

## THE WEEKLY PRINT

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JANUARY 4, 2024

## Assassinated Hamas leader Saleh Al-Arouri was key conduit between Hamas, Iran

*Hamas' ability to retaliate is limited, but Hezbollah is more likely to seek reprisal, say experts*

By Lahav Harkov

From the moment Saleh Al-Arouri, deputy chairman of Hamas' political bureau, described by the terrorist group as "one of the architects" of the Oct. 7 massacre, was killed in a drone strike in Beirut on Tuesday, Israel has been on high alert. With the war against Hamas in Gaza ongoing, plus constant shelling in the country's north from Hezbollah, which has a massive missile stockpile, the response could come from either direction.

Arouri was an "arch-terrorist," Dikla Cohen, a research fellow at the Truman Institute for Peace at Hebrew University, said. "His whole life was dedicated to

terrorism against Israel."

Arouri was a key figure in bringing Hamas and Iran closer together. Documents and other evidence uncovered by the IDF in Gaza show how effective Arouri was in that role. Cohen said that Iran's "fingerprints are everywhere, and at a level that you can understand that they worked together for 12 years...to prepare Oct. 7."

Arouri and Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh met with Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in November, asking for Tehran to supply the group with weapons if the war lasts over six months, a Hamas official told *The Wall Street Journal*.

The two were reportedly unsuccessful in convincing Iran to engage in a broader war against Israel.

Arouri's ties with Iran helped him build *Maquar al-Dafah*, Hamas' West Bank command. Tal Beerli, head of research at Alma Research Center, which specializes in analyzing threats against Israel's north, said that Arouri "was in very close contact with Hezbollah and the Iranians about how to develop Hamas terrorism with better infrastructure, transferring money, weapons sent via Syria and Jordan."

In the years since he was released from Israeli prison in 2010 as part of a deal,

Arouri moved from Jordan to Syria, Turkey, Qatar and Lebanon. It was in Beirut that he developed close ties with Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, and reportedly was the one to tell him about the Oct. 7 attack on Israel.

Even as he climbed the ranks to become Haniyeh's second-in-command, Arouri "dedicated the last 12 years to directing murderous attacks against Israel," Cohen said. "The best known is when he publicly took responsibility in 2014 for the kidnapping and murder of three teens... His death notice was already signed then."

"If Israel really killed him, as we can likely understand from the kind of drone used, it is a great achievement," she added.

But Cohen was skeptical that ties between Hamas and Iran would be significantly weakened by the strike: "We learned from the IDF's findings in Gaza that Iranian involvement [with Hamas] is so deep that assassinating one person is not enough to break it."

Officially, Israel has not taken responsibility for the strike in Dahiyeh, a Hezbollah stronghold in Beirut.

IDF spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari said on Tuesday that he was "not responding to what's being voiced here and elsewhere," and that "the IDF is on high alert in all sectors for any scenario."

Yet Mossad Chief David Barnea said on Wednesday that his intelligence organization is "committed to bring the murderers, planners and those who sent them to account. It will take time, but we will reach them wherever they are."

"May every Arab mother know," Barnea said, adapting a phrase from a famous speech by first Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, "that if her son participated directly or indirectly in the Oct. 7 massacre, his blood [will be shed]."

Other officials asked about the strike have hinted that Israel is trying to avoid a scenario in which Hezbollah enters the war. Hagari said twice in his daily press conference after Arouri was killed that the IDF is "focused on combating Hamas."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's spokesman, Mark Regev, told MSNBC on Tuesday that "whoever did it, it must be clear that this was not an attack on the Lebanese state. Whoever did this,

did a surgical strike against the Hamas leadership."

How and whether Iran's proxy in Lebanon, Hezbollah, will respond to an attack on its Beirut stronghold is the major question emerging after Arouri's death.

In an address Wednesday night, Nasrallah said that Arouri's assassination was a "very dangerous development" that "will not remain without response and punishment."

Regev's argument, that Israel was targeting Hamas and not Hezbollah, "was something that sounds convincing only to children or cowards," Nasrallah said.

The Hezbollah leader also warned that if Israel launches a war with the Iranian proxy, it would fight back "with no limits...to the end."

Trying to predict Nasrallah's response is "like playing dice," Beerli said. The Hezbollah leader, Cohen said, "is very unexpected and dangerous, and it is hard to estimate his moves."

Beerli recounted that, in August, Nasrallah gave a speech in which he said that if Israel attempts to assassinate anyone in Lebanon, whether from Hezbollah, a Palestinian, an Iranian or others, there will be a "severe reaction." In addition, he noted that Arouri and the Hamas office in Beirut were "under Hezbollah's sponsorship," making the strike symbolically against the Lebanese Shia militia, as well. Plus, Beerli argued, Hezbollah wants to "present a narrative of helping to fight the Zionist enemy."

"Hezbollah wants a war against Israel because it ultimately serves their needs," Beerli said. "Israel would severely weaken Lebanon in a war, which would make it easier for Hezbollah to take over in an Islamic revolution."

The strike on Arouri "could be a trigger for a more extreme response that will drag Israel into a war," he said.

Another possible response from Hezbollah could be a terrorist attack outside of Israel, Beerli said.

Cohen said that "since Oct. 7 Hezbollah has been very measured. They are calculating their steps. The big question is whether they will step out of that box."

One possibility, Cohen said, was that Hezbollah would continue to attack Israel

as it has done in the past three months, but either with larger barrages or with rockets with a longer range. Currently, the terror group is shooting projectiles that reach up to eight km (about five miles) from the border, but it could extend them further, or send hostile aircraft to Haifa and beyond.

At the same time, Cohen posited that internal Lebanese affairs are a major deterrent keeping Hezbollah from escalating its attacks on Israel.

"Christian Maronite leaders say they will not accept any dictates from Hezbollah when it comes to a war. They oppose it deeply because of the very terrible economic situation in Lebanon in recent years...They don't want Beirut to look like Shejaiyah in Gaza," she said, referring to a neighborhood in Gaza City in which a major battle of the current war took place in December.

Hamas' ability to respond to the assassination of Arouri and five others at the terrorist organization's bureau in Beirut is more limited, experts said. Cohen posited that Hamas may give some indication of its planned response at Arouri's funeral, scheduled for Thursday at 3 p.m. Israel time.

"The news of Arouri's killing had significant echoes in all of Gaza," Cohen said. "Hamas is clearly in deep shock."

That being said, she added that "Hamas is in great distress because the IDF is closing in on the tunnel system in Khan Younis, where [Hamas Gaza commander Yahya] Sinwar and his people are located."

Cohen noted that Hamas has far fewer rockets thanks to the IDF, but said they will likely continue to shoot what they have and to send out "tunnel rats" to surface and try to attach bombs to Israeli tanks.

She also expressed concern that Hamas may threaten the roughly 130 Israeli hostages it is holding in response. ♦

# Washington Post under fire for repeated anti-Israel bias, systemic sloppiness in Middle East coverage

*Under pressure, newspaper published editor's note admitting numerous mistakes with November front-page story on Israel's treatment of Palestinian infants*

By Matthew Kassel

As leading mainstream news outlets continue to navigate the pitfalls of covering the Israel-Hamas war, *The Washington Post* is facing particularly intense scrutiny over a growing number of issues connected to its reporting on the conflict, fueling mounting concerns among Jewish leaders, foreign policy experts and even some staffers, among other critics.

