

## THE WEEKLY PRINT

*How 'Dear White Staffers' turned into an anti-Israel, antisemitic account; The rescue mission that tested burgeoning Israel-Indonesia relations; All about Eve, the Orioles front-office trailblazer; Eugene Vindman offers tough love to Israel as he pursues congressional campaign; Ari Harow reflects on the lessons of 2014 and Netanyahu's view on hostage negotiations; 'It's unspeakable': UC Berkeley Jewish leaders decry university's response to antisemitic mob; Saudi Arabia attracts \$10 billion to build data centers; Jewish students recount a series of campus horror stories at congressional roundtable; University antisemitism task forces feature much talk, minimal action so far; Shoah Foundation signs deal with National Library of Israel, giving full access to its collections to everyone in Israel*

MARCH 5, 2024

## How 'Dear White Staffers' turned into an anti-Israel, antisemitic account

*Jewish Insider has linked the popular 'Dear White Staffers' account to a staffer for hard-left Rep. Summer Lee*

By Marc Rod

“Dear White Staffers,” the popular and closely watched Instagram page that captivated Washington by publicly sharing allegations of abusive behavior by and gossip about lawmakers and their staffers, has taken on a new tenor in the five months since Oct. 7, morphing into a prominent and vocal anti-Israel platform that some fellow Hill staffers describe as borderline or openly antisemitic.

The Instagram page's transformation from a platform supporting Hill workers across parties, with fans even on the center-right, into a mostly single-issue anti-Israel advocacy page is reflective of broader trends in many progressive organizing spaces since October — leaning into anti-Israel stances or facing internal and external dissent over their refusal to do so.

*Jewish Insider* has been able to link the Dear White Staffers account to a staffer

working for Rep. Summer Lee (D-PA), an early opponent of Israel's war against Hamas, who faced backlash last week for plans to appear at a gala alongside speakers who have made antisemitic and homophobic comments. Lee later pulled out of the Council on American Islamic Relations event after receiving criticism from other Pennsylvania Democrats, including Gov. Josh Shapiro. Multiple sources told *JI* that concurrent posts on the Dear White Staffers account and a personal social media account of the Lee staffer placed the two accounts in the same place in Los Angeles at the same time. *JI* has seen screenshots of the posts in question. Several Democratic staffers described Dear White Staffers' identity as an open secret among a growing number of Hill staff.

The Lee staffer appears, masked but identifiable, in a photo from a cease-fire

protest on Capitol Hill, which had been promoted by the Dear White Staffers account. Dear White Staffers' posts about the length of their tenure on Capitol Hill are consistent with that of the Lee staffer. The Dear White Staffers account has verified publicly that it's operated by only one person. The Lee staffer is also a leader of a congressional unionization effort that was launched in part by Dear White Staffers' sharing of allegations of mistreatment and abuse.

Neither Lee nor an email account for Dear White Staffers responded to a request for comment.

The Lee staffer previously worked for Reps. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) — another prominent anti-Israel lawmaker who has faced accusations of antisemitism, Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and Julia Brownley (D-CA).

The Lee staffer, who has publicly identified as Jewish, spoke out repeatedly, under their own name on their Facebook page, about their criticisms of Israel during the 2021 conflict between Israel and terrorist groups in Gaza, JI found. The staffer at one point objected to efforts to connect anti-Zionism and antisemitism. The Facebook page is no longer publicly accessible.

On Oct. 7, following Hamas' attack on Israel, the staffer shared a post on their Instagram story featuring a vintage poster from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a U.S.-designated terror group. The poster was captioned "A resistance poster by the PFLP circa 1973. The resistance continues...."

Dear White Staffers began as an account focused on the experience of staffers of color on the Hill, rising in prominence in 2022 for posting anonymous, unvetted testimonials from congressional staffers about lawmakers and staff for whom they worked. The account, whose owner had been highly secretive, has grown to nearly 120,000 followers and has been closely watched by D.C. politicians, on and off Capitol Hill.

Since Oct. 7, the account has evolved primarily into a stream of anti-Israel commentary, accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza and condemning the administration and Congress for continuing aid to Israel.

It has, at times, leaned into antisemitic tropes, accusing one Jewish member of seeking the deaths of children, and blaming Israeli training for the Capitol Police's response to a cease-fire protest at the Democratic National Committee headquarters that turned violent.

After months of such posts, a Dear White Staffers post valorizing the death by suicide of Aaron Bushnell, who burned himself alive in front of the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C., caught the attention of a sitting member of Congress.

Dear White Staffers shared a poster describing Bushnell's death as an "act of compassion, of moral defiance," accusing the U.S. military of murdering 30,000 people, calling for a vigil to "honor" Bushnell outside "the Zionist embassy." The account also reposted a tweet about Bushnell asserting

that "a lot of people are very frightened by extreme moral clarity because they don't have any," and other messages valorizing Bushnell.

Rep. Ritchie Torres (D-NY) responded, questioning "who hired this crackpot?" saying that the account was "falsely accusing the US of murdering 30k people" and "commemorating the self-proclaimed martyrdom of a man who sets himself on fire to protest an imagined genocide."

Dear White Staffers has served as an organizer and spokesperson for anti-Israel protests by staff on Capitol Hill and in the administration and promoted the campaign to vote uncommitted in Michigan's Democratic presidential primary to protest President Joe Biden's stance on Israel.

As primary election results trickled in Michigan last Tuesday, Dear White Staffers reposted a seemingly satirical call for Biden to "drop a [bomb] on the Knesset and personally choke-slam Netanyahu on TV with his bare hands." That post was since deleted.

The account has also opposed the U.S. campaign against the Houthis in Yemen and attacked AIPAC's influence on U.S. Israel politics — highlighting donations through AIPAC's political action committee to pro-Israel politicians, criticized President Joe Biden's campaign and political strategy more broadly and sought to recruit members to the Democratic Socialists of America.

Jewish Capitol Hill staffers, who have said they face an increasingly hostile workplace among their peers since Oct. 7, have pointed to the Dear White Staffers account, which is particularly influential among younger Capitol Hill staff, as contributing to that dynamic.

Five staffers who spoke to JI, all of whom asked for anonymity to discuss sensitive workplace topics and speak freely, said that they'd initially admired and appreciated the role that the account had played in helping to expose the challenging work conditions and low pay that Capitol Hill staffers experienced and pushing for change. One said they personally relied on the account when leaving a "toxic" congressional office and looking for a more supportive one.

The staffers lamented the turn the

account has taken since Oct. 7 — describing it as having veered away from advocating for the interests of all Hill staffers to advancing the account owner's own radical views on Israel policy, to the detriment of its prior efforts.

Several staffers said they felt that the content on the account was often antisemitic, or rode the line between anti-Zionism and overt antisemitism.

"[Dear White Staffers] has turned into a glorified antisemitic propaganda machine masquerading as a voice for the voiceless," a sixth staffer said.

A staffer pointed to posts celebrating a protest outside a Jewish senator's home, accusing the senator of genocide and of having blood on their hands, as one example of when the account has "crossed a line."

Multiple staffers said that, as Jews, they feel personally threatened by the account and the content it is posting. "I know a lot of Jewish staffers feel scared about what [they're] posting," one source told JI. "It's terrifying."

Another staffer said that knowing that many of their colleagues follow the account and support its commentary has made them feel increasingly uncomfortable among their peers on the Hill.

Three staffers said they've also been frustrated by the account's calls for congressional staff to publicly protest against the lawmakers for whom they work and — a rejection of long-standing Capitol Hill norms that unelected staffers should not publicly express opinions contrary to those of the elected lawmakers for whom they work.

Two staffers said that they were particularly concerned by the influence that the account holds among the youngest generation of Hill staffers, including interns. They "are touting antisemitism — some of them that don't even know it," one source said. "It's kind of scary to see what the next few years will look like because of it."

"It's creating a toxic narrative to the next generation of Hill staffers, which is just going to set things back even further," another staffer said. ♦

# The rescue mission that tested burgeoning Israel-Indonesia relations

*Jerusalem and Jakarta worked together to get Indonesians out of Gaza, leaving the door open for establishing diplomatic relations even after a planned announcement was suspended*

By Lahav Harkov

On Oct. 6, 2023, Abdillah “Bang” Onim, the Indonesian founder of Nusantara Palestina Center, an organization providing humanitarian aid, distributed new sneakers to boys and girls dressed in school uniforms in Gaza.

A day later, when Hamas invaded southern Israel, murdering 1,200 people and taking 240 hostages to Gaza, Onim turned to Instagram to fundraise, updating his over 1 million followers that the Gaza Health Ministry is asking locals to donate blood.

On Oct. 8, Onim posted a video of trucks funded by Indonesian donors delivering clean drinking water to Gazans on his YouTube channel with almost 2 million followers.

In a subsequent video, Onim published a selfie video from Gaza after an Israeli Air Force strike. “NEED ACCESS AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION!! HUMANITY APPEAL,” the video’s title states. Its description says: “Gaza no good. No [electricity]. No water. No medicine. No fuel. Border its close [sic] and bombarded. Severe war, tragic, tragedy, massacre, more tragic than the war in Afghanistan.”

Onim posted that video on Oct. 14, 2023 – one day after what had been the target date for Israel and Indonesia, the world’s largest Muslim-majority country, to announce diplomatic relations, in the form of exchanging trade offices.

