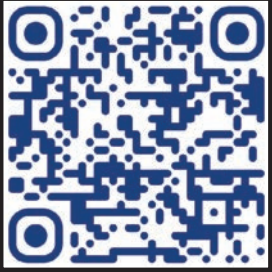


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27 IYAR, 5786

MAY 14, 2026

VOL. 104, NO. 34

MJF Lions of Judah Spring Recognition



Andie Uiberall, Kipnis-Wilson Freidland Award Winner.

Federation Lions of Judah, chaired this year by Margo Fogelman and Debra Saharovich, recently gathered for their Spring Recognition Reception – a joyful afternoon of community, celebration and shared commitment to Jewish philanthropy. The event honored Andie Uiberall with the National Kipnis-Wilson Freidland Award for her dedication to the Memphis Jewish community, welcomed new Lions of Judah Michelle Katz, Bonnie Belz, Amy Israel Pregulman and Judy Wormser, and featured

an inspiring message from Audrey May of the Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service on the many ways our community provides food and nourishment to those in need. Local teens Emma Berger and Dotan Weiss highlighted their experiences of sharing their love of Judaism, its traditions and customs with their non-Jewish peers through Federation’s Student to Student program. It was moving and a powerful reminder of the impact their generosity has on the next generation. **HW**



Memphis Lions of Judah gather for their Spring Recognition Program.



Student to Student Ambassadors Emma Berger and Dotan Weiss, with panel emcee Janis Finan.

MJF Holocaust Essay Contest 1st Place Winner

“What the Cameras Captured: My Great-Grandfather’s Story”

Memphis Jewish Federation proudly announces Hodaya Harary, an 11th grade student at Goldie Margolin School for Girls, as the winner of its 17th Annual Holocaust Essay Contest. Her work was written in response to this year’s theme, *The Power of Memory: Holocaust Stories and the Stories We Carry*, reflecting both the enduring significance of remembrance and the personal responsibility to carry these stories forward.

By Hodaya Harary

“Did you ever watch a candle as it’s starting to go out, when it burns all the way to the end? It flickers, a little more, a little less. That’s how he died – in my arms.”

Of the entire two-hour video of my great-grandfather, Sam Mermelstein, sharing his story with the Shoah Foundation, those lines hit me hardest: Sam describing the death of his friend, Blau, in Bergen-Belsen.

These weren’t rehearsed, robotic lines; they’re raw, reactive, and oddly poetic. They gave me more insight into who Sam was than any story I’d ever heard, any picture I’d ever seen of him.

Through his video, I meet the real Sam from Olenovo, a small Czech village where he met my great-grandmother, Suri. Childhood sweethearts, Suri used to tease him: “If only you were taller, I’d marry you.” Sam, laughing, would stand on a boulder to accentuate his height. After the war, height didn’t matter as much.

That Sam had aspirations, talents. He attended agricultural school, where he learned about potato quality: the more

starch, the better. With his knack for numbers, he began studying business at “commercial school.”

I imagine what came next as a Jenga tower; you’re building and building and suddenly, your creation topples. First, the Czech army. Then a forced labor camp. Then, in 1944, the train to Bergen-Belsen.

The Holocaust robbed Sam of his youth, his passion. To descendants like me, who had never met him, that became his identity. Before the video, I only understood my great-grandfather in relation to the Holocaust. In its attempt to destroy Sam, it became the crux of how I knew him.

Storytelling preserves not just what happened, but the person it happened to. Seeing Sam on my screen, the anecdotes paint a picture of who he was. Sam’s grandmother endearingly called him, “Malach hamaves” (Angel of Death), thanks to his roughhousing with cousins. Sam’s first thought on seeing Suri after liberation: “I couldn’t connect the dots that I’d ever had a girlfriend.” His smile when he remem-



Hodaya Harary 1st place essay winner.

bers Suri retrieving some pots from the camp, jokingly calling them “her dowry.” And the devastation in his voice as he retells watching Blau’s life slowly ebb away.

On screen, I recognize Sam’s humanity in his moral struggles, his guilt over his last army furlough: he chose to visit Suri over his parents – it would’ve been the last time he saw them. Without the video, Sam would be a name, a dot in my history. But, hearing his story in his

own words – in his own voice – he’s real, and I get to connect to him. I get to reclaim what the Holocaust stole.

In recording Sam’s story, the Shoah Foundation preserved a survivor’s testimony, ensuring there’s no chance of denial. The interviewer asks for exact spelling of towns and names, prompts Sam for the year and month. That’s important. But in the process of getting those details down, they’ve captured my family’s story: the person who survived. For that I’m forever grateful – and forever responsible, to ensure his story is never denied and his person is never forgotten.

My mom has a bracelet from Sam: three strands of pearls, separated by rows of tiny diamonds. She tells me how Sam had it specially commissioned on the 40th anniversary of his liberation – his deliberate gift to the future generations he survived for. One day it will be mine. My responsibility is to pass forward not just the bracelet but the person – his humor, his guilt, his love. That’s how we become more than history. That’s how the flame stays lit. **HW**

Jewish Leaders Lament ‘Woefully Inadequate’ Sentence After California Man Pleads Guilty in Death of Pro-Israel Protester



Elena Colomba draws a Star of David at a Thousand Oaks, California, street corner where a Jewish pro-Israel protester, Paul Kessler, was killed during an altercation, Nov. 7, 2023. Credit: Jacob Gurvis

By Grace Gilson

(JTA) – The Anti-Defamation League’s local leader decried a plea deal reached last Tuesday that is expected to spare the man charged with causing the 2023 death of Jewish protester Paul Kessler from being sent to prison. Instead, Loay Abdel Fattah Alnaji would face no more than a year in county jail.

Alnaji, 53, of Moorpark, California, admitted to hitting Kessler, a 69-year-old Jewish pro-Israel activist, in the head with a megaphone during dueling pro-Palestinian and pro-Israel demonstrations in a Los Angeles suburb in November 2023.

Kessler later died of his injuries, and his death became the first tied to demonstrations surrounding the war in Gaza in the United States.

Last Tuesday, Alnaji pleaded guilty to all charges related to Kessler’s death, including felony involuntary manslaughter and felony battery causing serious bodily injury, after initially pleading not guilty.

