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Hebrew Watchman

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2024 Annual Meeting Celebrates Historical Achievements and Welcomes Pace Cooper as Board Chair for Jewish Foundation of Memphis



Pace Cooper welcomed as new Foundation Board Chair.

Memphis Jewish Federation (Federation), Jewish Foundation of Memphis (Foundation), and Jewish Community Partners (JCP) held a joint Annual Meeting on Thursday, June 6, 2024, in the Belz Social Hall of the Memphis Jewish Community Center. The meeting, framed with the theme of Stronger Together, reflected on the historic achievements of both Federation and Foundation during an unprecedented year.

Marty Kelman, JCP's Board Chair, opened the meeting by noting that despite the challenges of this year, both organizations had experienced tremendous growth. He expressed how

much pride JCP takes in providing the resources needed for this success and stressed the importance of JCP continuing to look for ways to achieve greater operating efficiencies. He ended by thanking his fellow chairs for their hard work and commitment.

Scott Notowich, Federation's Board Chair, highlighted Federation's work with donors and lay leaders to raise \$4.1 million for the Israel Emergency Campaign, while also raising \$3.9 million for the Annual Community Campaign. In addition to the historic fundraising efforts, he reflected on some of the incredible opportunities Federation provided for the com-



Jack Shanker and Wallis Rogin presenting at Annual Meeting.

munity to come together following the October 7 attacks including a 600-person Solidarity Gathering, flying 180 Memphians to a March for Israel in D.C. and leading a Solidarity Mission to Israel.

Scott closed his remarks by saying, "This has been a heavy year, but I am hopeful. Federation is launching an initiative for emerging leaders with Jaclyn Marshall and Jill Shanker to grow our next generation of donors and leaders. I am hopeful because Federation has dedicated more resources to increasing our community relations efforts. And, I am hopeful, because we have an incredible board, the best staff and an exceptional leader, Laura

Linder. I have seen first-hand how hard our team works for Federation and for our Memphis Jewish community."

Guests heard from Wallis Rogin and Jack Shanker, local Jewish teens active in Foundation's B'nai Tzedek teen philanthropy program and as contributors to "The Perspective," a local Jewish teen literary magazine funded by Federation annual campaign dollars. They spoke on what they have learned from B'nai Tzedek and how their involvement with "The Perspective" has given them opportunities to share what Jewish

(See Meeting Page 3)

Cost of Shipping Donated Gear to Israel Quadrupling as El Al Ends Oct. 7 Cargo Discount



Duffle bags full of donated equipment organized by Bergen County Lev Echad are laid out for transport to Israel at Newark Liberty International Airport, April 10, 2024. Courtesy of Bergen County Lev Echad.

By Asaf Elia-Shalev

(JTA) – El Al, Israel's national airline, is ending a discount program for baggage containing donations that was created soon after Oct. 7 amid widespread shortages of military and medical equipment.

The company says it made the decision because other cargo transport options that were shut down when the war began have resumed and because the need for donations has decreased as the military's purchasing has caught up.

"On Oct. 7, we understood there's a major national effort, and we were also the only ones still offering service to the United States," Shira Kesselgross, El Al's head of corporate communications, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "There were a lot of donations at first, but, thank God, the army managed to

stand on its own two feet and started supplying itself. We saw demand drop dramatically so we returned to our normal policy."

After June 15, charities sending duffel bags to Israel will be required to pay \$200 per bag, instead of the discounted rate of \$50.

El Al has delivered tens of thousands of bags under the program, according to Kesselgross. The weight of the bags adds to a flight's fuel costs and the bags take up space the airlines could otherwise sell to cargo customers.

"\$50 was a symbolic price to cover some costs," she said. "We weren't making money off this program."

The airline's view that the need for donations has dropped off reflects the

(See El Al Page 3)

Congressman Kustoff Visits Normandy and Paris to Mark 80th Anniversary of D-Day

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman David Kustoff (R-TN) recently traveled to Normandy and Paris to mark the 80th Anniversary of D-Day and honor our greatest generation. "It was an honor to visit Normandy and Paris to pay tribute to the brave members of

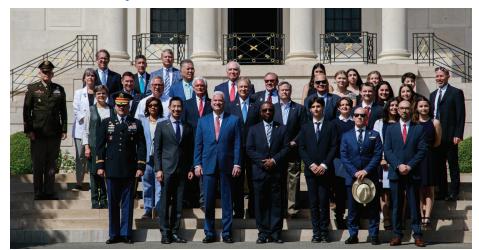
the Allied forces who fought to liberate Europe from tyranny 80 years ago," said Congressman Kustoff. "Because of the courage and sacrifice of the greatest generation, freedom still exists today. May the stories of these heroes never be forgotten." HW



Congressman Kustoff visits the Suresnes American Cemetery in Paris.



Congressman Kustoff and his congressional colleagues visit the Suresnes American Cemetery in Paris.



Congressman Kustoff and his congressional colleagues visit the Suresnes American Cemetery in Paris.



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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. June 21, 2024 / 15 Sivan, 5784.......7:59 p.m. Havdalah, Sat. June 22, 2024 / 16 Sivan, 5784...... 9:02 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Behaalotecha



Congressman Kustoff visits the Normandy American Cemetery in Normandy.

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Meeting...

(Continued From Page 1)

life is like from their vantage point.

Foundation's Board Chair Jason Salomon took the podium and conveyed some key milestones for the year, which included adding nine new members to the Professional Advisory Group and welcoming Plough Towers as a new partner agency. He also commended Foundation for being recognized by the "Memphis Business Journal" as the seventh largest granting agency and the eighth largest charitable organization in Memphis.

Most notably, Jason reported on a remarkable year of financial growth, noting Foundation's receipt of more than \$28 million in charitable contributions from donors to Donor Advised Funds and Support Organizations and awarding more than \$14 million in grants, including an historic gift for the University of Memphis through the Burton Weil Family Foundation.

Jason closed with a warm welcome to Pace Cooper, incoming Foundation Board Chair, saying, "I know you love Memphis and our Jewish community as I do, and I am so excited to see how your knowledge and experience can take our organization to the next level."

Charles Jalenak and Anthony Morrison, past Foundation Chairs, led a light-hearted tribute to Jason Salomon, outgoing Foundation Board Chair, with humor, praise and gratitude for Jason's guidance and leadership.

Laura Linder, President and CEO of JCP, gave the evening's final report. She shared a message framed around "We were made for times like these," and touched on the difficulties of the past year and highlighted our community's unwavering resilience. She paid special

tribute to the professional team, noting their incredible work and commitment over the past year. She welcomed Pace Cooper as the newly elected chair of the Foundation stating that the organization is "fortunate to welcome another accomplished and respected professional and community leader into the role of board chair."

Following the nominating report and elections, presented by JCP Past Chair Scott Vogel, Pace Cooper was warmly welcomed to the podium.

When Pace stepped to the podium, he expressed his gratitude for being elected to serve as Foundation Board Chair and his intention to continue and further develop the Foundation's work in the community. In explaining why he chose to serve as Chair, Pace said, "The real reason I'm driven to lead at this time is to enjoy and build on the momentum that the Foundation is enjoying as it grows faster and stronger. The success of this Foundation will, in turn, lead to the success of our overall community, our agencies and the Memphis Jewry that has shaped everyone in this room."

"We have some challenges like deepening our technology prowess, helping our most able philanthropists in establishing meaningful planned giving strategies, and getting some of our younger community members more involved, but we are more than just on our way," he continued. "We've already arrived, and every year brings more people, more money, and more momentum to fulfilling our mission. Together, this staff and this community can do special things to create a stronger and more vibrant Jewish Memphis." **HW**

The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Happenings

Lunch is Monday—Friday at 11:30 a.m. All programs start at 12:15 p.m. Monthly Luncheon is at noon.

Monday, June 24 Speaker: Steve Kaplan Mr. Kaplan shares his popular program "Did You Know?"