Over several months, Jerusalem and Jakarta had been working on a normalization agreement, including meetings in third countries, culminating with a visit to Jerusalem by Andi Widjajanto, an adviser to Indonesia’s president. The sides drafted a memorandum of understanding on Sept. 21, obtained by *Jewish Insider*, to open

trade offices and allow for more Israelis to get visas to visit the Southeast Asian state on business. A different aide to Indonesia’s president denied the report.

The back channel of communication between Widjajanto and then director-general of the Foreign Ministry, Ronen “Maoz” Levy, who played a key role in the Abraham Accords, was through New York-based businessman Joey Allaham.

Just over two weeks after the sides agreed on a text for the MOU, Israel-Indonesia normalization was shelved and that back channel was set to be used for a new purpose: to rescue Indonesians trapped in Gaza.

The continued mediated contacts between Jakarta and Jerusalem have left the door open to establishing diplomatic relations in conjunction with Indonesia seeking to join the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

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In WhatsApp messages obtained by *Jewish Insider* from Oct. 12, Judha Nugraha, director for the Protection of Citizens at the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, sent Allaham a list of Indonesians seeking to evacuate Gaza, including Onim, his wife, his 12-year-old daughter, 10-year-old son and 7-year-old son, and two of his wife’s relatives, on the instructions of Widjajanto.

The list also included Muhamad Husein, the founder of an NGO International Networking for Humanitarian, who runs a YouTube channel called “Muhammad Husein Gaza” with over 1.2 million followers, who sought to leave Gaza with his wife and

two children, ages 9 and 4. Another three volunteers at the NGO-run Indonesian Hospital in Gaza were on the list, though they decided to stay.

Israel’s Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), a civilian-military body that, among other things, coordinates the humanitarian aid in Gaza, was going to be involved in helping the Indonesians leave Gaza, but Nugraha asked that any Israelis in contact with Indonesians identify themselves as U.N. staff because the matter is “politically sensitive.”

COGAT declined to comment on its role in the matter, but a senior Israeli diplomatic source confirmed Israel’s involvement in evacuating Indonesians from Gaza.

Husein published his “Last message from Gaza!!” – or so he thought – on his YouTube channel on Oct. 12.

Thus began a nearly monthlong saga, with repeated attempts by the Indonesians to leave Gaza thwarted by Egyptian border guards, Hamas shootings and IAF bombing.

Early on Oct. 14, Allaham passed on a message from COGAT that anyone on the preapproved list could proceed toward Rafah, near the border with Egypt, but two hours later told everyone to leave the area immediately “due to concerning information we received” – a possible Hamas attack on the border crossing. That day, Onim posted his video about the lack of electricity and water in Gaza.

As the days passed without Egypt allowing foreigners through the Rafah crossing, Nugraha wrote on Oct. 16: “I need to maintain spirit and patience of Indonesian evacuees.”

Days later, Allaham explained to Nugraha that Hamas “shoot[s] anyone on

their way to the gates...I think tomorrow [the IDF] will be on the ground to guard the foreigners leaving. There are Americans who can't leave."

Onim texted: "Scared Indonesian boys want to get out...We feel panic."

On social media, however, Onim was posting as usual: "Here is one of the ways that Mr. Onim cheers up the orphans in Gaza, by having a picnic, eating," read the caption of his Oct. 18 video.

Five days later, Onim sent videos of the windows in his house broken from a missile that hit nearby.

Nugraha provided Onim and Husein's locations – in Gaza City and Khan Younis – as well as the Indonesian Hospital, for Allaham to send to his main point of contact in Israel – Levy, the Foreign Ministry official – to ensure the Indonesians' safe passage once the crossing reopened.

"Are they able to secure [the hospital] to make sure [there are] no rocket launchers?" Allaham asked. Nugraha responded in the affirmative – which would ultimately turn out to be false.

Nugraha wondered if Indonesia could try to bargain with Egypt to allow its citizens to evacuate, but Allaham explained that Cairo was primarily concerned about its security if large numbers of Palestinians crossed the border.

"Many bombing," Onim wrote on Oct. 31. "Please we want go from Gaza. In my house all Indonesia children."

That day, Secretary of State Tony Blinken said in a Senate hearing that Hamas was preventing 400 U.S. citizens from fleeing Gaza.

Hours later, Nugraha received confirmation from Egypt that Onim and his family could leave.

Husein's wife and children were left off of Egypt's list, however, and he was unwilling to leave them. After seven hours of frantic contacts between Jerusalem, Jakarta and Cairo, Israeli contacts informed Husein, via intermediaries, that his family could evacuate Gaza.

However, Onim and Husein did not have internet access for hours and did not know to drive towards the Rafah crossing.

Eventually, Nugraha was able to pass on instructions Allaham gave for the Indonesians: "If any interaction [with IDF

soldiers] put his hands up. Tell him to wear a t-shirt only. Say Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and his assistant Maoz gave the permission to leave."

Onim, however, wrote that bombs were dropped near his home and could not leave. Husein's neighbor, who was going to drive him to the crossing, also said he was too afraid to leave.

"The trip from Gaza City to South Gaza failed," Onim posted on Instagram.

Allaham noted that the director of the Indonesian Hospital in Gaza admitted to providing fuel to Hamas after being threatened by the terror group.

The following morning, Onim wrote: "Praise Allah, I am on my way to Cairo."

Onim told his Instagram followers: "God willing, tomorrow Onim Bang and his wife and children will go to Indonesia...Come back later." He promised that he had a team on the ground in Gaza who could continue to distribute aid.

In the following days, Onim posted videos from the Cairo International Airport ahead of his flight home, and Indonesian news channels featured his family upon their arrival in Jakarta.

On Nov. 2, Husein was on the move — though Nugraha and Allaham warned him Rafah was not open yet, and then were unable to reach him.

A day later, the Rafah crossing was closed again because of attempts by Hamas to smuggle people out of Gaza, the messages indicated.

Husein assured his YouTube followers that he is still alive, responding to false reports in Indonesia, while spreading some disinformation of his own with a claim that "dozens of US Marines and I5r43Ls" – his code for Israelis – died that day.

On Nov. 5, Allaham asked Nugraha and Onim about tunnels the IDF found under the Indonesian hospital, in which rockets and fuel were stored. "Did you have an idea?"

"Didn't have tunnel in Indonesia Hospital," Onim insisted.

"I have no idea about it," Nugraha said. "Indonesian volunteers have no idea also... They are only volunteers, they don't have access to the details of hospital operations."

Meanwhile, Husein claimed on YouTube that "Israel wants to drop a nuclear bomb on Gaza. It comes from the mouths of people

who have the DNA of genocide perpetrators," he said of the people who were working to rescue him.

"Husein doesn't believe us anymore," Nugraha lamented on Nov. 7. Meanwhile, the Egyptian authorities had flagged Husein's identity as stolen, a situation that Nugraha and Allaham had to clear up.

After several more days of back-and-forth, with Allaham speaking to Israeli Foreign Ministry officials and passing messages on to Nugraha and Husein, the latter drove to Rafah on Nov. 9.

Husein sent photos from the Rafah crossing and watched as ambulances and aid trucks entered Gaza, until finally he wrote: "It's now open. We're entering [Egypt]."

And then – another disappointment. Despite promises from COGAT, Husein was not on the list.

The next morning, the Rafah crossing was not open "because the bombings don't stop," Husein wrote.

On Nov. 12, Allaham wrote to Nugraha and Husein: "Brother, tell them to leave now! Hussein, you have to move!"

Six hours later Husein responded: "Praise Allah. On the way to Cairo. Thanks to everyone."

Husein later told an Indonesian news site that the car he drove to the border was using cooking oil as fuel.

In the ensuing days, Husein continued to post videos online, making it appear that he was still in Gaza, decrying the "Zionist military aggression."

In late November, Nugraha asked if there was a way to evacuate the Indonesian hospital, and Allaham told him the three volunteers must leave, even suggesting that Nugraha tell their parents that they're in danger.

Throughout the period in which he was trying to extract Indonesians from Gaza, Nugraha expressed concern about unrest in his country. On Nov. 21, he lamented the "humanitarian disaster" in Gaza and said that if the IDF "will kill another civilian and children, I cannot imagine the reaction from Indonesia's public...Attacking Indonesian Hospital and targeting civilian[s] will put my FM in [a] difficult position and cannot play a role as you expect before."

A day later, on Nov. 22, Indonesian



news sites, citing sources in Gaza, reported that the volunteers were arrested by Israeli soldiers in Gaza.

Nugraha, however, said “the three Indonesians are safe and not being arrested by IDF. They are waiting for evacuation.”

After several days in which Rafah crossing was closed to foreign citizens, the volunteers were able to leave, as well.

The IDF raided the Indonesian Hospital, finding Hamas tunnels, weapons and a hostage’s car on the premises. Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi condemned the operation as “a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law,” taking part in a pro-Palestinian demonstration attended by 100,000 in Jakarta that day.

Indonesia joined South Africa’s suit at the International Court of Justice in January, claiming Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians – even though Jakarta is not a party to the 1948 Geneva Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

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Despite the rhetoric against Israel from Jakarta, there have been new indications of a possible warming of ties in recent weeks.

But in December, Israel blocked Indonesia from joining the OECD, the organization of the world’s wealthiest countries.

As Nugraha said videos of civilian suffering in Gaza “create anger and hatred among the Indonesian public and mak[e] thing[s] more complicated,” Levy sent him a note via an intermediary pushing Indonesia to move towards normalization with Israel.

