are "in a difficult mental state" and "lost control because of their sorrow."

The message coming out of the forum, Mor argued, is "to free the hostages at all costs.

"Would we accept precision missiles targeting our power stations? What does at all costs mean?" he asked.

"Why are we being displayed like we're in the zoo? How are we different from families who sent their children to war? If my son wasn't kidnapped, he'd be fighting in the war. I would tell him to fight with all of his might for the people of Israel. I have two other sons fighting," Mor said. "That's how you act in a war. The individuals have to be able to sacrifice for the collective, or there will be no collective." ♦

DECEMBER 11, 2023

In Doha, Graham says Qatar is 'more the solution than the problem,' despite criticism

Sen. Lindsey Graham highlights normalization and two-state solution in address to Doha Forum

By Tamara Zieve

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) praised Qatar and pledged to continue to push for normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia and for a two-state solution between the Israelis and Palestinians, in an address to the Doha Forum on Sunday.

In his opening remarks to the conference, ahead of a conversation with former State Department spokesperson Morgan Ortagus, Graham heaped praise on the host country before delivering lengthy comments about the Israel-Hamas war.

"I want to thank you [Qatar] for what you

have done for my country," he said. "You get some criticism, and Hamas is here — but I know why they're here, they're here so they can be talked to. And you do things for the world that sometimes is not so popular, but I just want to let you know that I appreciate what you do, I love coming here and you're more the solution than the problem."

Graham described the morning session of the conference in its approach to the Israel-Hamas war as "the most one-sided view of a situation I have ever seen," before delivering his response to it.

"Congress would like to see this war over sooner rather than later," Graham said. "Congress would like to lessen the number of civilian casualties to the extent possible but Congress will stand with Israel until they do what they need to do. The last time a bunch of people tried to kill all the Jews 80 years ago there was no Israel, so the one thing I can tell you, if it's your goal to kill all the Jews you're gonna have one hell of a fight on your hands and the United States of America is going to stand with Israel, without animosity toward the Palestinians."

Addressing the “Palestinian problem,” Graham said, “The first thing we need to do is find a new PA (Palestinian Authority). I wouldn’t give 15 cents to this trow. So when this is over, I hope we can find new people to offer new governance that’s less corrupt, to give the Palestinian people something to live for. When this is over I assure you Hamas will not be able to destroy Israel ever again... and when this is over they’ll no longer be able to oppress the Palestinian people...I don’t know how long it will take but the ultimate destruction of Hamas will come from the Palestinian people.”

Turning to the Islamic republic, Graham described Iran as the “root of most of the problems in the region.”

Suggesting that Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack on Israel was inspired, at least in part, by the “desire of Iran to make sure Saudi Arabia never reconcile with Israel,” Graham asserted that “without Iran, there is no Hamas.”

“What I think happened, Morgan, this attack, at least in part, was designed to make sure that the big prize, Saudi Arabia, would never be able to recognize Israel and vice versa,” Graham continued.

“The biggest fear of the Ayatollah [Ali Khomeini] is that the Arab world in conjunction with Israel marches toward the

light away from the darkness. They hate that idea that everybody in this room can find a way to work with Israel and live with Israel, where everybody makes money and can live in peace.”

“So I believe we cannot let Iran win. And for Iran to lose would be the following: We not give up on the efforts to reconcile Saudi Arabia with Israel, that we not give up on a new way of doing business with the Palestinians after this war is over,” Graham said.

Graham, who will soon travel to Israel, said, “Here’s what I’m going to tell my Israeli friends: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE, none of these Arab countries can help you unless you make a commitment for a two-state solution. They just can’t do it. Now, whether you can do it I’ll leave that up to you, whether it’s a good idea for Israel I’ll leave that up to you but I do know this to my Arab friends, to the GCC friends, I know you cannot leave the Palestinians hanging. To my friends in Israel, the best thing you can do to beat Iran is to give the Palestinians a life where they’re not dependent upon terrorist organizations, that they can live and work and be prosperous.”

