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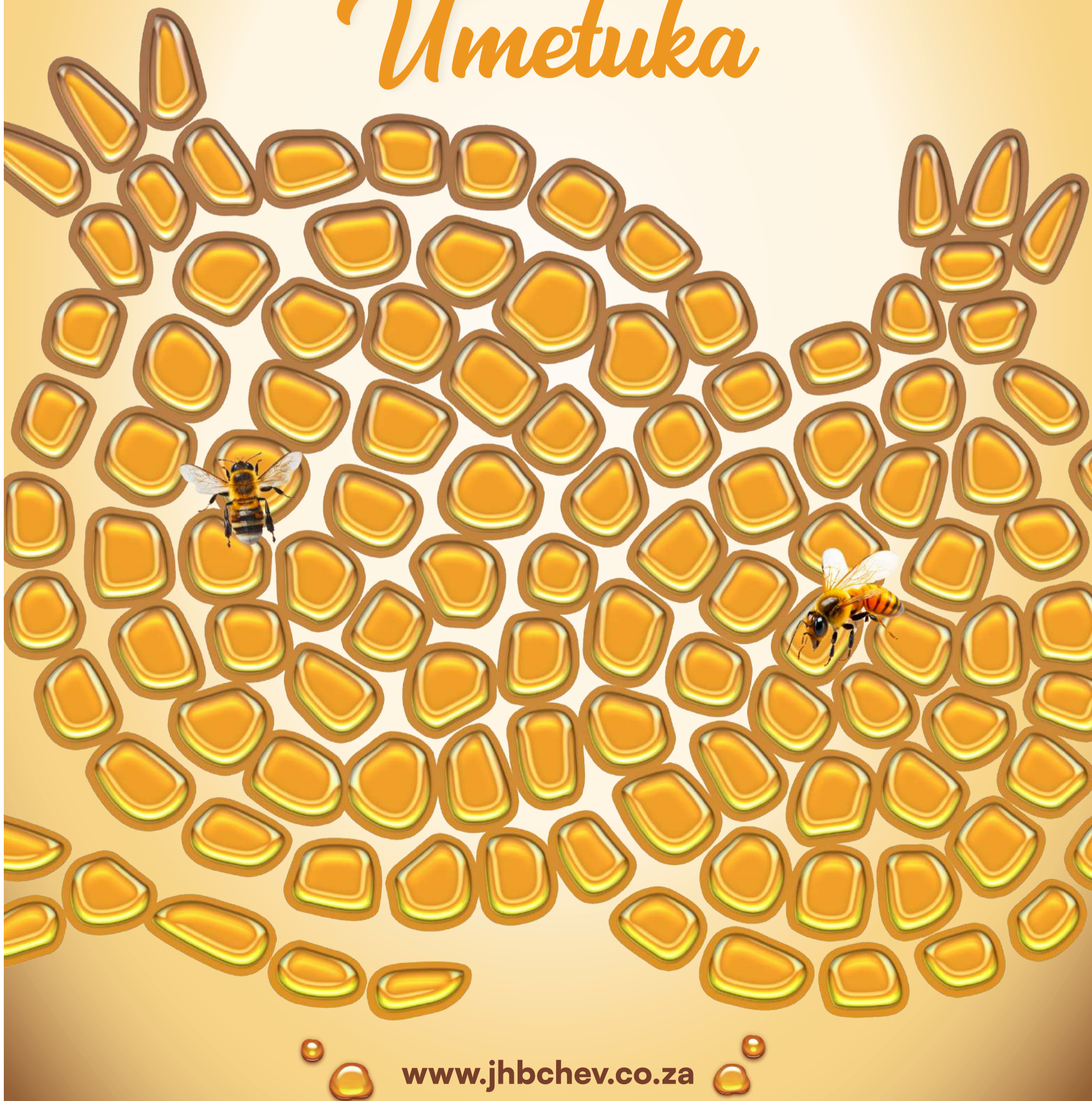
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Message from the **GROUP CEO**



Dear Friends

One of the magnificent gifts of Rosh Hashana is the magical power of revival. The world is renewed and with that, opportunities for blessings are infinite.

The past year has been painfully challenging for Jews worldwide. As we turn our attention towards this New Year and prospects of recovery, we do so with tremendous hope and faith.

For 136 years the Chev has helped people when they are facing their greatest trials. Reminiscent of the industrious honey bees, the Chev is a hive of activity all year round. We work tirelessly to ensure the survival of our community and to offer protection, relief from pain, and hope. That is our purpose and our goal.

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We need your support more than ever.

Our prayers at this pivotal time are for peace, prosperity and good health for our families; for our communities; and for our People in the Holy Land and wherever else they may reside. May all our challenges be transformed into blessings and salvation.

Best wishes for a Shana Tova u'Metukah



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Harassment won't silence Israeli-Palestinian dialogue

TALI FEINBERG

Local academic and activist Ivor Chipkin is appalled but undeterred by the "vicious" smear campaign launched in response to a conference he is convening that explores nuances in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The conference was to take place from 18 to 20 September at Constitution Hill, but following the anti-Israel lobby's hostility to this opportunity for dialogue and engagement, the management of Constitution Hill told Chipkin his event could no longer take place there.

"This capitulation to the demands of a small group of extreme activists sets a dangerous precedent that undermines the principles of free speech and open dialogue," Chipkin says of Constitution Hill's last minute venue cancellation.

By refusing to host the conference, Constitution Hill betrays its own principles, says Chipkin, the co-founder and director of the New South Institute (NSI), a non-governmental organisation that provides evidence-based policy and applied research for complex problems in delicate democracies.

"Constitution Hill is especially symbolic of what can be achieved when deeply divided parties come together to forge constructive ways out of conflict," Chipkin says. But, by succumbing to this pressure, "its management has not only betrayed its commitment to free expression, but has also emboldened those who seek to suppress ideas that they find offensive or challenging". He has since taken legal action, with a lawyer's letter sent to Constitution Hill's

management.

As for those who bullied Constitution Hill into the decision, he says, "This is a movement that is absolutely opposed to nuance, dialogue, engagement, and complexity, and actively works to close down spaces that allow for such discussion. We stand firm behind our intention of hosting a conference that seeks common ground. We trust that our partners won't bow down to those who would suppress free speech in an attempt to stifle open and honest discussion."

He said the conference, which is NSI's signature annual event called African Global Dialogues, has a distinguished roster of thought leaders who represent diverse perspectives on the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"This event was never about reinforcing one narrative, but rather about transcending binary thinking to find common ground and foster meaningful progress," says Chipkin.

However, the anti-Israel lobby made it clear that this was exactly what it didn't want, responding with a "frenzy of intolerance", Chipkin says. Extremists openly called for the event's lineup of liberal leftists and respected academics to be silenced simply because they were speaking about Israel. In a statement, the South African Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions coalition said, "Under the guise of promoting so-called 'dialogue' in South Africa, this conference is aimed at demonising the right of Palestinians to resist 75 years of settler colonialism, occupation, ethnic cleansing, and genocide."

Participants in the conference include Professor of International Law, Marco Sassòli; activist Hadil Al-Ashwal; the former head of the International Criminal Court, Chile Eboe-Osuji; Professor of Humanitarian Law, Yuval Shany; sociologist and professor emeritus at the University of Belgrade, Radmila Nakarada; professor of history in the Middle East Studies department at Ben-Gurion University, Benny Morris; professor of international relations at the University of Cambridge, Ayşe Zarakol; historian and writer Fania Oz-Salzberger; and philosopher Achille Mbembe.

Chipkin says anti-Israel extremists "used stolen draft documents and false

information to pressure participants, invitees, and other stakeholders [to torpedo the conference]. This is an example of the extreme and destructive nature of much of political discourse today, the precise problem that the African Global Dialogue seeks to address."

Local extremists even made a parody account on X, called African Global Dialogues, to mock the conference and its aims. The account compares Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Adolf Hitler, and says Israel killed its own citizens on 7 October. It calls the event "that stupid Zio conference". The term "Zio" is an established antisemitic slur.

The account calls for the boycott of one of the speakers, Mbembe, because he is "calling for dialogue-nuance at the peak of a colonial genocide, equating the rightful resistance of the oppressed with the fascism and depravity of their occupiers".

Chipkin says he created the conference because "the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and other conflicts have a profound impact on South Africa, the African continent, and the Global South. The conference seeks to look at how longer-term cycles of violence could potentially be interrupted, and if South Africa could play a role."

This "requires humanising political

Continued on page 5>>

From Israel to Soweto



Photo: Ilan Ossendyver

See story on page 3

Former hostage Amit Soussana and her friend, Eran Zaitoun, spend time in Soweto while visiting South Africa

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Exploding devices turn new 'pager' in war

RON KAMPEAS – JTA

Wireless devices carried by Hezbollah operatives and their associates exploded en masse on Tuesday 17 September, killing twelve and wounding at least 2 800 people in Lebanon and Syria, a mass targeted attack on the terror group as tensions on Israel's Lebanese border continue to escalate.

No-one claimed responsibility for the series of explosions on Tuesday, and Israel hasn't commented publicly on them. The United States also said it wasn't involved in the attack. Hezbollah blamed Israel for the attacks, Reuters reported, and said there would be "fair punishment".

Lebanese officials said the fatalities included two Hezbollah operatives and a child. One of the dead was the son of a Lebanese legislator. The Iranian ambassador to Beirut suffered minor injuries. Iran is Hezbollah's chief ally and sponsor. Emergency rooms in and around Beirut were overwhelmed with casualties, reports said.

The blasts are the latest indication that nearly a year of clashes between Hezbollah and Israel could spiral into a fully-fledged war. On Monday, Israel's security cabinet added "returning the residents of the north securely to their homes" to its list of official wartime goals, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a US official that Israel would "do what is necessary to safeguard its security" in the north.

Earlier this week, Israeli General Ori



Photo: Marwan Naamani - picture alliance via Getty Images

Twelve people have been killed and at least 2 800 injured when hand-held telecommunications devices exploded across Lebanon on 17 September

Gordin, who heads the country's Northern Command, proposed that Israel invade southern Lebanon in order to create a buffer zone between Israel and Hezbollah, effectively reviving an occupation that Israel maintained for nearly two decades until it withdrew from Lebanon in 2000.

Hezbollah began firing missiles at Israel shortly after Hamas's 7 October invasion, and clashes have intensified since July, when a Hezbollah attack killed 12 schoolchildren in a Golan Heights village. Israel assassinated Hezbollah's military chief, Fuad Shukur, in retaliation, and Hezbollah vowed revenge. Last month, Israel struck hundreds of Hezbollah missile launch sites in what it said was a pre-emptive attack.

Matthew Levitt, a senior fellow who studies counterterrorism at the Washington Institute for Middle East Policy, said

Tuesday's attack damaged Hezbollah's deterrence as the two sides are on the brink of war.

"It comes against the backdrop of Israel's pretty impressive, timely intelligence that Hezbollah was about to shoot rockets at intelligence agencies near Tel Aviv, pre-emptively striking them, which itself comes on the heels of the targeted killing of Fuad Shukur," he said. "So, if you're in Hezbollah right now, you're probably pretty concerned about the level of penetration."

The Wall Street Journal quoted anonymous sources as saying the pagers were from a recent shipment to the terrorist group. Should the explosions prove to be part of a planned mass attack, it could be unprecedented in scope, if not in method. In 1996, Israel remotely exploded a single cellphone to assassinate Yahya Ayyash, a leading Hamas official.

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Fruits of spiritual introspection

Torah Thought



Rabbi Kalman Green
Constantia Shul
Cape Town

The Torah portion "Arami Oved Av" (Deut. 26:5), recited when bringing the first fruits (*bikkurim*), is significant in Jewish tradition. It's also the central passage of the Haggadah which recounts the exodus during Passover.

The phrase is understood as, "An Aramean [Laban] tried to destroy my father [Jacob]." Some suggest Laban tried to poison Eliezer, Abraham's servant, which would have prevented the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, thus nullifying the Jewish people. Others point to Laban's domestic trickery, which led to tension between Jacob's wives and contributed to Joseph's brothers' jealousy and his eventual sale, ultimately leading to the Israelites' descent into Egypt.

The late Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks suggests that Laban represents an even deeper spiritual threat: assimilation. Jacob began as a deeply spiritual man, with visions of angels ascending and descending a ladder, symbolising his connection to G-d. However, after years under Laban's influence, Jacob's dreams turned materialistic, reflecting his new preoccupation with wealth and business. Laban's influence eroded Jacob's spirituality.

Jacob ultimately fled from Laban, recognising that Laban's subtle manipulation had distanced him from his true self and his relationship with G-d. And though it involved an existential wrestling match with an angel, Jacob's departure from Laban marks his return to spiritual integrity, a critical moment for the future of the Jewish people.

In Jewish thought, Laban symbolises the *yetzer hara*, the inclination towards evil. The *yetzer hara*, like Laban, operates subtly, encouraging people to take small steps down the wrong path, often under the guise of good intentions.

And yet, Laban is our grandfather. The *yetzer hara* is a vital component of our spiritual make up – it's what

gets us going, what makes us curious, what provokes our interest in other people, what establishes families and businesses.

As the rabbis state, "If not for the evil impulse, no-one would build a house, marry, have children, nor engage in trade."

Take a moment to consider for yourself the inner impulses that push you to do what you know you shouldn't, or keep you from doing what you should.

"Go ahead," it says. "Who's counting? Who will see? How could one hurt? You deserve it." It will flatter, cajole, seduce or come up with whatever it takes to induce you to step over the line.

Or your *yetzer hara* will be the voice that tells you not to do what you know you should. "Don't bother," it will counsel. "What's in it for you? Surely it's

somebody else's turn." Or even more negatively, "You don't deserve it, so don't even try. You're bound to fail, so don't even start."

Once the first step is taken, the *yetzer hara* continues to push a person further from their values.

However, the lesson of Jacob's escape from Laban is that there comes a time to separate from the negative influences in one's life, and return to one's true identity and integrity.