While the maximum sentence for his charges is four years in state prison, the court indicated that, as a result of the guilty plea, it is likely to place Alnaji on formal probation with no more than 365 days in county jail. A county jail sentence is generally considered less severe than time in state prison and is served locally, often with possibilities for work release, electronic monitoring or early release.

Alnaji’s sentencing hearing is scheduled for June 25, and he remains free on \$50,000 bail, according to the Ventura County District Attorney’s Office.

Both state prosecutors and Jewish advocates denounced the deal, saying the sentence would be too light.

“Alnaji should be sentenced to prison for his violent behavior, and our office strongly objects to any lesser sentence,” Ventura County District Attorney Erik

Nasarenko said in a statement. “While no amount of punishment will ever fully account for the Kessler family loss, a prison commitment underscores the severity of this crime and will deter others from committing similar acts of violence.”

Joshua Burt, the regional director of the Anti-Defamation League of Santa Barbara/Tri-State counties, said the deal would yield a sentence too light to be a deterrent.

“The sentence attached to this plea deal is woefully inadequate and emboldens others to act in anger against the Jewish community,” Burt wrote in a post on Instagram. “Without real, lasting consequences, men with evil intent or anger in their hearts will not be deterred from harming an already vulnerable community, elderly and Jewish alike.”

Citing the recent spate of violent attacks on Jewish communities and individuals, including the deadly shooting of two Israeli Embassy staffers in Washington, D.C., and the fatal firebombing attack on a march in support of the Israeli hostages in Boulder, Colorado, last year, Burt warned that the plea deal will “only serve to further isolate and victimize Jewish communities in the United States and beyond.”

Rabbi Noah Farkas, the president and chief executive of the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles, told JTA in a statement that Kessler’s death carried deep significance because “not only was he the first Jew to die during the Israel-Hamas protest movement after October 7th, but he did so while peacefully supporting his people.”

Farkas said he, too, wished Alnaji would be penalized more harshly, but that he saw a benefit in the case reaching a conclusion.

THE Hebrew Watchman

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Established September, 1925
By Leo I. Goldberger (1902-1989)

MAILING ADDRESS
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PO Box 770846
Memphis, TN 38177-0846

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The Hebrew Watchman is a
Member of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, and Jewish News Service

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
Memphis and Mid-South \$36
Out-of-State \$50
Payable in Advance

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THE HEBREW WATCHMAN
(USPS #807-360) is published
weekly every Thursday
for \$36 per year by
JEWISH LIVING OF THE SOUTH, Inc.
THE HEBREW WATCHMAN
PO Box 770846
Memphis, TN 38177-0846
Periodical postage paid at
Memphis, Tenn.

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to:
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5/14/2026

Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. May 15, 2026 / 28 Iyar, 57867:39 p.m.
Havdalah, Sat. May 16, 2026 / 29 Iyar, 5786 8:40 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Bamidbar

“We mourn his loss and welcome the admission of guilt for this heinous crime,” Farkas said about Kessler. “While we would have liked a harsher sentence that better reflects the pain of [the] Kessler family, we respect the legal process. Our hope is that today’s news helps bring closure to his family and gives our community the ability to demonstrate safely.” **HW**

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The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Happenings

There’s no better place to spend your days than with the MJCC Senior Adult Club –where great food, good friends and unforgettable programs come together! Our regular lunch begins at 11:30 a.m., followed by speakers or entertainment at noon.

Monday, May 18 Speaker

Kick off the week with a truly fascinating program. Our special guest speaker will share stories from 40 years of volunteering at the Memphis Suicide and Crisis Center. From deeply meaningful moments to unexpected flashes of humor, you’ll hear what it’s really like to answer crisis-line calls for decades. A Q&A session will follow. This is one you won’t want to miss.

Wednesday, May 20 BIG MONTHLY LUNCHEON

Get ready for music, movement, and maybe even a little dancing! The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Monthly Luncheon welcomes one of our newest – and most extraordinary – musical acts: Earlice Taylor Charles.

Earlice (Taylor) Charles is a dazzling three-octave lyric soprano and one of America’s “little-known national treasures.” A trailblazing artist whose talent spans blues, jazz, classical, R&B, Broadway, folk and country, she has performed with legends including Coco Taylor, Ethel Waters, Bobbie Short, Kirk Whalum, Carla Thomas and Joyce Cobb. On the Mississippi and Delta Queen steamboats, she became a beloved entertainer of the South.

Come enjoy this Memphis gem as



Earlice Taylor Charles

she brings her powerful voice and joyful energy to the MJCC! At our last big luncheon, people were dancing, singing along and celebrating old and new friends.

Entertainment is provided in partnership with Creative Aging. May’s lunch is sponsored by Always a Helping Hand and is in loving memory of Irvin and Deanna Serenco.

RSVP by 12 p.m., Tuesday, May 19.
Lunch and entertainment are just \$5, and you can reserve a table for groups of six or more. Roundtrip bus transportation is available within the MJCC area. For questions, contact Steve Kaplan.

Monday, May 25 Memorial Day – No Senior Lunch or Program.

Wishing everyone a meaningful and enjoyable holiday.

Wednesday, May 27 Ask the Rabbi

We wrap up the month with an audience favorite – Rabbi Levi Klein of Chabad Lubavitch of Tennessee returns with “Ask the Rabbi!”

Bring your biggest, smallest, funniest or most puzzling questions on holidays, Jewish myths, Kashrut and more. It’s always an entertaining, lively session with surprises and insights for everyone. You’re welcome to attend the program even if you skip lunch – though why would you?

Daily Kosher Lunch Program

Join us Monday through Friday for a freshly prepared kosher lunch from the Memphis Jewish Home kitchens. The cost is just \$2 for seniors.

Reservations are required by 1 p.m. the day before.

To reserve your spot, contact:
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(Available Monday–Thursday, 9:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.)
You may also call the front desk at 901-761-0810. **HW**

Israeli Security Firm on Unicorn Path Less than Two Years After Formation

By JNS Staff

(JNS) – An Israeli defense startup founded in the aftermath of the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks is raising \$200 million at a company valuation of \$1.2 billion, financial outlet Calcalist reported last Tuesday.

A unicorn is a privately owned startup company valued at over \$1 billion that is not listed on a share market.

The firm, Kela Technologies, is developing a platform that integrates civilian technologies to military systems without requiring they undergo major changes.