Graham praised President Joe Biden for the U.S. veto of a U.N. cease-fire resolution, and pledged

“to help President Biden secure the votes in the United States Senate to make it possible for Saudi Arabia to have a defense agreement with us, which would then make it possible for Saudi Arabia to recognize Israel.”

“Before the world I pledge my support, to help reconstruct a new Palestine but none of this is possible until you have a less corrupt younger Palestinian Authority, replacing the one we have. And Hamas can no longer wreak havoc on Israel or their own people.”

On the sidelines of the conference, Graham met with the emir of Qatar, Sheik Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

During the conference, Al Thani presented the annual Doha Forum Award to UNRWA, The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which has long come under fire from pro-Israel groups for bias against Israel and more recently for its role in the Israel-Hamas war.

On Friday, Graham met with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan in Washington, D.C. and they discussed the situation in Gaza, in a meeting also attended by Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. Princess Reema bint Bandar. ♦

DECEMBER 13, 2023

As universities struggle to address antisemitism, Cornell teaches how to fight it in the courts

Menachem Rosensaft, a legal expert on genocide, will begin his new course in January at Cornell Law School

By Gabby Deutch

As the presidents of Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology last week faced widespread condemnation for their stilted, legalistic answers to what seemed to many a straightforward question about genocide, Menachem Rosensaft, a legal expert on genocide, looked on in alarm.

The former general counsel of the World Jewish Congress and the child of Holocaust survivors, Rosensaft has taught a course on genocide at Cornell and Columbia’s law schools for more than a decade. So when the presidents of three of the country’s most prestigious universities failed to offer a straightforward answer when asked if calls for the genocide of Jews violate their

schools’ codes of conducts, he immediately recognized how poorly they had responded.

“You wonder what kind of legal advice they had gotten beforehand,” Rosensaft told *Jewish Insider* last week in a phone call from Germany, where he had participated in a conversation on antisemitism at Bergen-Belsen, the Nazi concentration camp. “The lack of common sense in saying, ‘You know

what? Calling for genocide against Jews should not be something that's downplayed.' Just condemn it and move on."

Starting in January, Rosensaft is for the first time offering a new course that may have something important to teach the university administrators struggling to appropriately respond to a crisis of antisemitism on their campuses. Called "Antisemitism in the Courts and in Jurisprudence," Rosensaft's course is a survey of the different ways antisemitism has manifested in modern history, and how it's been handled in the courts. Few courses like it have been offered at other American universities, although New York University's law school will offer a similar but more academic course this spring.

"My hope is that this course will be a prototype that other institutions can use, and hopefully have the fight against antisemitism, and countering antisemitism, become a serious academic intellectual exercise," Rosensaft.

He first pitched the idea to the dean of Cornell Law School, where he is an adjunct professor, over the summer. It was tentatively approved to be taught in January 2025; Rosensaft estimated it would take him several months of intensive research to perfect the syllabus. But then, on Oct. 7, Hamas executed the most deadly antisemitic attack since the Holocaust.

"Around October, I think 11th or 12th, I spoke with the dean, and he said, 'Tell me, do you think you could get the syllabus together on a more expedited form so that we can offer the course now, in January 2024?'" Rosensaft recalled. "I was able to just devote myself full time to pulling everything together." He retired as WJC's general counsel and associate executive vice president in August.

Cornell Law School Dean Jens David Ohlin echoed Rosensaft in a statement to JI.

"In light of recent events across the world and across the country, including a disturbing wave of antisemitism, I thought that a course dealing with antisemitism and the law would make an important contribution to our curriculum," Ohlin said. "From my perspective, it is essential to study and respond to the challenge of antisemitism with our greatest intellectual resources."

Cornell was in the national spotlight in October after an undergraduate student allegedly threatened to "shoot up" a kosher dining hall at the school's Ithaca, N.Y., campus. The student was arrested, and the university president responded with a strong show of support for Cornell's Jewish community.