As we approach Rosh Hashanah and the new year, it's a time for introspection, for rejecting false identities and distractions that have distanced us from our spiritual goals. Like Jacob, we must regain our sense of purpose, and rededicate ourselves and our first fruits to G-d.

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It turns out that thanksgiving (or giving thanks) is very Jewish. The very term Jew (Yehudi) is directly linked to the word *hoda'ah* - "thanks".

Voice your thanks to family, friends, bank tellers, street cleaners... everyone, especially G-d.

Hostage and saviour recuperate in SA bushveld

NICOLA MILTZ

A freed hostage from Gaza and the man who moved mountains to try track her down during her captivity have both experienced a life-changing, faith restoring trip to South Africa.

"I love this country and this beautiful Jewish community," said Amit Soussana, who spent 55 harrowing days in hell after Hamas terrorists abducted her from her Kfar Aza home on 7 October.

"I never thought I'd be in a heavenly place like this, embraced by such warmth," she said. A video clip taken last week shows a smiling Soussana in the African bush surrounded by a herd of elephants.

"People came up to me in Nando's asking me to bless them because they see me as a living miracle," she said.

"I look up at the African sky, and remind myself that things could have turned out very differently," she said. Though she has experienced moments of joy for the first time in months, they have been tempered by feelings of guilt, anguish, and deep concern for the hostages still in captivity.

"I cannot move on with my life until every hostage is returned home," she told the SA Jewish Report.

Soussana, 41, was the first person to speak out publicly about the sexual abuse and torture she suffered at the hands of her captors in Gaza. All this while human rights groups turned a blind eye to reports of abuse despite indisputable evidence.

Soussana, who was released from captivity on the last day of a weeklong truce in late November, was in South Africa last week accompanied by her friend and former longtime boyfriend, Eran Zaitoun, 45. He became her family's pillar of strength in the days and weeks following her abduction when her whereabouts were unknown.

"There was absolute chaos in those first few days. We had no idea where Amit was and the Gaza envelope was in turmoil," said Zaitoun, recalling how smoke was still rising from burning homes, bodies were lying

in the street, and the air was thick with shock and fear. The ground was littered with debris, broken lives scattered among the ruins, he recalled.

He rushed to be with her parents in Sderot, knowing they would need help.

"It was a war zone there. Her mother, Mira, was in a bad way. Every day became a desperate search for Amit," he said.

He recalls going to the main police headquarters to search for clues. "When I arrived, there were a handful of people. When I left, there were hundreds of people queueing outside desperate to find loved ones. That's when I realised the scale of the devastation," he said.



Eran Zaitoun puts on tefillin for one of the first times since his barmitzvah

Zaitoun made it his life's mission to find out what happened to Soussana. When her family became almost paralysed by fear and uncertainty, he stepped up, shouldering their burden until she was found.

"There was nothing left of her home. It had been burnt down," he said.

He took pieces of her clothing for DNA samples, and gathered photographs of her wearing distinctive jewellery, hoping these small details might provide crucial clues to help identify her.

After three agonising weeks, the family received a visit from a security officer. He arrived with an iPad to show the family raw video footage of Hamas terrorists abducting a woman whom they suspected was Amit, but

needed confirmation about.

An eerie, grainy video, now widely known, shows a woman being dragged across open fields by about eight terrorists from Kfar Aza into Gaza. She can be seen wildly kicking and resisting her captors, who eventually beat her into submission, punching her in the face.



Eran Zaitoun with former Hamas hostage Amit Soussana in South Africa

"That was me," Soussana said. "I was still in my pyjamas, and had tried to wrap my body in my blanket to cover myself before they took me.

"I knew it was Amit even though it was hard to tell. Her sisters weren't sure, and her mother refused to watch the video, she was so traumatised," Zaitoun said.

I never thought I'd be in a heavenly place like this, embraced by such warmth.

Three days later, the same officer arrived, this time with solid information confirming 100% that the woman in the video was Soussana.

"I cannot explain our emotions. On the one hand, we were ecstatic because we now knew she was taken

alive, but we were distressed and feared for her safety at the same time," he said.

Soussana believed she was taken to a large house belonging to a high-ranking Hamas officer and his family. The family soon fled when the Israel Defense Forces advanced, and she was then held alone in the house, chained up in darkness in one of the children's bedrooms.

"There were Sponge Bob pictures on the wall," she said, and she was forced at gunpoint to obey her abusive Hamas captor, whom she said went by the name Muhammad.

"I begged him not to keep me in the dark. I was so afraid," she told the SA Jewish Report.

Amit revealed some of the horrors of her experience in an interview with *The New York Times* and for Sheryl Sandberg's 60-minute documentary film titled *Screams Before Silence* about the sexual violence committed by Hamas.

Being in South Africa has rejuvenated this remarkable pair, whose epic tale of survival, resilience, and hope has led to a profound bond between them.

During a layover in Ethiopia on their way to South Africa, Zaitoun had a life-changing experience. Spotting a Chabad rabbi praying nearby, he felt an overwhelming surge of gratitude and a need to reconnect with his spirituality.

"Amit was returned to us against

all odds. I felt overwhelmed with gratitude in that moment seeing that rabbi, and decided to approach him," he said.

"It was early morning, and the rabbi asked me to return in 10 minutes, which I did. He could see I was a little shy, perhaps embarrassed. This was new for me, being a secular Jew from Israel. I put on tefillin for the first time since my Barmitzvah,"

Zaitoun said. The moment, he said, was deeply spiritual and profoundly transformative.

The pair were brought out to South Africa by Base Community and the Jewish National Fund (JNF).

Saul Jassinowsky, the founder of the initiative, said, "It's a special place for former hostages to visit and exhale after experiencing unimaginable trauma. The Base and JNF are working to bring out more hostages, with many upcoming planned trips, and to facilitate whatever we can for them."

Said Rabbi Aharon Zulberg of The Base, "This partnership and project has presented us with a special opportunity to be connected to our brothers and sisters in Israel. We have seen the positive effect on everyone in each trip that we have been privileged to facilitate. It embodies the spirit of renewal and hope through kindness, which is so much of what our community is about. We have been able to have an impact on those at the epicentre of what happened on 7 October. At the same time, our heroic guests have experienced a taste of our unique community."

Jassinowsky heard Zaitoun's moving tefillin story, and connected him to Adam and Chaya Michels of The Shalom Tefillin and Mezuzah Fund, who presented him with a new set of tefillin.

"The fund holds a very special place in our hearts as it was created in memory of our precious baby boy, whom we lost more than 10 years ago," said Adam, "Through this fund, we have found a way to honour his memory by helping fellow 'Yidden' to fulfil the sacred mitzvot of tefillin and mezuzot, bringing a spark of holiness into their homes and lives."

The couple returned home with feelings of gratitude and renewed hope.

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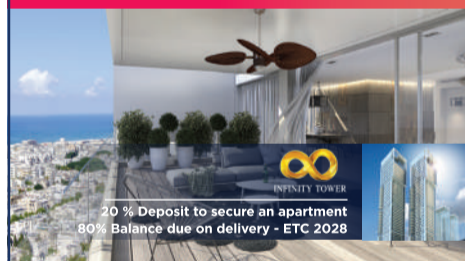
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Lamola: One step forward, two steps back

TALI FEINBERG

On his first official visit to the United States (US), South Africa's minister of international relations and cooperation, Ronald Lamola, unashamedly reiterated, "We stand with the people of Palestine," and that he believes Israel is committing genocide.

Lamola arrived for his weeklong trip to the US on Thursday, 12 September, just days after the African National Congress (ANC) in the Western Cape came out in full support of Hamas.

In an interesting turn, Lamola also told the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's 53rd Annual Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., that South Africa "condemns what happened to the people of Israel on 7 October, and we condemn it in the strongest terms. We call for the release of all the hostages."

That was where his recognition of Israeli human rights ended. "We also said that the state of Israel's response to the incident of 7 October is disproportionate to the offense committed," he said. "It's going beyond self-defence as predicated by international law, and it's against this background that we went to the International Court of Justice [ICJ]."

The way Lamola opened his speech may mean he is slowly starting to "walk back" South Africa's one-dimensional approach to Israel, says Hussein Solomon, senior professor in the department of political science at the University of the Free State. He notes that the previous minister, Dr Naledi Pandor, wasn't likely to have acknowledged Hamas's atrocities or called for the return of the hostages.

"The ANC finds itself in a very difficult position. It needs to walk back its position because it's scared," says Solomon. "There's that bipartisan bill going through Congress asking to re-evaluate US-South Africa relations. You have South Africa deriving tremendous benefit from the African Growth and Opportunities Act. You have South Africa benefiting from PEPFAR [The US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief], providing free antiretrovirals to HIV-positive people. You have the US assisting South Africa in numerous other ways. South Africa doesn't want to lose all of that."

"How are you going to walk back from court proceedings that you started, in which other countries have joined you?" asks Solomon rhetorically. "The ANC cannot lose face, so it's a process of walking back. Acknowledging what happened on 7 October and condemning it as opposed to justifying it, which was the previous position, is a start. But with a sitting president who said 'From the river to the sea' still in office, you cannot expect Lamola to walk back completely. It's not going to be 180 degrees, but it might be 10 degrees at a time."

However, the rest of Lamola's speech was radically anti-Israel. He went on to say, "We continue to call on the global community to stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine and call on Israel to stop the genocide that is currently unfolding. We will continue to do so, despite threats that come from across the globe, because we believe we are standing on principles."

Talking to an audience which included US legislators, he said, "We continue to champion human rights in Gaza. This has been a historic position of the South African government." He said the court had indicated that Israel "should cease its military operations, cease the destruction of infrastructure, but despite the court's ruling, Israel continues to do so".

He acknowledged "differences of opinion" with the US, but called for engagement "on the basis of constructive dialogue". Both countries benefited from the relationship, Lamola said. "Let us engage on

differences, but we may agree to disagree. We will not tell the US what to do, and we expect the US not to tell us what to do."

Among other engagements, Lamola was hosted by the controversial Quincy Institute for Responsible State Craft. According to Leon Hadar, former research fellow in foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute and the author of *Sandstorm: Policy Failure in the Middle East*, the Quincy Institute "routinely vilifies supporters of Israel in Washington. Its principal goal is to reorient American policy in the Middle East, marginalising America's two leading allies, Israel and Saudi Arabia, while promoting Iran as a future regional hegemon."

At that event, Lamola pushed the point that Israel was committing genocide. He said the reason South Africa went to the ICJ was because all other options had failed. He said he believed there should be an arms embargo to Israel because sending arms "fuels the conflict".

He denied that South Africa was put under financial pressure from Iran to take Israel to the ICJ. "We feel no pressure from Iran financially, physically, or in any other form. Trade between South Africa and Iran is very low, so there cannot be financial pressure."

Local political analyst Steven Gruzd says he didn't expect Lamola to veer from his script of supporting the Palestinians, even when speaking to a US audience. Even in a government of national unity, "all the important positions in the department of international relations and cooperation are still in the hands of the ANC," he says.

"So, while there might be a moderation of tone, in terms of substance, we're not going to see any radical changes in the stances that South Africa has taken on the international stage, including on the Palestinians."

"South Africa is given quite a lot of leeway on the international stage, and perhaps gets away with more than it should," he says. "This is because of its relative size, its importance in the southern African region, and on the African continent. America doesn't want to make an enemy out of South Africa. But I do think that the string of actions that have been taken in the past year in regard to both Russia and Israel have strained relations, like the Lady R incident and the ICJ case. A lot depends on what happens in November [the American elections]."

South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) National Director Wendy Kahn says the SAJBD is disappointed that "once, again the South African government has missed an opportunity to play a constructive role in ending this very painful war. The ANC has chosen to side with Hamas, as exemplified by government's failure to condemn the execution of six Israeli hostages three weeks ago. This unfortunate stance is clear evidence that the South African government is continuing to depart from its stated principles of conflict resolution."

Rolene Marks, the spokesperson for the South African Zionist Federation, says, "Minister Lamola makes claims that, as a lawyer and former minister of justice, he should know are untrue. The ICJ hasn't found Israel guilty of genocide, and it's outrageous for the South African government to continue spreading this falsehood both in South Africa and the US."

"South Africa is likely to struggle to prove its ICJ case when it files its papers next month," says Marks. "This is because Israel isn't committing genocide but defending itself against terrorist group Hamas. Additionally, South Africa remains hypocritically silent on human rights abuses elsewhere in the world, particularly in Africa. If South Africa were truly concerned about genocide, it would focus on places where there is credible evidence of such."

Antisemitism in Argentina soars mostly after 7 October

JUAN MELAMED – JTA

Argentina experienced a 44% increase in reported antisemitic incidents in 2023, mostly after the 7 October attack on Israel, according to a report issued on Monday, 16 September, by the country's Jewish umbrella organisation.

The report makes Argentina the latest country to record a spike in antisemitism following the attack and the subsequent Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Antisemitism watchdogs in the United States, Germany, and elsewhere across Europe have all recorded steep rises.

According to DAIA (*Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas*), which unveiled the report at the Buenos Aires city legislature, 57% of all antisemitic incidents last year took place in the three months after the attack.

What's more, the organisation found, Israel shot up as the cause of antisemitic incidents. In 2022, about 11% of antisemitic incidents in Argentina related to Israel. Last year, the proportion was 40%.

And the rate at which antisemitic incidents took place in person also rose. Most incidents that DAIA recorded took place online. In the nine months before the 7 October

attack, 72 in-person incidents were recorded. In the three months afterwards, there were 150.

Among the in-person incidents that DAIA logged in its report were the word "Hamas" and a crossed-out Star of David that was drawn on a student's desk, and a building that hung a sign reading, "Zionists out of Palestine. This did not start on 7/10. Hitler fell short."

From before 7 October, it included the inclusion on a restaurant's menu of an "Anne Frank" hamburger and "Adolf" fries; the restaurant changed the items' names after members of the Jewish community, including DAIA, criticised the menu for trivialising the Holocaust.