“OECD members are like-minded countries,” Levy wrote. “There is no precedent within the OECD for members who do not have full diplomatic relations with any of the other members. We do not want to create such a precedent.”

“Therefore, we need to have the certainty prior to any launching of a roadmap to [the] accession process, that any new candidate maintains full diplomatic relations with all current member states,” the note reads. “We wish we could welcome the launching of [Indonesia’s] roadmap to accession process to the OECD, but for that, we need to have a

clear action in the right direction.”

The process of joining the OECD requires the consensus of all current member states, and Israel said it will not approve Indonesia’s accession to the organization without full diplomatic relations.

Indonesia held its presidential election in mid-February, electing Prabowo Subianto, the country’s defense minister, to the presidency. Subianto has quietly supported normalization with Israel and met with Israeli officials.

The following week, Israel removed its veto on Indonesia after OECD Secretary-General Matthias Cormann said that the OECD would only allow the Southeast Asian archipelago state to join once it recognizes Israel, a diplomatic source confirmed to JI, saying that the solution was Jerusalem’s suggestion.

The OECD accession process is likely to take more than a year, such that even with the added incentive for Indonesia, the possible normalization with Israel would only take place after the war in Gaza winds down. ♦

MARCH 7, 2024

## All about Eve, the Orioles front-office trailblazer

*Assistant general manager Eve Rosenbaum has, quietly, played a pivotal role in the team’s sudden success*

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**By Matthew Kassel**

Since before she can even remember, Eve Rosenbaum, the assistant general manager of the Baltimore Orioles, has been faithfully committed to her hometown baseball team, having attended her first Orioles game at Memorial Stadium in 1990, when she was just 9 weeks old.

Like many long-suffering Baltimore baseball fans, however, Rosenbaum, 34, has never seen her team win the World Series or even advance to the championship. The

Orioles last claimed the trophy more than four decades ago, in 1983 — seven years before she was born.

But now, as the Orioles gear up for a highly anticipated new season boasting one of their strongest rosters in recent memory, Rosenbaum, in her fifth year with the club, can be credited with helping to instill a renewed if unfamiliar sense of mounting excitement with just a few weeks until Opening Day.

“The team last year was good enough and our players are only going to continue to mature and get better,” Rosenbaum told Jewish Insider in a recent interview, “so I’m definitely excited for the season coming up.”

Speaking from Sarasota, Fla., where the Orioles are now midway through spring training, Rosenbaum noted that expectations are especially high this year as the players ride the momentum from a 101-win season in 2023 that took them all the

way to the American League Division Series — a remarkable turnaround for a team that had long been stuck in last place.

“There’s a different vibe at spring training this year,” she told *JL*. In the past, “sometimes it would kind of be like, ‘OK, we’re just trying to get through the season, and then it’s like, ‘OK, we’re trying to figure out who’s an interesting player or who might stick around.’”

This year, on the other hand, “it’s like, ‘We’re here, we’re legit, people have to take us seriously,’” she said. “I think the talent we’re going to put on the field is going to be a super exciting collection of players.”

Most notably, that collection now includes Corbin Burnes, the Cy Young-winning pitcher whom the Orioles acquired from the Milwaukee Brewers last month in a blockbuster trade that is likely to boost Baltimore’s odds of advancing to the World Series.

The deal hardly seemed assured, even right up to the end of negotiations, according to Rosenbaum, who played a key role in orchestrating the trade. The acquisition, she said, followed a monthslong “back and forth” of offers and counteroffers often sent via text message, accompanied by moments of silence that could cast doubt on the entire process.

“At various times throughout the offseason, it was like a roller-coaster in terms of do we think this deal is going to get done? Yes. Do we think it’s going to get done? No,” she said. “You just never know when it’s going to happen, so we were just working day in and day out on it.”

The trade was announced shortly after news broke that the Angelos family had reached an agreement to sell its controlling stake of the Orioles to David Rubenstein, the billionaire private equity investor, in a deal valued at \$1.7 billion.

**“For most of my career, I just really didn’t think about the fact that I was one of the only women in the room or that there weren’t a lot of women in sports or in baseball in general,” Rosenbaum said. “I just sort of kept my head down and did my work, because ultimately, the team on the field is trying to win.”**

Rosenbaum, for her part, said she did “not have much to say about” the deal for now, noting that it “is still going through the vetting and approval process with the MLB,” even as Rubenstein was in Florida over the weekend to see the team in action. “But I think it’s a super, super exciting time to be here,” she added, “and I’m just looking forward to everything that comes ahead for the Orioles both on and off the field.”

As one of the few female front-office executives in Major League Baseball, Rosenbaum, a protégé of Mike Elias, the Orioles’ executive vice president and general manager, occupies a rarefied position. But Rosenbaum, who led international scouting for the Houston Astros before she was recruited to Baltimore in 2019 to direct baseball development, says she never gave much thought to her unique status.

“For most of my career, I just really didn’t think about the fact that I was one of the only women in the room or that there weren’t a lot of women in sports or in baseball in general,” she explained. “I just sort of kept my head down and did my work, because ultimately, the team on the field is trying to win.”

The baseball wunderkind, who was promoted to assistant general manager in 2022, credits that focus, in part, to playing on boys’ sports teams while growing up in Bethesda, Md.

“I was the only girl on a boys’ baseball team for a long time,” said Rosenbaum, who later played softball at Harvard, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology in 2012. “I was also the only girl on a boys’ soccer team. And that was the goal, the other boys soccer team, which was very unusual. It just sort of became part of who I was.”

With hindsight, she added, “I can look back on my career and know that it was probably harder for me to get to where I am than it was for potentially men in similar positions.”

“Maybe there were difficulties or challenges I had to overcome that I didn’t appreciate at the time because I just had my head down and was trying to power through,” said Rosenbaum, who began her career in baseball, in college, as an intern with the Boston Red Sox. “But at the same time, I’m still out here trying to get the Orioles back to the playoffs and get the

Orioles back to the World Series,” she added. “That’s really the goal.”

By the same token, Rosenbaum, who keeps in touch with Jewish friends from high school on group chat called “Jewthesda,” said that she often feels at a loss to explain how, if at all, her Judaism informs her passion for baseball, which has long drawn the interest of Jews.

Throughout her childhood, Rosenbaum’s faith would, on occasion, intersect with her favorite sport. At her bat mitzvah, for instance, her cake was a baseball. Her father’s gift, meanwhile, was a membership to the Society for American Baseball Research. “For some reason, I do feel like Jews have a special relationship to baseball,” she mused, without venturing an explanation. “It just kind of is.”

“I don’t know that it’s influencing my player evaluation philosophies,” Rosenbaum said of her Judaism. “But it is just nice to know other Jews around the game and we kind of can nod at each other and just kind of know that we have this special bond with the game and this special bond with each other.”

Rosenbaum declined to share details of her conversations with Dean Kremer, the Orioles’ Israeli-American starting pitcher, before he took the mound last fall in his first career playoff game, just days after Hamas’ Oct. 7 invasion.

“It just so happens that we’re in the playoffs and he’s making his playoff debut while this horrible attack is happening,” she recalled. “It was a highly personal moment for him.”

It was also the end of the Orioles’ postseason, as the team was swept by the Texas Rangers in three games, dashing its hopes of advancing to the World Series.

Even as she projects confidence while looking ahead to the coming season, Rosenbaum was still mindful not to promise the title, however, lest she jinx herself and the team.

“I would never make any sort of proclamation like ‘we’re going to win the World Series,’” she said, before invoking a superstition unique to her sport. “I think people will tell you that the baseball Gods will punish you for saying something like that.” ♦

# Eugene Vindman offers tough love to Israel as he pursues congressional campaign

*Vindman, who with his twin brother became famous during Trump's first impeachment trial, talks to JI about his views on the Middle East*

By Marc Rod

**Y**evgeny “Eugene” Vindman gained national prominence in liberal circles as a whistleblower who helped spark former President Donald Trump’s first impeachment trial. Now, as a congressional candidate, Vindman says he’d use his background as a war crimes prosecutor to train a critical eye on Israel’s operations in Gaza, emphasizing the need for thorough scrutiny of any potential wrongdoing.

Vindman and his twin brother Alexander became nationally known as whistleblowers in former President Donald Trump’s first impeachment trial; Alexander was a witness to Trump’s now-infamous phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and reported the call to his brother, who was a legal advisor at the time.

Vindman is one of nine Democrats running for the seat of Rep. Abigail Spanberger (D-VA), who is leaving Congress to pursue a gubernatorial campaign. Republicans, who landed a top recruit for the race, also plan on targeting the swing Northern Virginia district.

In an interview with *Jewish Insider*, Vindman cited his experience as a war crimes prosecutor and investigator as a “unique” asset when it comes to his “nuanced” approach to Middle East policy-making.

While he calls himself a supporter of Israel, he also said that he would be “highly surprised” if some Israeli soldiers hadn’t engaged in misconduct during operations in Gaza to take out Hamas — something he described as essentially inevitable in war, including by U.S. troops. But he said he hasn’t seen any evidence of systemic violations.

Two days after the Oct. 7 Hamas massacre, Vindman wrote a tweet warning

that “Israel will need to restrain its bloodlust to punish only those culpable for the slaughter.”