This discussion always brings facts that help in the home as well as some totally useless information that may or may not be very helpful!! No previous knowledge is necessary. It is a fun time for all. There is no charge for the program.

Wednesday, June 26 Speaker: Rabbi Yehoshua Nissan Topic: The Power of Prayer

Rabbi Nissan is a founding member of the Memphis Kollel. The seniors always enjoy his talks, which are both informative and humorous. Reservations can be made by calling the front desk at 901-761-0810.

Monday, July 1 Team Trivial Pursuit

We will split the room up into teams and see who the Trivia champions are!

Questions come from the Authorized Edition of Trivial Pursuit, most of which come from the Boomer edition. Come test your knowledge. Prizes will be given to the winning team!

Wednesday, July 3 Speaker: Peter Gicheru Topic: Fall Prevention

One recent magazine article said that 70% of people over 60 that go into the hospital go there because of a fall! Please come learn several ways how falls can be prevented. Come for the lunch and stay for the speaker.

Please join us from Monday through Friday for a delicious kosher lunch from the kitchens at the Memphis Jewish Home. The cost is only \$2 for seniors. Reservations are required the day before by 1 p.m. by contacting Steve Kaplan, Adult Services Coordinator, at 901-259-9220 or stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org, or by calling the front desk at 901-761-0810. **HW**

El Al...

(Continued From Page 1)

official position of the Israeli military, which says that there are no shortages of equipment.

Battlefield commanders and logistics officers say, however, that the official army line is false and that many combat soldiers are still stuck with subpar helmets and lack items like rifle scopes.

Charities collecting donations in the United States and civilian volunteers in Israel say they continue to field many requests from soldiers daily but acknowledge that they are delivering less equipment as a flood of donations from Jews in the Diaspora has slowed over time

Bergen County Lev Echad, a New Jersey charity, estimates it has sent more than 11,000 duffel bags to Israel since Oct. 7, according to Brian Nave, a volunteer with the group.

The group still sends 20 to 30 bags a week, which represents a significant slowdown from earlier months, Nave said, but he added that items it is sending such as drones and other electronics tend to be more expensive.

Nave said he was disappointed in El Al's decision but is loath to criticize the airline.

"It's going to make everything more expensive, but it's understandable," he said. "I don't want to get pissed at them – they have been our partners. But it's going to cost the Jewish people more money."

Israel remains in a state of war in Gaza but has reduced troop deployment significantly after calling up hundreds of thousands of reservists. Meanwhile, tensions in the north of the country remain high as Israel exchanges fire with Hezbollah, which has been flying rockets across the border from Lebanon.

El Al is watching the security situation and could reinstate a discount program in the case of military escalation, Kesselgross said.

"If we suddenly see a new military need because of a major new military campaign in one arena or another, we are prepared to return to an emergency discount program," she said. **HW**

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AEPi Launches Innovative "Chapter Without Walls"

Providing Distinct Jewish Leadership Opportunities to Students on Campuses Without AEPi Chapters

Alpha Epsilon Pi International, the world's largest and leading Jewish college fraternity, has launched an innovative new virtual fraternity chapter – AE-Pi's "Chapter Without Walls" – for men looking for the specific brand of Jewish leadership development and advocacy training that AEPi provides but attend colleges at which there is not an active AEPi chapter.

The AEPi Chapter Without Walls currently has members from schools such as Clemson University, The New School, Savannah College of Art and Design, Furman University and Fordham University. The group meets virtually on a regular basis and receives guidance and support from the AEPi Headquarters staff. Members are able to avail themselves of AEPi International's regular leadership and advocacy training programs such as the Leven Leadership Academy and the AEPi International Convention along with a proprietary online leadership training program, which is provided to all AEPi members.

"I was very involved in BBYO in high school, and when I chose where I went to college (Savannah College of Art & Design), I knew that there wasn't going to be a big Jewish community or the brotherhood of a fraternity. I thought that would be ok, but I was wrong," said Andrew Biller, president of the AEPi Chapter Without Walls. "I met some people from AEPi International at the JNF-USA conference, and they have worked hard with me to get this started. It feels great to be a part of AEPi."

Those interested in more information about AEPi's Chapter Without Walls can emailaneiberg@aepi.org.

"Our mission – to develop the future leaders of the Jewish community – is more important than ever at this time of rampant antisemitism and anti-Israel activity. Jewish communities on college campuses – no matter their size – need leadership and AEPi can provide it. I'm proud that we are continuing to innovate and finding new ways to bring the AEPi experience to more students," said Rob Derdiger, AEPi's CEO.

Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi) is the world's leading Jewish college fraternity, operating chapters on more than 150 college campuses around the world. Founded in 1913, AEPi has more than 100,000 living alumni. The fraternity's mission – developing the future leaders of the Jewish community – is demonstrated every day through acts of brotherhood, Tzedakah (charity), social awareness and support for Jewish communities and Israel. HW

Police: Body Found in Southern Israel Likely of Oct. 7 Terrorist



A shirt that was found on human remains in southern Israel's Sha'ar Hanegev area, June 13, 2024. Credit: Israel Police.

(JNS) – A corpse found last Thursday in the Sha'ar Hanegev region, adjacent to the northeastern Gaza Strip, is most likely that of a Hamas terrorist who took part in the Oct. 7 massacre, the Israel Police says.

A civilian discovered the remains, which were said to be in a state of "advanced decay," at an intersection where terrorists murdered at least 26 people on Oct. 7.

Alongside the body, security forces located an empty combat vest and a shirt with Arabic letters on it. The writing on the shirt appeared to be the symbol of Hamas's "military" wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades.

Police are still waiting for the full results of the identification process at the

L. Greenberg National Institute of Forensic Medicine in Tel Aviv, also known as the Abu Kabir Forensic Institute.

"The suspicion is that this is a Hamas terrorist who was killed during the attack," the Israel Police said in a statement last Thursday afternoon.

On Oct. 7, 2023, some 3,000 Hamasled terrorists invaded Israel by land, sea and air, killing about 1,200 people, kidnapping 251 people back to Gaza and terrorizing hundreds of thousands more by using rape and torture as a weapon while temporarily conquering several Israeli communities.

Israeli security forces killed around a thousand of the terrorists who crossed the border fence that day and captured many others. **HW**

Fetterman, Wife Gisele Hospitalized Briefly After Car Crash

(JNS) – Sen. John Fetterman (D-Pa.) and his wife, Gisele Fetterman, were "involved in a car accident with another driver" last Sunday morning, a spokesperson for the pro-Israel senator told JNS last Monday.

"Out of an abundance of caution, they were evaluated at a local hospital," the spokesperson said. "John was treated for a bruised shoulder, and they were discharged that afternoon. They are doing well and happy to be back in Braddock," their western Pennsylvania town.

The Maryland State Police told JNS that troopers from the Hagerstown barrack responded shortly before 8 a.m. last Sunday "to the area of westbound Interstate 70 at Interstate 68 for a report of a two-vehicle crash."

The police's preliminary investiga-

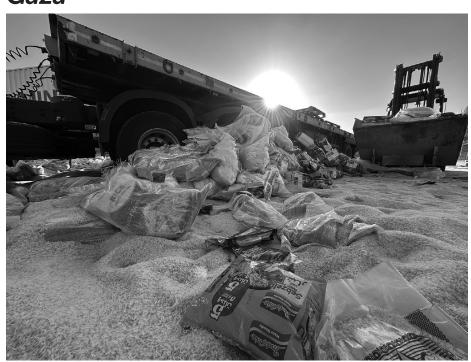
tion suggests that "a Chevrolet Traverse and a Chevrolet Impala were both traveling west on I-70 when for unknown reasons, the Traverse struck the rear of the Impala."

"The driver of the Traverse is identified as John Fetterman, 54, of Pennsylvania," the Maryland State Police told JNS. "A passenger in the Traverse and the operator of the Impala were transported by ambulance to War Memorial Hospital in West Virginia for treatment of their injuries."