The most prominent source of contention has in recent weeks centered on a factually challenged front-page story, published in mid-November, that detailed the struggles of premature Palestinian infants born in the West Bank and Israel who were separated from their parents amid Israel's ongoing war in Gaza.

In an extensive editor's note added to the story last week after more than a month's delay, the paper listed multiple inaccuracies in the original article, effectively undermining its core thesis — that Palestinian mothers were required by the Israeli government to return to Gaza when their travel permits had expired. Meanwhile, the note also acknowledged that the triple-bylined feature had not initially sought comment from Israeli officials, “an omission that fell short of the Post's standards for fairness.”

Though the paper admitted culpability in its mishandling of a politically sensitive subject, the editor's note still left some questions unresolved, including why the story chose not to identify the hospitals or medical workers it cited anonymously. The story had, without evidence, attributed its decision to protecting “staff members” who “fear reprisals from Israeli authorities.” But critics have cast doubt on that claim, noting that NBC News published a similar story just a few weeks later on two of the parents

cited in the *Post* article — and the outlet was for its part able to name the hospital in East Jerusalem as well as the head of its neonatal unit.

It is unclear why the editor's note took more than a month to produce. Before it was appended to the top of the article during the holiday break last week, the story had raised eyebrows among some *Post* staffers who privately expressed reservations that it did not meet the newspaper's rigorous editorial standards, according to a source familiar with the matter.

A spokesperson for the *Post* declined to comment on the story and did not address questions sent by *Jewish Insider* on Thursday afternoon, referring instead to the editor's note.

Robert Satloff, the executive director of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy whose sustained criticism of the recent *Post* story helped contribute to the publication of the editor's note, said he was pleased that the paper had ultimately recognized some of its mistakes. But he added that he remains frustrated with the broader thrust of its Middle East coverage, which he views as flawed.

“I believe the egregious violations of journalistic standards I highlighted in my critique of the Nov. 17 story is regrettably not limited to this article,” he said in an email to *JL*.

In addition to the story on Palestinian infants, at least two other articles authored by its lead reporter, Louisa Loveluck, have drawn significant corrections in recent weeks, raising questions about the paper's commitment to balanced coverage of the evolving war between Israel and Hamas.

The paper has also faced accusations that its Middle East coverage has veered into

activism, presenting a one-sided picture of the conflict that has differed in many ways from the stories seen in competing outlets like *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* — which have produced some of the most searing coverage of Hamas' Oct. 7 attack while also reporting aggressively on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

In contrast with the *Times*, for instance, which this week broke the story on newly declassified U.S. intelligence bolstering Israel's claims that Hamas used the Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza as a command center, the *Post* has for its part been fiercely skeptical of that determination. The paper concluded in its own analysis last month that “the evidence presented by the Israeli government falls short of showing that Hamas had been” operating out of the hospital. The *Post* acknowledged the new assessment from U.S. spy agencies in a separate article on Wednesday, while continuing to assert that such claims have been “challenged by a lack of conclusive proof.”

To some readers who have taken issue with the *Post's* coverage, its skepticism of U.S. and Israeli intelligence findings has been especially troubling because, according to critics, the newspaper has otherwise continued to uncritically cite Palestinian casualty figures provided by the Gaza Health Ministry — which reporters have habitually refrained from identifying as a Hamas-controlled agency. The newspaper has also been accused of amplifying unverified claims from Hamas' media office.

Meanwhile, the *Post* has faced criticism for the language it has used to characterize the war. In November, for example, the paper came under fire for describing as

“captives” Palestinian prisoners who were being released by Israel in a negotiated exchange for hostages held by Hamas and other terror groups, drawing an allegation of editorial bias from Jonathan Greenblatt, the chief executive of the Anti-Defamation League, who called the *Post*’s word choice “absolutely shameful.”

In an unorthodox editorial decision that departs from most other competing national outlets, the paper has framed its coverage of Israel’s war with Hamas as the “Israel-Gaza war,” rather than casting the fight as Israel’s battle against Hamas.

Last November, some staffers at the *Post* also reportedly signed an open letter claiming that newsrooms are “accountable for dehumanizing rhetoric that has served to justify ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.”

The paper’s approach to Middle East coverage has been an ongoing source of frustration among Israeli officials in Washington. In an early November meeting, for instance, top Israeli Embassy officials met with newsroom leadership — including Sally Buzbee, the paper’s executive editor, and Douglas Jehl, who directs international coverage — to privately air their concerns, according to a source familiar with the matter.

Soon after the conversation, however, the *Post* unveiled its now-amended story on Palestinian infants, which did not originally

seek comment from Israeli officials but was later updated to include a statement.

Buzbee and Jehl did not respond to requests for comment on the meeting.

Tal Naim, the spokesperson for the Israeli Embassy, declined to comment on the meeting but did not deny that it had taken place. “As part of the Embassy’s routine media outreach in Washington, we meet with various journalists, editors and news organizations on a regular basis,” she said in a statement to JI on Thursday. “These activities serve to maintain an open line of communication with the American news media and are not limited to any one outlet in particular. We do not comment on the content of these private engagements.”

While the *Times* and the *Journal*, among other outlets, have also drawn scrutiny for some alleged reporting errors as well as suggestions of slanted coverage, critics of the *Post* claim the paper has distinguished itself as a leading repeat offender.

The quality control issues have come at a rocky moment for the financially struggling newspaper, which last October announced a plan to cut 240 jobs. In recent weeks, the *Post* has been shedding staff as some of its most experienced reporters have taken buyouts.

Buzbee, who previously led the *Associated Press* and served as its Middle East regional editor in Cairo before joining

the *Post* in 2021, has strained to recapture the momentum the paper built during the Trump administration, when Marty Baron, the former longtime editor, oversaw an increase in subscriptions.

Buzbee also seems to have struggled to balance competing internal sensitivities around the Israel-Hamas war, which has become a divisive issue in newsrooms. Last November, the paper deleted an editorial cartoon criticizing Hamas that was accused of racism — a decision that Buzbee, in an email to staff, attributed to “the many deep concerns and conversations” voiced by newsroom employees.

In contrast with Buzbee’s brief tenure atop the *Post* masthead, Baron, who stepped down at the beginning of 2021, faced less criticism over the paper’s Middle East coverage.

Shortly after Hamas’ attack in early October, Baron, in an interview with JI, characterized the massacre as an “unprovoked” act of “state terrorism” — even as he acknowledged that *Post* stories have typically described Hamas as a militant organization.

Baron declined to weigh in, however, on recent backlash to the *Post*’s coverage of the war. “I’m not going to comment on any of this,” he said in an email to JI on Thursday. ♦

JANUARY 4, 2024

## Lihi Lapid: ‘I expect all women to support all women’

*Israeli women feel abandoned by feminists and women’s rights activists who have largely remained silent as reports of rape by Hamas terrorists on Oct. 7 continue to emerge*

By Ruth Marks Eglash

It’s been nearly three months since Hamas’ mass terror attack and despite the mounting evidence that the thousands of Palestinian terrorists who infiltrated into southern Israel on Oct. 7 raped, brutalized and kidnapped women and girls in a cruel and systematic way, some of the world’s

most prominent women and leading feminists have remained ominously silent.

For author and journalist Lihi Lapid, one of Israel’s leading feminist voices, their failure to speak out against what happened to Israeli women on Oct. 7 is both shocking and disappointing.