He told JI that his warning was a reflection of lessons learned by the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan, which he said the U.S. had “failed to prosecute... effectively because we were driven by emotion.” He said that eliminating Hamas is a worthwhile goal but argued both as a commander and lawyer, that “discipline is critically important” in focusing on achieving military goals.

Vindman said, “as a responsible international actor, [Israel] has an obligation to conduct operations in accordance with the law of war and international criminal law,” which bans targeting civilians and civilian objects, mandates that it only attack lawful targets, requires it to distinguish between civilian and military targets and be proportionate in its attacks.

“Where Israel fails in this, it must conduct thorough investigations,” he said. “I am a supporter of Israel but I also acknowledge that Israel needs to live up to its obligations” — even though Hamas does not abide by them.

“They have a right to self-defense, but they don’t get a free pass to do whatever they want,” he reiterated later in his conversation with JI. “I look at this from a perspective of supporting the Jewish state and Israel, but also as a strong supporter, [I] have to make sure... we hold them to that same standard that we would abide by.”

He also reiterated Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack on Israel was entirely without justification and “needs to be condemned completely without caveats.”

Vindman said he backs a temporary cease-fire that would free some of the hostages, arguing that there can be no

progress toward a more permanent end to the war until that goal is accomplished. He added that Hamas is not a viable partner for long-term peace, but also said that it may not be possible to “completely eliminate Hamas” through military means.

He called on Congress to expeditiously pass the Senate-approved aid package to Israel, adding that additional conditions or restrictions on aid to Israel are not necessary, given the protections codified in law and laid out in the Biden administration’s recent military aid policy memo.

The former military officer described Iran as the key issue in the region, highlighting concerning links among Iran, its terrorist proxies and Russia. He said the U.S. needs to be “very assertive in pushing back” on Iran, including the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran.

He said the U.S. should work with its partners, prioritizing potential diplomatic and economic pressure as a primary response, but also acknowledged the role of U.S. military force — including the administration’s decision to dispatch aircraft carriers to the region and strike Iranian proxy targets — as a deterrent.

Vindman, a career military officer, told JI he never anticipated entering politics before the impeachment saga. But he now frames his candidacy as a response to the resurgence of Trump and the MAGA movement.

“As we got toward the end of last year, it became obvious to me that Donald Trump was going to be at the top of the ballot, and I just couldn’t sit on the sidelines, when I thought that I can contribute in a meaningful way,” he said.

Vindman, who describes himself as a “proud Jewish American,” also highlighted

his immigrant story — he came to the U.S. with his family when he was 4 years old, fleeing the “bigoted” Soviet regime.

He said that his background in military service makes him a strong fit for the “unique” district, which includes or is near several military installations, giving the district a large constituency of military veterans and government employees. He said it’s also a critical skill set at a time of major geopolitical conflicts.

“We have an electorate that is very well-versed in federal policy and geopolitics and foreign relations and national security,” he said “And I’ve got a proven track record of having stood up for democracy at personal costs and to Donald Trump.”

Vindman told JI the U.S. needs to push back on antisemitism, Islamophobia and other forms of bigotry at home. He linked the rise in bigotry in the U.S. primarily to

Trump.

“Trump has created an environment where it seems OK for people to engage in this bigoted, radical behavior,” Vindman said. “I think we need to come back to a time where we treat everybody with dignity and respect.”

Vindman is one of a handful of Democratic candidates who are hoping to leverage Trump-era profiles to pursue higher office, including former Capitol Police officer Harry Dunn, running for an open House seat in Maryland; and previously Rep. Dan Goldman (D-NY), who was a lawyer for Democrats during the impeachment trial. Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA) just parlayed his role as a prosecutor in former President Trump’s first impeachment into a likely Senate seat next year

Vindman said he’s lived in the 7th District since 2018. His national profile and

popularity in liberal circles helped him pull in more than \$2 million during his first quarter in the race — a huge sum for a first-time House candidate.

Several of the other candidates, however, boast deep records in local politics. Vindman’s leading Democratic challengers include: Prince William County Supervisor Andrea Bailey, who entered the race with an endorsement from former Gov. Ralph Northam; state Del. Briana Sewell; former state Del. Elizabeth Guzman; and Prince William County supervisor Margaret Franklin. All significantly trail Vindman in fundraising.

The leading Republican candidate is attorney Derrick Anderson, who unsuccessfully ran against Spanberger in 2022 and is considered a top GOP recruit. ♦

MARCH 7, 2024

## Ari Harow reflects on the lessons of 2014 and Netanyahu’s view on hostage negotiations

*In an interview with JI, Netanyahu’s former chief of staff talks about his time in the Prime Minister’s Office and his new book*

By Lahav Harkov

The year 2014 has been on the minds of many Israelis since the war in Gaza began in October. It was the last time the IDF staged a large-scale ground operation in Gaza, following Hamas’ kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers. The American administration — headed by then-President Barack Obama — was at odds with Israeli Prime Minister — then and now — Benjamin Netanyahu. A decade later, many of the key players in Washington and Jerusalem are the same with different titles.

The year 2014 was also when Ari Harow was Netanyahu’s chief of staff.

Of course, when Harow wrote his new book *My Brother’s Keeper: Netanyahu,*

*Obama, & the Year of Terror & Conflict that Changed the Middle East Forever*, he didn’t know how much of the events nearly a decade earlier would reverberate at the time of its publication in late January.

Harow, 51, was born in Los Angeles, and his family moved to Israel when he was 12. Following his IDF service in the Golani Brigade, he returned to the U.S. and moved back and forth between the countries every few years for about a decade. He ran American Friends of Likud from New York in 2003-2006, before working for Netanyahu, who was then opposition leader, as his foreign affairs adviser and then as bureau chief of the Prime Minister’s Office. After leaving the job for health reasons

and starting a political consulting firm the following year, he returned to the Prime Minister’s Office in 2014 as chief of staff.

But Harow is probably best known in Israel for what happened after he departed the PMO; he has spent much of the past decade fighting legal charges against him.

Israeli police began investigating him in 2015, which eventually led them to the recording of *Yediot Aharonot* publisher Arnon “Noni” Mozes discussing with Netanyahu the possibility of passing a law banning free newspapers — meaning the Sheldon Adelson-owned pro-Netanyahu daily *Israel Hayom* — in exchange for positive media coverage. Harow became a state witness in what’s become known



as Case 2000, in which Netanyahu has been indicted on fraud and breach of trust charges.

As part of his plea deal, Harow was convicted on one count of fraud and breach of trust at the end of January – a week after his new book was published – and will have to pay a fine of NIS 700,000 (\$192,000) and do six months of community service, the details of which have yet to be determined.

Harow's book, however, is focused on his year as Netanyahu's chief of staff. He spoke with Jewish Insider about his time in Netanyahu's office, what the lessons of 2014 tell us about 2023-2024 and Netanyahu's view on hostage negotiations.

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**Jewish Insider: Did you think that so much of what you wrote about 2014 would be so relevant when your book was published 10 years later?**

**Ari Harow:** About a week or 10 days [after the Oct. 7 attack] it suddenly hit me that, wow, what I wrote about is really...the same players, same actors, same scenarios, but [now it's] obviously on a much larger scale. The nightmare scenarios I wrote about in the book are the nightmare scenarios that actually took place. That also shows that, when we talk about the intelligence failure, it's not that we didn't imagine the [Oct. 7] scenario – I outline it. It was discussed in 2014, [terrorists] crossing the border, taking over kibbutzes, killing people, taking hostages, etc. When it actually took place, it was eerie to go back and look at the book.

**JJ: One of the things you discuss in the book is the Shalit deal. What do you think were the lessons Netanyahu took from that deal that he could be keeping in mind today?**

**AH:** There's policy and there's politics. From a policy perspective, Netanyahu was a founding and leading voice [discussing] how to deal with terrorists. He was the father of not negotiating with terrorists, and that was always his stance in previous deals that took place. When it came to the Shalit deal – this was not something that he shared publicly – but he told me that his rationale to even contemplate that type of deal was Iran. If we at some point decided to attack Iran's nuclear capabilities, he wanted to give the

pilots and soldiers the confidence that Israel would do everything in their power to bring them home, so that they could go out on their missions without any worries at heart, and therefore he was going to pay a price.

Fast forward to Oct. 7, 2023, when [ Hamas Gaza leader Yahya] Sinwar [who was released in the Shalit deal] was the mastermind of the attack and there are others [freed in 2011] that have played horrendous roles in terrorism and attacks against Israel. There's no question that he has to be rethinking that at this point. In the negotiations for the first group of hostages, the ratio the Israeli government worked with was one [hostage] to three [Palestinian prisoners], not one to 1,027. Before a final deal, the asking price will be much higher, partially because they're soldiers and from Hamas' perspective, they're worth more. Let's be quite frank, the first group of hostages was a PR nightmare for them, and that's part of the reason they wanted to go out and make a deal.

Netanyahu faces a reality whereby on the one hand, he has to deal not only with his own policy principles but with a constituency that still believes in those principles. His constituency did not necessarily support the Shalit deal. At the same time, there was a precedent set that won't realistically allow him to go back to a 1-for-3 ratio. It's a very fine line that he's going to have to walk on.