Marisa Braylan, the report's author and the director of DAIA's Center for Social Studies, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the tally reflected a sad reality for Argentine Jews since 7 October.

"The attack didn't generate empathy towards the victims. There was silence, there were justifications, and in the worst cases, there was admiration," she said. "On 7 October, a latent antisemitism was dusted off."

'Voice in the dark' – hostage's mom speaks out

NICOLA MILTZ

The agony of a mother whose daughter she believes has been trapped in a suffocating tunnel in Gaza for nearly a year, petrified and starving in the dark, or even worse, deceased, is unimaginable.

"This is my reality, this is my every waking minute," said Simona Steinbrecher, the mother of Doron, 31, who has been held captive by Hamas terrorists in Gaza for 349 days.

"I'm her voice in the dark," she told the *SA Jewish Report* this week.

Steinbrecher is close friends with her former neighbour in Kibbutz Kfar Aza, released South African hostage Aviva Siegel, whose husband, Keith, is still in captivity. Their friendship has been solidified by 11 months of anguish over their missing loved ones.

Steinbrecher is one of 11 mothers of the remaining female hostages presumed alive. They fear their daughters are holding on by a thread. They know deep down that time is running out, and that a deal securing their release is urgent. They also know that they are at the mercy of dangerous men capable of unspeakable, hideous atrocities. And they are flabbergasted by the world's flat response to their daughter's plight.

"It hurts," she said. "My heart breaks over and over again."

"We know what they have done to female hostages," Steinbrecher said, alluding to testimony by released hostages of sexual assault and torture.

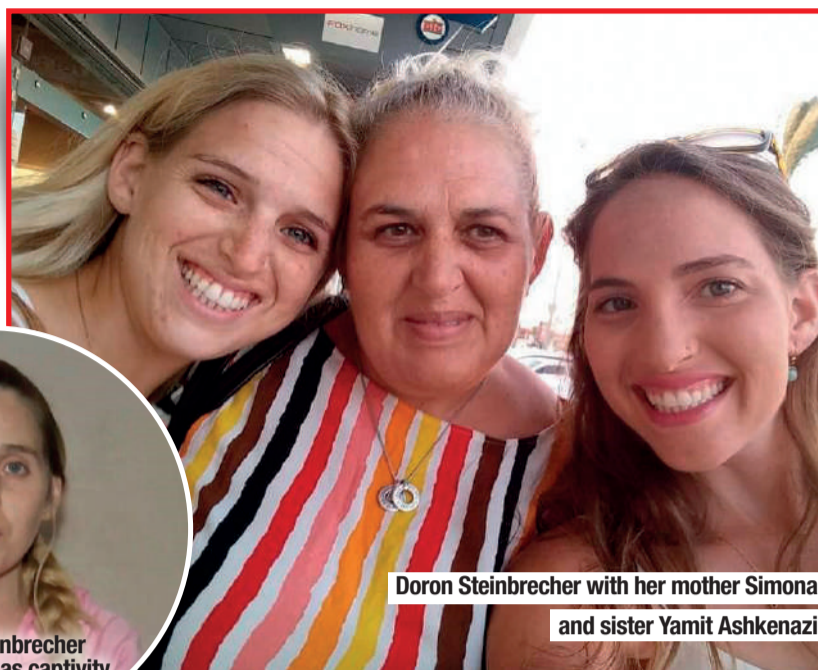
Steinbrecher and the other mothers cling to scraps of information, grasping at anything that might shed light on their daughters' conditions and whereabouts.

Every moment, she says, feels like a crushing weight, knowing that her daughter is in the hands of merciless captors. Each day stretches into an eternity as she imagines the terror of being confined in an unknown place, helpless and surrounded by danger. Sleepless nights blur into one another.

Yet, in spite of her anguish and that of the other mothers, they refuse to give up hope and they fight to have their stories told so the rest of the world won't forget about them.



Doron Steinbrecher while in Hamas captivity



Doron Steinbrecher with her mother Simona and sister Yamit Ashkenazi

"A mother's love doesn't stop, it fights," Steinbrecher said

From protest marches calling for a hostage deal to appearances at the Knesset and solidarity trips to the United States and Europe, their activism is astonishing.

Doron is a veterinary nurse. "She's beautiful inside and out, and puts other people's needs first," Steinbrecher said.

"I don't know where she is or what state she's in. No-one has seen her or heard from her. We don't know if she's alone. We know nothing," she said.

Steinbrecher holds a poster showing a photograph of Doron pre-7 October alongside a photograph of her taken in captivity and released by Hamas on 26 January, 107 days after her abduction.

In it she looks pale, like a shadow of her former self with sunken, pleading eyes.

"That was nearly eight months ago. I lie awake and imagine what she looks like now," Steinbrecher said, pointing out that her daughter requires daily medication which she presumes she's not getting.

Doron was alone in her Kibbutz Kfar Aza apartment on 7 October when Hamas terrorists invaded the kibbutz, killing, raping, and abducting dozens of residents.

She was in her apartment in the kibbutz housing for younger, single residents, but remained on the family WhatsApp group, her sister and parents not far from her on the

kibbutz in their own houses.

At 06:30, everyone on the kibbutz reported that they were in their safe rooms. They all thought the security forces would arrive, and they'd soon be saved. They never imagined a massacre.

Her sister, Yamit Ashkenazi,

was with her own family, including her young children, who remained in their sealed room for 21 hours without food or water, until 01:00.

Doron's mother and father, Roni, locked themselves inside and kept very quiet while the terrorists used their garden as a meeting place. "They must have thought there was no-one home as they didn't try to enter. That was a miracle," Steinbrecher said.

The terrorists tried unsuccessfully to break into Ashkenazi's house, but moved on when they heard dogs barking.

At 10:30, Doron told her parents that she was scared and that the terrorists had arrived at her building. She then sent a voice message in which she said, "They've arrived, they have me."

That was the family's only indication that

Doron was abducted, along with other details including that her room wasn't set on fire and her body wasn't found.

One of the most excruciating nights of Steinbrecher's life was on 31 August, when the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) announced that it had found the bodies of six hostages in a tunnel in Rafah. The names weren't released until hours later after the bodies had been identified.

"It was the longest night of my life," she said.

"All the families of the hostages were together at Hostage Square in Tel Aviv. We found out only after midnight, and it brought so much pain and agony to those parents whose children's bodies were found.

"I knew Carmel Gat. To think she was killed moments before being rescued after 11 months of hell! We need a deal now before another hostage dies," she said.

Another agonising day was Doron's 31st birthday on 18 March.

"The family including my five grandchildren who adore Doron, held a picnic and released balloons in the air to send to her. We needed it to be a happy day, but she wasn't there and we couldn't hold her," she said.

"I'm afraid for her. Apart from the scarcity of water or food, she needs medicine. If I could send her a message, I would tell her that we love her, and are waiting for her."

The mothers of the female hostages are closely united in their anguish, she said.

"We need to push the world to cry for them to come home. We cry, but it's not enough. We need the world to cry with us," she said.

It's believed that 97 of the 251 hostages abducted by Hamas on 7 October remain in Gaza, including the bodies of at least 33 confirmed dead by the IDF.

Harassment won't silence Israeli-Palestinian dialogue

>>>Continued from page 1

discourses rooted in fact and in empathy, preventing a regional escalation, and potentially even a wider war, not to mention creating the conditions for a sustainable [peace] settlement".

Having a conference in South Africa "isn't just topical and likely to generate global attention. It's also an opportunity to host a new and potentially unprecedented kind of conversation; one hosted in the Global South by an organisation from the Global South," he says. "This event seeks to reinsert South Africa and the Global South more broadly in constructive discussions about the Middle East, playing a constructive role in pushing against extremist voices and supporting approaches grounded in the fundamental humanity of both Palestinians and Israelis.

"By bringing together thought leaders in various fields and, importantly, from across the political spectrum, we hope to reach a common understanding of how these issues may be addressed. We seek to create a platform where historical grievances are acknowledged, and constructive paths forward are explored."

In light of these aims, "it's truly scandalous that a well-intentioned event could be perceived as controversial", Chipkin says. "Those who have attempted to misrepresent this gathering should be ashamed of their actions." Meanwhile, the conference will go ahead,

with a new venue to be announced.

South African Zionist Federation (SAZF) spokesperson Rolene Marks said "peaceful and respectful dialogue between Israelis, Palestinians, and their supporters is more critical than ever, with war ongoing in Gaza.

"It's regrettable and ironic that a venue symbolising the Constitution, which was born out of reconciliation and the meeting of multiple opposing political parties, has withdrawn from hosting conversations between people with opposing viewpoints," she says. "The SAZF wouldn't necessarily have agreed with many of the speakers, but we will support and defend freedom of speech and democracy, which entails allowing people with different viewpoints to express them peacefully.

"The event featured both Palestinian and Israeli speakers, and stated that it aimed to bring nuance and balance into a complex emotionally fraught space. Given South Africa's history of promoting peace, reconciliation, and dialogue, it's disheartening that activists choose to bully a venue into cancelling its hosting of an event. Constitution Hill shouldn't have yielded to these extremists. By doing so, it undermines the very values the Constitution represents such as free speech and freedom of association."

The *SA Jewish Report* reached out to Constitution Hill for comment, but didn't receive a response by the time of going to print.



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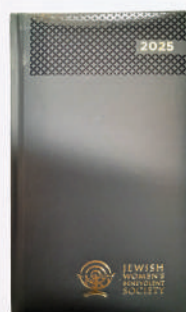
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Message to Hezbollah is clear



Thousands of pagers that had been handed out to Hezbollah operatives in Lebanon over the past few months exploded on Tuesday, 17 September, killing 12 people and injuring 2 800. This is the most bizarre news. One wonders who still uses pagers, and how whoever detonated them was able to do it.

At first, I thought it was some kind of joke, because it seemed unrealistic to imagine that anyone was still using pagers in this day and age. Such old technology!

Obviously, the world's fingers immediately pointed at Israel, but Israel hasn't confirmed nor denied any part in this. Truth is, I would be surprised if it was anyone else, not least of all because of Israel's technical expertise and intelligence abilities. Who else is capable of launching such a sophisticated attack that so carefully targets terrorist operatives? This attack certainly takes this war into a new realm, that of cyberspace.

Now, before I go on, I have to say that I'm a peacenik and hate that there could have been anyone innocent killed in this attack. Apparently, the child of a Hezbollah leader died, and that is truly tragic.

However, in terms of Israel taking on Hezbollah, this attack was priceless. Hezbollah leaders must be running around like headless chickens right now because their entire communications system appears to have been scuppered. Also, they are now fully aware that whoever did this to them knows a whole lot more about their workings than they think.

It's clear that those behind this attack knew that Hezbollah had warned its operatives not to use cellphones or emails, opting for this ancient technology that doesn't use data or apparently can't be traced or geolocated. So much for that!

I used to use a pager back in the 1980s up until the emergence of cellphones here. They were useful for bosses as they could contact you, but they were a pain in that to respond, you had to find and use a public telephone.

Because pagers use radio waves, they aren't easy to trace. This is why Hezbollah opted for this, as I understand. I'm sure those operatives hated those pagers as much as I did. They certainly do now!

My understanding is that this must have been many months in the planning because somehow, the pagers had to be intercepted and altered between having been ordered from the Far East and delivered to Lebanon. Then, they had to be handed out far and wide before anything like this was worthwhile.

I would have said that this attack has Israel's fingerprints on it because the message it sends is massive, but the death toll is very small considering the scale. Israel, as we know, does whatever it can to prevent the death of innocent people and focuses its attacks on terrorists.

The message, however, is clear: We know who you are, where you are, and have access to all your intelligence, so don't mess with us.

As for those operatives who were injured, they must surely be anxious that their bosses don't know what they are doing and are putting their lives at unnecessary risk. Hopefully, this will have an impact on further recruitment. Not that I think any leaders of terrorist organisations worry much about their operatives' lives. It's all about destroying Israel and its people. Everyone else appears to be just cannon fodder in pursuit of this.

However, there's no doubt that this attack, which took place all around Lebanon, hit its intended mark. There is no doubt that this is Israel trying to stop Hezbollah for its constant onslaught since 7 October. Although Israel's war has been directed at Hamas, the terrorist organisation behind the massacre and the hostage taking, Hezbollah has had a big part to play.

Since 7 October, Hezbollah has fired more than 7 500 rockets into Israel from Lebanon, and reportedly has 150 000 missiles pointed at Israel, according to the American Jewish Community website.

Every day, there are exchanges of fire between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Tens of thousands of Israelis have had to evacuate their homes in northern Israel and move to the safety of the middle of the country. And there they have stayed for most of the year because it's too dangerous for them to return home.

Last weekend, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted that this situation was unacceptable and intolerable, and couldn't go on. He said clearly that it was time to change the balance of power and get Israelis back home.

Just days later, this pager attack happens. So, while it has effectively put Hezbollah's communication on hold, injured its fighters, and affected morale, I wonder what the next step will be in this war?

Is there any chance that Israelis will be able to head back home to northern Israel? Unfortunately, I doubt it. But will it escalate the war?

A vital point in this attack is that I'm sure a sense of pride has been restored to Israeli intelligence – if Israel was behind this – because its reputation was so badly damaged on 7 October when it didn't anticipate the massacre. It also does give some sense of levelling the playing fields.

But does it indicate that we are closer to the end of the war? I don't believe it does. Does it bring us any closer to bringing home the hostages? Not at all. Does it push forward the signing of any ceasefire agreement. No.

I pray for a miracle – that somehow the hostages are brought home and can see in the new year in Israel. Imagine if on Simchat Torah, we could all look back on this nightmare as being a part of our history not our present.

Shabbat Shalom!
Peta Krost
Editor

'Palestine's' UN seat is far from statehood



OPINION

STEVEN GRUZD

There's a novel change in seating arrangements for the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 79), which began on 10 September in New York. Nestled between Sri Lanka and Sudan is the "State of Palestine", placed among the countries starting with "s" to emphasise the word "state".

