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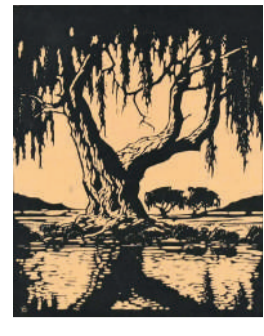
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# South African Jewish Report

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## Free-spirited adventurer mysteriously murdered

TALI FEINBERG

At 22 years old, Capetonian Atarah Katzeff had done more than most people do in a lifetime. She danced on the sea floor while diving; climbed the Drakensberg on 10-day hikes; and chased every adventure in between, from bungee jumping to horse riding, kayaking, and climbing.

After matriculating from Herzlia, Atarah - known as Tara - found her place at Warriors Academy in Limpopo, where she did two years of outdoor adventuring, and then went on to become an instructor there, living and teaching her passion. But this was also where her vibrant life was cut short. On 28 July, her lifeless body was found in her room at the academy. At first, no foul play was suspected as nothing had been stolen and the room was in order. But it was then determined that she had been strangled.

Police and a private investigator are working to find the killer, but "it won't bring her back", says her devastated father, lawyer Paul Katzeff.

An identical twin with sister Ariella, older sister to Daniel, and daughter of Anthea and Paul, Tara's years at Warriors Academy were the first time the twins had been apart. Now, in the wake of her sister's death, Ariella wrote on Instagram: "What can you say when you've lost a part

twin, the person I would have done anything for. As long as we had each other, everything would be okay, we could get through anything. I can feel her with me, and it truly feels that she's trying to reach me, to tell me that I need to be strong. But how does one keep going when their worst nightmare has come true?"

Paul says Tara had dreams of instructing on adventure programmes overseas. He was five hours away from Cape Town, heading to a motorbiking trip in Namibia, when he got the news. "It's the worst call any parent can get. I then had to return to

Cape Town and tell my family. It's like a horror movie. We're taking it one day at a time."

He and his family flew to the academy in Limpopo, where they met a private investigator and spent half a day on the scene. They have appointed private investigation company Privadect to look into Tara's death.

Privadect adheres to a strict nondisclosure policy while

of yourself? Tara is my everything, she's my other half, my best friend, my



Atarah Katzeff



investigating, and therefore wouldn't comment to the SA Jewish Report.

"The investigation is at a very sensitive stage," says Paul. "There are various leads and evidence that have been uncovered. Some suspects have been questioned. We're still awaiting the outcome of some findings. I had a feeling there was more than meets the eye. Tara was a healthy girl, and it was unlikely she would suddenly pass away."

Paul says everyone

at the academy is "very traumatised", and they had a ceremony for Tara, dedicated a bench in her name, and made a moving video tribute.

Warriors Academy owner Rudi Viljoen told the SA Jewish Report, "We are so very sorry. Tara was like a daughter to us. We only choose the best to become instructors. She was especially good with school groups that visit. She was so dynamic, and stronger than the boys!"

He said that on the

weekend of Tara's death, most of his family, who live and work at the academy, were away. Only a couple of other staff members were around, and a fellow instructor found Tara's body. "Her murder is still under investigation, but the professionals have made it clear this is an isolated case. For our entire 21 years, we have always prided ourselves on a safe environment. Nothing like this has ever happened." He says the Katzeffs have been

Continued on page 3>>

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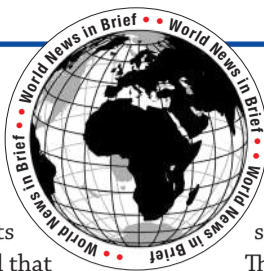
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**Canada revokes charitable status of JNF and Ne’eman Foundation**

Canada has revoked the charitable status of two Jewish nonprofit organisations that direct donations to Israel, including the Jewish National Fund.

The country’s tax authority announced the decision to revoke the status of JNF and the Ne’eman Foundation on Sunday, 11 August, in notices posted in the *Canada Gazette*, the government’s official newspaper.

The Canada Revenue Agency didn’t cite a reason for the revocations publicly. But the JNF disclosed two weeks ago that it was facing revocation, and said the CRA had determined that its mission was inconsistent with Canadian laws governing charitable activity.

The JNF has declined to release the CRA document explaining the revocation. That document and other details are expected to surface as part of a lawsuit recently filed by the JNF against Canada’s minister of national revenue, who oversees the tax authority. Citing internal CRA files obtained through a public records request, the lawsuit claims the revocation decision was “flawed and fundamentally unfair”.

In a statement posted to its website, the JNF blamed the CRA for caving in to public pressure from activist groups targeting the JNF, calling those campaigns antisemitic.

“As a Zionist-inspired organisation, JNF Canada has many vociferous antisemitic detractors who we believe have influenced the decision-making process in this matter,” the statement said.

The Ne’eman Foundation, which, like the JNF, funds philanthropic projects in Israel, didn’t announce that it was facing revocation and didn’t return a request for comment from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Its Canadian website is still accepting donations.

As in the United States, revoking a nonprofit’s charitable status for anything

other than a technicality, such as failing to file paperwork, is rare in Canada. It’s not the first time, however, that a Canadian Jewish charity working in Israel has lost its status. In 2019, a CRA audit found that a major nonprofit organisation called Beth Oloth had violated the law by supporting the Israeli military.

The new revocations represent a major victory for pro-Palestinian groups in Canada, including the anti-Zionist Independent Jewish Voices Canada, which has repeatedly complained to the CRA about tax-deductible donations supporting infrastructure projects on Israeli military bases. The law in Canada, as in many other countries, prohibits nonprofit organisations from supporting foreign militaries.

As the result of such complaints, the CRA audited JNF in 2014 and notified the group in 2019 that it intended to revoke its charitable status. It’s unclear why the tax agency decided to act now, but anti-Zionist advocacy in Canada and attention to it has strengthened since the start of the Israel-Hamas War in October.

Daniel Kurtz, a prominent lawyer for nonprofit organisations in the United States, said it was unlikely the Internal Revenue Service would crack down on such activity even though it violated US law.

“Contributing to fighting a war directly isn’t charity - there’s no question about that,” he said. “You can’t buy tanks or machine guns for the Israel Defense Forces or the Russians or anybody. Buying gear for soldiers is also probably inconsistent with the law. Can you help indirectly? That’s done to some extent too - providing non-military support to soldiers such as recuperation or education opportunities. It’s murky. And, as a practical matter, there’s probably going to be little stomach for any agency to challenge it.”

The JNF says it ceased building projects

for soldiers on Israeli military bases in 2016 when the CRA gave notice that such activity was inconsistent with its charitable status.

The organisation said it has offered to take additional steps to ensure its work adheres to Canadian law, and that the CRA made its decision without offering a path toward compliance.

**Man charged after stabbing Chabadnik in Crown Heights**

A man has been charged with hate crime after allegedly stabbing a Jewish man near the Chabad Hasidic movement’s headquarters in Brooklyn in the early hours of Saturday, 10 August.

Vincent Sumpter, 22, allegedly shouted “Free Palestine!” and “Do you want to die?” at the victim before stabbing him on Shabbat near the intersection of Eastern Parkway

and Kingston Avenue in Crown Heights. The location is near 770 Eastern Parkway, Chabad’s global headquarters.

Sumpter has been charged with eight felonies and six hate crimes, including assault as a hate crime, according to an arrest report.

Rabbi Yaacov Behrman, a spokesperson for Chabad, said the incident took place around 02:00 on Saturday. The victim, a member of the Chabad community, was transported to a hospital and is recovering and expected to be released within two days.

Bystanders chased down the attacker and

detained him until police made an arrest, Behrman said.

The victim, Yechiel Dabrowskin, told Israeli’s Kan public broadcaster that he had been with friends at a Shabbat event when someone said, “There’s someone outside threatening kids.”

“I told him to go away,” Dabrowskin said in Hebrew in an interview from his hospital bed. “Suddenly he pulled out a pocket knife.”

Dabrowskin said he had been stabbed 4cm from his heart, and had undergone surgery.

Video released by Crown Heights Shmira, a neighbourhood watch group, showed two men dressed in Hasidic attire confronting a man with a backpack on a sidewalk. The man with the backpack then thrusts his arm



Photo: Crown Heights Shmira & Holygems

several times at the chest of one of the Jewish men, who staggers backward.

The UJA-Federation of New York said it was “horrified by this senseless hate crime”. The Anti-Defamation League said it was in touch with law enforcement over the incident.

Behrman and others tied the attack to pro-Palestinian rhetoric that has been widespread in New York City since Hamas attacked Israel on 7 October and initiated an ongoing war in Gaza.

• All briefs supplied by JTA

**From sorrow to comfort**

**Torah Thought**



**Rabbi Danny Sackstein**  
Sunny Road Kehilla

**W**e now live in the post 7 October era. Every Jew has been forced to take a sincere look at their Jewish identity. The brutality of the attack and the double standard of the world is something most Jews hadn’t experienced in their lifetime.

We have just been through Tisha B’Av, the day we

feel the pain of the destruction of the holy Temples and the exile of G-d’s presence. A world without G-d is a world of darkness, suffering and confusion. As we see in the world today.

This Shabbos is called “Shabbos Nachamu”. We read from the prophet Isiah (Chapter 40). Isiah opens with the words, “Comfort, comfort my people, says your G-d.”

How do we successfully follow this pathway and transition from sadness and pain to comfort and hope?

When one experiences loss and mourning, initial shock and trauma set in. The pain is overwhelming as one’s world is turned upside down. It’s important to go with these powerful emotions and face the pain. This is the function of *shiva*. On Tisha B’Av, we all sit *shiva*.

One then needs to move forward towards the pathway of comfort. Healing

has no timeline. Each person finds their way. How does one make this shift from darkness to light?

My dear friend Rabbi Doron Perez shared his painful journey of these past months with his colleagues at this year’s rabbinic conference arranged by Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein.

The indescribable pain the Perez family has gone through is something we cannot imagine. The kidnapping of their son Daniel by Hamas terrorists, only to find out later that he was killed in battle, saving many lives. The injury to their son Yonatan days before his wedding, also fighting bravely on 7 October saving lives.

Rabbi Perez described his initial reaction upon hearing the news. He said he was paralysed by shock and grief. After a few days, he heard a clip from Rabbi Shlomo Weitzen from Shomron,

whose son was also killed in battle against Hamas terrorists.

Rabbi Weitzen said, “Though our son Amichai left us at the age of 33, on the last day of his life he received as a gift many, many more years of life. He saved all the families of the village of Kerem Shalom. One cannot know how many years of life he saved. All of these years and all the years of all their descendants, and all descendants of their descendants!”

Rabbi Perez said these words moved him deeply, and enabled him to shift his mindset. For the first time, he was able to

focus on the lives Daniel saved and the miracles that occurred for Yonatan to be alive. He was now able to be “next to the darkness, not in the darkness”.

Rabbi Perez points out that the word “*nechama*” (comfort) in the Torah, refers to a shift in mindset and a change in perspective.

The pathway to comfort is to see the bigger picture, to change our perspective, and understand our unique place and mission in G-d’s world.

May Hashem bless us all with the courage and wisdom to integrate this message in our lives!

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The Torah mentions the mitzvah of tefillin four separate times. Each of these texts is inscribed on parchment and placed into the tefillin. These passages cover the fundamentals of our faith, and describe the miracles G-d performed for us when He took us out of Egypt.

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# 'My brothers were captured – that was the good news'

ELKA COHEN

In a text message sent from the saferoom on kibbutz Nir Oz, Yair Horn (45) confirmed that he and younger brother Eitan (37) were together. Amos Horn (42) never heard from either of them again. It's been 313 days since then.

"For the first month, no one contacted us. We knew nothing. The army, the police, and the government couldn't tell us anything. Both my siblings just disappeared," says Amos.

His fight to bring his brothers home brought him to The Base in Glenhazel on Monday, 12 August, where he was guest speaker of its Tisha B'Av programme, a poignant present-day commemoration of the saddest day in Jewish history.