"We are focusing very heavily, for good reason, on the university presidents who did it wrong and who got it wrong," Rosensaft said. "But we aren't giving credit, I think, sufficiently to institutions that are doing the right things and to university presidents who are trying to get it right."

Rosensaft's course will require students to read a mix of history papers, legal casebooks and news articles. It offers a broad survey of the different ways that antisemitism has manifested throughout history. This, he argues, is what many people don't properly understand about antisemitism.

"The difference between antisemitism, as far as I can tell, and other forms of hatred and bigotry is not that it is a more serious or more heinous form of hatred. It's not. Racism is racism is racism. But other forms of racism or bigotry are binary in nature," Rosensaft explained. "They are based on color. They are based on religion."

Antisemitism, meanwhile, "is a multifaceted hatred that can and has manifested itself in a religious form; in nationalist form, in a hatred and antagonism of 'the other'; in political terms — 'the Jews are the capitalists,' or 'the Jews or the communists,' and of course in racial terms," said Rosensaft.

Rosensaft's course demonstrates these different varieties of antisemitism through legal cases, according to a copy of the syllabus shared with JI.

There's religious antisemitism shown in the blood libel trials in Europe in the late 19th century. The Dreyfus affair in France shows the "dual loyalty" trope in action. The notorious "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" are explored through defamation and libel trials that took place in the 20th century. Antisemitism as a form of racism is examined in a section on the Nuremberg laws in Nazi Germany. Rosensaft will teach the anti-Zionist "show trials" in Central Europe.

By the time he reaches the 21st century, Rosensaft will look at recent white supremacist trials with antisemitism at their core — the criminal trial of the perpetrator of the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, and the civil case that followed the violent "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville. He concludes with a unit on antisemitism on college campuses.

"Simply saying, 'Anti-Zionism is antisemitism' is effectively like treating cancer by focusing only on leukemia and ignoring other forms," Rosensaft explained. "The anti-Zionist antisemitism that we see on university campuses today is totally unrelated to the white supremacist antisemitism of Nick Fuentes, or what you get out of Russia and Croatia."

He hopes that the course, a serious legal study of the issue, will "provide a safe space for students to get beyond the sound bites and get beyond the slogan."

Of course, that's dependent on students signing up for the course. He does not yet have sign-up numbers; the spring semester does not start until Jan. 22.

"My hope," he said, "is that, using that approach, one can actually educate future lawyers and hopefully make this kind of approach accessible to others as to what antisemitism really is and why it is so dangerous." ♦

Sylvan Adams says \$100 million gift to Ben-Gurion University, his largest yet, marks pivot in giving

Canadian-Israeli businessman and philanthropist tells eJP that the university will decide how to use the donation, but with a priority on boosting the climate change-focused Sde Boker campus

By Judah Ari Gross

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Sylvan Adams, the Canadian-Israeli real estate mogul and philanthropist, donated \$100 million to Ben-Gurion University in southern Israel last week, his largest single charitable contribution ever, which he told *eJewishPhilanthropy* will hopefully benefit the university, the region, the country and the planet.

Though the gift was largely left up to the university to decide how to allocate, Adams and BGU reached an “understanding” that a significant portion of it would go toward the university’s Sde Boker campus, the Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research, which houses graduate-level programs focus on desertification, environmental studies, water management and other climate sciences.

“Climate change, desertification, water management, the sustainability of our planet. This is the biggest planetary challenge that the entire world is facing today. And we’re going to solve it because this is what we [Jews] do. We’re going to solve it,” Adams told eJP. “And I’m confident that amazing solutions will come out of BGU to benefit the entire world.”

Adams said his decision to donate the \$100 million to the university, which he’s been involved with as a donor for years, came as a direct result of the Oct. 7 attacks in southern Israel, in which Hamas terrorists killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, injured thousands more, destroyed entire communities and kidnapped over 240 people to Gaza, roughly half of whom remain in captivity.