“I expect all women to support all women,” Lapid — who is also the wife of Israel’s former prime minister and current opposition leader, Yair Lapid, told *Jewish Insider* in a recent interview.

“What happened [on Oct. 7] is a matter that should worry every woman,



everywhere,” she said.

Lapid said she believes that the world’s silence about the rape and brutalization of Israeli women, including around a dozen women still being held hostage in Gaza, is largely political.

“Many times, when women’s issues are discussed in parliament or in Congress, it does not matter if you are a Democrat or a Republican, a right-winger or left-winger, everyone comes together to help empower and advance women,” said the author, who is set to release the English translation of her novel, *On Her Own*, in March.

“In this situation, I feel like the world is talking about what happened with a political opinion that relates to what they think or feel about Israel and Palestine,” Lapid continued. “This is something that should be outside of the political story.”

Evidence of systematic rapes and brutalization of women became evident soon after the attacks when a video – self-filmed by the terrorists – emerged of Na’ama Levy, the seat of her sweatpants soaked in blood, being dragged through Gaza by armed gunmen. Since then, eyewitnesses and even some victims have come forward to testify to the police or talk to therapists and the media about the sex crimes that took place on that day – and afterwards, in captivity.

Last week, *The New York Times* published the findings of a two-month-long investigation into Hamas’ sexualized attacks on Israeli women, identifying new eyewitnesses to the horrors and corroborating images that have already been widely circulated. The newspaper also noted the failures by Israeli authorities to document accurately the crimes against women in the chaotic aftermath of the mass terror attack, which led Israel into an ongoing war.

Despite the reports – including clear visual evidence suggesting what took place – there has been no mass movement or broad global condemnation of the sexual crimes Israeli women suffered at the hands of Hamas terrorists. International organizations that purport to support women, human rights NGOs that are quick to condemn other kinds of human rights abuses and prominent celebrities or politicians who have advocated for other

women’s causes such as the 2017 #MeToo movement and the 2014 kidnapping of nearly 300 Nigerian schoolgirls by the Islamist terror group Boko Haram have made watered-down statements or largely stayed silent.

“I expect every woman who supported the #MeToo movement to be a part of the fight to bring our hostages back home, especially the young women,” stated Lapid. “You can’t say you want to protect women because they are women and then say this is a different struggle.”

Although many of the women raped or brutalized on Oct. 7 were subsequently killed and a large number of elderly women and mothers were released from Hamas captivity during a weeklong cease-fire at the end of November, Israeli officials estimate that there are roughly 12 women – most of them young – who are being held by the Iranian-backed terror group.

A further cease-fire in what has now become a three-month-long war in the Gaza Strip, with an estimated 22,000 Palestinians killed as Israeli troops advance through the enclave, was blocked in early December, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said, by Hamas’ refusal to release the remaining female hostages. While Hamas has denied the sexual abuse claims, the group’s refusal to release those women has been seen by some as a way for them to cover up their sexual crimes.

Lapid said she expected prominent celebrities and activists for women’s rights, such as Oprah Winfrey and former First Lady Michelle Obama, to speak out on behalf of the remaining female hostages and demand their immediate release. There are fears among some in Israel that those women still being held by Hamas might have become impregnated – another reason for Hamas’ refusal to release them.

“I mean, all those actresses who joined every #MeToo petition, where are they?” asked Lapid. “I thought everybody would join in [and call for the release of the hostages].”

Lapid used the example of Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani women’s rights activist who, as a teen, stood up to the extremist Taliban group over the right of education for girls and as a result was shot in the head. Yousafzai, who has been revered

the world over for her courage, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 – at the tender age of 17.

However, Yousafzai has also stayed silent about the rape and brutalization of Israeli women by Hamas – which shares a similar extreme Islamist ideological view of women as the Taliban – but has not refrained from attacking Israel’s military operation to remove the terror group from Gaza.

“Malala is a wonderful example because here we also thought she was so brave, and I remember how much we talked about her and what she did,” recalled Lapid. “We did not care at all what religion she was.”

“I don’t know about who is right or wrong in the country where Malala comes from, I don’t know what’s happening there politically,” Lapid emphasized. “I just cared about the fact that someone shot this girl because she wanted to go to school.”

“Yet here we have women who are being held hostage just because they went to a party or were in the wrong place at the wrong time,” she continued. “Some of them were taken from their homes, while holding their babies, so I expect women from all over the world to stand up and say no woman should be kept as a hostage in a dark room with no one there to protect her or even know if she is OK.”

“What I’m saying is, ‘Imagine if it was your daughter,’” said Lapid. “Imagine your daughter was there with people that we know are terrorists and extremists and we know that they did horrible things. Just imagine.”

Perhaps worse than the silence – and even the denial that such crimes took place – Lapid said that as an Israeli woman it has been especially difficult to see people in the U.S. and around the world actively tearing down the posters of those who were kidnapped by Hamas, especially women.

“I saw so many videos of young women tearing down pictures of young women who were or are being held by Hamas,” she said. “I felt like saying, ‘Don’t you look at the picture and imagine that it was you? Don’t you look at the picture and say, well, she’s like me, it could be me? It could be me kidnapped and held somewhere surrounded by men with no one to protect me?’”

“Seeing other women do that was heartbreaking,” said Lapid, adding that she

understands why “people don’t want to believe what happened because they don’t want to believe that the world can be such a horrible place.”

For Israelis, however, especially Israeli women, Oct. 7 brought “the sky down on our heads,” she continued.

“We all knew that we were in a dispute with the Palestinians, but we did not realize that [Hamas] is such a terrible terror organization – much worse than we could ever have imagined,” Lapid said. “That is why we’re still there [in Gaza] because we know that the moment we stop guarding

ourselves, it could happen again.”

“For us, Oct. 7 still did not end,” she added. ♦

JANUARY 2, 2024

## Jewish content creators say TikTok not doing enough to stop hate, antisemitism

*Screenshots of TikTok’s internal employee platform show moderators purposely enable antisemitic and anti-Israel content to remain*

By Ruth Marks Eglash

Jewish content creators on TikTok say they are facing a barrage of antisemitic hate since the Oct. 7 Hamas terror attacks on Israel and that the Chinese-owned video-sharing platform is not doing enough to protect them, with lax moderators and policies that are enabling and even amplifying extreme anti-Jewish and anti-Israel voices.

In some cases, Jewish creators who have tried to counter the hateful messages themselves by expressing support for Israel — or even just sharing Jewish religious, cultural or historical content — have had their accounts shut down or opted independently to pull back from the social media platform following relentless bullying and a limp official response from moderators and management.

Screenshots shared with *Jewish Insider* by Jewish employees of the internal messaging system used by TikTok staff appears to back up the claims that the moderating of hateful content against Jewish users and the regulation of antisemitic or false accusations against Jews and Israel are being allowed to slip through the cracks.

One Jewish user who says he received insufficient support or action against constant antisemitic harassment is Gidon Lev, a Holocaust survivor who spent his childhood in the Nazi concentration camp Theresienstadt. Lev pulled his TikTok

account with some 460,000 followers in November after the rising online hate became unbearable and inaction by moderators allowed it to continue unabated, Julie Gray, Lev’s life partner, told JI.

“We were doing Holocaust education and fun things about Jewish life, it was a nice account and people really loved Gidon,” said Gray, who lives with Lev in Israel.