This is the latest international bid for recognition of "Palestine's" sovereignty, attempting to pile yet more pressure on Israel to end its occupation of territories captured in the 1967 Six-Day War.

Jerusalem sees this move as a reward for terrorism after Hamas's deadly attack on 7 October 2023, and totally opposes it. The numbers aren't on Israel's side, as three-quarters of the world's states support the move. So, does it have any impact beyond symbolism?

On 10 September, Egypt asked for UNGA President Philémon Yang to confirm that "Palestine's" representative, Riyad Mansour, could take up his seat, which he did. The Egyptian ambassador said, "This isn't merely a procedural matter. This is a historic moment for us."

Israel's deputy ambassador to the UN, Jonathan Miller, said, "Any decision and/or action that improves the status of the Palestinians, either in the UN General Assembly or bilaterally, is currently a reward for terrorism in general, and the Hamas terrorists in particular."

West Bank and withheld tax payments to the Palestinian Authority. Israeli politicians explicitly said this was in retribution for the five countries recognising "Palestine".

Also in reaction, on 18 July the Israeli Knesset voted to reject outright the establishment of a Palestinian state, including as part of an eventual negotiated settlement. Gershon Baskin, a "peacenik" near the extremities of the Israeli left wing, has long called for the recognition of "Palestine", but this view is out of step with the post-7 October realities in Israel.



Today, more than 75% of the UN's 193 members – 146 states – recognise "Palestine". South Africa did so in 1995.

The Palestine Liberation Organization declared statehood in the occupied territories and East Jerusalem back in 1988, and by the end of that year, 78 countries had recognised "Palestine", mostly communist Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa. More did so after the 1993 Oslo Accords, which largely collapsed after the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and election of Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Palestinians launched their bid for statehood in the UN back in 2011, after negotiations with the Israelis evaporated. In spite of not being recognised as a state, it became a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation that year. It became a "non-member observer state" in 2012, and started using the "State of Palestine" moniker. The US threatened to stop funding any UN agency that admitted "Palestine" as a member, but was rebuked for this by the Arab League.

On and off since then,

the Palestinians have pushed for ever-greater involvement in and acceptance by the UN. Israel accuses them of abrogating the Oslo Accords, under which both sides agreed not to undertake unilateral actions like this on the global stage.

In 2015, "Palestine" became a party to the International Criminal Court.

Today, more than 75% of the UN's 193 members – 146 states – recognise "Palestine". South Africa did so in 1995.

Israel has never really worried too much about the UN. Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, famously coined the phrase, "Um Shmum" in 1955 to dismiss what the UN did by playing on its Hebrew acronym.

But, at the end of the day, this move will make Israel more uncomfortable in the UN as the Palestinians will have a podium from which to directly denounce the actions of the Jewish state. They are sure to use every opportunity that they get. It still makes "Palestine" no more of a state than Never-Never Land, Narnia, or Westeros until a deal is forged with Israel. And that day looks far, far away from here.

• Steven Gruzd is a political analyst in Johannesburg. He writes in his personal capacity.



Photo: UN Photo - Manuel Elias

The State of "Palestine" has been granted a permanent seat at the UN General Assembly

Through several administrations, the United States (US) has held that statehood could be recognised only as the result of negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. With the US having vetoed a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution on 18 April to grant "Palestine" full recognition as a state, the matter passed to the UNGA in May. It voted overwhelmingly to seat "Palestine" in the UNGA and accord it more participation rights than its erstwhile observer status entailed. It can now raise matters, submit proposals, and participate in meetings and conferences. In other words, it can have a full go against Israel.

The UNGA stopped short, however, of designating "Palestine" to be a full-fledged sovereign state. It cannot vote, and it cannot serve on the UNSC. Full membership would require a UNSC recommendation, which the veto-wielding US opposes – for now. Israel continues to control most of "Palestine's" claimed territory, and criticised this May resolution as well.

In late May, five countries including Ireland, Norway, and Spain recognised "Palestine" as the war against Hamas in Gaza intensified and as a punishment against Israel. In June, Israel authorised five new settlements in the

Priorities for SA's emergency resuscitation

OPINION

ANN BERNSTEIN



For the past nine months, the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) has been collaborating with experts, business leaders, former public servants, nongovernmental organisations, and academics trying to answer what is by far the most important question facing South Africa: what can a new government do to get the country back on track after 15 years of stagnation and decline?

When we started this project, the outcome of the election was difficult to predict. It was far from certain that the ruling party would lose its majority and form a coalition government. Fortunately, the Government of National Unity (GNU) is, we believe, potentially an unprecedented opportunity to turbo-boost reform and get South Africa back on track. CDE's "Agenda 2024: Priorities for a new government" consists of a series of catalytic action reports, four of which have now been released and distributed to about 20 000 decision makers around the country, with two more to be released in September.



The necessity for a new approach to governing South Africa couldn't be clearer. Annual growth has declined more or less continuously since 2009, and now averages less than 1% a year. We have the deepest unemployment crisis in the world, intensifying poverty, and a per capita murder rate that rivals that of war zones. Corruption is deeply entrenched, and the corrupt have little to fear from the law. We owe so much money as a country that we spend more repaying our debt every year than we spend on basic education, health, or policing.

The GNU has to deliver. It has to move with urgency to make sufficient progress so that individuals, communities, and investors feel confident that finally we're moving in the right direction and that there are important milestones – targets for delivery – the government is trying its utmost to meet.

CDE has focused on five priority areas for action. These are: fixing the state; freeing up markets to drive growth and development; addressing the fiscal crisis; building a new approach to mass inclusion; and strengthening the rule of law.

To begin to fix all of this, the government needs first to fix itself. Key to fixing the government is making sure that the Cabinet and Cabinet processes are fit for purpose, and that the best possible people are appointed to critical jobs.

We have argued that a smaller, streamlined, more coherent Cabinet is essential to ensure better decision making by government. Together with this requirement is a

theme throughout all our priority actions: ensure that the people in the most critical posts across government and state-owned companies (SOCs) – directors-general, chief executives, senior officials – are honest and capable. We are therefore proposing that the incumbents in about 120 "mission critical" posts all reapply for their jobs, and that, where individuals aren't the best possible candidates for the job, they be replaced.

Addressing the fiscal crisis and fixing SOCs is the second major theme for new government strategy. The choices here are challenging as there's little prospect of hastening the fiscal consolidation needed. An acceleration of economic growth after credible commitments to reform will ease some of these pressures, but is not enough. The government must avoid all new spending commitments. We have to get value for money. This requires that public servants are better led, managed, and supervised to improve productivity across government.

Fixing operational and commercial challenges of the most important SOCs such as Transnet and Eskom is urgently required. These challenges derive from corruption and mismanagement, but also from the absence of competition in the sectors they dominate. This results in operational failures that persist long after the point at which customers would have defected to competitors, if these existed. Fixing the SOCs, therefore, isn't just a matter of institutional-level tweaks, but requires a radical rethink of how the markets in which SOCs operate will be structured.

A third area of prioritisation is freeing up of the economy so that markets and firms, disciplined by competition but supported by a capable state, are able to thrive. It's critical to recognise the untapped potential for firms – formal and informal – that has been held back by a combination of bad regulation, increasing crime, and a rapidly deteriorating logistics system. And by a negative government attitude to private firms that needs to change if we are to become a country that welcomes investment.

The fourth priority concerns mass inclusion and a new perspective on how to ensure that people can move out of poverty and unemployment in the millions. To achieve this, the new government has to rethink the present approach to empowerment, which, even if it hadn't been wholly corrupted,

would empower only a small minority of people. What the country needs is a new approach focused on rapid employment growth and expanding opportunities for all those without any. It also requires rethinking procurement policies that have become the vehicle for transformation, but largely at the expense of higher costs of service delivery, coupled with considerable corruption. Empowerment policies that hold development to ransom so that a small elite can benefit need to be rejected and replaced.

The final priority for action by the new government concerns the rule of law. Catalytic actions here include a focus on reforming the Judicial Service Commission – the constitutional body that appoints judges – and which is failing in many respects; and a second report on strengthening the National Prosecuting Authority. This report will be launched on Thursday, 26 September, at a public event (see www.cde.org.za).

Arresting South Africa's devastating decline requires a new approach for the government. Hard choices must be made about people, policies, and how to get things done. Time is running out. Half-hearted, half-baked reform won't change the country's trajectory. The government needs to act quickly and decisively. After all, we have a country in crisis to fix.

• *Ann Bernstein is executive director of the Centre for Development and Enterprise. This article draws on CDE's "Agenda 2024: Priorities for South Africa's new government" series of reports. See www.cde.org.za*

Living a value-driven life – the antidote to hate

OPINION

ELI OVITS



The Jewish people are facing increasing antisemitism online, on our streets, and on our campuses since the horrific Hamas attacks on southern Israel on 7 October.

"Coalitions of unlikely connections" immediately come together to protest against Israel and Jews – often championing misinformation and twisting reality into an ugly proxy war. I witnessed such protests firsthand in Africa, and on several other continents.

JEWES OF ALL AGES AND BACKGROUNDS HAVE RISEN TO THE OCCASION, DONATING TIME, WISDOM, AND RESOURCES FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY, OTHER FAITH GROUPS, AND HUMANITY AS A WHOLE

History has informed us that it's not easy to be a Jew. Even those who maintained a lower profile or connection to Jewish life received an awakening during the crisis that one cannot hide from one's own identity.

So reflecting on this period – perceived as one of unprecedented hate – what can we take away as a positive factor?

For a start, we're a resilient people.

We come together to help those in need, and civil society is stronger now than ever. I would argue that the secret to our resilience is a deep understanding of purpose – that our foundations are built on generations of Jewish learning.

We are a nation committed to service. Whether it be helping the bereaved, the injured, the displaced, the traumatised, and of course, those who have loved ones in captivity, Jews of all ages and backgrounds have risen to the occasion, donating time, wisdom, and resources for the benefit of the Jewish community, other faith groups, and humanity as a whole. Limmud South Africa is the personification of this value, designed and led by volunteers.

During periods of turmoil, the need for Jewish unity is of paramount importance. And while that may sound like a given, achieving unity when there are multiple points of view is no simple task. Yet, we can extract from Limmud – past recipient of the Jerusalem Unity Prize – that Jewish unity is accomplished by safeguarding diversity. That now is that Seder-night-inspired-moment to look around and ask: who is missing from our broad tent, and how do we welcome them to the table?

Of course, there are communal norms and boundaries to respect as well. And there are those who prefer a different path. Whether it be the disruptors or those who deeply believe that watering-down or evolving tradition/Jewish

practise can in fact erode our core tenets.

Perhaps then, if there's one critical lesson to learn from this period, it's that the Jewish world of 6 October also had its flaws and imperfections. That some Jews, and certainly Israelis, had forgotten how to engage the "other". Let us, therefore, remember to argue for the sake of heaven. The alternative – a pursuit of absolute truth, and believing that we're the custodians of it, is a pathway that our adversaries have taken to new and dangerous extremes.

Looking back at these past difficult months, the highlighted Limmud values can help us to navigate change and uncertainty. After all, it's this framework that has enabled thousands of gatherings spanning the globe to celebrate Jewish life.

In essence, Limmud South Africa is the antidote to hate, and its record participation numbers reaffirm a community committed to Jewish values.

At a time where there are some who advocate that it's wiser to hide, lower one's profile, or use cancel culture, this community stands proud, morally sound, and vibrant.

• *Eli Ovits, a Nahum Goldmann fellow, is the chairperson of Limmud Israel and the founder of Altruists, a global consultancy that connects people to meaningful causes. He presented at Limmud Johannesburg this year.*



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Post 7 October antisemitism – an old, ugly anthem

LEE TANKLE

There was already a spike in antisemitism on 7 October, long before the Israeli military went into Gaza, said international antisemitism expert Dr David Hirsh at the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) Gauteng Conference on 15 September.

“Before there was any Israeli action in Gaza, there was a spike in antisemitism. Not on the 10th or the 15th of October, when Israel was at war, but on 7 October, antisemitism mushroomed,” said Hirsh, the academic director and chief executive of the London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, who was in conversation with Professor Karen Milner at the conference.

“I’m still trying to tease out why and what was it about 7 October that was new and different and that was a watershed moment, because there’s quite a lot of it that wasn’t new,” said Hirsh.

“We aren’t in the situation where everybody said, ‘Well now, we know what you were worried about, now we understand that it was true that Hamas wants to kill and harm Jews,’” said Hirsh, “A lot of people saw what had happened and a lot of people took it seriously. But other people glorified what Hamas did on 7 October, others denied it, others trivialised it, and others victim-blamed it. And some people did all four of those things at the same time.”

SAJBD Gauteng Council Chairperson Harold Jacobs said that even before the Israeli military response got underway, a wave of global antisemitism was unleashed that would only intensify in the weeks and months afterwards. “The sweep of defraudation and judgement of Israel was breathtaking,” said Jacobs. “South Africa seems to be the rare exception in that although we experienced a rise in antisemitic attacks, it seems to

have dropped off to the extent that we have returned to pre-7 October levels.”

Milner, the national chairperson of the SAJBD, agreed with Hirsh that 7 October was a watershed moment for antisemitism globally. “It’s reflected in discomfort among Jewish South Africans, which stems largely from the government’s position.

“We live in this bizarre paradox in South Africa,” said Milner. “The elite, the government, has taken this horrific stance. We’re not seeing the kind of deep-seated hate either against our community or against Israel from those in the wider South African community.”



Hirsh said that in Britain, only about 25% of the population hates Israel. “When we talk about the problem, that 25% is much greater in universities, it’s much greater among the young, it’s much greater actually among the educated and the articulate, which makes it unusual.”

He said that when he was working in the sociology department at the University of London in 2005 and the issue of the academic

boycott against Israel came up, he became ostracised for his position against a boycott. “In making arguments against the boycott of Israeli universities and academics, I was transformed by the way other people saw me from a sociologist into a Zionist sociologist. That meant I was a racist sociologist, a pro-apartheid sociologist, and a genocidal sociologist.”