This allows defense organizations to incorporate new capabilities more quickly and adapt their operations to the evolving battlefield, according to the report.

The company already reached a contract volume worth of \$50 million in 2025, it continued.

Among the leading investors in Kela are Stripe and D1 Capital Partners, as well as Bill Ackman (American hedge fund manager) and Eric Schmidt (former CEO of Google).

Kela was founded less than two years ago by Hamutal Meridor together with Alon Dror, Jason Manne and Omer Bar-Ilan.

Meridor is a graduate of the Israel Defense Forces’ intelligence agency Unit 8200 and ran Palantir Technologies’s operations in Israel in the past. **HW**

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2026 B'nai Tzedek Grant Reception



B'nai Tzedek participants.

On Monday, April 20, members of B'nai Tzedek, Teen Philanthropy Program of the Jewish Foundation of Memphis gathered to celebrate another successful grant cycle. Throughout the school year, participating teens developed the skills of both individual and

communal philanthropy, creating grant applications, conducting interviews, and engaging in a full allocations process to determine funding recipients. Grant Cowens, an eighth grader at Memphis University School, reflected on the experience: "The grant process



Leigh Hendry accepts a grant for Plough Towers.

this year wasn't easy, but it was really rewarding to see organizations with amazing causes like Room in the Inn and coat drives receive funding. We had \$12,000 to give out, but received \$22,000 in requests, so many organizations didn't get everything they asked for. Our group had to make tough choices." Liya Shimony, a junior at Lausanne Collegiate School, shared, "Helping organizations that make our commu-

nity a better, safer, and more inclusive place for everyone was very meaningful. Ending this process by celebrating with the awardees was another powerful reminder of how our hard work directly benefits our community and impacts people's lives." Miriam Kaplowitz, a ninth grader at the Goldie Margolin School for Girls, spoke about her continued involvement in the program: "I have been part of B'nai Tzedek for the past three years, and the award ceremony has always stood out to me. It feels like the culmination of everything we've worked toward. We spend the year thinking about which programs will help the most people and be the most successful, and getting to celebrate those grants shows how much we are truly helping our community." The evening's celebration provided an opportunity for teens to present grants to nine programs across Jewish Memphis, while also showcasing the thoughtful deliberation and dedication required to reach consensus. **HW**

US-Israeli Common Values Illuminate Times Square



Thousands gather in Times Square in Manhattan for a Chabad Teen Network event, Feb. 21, 2026. Credit: Courtesy of CTeen.

By JNS Staff

(JNS) – A billboard campaign highlighting the shared values of Israel and the United States was projected last week in Times Square, Israel's Foreign Ministry said last Wednesday. "From Jerusalem to Times Square – our shared values shine bright," the ministry tweeted, posting a video of the scenery. Two large billboards could be seen lit up, one of which showed Israeli and U.S. flags flutter in front of the Statue of Liberty, and the words "Freedom,"

"Security," "Justice," "Innovation" and "Human rights" flashing on the screen. This latest campaign comes on the backdrop of a similar measure initiated by the Israeli consulate in New York and the Israeli Foreign Ministry the prior week. A message singling out Hezbollah as the obstacle to peace between Israel and Lebanon was screened in Times Square, amid diplomatic talks started between Jerusalem and Beirut for the first time in three decades. **HW**

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My Teen Israel Experience



Aliza Wiener volunteered at Save A Child's Heart, helping kids brought to Israel for life-saving heart surgery.

Aliza Wiener, daughter of Dr. Hillel and Rebecca Wiener, is a junior at the Goldie Margolin High School for Girls. Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund provided her with a Teen Israel Experience grant to offset the costs of her NCSY GIVE Israel program. All rising juniors and seniors are eligible for grants of up to \$3,000 to attend a recognized teen summer or semester program in Israel. Teen Israel Experience applications for Summer 2026 are open and can be accessed at Lemsky Endowment Fund | Jewish Community Partners (jcpmemphis.org)

By Aliza Wiener

This past summer, I had the privilege to participate in NCSY GIVE, a summer program dedicated to volunteering through the land of Israel and helping in any way we knew. GIVE taught me the importance of giving of myself, for the sole purpose of helping others through



Aliza seeing the Kotel for the first time in two years.

things like packaging food for soldiers, creating a carnival for children whose parents are in the army, weeding avocado trees at kibbutzim, or spending time with the elderly.

Over the course of GIVE, we experienced many acts of chesed (kindness and love), but one that truly stood out to me was Save a Child's Heart, an organization that helps young children from Africa receive the medical care they desperately need. Many of these children come from places where children either don't have medical help or don't have the money to afford the help. Save a Child's Heart examines these children, some as young as six months old, and determines whether they need to be brought to Israel for life saving heart surgery and recovery. Once the child is brought to Israel and has the surgery, they need to stay in a home with children like them until they are healthy enough to return to Africa. We visited this incredible organization during our second week of GIVE. At first, none of us knew how to inter-

act with the children who had been through so much and didn't speak our language. The minute we got there we realized that wouldn't matter. The children were so excited to see us, they ran up to us squealing with joy and hugging us. The lady who worked there told us that even though we couldn't use words to communicate, love and happiness are a language everyone understands.

As we continued our trip, we went to more places that impacted me. Once a week we would visit a home for mothers and children who escaped abusive marriages. The first time we arrived, I immediately bonded with one of the babies named Yael. Despite my little knowledge of Israeli children's songs and games, just running around and dancing with her was enough. Eventually, I learned a simple Hebrew song and was able to sing to her, and seeing the smile on her face brought tears to my eyes. On our last visit there, none of us wanted to leave. A few girls got the mother's numbers so they would be able to keep in touch. This experience taught me that when someone is going through extremely difficult times, just knowing there is someone out there for you who cares means the world.

Although I was on a volunteer program, we did our fair share of traveling. We often went to the Old City, a place I know well since all my brothers stayed there during their gap year. Despite having been to the Kotel or Western Wall many times, the most life-changing experience I had was going to the Kotel on Tisha B'Av (holiday that commemorates the saddest day on the Jewish calendar and includes a 24-hour fast). Luckily, we arrived early, so we were able to secure spots, but seeing the huge swarms of people coming to the Kotel, all for the same reason, was very inspiring. Every-

where you turned, a person was crying into their siddur (prayer book) or there was a circle of people having a kumzitz (sing-along). Even though I was fasting, I didn't even remember how hungry I was because I was so overcome with a feeling of Jewish pride. This was the first Tisha B'Av I truly believed that the Messiah would come. After the fast ended, no one moved to get food or water; people continued praying and singing throughout the night. It was an incredible experience, and I can't wait to go back again soon.