During Amos's choked-up account, in which he described his lonely fight for the freedom of his brothers held hostage in Gaza, the auditorium was filled with the heartbroken silence of a community in support. It included Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, as well as government representatives from the United States, Israel, Germany and Argentina.

The family heard nothing until 25 November. It was seven weeks of brutal silence. When the first hostage deal took place, releasing 105 Israelis in a prisoner-exchange deal, Sapir Cohen and Lena Tupenov were among them.

"The two women, also taken hostage from Kibbutz Nir Oz, informed us that my brothers were both alive and in Gaza," says Amos.

"After they told me, I felt I could breathe normally again for the first time," he says. "But when you hear that your brothers are being held hostage by Hamas terrorists, and that's the good news, you realise just how insane the situation is."

Amos, his wife, and two children, took the opportunity to come to South Africa as part of an initiative by the South African Jewish National Fund (JNF SA) in its ongoing campaign to support hostage families and help raise awareness for their safe return.

Says JNF SA Chairperson Michael Kransdorf, "The warm Zionist embrace of our South African community offers families a safe reprieve from the overwhelming trauma of their uncertain circumstances."

Before 7 October, all three brothers were living their Zionist dreams. They had all made aliya from Argentina, completed army service, and were living happy, simple lives in Israel.

Eldest brother Yair was a stalwart member of his once thriving kibbutz

community, where one in four residents was either murdered or abducted in the devastating attack. Eitan lived in Kfar Saba, and was uplifted daily by the laughter of the children he taught as an informal educator in Jewish youth movements, which also took him all over the world.

"That morning, after getting no response from my brothers, I called all my friends on the kibbutz to find out what was happening, not realising they were all busy fighting for their lives. I wanted to drive there with my baseball bat to help get my brothers out, but my wife told me not to go."

Since that fateful day, the family are



Amos Horn

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

doing everything they can to secure the brothers' release.

"We go to the Knesset every day. We've

been in contact with the president of Argentina, the king of Spain, the United Nations, and the Red Cross. We're still waiting to hear back from the Red Cross, but many congressmen and women are showing their commitment. After hearing our personal story, they are joining our fight to bring them home."

Amos believes "the only way to bring them back home is to make another deal. Killing Hamas leaders doesn't help because you cannot kill Hamas ideology. I know it's not normal to negotiate with terrorists, but it's the only way. Bibi [President Benjamin Netanyahu] must make another deal."

"Because this isn't just my story or the story of my brothers, it's our story, the story of our people," he says, wiping away his tears through his broken-English, while his son Ariel (9) looks on.

Rabbi Aharon Zulberg of The Base reassured Amos of the community's ongoing support, saying, "Your pain is our pain, your fight is our fight, we're all responsible for each other, and we are all in this together."

The auditorium in Glenhazel is full of #BringThemHome posters - 150 faces helplessly frozen in time. They all have their own story, their own family, their own life. We must continue to fight for them.

## Free-spirited adventurer mysteriously murdered

>>Continued from page 1

wonderful ambassadors for the academy, and he appreciates their continued support in spite of the tragedy.

Paul says Tara was "in her element" at Warriors Academy, where she "felt completely safe, and was proud of her achievements". He remembers that "while she and her sister were shy at school, they also had adventurous spirits, and wanted to go bungee jumping at a young age – which they both did twice! We also took a diving trip to Egypt, living on a boat for a week. We were planning another diving trip in January."

Colonel Malesela Ledwaba, the media liaison for the police in Limpopo, confirmed that a case of murder is being investigated. He called on anyone with information to come forward. The day after the murder, a community meeting was held to discuss security in the area. A local newspaper reported that residents were "fearing for their lives at night".

On the Warriors Academy website, Tara wrote, "I've always loved the outdoors and the adventures that come with it. There's nothing I love more than being at the bottom of the ocean, enjoying the silence the water brings, or being at the top of a mountain in the pure serenity of nature. I am also a big adrenaline junkie, and Warriors definitely brings that out of me in the best way possible. I've found many passions like kayaking and climbing, and can't wait to assist the amazing people joining us."

She is listed as being qualified in abseil supervision; wilderness first aid; survival facilitation; mountain bike guiding; advanced open water dive training; and rescue scuba diving, among other skills.

Tara was laid to rest at the Pinelands Jewish Cemetery in Cape Town, and her family thanks the community for the "huge outpouring of love and support". Rabbi Greg Alexander, who officiated at the twins' baby naming and later their Batmitzvah, told the SA Jewish Report from his sabbatical in London that "I was blessed to study with Atarah and Ariella

in preparation for their Batmitzvah, and to see them grow up to be young adults in the community. I cannot imagine what this must feel like for her family. The loss to our community is great."

On Instagram, Ariella described her and Tara as having "twin telepathy", saying, "You broke the twin code - you're not allowed to go first. No one else knows just what I'm thinking, or will say a whole paragraph at exactly the same time with the exact same words as me."

Ariella says Tara "loved yellow, and was obsessed with parrot fish."



Anthea and Paul Katzeff with their daughter Atarah

What a beast she was, one of the strongest women I've ever met. Those muscles - she was proud of them and validly so. I remember when she first went to Warriors, she was so sure she was going to leave and never come back.

Not long after, she realised she had found something special. She found a home away from home, and that place would change her life. She changed so many people's lives in the process. She made me strong, and now we all have to be strong for her."

She wrote that she and her sister "were complete opposites in so many ways, but exactly the same in so many others. The one can't survive without the other, but I'm going to try my best for you, Tara."

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# Our greatest threat comes from within

RABBI DORON PEREZ — JTA



When Hamas attacked on 7 October, it followed one of the most divisive years in Israel in generations. The debate about judicial reform had become a zero-sum game, with each side fighting for the soul of the country as they saw it, and each prepared to push their agenda no matter what the consequences - two trains on a collision course with neither side prepared to back down.

So deep were these divisions that, according to leading heads of Israel's security establishment, documents found in the Gaza home of 7 October mastermind Yahya Sinwar indicate that he and other Hamas leaders saw internal divisions and perceived weakness among Israelis as a significant reason for the timing of the attack on Simchat Torah.

Similarly, Hassan Nasrallah, the head of Hezbollah in Lebanon, gloated that Israel risked being torn apart if the government and opposition failed to reach a compromise.

"For the first time since the creation of [Israel], we hear speeches from the entity's president and former prime ministers ... who talk about civil war and bloodshed," Nasrallah said in a speech in February 2023. "G-d willing, Israel will not reach its 80th birthday."

If it was internal strife that contributed to the attacks on 7 October, then more than 1 000 Israeli families paid the ultimate price that day and during the past 10 months of this war. We are one of them. Our son Captain Daniel Perez, who fought in defence of Kibbutz Nachal Oz, was among the 250 hostages taken to Gaza, and is now confirmed among the more than 1 200 killed on that horrific day. He, along with many others, still awaits a dignified Jewish burial. There remain 115 hostages in Gazan captivity.

On Monday evening, 12 August, when the fast of Tisha B'Av began at sundown, those unspeakable losses weighed heavily on the minds of many Jews. At the same time, they would be reminded of the traditional rationale for the destruction of the Second Temple, one of the historical tragedies mourned on Tisha B'Av: *sinat chinam*, baseless divisiveness among Jews themselves. The rabbis of the Talmud (Yoma 9b) blamed the people's downfall on Jewish factionalism in the form of senseless hatred, which made the community vulnerable to destruction at the hands of the Romans.

One of the most shocking texts I have encountered regarding the extent of Jewish divisiveness can be found in Jewish-Roman historian Josephus's account of a strategic military dispute between Roman military generals and Vespasian, the first-century CE head of the Roman Army, who would soon become emperor and be replaced by his son, Titus.

His generals argued that the internal strife weakened the Jews and presented an opportunity to attack and destroy the city. "The providence of G-d is on our side by setting our enemies against one another," the generals argued, according to Josephus (Wars of the Jews, Book 4, Chapter 6).

Vespasian's reply to his soldiers highlights the tragic situation among the Jews, and how the best Roman strategy was simply to sit back and watch the Jews destroy each other without the Romans lifting their weapons.

Vespasian replied, that "they were greatly mistaken ... without considering what was for their advantage, and for their security. For that if they now go and attack the city immediately, they will unite their enemies ... But if they wait they shall have fewer enemies; because they will be consumed in their own sedition. G-d acts as a general of the Romans better than I can do; and is giving the Jews up to us. While our enemies are destroying each other with their own hands, let us sit as spectators, while the Jews are torn to pieces by their civil wars ..."

Even a lengthy siege and threat of annihilation couldn't bring the Jews together. It tore them apart.

Like the sages in the Talmud, the famed *rosh* yeshiva of 19th-century Volozhin - the Netziv - points to sectarianism and demonisation as the root of causeless hatred:

"As a result of the senseless hatred in their hearts that one harboured for the other, they suspected all those who didn't follow their path as a God-fearing Jew of being a Sadducee and a heretic." (Ha'amek Davar, Introduction to Bereishit)

Sectarianism indeed reigned supreme prior to the destruction. There were many distinct sects - Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots, and Sicarii - and more sub-factions. If you were part of one ideological group, you were accepted. If you were part of a different ideological sect, you were scorned and hated. There was no middle ground - either you're with us or against us.

How do disagreements deteriorate into such deep hatred?

In the War Scroll found near the Dead Sea in the caves of Qumran, we find an answer. The text, probably written by the desert sect known as the Essenes, describes its followers as "the sons of light" and all others as "the sons of darkness".

This changes the rules of discourse. We're no longer debating views or ideas. We're delegitimising the other as a person. It's no longer about right and wrong, but about us and them. All who think and act like us are "good" and bring light, and all those who don't are "bad" and bring darkness.

The parallels between then and now are painfully obvious. We dare not go back to the zero-sum game of 6 October. Significant issues roil the Jewish people today, as they always have. None of us has the entire monopoly on truth, which, according to our sages, has 70 interpretations. We must commit deeply to our covenant of collective fate while debating respectfully the different understandings of our destiny. When we forget our unshakable bonds of

solidarity, others remind us of it.

Vespasian and Titus reminded us then. Sinwar and Nasrallah remind us today. Let's commit this Tisha B'Av never to fan the flames of demonisation, but to strive for more empathy, understanding, and unity.

Too much depends on it.

- South African-born Rabbi Doron Perez is the executive chairperson of the Mizrahi World Movement. In South Africa, he was executive director of Mizrahi South Africa, the senior rabbi of Mizrahi Shul and head of Yeshiva College school. His son Captain Daniel Perez was killed on 7 October defending Israel and his body was taken into Gaza by Hamas.

## As Israelis keep calm, 'comrades' duck for cover

LEE TANKLE

At a time of mourning like Tisha B'Av, it's difficult to come to terms with the collective trauma of the Jewish community since Hamas attacked the south of Israel on 7 October. However, speakers at Pine Street Shul in Johannesburg recently showed that, in spite of the devastation, Jewish people have the resilience to triumph over the tragedy.

Audience members grappled with the idea of how Israel has rebuilt itself again and again, and speakers brought different perspectives to this topic.

Tali Pimstein, a 20-year-old student at the University of the Witwatersrand, shared her experience of a recent South African Union of Jewish Students (SAUJS) trip to Israel, on which they took along 15 black students to learn more about the land and its history.

"The point of the trip was to ensure that we maintain the current environment for Jews on campus while empowering youth leaders with education. This struggle is so much more than education for us individuals, it's rather a step forward towards creating a brighter future and a field for solidarity."

She says that in spite of the fact that the students had read on social media that Israel was an apartheid state and was committing genocide against the Palestinians, there was a flood of applications to go on the trip.

The 15 chosen, affiliated to the African National Congress and Economic Freedom Fighters on the Wits campus, were nicknamed "the comrades". Pimstein said "the comrades" as well as the five Jewish students on the trip were prepared to engage in some tough dialogue about Israel and the war in Gaza.

When they went to the south of Israel, everyone was in shock at the devastation that Hamas had wrought, particularly at the site of the Nova music festival and kibbutz Kfar Aza.

"One of the things that stuck out for me was how [the site of the Nova festival] wasn't a place of statistics, facts, and numbers, but every single monument humanised every individual that was murdered at the festival," said Pimstein.