**JJ: You hear accusations from pundits and columnists that Netanyahu doesn't care about the hostages, or that leaving the hostages in Gaza prolongs the war, which helps him politically. You were in the inner sanctum and you saw his emotional state when it came to hostages. What would you say to those people?**

**AH:** I think it's wrong to accuse any Jew in the State of Israel of not caring about the hostages. It's just horrendous. That's the type of divisiveness that we stopped on Oct. 7 that we don't need back in the public sphere. There is no doubt in my mind that he very much wants to bring the hostages home. There's no doubt in my mind that he is doing everything he can do, militarily and diplomatically to bring them home.

The only question that separates anyone on the hostage issue is the price they're

willing to pay. If Hamas said we will give you back all the hostages, but in return you have to abandon Sderot, nobody in Israel would agree to that. We wouldn't give away land. We wouldn't give away army bases. We all agree that there are red lines. Now it's just a matter of what are your red lines. Netanyahu has zero political interest in the hostages not being brought home. He has every interest in bringing them home. I just don't accept that premise.

**JJ: Years ago, Netanyahu said in a Likud faction meeting that payments to Qatar help stave off a Palestinian state by keeping Hamas in power in Gaza. Qatar was paying Hamas while you were in the job. What was Netanyahu's thinking on that?**

**AH:** One of the policy failures of the government and Israel's military and security services over the last couple of decades is [the idea] that you can buy quiet, be it through monetary transfers via other diplomatic concessions. Just as Iran is a threat that we take at face value, meaning that when Iran says we want to wipe [Israel] off the map, the State of Israel went around the world saying hey, they actually mean it, so did Hamas and Hezbollah when they say they want to wipe us off the map. It is not a threat that we can throw money at. It's not a threat that we can push concessions at. It's not a threat that we can throw diplomatic initiatives at...I think that that was a principle that was not fully internalized. It was a huge mistake, and we're seeing the results of that.

**JJ: Do you think that Netanyahu's emphasis on Iran blinded him to threats closer to home?**

**AH:** It's not that he overemphasized Iran, it was that he underemphasized Iranian proxies, especially those that are on our borders...Netanyahu is prime minister but the same is true for our chief of staff and our heads of military intelligence and the Shin Bet and Mossad. They projected this arrogance that we're fine, there's no real threat. They clearly were mistaken and we should have been more grounded as a country in what we're facing.

**JJ: Iran was a huge sticking point – though one of many – between Netanyahu and former President**

**Barack Obama. A lot of the same people are in the Biden administration now. Do you feel like bad blood from the past impacts the way things work now?**

**AH:** I think that the initial support of the Biden administration and President Biden himself on Oct. 7 and the days and weeks and even months after that was almost unprecedented. They were staunchly on Israel's side, there was no attempt at balance or no attempt at moral equivalency. It was Israel's right, these are terrorists, and the terrorists need to be destroyed. We haven't heard that from other American leaders during times of conflict, probably ever. So I think that the administration's support for the first few months was tremendous.

Over the last number of weeks...that has started to shift. Part of that is expected. As we get further and further away from the visuals of those atrocities on Oct. 7, the international community reverts back into its old habits.

There is no question that the push we're starting to see now towards Palestinian statehood ties into those same individuals who played key roles in the Obama administration. I think that there's a certain naivete and a certain blindness to the realities of the Middle East. To think that the Israeli public – I'm not even talking about the leadership – just a few months after what we experienced on Oct. 7, would be willing to contemplate creating any type of Palestinian state is just insane. The fact is that we've paid the price in blood over and over and over again for decades now, every time foreign powers and the U.S. administration decided that they want to push towards statehood...The Israeli people are not there and they're not going to be there in the near future and this push towards [a Palestinian state] shows a complete disconnect with what's really happening here. I think that there's no question that those sentiments continue from the Obama administration.

**JJ:** It's interesting to see attempts by some Democrats to pin the war on Netanyahu when the war has very broad support in Israel. Do you think that's residual tension from the Obama years? Or is it just more politically expedient to speak that way?

**AH:** I think it's both. Tension between Netanyahu and the Obama administration

obviously peaked with Netanyahu's speech [on the Iran nuclear deal] to the joint session of Congress in 2015 and that most certainly did leave scars on the Democratic side of the aisle. That resentment is still felt by some within the Democratic Party

At the same time, I do think [blaming Netanyahu] is politically beneficial to both sides. In other words, Biden is running for re-election. Challenging an unpopular prime minister – he's currently unpopular in Israel and he is definitely not the most popular in the United States amongst Democrats – is in Biden's political interest. Netanyahu benefits from it as well. If he can move the discussion away from the failures of Oct. 7 to fighting off an internationally mandated Palestinian state, then he wins points with his political base and everybody's happy.

**JJ:** You recently said that you think Netanyahu needs to go. Do you think he will resign, or will he have to be politically defeated?

**AH:** First and foremost, we need to win this war. I do not think he should be kicked out of office today. I think that we're still in a very, very fragile situation here in Israel. We have soldiers dying daily in Gaza. We are still under attack daily, be it from the south, be it from the north. We're still not sure where things are headed with Hezbollah in the north. Until the ship is somewhat stabilized, I don't think that any type of reshuffling via elections or otherwise is a smart move.

When that day does come, I think it's important that Israel get a fresh start. He is the head of the pyramid, the prime minister who served for 14 of the last 15 years. I say this with tremendous respect and admiration, [but] in the aftermath of Oct. 7, we need a fresh start.

**JJ:** Likud used to be a party with very lively internal politics, but now they are devoted to their one leader. You were a Likud insider for a long time – what do you think happened?

**AH:** I think it's a shame. Likud is the largest democratic body in Israel...it's by far the largest party with open primaries. And just as in any other system, competition is a healthy thing...I think that there's been a shift whereby anyone who's a potential challenger to Netanyahu has either resigned or created their own party. I mean, look at

both [Moshe] Ya'alon and Gideon Saar... who went home. It's left the party devoid of any true competition, of anyone who can challenge [Netanyahu] and not only politically but from a policy perspective and from an ideological perspective. While he's been the linchpin to keeping the Likud in power for so long, it's weakened the party significantly.

**JJ:** There are a lot of rustlings of frustration with Netanyahu in Likud. Do you think something will change, or that his hold on the party is too strong for that to happen?

**AH:** I think he's still extremely popular in Likud and I can't see anyone unseating him at the ballot box within the Likud party.

Having said that, I do believe and I know that there are powers within the Likud that want to see change and are not going to sit idly through another round or two rounds of the current Likud situation. Some of them have been vocal already, like Yuli [Edelstein], a really prominent member of the party who served as speaker of the Knesset for many years and a minister for many years. He's been very vocal that he feels the country needs a new leader and that the Likud needs a new leader. Netanyahu's friction with [Defense Minister Yoav] Gallant is well documented, as well. I think that those are just a couple of examples of powers within the party that I think will challenge him and potentially bring about a new dynamic within the Likud and within the right, come next election.

**JJ:** Around the time you left was when Netanyahu started to seem more insular. There used to be a lot more people surrounding him every day, and then the numbers dwindled significantly. What do you think happened?

**AH:** I can just analyze from the outside looking in. I think two things happened. Firstly, politically 2015 was a turning point, as he was projected to lose the election. Everybody thought that his time was over, and he beat the odds in a big way. It set him on a path where now, nine years later he's still Prime Minister of Israel, and there was a sense that he can't be defeated at that point. I think that that changes the way you handle your office and the way you handle people.

The second thing is the legal troubles that he's dealt with which started a little bit

later, but that put him in a position where he has felt the need to isolate himself further.

**Jl: There's this accusation that he's flying solo, that he maybe has one or two advisers that he trusts and he makes decisions on his own. What do you make of that?**

**AH:** First of all, you hear the voices within the war cabinet. Historically, prime ministers are the ones that make the decisions. It's not unique to now...Leaders are supposed to lead and that means not everything is a group decision. I think that's normal.

Netanyahu has a minister within the war cabinet, Ron Dermer, who is not just another minister. He is [Netanyahu's] closest confidante, his partner, someone who he trusts completely and trusts his judgment. I do think that when you look at Ron playing that role, in addition to being a minister, and

joined by Tzachi Hanegbi at the National Security Council, he does have some people to bounce ideas off of and to consult with.

But there's no question that if you look back to the days that I was in office, there was a larger group of individuals that he counted on and trusted.

**Jl: Do you think Dermer has a political future? Netanyahu at one point thought so.**

**AH:** For the sake of the State of Israel, I hope that he does. I think Ron is a great Zionist, a great mind and a great asset for the State of Israel. He's not a politician in the normal sense of the word, so he's not going to compete in the Likud primaries at any point. But I do hope that once this is all said and done that he does find his way back into a position of leadership, whether it's immediately or at some point in the future.

**Jl: Do you think he's too strongly**

**identified with Netanyahu?**

**AH:** He is, but he's also very well respected not just by Netanyahu, but by others from other parties. He's a true professional and a true Zionist, and I think that we need people like him.

**Jl: What's next for you?**

**AH:** My goal in life, my passion in life has always been to do whatever I can for the Jewish state and the Jewish people, and that has not changed. If anything, it's expanded since Oct. 7. I think that the country is at a point where we really need to work diligently to keep the unity that we have today in place. We need to find a way to debate but work together. The threats that we face are just as significant, if not more significant, than before and any way that I can be of help to our leaders, I'm happy to do. ♦

MARCH 1, 2024

## 'It's unspeakable': UC Berkeley Jewish leaders decry university's response to antisemitic mob

*University administrators avoided mentioning 'antisemitism' in their official statements on the incident*

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By Gabby Deutch

**T**he day after an antisemitic mob at the University of California, Berkeley, forced the evacuation of Jewish students from an event where an Israel Defense Forces reservist was speaking, the university's two top leaders sent an email to the entire Berkeley community.