It wouldn't be an NCSY program without learning and inspiration; one counselor changed my life in many ways. My advisor Hannah's chaburah (study group or lesson) taught us the importance of time. She explained that we didn't have time to kill, we had time to fill. She instructed us to take out our phones and look at our screen times, then subtract that number from the 24 hours we have in a day. The numbers were concerning. She explained the number is how much time you have in a day, but if you add back the time spent on your phone, you'd have so much more. She explained that even on the bus just looking outside the window and soaking in the rich agriculture and history fills your time. The chaburah inspired me to take a step back and look at the world around me through my own eyes, not through a camera.

NCSY GIVE was a life-changing program. Not only did I grow spiritually and mentally, but I also overcame challenges, made connections with amazing people, tried new things, and developed a strong love for the land of Israel and all it offers.

Thank you to Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment fund for enabling me to have such an impactful summer. **HW**

FBI: Austin Mass Shooter Motivated in Part by US, Israeli Military Actions in Iran



Police crime scene tape. Credit: Kat Wilcox/Pexels.

(JNS) – The FBI said last Thursday that the gunman behind a mass shooting in downtown Austin, Texas, on March 1 was motivated in part by grievances over U.S. and Israeli military actions against Iran and admiration for the slain Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, but investigators found no evidence that he was directed or supported by a foreign terrorist group.

The shooter, identified as Ndiaga Diagne, 53, killed three people and wounded 15 others outside Buford's Backyard Beer Garden on Austin's West Sixth Street before police fatally shot him during an exchange of gunfire, according to the FBI.

The FBI said roughly 400 personnel from across the bureau and partner law enforcement agencies assisted in the investigation, which included reviewing more than 3,000 videos and 150 million digital files. Authorities also conducted 88 interviews, executed 22 search warrants and seized 30 electronic devices as part of the ongoing probe.

"There is no evidence of outside direction or radicalization," an investiga-

Investigators said Ndiaga Diagne acted alone and found no evidence of association with a foreign terrorist organization in the attack that killed three and wounded 15 outside a downtown bar.

tive update stated. "Rather, the investigation indicates an escalation in violent behavior in part tied to specific personal triggers and grievances related to U.S. and Israeli military actions involving Iran, culminating in a violent, impulsive attack."

The FBI said Diagne, who acted alone and had never previously been the subject of an FBI investigation, wore

clothing featuring an Iranian flag and a sweatshirt reading "Property of Allah" during the attack. Investigators said he "admired" Khamenei, who was killed in the joint U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February.

"While Diagne's affinity for Iran and the Ayatollah were most certainly factors in his mobilization to violence, the FBI has not identified conclusive evi-

dence to explain Diagne's motivation or how and why he selected the location for his attack," authorities stated.

Federal investigators said Diagne acted alone and had never previously been the subject of an FBI investigation. Authorities found no evidence linking him to a foreign terrorist organization or showing he received outside operational support. **HW**



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Managing Your Investments During Difficult Times

Provided by Mike Stein, Managing Director - Investments, Wells Fargo Advisors
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Economic difficulties, political unrest, and natural disasters can all present challenges. Investors may wonder what effect these types of events, and others, could have on their investments. That’s why it’s helpful to focus on three fundamental actions that could help investors work toward their goals – know yourself, build a plan, and keep an eye on the long term.

Know yourself

When stocks drop by 20% or more, some investors might ignore the drop, others might feel the urge to sell, while still others might see it as a good time to buy. This range of reactions illustrates different levels of risk tolerance, or how sensitive investors are to market volatility. Risk tolerance varies from one investor to another, and no level of tolerance is considered the “right” level – there’s only the right risk tolerance for each investor. Talking with financial advisors or completing online questionnaires can help investors determine their risk tolerance.

While understanding risk tolerance is essential, it should not be considered in isolation. Risk tolerance, goals, and time horizon all play a role in setting an investment plan.

Investing more aggressively may yield more rewards, but the length of time available for investing also plays a part. A longer time horizon could give investors the potential for compound growth. And setting specific goals can help to determine how much an investor should accumulate to support their goals.

Build a plan

Dwight D. Eisenhower may have said it best – “Plans are worthless, but planning is everything.” Even though a plan may need to be modified to adapt to changes, the very process of setting a plan can help investors to discover and focus on their most important investment goals.

For a plan to be useful, it’s important for investors to clearly detail which goals they are trying to achieve. Some of an investor’s goals will be shorter term, such as building a rainy-day fund. Intermediate-term goals might include buying a house or paying for a child’s education. Longer-term goals might include planning for retirement and potentially leaving a legacy for charities or family. Investor assets can then be matched to those various goals.

For example, investors might own short-term bonds to meet a near-term expense, and a mixture of stocks and longer-term bonds to meet needs that are further in the future. The investor’s risk tolerance will help determine the mix of historically more volatile assets – such as stocks – to less volatile assets, such as bonds.

Keep an eye on the long term

Once a plan is in place, it’s important to keep an eye on it over the long term. This includes considering rebalancing the portfolio if allocations move too far away from targets, a task that can be

automated. It also includes revisiting plans as an investor’s goals or situation change. A plan is meant to be a living document.

While market drops can be troublesome, unpredictable economic events have presented challenges in the past. With resilience and creativity, America’s businesses and households have managed to overcome them. While there are no guarantees that past performance will repeat itself, history has shown that sticking to investment plans and taking a long-term view of the markets can help investors work toward their goals.

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Trump Confirms Iran Ceasefire Holds Despite Naval Skirmish

By JNS Staff

(JNS) – U.S. President Donald Trump confirmed last Thursday that the ceasefire with Tehran is in effect despite a naval skirmish but threatened massive military action unless the Islamic Republic accepts a deal.

“They trifled with us today. We blew them away,” Trump said about the skirmish, in which U.S. guided missile destroyers came under fire, prompting a limited-scale retaliation. “Any other country, under the circumstances, wouldn’t have done that,” he continued, referencing the Iranian decision to fire on U.S. forces. He added that the Iranian fire failed to cause any damage, but that the retaliation did cause damage.