The group heard from survivors of these attacks first-hand. "Not only were we standing in a place where Jews were murdered for being Jews, but in the background, we were seeing bombs exploding.

It made us feel raw. There was no way to detach ourselves from our feelings."

"We couldn't just see and feel the impact of war, but also hear it as a daily, consistent background noise of bombing in Gaza 3km away from us," said Pimstein.

"I was overwhelmed by the immense sense of loss and grief on seeing first-hand the horrific destruction of the hatred. It gives us all a glimpse into the beyond-horrendous reality that Israelis have dealt with over the past 10 months."

Though her Jewish peers expected some war noise while they were in the south, "the comrades" were shocked and feared for their lives, Pimstein said. It reminded her that hearing bombs, rockets, and sirens isn't normal and shouldn't be taken lightly, but is considered normal in Israel today.

Rabbi Yehuda Stern said that on his recent trip to Israel, in spite of all the tension of a pending attack from Iran, he felt Israel's resilience, making Tisha B'Av even more poignant.

Stern had been unsure if his solidarity trip to Israel would even go ahead, with Ethiopian Airlines stopping flights to Israel for two days.

However, "We landed in Israel, and it's as if nothing is happening. The cafes are full. The restaurants are full. I'm asking myself, if rockets are about to come from Iran, why is everyone just hanging out over there? They should be hanging out in their bunkers, in their *mamads*, under their houses.

"This is the pillar of Israeli society," Stern said. "I felt more upbeat about Israel and its situation than I did in Johannesburg.

"Israelis are resilient. They are believers. They are supernatural. They are miraculous. And that keeps them going. Even during crazy times like this."

Stern told stories of people he had met on this trip who had been injured in Gaza and still wanted to go back to defend Israel. He also told the story of Rami Davidian, a 59-year-old farmer who was able to drive in and out of the forests of the Nova festival, saving the lives of 750 people.

A New Jersey rabbi had shared, Stern said, that, "In the year that Rosh Hashanah falls out of Shabbos and there's no *tikiya shofar*, on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, like our year was, one of two things can happen. It's either a day of destruction, or it's going to be a year of the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash."

"We have had our destruction," said Stern. "It's now time to rebuild like the people of Israel are doing."



The funeral of Israeli soldier Captain Daniel Perez at the Mount Herzl Military Cemetery in Jerusalem in March 2024

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# Prevarication or psychological warfare? Iran stalls, Israel waits

STEVEN GRUZD

In the Middle East's eye-for-an-eye conflict, Israel is bracing itself for a threatened military response from Iran. This follows the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on 31 July, for which Israel hasn't taken responsibility, as is its wont.

Israel also expects a retaliatory attack from Hezbollah in Lebanon - its commander, Fuad Shukr, was killed that same night. The key question is why, at the time of writing, such attacks haven't yet taken place. Does this signify Iran and Hezbollah in disarray, fearful of broadening the conflict? Or is it a psychological stratagem to torture Israel and Jewish communities worldwide, as the nature, timing, and size of any response remains unknown?

Defence analyst Helmoed Heitman said the delayed reaction may indicate disagreement on an appropriate and safe response between political and military leadership in Iran, "appropriate in the sense of sending the desired message. Safe in the sense that it won't be so serious an attack that it might draw in the United States, alienate European powers, and perhaps even China.

"For instance," Heitman said, "if Iran really fired another massive barrage of missiles [as it did in April] and Israel responded as it then almost certainly would, would Iran still have the missiles, the launchers and the command-and-control facilities to withstand punitive action by the US, be it military or through more strongly enforced sanctions or even a blockade?" He noted that some believe Iran has too few launchers to overwhelm Israel's defences.

Professor Abel Esterhuysen, the head of the department of strategic studies at Stellenbosch University, said that Iran didn't have to retaliate, and he hoped it wouldn't.

He listed many variables it has to consider, including that the attack was against Hamas, not Iran. This complicates decision-making. Everyone fears a regional war spinning out of control, and the Iranians won't attack without Russian and Chinese support. Another variable is the pressure inside Iran, with growing resistance to the regime, as well as what the US might do, with reports of behind-the-scenes restraint being urged by Washington. Yet another is the remarkable tolerance for Israel's actions by Sunni Muslim states in the region.

as well as the alliance between Israel and America and other friendly Arab countries." They passed the test, with only a handful of missiles landing in Israel, causing no casualties.

"It certainly makes them think twice about launching another attack from their own territory with similar results," Katz said. He thinks Iran doesn't believe it can harm Israel meaningfully through conventional missile and drone weapons. "It's just going to demonstrate to the whole world how ineffectual it is."

Katz said, "Iran is stalling. It's not 100% sure that any retaliation now is going to be effective. It's having second thoughts." He also suggested possible friction between Hezbollah and Iran.

"The Iranians are quite weak, but they can't appear to be weak after the assassinations. The fact that it happened in Tehran was a slap in the face. It was the inauguration of the president, and Haniyeh was their guest. It was extremely humiliating. They really don't want to retaliate, but they feel they have to, to save face," Solomon said.

So is this prevaricating a cruel psychological terror tactic to keep Israel guessing and sow angst? Heitman believes that it's more "the result of dithering while different groups within the system argue it out".

Solomon said the delay had "the added effect of making Israelis anxious and on edge. When is the next café or supermarket going to blow up? Or are they going to attack the Jewish community in Australia or South Africa, or wherever? Remember the bombings in Argentina of Jewish community targets 40 years ago by Iran's proxies."

Attacking a Jewish community outside of Israel might give Iran more plausible deniability but not satisfy those baying for a direct response from Tehran. Said Heitman, "Stepped-up attacks by their proxies will follow, if only

to send a message to the Israeli government that their assassination backfired. The challenge will be to initiate enough - and dramatic enough - such attacks without earning the enmity of countries now 'soft' on Iran and its actions."

"Jews have always been a soft target. They were a target in the Holocaust not having a state, and now they are a target for defending their state," said a security analyst requesting anonymity. "Iran cannot afford a full scale war. It will be isolated in the Middle East. Every day Israel exists gives it a convenient enemy to blame. It doesn't want this spider web to break."

Said Esterhuysen, "Attacking Jewish targets outside Israel - we have seen it before, we'll see it again. It's Israel's soft underbelly. But this would also be a broadening of the conflict."

Any Israeli counter-response would obviously depend on the nature of the possible attack. Another large-scale missile attack would probably elicit an even harsher counterstrike than in April. A formidable Hezbollah attack might trigger a focused Israeli invasion of Lebanon, ushering in the multi-front regional war nobody wants. Katz said such an attack might cause Israel to bomb Lebanon back to the 15th century.

If Israel can fend off a massive missile attack, it may have no need to retaliate whatsoever, Katz argued. "On the other hand, if it incurs severe losses in terms of civilians or infrastructure, the reply is going to be massive, and Israel may take the opportunity to attack Iranian nuclear installations."

Said Heitman, "The problem Iran faces is that the longer it waits, the weaker it looks. It made a mistake by posturing so strongly and then not following through immediately. It also strikes me that it might be looking for an opportunity to kill a senior or otherwise very public [Israeli] figure to make its point but keep it proportional."

The other problem is that an eye for an eye leaves everyone blind.

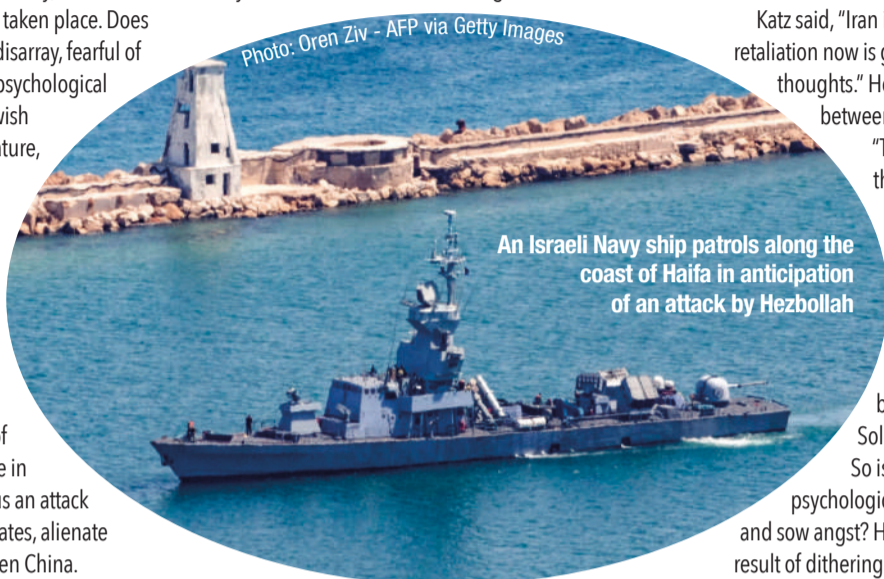


Photo: Oren Ziv - AFP via Getty Images

An Israeli Navy ship patrols along the coast of Haifa in anticipation of an attack by Hezbollah

"I don't think Iran wants an escalation," said Professor Hussein Solomon, a terrorism expert from the University of the Free State, "but it's in a bind. In April, after its diplomats were bombed in Damascus, it signalled to the Israelis and Americans 72 hours before it attacked Israel, alerting them and allowing them to prepare their response."

Dr David Brock Katz, research fellow at Stellenbosch University, said, "The first attack Iran launched from its own soil onto Israel was an abysmal failure. It tested Israeli defensive systems, the Iron Dome and others,



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23 - 25 August 2024

# South African Jewish Report

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## New meaning to Tisha B'Av

As the sun set on Tisha B'Av, there was a silent sigh of relief around the Jewish world, not least of all in Israel. Somehow, getting past this day, historically known for destruction in the Jewish calendar, is reassuring in a post 7 October world. We're aware that there's still a massive threat from Iran and its proxies, Hezbollah and Hamas, and it may well be carried out before the weekend. But we have passed Tisha B'Av.

Tisha B'Av resonated with me this year like never before. I have always found it difficult to yearn for a destroyed Temple or two because, in truth, I find it hard to mourn something that was lost more than 2 000 years ago. Having said that, I do appreciate the huge significance of their destruction for the Jewish people.

But this year, for me, Tisha B'Av was about 7 October and the devastation it signified for Israel, the Israeli people, and the Jewish world. It was a reminder just how fragile our sense of security is and the extent of the hatred towards us some people feel.

For me, Tisha B'Av was a day on which we once again, as we have been doing for 314 days, felt the pain of what our enemies did to us and its reverberations in the Jewish world.

On Black Saturday, we were thrust into a time warp where suddenly, those of us who thought antisemitism was in the past were brought back to reality. We learnt just how deep the hatred of Jews really is.

This is something to mourn on Tisha B'Av. I made time to watch the Aish.com Tisha B'Av video, which I was grateful for. It reminded me of the massive loss, heartbreak, and trauma that was caused when Hamas terrorists and Gazan citizens broke through the border into Israel. There, in a killing frenzy, they raped, murdered, burned alive, beheaded, you name it, they did anything that was depraved, to Jewish men, women, and children. What's more, they did it with glee and laughter. Such hatred is beyond anything I can comprehend.

However, that video reminded me - and it's a lesson to all of us - that out of the hatred, pain, and brokenness come heroes, kindness, and rebirth. From the darkness, we find light. It may take time, but that positivity and depth of strength is in our genes.

It's profound to learn that a woman whose son was kidnapped and held hostage, and after escaping, was then killed by friendly fire, can forgive and care for the Israeli soldiers at fault. Her son was the love of her life, and losing him forever altered her existence, but she holds no animosity towards the Israeli soldiers in Gaza. She feels for them, and wants to help them.

Then there's the jeweller whose son was killed at the Nova festival. He dreamed of his son getting married and that will never be. So, instead, he's giving away engagement rings to soldiers who are coming home between fighting to get engaged to their sweethearts. It started off as just one, but now numbers more than 100. The first person he gave a ring to didn't make it to his chuppah. He died in the war before his wedding day. Although this jeweller lost his son, he dreams of building the nation of Israel and families. This is his way of contributing towards that dream.