"Upholding our values," its subject line read.

When Danielle Sobkin, a third-year student and the co-president of the pro-Israel student group that had organized the event, saw the email, she hoped it would address the targeting of Jewish students that

occurred during the Monday night incident. Roughly 200 protestors surrounded the building where the event took place and tried to push their way in, shattering a door and several windows while chanting "Intifada!" Three Jewish students were injured. A junior told *J. The Jewish News of Northern California* he was called a "dirty Jew" and a Nazi.

But rather than addressing anything specific about the protesters' Jewish targets, the email — written by Chancellor Carol Christ and Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Benjamin Hermalin — described the

incident as an attack on the "fundamental values of the university, which are also essential to maintain and nurture open inquiry and an inclusive civil society, the bedrock of a genuinely democratic nation."

"The entire email didn't even mention antisemitism. Not one word of it," Sobkin told *Jewish Insider* on Thursday. "I think the entire response is a huge failure on the part of the administration, on the part of the chancellor. And I think students are just really disappointed that fear and the Jewish hate that was so blatantly perpetuated on Monday night has been essentially



sidelined, not being recognized, nor has anything been done about it.”

**“I found it to be shocking that the statement from the administration didn’t use the word ‘Jewish’ or ‘antisemitism’ anywhere,” said Tyler Gregory, CEO of the Bay Area Jewish Community Relations Council. “It feels like they’re trying to gaslight people about who the victims are. Whether that was intentional or an oversight doesn’t matter. Either way, we’ve got a problem here.”**

Well before the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks in Israel touched off a dramatic rise in antisemitism at American college campuses, Berkeley had grappled with an active and virulent anti-Israel faction whose supporters sometimes crossed the line into antisemitism. In 2022, several student groups at Berkeley’s law school pledged not to host speakers who had ever supported Zionism, prompting a civil rights investigation from the Department of Education.

The failure to mention “antisemitism” in the university’s official condemnation of the protest reflects what several Jewish community leaders at Berkeley and in the Bay Area have long identified as a glaring blind spot at the prestigious university.

“I found it to be shocking that the statement from the administration didn’t use the word ‘Jewish’ or ‘antisemitism’ anywhere,” said Tyler Gregory, CEO of the Bay Area Jewish Community Relations Council. “It feels like they’re trying to gaslight people about who the victims are. Whether that was intentional or an oversight doesn’t matter. Either way, we’ve got a problem here.”

In a Wednesday conversation with JI, Dan Mogulof, Berkeley’s assistant vice chancellor for executive communications, did not mention antisemitism when discussing the incident or how the university would respond to it. He said the school may consider adding a required seminar about “the importance of diversity and perspective and civic discourse and freedom of speech,” but added that he “would be hard-pressed to think of policies that would be unique to the Jewish community that would be necessary

or effective.”

In a follow-up conversation on Thursday, Mogulof acknowledged that the Monday incident had, in fact, been “informed by antisemitism, but that’s different than saying that everybody there was motivated by that or engaged in that.” The email from the chancellor did not mention antisemitism because, on Tuesday morning, the school had not been able to verify whether there had been antisemitic incidents, Mogulof said, and they wanted to send something out. “The only source of reports about antisemitic expression was on social media.”

Mogulof had been at the Monday event, which he described as “terrible.” But he claimed he had not witnessed any antisemitic actions. “It was really chaotic,” said Mogulof.

**“I think what happened on Monday was more of a wake-up call that we’re in new territory,” said Dan Mogulof, Berkeley’s assistant vice chancellor for executive communications.**

As the administrators drafted the email to students, “we wanted to universalize it,” he said of the Monday incident. “It’s just unacceptable, no matter who was being targeted. It applies to everybody.” He then downplayed the importance of the email, saying “they have a wonderful symbolic value” but that only about 15% of students open the email. “We’re not just relying on campus messages.” On Friday, he noted, several administrators will meet with Jewish community members in an event organized by the chancellor’s advisory committee on Jewish life and campus climate, a body created years prior to Oct. 7.

When asked if the event constituted a security failure for the university, Mogulof demurred. “Well, I don’t know. You’ve heard me speak. Would you?” he asked. “The fact that we were able to safely evacuate the building and get people away from the mob with what so far are two reports of minor injuries, I’m thankful that happened.”

“I think what happened on Monday was more of a wake-up call that we’re in new territory,” Mogulof said.

But Jewish community members on campus view the security and planning failures that led to a mob successfully

shutting down an event organized by pro-Israel events as an almost inevitable consequence of the Berkeley administration not responding forcefully enough as Jewish students have faced harassment and exclusion in recent months.

“It can’t be just brushed under the rug, like it’s been done. This is a pattern,” said Berkeley Chabad Rabbi Gil Leeds. “It’s unspeakable, the level of, I think, negligence and cover-up for these actions.”

A spokesperson for California Gov. Gavin Newsom told JI that, “the Governor vehemently condemns antisemitism and has called on California’s university systems to take additional steps to protect student safety.”

In a statement to JI, Rep. Adam Schiff (D-CA), who is running for Senate, decried the incident and called out university administrators for failing to act.

“Over the last several months, we’ve seen a wave of antisemitism on college campuses across the country. What happened at Berkeley is just the latest, horrifying example,” said Schiff, days before California’s Senate primary. “It’s unacceptable in any setting, especially in a California university that prides itself on inclusion. And yet, this kind of intimidation — and inaction from administrators — is an all-too-common reality for so many Jewish students today.”

Rep. Katie Porter (D-CA), who is one of Schiff’s competitors in the race and a former visiting professor at Berkeley, condemned Monday’s incident in a statement.

“Hate has no place in our communities. It’s on all of us to combat it by speaking firmly against bigotry, especially on college campuses — where free speech should be respected, but hate speech never tolerated. As a former UC Berkeley faculty member, I strongly condemn Monday’s events,” said Porter. “Stopping hate includes condemning antisemitism, and I will continue to speak out against hate targeting our Jewish communities.”

A spokesperson for Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA), the third major Democrat vying for the Senate seat and the congressperson who represents Berkeley, did not respond to a request for comment.

**“In addition to punishing the perpetrators of this violent**



**intimidation, universities and those who fund them must do more to protect and support Jewish students,” said the Koret Foundation’s CEO, Jeff Farber. “Simply put, those entrusted with the safety and education of the future generation must have the moral clarity to stand up for what’s right. The world has changed and stronger responses are necessary to protect Jewish students.”**

Berkeley has not faced the same public pressure from Jewish donors like at other top schools, most notably Harvard and Penn. Gregory, from the JCRC, and Rabbi Leeds both called on philanthropists to consider putting pressure on Berkeley.

“I would call upon them to really consider making sure that the university — if you’re giving so much money to a school that bears your name, you would want it to definitely have a certain character and definitely not be a place that is unfriendly to Jewish people,” Leeds said.

The Koret Foundation, a major Jewish philanthropy in the Bay Area, has been a major supporter of universities in the area, including a \$12 million gift to Berkeley in 2020. The nonprofit’s CEO, Jeff Farber, told JI that the organization “has always taken current circumstances into consideration for decisions about grants.”

“In addition to punishing the perpetrators of this violent intimidation, universities and those who fund them must do more to protect and support Jewish students.

Simply put, those entrusted with the safety and education of the future generation must have the moral clarity to stand up for what’s right. The world has changed and stronger responses are necessary to protect Jewish students,” Farber said. “We are in close contact with administrators at the universities we partner with and will continue to insist they implement serious, meaningful action to address antisemitism on their campuses.”

The university has opened disciplinary investigations into the students involved, and campus police have begun investigations, including a hate crimes probe, Mogulof said. He declined to comment further, citing student privacy concerns. He also declined to say whether Bears for Palestine — the Students for Justice in Palestine-affiliated group that organized the protest and is a registered student group on campus — would face any consequences.

“We cannot punish or sanction anyone or any group for constitutionally protected language. We can and we will punish any individual or any group that engages in expression not protected by the First Amendment,” Mogulof said.

The leaders of Bears for Israel, the pro-Israel group that organized the event, had been seeking a meeting with Berkeley’s chancellor since October. They reached out again this week but have not heard back. Mogulof said the chancellor would “absolutely” consider a meeting with them but declined to say more.

“It’s really difficult to be a Jewish student leader, just in general, but especially right now it’s especially isolating. Nobody’s really in your corner,” said Sobkin. “That further develops this feeling of hopelessness and loneliness in what we’re doing.”

On Monday, after campus police moved the event from its original location and then failed to secure the second location, and after attendees were forced to evacuate through the basement to exit from a parking garage away from the protestors, the speaker — Ran Bar-Yoshafat — did deliver his talk, at the campus Chabad house. Not everyone made it; Rabbi Leeds got a frantic phone call from the mother of one student who had been separated from the group, and who had called her crying. But the event continued, almost like a therapy session. Leeds promised that the students would invite more pro-Israel speakers, and would not be afraid.