“If there’s no ceasefire,” Trump told a reporter at the White House, “you’re just going to have to look at one big glow coming out of Iran – and they better sign their agreement fast.”

The U.S.-Iranian talks are “going very well – but they have to understand, if it doesn’t get signed, they’re going to have a lot of pain,” he added.

Last Thursday, Trump said he had given the Iranian regime a week to reply to a proposal for a ceasefire which, according to reports, includes a guarantee that Iran won’t limit maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, will relinquish enriched uranium it possesses, and will agree to a 15-year pause in any attempt to develop nuclear arms. [HW](#)

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Netanyahu: US, Israel in ‘Full Coordination’ on Iran



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Donald Trump meet at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Fla., Dec. 29, 2025. Credit: Amos Ben-Gershom/GPO.

By JNS Staff, Amelie Botbol

Israel is in “full coordination” with Washington on Iran and is preparing for all possible scenarios, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said last Wednesday as he convened his Security Cabinet.

“We are maintaining continuous contact with our friends in the United States,” said Netanyahu, according to his office, adding that he spoke with U.S. President Donald Trump “almost on a daily basis. My people and his people are in daily contact as well, including today. And I will also speak with President Trump later tonight.” There were “no surprises” between them, he said.

Jerusalem and Washington share the goal of removing all enriched nuclear material from Iran and dismantling its enrichment capabilities, he continued.

“President Trump believes he can achieve this one way or another. We, however, are prepared for any scenario, and that is the directive I have given to the IDF and our security agencies,” said Netanyahu. “Israel is stronger than ever; Iran and its proxies are weaker than ever.”

Trump said the United States has had “very good talks” with Iran over the past 24 hours and suggested a deal remains within reach, CNN reported last Wednesday.

Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office, Trump said there is no set deadline for Tehran to respond to a U.S. proposal, adding that “it’ll happen” without specifying a timeframe. He warned that Washington could take further steps if an agreement is not reached but said Iran “wants to make a deal” and that an accord is “very possible.”

Trump also reiterated that Iran would not be allowed to obtain a nuclear weapon

and claimed Tehran has agreed to that condition.

Trump earlier last Wednesday warned of a renewed and more intense bombing campaign should the Islamic Republic not finalize an agreement to end the war.

“Assuming Iran agrees to give what has been agreed to, which is, perhaps, a big assumption, the already legendary ‘Epic Fury’ will be at an end, and the highly effective blockade will allow the Hormuz Strait to be open to all, including Iran. If they don’t agree, the bombing starts, and it will be, sadly, at a much higher level and intensity than it was before,” the president wrote on his Truth Social account.

His social media post followed an Axios report hours earlier that the White House believes that the United States and Iran are nearing an agreement on a one-page, 14-point memorandum to end the war in the Middle East.

Tehran [was] expected to respond to mediators Thursday regarding the U.S. proposal to end the war, CNN reported.

Likud Knesset member Shalom Danino told JNS that historically, Israel’s main request of the United States had been approval for a strike on Iran. Previous U.S. administrations, including that of President Barack Obama, opposed such a move, viewing it as contrary to American interests. From that perspective, the lawmaker said, the joint campaign was particularly significant.

“Had we attacked alone, would we have been able to eliminate Iran’s nuclear program? No. We would have had to settle for what we could accomplish on our own,” Danino told JNS last Thursday. “This campaign set the nuclear program back for a very long time. It damaged their production chain and improved Israel’s standing both regionally

and internationally.”

Danino said the campaign also provided Israel with political and diplomatic relief from mounting international pressure.

“We always need to ask ourselves whether it would have been better to act alone. If the Americans maintain their demand that the uranium be removed from Iran, our situation will be excellent,” he added.

According to Danino, all of the campaign’s objectives, as outlined before the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on which he serves, were achieved.

“The most immediate and urgent goal was to stop them from building and arming a nuclear bomb,” he said. “They were close to going underground and assembling the final components of a weapon that could potentially have been launched. It was a matter of months.”

On Iran’s ballistic missile program, Danino said Israel’s strikes significantly disrupted the country’s production capabilities.

“They can rebuild, but we will have time to prepare and strike again if necessary,” he said.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing last Wednesday, calling their talks “constructive” in post on X.

“Both sides reaffirmed Iran’s right to safeguard national sovereignty and national dignity. The Iranian side appreciates the four-point proposal put forward by the Chinese side on upholding and promoting regional peace and stability,” Araghchi wrote. “The Iranian side trusts the Chinese side and expects the Chinese side to continue playing a positive role in promoting peace and stopping war and supports the establishment of a new post-war regional architecture that can coordinate development and security.” **HW**



Barbara Zwick Hirsh

Barbara Zwick Hirsh, age 85, of Memphis, Tenn., passed away peacefully in Sarasota, Fla., on May 2, 2026.

Barbara was born on November 1, 1940, in Knoxville, Tennessee, to Pearl and Benjamin Zwick. She was married to Robert Myer Hirsh, the love of her life, for 64 wonderful years. Following her graduation from the University of Tennessee, Barbara joined Robert in the real estate business, where they built both a career and a life together.

Barbara was a sweet and gentle soul, known for her quiet nature and kind heart. She found her greatest joy in being surrounded by her family, whom she loved deeply.

She is survived by her devoted husband, Robert Hirsh; her four children, Stephanie Hirsh Steinmetz (Stephen), Kimberly Hirsh Reed (Joby), Jeffrey Hirsh and Amy Hirsh Schwartz (Richard); and her seven adoring grandchildren, Charles Steinmetz, Jacob “Jack” Steinmetz, Sydney Reed, Julia Hirsh, Liam Hirsh, Samuel Schwartz and Logan Schwartz.

Barbara’s love, warmth, and gentle presence will be deeply missed by all who knew her.

Funeral services were held at Anshei Sphard Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Tidewell Hospice Sarasota or to a charity of your choice in Barbara’s memory. **HW**

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5 Things Jewish Women Should Know About Breast Cancer

By JTA Staff

(JTA) – The rumors that you’ve heard are true: A growing number of women are diagnosed each year with breast cancer. Breast cancer diagnoses are increasing at a rate of 1% per year for all women, and at 1.4% per year for women under 50, according to the American Cancer Society.