She described how even prior to Oct. 7, the two were forced to contend with neo-Nazi and Holocaust denial comments. But “then the war started,” Gray said, “and we started to get anti-Israel comments too, with people calling Gidon a baby-killer who supports genocide, so we decided to leave the platform because of that.”

Gray said the two now focus Lev’s social media activities on Instagram, after complaints to TikTok moderators and management in Israel and Germany were brushed off, despite presenting evidence of the racist attacks.

“TikTok was just refusing to acknowledge that this was happening,” explained Gray. “They said that it is not real and does not happen, even when we confronted them with actual evidence they would just say ‘we are working on it.’”

Gray and other Jewish users of the site set up a support group on Facebook and shared with JI some of the problematic content and comments that, despite appearing to be in violation of TikTok’s community guidelines

and being flagged by Jewish users as racist and offensive, was marked as acceptable and allowed to remain on the site. In one video, which was “disguised” as a “skincare tutorial,” a woman uses cue cards to accuse Israel of “banking Palestinian skin” — reminiscent of ancient blood libels against Jews. Despite complaints, it was marked as not a violation of TikTok guidelines.

“Something is happening with their moderators because this has become a pattern,” said Gray, adding that Jewish content creators are being trolled so harshly that even those “who were making videos about Jewish food have had their accounts banned.”

One such account, belonging to popular Jewish TikTok user Sarah Hester Ross, who boasts over 2.4 million followers, said that her account was shut down “for calling out antisemitic comments on my Chanukah videos.”

“We oppose antisemitism in all forms,” a spokesperson for TikTok told JI. “Antisemitism is on the rise globally, and we’re committed to doing our part to fight it. Our Community Guidelines apply equally to all content on TikTok and we invest heavily in training our moderators to apply our policies consistently.”

TikTok said it has in place strict policies against hate speech and hateful behavior, including antisemitism “which has no place on our platform.” The company has said that

between Oct.7 and Nov. 30, more than two million pieces of content that violated those rules were removed from the platform.

"We regularly report on our actions to counter hate, and of the content we removed for hate speech and hateful behavior, nine times out of ten we remove it before it's reported," the company said in a statement to JI, adding that TikTok does not "promote" one side of an issue over another and that the platform's algorithm is generated by "our community and recommendations are based on the content people have previously engaged with."

However, JI viewed screenshots shared by Jewish TikTok employees from the company's internal interface system, Lark, showing that moderators from the Trust and Safety unit, including those based in the U.S., were celebrating that pro-Palestinian accounts, including some posting violent videos or that have made false claims against Jews and Israel, are allowed to remain on the platform.

In one example seen by JI, a trust and safety officer expressed gratitude that "TikTok has allowed me to have constant contact with our amazing heroes Motaz Azaiza & Saleh Jafarawi and helping them with protecting their content on the platform that is exposing the TRUTH, and get rid of those who are impersonating them!"

Both Azaiza and al-Jafarawi are Palestinian journalists based in Gaza. Al-Jafarawi has been accused of being closely aligned with Hamas, a designated terror group by the U.S. and Israel, and has posted violent content and false accusations against Israel to his millions of followers. In November, Instagram suspended al-Jafarawi's account after complaints, though it was later reinstated.

In a blog post on TikTok's website titled 'Our continued actions to protect the TikTok community during the Israel-Hamas war,' the company said it "continues to invest in training for the moderators, in partnership with experts, to address implicit bias and the unique aspects of hateful ideologies."

"We provide ongoing training for our content moderation teams to identify evolving hateful behavior, symbols, terms, and offensive stereotypes," it said. "We also regularly engage with our community and experts to strengthen our approach against

hate."

TikTok said it was also working with outside organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League and others who "help us to more quickly detect and remove hate or violent extremist content that has already been identified off the platform."

Jennifer Cohen, a best-selling author and podcaster, who has had an account on TikTok with more than 110,000 followers for the past two years, said that since Oct.7 she has refrained from posting any pro-Israel content because of "the hate-filled messages I receive based on me being Jewish."

"I have also seen my numbers dropping and my content constantly pushed aside by pro-Palestinian content," Cohen, who now only posts Jewish content on her Instagram account, added.

Tom Divon, a platforms researcher at Hebrew University who has been tracking TikTok and other social media apps for a while, told JI that while antisemitism and the proliferation of fake and inflammatory content have long existed on TikTok, "a noticeable shift occurred after October 7."

"Prior to this date, you might have encountered sporadic instances of antisemitic content on the 'For You' page, which offers content based on previous viewing history, however, since then, the volume of videos espousing such ideologies has surged dramatically," he said.

"It's essential to recognize that part of the motivation behind this surge is the pursuit of virality and trendiness," Divon added. "Not all users necessarily hold antisemitic or malicious intentions, but they recognize that this type of content is often algorithmically rewarded, leading some to jump on the bandwagon in search of exposure with their own take."

Divon said he did not believe that TikTok altered the algorithms to amplify content supportive of either Palestinians or Hamas.

"However, I do believe that TikTok isn't doing enough to monitor relevant areas of the platform," he said. "Pro-Palestinian creators are adept at using filters and emojis to encrypt symbols of Palestinian resistance and make their content more appealing."

"This approach allows them to evade moderation as the algorithm doesn't recognize emojis as offensive or violent," Divon explained. "For many other creators

and viewers, these symbols serve as clear indicators of content worth engaging with, thereby boosting its visibility in TikTok's algorithm."

"TikTok appears to prioritize hashtag-driven moderation, but more advanced methods are at play here," he continued, adding, "In this context, Israeli creators may be outnumbered and less experienced and literate in content creation on TikTok."

Divon said it was important to note that Jewish creators have not simply abandoned social media altogether, but "instead have opted to continue their remarkable ambassadorship on other platforms where they can prioritize their well-being and avoid the accumulated trauma." ♦

# Top GOP Senate recruit Dave McCormick underscores importance of American strength in Middle East

*In JI interview, McCormick says Israel's war against Hamas is a battle between good and evil after visiting Kfar Aza*

By Josh Kraushaar

In a show of solidarity with Israel, GOP Pennsylvania Senate candidate Dave McCormick spent the first week of the new year in the Jewish state, meeting with the country's military leaders, government officials and families of hostages — while spending a day touring the remains of Kfar Aza, one of the *kibbutzim* hit hardest during the Oct. 7 Hamas terror attack.

"You can read about these things, but when you see it yourself, it's just much more meaningful. It has reinforced my belief of the need to have solidarity with Israel and the people of Israel, but also to make clear the difference between right versus wrong," McCormick said in an interview from Tel Aviv with *Jewish Insider*.

McCormick added that he watched the 47-minute video compiled by the Israeli Defense Forces documenting the Hamas atrocities on Oct. 7: "The evilness of what occurred here and the need to have a united front against that evil — that's the lesson. Lesson two: The brutality and heinous nature of Hamas is even more extreme than I could have imagined... It's about fighting back against an ideology and a terrorist threat that goes far beyond just Israel."

The Pennsylvania Republican said that he endorsed Israel's policy of seeking the eradication of Hamas from the Gaza Strip, saying he fully backs the country's military strategy. "You cannot live that close to an enemy threat that is genocidal like Hamas. The eradication of Hamas is not negotiable. The war has to be conducted in a way the Israelis best determine," McCormick said.

McCormick gave a mixed review of President Joe Biden's Middle East policy, acknowledging he's been a supporter of

Israel ("We need to stand with Israel, and I think President Biden, the things he said, has been consistent with that") but sharply criticized the administration's lack of deterrence against growing Iranian threats.