"No citations were issued," it added. "The crash investigation remains active and ongoing."

"Not the best way to spend our 16th wedding anniversary but we're doing well," Fetterman wrote. He added that he is treating his injuries with frozen peas "from the Teeter" and Tylenol. HW

U.S. Slaps Sanctions on Tsav 9, Israeli Group Targeting Humanitarian Aid to Gaza



Humanitarian aid supplies dumped by Jewish settlers near a military checkpoint in Hebron, West Bank, May 13, 2024. Credit: Ibrahim Hamad/Anadolu via Getty Images

By Asaf Elia-Shalev

(JTA) June 14, 2024 – The Biden administration imposed sanctions last Friday on an Israeli group for attacking humanitarian aid convoys destined for Palestinian civilians in Gaza, in the latest round of penalties against far-right Israelis accused by Washington of undermining efforts toward peace and stability.

The group added to the U.S. sanctions list is Tsav 9, which says aid should be stopped because it ends up in the hands of Hamas – a view shared by a majority of Israelis.

For months, Tsav 9 activists have organized to block convoys, harass aid workers and damage aid trucks as well as goods meant to alleviate pervasive hunger and suffering in Gaza. The group's name means Order 9 in Hebrew, a reference to the military's order calling up reservists.

The announcement by the State Department of the financial restrictions labels Tsav 9 a "violent extremist" group and cites a May 13 incident in which activists looted and then set fire to two trucks in the West Bank carrying aid bound for Gaza.

Tsav 9 released a statement defending itself as a legitimate protest group.

"The effort to prevent a rightful democratic nonviolent protest in order to keep supplying Hamas with aid during the war goes against any American and liberal values," the statement says.

"Much of the aid transferred to Gaza falls directly into the hands of the terrorist organization Hamas, which massacred, murdered, and raped hundreds of women, elderly, and children (including American citizens), rather than going to the Gazan civilians."

The State Department called on Israel to protect the convoys from attacks and ensure their passage to Gaza.

"We will not tolerate acts of sabotage and violence targeting this essential humanitarian assistance," the announcement from the State Department says. "We will continue to use all tools at our disposal to promote accountability for those who attempt or undertake such heinous acts, and we expect and urge that Israeli authorities do the same."

Announcements of sanctions on Israelis began in February following an executive order signed by President Joe Biden aiming to stem rising violence between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank.

Before targeting Tsav 9, the United States imposed sanctions on several Israeli settlers involved in attacks against Palestinians as well as organizations involved in supporting extremists.

Financial institutions under U.S. jurisdiction are required to freeze assets belonging to sanctioned groups and individuals, and American citizens are prohibited from aiding them. **HW**

Mob on New York City Subway: 'Zionists: This is Your Chance to Get Out'



New York subway car. Credit: Zopalic/Pixabay.

(JNS) – Anti-Israel protesters continued to run wild across New York as masked agitators on a city subway car last Monday demanded to know if there were any Zionists on board, while elsewhere in the city vandals attacked the home of the Jewish director of the Brooklyn Museum.

The back-to-back events coming on the heels of a raucous pro-Hamas rally

outside an exhibition on the victims of the Oct. 7 massacre raised concern that rabid antisemitism of a radical minority of agitators was spiraling out of control in New York City.

The group of masked passengers on the subway demanded to know if there were any "Zionists" on the train – then warned them, "This is your chance to get out," according to a video circulating on social media.

The video shows the slogan being yelled inside the packed subway car by a man with the crowd of activists echoing his words.

Less than 48 hours later, the New York homes of the Jewish director of the Brooklyn Museum and other non-Jewish museum officials were vandalized last Wednesday in a coordinated attack.

The assailants smeared red paint and graffiti on the Brooklyn Heights home of Anne Pasternak, director of the museum, and hung a banner at the entrance to the museum director's apartment building that accused her of being a "white supremacist Zionist."

"Blood on your hands" was also splashed in red paint on the walkway leading to her building.

The homes of two trustees and the museum's president and CEO Kimberly Panicek Trueblood, whose husband is Jewish, were also targeted in the overnight attack that was carried out under cover of darkness.

"This is not peaceful protest or free speech," New York Mayor Eric Adams wrote in a post on X where he shared the images. "This is a crime, and it's overt, unacceptable antisemitism. These actions will never be tolerated in New York City for any reason."

"The latest lesson in anti-Zionism

as antisemitism," Rep. Ritchie Torres (D-N.Y.) posted on X. "The anti-Zionist left is not only seeking to purge Zionists (i.e. most Jews) from public places like public transit. It is vandalizing the private homes of individual Jews."

The Brooklyn Museum was itself stormed by protesters last month who damaged artwork and unfurled a "Free Palestine" banner from the roof. Dozens of people were arrested in that incident.

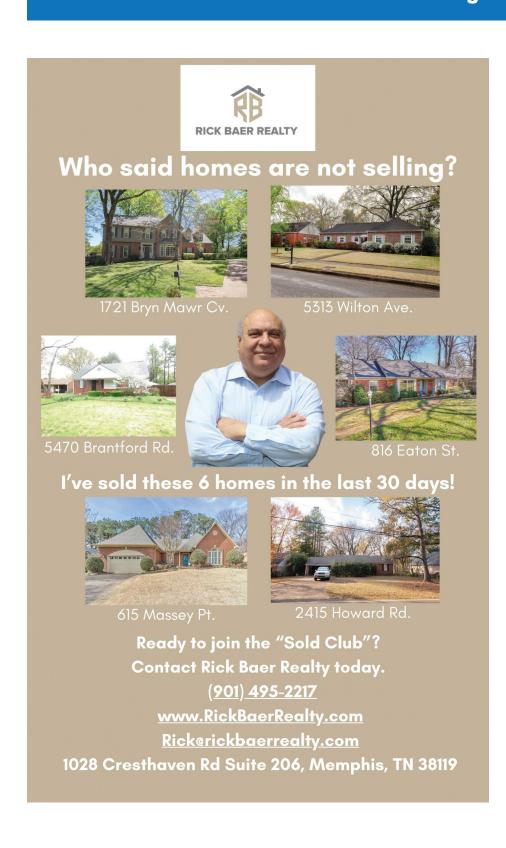
Earlier this week, a mob of protesters chanting "intifada revolution" rallied outside a New York City exhibit memorializing the hundreds of victims of the Hamas-led Oct. 7 attack on the Supernova music festival in southern Israel.

The crowd lit flares and waved PLO flags, along with one associated with the Iran-backed Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah, in front of the exhibition on Wall Street during what was billed by organizers as a "citywide day of rage for Gaza."

The protest was widely condemned across political lines, including a denunciation from the White House, and the exhibition will now run until June 22 due to overwhelming demand.

Some American Jewish leaders are now calling for a ban on masks in New York City due to the explosion of antisemitism by mobs with hidden faces. **HW**

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42% of Jews Have Felt Unsafe Wearing Jewish Symbols in Public Since Oct. 7, Study Finds



Family members of Hamas hostages lead a crowd at a rally in Central Park, March 10, 2024. Credit: Luke Tress

By Ben Sales

(JTA) – Since Oct. 7, more than 40% of American Jews have felt unsafe wearing Jewish symbols in public and more than a quarter have chosen not to mention their Jewish identity when they meet someone new, according to a new survey.

The survey, commissioned by the American Jewish Committee and published last Monday, reports many of the same findings as previous surveys of American Jews since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war eight months ago: More than 80% of Jews feel antisemitism is a problem in the United States and say it has grown. More than 80% also feel it's important for the United States to support Israel. More than 60% plan to vote for President Joe Biden.

The survey also demonstrates American Jewish discomfort in social settings since Oct. 7. Many American Jews avoid talking or posting about the war. Some say they have ended friendships.

And in a finding that AJC highlighted,

7% say that they have considered leaving the country due to antisemitism. Among those who say they had more education about Israel, AJC reported, that number is higher. In a separate question, 6% of respondents said they had had thoughts of leaving because of antisemitism over the five years prior to Oct. 7.

