

A Nation Shattered by Oct. 7 Attacks

There is no word in the psychological lexicon for what happened on Oct 7 or the new world in which Israelis now live. But “shattered” comes closer than “trauma”


 19


 12

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A soldier mourns near a photo of a deceased relative at the Nova music festival site on January 5, 2024 in Re'im, Israel. Approximately 40 hostages were taken from the Nova music festival site during Hamas's Oct. 7 attack, alongside the 364 who were killed, according to Israeli authorities. (Photo by Amir Levy/Getty Images)

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Commentary

ISRAEL – When Israelis speak about Oct. 7, they frequently say “there are no words.” But one word they consistently use is “*shattered*.”

Israeli psychologists have been treating *severe trauma*, *complex trauma* and *collective trauma*. The word “trauma,” however, fails to convey the scale, the savagery or the sadism of events that day. The term does not encompass the complex mix of disorientation, anguish, emotional overload and the experience of utter brokenness after the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust.

There is no word for the shock felt by Jews around the world when Israel was suddenly and without warning attacked by thousands of rockets targeting civilians from the north to the south and from the river to the sea. There is no word to describe what it is like to be a Jew kidnapped by terrorists indoctrinated since early childhood to believe that murdering Jews is rewarded in the afterlife. Or to know that the people you love are in the hands of terrorists who delight in rape, torture and slaughter; who enjoy forcing parents and children to watch as they inflict horrors on loved ones.

There is no word to convey the terrifying ordeal suffered by survivors of the attempted genocide that Hamas perpetrated on Oct. 7. There is no word that communicates the panic, betrayal, horror and distress of those who hid for hours waiting for help to come, reading WhatsApp messages about terrorists inside their neighbors’ houses. Hearing terrorists break into their own homes. Hearing the screams of injured and dying friends and relatives. Hearing sounds of gunfire and exploding RPGs punctuated by ecstatic shouts of “Allahu Akbar.” All the while knowing they were being hunted.

Everyone in Israel is just one or two degrees of separation from someone who was murdered, injured or kidnapped on Oct. 7. And everyone knows someone who sped to the rescue that day, many of whom never returned.

There is no word to describe the grief of a country still holding its breath while more than a hundred hostages remain in Gaza, and while hundreds of thousands of soldiers, many in their teens and early 20s,

go to battle. Some returning badly injured. Some returning to be buried.

Israel, which in the 20th century absorbed hundreds of thousands of displaced Holocaust survivors as well as nearly 900,000 Jewish refugees fleeing antisemitism and violence in neighboring Arab countries, is now temporarily housing about 200,000 displaced Israelis — refugees in their own country — some in hotels and even dormitories.

This includes not only those evacuated from areas near the Gaza border, but also from the north, as confrontations with terrorists in Lebanon escalate. Many displaced families are unsure how long it will take before they can return home. Some refugees from the south have already returned. Some don't have homes to return to. Some don't know if they want to return.

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A Shattered Paradigm

Jews are the only indigenous people who lived in one region for thousands of years, and then, when the majority were dispersed across the globe to be a tiny minority wherever they lived, managed to retain the same religion, rituals, language and attachment to their ancient land for 2,000 years — even as they believed themselves to be full members of their new host countries.

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But Jews have also been unable to spend even one century without being ethnically cleansed, violently persecuted or massacred somewhere — whether in the Diaspora or the land of Israel. And since the newest iteration of Jewish control of the land in 1948, Israelis have existed under a threat to which there has been no real solution.

During the Second Intifada, roughly 1,000 Israelis were killed by Palestinian terrorists. There were stabbings, shootings, suicide bombings and beginning in 2001, mortar and rocket attacks launched from Gaza. In response, Israel increased security. Terrorists from the Palestinian Territories became less able to penetrate Israel's borders and the number of injuries and deaths decreased. And of course, from the time they are little, Israeli children are aware that they will be required to serve in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

One of the most surprising things I learned during my time in Israel is that for decades, new parents have believed — or at least hoped hard enough to almost believe — that by the time their children are old enough to serve, defending the country from terrorism will no longer be necessary.

Gaza: “Land For Peace”

Gaza was home to Jews for over 2,000 years, beginning in at least the second century BCE and ending in 1929, when Arabs in the region once known as Judea killed more than 65 Jews in Hebron and around 135 Jews in Gaza. These pogroms came after a decade of similar antisemitic violence in the British Mandate of Palestine. A British commission referred to the pogroms as “racial animosity on the part of the Arabs.”

In part to protect Jews and in part to appease the forebears of the Arabs who in the 1960s would come to be called Palestinians, British colonial forces expelled the Jews from Hebron and Gaza, and restricted Jewish immigration to the region.