Among the victims were more than 80 members of the BGU community. “Our students, staff and faculty persevered in the face of one of our country’s darkest

moments. This gift comes at the perfect time for renewal,” Mitchell Oelbaum, president of the Canadian fundraising arm of BGU — Ben-Gurion University Canada — said in a statement.

“[Hamas] perpetrated the worst attack, the worst day of Jewish deaths since the Holocaust,” Adams said. “So this enormous donation, this enormous investment in the south, specifically in the education of our youth who are the future, is my answer to Oct. 7 — to tell everyone, our enemies, our friends and the whole world, that we are here to stay. And I am investing serious money to emphasize that point.”

Adams said that this donation also marks a shift in his philanthropic strategy, which in the past focused on showcasing the “beautiful” and “normal” side of Israel.

This included bringing the 2018 Giro d’Italia bicycle race to Israel and creating Tel Aviv’s Sylvan Adams National Velodrome (Adams is a major cycling buff), paying for Madonna to perform at the 2019 Eurovision Song Contest in Israel, as well as funding the Save a Child’s Heart nonprofit, which brings children from around the world, including from Gaza, to Israel for life-saving heart surgery at the children’s hospital named for him in the Tel Aviv suburb of Holon. (Adams has also made large donations to Tel Aviv’s Sourasky Medical Center, more commonly known as Ichilov Hospital, which contains the Sylvan Adams Emergency Hospital.)

“[Those projects] were trying to show a normal benevolent face of Israel. But after Oct. 7 and now the war in Gaza, there is no ‘normal.’ So I guess I’ll be having to put those projects on hold until ‘normal’ returns and we can go back to showing our sunny face,” Adams said. “But right now, we are in a period of grieving. We’re in a period of war. We have to win a war. We may have to win a second war in the north. And so I will shift

my attention to projects to strengthen Israel because of my deep patriotism, my Zionism and my love for, for our countrymen and my love for all of the Jewish people.”

BGU President Daniel Chamovitz said in a statement the university is “profoundly grateful to the Sylvan Adams Family Foundation” for the donation.

“This gift will help guide the way forward for our community as we look to rebuild an even stronger Negev, together. We enter this next stage with a focus on six key areas of impact, among them: the future of the Negev and Israel; technologies for the future; climate change; sustainability and the environment; and global health,” Chamovitz said.

Adams has maintained a relationship with BGU for several years. He serves on its board of governors and funded construction of the Sylvan Adams Sports Center at the university, which opened in August. Last year, the university awarded him an honorary doctorate.

“That was a nice project, a big project, but — from any objective perspective — much more modest than this new investment that I’ve done,” he said.

To explain his interest in BGU, the only university in southern Israel, Adams often quotes Israel’s first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, who famously said, “Israel’s future lies in the Negev.”

“I’ve done big [donations] before in the NIS 100 million [\$27 million] range, but never in the \$100 million range,” Adams told eJP. “I wanted it to be concentrated. I wanted it to be big. And what better thing can we do than educating our youth and solving planetary problems. So I thought it was a very good candidate for accomplishing several goals at the same time.” ♦

UAE climate diplomat Nawal Al-Hosany hails 'historic' COP28 agreement

Tripling renewables by the end of the decade and including fossil fuels in the agreement is significant, but action must quickly follow, the UAE's representative to IRENA says

By Kelsey Warner

The article first appeared in The Circuit.

Dr. Nawal Al-Hosany is the UAE's Permanent Representative to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), a position she has held since the post was created in April 2018.

The inter-governmental body, now 14 years old, promotes renewable energy and technology and helps countries plan and carry out energy transitions. Al-Hosany, who also served on the COP28 UAE Advisory Committee, serves as an Emirati diplomat to IRENA, which is based in the UAE capital of Abu Dhabi.