"What we're seeing is the failure of deterrence. We're seeing the consequence of weakness under the Biden administration," McCormick said. "The Obama Iran deal followed by the Biden approach to Iran is at the heart of [the problem] because it's given Iran the ability to invest and underwrite terrorist groups across the Middle East that have both regional and global ambitions."

In a sign that he's taking a more hawkish posture than other GOP Senate candidates, McCormick attributed growing chaos in the world to American enemies perceiving Biden's weakness, stemming from the president's decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan. "You've got the debacle in terms of the pullout in Afghanistan, you've got the mishandling of Ukraine. You've got a president who's very shaky in his response to direct or indirect threats to America," McCormick said.

During the trip, McCormick met with Israeli President Isaac Herzog and Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana. McCormick's wife, Dina Powell McCormick, former deputy national security adviser in the Trump administration, also joined the trip.

McCormick, a graduate of Princeton University, also weighed in on the resignation of Harvard President Claudine Gay this week, noting that he was one of the first political figures calling for the ouster of former University of Pennsylvania President Liz Magill, who resigned just days after a disastrous congressional hearing on

campus antisemitism.

McCormick suggested that if elected, he would support legislation to roll back the tax-exempt status of university endowments, and conditioning federal research dollars to colleges. He also proposed colleges reform their tenure process. "I'm not trying to jam conservatism down people's throats, I'm trying to create universities that are at their core, a place where people can express themselves and find their way to ideas that are truly the best ideas," McCormick said.

McCormick is running in this year's Senate race against Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA), a race that is shaping up to be one of the most competitive battlegrounds that could determine party control of the upper chamber. The race is expected to be one of the most expensive in the country.

McCormick, who unsuccessfully ran for the seat Sen. John Fetterman (D-PA) now holds, is now offering qualified praise for the junior senator, who has emerged as one of the most outspoken Democratic supporters of Israel in Congress. He contrasted Fetterman's vocal support of Israel against Casey, who he argued hasn't shown the same degree of "moral clarity."

He also credited Fetterman for breaking with his party on border security and calling out Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ) for corruption. "He's embraced positions that are great and consistent with my position," McCormick said of Fetterman. ♦



# The Hasidic Knesset member from Brooklyn speaking out against U.S. antisemitism

*Moshe Roth: 'We assumed that whoever is educated has moral clarity. To us, moral clarity and right and wrong are built in our education...so we didn't see it coming'*

By Lahav Harkov

In late December, a Knesset member from the Ashkenazi-Haredi United Torah Judaism bloc, approached the podium in his usual Hasidic garb, a long black coat and a black *kippah*, and asked for permission to address the parliament “in a foreign language” — something usually reserved for when foreign leaders address the legislature.

MK Moshe Roth proceeded to address “my fellow Jews” in English inflected with the part-New York, part-Yiddish accent that would be familiar to anyone who has spent time in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, where Roth grew up.

“On the other end of the world, there is another war raging, an onslaught of blind hatred...this hatred known as antisemitism is shamefully running rampant in the civilized streets of other countries...[and] voiced in universities which used to be prestigious.

“We know you carry the burden of this terrible phenomenon,” Roth added. “I call upon you from our eternal holy city of Jerusalem: Stand strong...Now is the time to stand together and look out for each other.”

Roth, a Bnei Brak resident who marks a year in the Knesset this month, spoke with *Jewish Insider* last week fresh off of another speech, this time in Hebrew. He criticized the government, despite being a member of the ruling coalition, because the law does not grant families of injured soldiers any benefits as long as those soldiers are hospitalized, even if the hospital stays are lengthy and require relatives to miss many days of work. The MK called the situation “shameful” from the plenum.

Diaspora Jews, IDF soldiers — these are not the typical constituencies of a lawmaker who was the first ever to be appointed to the

UTJ list to represent Sanz Hasids.

Yet Roth, who speaks with an easy, warm smile, said his mission is to serve “*klal Yisrael*,” the entire Jewish people, a value he learned from his father, Rabbi Chaim Alter Roth, who was an important figure in Agudath Israel of America.

*The interview was edited for length and clarity.*

**Jl: What inspired you to get into politics?**

**MR:** I don't like to use the word politics. That's why I got into *askanut* [community service]. I have taken part in public work as a volunteer for many years; I was on the board of Laniado Hospital in Netanya for 20 years for the same reason. For as long as I can remember, I was busy with volunteer work. Part of my reason for becoming a lawyer was to utilize that to help the public.

My upbringing was in an environment of caring for *klal Yisrael*. My father came out of Auschwitz at the age of 16 with the number 8524 tattooed on his arm. That environment affected my outlook and put everything in a certain perspective. I was raised by my parents with the ideal that caring about Israel and the Jewish people is the most important thing.

When I came to Israel on my own as an immigrant at age 20, I felt part of the big picture. To me, UTJ is a venue for the whole Jewish nation. Although I am focused on the needs of the Orthodox community and its education, when we talk about the wide scope of things, I definitely think about what is important for the Jewish nation.

**Jl: Why did you make the unusual**

**decision to give your speech about antisemitism in the plenum in English?**

**MR:** Antisemitism is an international issue. The ones who are getting the brunt of it and carrying that burden are not in Israel. We in Israel have a different kind of war. Antisemitism is the war of the Jews living in the free world, of students on campuses and people at work. I felt it was important to talk to them. Therefore, I addressed my words to my fellow Jews. I think it is important for there to be continuous communication between Israeli political leaders and the Diaspora.

Modern antisemitism is cloaked by anti-Zionism. When somebody is an anti-Zionist, it's because he's an antisemite...The worst antisemitism is what's happening on campuses...It's also the antisemitism that caught us by surprise. The reason that we, the Jewish people, were so naive about it is that it's hard to fathom how educated people can become antisemitic. We assumed that whoever is educated has moral clarity. To us, moral clarity and right and wrong are built in our education...so we didn't see it coming

**Jl: What do you think is Israel's role in combating antisemitism?**

**MR:** This is one thing Israel can't do much about, contrary to what people may think. Any action Israel will take will be condemned automatically...The only thing Israel can do, and for this we need the Jewish community and influential individuals in the world, is bring to light the source of the antisemitism in universities, such as money from Qatar and other sources that have antisemitic agendas. Sunlight is the best disinfectant. We should use our influence

in the world to try to counteract that kind of antisemitism and to be a force against it.

The war against antisemitism should be part of a global effort with good people. We need good people to stand with us.

**Jl: Was your speech part of that effort?**

**MR:** You know, my mother tongue is Yiddish. Coming from Brooklyn, English wouldn't have helped me with anything. But at a certain point, I put my mind to learning.

Right now, the most important thing that I can be a part of and put my skills to use is being part of *hasbara* [literally "explaining" – public relations].

There's no English word for *hasbara*, because the only one asked to explain itself is Israel. I am trying my best at this.

**Jl: What are you doing for Israel's public relations?**

**MR:** I meet with delegations from foreign parliaments visiting the Knesset, and when they hear me speak, it adds a traditional, Jewish worldwide effect. In a certain sense, I have many generations speaking through me. I also think that looking religious only adds to the seriousness of what I have to say.

I do interviews with international media, not only in the West. I had an interesting one with Indian media. Since they also have a lot of issues with radical Islam, they loved to hear somebody speak about that. It felt close to home for them. That was an interesting experience, to see all of us in the free world have the same threat in common.