"Seven percent looks like a small number, but in fact, for Jews who have looked to America as a haven of safety and prosperity, this number is actually quite striking," said Alexandra Herzog, AJC's deputy director of contemporary Jewish life, in a press briefing about the survey.

The survey polled 1,001 Jewish adults between mid-March and early April, before many of the most recent major developments of the war and the response to it in the United States, including the campus pro-Palestinian encampment movement, the Israeli military's invasion of Rafah in southern Gaza or the Israeli ceasefire proposal recently announced by Biden.

A portion of respondents reported se-

rious social breaches. Thirteen percent of people said they lost a friend or a relationship due to disagreements over the war. And 12% say they have ended a friendship or a relationship after the other person "expressed antisemitic views." Seventeen percent said they have felt unsafe in a conversation about the war.

A majority, 53%, said they had avoided talking about the war with someone. And 45% feel unsafe sharing their views about Israel on social media.

The survey found that since Oct. 7, 45% of respondents felt somewhat or much more connected to Israel, while 19% feel somewhat or much less connected. Likewise, 48% said they feel more connected to their Jewish identity while just 4% say they feel less connected. The remainder in each question say there hasn't been a significant change.

Respondents aged 18-29 were more evenly divided. In that age cohort, 32% said they felt more connected to Israel since Oct. 7 and around the same number, 33%, said they feel less connected. And 39% of the 18-29 group feel more connected to their Jewish identity while 11% feel less connected.

Overall, 72% of the survey's respondents said being Jewish was important in their lives and 28% said it was not. The vast majority of those who said they felt more connected to Israel, 85%, also said being Jewish was important in their lives. Among those who said they felt less connected to Israel, 60% said being Jewish was important in their lives and 40% did not.

Respondents were split over publicly airing their Jewish identity or feelings about Israel. While 39% said they feel safe wearing Jewish symbols in public, 42% feel unsafe.

That figure reflects a shift compared to an AJC survey taken between October and November, largely following Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, in which only 26% reported that they "avoided publicly wearing, carrying, or displaying things that might help people identify you as a Jew out of fear of antisemitism" over the previous year.

In addition, last Monday's survey found that 27% of respondents felt unsafe spending time in a Jewish institution such as a synagogue or JCC.

The survey also showed that Jewish Americans are more supportive of Biden than the national average. In the 2024 election, 61% plan to vote for Biden and 23% plan to vote for Donald Trump. Those numbers were similar to the way respondents said they voted in 2020, when 64% said they voted for Biden and 21% for Trump.

Ninety percent of those who voted for Biden in 2020 plan to vote for him again in 2024. For Trump, that figure was a touch lower, at 85%.

Ten percent said they planned to vote for "someone else" in this year's presidential election. Third-party candidates were not listed in the AJC survey, but that tracks with national polls that show Robert F. Kennedy Jr. polling at around 9%.

In addition, 49% of respondents said Biden would be better at handling U.S.-Israel relations, to 25% for Trump. And 55% said Biden would be better at combating antisemitism versus 20% who preferred Trump on that issue. Respondents approved of the job Biden is doing 56%-40%, a sharp contrast to national polls showing him with an approval rating in the 30s. And respondents were split on how Biden is handling the Israel-Hamas war, with 48% approving and 43% disapproving. **HW**



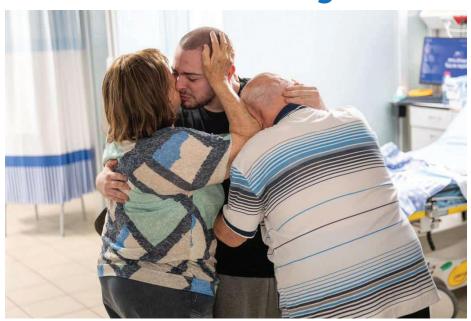








Rescued Israeli Hostages were in a 'State of Severe Malnutrition'



Rescued hostage Almog Meir Jan is reunited with his family at Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan, June 8, 2024. Credit: GPO

(JNS) – The four hostages rescued last Saturday after eight months in Gaza captivity are in a "state of severe malnutrition," according to a doctor who treated them upon their return to Israel.

"They have been physically and mentally abused for a long time. They are all in a state of severe malnutrition, although it does not appear that way to them," Dr. Itay Pessach, director of the Edmond and Lily Safra Children's Hospital at Sheba Medical Center in Ramat Gan, told Channel 12 last Monday.

During "Operation Arnon," Israeli forces rescued the four hostages from two separate locations in Nuseirat Camp in the central Gaza Strip – Noa Argamani, 26, from one apartment, and Almog Meir Jan, 21; Andrey Kozlov, 27; and Shlomi Ziv, 40, from another.

All four were all abducted by Hamas terrorists from the Supernova music festival near Kibbutz Re'im during the Oct.

7 massacre.

They were being held in apartments in a densely populated residential area of Gaza; Pessach explained that the medical condition of others, who were held in Hamas's vast subterranean tunnel network, was much worse upon their liberation.

"I think there is a significant difference, but one cannot compare the suffering of one person to another. They all suffered from all types of abuse – physical abuse and mental abuse and for a long time," the doctor explained.

Some 250 people were kidnapped to Gaza during the Oct. 7 onslaught, with 116 remaining there, with at least 40 considered no longer alive by Israeli authorities. Two mentally ill Israelis crossed into Gaza on their own years ago, and are also being held by the terrorists, as are the bodies of two IDF soldiers killed in the 2014 Gaza war ("Operation Protective Edge), yielding a total

of 120 Israelis held in the Strip.

One hundred thirty-four hostages have been returned to Israel.

Pessach said that from the first wave of released captives in November, Israeli medical teams have adhered to a protocol they developed along with the Health Ministry, including investigating the nutritional and physical condition of the returnees, with lab tests, imaging tests and tests for the function of the heart and other organs. They also check for various injuries.

Furthermore, the returnees undergo a psychological and psychiatric evaluation and receive a psychological escort. A psychosocial team greets them first thing upon their arrival, he said.

Almog Meir Jan returned to the news that his father, Yossi, had died hours before his rescue after 246 days of captivity. His mother, Orit, who had a birthday [last] Sunday, said that "it is very, very difficult the way it happened, and it saddens me that he cannot say goodbye to his father. Today we are going to bury him, and we will give him the last honor he deserves."

Channel 12 last Sunday night aired details about the experience of the captives from family members who were with them at Sheba Medical Center from their arrival last Saturday.

According to the families, Meir Jan, Ziv and Kozlov formed a strong bond being held together for so many months in the same apartment.

"During the entire period of captivity, I was together with Andrey and Shlomi in the same room," Meir Jan said, as told by his relatives to the Israeli news outlet. "Sometimes the terrorists abused us, but we remained strong and supported each other very much. We are very united."

Meir Jan also said that sometimes the

three cooked for themselves and even managed to exercise.

Meir Jan was also somewhat informed about events in Israel during his captivity.

"We saw the rally in 'Hostage Square' [in Tel Aviv] the day before Holocaust Remembrance Day, and there I saw my picture hanging. The terrorists informed us about the events, we knew about the demonstrations and rallies and also about the controversy surrounding the conscription law. In captivity I kept a diary, a kind of tablet. A year in which I counted the days, that's how I knew that mom was celebrating her birthday today."

Meir Jan discussed the harrowing moments of the dramatic rescue, saying that the night before he got a haircut and shaved.

"When the IDF forces came to rescue us, both we and the terrorists were sleeping. We heard the forces and didn't believe it at first. During the rescue they kept shooting at us from all directions, and when we got out, we got stuck with the vehicle twice and it was very stressful."

Ch. Insp. Arnon Zamora, a member of the Israel Border Police's "Yamam" National Counter-Terrorism Unit, was mortally wounded during the mission.