Hirsh said his situation wasn’t unique, and what he was doing with the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism was to institutionalise the work and try to create a community and infrastructure of scholarship that Jews have largely been excluded from.

Milner asserted that Jewish students on South African university campuses were safe, even though it might seem like it is ground zero for antisemitism.

“It’s on campuses that our students come face to face with all the things that we’re talking about. At the universities where we have high numbers of Jewish students, we’ve been incredibly successful in making our students feel safe,” said Milner. “Our students are a tiny minority. By definition, Jewish students here are white. So, we’re a minority within a minority, and it’s really difficult for Jewish students to stand up if there’s going to be a massive march by the Progressive Youth Alliance, which is made up of the African

National Congress Youth League and the Economic Freedom Fighters.”

But Jewish students on campus have been able to stand up for what they believe, even going face to face with Israel haters, and have come out stronger, Milner said.

Similarly, in terms of antisemitic action, South African campuses have been relatively quiet, she said, even though former Department of International Relations and Cooperation Minister Dr Naledi Pandor encouraged students to partake in encampments, “There were about six tents at the University of Cape Town. There were a few at the University of the Witwatersrand. They lasted a couple of days. and they went home,” said Milner.

Milner said the source of the problems in the academic space in South Africa came from a small portion of academia.

“The STEM [science, technology, engineering, and maths] fields are far less problematic than the humanities in this regard, but we’re seeing this small, very committed group of academics managing this simply because they’re so committed and there are more of them than those who are committed on the other side.

“I don’t think academia in South Africa is antisemitic,” Milner said. “Our students are safe, and our academics are safe.”

For Hirsh, anti-Zionism is a form of antisemitism that has existed for a long time. There’s an anti-Zionism which isn’t about Israel and Palestine but is a world view opposed to Jews and Judaism globally, he said.

“It wasn’t about Israel or Palestine. It was about making the Palestinian flag and Hamas into a key symbolic issue that defines who we are and how our politics are different from other people’s politics,” said Hirsh, “It isn’t about foreign policy, it’s about people explaining their own identity by reference to the Jews, and they have been doing that for a very long time.”

National unity government – so far so good

LEE TANKLE

“For the first time since 1994, there’s a Cabinet that reflects the remarkable diversity of this country,” political analyst and director of the Africa Institute of the American Jewish Committee, Wayne Sussman, told the South African Jewish Board of Deputies Gauteng Conference on 15 September.

“It’s a Cabinet which cares about urban interests, suburban interests, informal-settlement interests, and township interests. It’s something we should be very optimistic about.

“Today is a better country than it was before the election,” he said. “Today is better for Jewish South Africans than it was before the elections. And today is better for South Africans than it was before the elections.”

Sussman said that after the elections, it was difficult for the African National Congress (ANC) to make up the magic number of parliamentary seats whereby it could create a Government of National Unity (GNU) that would keep in line with its interests.

It quickly became clear that Cyril Ramaphosa was thinking about his legacy in his second term, he said. “He realised that the horrendous youth unemployment, horrendous lack of economic growth, lack of investment in this country, and infrastructure decay couldn’t be something which he’d be remembered for,” he said.

The decrease in support for the ANC was widely felt throughout the country, Sussman said, having lost almost 30% in Gauteng, and 70% in KwaZulu-Natal.

“More than a quarter of members of Parliament in the ANC didn’t return to the parliamentary benches. It was down to 159 seats, so it needed a party with substantial numbers to help make up the 42 remaining seats.

“The results of the 2024 elections were that a simple alliance between the ANC and the Economic Freedom Fighters [EFF] wasn’t possible because the EFF declined in this election,” said Sussman, “The EFF went backwards in Gauteng, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga. These are the provinces where it did well historically. Umkhonto weSizwe [MK] was the core reason why.”

Furthermore, the ANC coalition with the EFF in Ekurhuleni showed why the two parties couldn’t work together seamlessly as “you saw the EFF trying to one-up the ANC on every occasion”, Sussman said.

Similarly, “Of all the scenarios, the ANC plus MK was the least likely because you don’t reward bad behaviour. If you’re rewarding someone who kicked you in the face six months ago and they come and be your saviour, what will that mean to the people in the ANC in the Eastern Cape, North West, and Limpopo moving forward?”

Sussman said that after these considerations, there was only one possible suitor for the ANC – the Democratic Alliance (DA). “But the ANC needed to sell this to the national executive council of the ANC. It needed to make it more palatable.

“After the election, it was clear that the multiparty charter was moot. It couldn’t form a government. There was no choice but to form a deal with the DA; the Inkatha Freedom Party [IFP]; the Patriotic Alliance; the Freedom Front Plus; the United Democratic Movement, and a range of other parties. And the first GNU had 288 seats, of which the DA had 87.”

Sussman said the ANC designed the GNU in such a way that if the DA quit, it would still have a majority.

It’s remarkable that in Gauteng, a province where the ANC has 35% of the vote, its ministers control 96% of the budget, he said. They have all the big ministerial positions. So, in spite of the devastating result for the ANC in the election, not much has changed.”

For example, in terms of ministerial positions, Sussman said, the ANC still held 70% of the positions and had 55% of the seats in Parliament. “So, Ramaphosa did very well for the ANC in the GNU negotiations. How well did Jack Bloom’s party [the DA] do? It got six ministers and six deputies. That’s 12 positions. It got 30% of the seats of all the parties.”

Sussman said on the road to the 2026 municipal elections, “Despite the ANC’s vulnerable position, it looks at all these coalition partners, from the ACDP [African Christian Democratic Party] on the right, to the Pan Africanist Congress [PAC] on the left, to Rise Mzansi on the centre-left. There are many potential advancing partners.”

“The fact that the DA isn’t in the heart of government and Gauteng’s premier, Panyaza Lesufi, is running a minority administration might play into the DA’s hands in 2026. Because there are going to be challenges with this minority government,” he said.

Even though Sussman is optimistic overall about the GNU, he said some things could put it in jeopardy.

He expects the 2026 election to be the place where the strength of the GNU will be tested. “There will be pressure in the ANC to exact revenge on Ramaphosa. In the 2026 vote, he might be a sacrificial lamb,” said Sussman, “Similarly, look at what the DA is saying, ‘We are the insurance policy against the EFF or the MK.’ It’s not attacking the ANC at the moment. That will change in 2026.”

“We are witnessing an age of a Cabinet where there’s constructive competition. People compete to outshine one another. This is good because this will take our country forward. The government knows that it has to attract investment; tackle youth unemployment; deal with gender-based violence; and make its citizens, including Jewish South Africans, all feel welcome here.”



Political analyst Wayne Sussman

Pravin Gordhan, a man of integrity and courage



STEPHEN KOSEFF

TRIBUTE

The first time I heard of Pravin Gordhan was when he was appointed commissioner of the South African Revenue Service (SARS) in 1999, a role he held until 2009. His tenure was marked by remarkable success, transforming SARS into one of the most effective tax collection agencies in the world.

A few years into his role, I, along with a number of chief executives from South Africa's banking sector, had the privilege of meeting him in Pretoria. In his characteristic no-nonsense manner, Pravin insisted that corporates must step up and contribute more to the fiscus. With a wink and a suppressed smile, he guided us to acknowledge that corporate tax deals weren't serving the nation. This pivotal moment led us to increase our contributions, fostering a culture of corporate accountability that continues to thrive today.

Pravin was frank, hardworking, and possessed an integrity that was beyond reproach. Many will remember him for his invaluable contributions to South Africa's democracy. He

society to "connect the dots, follow the money", always prioritising South Africa's interests over his own, often at great personal cost. His courage in these turbulent times is a testament to his character.

I vividly remember the events of December 2015, known as "Nene-gate", when former President Jacob Zuma replaced Nhlanhla Nene, the minister of finance, with David "Des" van Rooyen. The chief executives of the banks, including myself, as well as a representative of business leadership, held an emergency meeting with certain senior ministers to discuss the damage this nefarious appointment would have on the economy. This after the rand and bank shares had taken a nose-dive on the news. Thankfully, Zuma responded to the backlash, and removed Van Rooyen after a mere four days in office. Pravin was then reinstated as finance minister, a move that was met with widespread relief.

In his second term as finance minister, Pravin championed collaboration with the private sector, creating the impactful CEO Initiative, out of which a successful small and medium-sized enterprise fund was created, with substantial financial backing from large corporates, as well as the establishment of the Youth Employment Service (YES) programme.

YES has created more than 155 000 job opportunities for young people in spite of the challenging economic landscape. Pravin's unwavering commitment to uplifting the youth is a shining example of his dedication to South Africa's future.

Regrettably, I fear that Pravin's final role as minister of public enterprises may overshadow his remarkable legacy. He faced unjust criticism for the challenges faced by SOEs. In spite of his commendable efforts to reform institutions like

South African Airways and Eskom, the complexity of these issues was daunting.

The relentless attacks on his character, including racist slurs, would have silenced many. Yet Pravin remained undeterred in his fight against state capture and the endemic corruption that continues to haunt South Africa. I only wish he were here to witness the progress of some of the initiatives he championed to revive South Africa's institutions.

Pravin embodied patriotism, always willing to engage with people from all walks of life. He was never too busy or self-important to take a call or have a conversation. Even though we sometimes disagreed, I, like many others, will deeply miss his courageous contributions to our beloved country.

As we reflect on Pravin's life and legacy, my heart goes out to his family, loved ones, and colleagues. His passing leaves a void that cannot be filled, but his spirit will live on in the values he championed and the lives he touched. May his memory be a blessing, inspiring us all to carry forward his commitment to integrity, justice, and the betterment of our nation.

• Stephen Koseff is the former Chief Executive Officer of Investec.



Photo: Ian Ossendryver

Former Cabinet Minister Pravin Gordhan

was incapable of dishonesty, and never hesitated to confront issues head-on. I came to appreciate these qualities during our interactions when he served as minister of finance from 2009 to 2014.

As the former chief executive officer of Investec, I firmly believe that growth-driven capitalism is essential for unlocking South Africa's potential. While we agreed on the necessity of social upliftment, our discussions often highlighted our differing views on how to achieve this. I fondly recall our robust debates in which I advocated for growth while he championed transformation. Ultimately, we found common ground in the phrase "inclusive growth", a goal that remains elusive, partly due to the state capture and corruption that have plagued our state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and government agencies.

In spite of our ideological differences, I had deep admiration for the sharp intellect and big heart behind Pravin. A veteran of the anti-apartheid struggle, he played a crucial role in South Africa's transition to democracy. Yet perhaps his most significant contribution was his unyielding fight against corruption.

During the height of state capture, Pravin bravely spoke out against corruption within his own party, the African National Congress. He constantly urged journalists and civil

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Madiba understood unifying power of sport, says Bacher

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

He turned the Springboks' historic win at the 1995 Rugby World Cup into a unifying national force and helped engineer South Africa's return to the international cricket pitch in 1991. As Heritage Day approaches, veteran cricketer and administrator, Dr Ali Bacher, recalls Nelson Mandela's impact on our sporting legacy.

"It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. Sport can create hope where there was only despair." Mandela's words revealed his innate understanding of the role sport plays in uplifting and connecting South Africans.

Bacher reflected on his interactions with Mandela on and off the sports field. Together with his close friend, the late Steve Tshwete who became sports minister in 1994, Bacher helped to spearhead South Africa's return to international cricket in June 1991.

"We again became members of the International Cricket Council [ICC], because for the first time ever, we had one non-racial cricketing body for South Africa," he said. "We didn't talk about international cricket matches at that time, all we wanted to do was to rejoin the ICC."

It was Mandela himself who opened the door for the South African cricket team to appear on the international stage. Following South Africa's ICC acceptance, Bacher invited West Indian cricket captain, Clive Lloyd, to visit South Africa to survey the cricket scene and township development programme. Upon Lloyd's arrival, he asked to meet Mandela.

The meeting was short but friendly as a Swedish delegation of reporters were waiting outside to see Mandela, Bacher recalled. When the Swedish media entered afterwards, they asked Mandela for his thoughts on South Africa's exclusion from the upcoming 1992 Cricket World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

"All he said was, 'They must definitely be invited,'" said Bacher. "That's the power of Nelson Mandela. Those words went around the world in a second and the next day, I was called by Sri Lanka's president." An emergency meeting in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, swiftly followed, at which ICC member countries voted overwhelmingly in favour of South Africa's participation in the World Cup.

In February 1993, South Africa hosted a cricket tournament with the West Indies and Pakistan, who ultimately competed in the finals at the Wanderers Stadium. "On the day of the finals, I got a phone call from Steve saying that Madiba would like to come watch the cricket," Bacher said. He collected Mandela outside the stadium, and escorted him to the Long Room suite. It was the first cricket match Mandela had ever watched.

At teatime, he offered to meet

the players in their change room and afterwards, chose to return with Bacher via the field. Bacher has never before shared the story of what happened next.

"We're walking along the boundary rope, and after about 13m, a white gentleman jumps over the fence and throws an orange at Mandela. I'm on the right of Mandela, and you won't believe it, I catch this orange in my right hand. And we carry on walking as though nothing happened."

the pleasure of showing him that that orange had frightened him."

Arguably the most seminal Mandela sporting moment occurred in 1995. Amid the excitement of the Rugby World Cup in South Africa, Mandela announced that he would support the Springboks. That same day, a television crew came to Bacher's house to ask for his response.

"I said that though we respect Mr Mandela enormously, we wouldn't support our national

existence that prevented blacks from playing for the national cricket team."

Upon seeing Bacher's response, Mandela explained his reasons for supporting the Springboks, saying, 'I understand what rugby means to the Afrikaner. The Afrikaner, by and large, has accepted me as the president of their country, and this is my way of saying thank you to them.'

As the final approached, Tshwete told Bacher that he had received

a call from Mandela asking him to bring a number six jersey to Ellis Park Stadium – the same number as Springboks captain Francois Pienaar. "Steve doesn't know what it's about, but I tell him where to get a jersey," Bacher recalled. He later heard from Springbok Joel Stransky how, before the match, Mandela went to each player and told them how important it was for the country

And we won."