Fortunately, new technologies are making diagnosis and treatment more effective than ever before, improving breast cancer survival rates even as cases are climbing. Today, the five-year survival rate for all breast cancers is 91% - and that rate rises to 99% when breast cancer is caught in the earliest stages.

And that’s not the only good news. Breast cancer research is constantly evolving, and Sharsheret, the Jewish breast cancer and ovarian cancer organization, is committed to sharing information about the latest cancer research. The nonprofit provides personalized support and educational outreach to Jewish women, men and families living with, or at increased genetic risk for, breast cancer or ovarian cancer.

“Knowledge means power and saves lives,” Sharsheret CEO Elana Silber said. “Sharsheret educational outreach goes beyond just sharing information. Integrating real-time trends into programs and resources, we ensure that women and men can make informed decisions, strengthening individuals’ outcomes and the impact of Sharsheret’s mission to support and empower women, men and families facing cancer.”

While Sharsheret provides genetic and mental health counseling to women and families of all backgrounds, their educational outreach and programs are especially relevant to Jewish families, who carry genetic mutations that cause breast cancer are roughly 10 times more common than among the general population.

Keep [reading] for the latest news about breast cancer research and diagnostic trends.

1. Weight-loss drugs may assist with cancer treatment

GLP-1 receptor agonists – the popular, injectable weight-loss drugs best known by their brand names, like Ozempic and Wegovy – have been hailed as miracle drugs. In addition to enabling weight loss, these medications have also been shown to protect the heart, kidneys and liver.

These new medications may prove valuable when it comes to cancer treatment, too. That’s not only because they help patients lose weight quickly and effectively – which is important because people who are overweight are more likely to have diabetes, and diabetes “may have an increased risk of complications from breast cancer treatment and possibly also have an increased risk of recurrence,” according to Dr. Ruth Oratz, an oncologist at NYU Langone Health who sits on Sharsheret’s medical advisory board. It’s also because these

medications have been shown to have anti-inflammatory properties and can reduce lymphedema, swelling caused by an accumulation of fluid from the body’s lymphatic system.

“Patients on these drugs feel better and are healthier overall,” Oratz said during a Sharsheret webinar in February 2025. “They’ve already shown a benefit in reducing the incidence and risk of recurrence of other kinds of cancers.”

2. AI may help improve breast cancer detection

Artificial intelligence is everywhere these days – including at the radiologist’s office, where it is being used to improve both accuracy and efficiency of breast cancer screenings.

According to a recent article on Breastcancer.org, by training on millions of mammograms, AI systems can create a mathematical standard of what “normal” breast tissue looks like, allowing it to spot subtle anomalies that might otherwise escape the human eye. Early research indicates that this digital “second opinion” may help increase breast cancer detection rates by up to 20% while also reducing false positives.

While AI has been shown to be a powerful tool in detecting breast cancer risk, it is not without its downsides. Experts caution that a lack of diversity in data used to train AI may result in less accurate screening results for, say, Black and older women. “There is a lot of bias in AI because there’s a lot of bias in the world, and that pre-existing bias gets embedded in AI systems,” Meredith Broussard, a data journalist and AI researcher at New York University, told Breastcancer.org.

However, AI is designed to enhance the radiologists’ medical expertise, not replace it. “You have to have the radiologist in the driver’s seat, as there is a human element that AI will never have,” breast radiologist Amy K. Patel told Breastcancer.org. “I do think AI is going to help radiologists be much more effective in the years to come.”

3. Biomarkers pave the way for better, more individualized care

An increased understanding of biomarkers – measurable indicators of a biological state or condition, like cancer – is helping medical teams detect cancers earlier and create individualized treatment programs designed to maximize results.

“Breast cancer is not one disease,” Dr. Thomas Buchholz, medical director of San Diego’s Scripps Cancer Center, shared on a Sharsheret webinar last November. “We consider a number of different types of things when people ask, ‘What type of breast cancer do you have?’”

Breast cancer cells have specific features, such as proteins, that make the cancer grow in certain ways. Therefore, tests for certain breast cancer biomarkers – estrogen receptors, progesterone

receptors and a protein called HER2, which stimulates cell growth – can help determine a course of treatment.

Medical teams “incorporate these biological factors into decisions concerning treatment,” Buchholz said, adding that they also can predict “what is the responsiveness to chemotherapy, what is the responsiveness to radiation, what is the responsiveness to hormonal therapy.”

Today, when it comes to breast cancer treatment, “There’s truly no one-size-fits all,” Dr. Elisa Port, the chief of breast surgery at the Mount Sinai Health System in New York, said during the webinar.

4. Growing awareness of menopause means cancer patients have options

Once considered a taboo subject, menopause is “finally having its moment.” Medical experts are now openly discussing the symptoms and treatments for when a women’s menstrual cycle ends, and celebrities and women’s group chats are hopping on the trend, too.

While menopause is a natural part of aging, some cancer patients take hormone suppression drugs as part of their treatment, which can lead to severe and sudden menopausal symptoms, like hot flashes and loss of libido. Similarly, some women who carry a BRCA gene mutation – which significantly increases the risk of breast cancer and ovarian cancer – may undergo prophylactic surgery, which entails breast and/or ovary removal, sometimes along with removal of the uterus and fallopian tubes, putting the patient into menopause.

“Natural menopause is gradual; surgical or medically induced menopause is intense,” Silber said.

Sharsheret can help women navigate menopause symptoms and treatments as part of their cancer care. “Sharsheret helps support and educate women about what comes next,” Silber said. “We highlight these critical issues so that women know to raise them with their healthcare providers, and we make sure they don’t face those questions alone.”

Among their many services, Sharsheret’s social workers help women make sense of the medical and emotional impact of treatment-induced menopause. Sharsheret also matches women with other women who have gone through the same treatments, providing a real-world perspective on what to expect.

Additionally, the organization provides survivorship kits, educational webinars and tailored materials on myriad issues related to surgically or medically induced menopause – including sexual health, bone strength and fertility preservation, as well as non-hormonal strategies for coping with hot flashes, sleep disruption and vaginal dryness.