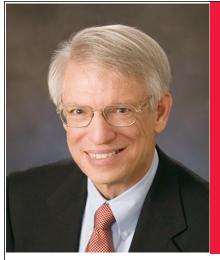
Argamani was reunited with her father, Yaakov, and later with her terminally ill mother, Liora.

"Unfortunately, her mother is in very poor condition," Yaakov told Ynet. "She barely looked at Noa. They met after eight months, but it was very difficult."

He said he believed that his wife understood. "There was a kind of response. Liora understood but simply couldn't express her emotions or say what she had longed to tell Noa when she finally met her." HW

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New SAVE Repayment Plan Offers Key Benefits

Provided by Mike Stein, Managing Director - Investments Wells Fargo Advisors

Questions for Mike? You can reach him at 901.761.8151 Michael.Stein@WellsFargoAdvisors.com fa.wellsfargoadvisors.com/michael-stein

In July 2023, the Department of Education launched a new income-driven repayment (IDR) plan for federal student loans called the Saving on a Valuable Education (SAVE) Plan. The SAVE Plan is the most generous IDR plan to date, and like all IDR plans, it calculates a borrower's monthly payment amount based on income and family size.

The SAVE Plan replaces the existing Revised Pay As You Earn (RE-PAYE) Plan, and all borrowers who are currently enrolled in REPAYE will be automatically transferred to SAVE. **How SAVE helps borrowers**

The SAVE Plan has many benefits, including lower monthly payments, a full interest subsidy for the entire time a borrower is enrolled in the plan, and shortened repayment terms compared to previous IDR plans. SAVE is being implemented in phases, with some benefits taking effect in 2023 and others that are scheduled to take effect in July 2024.

Key benefits that took effect in 2023:

- The amount of income protected from loan payments increased from 150% to 225% of the federal poverty level. Borrowers whose incomes are at or below the 225% threshold will have a \$0 monthly payment (this equates to about \$32,800 a year for a single borrower or \$67,500 for a family of four).
- Unpaid interest will not accrue, so loan balances won't grow as long as borrowers make their monthly payments as calculated under SAVE (even when a borrower's monthly payment is set to \$0).

Key benefits scheduled to take effect in July 2024:

• For undergraduate loans, monthly payments will be capped at 5% of discretionary income (compared to 10% under REPAYE), and graduate loans will be capped at 10% of discretionary income. Borrowers who have both

undergraduate and graduate loans will pay a weighted average each month of between 5% and 10% of their income based on the original principal balances of their loans.

• For borrowers with original principal balances of \$12,000 or less, all remaining loan balances will be forgiven after 10 years of payments. For original loan balances over \$12,000, the maximum repayment period will increase by one year for every additional \$1,000 borrowed. For example, a \$13,000 loan will be forgiven after 11 years of payments, a \$14,000 loan will be forgiven after 12 years of payments, and so on. The maximum repayment period under SAVE will be 20 years if all loans in repayment are undergraduate loans and 25 years if any loans in repayment are graduate loans. (The same maximum terms of 20 and 25 years applied under REPAYE.)

To learn more and to enroll in the SAVE Plan, borrowers can visit studentaid.gov/idr.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, 2023

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'BBC' Asks Why Israel Didn't Warn Gazans Before Rescue Operation

(JNS) – BBC news anchor Helena Humphrey came in for ridicule after asking former IDF International Spokesman Lt. Col. (res.) Jonathan Conricus last Sunday whether Israel should have warned Gaza's civilians before launching last Saturday's rescue operation.

Referring to the high Arab casualty count reported by Hamas sources, Humphrey asked, "Would there have been a warning to those civilians for them to get out on time?"

Conricus, now a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD), a Washington-based think tank, politely stated the obvious, "We cannot anticipate Israel to be warning ahead of a raid to extract or to save hostages because then what the terrorists would do is to kill the hostages and that would defeat the purpose."

Asked what he was thinking when the BBC interviewer posed the question, Conricus told JNS, "I wondered whether she was reading off a teleprompter or actually thought of the question herself.

"But," he added, "in the upside down universe of activist journalism, this question makes total sense."

Humphrey's question became the butt of jokes on social media.

"Everyone knows that proper hostage rescue etiquette dictates that you must first inform the terrorists holding the hostages of the exact time you plan to rescue the hostages," tweeted one person in reply.

"Lol stop. They asked that??" tweeted another.

"Did you answer AFTER you stopped laughing?" tweeted a third.

"The Jewish Press" headlined its story on the exchange, "Showing Incredible Self Restraint, Israeli Guest Does Not Call BBC's Helena Humphrey a Moron."

However, Conricus attempted to convey a serious point during the interview regarding the complicity of Gazan civilians in Hamas's crimes.

"The whole civilian issue here needs to be analyzed impartially and understood," he said. "According to the reports I have gotten and also even statements by a Hamas spokesperson, the Israeli hostages were held and jailed by Palestinian civilians in a Palestinian civilian area."

He said the cooperation of the surrounding Palestinian civilian population begs investigation:

"Who were the people who jailed these Israeli civilians for eight months? Why did they do it? What was the role of the surrounding community and the hundreds, if not thousands, of Palestinians who for sure were aware of the fact that the Israeli hostages were being held in their midst? And why were they complicit with Hamas?"

Humphrey pushed back on Conricus, saying, "We don't know that they were necessarily complicit with Hamas, all of the casualties that were incurred."

Two hundred Gazans were killed in the attack, Hamas claims.

Conricus said that "there was a significant firefight" between the IDF and Hamas terrorists during the operation.

"According to testimonies of Israeli soldiers, there were RPG rockets, heavy machine gun fire, and grenades being thrown. And I think we cannot rule out that at least some of the alleged Palestinian casualties were the result of a reckless Palestinian fire," he said.

"They may have been the result of Israeli fire, we don't know. But the bottom line ... again, just like we saw in Rafah about three months ago, Israeli civilians were held hostage by Palestinian civilians."

The operation saw the release of four hostages: Noa Argamani, Almog Meir Jan, Andrey Kozlov and Shlomi Ziv. All were abducted from the Supernova music festival on Oct. 7. They were held hostage for nearly eight months.

Asked by Humphrey whether the raid risked ceasefire talks, Conricus rejected a ceasefire as "an aim to aspire to." Rather, Israel should aspire to "victory.

"Victory in order to defend Israeli civilians back home. Victory in order to get the hostages back. And the ceasefire, in my humble opinion, is defeat for Israel and a victory for Hamas," he said.

Meanwhile, "Ynet" reported that Lama Tatour, an Arab Israeli actress who hosted "Perspective," a cultural program in Arabic on Israel's Keshet network, was fired after posting a picture of Argamani along with some callous comments.

"This is how a hostage looks after 9 months of captivity? Her eyebrows look better than mine! Her skin! The hair! The nails! For this innocent children and women had to be killed," Tatour posted on Instagram.

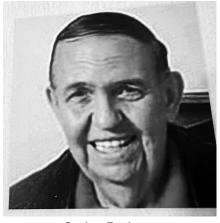
The show's producer, Khaled Natour, told her, "You can't write something like that, it's a happy day for the State of Israel."

She replied that "Jews said similar things." Natour immediately suspended her.

Shortly thereafter, Keshet fired Tatour, "Ynet" reported.

"We strongly condemn the statements made by actress Lama Tatour today on social media," the channel stated. **HW**

OBITUARIES



Carlos Espinosa

The life of Carlos Espinosa was a life of service. Originally a Christian Brother, his order was devoted to the teaching of others. Teaching was a lifelong mission. Carlos was born February 5, 1938, in Cuba.

Carlos escaped from Cuba and Fidel Castro. He was educated at Notre Dame and served in Memphis as a high school teacher at Trezvant and White Station High Schools. Carlos met Lillian at Notre Dame. She had survived Hitler by hiding in the woods in Belgium. Carlos converted to Judaism and they remained married until Lillian died. They cele-

brated Jewish holidays in the years that they were married. After, holidays were celebrated with friends.