We learn of a former high-ranking soldier whose son alerted him to what was happening down south because he was stuck there on a kibbutz with his family. So, this grandfather and grandmother got in their car and drove down south to save their son and his family. But en route, there were many others in deep distress needing help. So, the former soldier did what needed to be done to save them first, even if it meant getting the wounded to hospital. Only once they had saved many lives did they get to their son and his family and save them.

I'm certain that the heroism on 7 October and since then knows no bounds. It's about the values that most of us grow up with, especially in Israel, namely that every life counts. And we cannot leave behind someone whom we may be able to help.

The stories of soldiers, civilians, security guards, women, and men who put their lives on the line to save others on 7 October and since then abound. So few of them really get shared, but they are out there.

I have no doubt that there are bad eggs among us and among Israel Defense Forces soldiers, that's the law of averages. However, as Jews, we grow up valuing life and humanity. We grow up believing that if you save one life, you save the world. Not that I think we all dream of becoming heroes, but I believe that instinct to do good and help others is intrinsic in most of us.

I do recognise the massive damage this war is doing both to Gazans and Israelis. Israel hasn't stopped suffering, and the country is traumatised. The past 10 months have taken us so far from reaching any kind of peace agreement any time soon. There's so much hatred, fear, and distrust, it's almost insurmountable. All we can wish for right now is an end to the war so people can live without the constant trauma, fear, and anxiety.

I recognise however that just as people can see the good through their pain, nothing is impossible. I believe in miracles, especially those created by man.

And much like Tisha B'Av is about mourning terrible losses, it's about rebuilding and rejuvenation. It's about miracles and the deep strength of our people. *Am Yisrael chai!*

**Shabbat shalom!**

**Peta Krost**  
Editor



## It's not rocket science, Ramaphosa, stop supporting Iran!

OPINION

GLEN SEGALL



The conflict between Israel and Iran is unmistakably evident in all seven fronts of the war that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu identified on 26 December 2023. Since then, cyber, legal, and economic fronts can be added to Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Iran itself, Iraqi-Shia militia, Yemeni Houthi and the West Bank, to make 10 fronts.

Israel isn't the only country facing Iranian aggression on these fronts. American President Joe Biden has identified more than 50 nations that have been affected in more than 30 attacks on international shipping in the Red Sea. That includes the use of anti-ship ballistic missiles for the first time in history.

Those who support Iran and its proxies might well heed Netanyahu's promise and warning on the evening of 7 October 2023. He said, "We will target Hamas everywhere it operates." Assassinations of Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and Islamic State terrorist leadership in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank are reminiscent of American targeted assassinations of Al-Qaeda after 9/11.

The most senior was Ismail Haniyeh, the chairperson of the Hamas political bureau, in Teheran on 31 July 2024. The exact details of the assassination, even by whom, are shrouded in mystery. However, the message is clear: no one who threatens Israel and kills Jews can feel safe or secure anywhere. This isn't a first in Israel's history. The Nazi Adolf Eichmann was captured in Argentina on 11 May 1960, brought to trial in Israel, and sentenced to death. The response to the killing of 11 Israelis at the 1972 Munich Olympics was to hunt down and assassinate all the perpetrators, and that took 20 years to complete.

The challenge for Israel is that such signalling isn't always that hard-hitting and effective. Radical Islam glorifies death to justify the martyrdom in the religious jihad effort. Thrown into the cauldron is the almost five-decades long enterprise of Iran in its Islamic revolution to spread Shia Islam globally. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corp and Hezbollah franchises globally are supplemented by various health, education, and charity organisations. These have infiltrated and dominate local communities in despair, especially in Africa. That exemplifies the struggle with Sunni Islam, led by Saudi Arabia for similar influence.

Israel's objective to deter and defend is amplified by efforts to target Iran's uranium enrichment and missile programmes. Neutralising this lethal capability has become existentialist given the ayatollah's threat to wage a "war of annihilation" against Israel. The 11 April 2024 direct attack of more than 330 drones and missiles from Iran and proxies is a sign that this is more than just rhetoric.

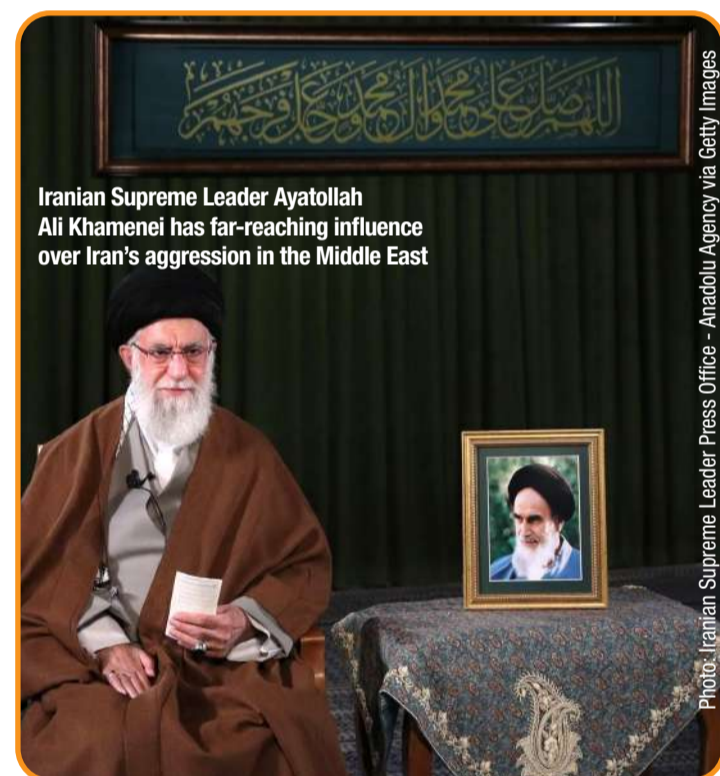
Iranian political, religious, and military leaders are rational to the extent that they don't yet wish to escalate to a full-scale war with Israel or Western countries such as America and Britain as they know they lack the ability to win. If Iran were to attain nuclear capability, this could change. It could then wage unlimited proxy wars like the former Soviet Union did in Korea and Vietnam.

Until then, Iranian tactics include psychological warfare and attrition attacks in a strategy of asymmetrical conflict. The former is shown by the mere threat of an attack on Israel that leads airlines to cancel flights, negatively impacting its economy. The latter is exemplified by daily drone and rocket attacks by Hezbollah on northern Israel that continue unabated. Such attrition could continue, like that by Hamas from Gaza on southern Israel, for almost 20 years. Evacuated Israelis in the south and north cannot go home, nor can their children

start the new school year in September unless this ends.

The way forward and next steps have already been asserted by Netanyahu. He said, "Our objective is singular: to defeat the murderous enemy. We declared 'never again', and we reiterate: 'Never again, now.'" On 28 October 2023, he described the expanding war as Israel's "second war of independence". Clearly an ayatollah-ruled Iran, with its current policy, is a significant abnormality that stands between Middle East peace and Armageddon. Victory isn't going to be easy or quick to achieve. It will take a strong international coalition with local Iranian resistance movements.

The dominoes will fall with the demise of the ayatollah regime. That includes the end of the Syrian and Yemeni civil wars, a kick-off towards elected stable governance in Lebanon and Iraq, and safe shipping through the Red Sea. Without Iranian interference, Israel could sign peace treaties with Lebanon and Syria to supplement those with Egypt and Jordan. It would be one of a few steps towards negotiations with the Palestinians not overshadowed by the violent means of terrorist organisations such as Hezbollah. Most important, without this 10-front war would come the release of hostages held in Gaza.



**Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has far-reaching influence over Iran's aggression in the Middle East**

Photo: Iranian Supreme Leader Press Office - Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

In spite of the global impact of Iranian aggression, especially the economic ramifications, the response of the international community has been varied and not always united and resolute. Some are supporting Iran to their own political and economic detriment. Here, the African National Congress government's support of Iran is somewhat perplexing from a values perspective. It has no apparent tangible gains for such support. It appears to be a one-way street, being drawn into the ideological battle between the West and Iran.

The time has come for the president of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, to demand a retraction of such support. On 19 September 2023, he addressed the United Nations General Assembly, stating that while every human effort should be directed towards realising the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, "our energies have once again been diverted by the scourge of war". To realise his own words, he must demand that Iran halt regional interference, cease support of terrorism, close down its nuclear and missile programmes, and refrain from threatening the annihilation of Israel.

• Glen Segall is a professor at the University of Cambridge; a visiting professor and research fellow in the department of political studies and governance, University of the Free State; and research fellow at the Ezri Center for Iran and Gulf States Research, University of Haifa, Israel.



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# Unstable world often ends badly for Jews

OPINION

The past few weeks have again shown how unstable the world has become, with unpredictable incidents occurring across the globe.

## Disputed elections in Venezuela

A fiercely contested election was held recently in Venezuela. On Friday 2 August, the electoral commission stated that after processing 96.87% of the votes, the incumbent, President Nicolas Maduro, had obtained 51.95% of the votes while opposition candidate Edmundo González got only 43.18%. It didn't make public the data that supports this, and has yet to do so. The opposition has released credible and detailed data from the election showing that it won 67% of the vote, with the incumbent reaching only 30%. Not surprisingly, Venezuela's opposition and multiple Latin American leaders have refused to recognise Maduro's victory; nor has the United States or the European Union. In fact, the US said it would recognise González as the winner. At least 11 people have been killed in the protests against the election results, according to non-governmental organisations, and Venezuelan authorities say that more than 1 000 people have been detained. This story still has a way to run, but instability and violence appear likely to continue.



Anti-immigration protests have taken place across Britain since three young girls were killed in Southport last month

## Race riots across Britain

On 29 July, three young girls were killed in Southport in the north of England. Fuelled by fake online news that an illegal immigrant was responsible, anti-immigration protests then flared across towns and cities in England and Northern Ireland. Mosques and police officers were attacked. In Rotherham, a mob tried to set fire to a hotel they thought was housing asylum-seekers. Police arrested more than 150 people that weekend. As *The Economist* put it, some of the worst race riots since World War II hardly fit the image of a newly stable Britain, so sought by the incoming Labour government with its new huge parliamentary majority. Prime Minister Keir Starmer held his third emergency meeting of the week on Friday, and told ministers and police chiefs to "remain on high alert" to the threat of further rioting across England and Northern

Ireland. Almost 500 rioters have been arrested so far. Countries like Nigeria and Kenya have even issued travel advisory notices, warning their citizens planning to travel to the UK that there is an increased risk of violence. All this in one of the world's oldest and most stable democracies!

## Fall of Bangladesh's leader

On 5 August, Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh's prime minister, resigned and fled the country following weeks of violent protests against a job quota scheme. What was so surprising about this was that she had ruled the country with an iron grip since 2009 and looked unassailable and invulnerable. She was relatively quickly driven out by a massive example of people power on the streets of Dhaka, much to the surprise of Bangladesh's neighbours, who seemed unsure how to react initially.

## Africa isn't immune

Instability also broke out in two of Africa's most important countries: Kenya and Nigeria. Protests in Nigeria began over the soaring cost of living, with hundreds of thousands of people taking to the streets in the capital, Abuja, in Lagos, and other big cities, marching against economic hardship and crime. The protests eventually ebbed only on Monday 7 August, following a crackdown by security forces, with Amnesty International saying that at least 13 people had been killed in clashes with police since the start of the protests. Police put the death toll at seven.

This follows ongoing protests in Kenya, where young people returned to the capital's streets for an eighth week of demonstrations on Thursday 8 August, as the president swore in a new Cabinet. Police fired tear gas at protesters in the Nairobi city centre as many businesses remained closed. The demonstrations started nearly two months ago, organised mostly by young Kenyans against unpopular proposed tax increases that were imposed to reduce the budget deficit. They persisted as more citizens joined the largely leaderless, social-media-organised movement against corruption and the high cost of living. At least 61 people have been killed in the protests nationwide, according to the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights.