We have a group of MKs who speak foreign languages and we work together. I am also a member of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Subcommittee on Foreign Policy and Public Diplomacy. Today, for example, we had an important session on UNRWA [the UN agency for Palestinian refugees]. Every few days we have meetings that have to do with foreign policy. I take points from them and try to utilize them in whatever interviews I give.

All in all, it's a very lopsided, odd battle because for every interview and piece of media in which we are successful in getting our message on the world stage, there are hundreds from the other side.

**Jl: There are a lot of Israelis who are not part of the government or the army trying to help Israel's public messaging via social media and other channels. Is the Haredi community also trying to get involved in this way?**

**MR:** The general Haredi people, as communities and organizations, have the tendency to be first responders in any crisis and to volunteer to help with any need that may arise. ZAKA, Hatzalah, supplying food, healthcare and equipment — that would be their first instinct and they do it in abundance.

There are more than 200,000 volunteers in the Haredi community. That is eight times as much as any other community in Israel... ZAKA is 90% Haredi. Nobody else does what they do. Either they do it or it doesn't happen...

There is also more sophisticated help, like helping the system run better. We have professionals for that, people who have the know-how. Haredim have a lot of volunteers in every system, but you don't see them, because it's happening behind the scenes. Many Haredi people are helping with *hasbara*, whether it's publishing articles, cartoons or video clips. You see their work everywhere.

Haredi people, in general, are sensitive to what's going on in Israel. Little children start school every morning by saying psalms and praying for fellow Jews in distress.

**Jl: There was a lot of buzz in the media about thousands of Haredim volunteering to join the IDF when this war began. Do you think this is a lasting trend?**

**MR:** It's true, but this doesn't change the general idea that yeshiva students need an exemption from the draft, because 100% of those who volunteered in the wake of the crisis were not yeshiva students. No one is exempt just because he's Haredi; only yeshiva students are, whether they are teenagers or they are married and have children and learning in the *kollel*. The only difference is that now they are learning for the spiritual sake of the success of the army. There's no practical change in that arrangement.

What is different is for the Haredim who are in a position to volunteer. In the regular situation, it's very bureaucratic and you can't just join the IDF when you want. After Oct. 7, the IDF was more flexible, so many Haredim were able to join immediately.

In addition, new venues opened up to be part of the effort. If they remain open in the long term, more Haredim will be able to be part of the system...in a situation where a father of two children can serve, but not too far from home or something like that.

Nothing will change with regard to yeshiva students. It hasn't changed, and it won't change. So it's true, thousands of Haredim are enlisting, but there is no change in the major idea of the past 75 years that [Haredi] yeshiva students don't join the army.

**Jl: You say it won't change, but this has been a big political issue for decades. It brought down governments.**

**MR:** The reason why it won't change is not only because the Haredim don't want it to change – it's because nobody wants it to change. It's a political sport. Everyone loves to talk about it, to negotiate about it. It's good for the polls when an election comes around. It's a wonderful item to highlight that covers up for so many mistakes and negatives. All a politician has to do is talk about the importance of the draft, the army, the mothers of the soldiers – as if all soldiers are on the front.

The army doesn't need more manpower. There is no actual need. If there was a need, there wouldn't be any Army Radio and thousands of boys and girls walking the halls of the Kirya [Defense Ministry headquarters in Tel Aviv]. But no politicians talk about the mothers of the soldiers [serving] in Army Radio.

**Jl: The High Court of Justice struck down the law regarding Haredi enlistment in 2017 on grounds of inequality and has continued to demand the government come up with a new solution. The Knesset was supposed to work on a bill the week the war started. You don't think the government will have to deal with this issue eventually?**

**MR:** There won't be a law. There's no law that could address the social issue. It's a contradiction. A social issue is based on an arrangement, a legal issue is black and white. This is a social issue, not a defense issue because the IDF doesn't need more manpower...To solve a social issue you need compromise...but the politicians are not really interested in solving it. All they want is to raise the issue again for political benefit.

There is a real virtue to this compromise. We, the Jewish people, are three things: We are a nation with a state, we are a race and we are a religion. These three pillars work together. We need scholars. To us, Torah education is a necessity, a basic part of our being...We are the people of the book. That is a huge responsibility, to make sure the Torah is not forgotten. ..Therefore, although I am not a yeshiva student, a scholar, I want

and need the Jewish nation to have scholars – and the more the better. The minimum would be that a substantial part of the Jewish people should only be learning Torah. For that to happen, we need yeshivas...

Today, we have about 1-1.2% of the population in yeshiva, but it would be better if we had more. In the time of Joshua, there were 1,000 learners for every 1,000 soldiers – that was the formula. ♦

JANUARY 2, 2024

## 'Root problem' of antisemitism at Harvard remains after Gay resignation, Jewish leaders say

*Harvard President Claudine Gay stepped down on Tuesday after scrutiny of her handling of antisemitism on campus and amid allegations of plagiarism in her academic work. She didn't acknowledge either*

By Gabby Deutch

**H**arvard President Claudine Gay resigned on Tuesday, following months of scrutiny of her handling of antisemitism on campus and amid allegations of plagiarism in her academic work.

In December, the university's governing body pledged its support for Gay. But in long statements emailed to the Harvard community on Tuesday, neither Gay nor the Harvard Corporation explained what had changed over the university's winter break, and why she was now leaving her post. Their messages did not mention the explosion of antisemitic incidents at Harvard since Oct. 7 under Gay's leadership.

Jewish community members met the news with skepticism — some tentatively hopeful that her resignation would bring about change in the university's much-criticized response to antisemitism, and others pessimistic that a change in leadership will root out the deeper problems facing Jewish students and faculty at the Ivy League university.

"The problems at Harvard have been years, if not decades, in the making," Jeremy Burton, CEO of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston, told *Jewish Insider* on Tuesday. "Whatever your

opinion about Gay's decision to step aside and how that came about, we would be doing ourselves a disservice if we pretend that this in any way moves us closer to resolving the root problems with the campus environment at Harvard."

Harvard has faced widespread scrutiny for its response to the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks in Israel. The university did not address the terrorist attack for more than two days, at which point a letter authored by dozens of student groups blaming the bloodshed on Israel and its treatment of the Palestinians had gone viral.

The day after the attack, Gay spoke with Harvard Chabad Rabbi Hirschy Zarchi to express her condolences and offer sympathy for the campus Jewish community. But she told Zarchi she did not plan to release a statement.

"This was after the student groups came out with their message," Zarchi told JI on Tuesday. "She said to me that she doesn't think she's going to say anything, [that] she's going to rely on the deans. She had a lot of faith in the deans."

Soon after, the dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Education sent an email blaming both "Hamas and the Israeli government" for everyone killed in the

attack.

The next day, Gay sent her first statement addressing the situation in the Middle East and responding to rising reports of antisemitism and Islamophobia. She sent two more that week alone. Ever since, the school has been locked in a cycle of reactionary damage control.

"Claudine Gay tacitly encouraged those who sought to spread hate at Harvard, where many Jews no longer feel safe to study, identify and fully participate in the Harvard community," the Harvard Jewish Alumni Alliance, which has thousands of members, said in a statement Tuesday.

The slow response and equivocation of Gay and other Harvard administrators were particularly jarring, Jewish community members argue, given how quickly Harvard has responded to other global events like the war in Ukraine and the anti-racism movement that emerged after the murder of George Floyd in 2020.