Carlos became a close friend to Bill and Shirley Kinkaid. When Bill became terminally ill, Carlos helped Shirley through those difficult years. After Bill died, Carlos and Shirley remained close. Carlos helped Shirley become fluent in Spanish.

There were trips to countries where Shirley could use her Spanish. Carlos and Shirley would continue celebrating holidays with friends.

When Carlos began losing his ability to walk, Shirley cared for him. She sacrificed much in order to give Carlos what he needed as his health and level of function deteriorated.

Carlos spent his final days in the Memphis Jewish Home with the care from Hope Hospice.

In a world in which we hear so much about evil, we spend a few moments to remember Carlos who was all good.

Carlos died on May 24. Graveside services were conducted by Rabbi Ross Levy of Temple Israel where Carlos had been a member for many years, sang in the choir and was a volunteer for G-d's Unfinished Business. **HW**

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Reflections of OT Practice in a War Zone

Dr. Orli Weisser-Pike, OTD, OTR/L, CLVT, SCLV, FAOTA

My identity as a Jew was never important to me, although my ties to Israel were deep. My parents were born in Israel, before its Independence. In their early twenties they moved to South Africa, where I was born, but returned to Israel after two decades. Thus, I lived in Israel from the ages of 12 to 22 and served two years in the Israeli Defence Force (IDF). In the spring of 2023, at age 56, I went to Israel for what I thought would be the last time, to visit my parents' graves and to say goodbye to my relatives and friends. In my mind I had no reason to return.

I woke up on October 7, 2023, to the unbearable news of the massacre by Hamas terrorists of hundreds of Israelis. Everyone I knew in Israel was personally affected by the events. I was desperate to help, but I didn't know how. For the first time in my professional life as an occupational therapist (OT), my Jewish identity took on special importance. I joined a Facebook group for Jewish occupational and physical therapists created in the aftermath of the events of October 7. Someone posted about an opportunity to volunteer as an OT at a rehabilitation hospital in southern Israel. I didn't hesitate for a second.

The application process was bureaucratic, but with a little persistence and patience my temporary permit to practice OT in Israel was granted. I deliberately elected to volunteer for two weeks to coincide with the eight-day festival of Passover, knowing that staffing is typically more challenging during holidays. I had all the necessary skills: I was fluent in written and spoken Hebrew; I could get around the country independently; and I had relevant work experience. The arrangement was that I would get to Israel on my own dime, but the facility would provide me with lodging, food, and internal travel arrangements from the airport and back. For me, I viewed the travel expense as a fair cost for continuing education. I got a lot more than I paid for.

The rehabilitation hospital was constructed on the grounds of Adi Negev Nahlat Eran, an inclusive community designed and built to facilitate accessibility, healing, and growth for people of all ages needing various levels of assistance. Aside from the rehabilitation hospital and staff housing, the village also has group homes for adults needing assistance, a horse stable with therapeutic riding, a zoo, vegetable garden, and a hydrotherapy pool. The facility offers on-site special education for children, life skills programs for adults, and a wide range of therapies including respiratory therapy, hydrotherapy, music therapy, art therapy, communication therapy, and physical and occupational therapies. There were other facilities and programs as well, which I didn't get to explore. Adi Negev is also just 12 miles from Gaza. I expected I would be treating soldiers and those wounded in the war. I could hear the sounds of bomb explosions and jet fighters. Some young women I met one evening who were doing two years of national service in lieu of joining the IDF, told me that they could easily identify who was bombing whom. They told me that if rockets were being fired from Gaza, they would get notifications on their phones. I forgot to download that App, but I made sure I knew how to get to the safe room if needed.

The orientation was easy, and I quickly fell into the groove. My day started at 8:30 and ended around 3:45 in the afternoon. I ended up working only six out of 10 weekdays because of the religious

holidays. I saw seven patients a day for 45 minutes each. Documentation was easy, and I was forewarned not to write a "megillah" (long story). I was also mindful not to ask patients about their experiences in the war. I didn't want to retraumatize anyone or come across as being there for "terrorism tourism." Being in a profession dedicated to improving the lives of others, I forgot to think of my fellow OTs as having experienced their own personal traumas.

One of the OTs, Almog, gave me a lift into the nearby city of Be'er Sheva. On the way there, she told me that her real home was in one of the communities within the "envelope" -- the bucolic agricultural villages and towns surrounding the Israeli border with Gaza, which had been burned and decimated. She and her partner were relocated to an apartment in Be'er Sheva, a safer distance from the war zone. On Friday, October 6, Almog's partner – a vet – was asked to treat some animals at a zoo in central Israel, so they stayed near Tel-Aviv on that fateful weekend. Their home was destroyed.

The occupational disruption of the war meant that Almog could work only once a week from 10 a.m. on Wednesdays. Other days she had to tend to the reconstruction of her home, go for counseling, and try to rebuild her life. She and her partner were considering emigrating for a while to another country, but she wasn't sure where she could work with her Israeli undergraduate OT degree.

The OTs dressed casually, sometimes even wearing slide-on shoes. Once at work they donned a white coat with the facility logo. I made a mental note of the way in which one of the lead OTs was dressed. Whenever I saw her, she wore jeans and T-shirts with slogans demanding safe return of the hostages. I later learned that together with her husband, small children, and dogs, she spent over 17 hours in their safe room while terrorists screamed, shouted, and shot at them from the other side of the door. She and her husband made the unimaginable decision to annihilate themselves should the terrorists breach the safe room. They would rather murder their pets and children and take their own lives than get kidnapped to Gaza.

Miriam was a 70-something Moroccan Israeli recovering from Guillain Barre syndrome. I'd never experienced the Moroccan festival of Mimouna at the end of Passover, which she celebrated the previous evening at the hospital. She told me her son was known as the "King of Mimouna" and had organized the celebration in countries he visited across the globe. This year, though, he was too sad to participate. His best friend and her four children were beheaded by the terrorists on October 7.

My room was in an apartment shared with JoAnn, a German Christian volunteer who worked in the kindergarten. She was 19 years old and had already been at Adi Negev for the past three months, with one more to go. JoAnn later disclosed that her great-grandparents were Nazis. Together with her parents, she participates in the March of Life, an organization devoted to remembrance, reconciliation, and combating antisemitism by taking a stand for friendship with Israel.

During the holiday and weekend breaks, I spent time with my relatives. I also made time to visit the plaza in front of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, which has become the headquarters of the families of those kidnapped and missing since October 7. On Passover, Jews around the world partake in the Seder, a ritual meal characterized by retelling the biblical story of the liberation of the Jews from enslavement in Egypt. At the

plaza, a long table was set for the hostages still missing since October 7. The empty seats were a chilling reminder of the brutality of the war. As of this writing, 128 people are still kidnapped, their whereabouts unknown. I visited the plaza twice. The first time, I experienced a virtual-reality presentation based on real footage from the Supernova Rave, where hundreds were slaughtered, and dozens were kidnapped to Gaza. The following time, I entered a tent devoted to those missing and killed at the music festival. An elderly man was sitting in the corner and welcomed me into the tent. He told me that his son, 34-yearold Elkana Bohbot, was the DJ for the music festival. He too was kidnapped on October 7. I had no words for his father, yet he thanked me for coming to the tent and allowed me to take his photo.

Before Tel-Aviv, I had spent the Passover Seder with relatives in Haifa. In the morning my cousin, an avid surfer, took me to the beach and set me up on a paddle board. While we were out at sea, my cousin asked if I could hear the noise of the engine of the drone flying overhead. I couldn't see the drone; in my mind's eye I pictured a quad-propellor book-sized gadget like the toy I once bought for my sons. I heard it but couldn't see it. Yoav, my cousin, told me it was about the size of a small aircraft and that it had been circling over Haifa since the start of the war. Apparently, it was scrambling the global positioning system (GPS). Yoav told me that people complained they couldn't order food deliveries or taxi services or find their way on a map. Once back on land, I found my phone to see what he meant. I opened up Google maps to pinpoint my location in Haifa. The map located me in Beirut, the capital city of Lebanon. When I zoomed in, the pin located me in the Beirut airport. I took a screenshot to remember.