Things are likely to get more

wobbly and unbalanced as we race to the end of the year. There is, of course, a US election in November, with two candidates who hold radically different views about where they want to take the US. There has already been an attempted assassination on one candidate, and to say the US is bitterly divided politically is putting it mildly. The wars in the Middle East and Ukraine continue unabated, as does the civil war in Myanmar. France still isn't sure who will lead the new government that has to be formed after the Olympics, nor what the ruling coalition will look like, after no party came close to securing a majority in their recent elections.

This is just to mention a few hot spots. There are many more. We should all buckle up and hold on tight as we're on a wild ride into 2025! Unfortunately, we Jews have seen this movie before. Throughout history, as soon as the world goes through an unstable and unbalanced phase, with extremists on the hard left and hard right gaining power, it generally ends badly for the Jews - and other vulnerable minorities. The 1930s are a good example. Let's hope this time it's different, but as the old saying goes, the more things change, the more they stay the same!

• Harry Joffe is a Johannesburg tax and trust attorney.



HARRY JOFFE

# Pro-Palestinian posturing while South Africa burns

OPINION

I was astonished to see the African National Congress (ANC's) Fikile Mbalula and the department of sport, arts, and culture campaigning against Israel at the Paris 2024 Olympics. This was just as the media broke the international story that 95 Libyan nationals had been discovered at an illegal, non-state military camp in Mpumalanga, posing a national security threat to the entire Southern African Development Community region.

On Saturday morning, I woke up to the devastating news that eight innocent people had been killed in a tavern in the Kanana township of the North West province. Isn't this supposed to be the government's priority? It's increasingly evident that the political leadership doesn't prioritise the security and safety of impoverished South Africans.

It needs to be emphasised that more than 84 people are killed daily in South Africa, a number that may have increased in 2024. Between January and December 2023, the South African Police Service reported 27 368 murders, an alarming figure. And that's just murders.

Though there are white victims, the majority are black. The tragic reality is that black-on-black violence is prevalent, with murder hotspots identified in the Western Cape, Gauteng, Eastern Cape, and

KwaZulu-Natal. Political leaders are aware of these dangers, which is why they employ private security for themselves and their properties, leaving the poor to fend for themselves. South Africans deserve diligent service and constant protection within their country. This hasn't been the case for many years.

threat to innocent people. In fact, terrorism experts have previously warned that terror groups carrying out attacks in Africa are using South Africa as a financial and training base for their heinous activities, resulting in numerous deaths. The country is dotted with illegal, unregistered spaza stores - small shops operating from a

and greed of public servants and politicians.

Furthermore, our very own health department has conceded in parliament that 15 000 children are diagnosed annually with severe acute malnutrition, with 1 000 dying directly from it. And this is happening in a resource-rich nation! Severe acute malnutrition is one of the three leading causes of child deaths, accounting for another 10 000 deaths a year.

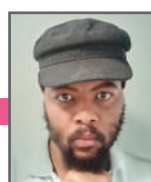
Our political leadership must start treating citizens as equal by prioritising them and providing dignified public services. As the saying goes, charity begins at home. We cannot claim to fight for social justice globally while failing to protect our citizens from brutal killings that often don't get investigated, leaving victims without justice. We need to take ourselves seriously.

How does the Palestine-Israel matter become South Africa's priority when we're the world's most unequal country? Ten percent of the population, which is white, owns 80% of the country's wealth, but the political leadership is obsessed with countries that are thousands of kilometres away.

South African politicians have convinced themselves that the Israel-Palestine conflict holds political significance and can garner electoral support. However, this hasn't proven true, as the ANC lost 17% of its national votes in spite of making a considerable noise about the Middle East conflict.

The department of sport, arts, and culture should focus on domestic issues. Our youth are struggling with alcohol and drugs, yet it's more concerned about Palestine. Why not collaborate with communities to rehabilitate lost youth and create arts and rehabilitation programmes to reduce substance abuse? South Africans voted for representatives to deliver quality services, not to focus on distant conflicts. While our government criticises Israel, there are lessons to be learned from Israel's experience in handling terrorism and surviving amid constant threats. We should also learn from other countries' use of diplomacy to resolve issues and avoid unnecessary tension.

• Kenneth Moeng Mokgatle is a political writer and researcher based at Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. • Article originally published on [layoftheland.online](http://layoftheland.online)



KENNETH MOENG MOKGATLE



The South African government needs to focus more on local issues such as child malnutrition and less on issues in the Middle East

People live in fear within their communities while we claim to address complex issues in Palestine, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, and Ukraine. We're failing to secure our borders, which have always been porous. Many undocumented migrants from other countries pose a national security

private home selling food, drinks, cigarettes, and so on to local people, especially in townships. They don't comply with tax regulations, yet the government has ignored warnings that some of this money is being used to finance terrorism. Jihadist financing is flourishing in South Africa due to the complacency

## Cape Holocaust Centre celebrates

TALI FEINBERG

Twenty-five years ago Holocaust education didn't exist in South Africa. Today, it's an integral part of the national school curriculum, with thousands of pupils and educators visiting the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre (CTHGC) and its sister centres in Johannesburg and Durban each year, and hundreds of workshops training teachers in Holocaust education across the country.

This is due to the vision and insight of CTHGC founder Myra Osrin. A quarter of a century ago, she helped bring an Anne Frank exhibition to South Africa, which toured the country for 18 months. Afterwards, teachers and students kept asking for more. "I realised a Holocaust centre could be of great value to South Africans," recalled Osrin at an event on 7 August celebrating 25 years of the CTHGC's role in promoting respect for diversity through education.

It was around that time that Osrin became aware of two "non-Jewish brothers building the first Holocaust centre in the United Kingdom". Curious, she headed to London and then took "an hour and 20-minute train ride that would change my life". That journey took her to the Beth Shalom Holocaust Memorial Museum in Nottinghamshire, England. It was there that she found the sons of a Methodist minister, James and Stephen Smith, along with their mother, Marina, who had visited Yad Vashem in 1991 and were so stunned by what they learned that they decided to build a centre that not only memorialised the Holocaust but taught its lessons for humanity.

It was at this point that the Smiths joined forces with the "unstoppable" Myra Osrin, in the words of Stephen Smith, who played an integral role in the creation of the CTHGC and became its patron. Smith went on to become executive director of Steven Spielberg's USC Shoah Foundation, among his many other roles in Holocaust and genocide education. He joined the CTHGC in celebrating its quarter century of making an immeasurable impact on the lives of South Africans.



Thousands of pupils visit the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre each year

Today, about 556 000 people have visited the CTHGC, including members of the public, pupils, teachers, civil servants, police, military personnel, businesspeople, activists, and professionals.

Infusing his address with Jewish imagery, Smith began by reflecting on how, "In the book of Genesis, when G-d calls out to Abraham, he responds with a single word: 'hineni' [here am I]. Twenty-five years ago, a vision took root in this place when Myra Osrin answered the call and said, 'Hineni - here am I'. With her answer to that call came a vision of remembrance, of education, a vision that has grown and flourished."



Volunteer guide Vivienne Basckin showing pupils around the exhibition

He noted that 25 years later, "We have witnessed an entire generation grow. The 15-year-olds who first walked through these doors are now 40. Now their own children come here. These children

were born into freedom and democracy, and so it's here that they understand more about the price of freedom, the vigilance it requires, and the responsibility it bestows upon them."

He said "hineni" also means "we are here to bear witness", and paid tribute to the Capetonian Holocaust

Continued on page 9 >>

## quarter century of education

survivors who have dedicated themselves to sharing their harrowing stories.

He recalled that in 1999, Osrin asked him to interview three survivors in one day: Miriam Lichterman, Henia Bryer, and Pinchas Gutter. "Three families, three homes, almost identical trajectories through the Warsaw ghetto and Majdanek," said Smith. "That night, I sat on my balcony in Sea Point feeling destroyed. I had always encountered one story at a time. Three was unbearable. That's when I truly understood that I would never understand." And yet, he continues to try to understand every day.

That was also when he first met Gutter, who now lives in Canada. "Since then, Pinchas has been my friend, my mentor, my journeyman," said Smith. "During my recent conversion to Judaism, Pinchas guided me, meeting every Sunday to study the weekly biblical portion. Our friendship, rooted in this place, continues to grow and flourish. It stands as a testament to the power of this centre to forge connections across generations, across experiences, across the divides that too often separate us."

Said Smith, "The CTHGC asks us to explore what we learn from those who kill. What we learn from those who save. What we learn from those who forgive. The lessons of the Holocaust aren't confined to one time, one place, or one group of people. They are universal lessons about the fragility of democracy, the dangers of hatred, the responsibility we all share to stand up for human dignity and human rights."

His thoughts were echoed by Konstanty Gebert, a Polish journalist and a Jewish activist, who recalled the story of a Rwandan genocide survivor who put up pictures of the Holocaust in his apartment and asked his community to come to his home to learn about it. "He was saying, 'It didn't only happen to us,' said

Gebert. Recognising each other's pain allows people to "understand the dramatic history of others", which is why a centre like the CTHGC plays such an important role in shaping the future.

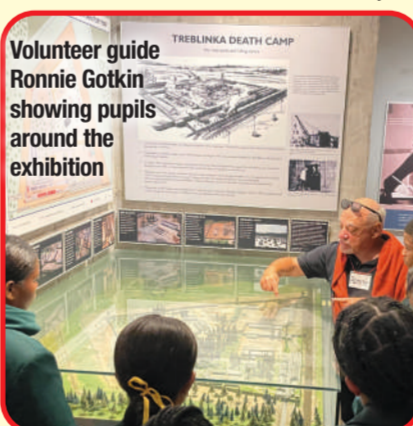
Ellen Germain, the United States special envoy for Holocaust issues, said it was "an education to be here", and that the CTHGC's "dual role of a memorial and an education centre is even more vital today". Her office is witnessing "the largest rise of disinformation and misinformation" the world has ever seen, and social media and artificial intelligence have created confusion about the world in the mind of the average person. "That's why it's so important that facts are protected in

institutions like the CTHGC, which also teaches critical thinking," Germain said. "We need to help our youth become resilient to disinformation."

The chairperson of the CTHGC and its former director, Richard Freedman, said the centre was a beacon against the "tide of despondency" that had enveloped our world and that it would continue to "foster vigilance and inspire activism on all fronts". He thanked the talented team that came together to make the centre a reality 25 years ago, many of whom continue to

work with it to this day. The centre's director, Jakub Nowakowski, emphasised that the past 25 years were "just the beginning", and that the centre continued to evolve and engage with current challenges. Looking to the future, the CTHGC would have an exhibition of testimonies from Rwanda, was working with grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, and would be leading a tour of Jewish Poland in 2025.

Said Smith, "To be willing to say 'Here am I' in a world in which anti-Jewish hate grows and sorrow and mistrust abound - are we willing to be the bridge, to walk into the breach, to shine a light, to be fully human? We'll never complete this work, but neither shall we desist from carrying it out. As we celebrate this milestone, let's say, once again, 'Hineni - here I am'. Ready to remember, to teach, to learn, to hope, to act, to be the hands that reach out across divides."



Volunteer guide Ronnie Gotkin showing pupils around the exhibition

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# World peace? Women's Day dialogue that actually matters

OPINION

DEBBY EDELSTEIN



On 8 August 2012, writer, academic, and activist Helen Moffet wrote a furious blog post titled "Take your Women's Day and shove it".

Of course, it went viral. You can find it easily enough on the web if you're comfortable with strong language. It's far more powerful in its original form but essentially, Moffet rants against the government's complete abandonment of the country's women and says, "The public spectacle of hypocrisy that is Women's Day is just rubbing salt into their wounds."

Twelve years later, there's still a growing heaviness around National Women's Day on 9 August that shows no sign of lifting.

It can make the well-intentioned "happy Women's Day" sentiments that circulate on WhatsApp seem tone-deaf to the issues that make this day anything but happy for many women in this country.

Our National Women's Day commemorates the 1956 Women's March to Pretoria, where about 20 000 women of all races protested against the apartheid government's pass laws. It honours the contributions of women like Lilian Ngoyi and Albertina Sisulu, and remembers their role in shaping the nation.

But the way Women's Day is celebrated today - with goodie bags and offers of discounts - is perhaps symptomatic of how we prefer to avoid difficult but essential conversations and offer spa days instead.