After the Six-Day War in 1967, Jews returned to live in Gaza. In 2005, in the hope of securing both peace and international goodwill, the Israeli government led by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon unilaterally withdrew its forces from Gaza and forcibly removed the 9,000-plus Jews who lived there, as well as disinterring those buried in Gaza.

Referencing the long history of Jewish expulsions by colonial forces and antisemitic governments, Gazan Jews' protest slogan was “Jews don't expel Jews.” The IDF physically carried many of them out of their homes and across the newly designated border.

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Hours after the finalization of the historic 2005 withdrawal, Palestinian terrorists in Gaza fired rockets at Israeli civilians. In 2007, the year Hamas took over as Gaza's government and murdered its political rivals, terrorists in Gaza launched more than 2,800 rockets and mortars at Israel. By then, the staunch international support for demolishing Gaza's terrorist infrastructure, which Sharon expected would last a decade, had already evaporated.

Instead, between then and Oct. 7, with backing from Iran along with appropriated international aid controlled by UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (which has been revealed to be both a terrorist-training system and an internationally funded source of income for Hamas terrorists and supporters), Hamas significantly expanded its terrorist capabilities and vastly increased its stockpile of weapons.

Without the international support necessary to destroy Gaza's terrorist capabilities, in order to keep Israelis safe, Israel had to rely on defensive strategies. Israelis' famous technological ingenuity resulted in an increasingly sophisticated rocket-alert system that now includes smartphone apps, and the "Iron Dome," a highly advanced technological system that intercepts terrorists' rockets, neutralizing the vast majority that don't fall within Gaza.

Nonetheless, bomb shelters are still necessary. They appeared across Israel's roadways as well as in Israeli homes and businesses. The fortified room in a home is called a "*mamad*," an acronym for "*merkhav mugan dirati*" which means "apartment protected space." The door to a mamad doesn't lock. If a home is damaged, first responders need to be able to open it in order to extract the people inside.

Life in Israel, and especially the *otef* (the Gaza envelope), can be hard for those outside of Israel to truly grasp. Imagine needing constant protection from terrorist rocket attacks, and trying to prevent your

children from developing anxiety, panic disorders and PTSD. Israel's creative solution was to turn children's bedrooms into bomb shelters. In newer homes, when rocket attacks happen at night, instead of awakening children to take them to a shelter, Israeli parents calmly visit their children's bedrooms until the danger has passed. Sometimes children don't even wake up.

This all had the effect of transforming something life-threatening into something more like a nuisance. On Jan. 29, I experienced this myself when air raid sirens sounded in Tel Aviv and my cell phone app blasted a "critical alert." Hamas rockets aimed at the city came close enough that from the bomb shelter, I could hear them exploding when Iron Dome missiles destroyed them in the air.

In a tacit contract between Israeli citizens and their government, Israelis have come to tolerate a certain level of antisemitic terrorist violence as the price of Jewish self-determination in the historical, biblical, and continuous homeland of the Jews. In return, Israeli homes — or at least, the mamads — were thought to be as safe as if covered by an iron dome.

On Oct. 7, that contract was shattered.

The Kibbutzim

Early in the morning, Hamas began their barbaric rampage. Thousands of rockets were launched from Gaza at civilian targets across the country, and Israelis took refuge in their mamads as they always do.

They soon understood that it was not a "normal" rocket attack — the alerts didn't stop when they usually do. But they could not have imagined that at that moment, thousands of terrorists were breaking through the border wall and invading their country, intending to murder, rape, dismember and kidnap as many Israelis as possible. Or that terrorists knew exactly where to find them. Or that their "safe rooms" would become death traps.

Entire families were gunned down in their children's bedrooms. Or they died from smoke inhalation. Or they were burned alive when terrorists set fire to their homes. In many cases, terrorists shot their

victims through mamad doors as Israelis tried desperately to hold them shut.

That is how 18-year-old Maayan Idan was murdered in front of her family as her father, Tsachi, held the door closed. Terrorists livestreamed the family's ordeal on Facebook as Maayan's parents and young siblings tried to process what was happening.

Tsachi was kidnapped from Kibbutz Nahal Oz and is still a hostage in Gaza. At Maayan's funeral, her mother, Gali, described being "shattered into pieces."

Sixty-nine-year-old Itzik Elgarat was shot in the hand through his mamad's door. He called his brother, Danny, who thought the handle had somehow injured Itzik and told him how to create a tourniquet. Just before the call was disconnected, Itzik became hysterical. "Danny! This is the end!" he said. "This is the end!"

Not understanding what "end" it could be, Danny called a relative who lived in the same kibbutz, asking him to check on Itzik. His relative told him the kibbutz had been overtaken by terrorists. As one of the few residents with a weapon handy, he had killed two terrorists in his own home. Danny then opened his phone tracking app and watched as Itzik's phone entered Gaza.