Israel is a small country with excellent public transportation systems. I traveled mostly by train and bus. Everywhere I looked I saw flags of Israel, large bill-boards proclaiming, "Together we will win", huge posters demanding the safe return of the hostages, flyers advertising the names of those missing, and graffiti artworks honoring the Supernova music festival, the hostages, and other events related to the war. One graffiti artist drew a portrait of Rachel, an elderly lady who was held hostage in her home in Ofakim. She became famous for

stalling five Hamas terrorists while waiting for Israeli forces to rescue her and her husband, by offering to bake the terrorists chocolate chip cookies, telling them jokes, and asking them to teach her to speak Arabic.

Ofakim is a small town about one mile east of Adi Negev, where I volunteered. At the end of my last workday, I went to thank and say goodbye to the director of rehabilitation, Dr. Shilo Kramer, for approving my deployment and helping me get my permit. He asked if I had already been to Ofakim and seen the sights. I had indeed been to Ofakim – I ran there and back one morning for exercise – but I didn't know what he meant by "the sights."

"You're coming with me, now", he ordered. "I will show you where the terrorists were, and then we'll have a shawarma."

It was late in the afternoon. Within minutes we were whizzing down the road entering Ofakim.

"This is where the terrorists came in with their machine guns and rockets on Saturday morning." Dr. Kramer methodically stopped his vehicle at each location where an Israeli was murdered.

I noticed there were posters and impromptu memorials commemorating the lives of the dead. The terrorists intentionally targeted a poor neighborhood with old homes that didn't have safe rooms. To keep its citizens safe, the municipality built communal safe rooms on each street in the neighborhood. Many lives were lost in Ofakim. But many also survived, including Rachel, who baked the cookies. She was from this neighborhood. Her home was badly damaged. We went past it and saw the progress on its reconstruction. The death notice for her husband was still on the gate. He died a few months after the attacks. Dr. Kramer seemed to know everyone in the neighborhood including the personal stories of all who were killed in the war. He also knew the stories of those who survived - many were treated as patients at Adi Negev. A young man, probably in his late 20s, stopped us to ask for money. He looked like a vagrant. He told us his story. On Saturday morning, October 7, he got up early to walk to synagogue. On the way he encountered the terrorists who by now were shooting up the neighborhood. He was captured at gunpoint, forced to his knees, and was beaten with the terrorist's Kalashnikov rifle. I couldn't understand everything he said since his speech was pressured and he kept switching between Hebrew and fragmented English. The story was broken, much like his spirit. He was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Dr. Kramer questioned whether he was getting treatment. He said he went to counseling, but each time he came back to his home in the neighborhood he relived the horrors of the day. Dr. Kramer encouraged him to return to work rather than become a beggar.

Sadness was the overall mood of the country. It is customary to wish each other a Happy Passover, but people debated the appropriateness of the greeting. "Let's just have a Passover," was mostly what I heard. People felt awkward about celebrations, and many festivities were canceled or muted. One friend, a paramedic in his 60s, couldn't talk about his experiences in the aftermath of October 7. He silently drove me on what was now known as the "bloody path" - an access road along the envelope communities. This is where the terrorists drove once they breached the border fence; they slaughtered people and burned everything in their wake. We paused where the asphalt had melted, alongside the field where the music festival was held. I got out of the car to acknowledge the dead and missing.

When I arrived at Adi Negev, I was proud to tell everyone I worked at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC). I had brought a bunch of socks with the university logo, to give to my future colleagues at the end of my deployment. Within days of my arrival, antisemitic protests broke out at university campuses across the United States. I shrunk on the inside, fearing the protests would ignite at UTHSC. Just before I left Adi Negev, I gave my OT colleagues each a pair of socks and apologetically explained that to my knowledge there were no protests at my campus. Most of my work colleagues found the Hamas attacks on Israel abhorrent.

On my last day, the Israeli OTs gathered together to say goodbye and thank me for coming. They were so appreciative of the help. It was difficult for them to balance work with home life. Since the war, most educational institutions in

Israel is the only place where Jews

have a safe home. No matter what percentage of Jewishness I claim or deny,

I will always be welcomed in Israel.

Like any country, Israel's government is made up of its citizens. No doubt Israel

has made mistakes, as have all countries. Yet it strives towards tolerance,

democracy, and civil liberties for its cit-

izens while demanding accountability towards its safety. Each Israeli citizen is

expected to serve the country by enlisting in the IDF or providing community

service. Israeli teens and young adults, younger than the students I teach in a

master's degree program, perform im-

portant duties safeguarding the country

Personally, between the ages of 18 to

20, I served in military intelligence and

gathered information in real time about

the military activities of a neighboring

country, which at the time was consid-

ered a hostile enemy. My relatives' chil-

dren and their friends are foot soldiers,

pilots, tank drivers, lawyers, and opera-

tors of drones and defense systems. One

of them, age 23, was recently called up

to reserve duty. Like me, she served in

military intelligence. Her role was to

gather information about a single hos-

tage still in Gaza. Each hostage has been

assigned a team of IDF soldiers who are

desperately looking for them. Not all

hostages are Jewish or Israeli. Many

are foreign workers who were seeking a

I am glad I went. I learned more from

being with Israelis than I could from a

newspaper, television, or social media.

I had to be there. I felt safe. I felt wel-

comed, and that I belonged. My Jewish

identity has become important in a way

I didn't expect. I know that Israel will

suffer for decades from PTSD and other

impacts of the war. My role as an oc-

cupational therapist is to help people,

groups, and populations heal. I hope to

perform this role again in the near fu-

spect people's privacy and anonymity.

Most names have been changed to re-

Adi Negev Nahlat Eran. https://adi-il.

March of Life. https://marchoflife.org/

https://nypost.com/2023/12/25/

news/israeli-mom-who-stalled-hamas-

Cookie recipe by Rachel Edri,

captors-with-cookies-shares-recipe/

better life in Israel.

ture, in Israel.

org/about-us/

Additional reading:

and its people.

Reflections...

(Continued From Page 10)

the area had closed down due to lack of security against rocket attacks, so children were home.

Adults were ordered to return to reserve duty in the IDF, so families were fractured. Many of the OTs had personal trauma from the war, relatives and friends who were murdered, killed in the line of duty, or captured to Gaza.

One of the workers at Adi Negev is Kfir and Ariel Bibas' aunt. Kfir and Ariel were captured, along with their mother, Shira, and father Yarden, to Gaza. A few months later, Hamas released a video of Yarden in captivity after being informed by his captors that his wife and children were murdered by Israeli bombs. Israel has denied this, stating that Hamas' claim is an example of the psychological warfare being used to manipulate the Israeli government.

On my last day at work the OTs surprised me with an autographed white coat – the same kind they wore at work. It was covered in colorful messages expressing their thanks. Most of the messages were anonymous. I was barely there, yet they showered me with gratitude. I was humbled at the gesture of kindness. I went because I felt I had to do something.

The biblical tale of Passover is thousands of years old. It's the story of the Jewish people's return from exile in Egypt to their promised homeland in Israel. Jews have lived and been exiled from Israel for centuries. Various empires conquered the area, forced Jews to convert to their beliefs and cultures, and destroyed their temples in Jerusalem. Archeological sites all over the country prove that Jews existed in Israel for eons. Israel gained official statehood on May 14, 1948, following the Holocaust. Today, many Israeli Jews view the events of October 7, 2023, as their second Holocaust.

Twenty-six years ago, when I announced my engagement to a Catholic American, my father warned me: no matter where you are in the world, antisemitism will always rear its head. It took me years to understand what he meant. Regardless of whether or not I claim my Jewishness, I will always be considered a Jew and hence a target for hate. I reclaimed my Jewish identity after seeing a social media posting by an Israeli citizen living in Canada who denounced her Israeli citizenship following the Hamas attacks. I was so shaken by her actions.