In more than a decade of designing

and hosting women's leadership conferences, I learned that there were certain weighty social topics that wouldn't attract the crowds.

Audiences would far prefer panels about lifting other women up, how to network better, or how to boost your personal brand.



Women need to engage more with other women and now is the perfect time to do so

It made me think of the scene in the movie *Miss Congeniality* in which Sandra Bullock smiles beatifically and says "World peace" in answer to the question "What's the one most important thing our society needs?"

Bullock plays Federal Bureau of Investigation agent Gracie Hart, who goes undercover in the Miss USA beauty pageant to prevent a group from bombing the event. Gracie is a straight-talking cop rather than a people pleaser. But when

her first retort, "harsher punishment for parole violators", gets no response from the audience, she reconsiders. And when she resorts instead to the "world peace" response that the audience expects, the crowd goes wild.

It's a line that has become almost iconic in the way it captures what happens when we are seduced into saying what everyone wants to hear rather than what needs to be said.

There's a time to pitch the conversation at a level that's appropriate. But the role of a leader is to host the conversations that need to be held, to include all voices present, and to pose the important questions that need to be answered. These are the most important contributions women leaders can offer.

Some years ago, I spent some time researching the area of online gaming. Author

Jane McGonigal in her book *Reality has Broken*, tells us that the average young person in the United Kingdom will spend more than 10 000 hours gaming online by the age of 21.

Malcolm Gladwell first proposed the 10 000-hour theory in his best-selling book *Outliers: The Story of Success*. Ten thousand hours of practice and preparation seems to be the crucial threshold that makes the difference between being good at something and being extraordinary at it.

The question McGonigal poses is what exactly are gamers getting good at? The conclusion she comes to is that the core skill being developed is that of collaboration. The ability to problem-solve and work with strangers from around the world.

I've asked myself a similar question over the years when it comes to applying these same principles to the skills that women learn when we serve soup and pour tea, and when we learn how to include others and make them comfortable. What exactly are we getting good at? Or rather, what are the skills we're mastering as we host gatherings?

These aren't the skills of housekeeping and domesticity. Rather, we're honing the ability to organise, to unite, to mobilise, and to convene. We're mastering the skills required to manage, work with, and lead groups of all sizes. We're learning how to read the room, and how to lead the room. We're learning observation, practising listening, and noticing what remains unsaid.

As the world shifts to take these skills more seriously, it's an indictment on the role women still occupy that we need to be reminded that the strengths traditionally associated with our leadership, are skills that we're poised to strengthen and claim. The ability to host dialogue, manage conflict, find common ground, and model respect in the midst of hatred. These are the leadership skills we need more than ever.

The good news is that women have a natural ability to host conversations, create

safe spaces, and make others feel welcome.

Introducing and hosting conversations are the skills that have launched humanitarian relief efforts that have earned the Nobel Peace Prize. They are also the same skills that are used by neighbourhoods, parents, and teachers to solve local problems.

The conversations that will make the most difference won't happen in auditoriums. They will happen when women speak up about what matters most, and when men listen more to what needs to be said.

In the words of Gloria Steinem: "One of the simplest paths to deep change is for the less powerful to speak as much as they listen, and for the more powerful to listen as much as they speak".

We have a collective responsibility to continue the work of the women who walked before us, and to protect the future of the women who will follow.

These are the kinds of conversations we need more of during women's month. And there's no shortage of talented women leaders to step up to host them.

• *Debby Edelstein is the founder of QualityLife Company, a global leadership coaching consultancy and the creator of leadership development programme WeLead Circles. She is co-author of "Unapologetically Her: Global perspectives of Women's Triumphs, Strategies and Resilience" and a member of the Board of Advisors at Harvard Business Review.*

## When finding love later is right on time

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

Whether you meet your person much later than you expect or find love a second time around, it's never too late to write your love story.

In marking Tu B'Av - the Jewish holiday of love - on 19 August, we celebrate those who believe in a lifetime of possibilities.

She's in catering, he's in coffee. Crossing paths at various *simchas*, their relationship now seems inevitable. But it took a while before Simon and Ilana Zelkin (nee Markowitz) discovered a love connection.

"We got along, but I just thought of him as a friend and business associate until I invited him over for Sukkot last year, and he took my hand," Ilana recalls. Though the move was quite a shock for her, she has never looked back.

"We started dating at the end of September last year, got engaged at the beginning of March, and were married on 8 May," she says. Ilana is 49 and Simon 56. Though the two planned their wedding quickly, mainly to give Ilana's sick mother a reason to get out of bed and recover, marriage was inevitable. "Simon had been married before and didn't want to do it again," Ilana recalls. "I just thought we'd be life partners, but three months into dating, he was telling people he wanted to marry me."

Simon says he knew he'd found

the right person. "I dated quite a few people, but nobody was ever there for me, and Ilana was. Our values in life, Yiddishkeit, and business also intertwined. Everything was there."

More than 20 years earlier, newly divorced and in his mid-30s, Simon re-entered the dating world with trepidation. "It was scarier than when I was younger," he says. "The world has moved on while you've been married. You're no longer the same person you were the first time around, and you're set in your ways."

Having never wanted children, Simon found it difficult to meet women who were child-free or shared his views. Asked what kept him



Simon and Ilana Zelkin

saying 'I'd love to share my life and my home with someone but all in the right time and when it's meant to be.' I feel blessed that Hashem heard me. I didn't give up hope, but I didn't obsess about it." It was also leading a full life and removing herself from a toxic relationship that she believes opened the door to meeting Simon.

With Simon, she knew things were different. "As you get older you don't have a list of

requirements," she says. "You just want someone you can lie with, talk to at night, and feel comfortable with. He brings that. His love is non-conditional."

Before Karin Arbeter began dating, Phil Arbeter (who used to live across the road from her sister with his ex-wife) she says she didn't think she'd meet anyone. At 52, Phil was more than 16 years her

senior, and she recalls being terrified to date him as she'd heard horror stories from his ex. Yet the truth was undeniable. Like Simon, Phil had sworn off marriage, but seven months later, he and Karin were under the chuppah. "Twenty-eight years later, and here we are," Karin says.

She says the secret to a happy marriage is really considering the other person. "You have to give and take and negotiate things that are important to you and that are important to the other person.

Be flexible. The worst thing you can do is to have a shopping list of what you're looking for." Happily dating, Shana Ginsberg\* says that when she got divorced four years ago, she was 56 and thought there was no way she would meet someone at that age.

"I'm now 60 and realise there are lots of wonderful men out there - either divorced or widowed," she says. "Dating at this age is fun because it comes without the angst and fear we have as young adults."

The fact that she already has children and is clear about what she wants in a partner means that Ginsberg doesn't feel like she's on the clock. "In dating when you're older, we all come with our baggage," she says. "So, it's not enough to find love and compatibility, it's important to figure out if my

baggage can fit with his baggage."

Though well-meaning loved ones urge her not to be fussy, Ginsberg says she's not willing to be with someone who's not right for her. "I have long since learnt that there's nothing better than a wonderful relationship, but being on my own is far better than being in a bad relationship."

Never married, Susan Jacobson was 49 when she met her partner - a divorcé four years younger than her - on Tinder. "I knew he was different because he was a bit shy, very patient, and just had a kind and honest-looking face," she says. "After having kissed many a frog and dated people just for the sake of going on dates and seeing if anything would happen, I'd come home in tears, saying, 'I'm never doing it again.'" Yet Jacobson would always get back out there, and learned not to compromise.

"I believe that if it's meant to be, it will be. You can't be too needy; you need to be happy in your own space first." Today, she and her partner have been happily together for more than five years. They needed to adapt to living together, Jacobson says, yet the fact that they were embraced by each other's families made everything easier.

"Flirt a little, just have fun, and stop worrying about meeting the one," she advises those looking for love. "You need to meet a few people with different interests and different backgrounds to know what you're looking for in life."

\*Not her real name



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# Up close with an apartheid killer

**Isa Jacobson** has spent more than four years creating *The Apartheid Killer*, a documentary that will be aired on the BBC World Service and as a series of podcasts. It explores a series of shootings in 1980s South Africa in which the late private security guard Louis van Schoor killed at least 39 people. The documentary is based on interviews Jacobson conducted with Van Schoor and the relatives of his victims. Van Schoor was arrested in 1991, but with many of his killings signed off by police as “justifiable homicides”, he served only 12 years. The *SA Jewish Report* spoke to Jacobson, a journalist and filmmaker.

## What drew you to documentary filmmaking?

Documentaries tell real people's stories and some of those stories are truly remarkable. I also make films for nongovernment organisations and those real stories help to communicate people's lived experiences to a wider world, especially to those who may never get to see how those people live. It's important always to be respectful of those experiences.

## What have you done to date as a filmmaker?

I made a documentary that focused mostly on Van Schoor's daughter, titled *Daddy's Girl*, before I started making films for non-profit organisations. These films have taken me to multiple African countries, often shooting alone in urban and rural areas. Four years ago, Charlie Northcott, my BBC co-director, contacted me to see if I would be able to get Van Schoor to talk to me again. That led to *The Apartheid Killer*.

## What drew you to this particular investigative documentary?

I was asked by the BBC to find the survivors and the families of Van Schoor's victims. It was this investigation that really drew me in and propelled me forward. Finding Marlene and Raymond Soenies, and helping them to bury their brother and father, Edward, gave me a focus beyond the investigation.

## Why did you believe it was necessary to do this now, so many years after the end of apartheid?

Many stories about the apartheid era haven't been told. Many loved ones lie in unmarked graves, and those families haven't had the chance to heal. We need to reveal the truth to stop the intergenerational trauma and help the country to heal.

## This will be shown on BBC Africa Eye and as a season of the World of Secrets podcast. How did the former come about, and what exactly is the latter?

The BBC Africa Eye documentary is 75 minutes long, and the *World of Secrets* podcast, season 3, is a six-part podcast. Both are titled *The Apartheid Killer*.

## How can South Africans access it?

The link to the documentary on YouTube is: <https://tinyurl.com/3ewuuy5f>

The podcast can be found on most podcast platforms. Here's the link to Apple podcasts: <https://podcasts.apple.com/za/podcast/world-of-secrets/id1704480561?i=1000662742692>

## How did you get access to Van Schoor, and why was he willing to speak so openly to you?

I had met Van Schoor when he was still in prison more than 20 years ago. He was keen to tell his side of the story, and I think that remained the case many years later, with the focus more on him. Probably knowing me helped, and being a white South African certainly played a role in making him feel relaxed. It may even have helped that I'm a woman.

## Why were the families keen to talk, and what struck you about the fact that they were keen?

Marlene and Raymond were left with so many unanswered questions, and were seeking the truth and some closure. I was grateful that they were so willing to open their hearts and homes to me and Charlie, and speak about such painful experiences.



Louis van Schoor in the documentary *The Apartheid Killer*

## Why weren't Van Schoor's victims on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission list, and how did he get away with it?

Van Schoor's crimes were considered to have been committed while he was a private security guard. The victims weren't on the TRC list for that reason. The anti-apartheid activist who worked to stop him was Sharlene Cragge at the Black Sash. He

was killing with impunity, but the white community kept encouraging him by hiring him to guard their businesses. And the police kept rubber stamping his killings.

## How do the victims' loved ones feel about the 'apartheid killer' now?

It's important to watch the film and listen to the podcast to get the answer to that. But it won't speak for every victims' loved one.

## Do you and those you have interviewed believe that apartheid - as in racial hatred - has ended in South Africa? What are your thoughts on this?

There was no true justice served after the TRC, and we still need to look long and hard at the sins of the past in order to move on. I don't believe that apartheid-era killers and torturers should have been allowed to walk free. And if white people are seen to be given free passes, it's deeply problematic.

## Who do you hope will watch and listen to this and why?

I hope it will open up a discussion in the country about genuine restorative justice and a route to

reparation for Van Schoor's victims.

## What do you hope your audience will take home from this?

That no one should be allowed to say that they were just following orders and get away with committing heinous crimes. That we need to reveal the truth before those that hold the truth die. And I hope Jewish audiences will feel the compulsion to stand up for justice in today's world.