Prior to taking up her post at IRENA, Al-Hosany was the executive director for sustainability at Abu Dhabi renewable energy company Masdar for a decade, and she currently serves on the board of Investcorp Capital and the advisory council for *National Geographic* magazine. She is also credited as being one of the first two Emirati women to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest free-standing mountain in the world.

Al-Hosany fielded questions from *The Circuit's* Kelsey Warner on the final day of the COP28 climate meeting in Dubai.

Nearly 200 parties just approved a plan to triple renewables by the end of this decade and transition away from coal, oil and gas. Reflect on COP28, and what comes next?

The UAE Consensus has made history. At a time when the world needed unity and action the most, the UAE COP28 Presidency delivered. The COP28 Presidential Action Agenda has closed the emissions gap by at

least one-third already. There is language on transitioning away from fossil fuels in the final agreement of a COP for the first time ever — COP28 President Dr. Sultan Al Jaber said he would deliver fossil fuels in the text, and he has.

However, we must be clear that any agreement is only as good as the speed and scale of its implementation. The international community must remain united to turn the UAE Consensus into tangible climate action. We must continue to foster global collaboration to build on the wins from COP28 to drive a resilient climate future for all. That means holding the pledges announced at COP28 accountable through financial commitments.

That also means running with the momentum generated from the top levels and making sure it delivers impact on the ground. We must build on the robust foundations of our international partnerships, like the UAE's long-standing partnership with IRENA. We have seen the benefits of our continued collaboration from one COP to the next. For instance, since IRENA launched the Energy Transition Accelerator Finance platform at COP26 in Glasgow, with support and anchor funding of \$400 million from the UAE's Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, the platform surpassed its COP28 target of mobilizing \$1 billion four-fold. Financial pledges towards ETAF at COP28 reached \$4.05 billion to scale up renewable energy projects in developing countries.

The COP28 agreement calls for tripling renewables by the end of the decade. Practically speaking, what does that mean for what is needed?

The language on tripling renewable energy capacity in the Global Stocktake text is based on IRENA's research, which shows that to stay on a 1.5 degrees C pathway, we must triple global capacity to 11,000 gigawatts by 2030, while also doubling energy efficiency, in the same timeframe.

On the back of IRENA's collaboration with the COP28 Presidency on ramping up renewables, the Renewable and Energy Efficiency Pledge is a recognition that our future world will not work without clean and renewable energy. This is also vindication of the UAE's early adoption and investment in renewable and clean energy solutions. At COP28, the global community has shown that it understands the importance of this point, and it has shown a willingness to put its money where its mouth is.

What are the priorities for paying for the energy transition and what are the hurdles to closing the big financing gap?

This energy transition requires trillions not billions. By 2030, we need investments of between \$4 trillion to \$5 trillion each year, with \$2.4 trillion of that needed for emerging and developing economies. Right now, clean energy investments in Africa represent only 2% of global investments. That is unacceptable. The global energy transition cannot happen without all of us — especially the Global South.

His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's recent announcement of the new climate fund, Alterra, drew widespread support. The \$30 billion investment fund will deploy \$5 billion in risk-mitigating capital to incentivize investment in the Global South. The fund

will also deploy \$25 billion in investment funds in the climate space, directly into projects with the aim of catalyzing at least another \$250 billion of investment by 2030.

How can the green finance announcements work alongside the renewables target?

Climate finance and renewable targets

are two sides of the same coin. You need to mobilize the finance to deliver the projects that will ramp up renewable capacities. More than \$83 billion has been committed to climate action at COP28, with \$61.8 billion parked for climate finance, which will work in tandem with energy transition and renewable energy projects to ensure capital flows reach climate frontline communities, and the parts of the world most in need of

climate resilience measures.

For too long we have faced a false choice of development or climate action. We can have both, at the same time, with green climate finance being directed towards projects that ensure energy access and economic development opportunities.

This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity. ♦