"It created a culture that we don't remain silent when we experience or witness the slightest form of discrimination," said Zarchi. "That's a beautiful culture to inculcate in students. But then there's a double culture in which, when it comes to matters of the Jewish community, there's

nothing being said.”

The tipping point for Gay may have been allegations of plagiarism in Gay’s academic work, dating back to her graduate thesis, that emerged in recent weeks. Those accusations followed a disastrous performance on Capitol Hill in which Gay refused to say definitively that calling for the genocide of Jews violates the school’s code of conduct.

“It can be, depending on the context,” she said at the December congressional hearing.

Gay later walked the testimony back, telling the *Harvard Crimson* that she got caught up in a combative hearing and “failed to convey what is my truth,” which is “that calls for violence against our Jewish community — threats to our Jewish students — have no place at Harvard, and will never go unchallenged.”

In her Tuesday email announcing her resignation, Gay said “it is in the best interests of Harvard for me to resign so that our community can navigate this moment of extraordinary challenge with a focus on the institution rather than any individual.” But she argued that she had been unfairly maligned in recent weeks.

“It has been distressing to have doubt cast on my commitments to confronting hate and to upholding scholarly rigor—two bedrock values that are fundamental to who I am—and frightening to be subjected to personal attacks and threats fueled by racial animus,” Gay said.

In November, Gay announced in a speech

at Harvard Hillel that the university was forming a group to advise administrators on how to combat antisemitism on campus. One person familiar with the group’s proceedings told *JI* on Tuesday that the group has met once or twice a week for the past two months. But Gay did not consult with the group, which included several university administrators, author Dara Horn and Harvard Divinity School visiting scholar Rabbi David Wolpe, before she testified on Capitol Hill. Wolpe resigned from the group after Gay’s appearance.

Despite the frequent meetings of the advisory group, the university has not announced any new actions against antisemitism. The person familiar with the group’s work said there are no future plans to meet, and that its members have not been told what the university’s next actions on antisemitism will be — if any.

Jacob Miller, a junior at Harvard and the former student president of Harvard Hillel, said something at the school needs to change to make Jewish students feel at home. But it’s not clear if that will happen.

“There does need to be a change in the culture, and I don’t know if this is a part of that, or if this is just Harvard trying to evade the negative press that it’s receiving,” Miller, who was an editorial fellow at *Jewish Insider* from 2021-2022, said. “It remains to be seen exactly how the school reflects its commitment to protecting Jewish students. It’s too early to tell.”

Jewish students have begged Harvard’s administration to do more to fight antisemitism and to enforce the school’s code of conduct, such as by taking disciplinary action against students who have disrupted classes with pro-intifada chants.

Jewish donors aren’t convinced that the change in leadership is reason enough for them to rethink their decision to withhold donations from Harvard.

Yossi Sagol, an Israeli businessman who attended Harvard Business School, told *JI*’s sister publication *eJewishPhilanthropy* in October that he was considering withholding a donation to Harvard. A spokesperson for Sagol Holdings told *JI* on Tuesday that Sagol “is waiting to see the actions of the university, and will not have a decision until then.” A separate group of Jewish alumni decided last month to lower their donations to just \$1 to signal their dissatisfaction.

Harvard announced that university provost and chief academic officer Alan Garber, an economist and physician, will serve as interim president.

“The provost has a very close relationship with the Jewish community,” said Miller, who added that Garber occasionally attended Jewish prayer services at Harvard Hillel. “He’s very friendly and attentive to the issue of antisemitism on campus.”

*eJewishPhilanthropy* news reporter  
Haley Cohen contributed to this report. ♦

JANUARY 2, 2024

## Nonprofit tracking online antisemitism with AI tools details cyber aftermath of Israel-Hamas war

*CyberWell CEO Tal-Or Cohen Montemayor said there’s been an 86% rise in online antisemitism since Oct. 7*

By **Tori Bergel**

One of the newest companies monitoring antisemitism online is CyberWell, an AI-backed nonprofit that’s home to the first open source database of anti-Jewish digital hate. CyberWell’s executive director and

founder, Tal-Or Cohen Montemayor, started the company about 18 months ago after growing increasingly concerned by the rapid migration of conspiracy theories and “violent antisemitism” from darker internet channels to mainstream social media.

“It’s very difficult to be Jewish, openly online today,” Cohen Montemayor said during an interview with *Jewish Insider* last month at Gregory’s Coffee in Midtown Manhattan. “We’re experiencing an unprecedented wave of hate.”



The company reported an 86% rise in antisemitic content across all platforms post-Oct. 7.

Cyberwell monitors for antisemitism in both English and Arabic, using the 11 categories detailed in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism to determine a positive incident.

Once a potential instance is flagged by CyberWell's AI systems, a human analyst vets each case before they are included in the final total. CyberWell collects everything from specific hashtags and trends to individual offending users, and publishes that information in a dataset on its website, as well as sending an exhaustive report to each social media platform, which include high level compliance alerts for their own content moderation teams so they have all the information needed to implement a change.

Cohen Montemayor, who is a lawyer by trade, got her start in the open source intelligence and business intelligence space, specializing in U.S. extremist movements and the dark web, before founding CyberWell. Certain trends the company has seen most recently include increased calls to violence against Jews in CyberWell's Arabic dataset and an increase on the English side of what Cohen Montemayor called "classic antisemitic narratives," such as that Jews control the government or the idea of Jewish power.

"I couldn't help but be very alarmed as

a student of history, and thinking about the Holocaust and how it happened, is primarily before the Holocaust could happen, the idea of hating Jews had to be popularized, and was popularized in traditional media, was popularized in academia," Cohen Montemayor said. "When you see that happening now on these algorithmically empowered machines that bring over half of the worldwide internet activity, you can't help but think that we're on the precipice of a very similar violent event."

Of the five main social media platforms CyberWell operates within — Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, YouTube and X, formerly known as Twitter — Facebook saw the highest rise in antisemitism after Oct. 7, with a 193% increase while X increased by 81% (although Cohen Montemayor described X as having a "higher level of baseline antisemitism because they don't remove hate speech.")

At the same time, Cohen Montemayor has also noticed a rise in denial of the Oct. 7 Hamas massacre across the board. Social media platforms don't currently include the denial of the events of Oct. 7 in their hate speech policies, which CyberWell is lobbying to fix.

"I predict that this denial campaign will literally be the reincarnation of Holocaust denial. Only now it's not going to be limited to academia, it's going to be on algorithmically empowered machines," she said.

Since Oct. 7, CyberWell has been tasked by the platforms it works with to expand

beyond just monitoring antisemitism into watching for glorification of terror, graphic content, misinformation and disinformation. One of the main issues highlighted by the company's newest report, however, is the failure of social media sites to actively monitor and remove violating content themselves.

Last month, Facebook's content moderating decisions were overturned more than once by parent company Meta after the platform removed two videos (and later a handful of posts) that showed scenes from the Oct. 7 massacres, initially deemed by the platform as being in violation of Meta's policies regarding sharing videos of a violent nature. Meta's Oversight Board said the posts should have been allowed and that Facebook's tightened removal policy was too severe.

"I wish that there wasn't a reason for [an] online antisemitism expert to exist like CyberWell. It's a need," Cohen Montemayor said. "Objectively speaking, today, there is not only a 300% increase of incidents outside, there's a doubling and tripling of the levels of online antisemitism, and social media platforms, the Jewish community cannot expect them to be antisemitism experts."