# Women fight for sporting chance as fans increase

SAUL KAMIONSKY

**P**rofessional golfer Stacy Bregman, Banyana Banyana-capped footballer Erin Herz, and 2024 Touch Rugby World Cup bronze medallist Hayley Landau have overcome various challenges to excel in what were traditionally male-dominated sports.

Trying to find sponsors to help her play in tournaments overseas is a challenge for Bregman, who has been playing in Europe for the past three and a half months, having started her season with the Sunshine Ladies Tour in South Africa.

"Sometimes, you're not having your best season and you don't know when your next paycheck is coming because the earnings are dependent on how you play," says Bregman, a professional golfer since 2006. "You go through a little bit of a dry spell, which can be quite daunting."

These challenges can be harder for women golfers. "Money-wise, the pay gap between men and women is quite big and the prize money is different," Bregman says. "So, we feel this difference more sometimes. We need to play more consistently."

But she says women's golf has gone from strength to strength during her time in the sport. "There are now more sponsors. Bigger banks and bigger companies are getting involved. The Sunshine Tour in South Africa is growing." She notes a substantial difference in the prize purse compared with 10 years ago. "Even with the LPGA [Ladies Professional Golf Association] in Europe and Asia, prize funds are starting to increase. People are getting excited about the women's game."

Bregman says women previously didn't get as much coverage as men, but that's changing. She enjoyed the huge coverage the women's game got in the just-completed Olympic Games. "The whole week was dedicated to the women playing."

Herz, who plays football for TS Galaxy Queens in the Hollywoodbets Super League, the topflight of women's football in South Africa, says grit, determination, and a burning desire to be better every chance she gets have played a role in her rise to the top of the game.

Her main challenge has been "lack of investment and general concern for women's football. We're not taken nearly as seriously as we deserve to be considering the talent we produce. Once again, determination gets me through because I have to believe better days are coming. I also do extra work on the side

to deal with the lack of investment and keep myself afloat."

Landau scored five tries, including a hat trick against Singapore, as the over-35 Springbok team took bronze at the recently concluded Touch Rugby World Cup in Nottingham, England.

Having suffered a hamstring tear leading up to the 2019 World Cup, Landau was happy to get through this year's showpiece injury-free. "I was probably the fittest I've ever been," she says.

Not only does Landau often come up against younger opponents, sometimes she takes to the field as one of three women alongside three men in mixed matches. Having training games against men's teams "helps us to read the play at a faster pace", says Landau, a touch rugby player since 1997.

"The other challenge, from a woman's point of view, is that the majority of our team have had children. If you've had babies, sometimes your ligaments have stretched, maybe you're not as flexible, and your body isn't as strong as, say, a younger woman who hasn't had children, so you've got to work with your fitness, strength, and conditioning."

Herz is in the process of returning from a long-term injury, which has been tough mentally for her, though she says, "I've recovered physically, and am eager to get better and better."

Herz says women's soccer has grown immensely during her time in the sport. "Starting at grassroots level, there are so many more youth tournaments and trials for youngsters to showcase their abilities and put their names on the map. This then builds up our impressive national team, which once struggled to qualify for the World Cup and is now moving through the group stages and challenging big-name countries. It's so exciting to be a part of it."

"I absolutely love what I do," Bregman says, discussing the secret for her longevity as a golfer. "The people who have supported me - my family, friends, and sponsors - have also kept me going."

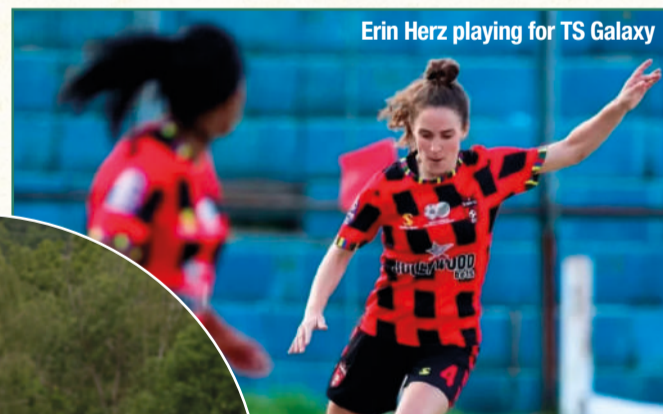
Bregman advises young South African sportswomen to be determined, dedicated, and resilient. "If this is the career that you want, you're going to experience some ups and downs. If you think that you're good enough, keep grinding, and just keep believing."

She says this season has been decent for her. "I feel like I'm playing better than my results, but there's something good happening. My game just needs to kick a little bit and find a formal shine."

Bregman, who has aspirations to play in the Olympics, says juggling golf with family commitments can be hard. "I'm fortunate to have a family that supports me and understands. When certain competitions come up and overlap with certain things, like a 50th celebration or a friend's wedding, they are pretty lenient with me."



Stacy Bregman



Erin Herz playing for TS Galaxy

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# Pokémon champ takes his best game to Hawaii

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Being top of your game is awesome, but even more fascinating if the game is Pokémon Trading Card Game (Pokémon TCG). Twelve-year-old Zac Aufrichtig has made it to number one in his age group in South Africa, having recently won the Special Event (SPE) tournament in Johannesburg. This secured him an invitation to the World Pokémon Championships in Honolulu, Hawaii, this month.

This Grade 6 Herzlia pupil, who aspires to become the number-one Pokémon player in the world, started playing the Pokémon Go mobile game four years ago after taking an interest in it while on holiday in Knysna with his uncle's family. "I saw them playing the game, and I started playing with them," he says.

"Zac rose through the ranks pretty quickly," Aufrichtig's dad, Daniel, says. "He has been playing the card game for only two years. A lot of his opponents have been playing for much, much longer. If you have a look at the age of the contenders, there are a range of Pokémon players competing, from kids all the way through to adults."

The world championships, the pinnacle of competitive Pokémon, brings together the best Pokémon players from across the globe. The tournament is divided into three

categories – Masters, Seniors, and Juniors. Aufrichtig is competing in the latter, which consists of players aged six to 12 years. Referring to the tournament he won in Johannesburg as "one of the top events in South Africa", Aufrichtig says, "A lot of the Western players travelled to Johannesburg for that tournament. It's a normal tournament but a lot stricter, and you win bigger prizes."

He went on to place fifth in the Cape Town SPE.

"All the tournaments you play accumulate points, based on which you either get invited to the world championships or not. Zac made the cut," his dad says.

The world championships span over three days, with several games each day, to form a final eight. At least 19 South Africans across all age categories are competing in Hawaii.

Aufrichtig has tried unsuccessfully to get his family into the game. They have tied the championships into Aufrichtig's Barmitzvah present, which allows them to go from Hawaii to Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Aufrichtig loves Pokémon because he believes it's strategic, not just based on luck, "so you get to use your skill. The game is fun, and you can meet people through it."



He attends three lessons a week under his 14-year-old coach, a school friend of his who also qualified for the world championships.

Aufrichtig plays in Pokémon competitions

on the weekends in Cape Town. "I have a few friends between the ages of 12 and 13 who go with me," he says.

He has built his own deck of cards, which he has collected through buying and trading. It's with this deck that he goes into each game to compete.

If Aufrichtig were to explain the game to a beginner, he would say, "You build a deck of 60 cards that work nicely together. The Pokémon have a HP - a health point", which shows how healthy a Pokémon is, indicating how much damage it can take before fainting. "You want to try to knock out your opponents. You have six prize cards, the first one to complete their prize cards wins."

"There are three ways to win. The first is you take all your prize cards. Another

is when your opponent runs out of cards in their deck", or you knock out all your opponent's in-play Pokémon.

Aufrichtig, who plays basketball and is part of the orchestra at Herzlia, also plays the live version of the card game on his phone, and sometimes plays the Pokémon video games on Nintendo Switch.

"Pokémon has gone way past a video game or a child's game," his dad says. "The strategy of some of these cards is pretty intense to understand and learn."

Indeed, Pokémon is described as a pop-culture phenomenon that has expanded from video games to trading cards, manga, anime, films, and mobile games.

Competitors at the championships, which have been around since 2004, will be able to enjoy a museum on the history of the Pokémon World Championships; a Merchant Room, where they can find unique Pokémon items for their collection from local vendors; and a Collect & Trade Corner, where they can trade with fellow Pokémon fans.

Taiwan's Shao Tong Yen won the junior division of the card game at last year's championships in Japan, while a Brazilian and American won the other two categories.

Japan usually does well at the world championships, says Aufrichtig, who looks forward to competing in Honolulu, "one of the bigger Pokémon cities".

## Thirteen-year-old shoots to prominence in KZN soccer

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Thirteen-year-old Mikaela Pillemer captained the KwaZulu-Natal Invitational Primary School Soccer Association Izinkanyezi team at the interprovincial Fran Hilton-Smith Tournament in Limpopo this month.

She led her side to win the bronze medal, while showing shooting prowess in front of goal.

This Umhlanga-based Grade 7 student at Crawford International La Lucia was named as one of the most valuable players (MVPs) of the Under-13 girls tournament, held from 1 to 4 August.

She scored several great goals, including some shots that packed a punch from far out.

Pillemer says it felt good to win a bronze medal. "I was proud of our team and myself because we accomplished everything we had trained for. Going into the tournament, we were hoping to win. At the end, we were very, very close."

Hilton-Smith presented Pillemer with the bronze medal following the fourth edition of the tournament, named after the former Banyana Banyana coach, a key figure in the growth of women's football in South Africa and abroad.

After coming second in their first-round group at the tournament, Pillemer's side progressed as one of the top four teams that would battle it out for the cup. The matches between the top four were very close, no team winning more than once. "One goal could have changed it for us, and we could have come first," Pillemer says.

A memorable moment was "winning our last game because our opponents were meant to be quite a hard team. We managed to beat them 1-0 and secure

third spot. Another special moment was when we were facing the team that ended up winning – [Johannesburg Primary Schools Football Association Southern]."

Neither team had found the back of the net until deep into the game. Pillemer's powerful shot from outside the penalty area put her side 1-0 up. "We were all cheering," she says.

Tournament chairperson Cheneé Green, who handed Pillemer her MVP award at the closing ceremony, said, "It has been my greatest reward watching Mikaela grow into the player she is today. I see only great things for her if she continues to push through and follow her passion."

Izinkanyezi coach Damien Pierce also sang Pillemer's

praises. "Miks has really grown in her game. The way she takes instruction and implements it is remarkable. She is an amazing talent."

Says Terri Pillemer, Mikaela's mother, "Mikaela played in the same tournament last year, but not in the A team. She was only 12 then. Now, as a 13-year-old, to be back and playing in the KZN primary school A team and captaining the team, people were just so proud of her and kept saying what a fantastic captain she is and how good she is at leading the team."

During the matches, Pillemer could be seen guiding her teammates. She would use the team's special catchphrases to explain what playing structure they should adopt on the field.

A few weeks ago, Pillemer was announced as the captain at a capping ceremony, and received KwaZulu-Natal colours for the second time, having also represented her province last year. "The heads of all the schools representing the province were present because the girls represent their schools as well as their province," Terri says.

The KwaZulu-Natal team was selected in December and



Mikaela Pillemer in action against Umlazi Young Lions Football Club

from then on, trained every weekend. "The first round of trials had been to make the North Durban team and thereafter, she had to try out for a slightly bigger pool before making it into the KZN squad," Terri says.

Pillemer, whose family are big Liverpool fans, has been playing soccer since she was very young, probably as soon as she could walk. "My dad has always loved soccer, so I've always played soccer with him. My brother also played soccer."

As a five-year-old, Pillemer started playing for a club called Juventus, a team she has been with ever since, not only in the girls' side, but also the boys' side. She also played for a

team called the Centre of Excellence.

"I love the way you always feel so free on the soccer field," Pillemer says. "I'm happy when I play. Everyone feels connected. Soccer is a beautiful sport to play."

Pillemer loves challenging herself. "On one holiday, she set a challenge to be able to juggle the soccer ball a certain number of times," Terri says. "She did this without the ball touching the ground, using different parts of her body. On another holiday, she set herself the goal of learning the around-the-world trick with a soccer ball, and achieved it."