Bacher also reminisced about how difficult it was to say no to Mandela. When in 1997, the president invited him for tea, he asked, "Would you agree that in a small way, I helped you get back into world cricket?"



It was Mandela himself who opened the door for the South African cricket team to appear on the international stage.

"I said, 'Of course'. Mandela then told Bacher about a small village he'd visited near Polokwane with no toilets and dilapidated buildings.

"He said, 'Ali, it would be a nice gesture if Cricket SA gave me R1 million to help this community.' While Bacher was agreeable, he met opposition from the board, which feared the move would lead to a barrage of requests from other charities.

"I told them, 'I see what you're saying, but you can tell him I won't,'" Bacher recalled. Board chairperson, Raymond White, then instructed those opposed to put up their right hand, but no-one did so. "They were terrified that it would go around the country that the Cricket Board wouldn't support Mandela's request," Bacher said.

"The next morning, I took my family to Madiba's house for tea. Madiba put my two eldest grandchildren, then six, on his lap and started to sing to them. He was an extraordinary person. I feel honoured that I had a warm relationship with him."



Dr Ali Bacher shows off the photograph he has of himself and Nelson Mandela

Photo: Ilan Ossendryver

Later Bacher asked Mandela's main security guard if Mandela had seen the orange. "He said, 'Of course', so I asked why he hadn't stopped. He said that Madiba wasn't going to give that gentleman

cricket team to play as Springboks. This was because cricket had now united, and among our black administrators and players, 'Springboks' was an ugly word because it denoted a part of our

to win the final.

"I was at the match, and when Madiba walked onto the field wearing the Springbok rugby jersey, I don't think I've ever heard an ovation like the one he received.

Embrace technology to transform our economy

LEE TANKLE

Going back 10 years, one dollar bought R11 and today, that same dollar buys R18, which means South Africans are 60% poorer than we were 10 years ago, said chief global equity specialist at Sasfin Securities, David Shapiro.

Speaking at the ORT SA Biennial General Meeting on 12 September, Shapiro said the reason for this massive depreciation was that the United States (US) had made great strides in technology.

"One of the big issues is that in South Africa, with interest rates where they are, with the prime rate at 11.75%, no business can function at those kinds of levels," he said.

Having said that, he insists that the future for South Africans is improving, but it needs a lowering of interest rates. "Every time rates come down, it's more money in your back pocket, which you can spend. We're going into a period which is going to be much brighter."

Shapiro expects a cut in interest rates soon, but didn't elaborate on how much of a drop we'll get. "We're going to start to get back into a period of growth, something we haven't seen for years, but we haven't yet felt it, and it will take time to filter down."

He said the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) was mainly dependent on the rand hedge, an investment strategy used by investors in South Africa to reduce the effects of currency depreciation or volatility on their investment returns. To try and keep up with economies like that of the US, the JSE needed to lessen its reliance on the rand hedge.

"We have to transform this economy," Shapiro said. "We must embrace technological change. If we don't, we're just going to be left behind and continue to battle.

"If you walk into the JSE, \$100 is still worth \$100. It hasn't grown. But if you would have gone into the US market, that same \$100 would now be worth \$284 dollars,"

said Shapiro.

"The US markets will continue to dominate, and the dollar will continue to rule," he said. "The US has just wiped out its competition. If you go to the US, whether it's Amazon, Alphabet, Meta, Tesla, you name those companies, the reason that it has grown is the advancement of technology."

Savings in South Africa are going into pension funds, Shapiro said, that are forced to invest in the country, thereby not saving enough. The only way we can compete is to embrace technology.

Shapiro believes the US has come out of high inflation due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period because of its focus on new technology.



David Shapiro

"Initially, central bankers [in the US] thought that the rise in inflation in 2021 was transitory – meaning it would go away once we opened the harbours, started the airlines, and got back to all those things that had created life as we knew it. Even though inflation was going up, no-one took any action.

"Suddenly, at the end of 2021, they found that it wasn't transitory, it was sticky. To curb it, they put up interest rates at a pace that we hadn't seen before."

Shapiro maintained that the interest rates would have continued to rise if not for the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) and ChatGPT in November 2022.

"All of a sudden, we had this bright area of technological advancement," he said. "Technological advancement that we'd never seen before, which is going to continue for decades to come – or certainly for another decade.

"What AI means is that you'll teach computers, and you'll provide the learning skills, after which it will use the skills that it requires to help you in your business. Believe me, there's not one business we know that won't be impacted in any way," he said.

He explained that one of the consequences of these

technological advancements in the financial sphere is that after three or four years, we've got to a stage where central bankers have managed to get on top of inflation and start bringing it down.

One of the crises the financial industry is trying to tackle is the fact that people are starting to live longer, Shapiro said.

Most people are expected to leave the job market at about 65, and could live well into their 90s. "Sixty-five to 90-odd is more than 25 years of retirement. That's a long retirement. And consider that you started working properly only at about 25. So, 25 to 65 is 40 years. You'd better make sure that in

those 40 or 45 years, you've saved enough for another 25 years. Now you do the calculation. How many people save a third of their income now or even any at all? It's becoming an issue."

The only way to handle this issue was to ensure that your savings maintained their purchasing power, Shapiro said. "If you could buy a box of Smarties for R1 today, you better hope that in 20 years' time, you've still got the equivalent of R1 to buy a box of Smarties or more."

Ceasefire now or later – that’s the impossible question



HARRY JOFFE

With Hamas’s recent killing of six hostages leading to a surge in demand within Israel for the government to agree to a ceasefire immediately, it’s important to analyse the pros and cons of this decision. As it stands, two issues cloud the debate.

First, the issue of the hostages, which of course is deeply emotional. This has been magnified by the harrowing accounts of the terrible abuse and mistreatment the hostages are being subjected to as well as pictures starting to emerge of the truly horrific conditions they are being kept in.

Second, there’s no doubt that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has lost much credibility, abroad and at home. Although his polling figures have picked up, there’s still a majority of Israelis that want him to go.

Many see him as prolonging the war for his own political benefit. This may or may not be true, but even if it is, it still doesn’t mean that Israel should immediately end the war because there are many reasons for Israel to be wary of an immediate ceasefire.

On the positive side, the benefits of a ceasefire are clear. The most obvious being that some of the hostages will be released. Although, it must be stressed, the details of the release haven’t been made public. It’s not clear over what period the

hostages will be released, and if the release would include any soldiers, or only women, children, and the elderly and sick. However, obviously getting hostages released is a priority for any Israeli leader, and Israel has always prided itself on not leaving any of its people behind.

Then, we need to recognise that a ceasefire gives the troops a well-deserved rest. Many of them have been fighting for eight or nine months, and cannot continue forever. In addition, they will need to freshen up and regroup for any potential escalation in the north.

We also need to consider that Israel is finding itself increasingly isolated on the international stage, borne out recently by the news that the United Kingdom, previously a close ally, confirmed that it would be suspending 30 out of 350 arms-export licences to Israel. This affects equipment such as parts for fighter jets, helicopters, and drones. An end to the war now would definitely assist Israel’s position internationally.

Finally, Israel’s relationship with the United States, its main ally, is becoming increasingly frayed, with the administration pushing hard to end the war before the election in November. This relationship will very likely become more difficult if Kamala Harris wins, as she has made it clear repeatedly that she wants an immediate end to the war.



A protester in New York City calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas

However, the disadvantages of an immediate ceasefire are also clear.

First, there has been no clarity about which internees in Israel Hamas wants released in exchange for the hostages. It may well be that some of the names on Hamas’s list are unacceptable to Israel as they could create major security risks. This issue in itself could make any deal a non-starter, as it must never be forgotten that Yahya Sinwar, the architect of the 7 October attacks, was released in the previous

prisoner/hostage swop.

Second, Israel is concerned that if the war ends now, Hamas will claim victory as it will have survived. This will be magnified if Israel is unable to capture Sinwar, Hamas’s leader, before any ceasefire. If he comes out of the tunnels after a ceasefire a free man, he will undisputedly be the leader of the Palestinian movement and a hero to the Palestinians. That will very likely lead to the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank collapsing, with

Hamas taking over its reins and becoming the controlling power in the West Bank. That would, in turn, lead to an upsurge in violence there – this has already begun – with a major security risk for Israel, which will have to contend with a Hamas threat on two fronts. It’s unlikely that Israel would be prepared to risk this scenario.

Many in the security establishment do seem to want to accept a ceasefire deal, but the conditions they are happy to accept

also haven’t been made clear. Their conditions are probably still too far apart from Hamas’s. For example, it’s unlikely that they will accept continuing Hamas control of Gaza in any form.

They also don’t seem to share Netanyahu’s assessment that continuing Israeli control of the Philadelphi Corridor is so crucial. Their analysis has been supported in media like *The Jerusalem Post* and *The Economist*, but the Philadelphi Corridor is only one of the issues, and not the most important one.

While on the one hand, the war must end and probably cannot carry on much longer, on the other, it seems clear to many that Israel cannot simply end the war now without having achieved some of its key aims. In addition, while the condition of the hostages remains dire and time isn’t on their side, Israel cannot afford to be seen by its enemies to have lost this war.

The decision when to end this war and under what conditions is devilishly difficult. Even a leader with more credibility and support than Netanyahu wouldn’t find the decision easy. This is a fateful decision to make either way, and not one that any leader would relish having to take.

• Harry Joffe is a Johannesburg tax and trust attorney.

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Test of faith: hostage families call for global outcry

STEVEN GRUZD

South African-born Aviva Siegel is fighting with every fibre of her being to get her beloved husband, Keith, aged 65, released with the other 100 hostages believed to be held in the dank, festering terror tunnels of Gaza.

Her raw pain and anguish were palpable as she spoke about it and how she was starved, held in airless tunnels, and taunted by terrorists after being taken hostage by Hamas on 7 October for 51 days.

"We need to scream and shout until all the hostages come home! We must get them out before another hostage dies!" she said on a webinar on 16 September that was co-hosted by the SA Jewish Report, the Jewish National Fund of South Africa (JNF SA), and The Base Shul in Glenhazel.

"We weren't allowed to feel. I had to hide my tears," Aviva said of the horror of the experience she relives every day, and never leaves her for a second. "We were starved, and they ate right in front of us." She suffered dehydration, infections, lost 10kg, and could hardly walk unassisted.

"I felt so many times I was going to die. I wanted to die. It was too much for me to handle," Aviva said. Just before her release, she refused to leave without Keith. He convinced her to go with these heartbreaking words, "You be strong for me, and I'll be strong for you."

Aviva made aliya from Randfontein, eventually settling on Kibbutz Kfar Aza, 2km from Gaza. She and Keith were kidnapped there by Hamas on 7 October. She graphically described how kibbutznikim, young and old, were massacred, raped, and burned alive on that day. Parents were killed in front of their children, children hid in cupboards for hours, houses were set alight.

The couple was taken at knife and gunpoint into Gaza in Keith's car. Keith was shot in the hand and his ribs were broken. He was in excruciating pain for days. His captors didn't care, and wouldn't let him lie down.

The Siegels were first hidden in a dark, cramped underground tunnel under a



Gaza home with five others, with little air and filthy mattresses. They were moved 13 times. They weren't allowed to talk for days on end. Young women were beaten with guns and sticks and violated.

"Evil cannot win, and it is winning,"

she said. "The world needs to scream and shout with me to let them come home."

Also on the webinar was Rabbi Doron Perez, also born in South Africa, who served as head of Mizrahi SA and Yeshiva College, before eventually settling with

his family in Israel in 2014.

In the chaos of 7 October, his eldest son, Yonatan, an officer in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), was shot through the leg and taken home for treatment. His younger son, Daniel, was stationed around the base of Nahal Oz near Gaza. They lost contact with him, and he was subsequently confirmed as officially missing in action.

A few weeks later, Yonatan got married, as was planned before the attack. The family also faced the prospect of a funeral for Daniel, and asked not to be told if he was confirmed dead until after the wedding. Perez resolved to put Daniel out of his mind during the wedding, but when the chuppah commenced, everyone started

crying. "It was the saddest, happiest, most uplifting wedding. I then understood it is possible to carry angst and pain at the same time as gratitude and happiness," he said.

Eventually, after 163 days, on 17 March 2024, the family received the devastating news that Daniel had been killed in action. The IDF had collected some of his blood, and these remains were buried on Har Herzl in Jerusalem. After shiva, Perez was allowed to listen to a recording of the last two hours and 16 minutes of Daniel's life, retrieved from his tank. Daniel fearlessly confronted a second wave of terrorists carrying rocket-propelled grenades, killing many of them. "It was tragic to listen to his decisions, his bravery, his clarity of thought," said Perez. "He shot all 3 000 rounds from his machine gun."

Rabbi Perez said he had not (yet) experienced a crisis of faith after Daniel's death. "I feel grateful and blessed every day, and don't feel any anger," he said. "But I won't judge people who do. I'm still suffering for my son, but I know people who lost two sons, or many family members. I feel like there's a blessing within this curse. Pain doesn't have to translate to anger, criticism, and blame. I feel 'lucky', and take nothing for granted. Daniel died at the best time of his life, with all his relationships intact."

Dalia Cusnir, whose two brothers-in-law, Eitan and Amos Horn, were taken hostage from Kibbutz Nir Oz on 7 October, also spoke on the webinar. The Horn brothers were among at least 100 people on the kibbutz who were murdered or captured. It took weeks for the family, who hail from Argentina, to learn that both men were alive in Gaza, including from released hostages and DNA retrieved from tunnels.

Dalia has undertaken advocacy campaigns on behalf of the hostages. She received a surprisingly warm welcome by the United States Congress, even from avowed Israel opponents. However, she felt that interactions with United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Vatican were insincere, fruitless exercises.

With her husband, Yair, and their two children, Dalia was recently hosted in South Africa as part of an initiative to promote healing for hostage families by the JNF SA and The Base. "I'm so grateful and thankful. We had two weeks of respite and love from this community. They embraced us, and showed we aren't alone."