"It's such a nuanced form of hate that you need somebody who brings that knowledge about antisemitism and Israel, and also brings technology in order to solve this issue at scale." ♦

JANUARY 3, 2024

## Will Saudi Arabia's plan work to become the Middle East's new corporate HQ?

*With the world's most active sovereign wealth fund and a raft of incentives and social reforms, the kingdom may diminish the UAE's dominance in attracting corporates*

By Kelsey Warner

*The article first appeared in The Circuit.*

The deadline has passed for international companies vying for big contracts with Saudi Arabia to

relocate their corporate headquarters to the kingdom.

From Jan. 1, government-backed entities are restricted from doing business with large foreign firms that don't have regional

headquarters in the country, as Saudi Arabia looks to diversify its economy away from oil. Ultimately, the kingdom is squaring off with the UAE, which has long held the majority of regional headquarters and attracted the

lion's share of corporate expenditure and foreign investment.

"A superficial nameplate saying 'this is the regional headquarters' will not fly," Saudi Arabia's Minister of Investment Khalid Al-Falih said back in 2021, when the mandate was first announced. The expectation is that businesses will employ executive-level staff and oversee operations in other Middle East countries from their kingdom-based offices.

By October 2021, 44 companies had received government licenses to set up headquarters in the country. The companies that had already relocated their regional headquarters included PepsiCo, DiDi, Unilever, Siemens, KPMG, Novartis, Baker Hughes, Halliburton, Philips, Schlumberger, SAP, PwC, Oyo, Boston Scientific and Tim Hortons. Since then, a total of 200 have been granted licenses for regional HQs.

In tandem with the corporate push, quality of life is becoming a larger emphasis for the kingdom. In 2016 the religious police was tamped down. Two years later, an investment initiative was launched to rapidly develop more cultural, entertainment, sports and tourism activities, which was quickly followed by opening up

to global tourism and a broader acceptance of Western dress in corporate settings. Women's workforce participation has also gone up, from 18% in 2009 to 30% in 2020, according to the Atlantic Council.

Saudi Arabia is now aiming to lure 480 companies to open regional HQs by 2030. For context, as of 2021, 196 of the Fortune 500 had a dedicated office for the Middle East and Africa to service the region, with 70% opting to locate in Dubai.

Analysts and recruitment experts predict executives are scrutinizing the policy for loopholes.

The feeling among those already doing business in the region is "we're going to try and get around it in some way, shape or form," Oscar Orellana-Hyder, co-founder of Cordell Partners, a financial services headhunting firm based in the UAE, told *The Circuit*.

"The decision on where to locate a headquarters also depends on who the anchor investor is in a firm, the amount invested and what type of capital has been raised from the region," he added.

The move comes at a time when the region's sovereign wealth funds are writing

bigger checks and becoming more strategic in their investment decisions – with more strings attached.

Three sovereign wealth funds from the UAE invested a combined \$36.5 billion in 2023, according to Global SWF, which tracks the world's sovereign investment funds. Abu Dhabi's Mubadala was ranked third in the top 10 list of SWFs with investments of \$17.5 billion, followed by Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) with \$13.2 billion.

Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) was ranked seventh at \$5.9 billion. Abu Dhabi's ADQ took the eighth spot with investments of \$5.8 billion.

But it is Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, known as the PIF, that is the world's most active and prolific: it was the leading sovereign investor in 2023 with \$31.5 billion deployed in 48 deals, a 33% increase over 2022.

"If you're pitching to the PIF, and if you're pitching to other parts of Saudi Inc. then it's all about this commitment piece," Orellana-Hyder said. "Commitment has to flow both ways." ♦

JANUARY 3, 2024

## New Rosov Consulting study examines "texture" of diverse Jewish families

*Crown Family Philanthropies, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and the Jim Joseph Foundation funding the new investigation, which will be based largely on focus groups, qualitative data*

By Jay Deitcher

*The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.*

With the Jewish family becoming increasingly diverse and Jewish identity increasingly fluid, a leading Jewish researcher is trying to figure out how the rich tapestry of family life is being woven today.

"There are lots of assumptions about, 'This is what it's like as a person of color in the Jewish community. This is what it's like for somebody who is economically challenged

in the Jewish community,'" Alex Pomson, principal and managing director of Rosov Consulting, told *eJewishPhilanthropy*.

Funded by Crown Family Philanthropies, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation and the Jim Joseph Foundation and conducted by Rosov Consulting, the new study of Jewish families is qualitative, looking at the experiences and needs of diverse families within the Jewish community.

"We really want to better understand, [to] hear people's voices, to hear their own lived realities at this moment," Pomson said.

"Where is the 'Jewish' in their lives, and to what extent is it in their lives, and in what ways do they understand what it means to be Jewish?"

The study defines a family as a unit made up of at least one primary caretaker and child who is between the ages of 0 and 8. To participate in the study a family must want to incorporate "any kind of Jewishness" in their lives, Evelyn Dean-Olmsted, senior project associate at Rosov Consulting, told eJP.

Identities that were focused on include

members of the LGBTQ+ community, interfaith families, interracial families, interethnic families, single-parent families, families who live in communities that don't have large Jewish populations and families who are socioeconomically vulnerable.

"We started out with a checklist," Pomson said, "We thought, 'We want to do a group with this identity, this identity and that identity,' but it turned out the people who we were interviewing possess multiple identities inevitably. So you've got a person of color who may also be somebody in our socioeconomic group or in our outlying community group. They tick multiple boxes."

The first part of the study is a literature review, which was released in November, and the second involves gathering information from 40 focus groups made up of 182 individuals from 45 states. Participants were recruited with the help of Jewish federations, Honeymoon Israel, 18Doors, Keshet and PJ Library. Interim findings will be released next month, with the full study being published in early summer 2024.

Researchers aim to answer many questions, including how participants express their Jewishness, how they express

other identities, what organizations best support them, what role does extended family play in their Jewish lives and what challenges they face raising Jewish children.

While interfaith marriages have long been a source of concern and consternation in much of the Jewish community, they are "a source of a lot of inspiration and creativity and energy for other people," Annie Jollymore, senior project associate at Rosov Consulting, told eJP. "We have heard so many cool and interesting stories about cultural mixing, about reimagining of Jewish traditions with influences from other cultures that are present in the family."

The study being qualitative—as opposed to being based solely on hard data—offers many benefits, Pomson said. "There are things you learn from qualitative research that you don't learn from quantitative and vice versa... It's very much about the quality of people's lives and really getting to the texture of their lives, and it isn't simply about counting up how many people are there of this kind and how many are there of that kind. We aren't going to be able to say that. What we are going to be able to say is what's it like for somebody who is a person of color, what's it like for someone who is

raising a disabled child, or what's it like for somebody in an interfaith relationship who wants to introduce 'Jewish' in their [children's] lives and their partner wants to introduce another faith into their children's lives."

Although it's early in the study, the researchers have many hypotheses, including that a family's Jewish practices and identity is heavily influenced by their relationship with their extended family. Because Jews today are often geographically separated from larger family networks, there are additional challenges to raising children with Jewish practices that past generations didn't face. This gets exacerbated for families who can't afford to live within Jewish communal hubs.

The experience has been a lot of fun for the researchers, Pomson said. "We're talking to some really interesting people that we wouldn't normally be speaking to, and there's nothing more affirming [then] when people tell you how meaningful that conversation was to them." ♦