5. Genetic testing can save lives

About 5 to 10 percent of cancers “have some kind of inherited component,” according to Peggy Cottrell, Sharsheret’s genetics program manager

– meaning that a person is born with a genetic change or mutation that increases their risk of developing cancer.

Probably the best known is the BRCA gene mutation, Cottrell added, which comes with increased risk of breast and ovarian cancer and is more prevalent among Ashkenazi Jews than the general population.

Fortunately, genetic testing – which is typically done via blood or saliva samples – can help determine whether or not a person is a carrier of a cancer-causing gene. “It can help save lives,” Cottrell explained, “because we care for people differently depending on what we find.”

For example, if a person tests positive for a BRCA1 mutation, “instead of the general recommendation – which is to maybe think about getting a mammogram when you turn 40 – we want those people to start with an MRI when they’re as young as 25.”

Who should consider genetic testing? In general, experts recommend screening for those with “triple-negative breast cancer, ovarian cancer, pancreatic cancer, colorectal cancer before age 50, metastatic prostate cancer, or male breast cancer,” according to the National Cancer Institute. In addition, “people with certain personal or family medical histories that suggest the possibility of a hereditary cancer syndrome” should consult with a doctor or genetic counselor.

One thing to keep in mind: It’s important to look at the entire family tree, as men are just as likely to be carriers of these genetic mutations. “This is not only a women’s issue,” Silber told JTA in 2022. “Family history is so important.”

While Sharsheret does not provide genetic testing, they employ genetic counselors like Cottrell who can help explain the process and assist with finding free or low-cost genetic testing. Should a person test positive for a hereditary cancer mutation, Sharsheret can provide a wealth of resources, including a peer support network.

“We are happy to answer people’s questions,” Cottrell said. “It doesn’t matter how simple or boring their question may seem, we’re just always happy to set up a time. There’s never any charge to someone who is in touch with us to ask questions and everything is always confidential.”

To speak with a trained specialist or someone at Sharsheret, visit www.sharsheret.org or call 866.474.2774.

Information provided by Sharsheret is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment and should not be used to diagnose or treat a health problem. Always seek the advice of your physician or qualified health provider.

This article was sponsored by and produced in partnership with Sharsheret, the national Jewish breast cancer and ovarian cancer organization. This article was produced by JTA’s native content team. **HW**

Iran Launches Third Missile Attack on UAE Last Week

(JNS) – The government of the United Arab Emirates said last Friday that its territory had been targeted by Iranian drones and missiles for the third time last week.

The Friday attack was one of several points of military friction last week between the U.S. and the Islamic Republic, one month into a tense ceasefire in the American-Israeli operation to neutralize Iran’s ability to threaten its neighbors.

“The UAE’s air defenses are currently dealing with missile and drone attacks originating from Iran, and the Ministry of Defense confirms that the sounds

heard in various parts of the country are the result of the UAE air defense systems intercepting ballistic missiles, cruise missiles and drones,” the UAE Defense Ministry said in a statement.

Last Thursday, U.S. forces engaged with Iranian attackers in the Strait of Hormuz after U.S. guided missile destroyers came under fire.

“Three world-class American destroyers just transited, very successfully, out of the Strait of Hormuz, under fire,” U.S. President Donald Trump said. “There was no damage done to the three destroyers, but great damage

done to the Iranian attackers. They were completely destroyed along with numerous small boats, which are being used to take the place of their fully decapitated navy.”

U.S. Central Command called the Iranian attacks “unprovoked.”

The attacks came as U.S. forces continue to blockade the strait during a ceasefire period, pending a possible deal with Iran.

Israel and the U.S. launched “Operation Roaring Lion/Epic Fury” on Feb. 28, conducting thousands of attacks and sorties targeting mostly military targets

in Iran. A ceasefire was declared on April 8.

During the fighting, Iran launched thousands of projectiles at Israel, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and several other Persian Gulf states. Iran also closed the Strait of Hormuz, blocking the transportation of oil and gas eastward. The U.S. imposed a counter-blockade, preventing Iran from shipping its own petroleum and other products.

Last Thursday, Trump said Tehran had a week to reply to a list of U.S. demands for ending the conflict. **HW**



In 2027, Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab (MJHR) will celebrate 100 years of serving patients. In honor of this accomplishment and all the people who made it possible, we are telling 100 of their stories. Over the next two years, we will publish 100 Stories for 100 Years – a weekly column spotlighting resident, staff, and lay leader stories with the Home from throughout our history. This week, we are sharing words from our newly elected President, Bob Eiseman.

Meet Bob Eiseman



Dr. Bob Eiseman

MJHR: Tell us about yourself (hometown, education, family, hobbies, career).

I'm Dr. Bob Eiseman, originally from Memphis. I have a BS degree in electrical engineering from Northwestern University, and my medical degree is from UTHSC – the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. I'm a pediatrician.

My wife, Tami, and I live in the house my dad built when I was 3 years old. We have two grown kids and a granddaughter.

I enjoy yardwork, walks, biking, Broadway shows, Theatre Memphis and traveling, especially cruises. I'm involved with several committees in the

community.

MJHR: How did you become connected to MJHR?

Ten years ago, Scott Notowich asked me to join the board. We have one of the best boards in the city with a variety of people. We're a good, working board – no one is forced to do more than they're comfortable with.

MJHR: Share your favorite MJHR story.

When my mom and dad were at the Home for rehab, what I enjoyed the most was walking the halls and seeing the residents. They're enjoying life and happily engaging with visitors. You can really see the good work being done for them at the Home, it's such a good thing to see.

MJHR: What do you wish for the future 100 years of the organization?

To maintain the good that's happening day-to-day and improve as well, making sure we don't leave anyone behind.

I'd also like to see an endowment – not just to raise money or handle a deficit – but to create a fund for eternity.

MJHR: Is there anything else you'd like to say about your involvement with MJHR?

I'm the incoming board president; the current board believes in me. My role began after our annual meeting in April. I'm looking forward to partnering with qualified board members and planning for our 100th celebration. I'm coming



Bob celebrates Sukkot at the Home with his daughter-in-law, Baylee Less-Eiseman.

into this role after great presidents before me.

Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab is a not-for-profit nursing home, Jewish in character and environment, dedicated to providing the highest level of care

possible with dignity, compassion, and professionalism. Only through the help of generous donors is the organization able to care for those in need. Find more information at www.memphisjewishhome.org/giving. **HW**

WhatsApp Founder Donates Record \$200 Million to Shaare Zedek



Medical staff at Shaare Zedek Medical Center and soldiers transfer patients back to regular wards after the underground department established during the war was closed, in Jerusalem, April 10, 2026. Credit: Dor Pazuelo/Flash90. By Alex Traiman

(JNS) – WhatsApp founder Jan Koum is donating \$200 million to Shaare Zedek Medical Center in what is being described as the largest philanthropic contribution in the history of Israel's healthcare system, officials from the Je-

rusalem hospital told JNS last Thursday. The donation, made through the Jan Koum Family Foundation, is expected to triple the size of the hospital, which currently has approximately 1,000 beds. Koum, 50, who was born into a Jewish

family in Ukraine and immigrated to the United States as a teenager, co-founded WhatsApp in 2009 before selling the messaging platform to Meta for approximately \$19 billion in 2014.

The funds will be used to construct a new inpatient tower that will also include housing for medical staff, tripling the size of the hospital. According to a source in Israel's healthcare system, planning approvals for the new tower are advancing rapidly through Jerusalem's municipal planning institutions.

The contribution surpasses the previous record donation to Israel's healthcare sector, a \$180 million gift made in 2025 by Anat and Shmuel Harlap to Rabin Medical Center's Beilinson Hospital.

The two donations reflect a growing trend in which private philanthropy – much of it from American Jewish donors

– is increasingly funding major hospital infrastructure projects that the state has not undertaken on a similar scale.

As an independent hospital not affiliated with one of Israel's health funds, Shaare Zedek relies heavily on philanthropic support to expand and develop its facilities. Officials said the latest donation underscores the widening gap between institutions capable of attracting major private capital and those primarily dependent on government funding.

Koum, who divides his time between California and Europe, has become a prominent philanthropist, supporting Jewish, educational and pro-Israel causes around the world. In recent years, he has donated to several Israeli organizations and initiatives, including the Maccabee Task Force, Friends of Ir David and the Central Fund of Israel. **HW**

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Mohamed Sabry Soliman Pleads Guilty to Murder, 100 Other Charges for Boulder Firebombing, Faces Life in Prison Without Parole for Antisemitic Attack



Michael Dougherty, Boulder County district attorney, speaks at a press conference after Mohamed Sabry Soliman, 46, was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole after pleading guilty to the June 1, 2025 firebombing people who were rallying on behalf of Hamas-held hostages in Boulder, Colo., May 7, 2026. Source: YouTube/City of Boulder.

By Jonathan D. Salant, Jessica Russak-Hoffman

(JNS) - Mohamed Sabry Soliman, 46, pleaded guilty last Thursday to first-degree murder and 100 other charges for throwing Molotov cocktails at a rally of people demonstrating on behalf of the hostages, whom Hamas held in Gaza, in Boulder, Colo., on June 1, 2025.

Karen Diamond, 82, died from injuries sustained in the attack. Soliman also injured 14 people and reportedly yelled “free Palestine” during the assault and expressed intent to kill Zionists.

Michael Dougherty, Boulder County district attorney, said at a press conference that “this was an attack on the Jewish community and an act of terror.”

“Today we’ve seen the defendant held fully accountable and fully responsible for the horrific hate crime that he committed and the act of antisemitism he committed after planning it out and

taking methodical and intentional steps to harm as many people in the Jewish community as he possibly could here in Boulder,” Dougherty said.

“The defendant is now going to spend the rest of his life in state prison, or federal prison, knowing he destroyed the lives of innocent, wonderful people,” the district attorney said. “And he killed Karen Diamond.”

“As much as this act was brutal and monstrous and horrific, it was also – and hear me loud and clear – cowardly, because you want to come to Boulder County, you want to go to any community and set innocent people on fire, you are truly a coward,” he added. “And we saw that reflected in the statements he made in court today too.”

Stephen Redfearn, chief of the Boulder Police Department, said at the press

conference that he is “very thankful” for the verdict.

“That verdict sent a message, not only to the offender but also to anybody who thinks they can come and harm our community,” he said. “This targeted attack against our Jewish community was unacceptable, and this verdict here today provides some sense of justice.”

“I’ve seen a lot in my career, and this was not my first response to an incident of mass violence,” he said. “But this was one of the most heinous and cowardly crimes that I have ever seen.”

Soliman entered his guilty plea in Boulder County District Court and reportedly faces the possibility of life in prison without parole. Prosecutors said that he still faces federal charges in a case where the death penalty remains a possibility.

The Boulder assault was one of several violent, antisemitic and anti-Israel incidents in the United States after Oct. 7 that drew national attention. A gunman killed two Israeli Embassy staffers in Washington, D.C., after an event at the Capital Jewish Museum on May 21, 2025, and an arsonist attacked the governor’s residence in Harrisburg shortly after Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, who is Jewish, hosted a Passover Seder there on April 13, 2025.

The incidents were among 203 assaults recorded in the past year in the Anti-Defamation League’s annual audit of incidents of Jew-hatred, which noted an increase in violent attacks, even as overall antisemitic incidents declined.

The Anti-Defamation League stated that it welcomes the guilty plea from the

man [who] carried out “one of the most shocking antisemitic acts in American history.”

“This attack deeply traumatized the entire Jewish community and served as a reminder of what can happen when antisemitism is normalized in society,” the ADL stated. “No act of justice will bring back the life of Ms. Diamond, nor will it heal the wounds of those who suffered as a result of this horrific attack on a peaceful group of Americans.”

“This firebombing was not a random act. The perpetrator planned this attack for over a year, targeting Jewish community members who were peacefully and publicly expressing their values,” the nonprofit said. “This demands a serious response, but the resolution of the state charges is just the beginning of the long road to justice for the victims.”

The Trump administration has sought to deport members of Soliman’s family despite court orders blocking removal, according to Eric Lee, an attorney for Soliman’s ex-wife and her family. “The El Gamal family is thinking of all the victims who suffered because of what Mr. Soliman did,” Lee told USA Today.

Lauren Bis, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, told USA Today that the agency would not back down.

“Under President Trump, DHS will continue to fight for the removal of those who have no right to be in our country – especially terrorists and their associates,” she stated. “We are confident the courts will ultimately vindicate us.” **HW**



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