“On the Sather Gate, where they’re protesting and blocking daily, it says the motto of the school, ‘Fiat Lux. Let there be light.’ It’s from the Bible,” Leeds said, referring to a well-known gate on campus. “It’s the Jewish people; that’s what we stand for, and we want to make sure that there’s only light coming out of Berkeley again. This is definitely a dark day in the history of Berkeley, and all of all of higher education. But from the greatest darkness comes the greatest light, so we can really make a difference.” ♦

MARCH 5, 2024

# Saudi Arabia attracts \$10 billion to build data centers

*Amazon Web Services will pour more than \$5.3 billion into the kingdom*

By Kelsey Warner

*The article first appeared in The Circuit.*

Ten billion. That was the figure that caught everybody's attention at Day 1 of LEAP24, the buzzing tech exhibition now underway in Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia announced on Monday it has attracted over \$10 billion in investment from Amazon Web Services and other tech companies to build data centers, the critical infrastructure to support its ambitions in artificial intelligence.

AWS, Amazon's cloud division, said it plans to open the data centers in 2026 and will pour more than \$5.3 billion into the kingdom.

The Seattle, Washington-based colossus is one of many international firms that have

set up regional headquarters in Saudi Arabia in response to a January 2024 deadline set by the kingdom for foreign firms to establish HQs in the country or lose out on big government contracts.

Meanwhile, Saudi Aramco unveiled a large language model called AramcoMetabrain, which is built on 90 years' worth of company data.

Aramco President and CEO Amin H. Nasser said the aim is to make the world's largest oil company more productive.

Aramco also announced a new partnership with Grok, a U.S.-based AI chip company that it says can offer a faster implementation of AI. ADNOC, which has been developing AI tools for several years, said today it has generated \$500 million of

additional value in 2023 by using AI.

Alat, the new sustainable technology manufacturing company launched last month and backed by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, said it plans to team up with Riyadh research university King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology to boost the development of the semiconductor industry in the kingdom.

Amit Midha, CEO of Alat, laid out his vision for the company in a keynote at LEAP on Monday: "Imagine purchasing a phone that has been assembled by intelligent robots – in an automated factory, in a smart city, in Saudi Arabia, powered by clean energy." ♦

MARCH 1, 2024

# Jewish students recount a series of campus horror stories at congressional roundtable

*Students from nine top schools from around the country offered strikingly similar accounts of the explosion of antisemitism on their campuses and their administrations' failure to respond*

By Marc Rod

For two hours on Wednesday, lawmakers heard from a parade of Jewish students, each delivering the same message: They do not feel safe on their college campuses.

Speaking to a roundtable organized by the House Committee on Education & the Workforce, Jewish students from

Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Columbia, Rutgers, Stanford, Tulane, Cooper Union and University of California, Berkeley spoke about the harassment, threats and violence they've faced on their campuses since the Oct. 7 attack on Israel.

The students' accounts were all

remarkably similar, despite coming from a range of locations and school types, including openly antisemitic taunts and harassment, angry mobs rampaging through campus and overtaking campus buildings, vandalism and in some cases threats of or actual incidents of violence, all going largely or completely unaddressed

by university administrators and campus police, despite repeated and sustained pleas from the students for help and support.

In some cases, the students said professors and administrators were complicit or actively involved in the antisemitic activity. Students said that they feared for their safety and even their lives.

The students, saying they felt abandoned by their universities and had no faith in them to act to protect them, pleaded for action from Congress. They said that they hoped their testimony could serve as a wakeup call to both Congress and the American public.

“As my friends from Harvard and UPenn can tell you, it doesn’t end simply because presidents are replaced. Systemic change is needed,” Kevin Feigelis, a Stanford student, said. “Universities have proven they have no intention of fixing themselves. It must be you, and it must be now.”

Shabbos Kestenbaum — a Harvard student who said he’d contacted the school’s antisemitism task force more than 40

times without a response and had been threatened in a video with a machete by a still-employed Harvard staff member — called Congress and the courts the students’ “last hope.”

Multiple students and lawmakers said that the current events on campus carry echoes of 1930s Germany or the pogroms in Russia.

Some suggested potential courses of action that Congress and other federal branches could take, including leveraging U.S. taxpayer funding or the schools’ tax-exempt statuses, placing third-party monitors on campus and enforcing diversity requirements in Middle East studies departments requiring them to include pro-Israel views.

Students from Harvard, Penn and MIT all said that little has changed on their campuses since last year’s blockbuster congressional hearing on campus antisemitism, which prompted the ouster of Harvard and Penn’s presidents.

Rep. Virginia Foxx (R-NC), the committee’s chair, vowed that she and her colleagues would not stop their efforts to tackle antisemitism on campus.

“I was very emotional,” Foxx told *Jewish Insider*, “I’m a mother and a grandmother. I have one grandchild who went to college and I’m not sure what I would have done if he had come home to say he felt threatened on his campus like these students feel threatened. No student on a college campus, in this country, in the year 2024, should feel threatened.”

Foxx said that the committee’s antisemitism investigation is proceeding deliberately, but that the schools will be held to account. The committee has already requested documents from Harvard, Penn and Columbia and has now subpoenaed Harvard. Foxx suggested that other schools whose students had appeared Thursday could be next. ♦

MARCH 1, 2024

## University antisemitism task forces feature much talk, minimal action so far

*Elite universities are increasingly turning to task forces to address campus antisemitism. But questions remain over the efficacy and mandate of such groups*

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By Gabby Deutch, Haley Cohen

In the aftermath of a surge in antisemitism that erupted following the Oct. 7 Hamas terror attacks in Israel, top universities including Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Columbia, the University of Pennsylvania and Northwestern announced the creation of new bodies tasked with studying antisemitism on campus and identifying how to address it. Their impending work is framed with urgency, and the bodies are generally discussed using language about the importance of inclusivity on campus.

But nearly five months after the

environment for Jewish students on these campuses began to rapidly deteriorate, questions remain over the efficacy and mandate of such groups. They will also face the thorny issue of campus free speech as they delve into questions about what, exactly, constitutes antisemitism on campus.

The question over the credibility of these antisemitism task forces was underscored this week at Harvard, following the resignation of business school professor Raffaella Sadun, the co-chair of the

presidential task force, reportedly because she felt university leaders weren’t willing to act on the committee’s recommendations.

“They’ve utterly failed to protect Jewish and Israeli students. It’s shameful,” a Jewish faculty member at Harvard told *Jewish Insider*. They requested anonymity to speak candidly about interactions with students and administrators in recent months. The professor has seen numerous Israeli students kicked out of WhatsApp groups unrelated to politics because they are Israeli. The professor also described widespread

opposition, among many students, to topics having to do with Israel — and a corresponding reluctance to act from administrators, who fear pushback from far-left students.

“If you’re an administrator, and you care about your own personal well-being, and you want to keep Harvard out of the news or off social media, you basically try not to engage with these people in a way that will provoke them,” the professor said. “In the end this backfired on Harvard, because their failure to take care of Jewish students contributed to the accusations of institutional antisemitism, the lawsuit, the congressional investigation.”

**“I think if the mandate is not clear, if there’s not enough resources, if the council doesn’t have committees and jobs, it’s just going to be window dressing,” said Miriam Elman, executive director of the Academic Engagement Network. “It’s not going to be able to do the work that needs to be done.”**

Harvard announced the creation of an antisemitism task force in January, which immediately faced criticism due to comments made by its other co-chair, historian Derek Penslar, suggesting that antisemitism is not a major problem at Harvard. The body’s full membership has now been announced, but the scope and timeline of its work remains unclear.

Interim Harvard President Alan Garber said in a Monday email that he expects the work of Harvard’s antisemitism task force to “take several months to complete,” but he asked the co-chairs “to send recommendations to the deans and me on a rolling basis.” It is not clear if the university will provide updates along the way; or if Harvard’s leadership will accept the task force’s recommendations.

At universities that already had antisemitism task forces prior to Oct. 7, those that achieved the most success generally have a budget to pursue actual work, a clear timeline for their work and strong buy-in from administrators, who must be willing to actually implement the groups’ recommendations, according to Miriam Elman, executive director of the Academic

Engagement Network, which works to fight anti-Israel sentiment and antisemitism at U.S. universities.

It’s not yet clear if the newly created task forces — especially those at private universities, which don’t have the same obligation for transparency as public universities — will achieve the needed support from leaders.

“I think if the mandate is not clear, if there’s not enough resources, if the council doesn’t have committees and jobs, it’s just going to be window dressing,” said Elman. “It’s not going to be able to do the work that needs to be done.”

At Columbia University, Shai Davidai, an assistant professor in the business school, said he doesn’t have confidence that a newly created antisemitism task force can succeed unless the faculty on the committee changes to include more Zionist and Israeli voices.

**“Stanford is aware of exactly what is going on, and if they cared they would have done something over the last five months,” said Kevin Feigelis, a doctoral student in the Stanford physics department, who on Thursday testified at a House Education Committee roundtable with Jewish students. “The university places people on these committees in one of two ways: either it places people who they think are going to be most sympathetic to the university or they go straight to Hillel and ask them. These are both troubling.”**

“At universities, if you want to make sure something doesn’t happen, you set up a task force,” Davidai continued. “The task force at Columbia has done absolutely nothing. They just talk.”

At Stanford University, an antisemitism task force created in the wake of Oct. 7 has, like Harvard’s, been mired in conversations and controversy over its membership. Faculty co-chair Ari Kelman, an associate professor in Stanford’s Graduate School of Education and Religious Studies, had a record of downplaying the threat of campus antisemitism along with recent alliances with anti-Israel groups. He resigned, citing the controversy, and was replaced with Larry Diamond, a pro-Israel professor in

Stanford’s political science department. Under its new leadership, the committee also expanded its name and scope in January to include anti-Israel bias.