"Don't stop talking about the hostages," Dalia said. "Don't normalise it. They are real people, like you and me, like your kids and my kids. Use all your contacts. Shout it out to the world."

'Mr Tennis' leaves Israeli court 40-love up

STAFF REPORTER

Dr Ian Froman, appropriately nicknamed "Mr Tennis" for bringing the game to Israel and making it part of its lifestyle, passed away at the age of 87 on 9 September.

While so many in his professional life as a dentist, fundraiser, and tennis guru mourn his loss, his two nieces, Sarah Froman Ettlinger and Judy Froman Cowan, have paid tribute to him.

While in primary school, Judy wrote about her hero, her uncle Ian, simply because, she said, "He risked everything for love and chose to live his life giving love, receiving love, and doing what he loved. And for this, the 10-year-old inside of me has looked up to him all my life."

She said his enduring love for tennis became obvious as far back as when he began nursery school. His parents, Kate and Philip, were involved in Jewish education in South Africa. "While on a drive in Linksfield one day, they discovered a mushroom farm on auction, and convinced the South African Jewish Board of Education to buy it and establish a Jewish school there," said Judy.

"My father, Colin, and my uncle, Ian, were at King Edward VII Preparatory School and my *zaida* told the board that if the name King Edward was good enough for their school, the name King David would be good enough for the new Jewish school." The farm was bought, and Kate Froman became interim headmistress at King David Linksfield.

"I cannot imagine what the dynamic must have been like between Ian and his parents when he point blank refused to walk into his nursery school classroom," said Judy. "At the age of four, he arrived at Genia Ludwin's classroom holding a tennis racket larger than himself, and demanded that she draw a line on the wall outside the classroom so he could hit his tennis ball against the wall while the other children played with dough. And so it was. Ian got his make-shift nursery school tennis court, and spent every day in the sunshine doing what he loved."

Judy said her parents used to call her uncle "the sunshine and orange-juice kid", and she spoke about how he went on to play at Wimbledon and represent Israel at the Davis Cup. Had her uncle turned pro, Judy said, he would have gone far in his tennis career, but "My *zaida* insisted that Ian couldn't rely on tennis to make a living. So he relented out of respect for his father, and reluctantly became a dentist."

Judy described her uncle as "athletic, good looking, very charming, and his vast repertoire of jokes rolled easily off his tongue. It's no surprise that women adored him."

"But," she said, "after Ian met Ruth Esakov – a stand-in date to the Wits Dental Ball which was held on a Friday night because Ian's then girlfriend was *shomeret* Shabbat – he had eyes for no other."

Ian and Ruth married in 1963, and had a love affair that lasted more than 60 years.

Judy said she recently watched a video of the Froman couple in their 80s. "There was this wonderful couple giggling and dancing together, and I marvelled at how their love had lasted a lifetime. If Ian was my hero, Ian and Ruth were my idyllic couple."

They loved each other and both loved Israel and chose to risk everything in the 1960s to make a new life for themselves and their family in Israel, she said.

"And after my *zaida* passed away in 1971, Ruthie encouraged Ian to chuck in dentistry and live his dream, finally making a career of tennis," Judy said.

Sarah spoke of him believing "in sport as a tool to change lives and wanting to gift

tennis with its white uniform and rules of behaviour to the children of Israel who at that time had no proper sports facilities".

She said that after fighting in the Yom Kippur war, Froman left his dentistry practice and built a tennis centre in Ramat Hasharon. Over the years, he raised about \$200 million (R3.5 billion) for the Israel Tennis centres, she said.

"I remember the days when he travelled with young Israeli kids to our home in Houghton and would put on exhibitions on our tennis court. Like the Pied Piper, the kids and everyone else bought into his belief," Sarah said.

She spoke of Gilad Bloom, a former professional Israeli tennis champion, being one of those kids. "He wrote on Facebook that everything he became in life was due to the confidence that Ian instilled in him in those early years. He was one of many who felt that way."

Judy spoke of her uncle's vision, saying, "He understood that sport could be used to encourage interaction between people of all backgrounds, to teach discipline and decorum, and help educate Israel's burgeoning multicultural population to integrate and get on with each other. He went on to establish 12 more tennis centres around Israel, most of which were placed in areas where kids needed a place they could go to for free to do their homework, meet other kids, and learn about life from each other and their coaches."

"The success of his labour of love was recognised when Ian received the Israel Prize – the Israeli equivalent of a knighthood – for his contribution to sport and the betterment of society in Israel."

It was so clear, Judy said after reading all the tributes to her uncle in the Israeli media, that he was far more than just "Mr Tennis", he had truly transformed people's lives.

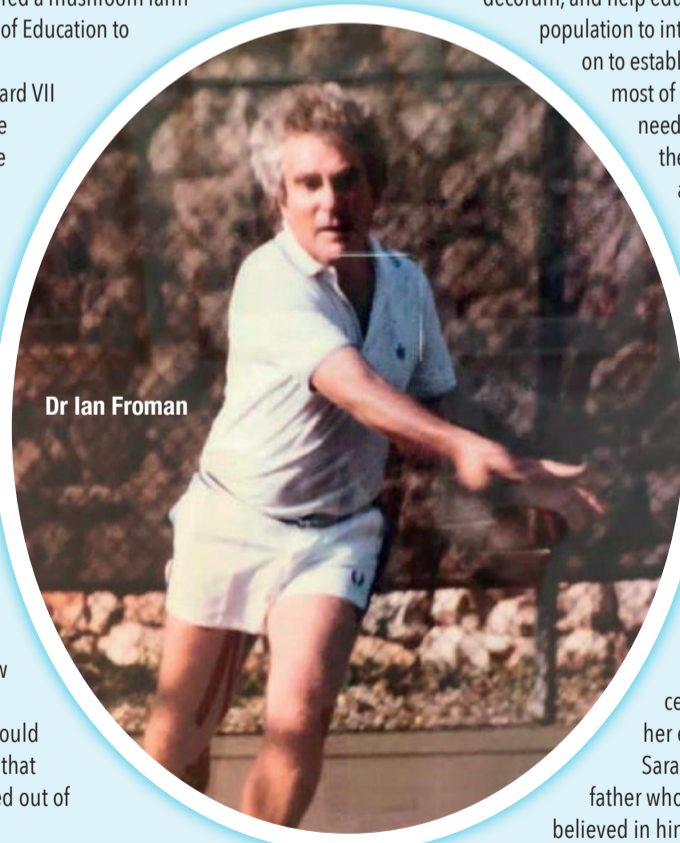
Sarah said her cousin, Amira, Froman's second daughter, spoke at the funeral of the father she shared with thousands of children from the tennis centres, who sang, *You Are My Sunshine* to her every night as a child.

Sarah said that her cousin, Philip, "spoke of the father who was by his side for so many years, who believed in him and taught him that nothing was more important than family. Most of all the fact that Ian showered him with love so that he felt a sense of security every day of his life."

Sarah quoted Philip as saying, "My dad had such incredible charisma and charm, but in a simple, genuine way, that instantly entered people's hearts and left an everlasting impression on them, be it world famous tennis players such as Jimmy Connors, Israeli leaders such as Yitzhak Rabin, Chaim Hertzog, and so many others."

Froman lived out his years in Beit Yanay surrounded by all those he loved and who loved him – his wife Ruthie; his three children, Yaron, Amira and Philip; his 11 grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

Recalled Judy, "I visited them all a couple of months ago, and was so delighted to see all the kids in the Beit Yanay community come from active duty in Gaza to our cousin, Amit's, hummus bar on a Friday morning for some hummus and to let their hair down. Every one of them greeted Ian warmly, shook his hand, and treated him like their grandfather, because that's what he was: a father, uncle, and grandfather to us all."



Dr Ian Froman



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Art of *Moving On* – or at least writing about it

Barbara Ludman is an American journalist who has lived in South Africa since April 1976, and has deep roots in Parkview, Johannesburg. Ludman, who has had a long association with the *Mail & Guardian* newspaper, has written a book of short stories titled *Moving On*. The *SA Jewish Report* speaks to her about it.

How would you describe *Moving On*?

It's a collection of short stories about people finding ways to move on – or not – after trauma.

What drew you to write this book?

Anger, initially. When my husband died, I discovered how unfriendly the world was to the people left behind, from banks to the master's office, medical aids, and specialists. But when I began writing the stories, I found so much light and quite a lot of humour. People are amazingly resilient, and find the most interesting ways to survive what life throws at them.

What made you choose the title?

I don't think I did. My working title was, *So Now What?* I could have called it *New Lives* because so many of the characters in the book move on to new lives.

What was your process of researching and writing the book?

It was multifaceted. I've been a journalist all my life, and I approached the project first with interviews. A niece and a wonderful woman in Cape Town went to Everest, and they spoke of

incredible cold and guest houses with what felt like cardboard walls. Another niece married the widower of her best friend, with her blessing. I know several people who look after spouses who have descended into various levels of dementia – that took prodigious research to get it right. I remember my mother-in-law's unhappiness at having lived so long. She had survived all her friends, so I looked into how one would actually commit suicide.

But for the most part, once I started writing, stories just began to happen. I'm not good at keeping secrets – I talk too much about what I'm working on, no doubt to the irritation of my friends – but it has made the book so much better than if I had just relied on my imagination. People had suggestions and opinions, and they were so generous about my using slices of their lives.

How and why did you choose the individual stories?

I didn't actually choose them. They chose me. The first story in the book, about a woman looking for a shallow, meaningless relationship – it was wonderful to watch what she got up to. The Everest stories landed at the right time,

inviting me to write about them. And another example: I'd got to nine stories, and my editor, Pat Tucker, told me that I needed another story. And just like that, I realised the book needed a mother/daughter chapter, and there it was, its hand raised, saying, "Yes, what about us?"

Why place the stories in Parkview?

I found Parkview to be the perfect place to set the book. It's as much a village as a suburb, and has just about everything – a high street with restaurants and interesting shops, a park with a lake, a fruit shop whose owners are engaged in the community, a first-rate library – actually everything but a cinema, but that might be returning. It's home to the kind of people I wanted to write about – older residents and young families, all very different sorts of people who make the suburb so warm



Barbara Ludman

and interesting. Community in fiction is important – as it is in life – and I wanted the characters linked, if loosely. In *Moving On*, people wander in and out of each other's stories.

Are the stories and the people from your life? If so, explain.

I never write about myself. Other people have much better stories to tell. I'm a listener, and stories I thought I'd forgotten years ago began to surface as soon as I started writing. Somehow they'd been filed away in the hard drive of my brain and showed up when they were needed.

As for the characters, some are based on relatives. Some are combinations of people I know. Some just appeared – I have no idea where they came from but I was happy to get to know them. And many of the events are real. The home invasion happened to a close friend. The trip up Africa, swimming with crocodiles, that happened to good friends.

In some cases, I put real people in new situations. For example, I wanted to see how my sister would have done if she'd had my life – and she thrived. I wanted to know what my husband would have been like if he'd been gay. One begins these stories, and then the characters take over and one has to run to keep up.

Why do you believe these stories are important for people to read?

I would like to think people might like to meet my characters. I had a lovely time watching them develop, and enjoy the stories.

Who makes up the audience you hope to read this book?

Oh everyone, I hope, over the age of 19.

What do you hope people will take home from the book?

It depends. Hopefully a bit of joy, some appreciation of life in Johannesburg, and the power of the human spirit. For people like me who have lost their spouses, the point is that there's a way to move on from tragedy. I haven't – I've continued to work as a journalist, still haven't learned to cook as well as my husband did – but moving on after a loss or any kind of trauma is a good idea, and maybe one day I'll try it.

Venter celebrates winning deaf cricketer hat-trick

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Two-time Maccabi Games gold medallist, Colin Venter, recently became the first cricketer to win the Cricket South Africa (CSA) Hearing-Impaired Cricket Player of the Year award three times.

This King David Linksfield alumnus was one of the star international South African cricketers, such as Proteas players Marco Jansen and Quinton de Kock, to be awarded at what he describes as a "dazzling" CSA Awards evening on 5 September.



Colin Venter as the 2017 Maccabi South African flag bearer

"The award meant a lot to me as it came full circle since my last awards in 2012 and 2013, becoming the first deaf cricketer to win the award three times," says the 35-year-old Venter who captains the Lions Deaf Cricket and South Africa Deaf cricket teams. "At my age, it's humbling to receive this award through my experience, leadership, and putting a lot of effort into fitness."

The award recognises a hearing-impaired cricketer who has not only demonstrated cricketing talent over the past year, but an ability to overcome challenges with determination and grace.

"The past year was an excellent year for me with the ball, as I managed to take 10 wickets at the IPT [Inter-provincial] Tournament in Cape Town and captained the Lions Deaf Cricket side to win the tournament," Venter says. "I took my first T20 hat-trick against Boland."

Venter was one of the 13 Lions cricketers awarded at the awards evening, attended by "high-profile players and leaders including Sports Minister Gayton McKenzie".

Venter made his international debut for the South Africa Deaf cricket team in 2011 in Australia, and was made captain in 2016, following in the footsteps of his dad and uncle, who represented South Africa in the inaugural 1996 Deaf World Cup in Melbourne, with his dad captaining the team.

"I come from a cricket-mad family with my dad and uncle being the pinnacle in my cricket journey," Venter says. "They started their career in 1977 after school, and have been involved with Lions Deaf Cricket for many years."

Venter's brother and cousins helped to set his foundation in backyard cricket. He went on to play for King David, and started his Lions journey at the age of 14.

"I grew up in a small family with Judaism on my mother's side, and attending King David enhanced my experience," he says.

Venter was born into a predominantly deaf family, and he and his brother are hard of hearing, so he wears two hearing aids.

"The only challenge we face on the cricket field is not hearing the 'snicks behind' when batters edge the ball towards the wicketkeeper and slips, and usually that can prove to be the difference between a wicket and winning the game. Communication is very visual in sign language, so it takes a bit of time to position the field and communicate with players on the other side of the field."