Gazans Celebrate: 'Gantz Retreated, So, Too, Will Netanyahu'



National Unity Party leader Benny Gantz holds a press conference in Ramat Gan, May 18, 2024. Credit: Miriam Alster/Flash90.

(JNS) – Video footage emerged last Sunday night of Palestinians in northern Gaza celebrating after War Cabinet minister Benny Gantz announced he would withdraw his party from Israel's unity government.

The video clip, first posted to X on the account of a pro-Hamas journalist named Hossam Shabat, was captioned in Arabic: "The joy of citizens in northern Gaza after Gantz announced his resignation."

One man can be heard saying in the video: "Just as he [Gantz] retreated, so too will [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu."

A senior Hamas official, Sami Abu Zuhri, told Iran's Press TV last Monday that Gantz's decision to leave the government "points to the downfall of the regime's [Israel's] political system.

"There is no end in sight to the resignation of the Zionist regime's political and military figures," claimed Abu

Meanwhile, Qatar's "Al Jazeera" cited a spokesperson for Iran's foreign ministry as saying last Monday that "the repeated resignations in the government of the Zionist entity indicate its collapse from within."

Speaking at a press conference in Ramat Gan last Sunday, Gantz announced his National Unity Party eight lawmakers' departure from the government formed in the days after Hamas's Oct. 7 massages

"Unfortunately, Netanyahu is stop-

ping us from reaching true victory," said the former Israel Defense Forces chief. "Therefore, we are leaving the unity government today. With a heavy heart, but wholeheartedly."

Gantz called on the remaining 64 members of Netanyahu's coalition to "listen to their conscience," singling out Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, who has frequently clashed with the premier.

Netanyahu issued a statement on X urging Gantz to reconsider his decision, saying "this is not the time to abandon the campaign [against Hamas] – this is the time to join forces."

Last Monday morning, youth activists of Israel's Religious Zionism Party left a flower bouquet at the door of Gantz's office at the Knesset.

"Benny Gantz, thank you! With love and appreciation, Yahya Sinwar," a note placed with the flowers read, a reference to the terrorist leader in Gaza.

The activists said, "We all saw the thousands of Gazans who celebrated after [Gantz's] address. During wartime, we need to be united against the enemy and not be divided by cheap political considerations. We call on all of Israel: Now is the time for unity. Only united will we win.

"Gantz's address was a gift to Sinwar and the Hamas terrorist group. As they aim to divide the citizens of Israel to hurt them, Gantz gave them exactly what they want with his move," they added. **HW**

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Record Crowd of 50,000 Turns Out for Pro-Israel Toronto Event

By Dave Gordon

(JNS) – More than 50,000 pro-Israel people turned out for the UJA Walk with Israel in Toronto last Sunday, a record turnout for the event, which is in its 55th year.

Adam Hummel, a lawyer in Toronto, told JNS that it was "remarkable and uplifting to see so many Jews come together" this year for the 5K walk (about 3 miles.)

"I was dumbstruck how many people were gathered and feeling the energy and community, especially when we have been struck by so much sorrow," Hummel said.

Although it seemed in prior years that people attended out of inertia, this year was different, according to Hummel.

"It felt like people needed to be there," he said. "Because of everything we have gone through as a community, and what Israelis went through, people needed to show up to stand with Israel."

The event, a project of the UJA Federation of Toronto, moved from the heavily Jewish neighborhood at the Bathurst Street corridor at Lawrence Avenue to the Federation's Sherman Campus, which was rebuilt several years ago.

Guidy Mamann also told JNS that this year's event felt different.

"I've been to many, many walks for Israel since I was a kid," the Toronto lawyer said. "Normally, people go because they want to have fun and see old faces, but I think this year it was driven by a need to go."

"There was a sense of needing to go to this walk-a-thon because of the trauma we've been through together," he said. "We needed to feel each other and see each other in large numbers. I think the community really needed that."

Brendan Shanahan, president of the

Maple Leafs, the Toronto hockey team, and the singer Montana Tucker, who sang the Israeli national anthem, were among the celebrities present.

"We are thrilled by the overwhelming support for the walk this year from our community and our friends and neighbors across Greater Toronto," stated Jeff Rosenthal, chair of the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto. "To see a record-breaking turnout this year speaks volumes about our community's pride, resilience and determination to show our city who we are and what we stand for."

Exceptions for Jews

Michael Kerzner, the solicitor general of Ontario, and Melissa Lantsman, deputy leader of the Conservative Party, attended the event. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Olivia Chow, Toronto's first Chinese-Canadian mayor, reportedly were not present.

Chow, who had skipped what she called a "divisive" annual Israeli flag raising at City Hall the prior month, said in an interview with a popular Toronto radio station last Monday morning that she had a prior commitment and couldn't attend Sunday's event.

"She wasn't missed," said David Burstein, a Toronto dentist.

"It was one of the most outstanding communal Jewish experiences of my life, and I've lived in Toronto my entire life. The energy was fantastic," Burstein told JNS. "The fact that they got the four hostages out the day before, really helped morale and added to the joy of the day."

Kevin Vuong, a federal politician of Chinese descent, told JNS that he was disappointed that Chow skipped the pro-Israel event, which she attended previously as a federal politician.

Vuong noted that Chow told the Jew-

ish community that "you're never alone" after a shooting at the Jewish girls' elementary school Bais Chaya Mushka in Toronto in late May.

Chow's statement implied that "she stood with Toronto's Jewish community," Vuong said. "She lied."

"It's clear that if it was any other community, she'd have been there. No mayor, nor prime minister for that matter, would skip an event attended by 50,000 Canadians," Vuong added. "Unfortunately, as we've seen in the aftermath of Oct. 7, these so-called leaders make exceptions when it comes to Jews."

Vuong and his wife attended the event "to show our support for Jews both here at home in Canada and abroad, and that meant walking the talk and walking the walk."

'I was shocked at the depravity'

The politician had harsh words for the hundreds of pro-Hamas demonstrators, who used bullhorns and loudspeakers to broadcast anti-Israel chants and Islamic prayers and who reportedly sought to enter a place where the event was taking place and had to be barred by law enforcement.

"One thing I couldn't believe was that pro-Hamas supporters brought in speakers and blared the rocket sirens that go off when Israel is under attack," Vuong told JNS. "I was shocked at the depravity that someone would think to do that in the hopes of triggering participants."

"Sadly, I was not surprised when other counter-protesters gave up all pretenses and started cheering outright for Hamas," he added.

Hummel, the Toronto lawyer, called the protesters "pathetic, paltry and sinister."

"We celebrate life and they clearly do not. We were there in blue and white with our children, singing songs about life. There was a world of difference," he told JNS. "They were wearing black and had their faces covered."

"They stood with swastika signs. Repulsive and pathetic," he added. "The visuals could not have been starker of what we're fighting for, and what we are fighting against."

Mamann, the other Toronto lawyer, told JNS that some of the protesters tailed Jewish community members after the event in a harassing way.

"These people come clear across town and out of town to disrupt us. The police were on our side. But at the end of the day, the protection doesn't finish when the walk finishes," he said. "There are thousands of people trying to make it home, and there is still work to do."

Ali Siadatan was among the non-Jewish Canadians of Iranian descent who participated in the event to voice their support for the Jewish state.

"I stand with Israel, because I wish to live in a free world. Israel is at the epicenter of a global ideological war," Siadatan told JNS. "Israel's victory will push back the forces of Islam and Marxism. Israel's defeat would encourage these very forces to explode in the West and in Canada."

"Even the future of Iran very much depends on the victory or defeat of Israel against the regional forces of Islamic militancy," Siadatan added.

At the end of the walk, JNS caught up with the rapper Nissim Black, who performed at the festival, which also had kid-friendly activities and musical performances.

"Incredible energy," Black told JNS. "It was so special seeing all those people together celebrating Eretz Hakodesh," the Holy Land. HW



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