Despite the updates, Kevin Feigelis, a doctoral student in the Stanford physics department, who on Thursday testified at a House Education Committee roundtable with Jewish students, said that “the task force has still accomplished nothing and it’s not clear that they have the power to accomplish anything.”

In January, Feigelis worked with the campus antisemitism task force to plan an on-campus forum meant to combat antisemitism. The symposium was disrupted by a pro-Palestinian protest that included threats to Jewish attendees.

The task force “was instituted just to appease people,” Feigelis said. “Stanford is aware of exactly what is going on, and if they cared they would have done something over the last five months. The university places people on these committees in one of two ways: either it places people who they think are going to be most sympathetic to the university or they go straight to Hillel and ask them. These are both troubling.”

Feigelis expressed belief that the task force could accomplish more if it consisted of lawyers and more Israeli faculty.

**“If you really want to fix the problem, why conflate it with other issues that are going to prolong trying to find a solution to it?” Mike Teplitsky, a Northwestern alum and the president of the Coalition Against Antisemitism at Northwestern, said of the task force’s attempt to also focus on Islamophobia and other forms of hate. “I would call it a bureaucratic distraction from trying to fix the problem.”**

“If [the administration cared] the committee would not be made of political scientists and a biologist... lawyers should be the ones staffing a committee that determines what constitutes antisemitism. Instead they picked people who have no idea what constitutes free speech or what the code of conduct actually is.”

He continued, “The task force is currently holding listening sessions, but it’s just not



clear what will come of that.”

After Northwestern University announced in November that it would create an antisemitism task force, 163 faculty and staff members at the university wrote a letter to President Michael Schill saying they were “seriously dismayed and concerned” by the announcement, raising concerns that the task force’s work would challenge “rigorous, open debate.” Three of the signatories of that letter — including Jessica Winegar, a Middle Eastern studies professor and vocal proponent of boycotts of Israel — were then named to the task force, which will also focus on addressing Islamophobia.

“If you really want to fix the problem, why conflate it with other issues that are going to prolong trying to find a solution to it?” Mike Teplitsky, a Northwestern alum and the president of the Coalition Against Antisemitism at Northwestern, said of the task force’s attempt to also focus on Islamophobia and other forms of hate. “I would call it a bureaucratic distraction from trying to fix the problem.”

Mark Rotenberg, Hillel International’s vice president for university initiatives and the group’s general counsel, argued that antisemitism has proven to be so severe as to warrant its own mechanisms. The inclusion of Islamophobia “and other hateful

MARCH 4, 2024

behavior” in the group’s mandate would be like if a campus Title IX office, focused on gender-based inequality, was also required to focus on racism.

“Antiracism may be a very important thing, but merging it with the problem of violence in frat houses is not going to signal the women on that campus that they are really taking that problem seriously,” said Rotenberg, who works with administrators at campuses across the U.S. on antisemitism-related issues. “That’s our point about antisemitism.”

Lily Cohen, a Northwestern senior who is a member of the task force, came face to face with antisemitism on campus a year before the Oct. 7 attacks. After writing an op-ed in the campus newspaper decrying antisemitism and speaking out about her support for Zionism, she was called a terrorist and faced an onslaught of hate — including a large banner that was printed with her article, covered by “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” in red paint.

“I think it comes from the top,” said Cohen, who noted that, after the op-ed incident, “no strong actions were taken to stand up for Jewish students or protect Jewish students, or even just express that that wasn’t OK. It fostered an environment where antisemitism is tolerated at

Northwestern as long as it stays just subtle enough that you’re not saying Jews.”

Afterward, she met with university administrators to talk about what happened to her. “At the end of the day, listening is not enough,” she said. “I don’t think in any of the meetings I had with any administrators, that they actually referred to what happened to me as antisemitism. I think that that’s a huge problem here, is how easy it is to say, ‘We are not antisemitic, we’re just anti-Zionist,’ or ‘We don’t hate Jews, we just hate Zionists. We just hate Israel.’”

The group started meeting in January, and it was asked by the president to finish its work by June, which Cohen worries is not enough time, especially given its broad scope. Administrators at the school have not instilled much confidence in her in the past, but she is choosing to be hopeful.

“Being on the committee, I have to be optimistic that we’re going to do something and that the president will take our recommendations seriously, and will put them into action,” she said. “Because if not, what was it all for?” ♦

*Gabby Deutch is Jewish Insider’s senior national correspondent; Haley Cohen is eJewishPhilanthropy’s news reporter.*

## Shoah Foundation signs deal with National Library of Israel, giving full access to its collections to everyone in Israel

*The arrangement with Israel is only first step before eventually making the video testimonies of tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors and hundreds of Oct. 7 survivors available worldwide, Shoah Foundation executive director says*

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By Judah Ari Gross

*The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.*

Everyone in Israel will now have full access to the USC Shoah Foundation’s collection of testimonies from more than 52,000 Holocaust survivors and

hundreds of survivors of the Oct. 7 terrorist attacks through a new agreement between the organization and the National Library of Israel signed on Monday in Jerusalem.

The new partnership is meant to both provide Israelis with a resource to combat contemporary antisemitism and to serve as

a “case study” to demonstrate the viability and need of making the collection fully and freely available to everyone, Shoah Foundation Executive Director Robert J. Williams told *eJewishPhilanthropy* before the signing of the deal.

Williams said he hopes to make the

collection available universally by the end of the year.

Joel Citron, chair of the Shoah Foundation, said the memorandum of understanding with the National Library of Israel marked only the “step one” of making the collection available around the world. “But there will be a step two, three and four,” he said. “It’ll take some time, but we’re working very hard on it.”

Until now, roughly 10% of the Shoah Foundation’s Institute for Visual History and Education collection has been accessible online to anyone, while the rest of it has only been available at 180 universities and museums around the world. This new partnership will allow anyone with an Israeli IP address to “search, stream and download testimonies from survivors of the Holocaust and other antisemitic attacks” through a dedicated page on the library’s website.

The agreement was signed by Williams and National Library of Israel Chairman Sallai Meridor in the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem, which first opened its doors in a limited capacity in late October, following a major, yearslong effort to construct a new building for the institution.

Both Meridor and Williams said they hoped that this agreement marked the start of a deepening relationship between the National Library and the Shoah Foundation.

“This is only the beginning,” Williams said, voicing admiration for the library’s technology division, as well as its education department. “I think there’s a lot we can do there,” he added.

Since coming on board as the chief executive at the Shoah Foundation, Williams has made it a priority for the organization to document and combat contemporary antisemitism, on top of its work related to the Holocaust. This includes collecting testimony about Jews who suffered antisemitic attacks after 1945, including

Jews from Muslim countries who faced attacks after the foundation of the State of Israel, U.S. Jews in the post-civil rights era, Soviet Jews, Ethiopian Jews and terror attacks since the 1994 AMIA bombing in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Williams told eJP the foundation plans to collect 10,000 such interviews in the near future.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Williams said the agreement has already expanded his understanding of what the Shoah Foundation has to do in order to make its collections accessible around the world.

Williams noted that making the collection available in Hebrew required the Shoah Foundation to not only translate the testimonies and documents themselves but also to translate the metadata behind the collection, so that the Hebrew-speaking public can search for materials in their native tongue. As the foundation looks to expand access to its collection around the world, it will also translate that metadata into other languages as well, he said.

“The only way to make this content available to people is if it is in their mother tongue, and honestly we wouldn’t have thought of that if it hadn’t been for this partnership,” Williams said.

Citron and Meridor both credited with Trudy Gottesman, who sits on the board of the Shoah Foundation and whose family was one of the major donors toward the construction of the library, with making the “*shidduch*” (matchmaking) between them and bringing the collection to the library.

The signing kicked off the USC Shoah Foundation’s four-day solidarity mission to Israel. The top officials from the organization, as well as members of its board, are also due to meet with Israeli President Isaac Herzog, visit Yad Vashem and meet with Oct. 7 survivors and families of hostages.

Almost immediately after the Oct. 7 terror attacks, the National Library of Israel and the Shoah Foundation, along with a number of other organizations and initiatives, joined together to collect and gather testimonies and other forms of documentation about the massacres.

Raquel Ukeles, the head of collections for the library, recalled an early phone conversation that she had with Williams about the creation of this unified effort.

“We were in shock, we were in trauma... And you said to me, ‘Raquel, you have the ability to build this right,’” Ukeles said, comparing this centralized, cooperative effort to the more haphazard, scattered initiatives to collect testimonies and documents relating to the Holocaust.

Ahead of the signing, Meridor stressed the importance of making this collection available at this time.

“I’ve never been as worried or as sad,” Meridor said.

The Oct. 7 attack “is shaking the structure, not just one of the floors, of the basic promise of Zionism that this would never happen, that we may die in battle, but that pogroms would never happen in a sovereign Jewish state,” he said. “And this very basic promise is being challenged. It will take a lot of effort to climb out [of this situation]. I am sure that we will do it. The spirit of this people is beyond belief. But there are no miracles and there are no magicians, and it will be a very tough climb uphill.”

These testimonies and documents will allow the people exposed to them to “learn about the capacity of human beings in general to let themselves fall to the lowest depths that one can think of, of depravity and cruelty and inhumanity and, at the same time, the zeniths that humans can get to through conscience and courage and hope,” he said. ♦