Reflecting on his journey from playing for King David to captaining the national team, Venter says, "I started playing club cricket at 11 with adults, so that helped to bring the experience into school cricket. I remember being the fast bowler, all the other kids at the school would tell me to 'please bowl slow' to them. I played first-team cricket and was fortunate enough to be under the guidance of fellow cricketer and captain, Matthew Rosen, at school and Maccabi cricket."

Having received half colours for cricket at King David, Venter played cricket at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), receiving half colours and playing in the University Sports South Africa tournament.

A teacher by trade, Venter is the head of the e-platform department of eDeaf, a service and training provider.

He captained South Africa in the Deaf International Cricket Council T20 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates this year. "With more than 30 caps, I'm proud to say that we had the best winning rate among previous years and won our first international trophy, which holds a special place in my cabinet. Knowing I can contribute to my country through sport in a different format is the biggest honour of my cricketing career."

Aside from his national duties, he plays for the Lions Deaf Cricket team in the Saturday leagues. "We play against hearing clubs. Our home ground is at Marks Park Cricket Club. Every year, we participate in the Inter-provincial Tournament, which is hosted across South Africa and is the pinnacle of selection for the South African side.

"The tournament is for deaf people only and no hearing devices are allowed on the field of play. This gives deaf players the opportunity to be selected for the South African side."

Winning two golds at the Maccabi Games ranks as one of his most memorable cricketing moments. "In 2013, my first Maccabi Games didn't end well as I tore an ankle ligament in the first match and could no longer participate. The team, with its grittiness, managed to win the gold medal with 11 players throughout. The second Maccabi Games I participated in was in 2017, when I was selected as flag bearer for the South African team," following in the footsteps of the likes of Proteas batsman Adam Bacher. "I fared really well with the ball, and we eventually won the gold medal, defeating Great Britain."

Other highlights from his cricketing journey include being nominated Gauteng Sportsmen of the Year with a Disability in 2015, and captaining Lions Deaf Cricket to a 21-game unbeaten streak.

In the Inter-provincial Tournament at Durbanville Cricket Club in April 2023, Venter memorably took five wickets in his final over against Boland, before being named man of the match in the final game against Western Province.

Venter's cricketing success comes down to "hard work behind the scenes of bowling many balls, training, and fitness sessions. Perseverance, staying humble, and playing hard cricket is the secret."

Having won many provincial trophies, "I would like to win a World Cup or Champions Trophy hosted by the Deaf International Cricket Council," he says.

Plan seating in advance, or be air-fried



INNER VOICE
Howard Feldman

interests, and both would prefer that the other was out the way. But few are brave enough to risk their spouse thinking that they prefer not to be seated near them. And so, in the interest of *shalom bayit* (peace in the home), the pretence continues until by silent signal, places are shifted and sexes are separated.

A few years ago, I mentored a female chief executive who was struggling with her team. Her style was collaborative, and she believed in creating a low power distance culture. This meant she wanted her people to be empowered and to challenge when they thought it appropriate. The problem was that they didn't fully grasp that her style was at her discretion, and that her position was still one of seniority. We needed to find a way to remind them of that without changing her approach.

One of the remediations I recommended was to send them nonverbal messages that established her position without spelling it out. Like making sure that she sat at the head of the boardroom table whenever they met. And that they knew not to take her seat. She would place her people next to her when meeting with external parties, underscoring her role.

Because seating placement matters, no matter the event.

Best practice recommends that we think about seating before our guests arrive. It's important that spouses concur, and that the table is designed to allow for a free flow of conversation. This means placing CrossFitters and air-fryer enthusiasts where they can do the least possible harm.

There's nothing quite as anxiety producing as a relaxed host – those who nonchalantly wave their arms as if they haven't a care in the world, and say, "I don't mind, sit anywhere."

How horrifying it is to contemplate arriving at a function only to find out that seating hasn't been assigned and that it's a free for all. And that every relationship that you have known is about to be tested. It's not out of the question that there's a chance the evening might well conclude with friendships in tatters, family bonds broken, because they didn't think of reserving you a seat. This could result in forcing you to spend an evening in conversation – G-d forbid – with "CrossFitters" and "air-fryers".

Shabbat meals are a high danger zone. Seating is an art that's in terrible danger of being lost. And as we lose the skill, so the quality of our meals and our social interactions will diminish with it. I would argue that much like hypertension, poor seating is a silent killer. And we're all at risk.

My late father was good at many things. Seating his guests wasn't one of them. For some reason, he had the notion that couples who were friendly should be seated next to each other. Never opposite. The result was a long row – they had a 20-seater table – of people who would otherwise enjoy a great conversation, unable to do so as they wouldn't be able to see them, let alone engage with them throughout the meal. Friendless CrossFitters would be seated opposite, rendering the meal a mindless dessert of unstimulating dialogue.

To be fair, it's not simple. My wife and I have never quite figured out if it's better to separate men and women or intersperse them. Invariably, conversations diverge along with

Communal health and contemporary antisemitism



ABOVE BOARD
Karen Milner

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) last weekend hosted both its Cape and Gauteng conferences. In an unusual step, we chose to hold the conferences on the same day so that we could allow our special guest, Dr David Hirsh, to attend and address both events. Dr Hirsh is a leading expert on contemporary antisemitism, and is the chief executive and academic director of the London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, as well as a senior lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London. The events were both exceptionally well attended, and are further testament to the vibrancy and health of our community.

In his opening remarks at the Gauteng conference, political analyst Wayne Sussman echoed this sentiment. He reflected on the dynamic nature of Jewish community events, having attended several across the country in a single week. Sussman's analysis of the government of national unity was, as expected, sharp, engaging, and insightful.

In Johannesburg, we gave our appreciation to outgoing Chairperson Harold Jacobs, who was at the helm over a very trying period that incorporated both the COVID-19 pandemic and 7 October massacre. Jacobs' calm and consultative leadership as well as his exceptional legal knowledge were integral to the Gauteng Board's successes in past years, and the community owes him a great debt of gratitude for his unwavering dedication through these complex periods.

In Cape Town, Dr Hirsh delivered a compelling presentation on the rise of contemporary antisemitism. His analysis of these troubling trends resonated deeply with attendees. Following this, I had the honour of joining him for a panel discussion chaired by newly appointed Gauteng SAJBD Chairperson Danny

This column is paid for by the SA Jewish Board of Deputies

Mofsowitz. The panel delved into pressing issues, including growing concern about antisemitism on university campuses and the increasingly blurred lines between anti-Zionism and antisemitism.

Dr Hirsh stated that the commonly stated Golda Meir quote, "The world hates a Jew who hits back. The world loves us only when we are to be pitied," was shown by the events that followed 7 October to be only partially true. While the world does indeed hate it when Jews hit back, the celebrations and victim blaming that followed 7 October reveal that the world doesn't love us when we are to be pitied either.

Though we may take some solace in the fact that the situation in South Africa – especially on our university campuses – appears more manageable compared to other Jewish communities around the world, we cannot ignore the alarming rise in antisemitic incidents post-7 October. Through hosting Dr Hirsh and introducing him to media outlets, think tanks, legal professionals, educators, and academics, we hope to further educate and raise awareness of contemporary antisemitism and its evolving manifestations. Engaging with broader society on this issue remains critical, and we are deeply grateful to Dr Hirsh for his invaluable contribution to this mandate.

As the month of Elul continues and we head toward the high holidays, I'm heartened by the strength, health, and vibrancy of our community. May we all harness the momentum and spirit of this period and carry it forward into the new year.

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

Symposium addresses Jewish education in contemporary world

The Academy of Jewish Thought and Learning and SAJEP (the South African Association for Jewish and Hebrew Education Professionals) held their annual Jewish Education Symposium in Johannesburg and Cape Town on 3 and 5 September, with more than 250 educators participating nationally.

As the only space bringing together all of South Africa's Jewish and Hebrew educators – adult educators, school teachers, informal educators, rabbis and rebbetzins – as well as community leaders, the symposium serves as a platform for sharing ideas, innovative teaching methods, and strategies to improve Jewish education nationally.

There was a particularly high turnout for the event in Johannesburg, with participants engaging in workshops on Hebrew pedagogy, Jewish studies, and the integration of Jewish values in secular education systems. Cape Town's sessions also proved fruitful, with vibrant discussions on community engagement, digital learning tools for Hebrew, and curriculum development.

International speakers included renowned educators and rabbis such as Rabbi Dr Raphael Zarum from the London School of Jewish Studies



Rabbi Ramon Widmonte, Chief Rabbi Dr Warren Goldstein, and Rabbi Dr Raphael Zarum

and Rabbi Reuven Spolter from Herzog College, who emphasised the importance of adapting Jewish education to contemporary needs without losing sight of tradition.

One of the highlights was a panel discussion on how Jewish schools are dealing with an increasingly anti-Jewish and anti-Israel environment.

The success of the symposium underscores the vitality of Jewish education in South Africa and the growing commitment to ensuring that Jewish educators hold themselves to higher and higher professional standards. The academy is already planning follow-up events, aiming to expand the conversation and foster greater networking to share great ideas.

What the world needs now is music



What *The World Needs Now* is music, and that's exactly what the audience heard at this special performance hosted by the Union of Jewish Women Johannesburg (UJW) on Sunday, 15 September at the King David Sandton hall. This spectacular performance of harmony, hope, and heart was directed and choreographed by Lorri Strauss and Sharon Spiegel-Wagner and hosted by Vicky Friedman. Talent of all ages was showcased by members of our community who gave of their time and expertise to support the UJW. These included Gina Shmukler; Sharon Spiegel-Wagner; Yael Benjamin; Demi Cohen; Melissa Krawitz; Lorri Strauss; Lance Maron; Peter Berman; Ryan Peimer; Adam Davis; and Emma Jean and Adrian Galliard.

Mina Lopato celebrates families, past and present

Mina Lopato Nursery School's annual Family Fun Day on Sunday, 15 September, was a hybrid of welcoming new and prospective families as well as current families and alumni of the school.



Open Day at Mina Lopato Nursery School

A King David Schools column

What is an international, world-class school?



KD CORNER
Rabbi Ricky Seeff

Maybe it was the COVID-19 pandemic. Maybe it was the intense loadshedding. Maybe it's a world that's getting smaller with each passing year, but there seems to have been a surge in parents and students looking to study overseas.

This has created the necessity for local private schools to be "world-class" or "international" schools. Schools have needed to offer parents and children a plethora of opportunities and excellent academic programmes with the promise of creating an opening, or at least keeping the door open, to international study.

The world is a more competitive place, and there's no question that a rigorous and innovative approach to academics and multi-disciplinary extracurricular participation will enhance a student's chances of getting accepted at foreign universities. Therefore, schools need to maintain excellent standards. However, that's not the whole story and definitely not for Jewish students.

In an article titled, "Over a million South Africans eyeing universities abroad", Rebecca Pretorius from Crimson Education writes that the goal posts to admission into foreign universities have moved over the years. One incredible example is how universities are particularly interested in students developing mastery in their own areas of interest. She says, "Establishing and organising their own clubs or social movements aimed at solving a real-life problem can highlight leadership skills and a passion for making an impact. Students can also compete in local or global competitions. You don't need to be

the top academic. You need to be driven. You need to compete, and have a passion to contribute to the world."

She also points out that understanding the admissions process enhances the chances of international study.

Good schools will ensure that children work hard and strive to be the best. World-class schools will help ignite fire in a child to work hard at making a difference. To work hard at solving the world's problems. World-class schools will produce leaders.

In the Jewish context, I believe a world-class school is one that gives children a sense of belonging and a grounding in their identity. The events of 7 October have shone a light on Jewish peoplehood. We are connected. There's no longer the South African Jew; the Israeli Jew; the American Jew; or any other brand. There's just a Jew. Jewish students need to know who they are, that they belong to an amazing people. They belong to something bigger than themselves. They are part of a community, not just in their locale, but around the world. If they don't have this sense of belonging and Jewish pride, they run the risk of being reminded who they are when they arrive on foreign university campuses.

A world-class Jewish school builds leaders and builds Jewish identity, and this strong grounding helps children to understand that no matter where they end up and no matter where they study, they have a proud identity, they have a people.

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The Chev is hosting first night Rosh Hashana and you are invited.

If anyone in the community is alone for Rosh Hashana, please join the Chev for a sumptuous and uplifting Yomtov dinner.

Date 2nd October
Time 19h15 for 19h30
 RSVP by 25 September to:
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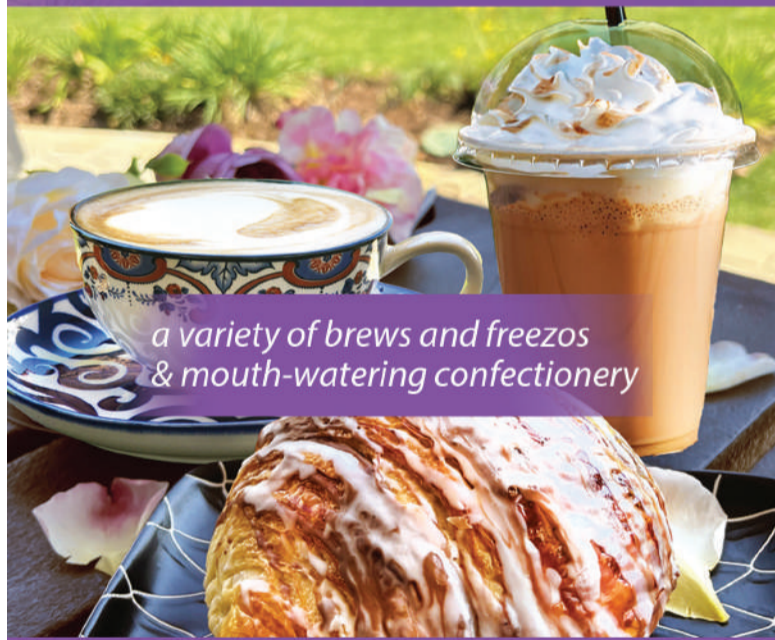




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