## US students' summit promotes Israel advocacy

LEE TANKLE

For South African students, spending time with those from American universities "opened our eyes to the fact that campus leaders can play a pivotal role in changing society and the government's decisions or attitudes".

So says Klaas Mokgomole, a former activist for the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) coalition and student, who now works with the South African Zionist Federation. Mokgomole was referring to the Passages conference in Washington at the end of July, in which 12 South African students joined hundreds of American Christian students and alumni. The goal was to deepen their understanding of antisemitism and their faith.

As one of the only groups from Africa, Mokgomole said, "We went to this conference because we wanted to network with other Christians from around the world about Israel."

Another South African participant, Mikateko Mnene, who is studying education at the University of Johannesburg (UJ), said, "The experience heightened my knowledge about Israel and what's happening on the ground."

"As a Christian, a leader of the Student Christian Forum at UJ, and a youth pastor, having been exposed to the history and the people of Israel, I feel a responsibility to advocate for Israel," Mnene said. "Israel is the foundation of my faith as a Christian. So, it was about going back to the roots of my Christianity in its most sacred and pure form."

The South African group, all of whom are associated with South African Friends of Israel (SAFI) that had led the trip, participated in workshops about Israel and its history. They also met the families of Romi Gonen and Or Levy, who were kidnapped from the Nova music festival on 7 October. The families

spoke about their experiences, and how they were working to free their relatives.

"Meeting these passionate Christian students has been an extremely uplifting experience for us," said Yarden Gonen, Romi's sister, who has become one of the faces of hostage families around the world. "We know that they have taken on our mission of ensuring that our loved ones aren't forgotten, and that they will share our stories with their families, friends, churches, communities, and their campuses."

Said Mnene, "It was a privilege to talk to people from Israel, people who are living in Israel, and hear the stories of what happened on 7 October and the impact it has had on their lives. Being exposed to the truth is such a precious opportunity in an environment of misinformation."

"I needed to go on this trip because, at the end of the day, some people have to be the light in communities and areas of influence," Mnene said. "I believe that in my areas of influence, mainly the young people that I meet in my community, I can speak the truth about what's happening in Israel, stand for Israel, and pray for peace."

"We had the opportunity to talk to people who live in Israel and hear their stories," said Mnene. "It was transformational because it gave me such a different perspective of what's happening on the ground. We see what's happening only from afar, but seeing people and experiencing their stories and emotions was powerful."

For Mokgomole, "The experience made me realise that as much as I may be in Johannesburg advocating for Israel and educating people, there are other people around the world doing the same job. It gave me confidence to know that I need to continue what I'm doing, that what I'm doing is correct, and I shouldn't be shy about it."

# This Humpty Dumpty won't fall

In the unlikely event of my forgetting to look in the mirror, I have social media to remind me that I'm bald. For good measure, a few times a week at the least, attention is drawn to the size of my nose - it's apparently Jewish-looking - and that I'm overweight.

There are those who feel it's important that I'm aware that I look like an egg head, and like Humpty Dumpty - before the fall. It has been noted by many on X that if you look closely at my eyes, you'll see the evil that lurks there.

Because I am, after all, a "genocidal, apartheid-loving, Zionist, Palestinian-hating, baby killer".

If social media is to be believed, the size of my nose and my lack of hair seem to have increased significantly since 7 October, when Hamas launched an invasion on the towns and people of southern Israel.

My "support" for apartheid, though fictional, has grown proportionately since that day, along with my "Jewishness", which discredits me in all areas and precludes me from having a view on anything other than Israel.

I'm repeatedly asked why I "put myself out there" in this way. The most obvious reason is that the abuse is an attempt to silence me. The insults are meant to embarrass me into keeping quiet as labelling me a racist is designed to make me cower in fear.

Whereas I'm aware of the truth of my repeated bad hair day, I also know that I'm not a racist. I'm not a racist off social media, which means that it's unlikely I'll be one on it. Simply because someone calls me something doesn't make it true or believable.

I also respond because I can. As Jews, we have been facing this antisemitism thing for thousands of years. We're good at it. We understand it, and we know it when we see it. Many on X, however, are new to the prejudice, and are still trying their hand at it.

In a way it's like a game of "whack a gator", where antisemites are awarded with a short sharp verbal smack when they raise their snapping jaws. It might

## INNER VOICE

Howard Feldman



not deter them, but they will think twice before attempting it again.

There's also the issue of algorithms, but that's neither here nor there.

Since 7 October, Jews around the world have been reduced to being defenders of Israel, defenders of our people, and defenders of our position in the world.

In some ways, it reminds me of a phenomenon we've seen before, when we speak of survivors or victims of the Holocaust. The event itself was so significant, it dwarfed so many things about them, reducing them to "survivors" or "victims" and not whole people. We know intellectually that they were. Some were smart, some less so, some kind, and some not. Some had great senses of humour, and some could have done with smiling more often. But in the tragedy of history, so much is lost because only one thing becomes relevant. And that's the survival of their memory and that of the Jewish people. As an aside, I'm aware of the incredible projects out there to individualise and record personal testimonies of survivors and I celebrate them, but I'm talking about the more general memorialising of six million Jewish lives.

I don't advocate that that we all treat social media like a game of whack a gator. I don't believe that everyone needs to "put ourselves out there" in the same way. But we each have talent and skill, and we each have a responsibility, especially now, to do what we can to protect each other and our people. Because, after all, it's infinitely better to be the Humpty Dumpty sitting on a wall than the Humpty Dumpty who isn't.

A column of WIZO South Africa

# WIZO celebrates women in August - and every month



Shelley Trope-Friedman  
President, WIZO South Africa



August is well known for being the month that celebrates women, with 9 August being National Women's Day. But the Women's International Zionist Organisation (WIZO) doesn't need a specific day or month to celebrate the strong, kind, and caring women we are, as these are the innate qualities that make us proud WIZO women! Being the largest global women's Zionist organisation comes with a commitment and promise that we will fulfil the vision and mission of World WIZO, which is dedicated to the education and advancement of women.

As WIZO women, we play an integral role in supporting all our projects as we strongly believe in providing transformative initiatives that promote social resilience for those who need it most in our beloved Israel. Because of this, we continue to work tirelessly to advance the rights and well-being of women.

WIZO has had a significant impact on the lives of countless Israelis through all stages of life, from the babies in our daycare centres to the youth and the elderly. One of WIZO's most noteworthy facets is establishing programmes for girls and women at pivotal junctures in their lives, as well as providing safe havens for women who are victims of domestic violence.

Having said this, Israeli women have continued to show fighting spirit as they maintain their homes while their spouses serve in the Israel Defense Forces. Their fortitude and strength in holding the fort has been nothing short of extraordinary. Our WIZO women have been there every step of the way, providing the support they need in strengthening their resilience and by

giving them couples, children and family therapy. Our educators in daycare centres and youth villages bring a comforting and nurturing sense of safety to the children in their care when the world around them is so volatile.

We reflect on the progress that has been made by these women as they display acts of courage and determination. They are strong and resilient and we, as WIZO women, stand behind them every step of the way!

This brings us to a very proud moment in which WIZO has been recognised on the Maala Index for the outstanding work that we continue to do. This index is used to assess the standards of corporate responsibility and social-environmental impact of organisations in Israel. WIZO received this incredible recognition for diversity in the workforce, ethics, and responsible corporate governance. This is the first time a non-profit organisation has integrated into the Maala Corporate Responsibility Index, and we join a prestigious list of companies such as Microsoft, Nespresso, and L'Oréal. WIZO women will continue to stand up for those in need. The fruits of our labour, and our very WIZO presence, are evident in everyday life in our beloved Israel.

WIZO South Africa joins me in thanking you for your loyal support as we acknowledge how truly blessed we are to be a part of an organisation that is so special, powerful, and impactful!

We pray for the release of the hostages. *Am Yisrael chai.*

This column is paid for by WIZO SA

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## Israel & Iran at war

Sunday 18 August 2024 at 19:00 SAST



As Israel braces for a massive attack from Iran, the country is surrounded by a ring of fire, Iranian proxy armies, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen, and Shiite militia in Syria and Iraq. What are Iran's ambitions and how does Israel counter the rise of the jihadi imperialists?

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# King David helps turn orphanage into haven

The outreach and eco committees from King David Linksfield went to Juno Aurora, an orphanage in Kelvin, Johannesburg, to paint a mural and plant a vegetable garden on Sunday 4 August.

Juno Aurora Haven cares for 24 children from the age of six months until 16 years. As of 2024, children who don't have a birth certificate aren't able to attend a government school. These children have clinic cards, but this isn't sufficient. The children must now be home schooled, and miss out on socialising with other children, playing sport, and much more.

The home urgently needed a revamp, especially plumbing, roof repairs, furniture, and general maintenance.

The day wouldn't have been possible without a generous donation from the King David Schools' Foundation; teachers; a representative of the Community Security Organisation; Doc, the bus driver; and, most importantly, the volunteers, who gave up their Sunday morning to bring a little colour to this special place.

King David representatives walked out of the orphanage covered in paint and soil, but proud of the beautiful mural they painted and the garden they planted, filled with nutritious vegetables that hopefully children will be able to enjoy in the not too distant future.



The outreach and eco committees from King David Linksfield at Juno Aurora Haven

# Pressure and protest

We had the honour of hosting Ellen Germain, the United States special envoy for Holocaust Issues, this week for an insightful breakfast discussion. The meeting, also attended by a human rights officer from the United States embassy, provided an opportunity to engage in open conversation about the persistent challenge of antisemitism and the complex dynamics of Holocaust remembrance, particularly in the aftermath of the tragic events of 7 October. It covered the complexities that we face in the continuous and blatant politicisation of the term "genocide", as well as the manner in which the memory of the Holocaust is misused by those who seek to discredit the Jewish people and Israel.

Germain was in the country for the conference "Building Resilience Through Holocaust and Genocide Education", which was held at the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre on the occasion of its 25th anniversary, as well as the 30th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide and the end of apartheid.

The conference was aimed at museum educators tasked with the critical and challenging role of teaching the history and lessons of the Holocaust and other genocides. Our national

vice-president, Mary Kluk, who also serves as a director at the Durban Holocaust Centre, delivered a poignant address titled "Teaching about the Holocaust and Genocide after October 7". Kluk described her session as "hugely important in a time when the world demands that we critically examine the work we are doing."

This conference comes at a particularly challenging time, given the pressure faced by Jewish communities worldwide and the alarming rise in antisemitic incidents globally. Recent statistics paint a troubling picture. In the United Kingdom, there were 1 978 recorded antisemitic incidents between January and June 2024, the highest ever reported. France experienced a tripling of antisemitic acts, reaching 887 recorded events during the same period. In Canada, the Jewish community, in spite of comprising less than 1% of the population, were victims of 70% of all hate crimes reported in 2023. Meanwhile, an Anti-Defamation League/Hillel survey revealed that 73% of Jewish students in the US witnessed antisemitism on campuses following 7 October, with only 39% now feeling comfortable identifying as Jewish.

It's a real pity that a small group of Jews for a Free Palestine chose the Cape Town Holocaust &

**ABOVE BOARD**  
Karen Milner



Genocide Centre and a conference on teaching the Holocaust to launch an ill-conceived protest. The demonstrators, who donned watermelon-themed kippot, couldn't have been more callous in their misreading of the situation, and choice of time and location for this protest. While inside the conference, delegates discussed the definitions and experiences of antisemitism both modern and historic, it's clear that there's no definition under which protesting outside a Holocaust museum wouldn't be considered base antisemitism. No image could be clearer of the gulf between this group's stated ideals and the reality of its conviction than its decision to engage in this protest. It's clear that those protesting have no respect for Jewish traditions or heritage. There are many ways to protest against the Israel-Gaza war. The choice to protest at a Holocaust museum is designed to hurt the Jewish community, not assist Palestinians in their desperate plight or bring about an end to the war in any meaningful way.

• Listen to Charisse Zeifert on Jewish Board Talk, 101.9 ChaiFM, every Friday from 12:00 to 13:00.

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