Danny's sister lived in the same kibbutz. She spent seven hours holding her door handle in the closed position, saving the lives of the two grandchildren who were with her. Terrorists kidnapped her ex-husband, Alex Dancyg, a 76-year-old world-renowned scholar of the Holocaust and Polish Jewish history, and the son and brother of Holocaust survivors. He has trained Israel's Auschwitz guides for over 30 years, and is a beloved fixture at Yad Vashem, Israel's memorial museum of the Holocaust.

According to released hostage Nili Margalit, for at least the first 50 days, Hamas held her and Dancyg and others from Nir Oz, most of them elderly, deep in a tunnel. To keep their minds active, they took turns giving talks about their areas of expertise. When Dancyg lectured about the Holocaust, the others asked him to speak about something else.

Margalit, Dancyg and Elgarat were kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz, where 46 residents were murdered. By the time the IDF arrived, the terrorists were gone and had kidnapped approximately 80 people — about a third of all the hostages. About one quarter of their close-knit community was either kidnapped or murdered.

Thirty people from Nir Oz are still held hostage in Gaza, including Dancyg and his brother-in-law Elgarat. Also kidnapped were Elgarat's next-door neighbors: Four-year-old Ariel Bibas, his 9-month-old brother, Kfir (who, if alive, spent his first birthday as a hostage), their mother, Shiri, and father, Yarden, who was taken separately after trying to protect his family. Images (shot by a Palestinian “civilian” who works as a photographer for the Associated Press) show Yarden being kidnapped on a motorcycle, blood gushing from his head; a terrorist with a hammer in one hand, holding Yarden by the throat. Hamas streamed the kidnapping of Shiri and her boys, all of them wrapped in a blanket. A screenshot of the terrified mother and her red-headed babies has become an iconic image of the Oct. 7 kidnappings.

About 100 residents of the larger Kibbutz Be'eri were also murdered that day, and about 30 kidnapped — together, 10% of that community. Among the kidnapped were Emily Hand, who spent her ninth birthday as a hostage. She was at a sleepover with her friend, Hila Rotem, when terrorists invaded the kibbutz.

After her release, Emily revealed that in Gaza, she, Hila and Hila's mother, Raya, had been held not in tunnels, but in homes. For at least part of the time, she was with Be'eri resident Yossi Sharabi whose brother, Eli, was also taken hostage. Yossi's wife and three daughters survived the massacre, but terrorists killed Yossi in Gaza, where Eli remains a hostage. Eli's wife and two daughters were murdered. Yossi and Eli's brother, Sharon, says his family is “shattered.”

The Nova Festival

Hamas terrorists who invaded Israel on motorized paragliders swarmed the Nova “peace rave” at a campground near Kibbutz Re'im. (*Re'im* means “friends.”) With assault weapons, grenades and RPGs, terrorists mowed down hundreds of partygoers who fled on foot and

by car, many of which were incinerated. Of between 3,000 and 4,000 attendees, 364 were murdered and many more were injured. Forty from the festival were reportedly taken hostage.

Ayala Avraham and her husband, Ilan, although in their 50s, were regulars at trance music festivals, dancing together every weekend. Ilan frantically drove Ayala and a friend away from the Nova grounds while terrorists shot at them, hitting the car. The three made it to Moshav Yakhini, a small community near Sderot, where they hid in a standalone bomb shelter behind a security gate.

When Ilan realized terrorists were approaching, he gave Ayala the car keys, hugged and kissed her, and said “You will be okay.” Then he stood outside the shelter to distract the approaching terrorists, hoping they would not look inside. Several terrorists grabbed Ilan and absconded with him.

Other terrorists soon discovered the women, but left only one to guard them. The women broke free from their captor, who shot at them, wounding Ayala’s friend as they ran to hide behind her car. They were not well hidden. If he had come after them, they would have had no chance. But for whatever reason, he ran back toward the other terrorists. The women were soon rescued by the IDF.

For three weeks, Ilan, who wore dreadlocks, was thought to be missing. Eventually, his unusual hairstyle allowed him to be identified — terrorists had completely mutilated his face. It was later revealed that he had refused his captors’ demands to knock on doors and tell people in Hebrew that it was safe to come out of their homes.

Meanwhile, near the festival grounds, in tiny roadside bomb shelters, each built to accommodate 10, dozens of terrified festival-goers huddled together as terrorists sprayed them with gunfire and threw in grenades. In one shelter, a 22-year-old unarmed off-duty soldier, Staff Sgt. Aner Elyakim Shapira, caught seven grenades and threw them back out. The eighth grenade killed him.

Some survivors of the blast were kidnapped, including Aner’s close friend, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, an Israeli-American whose left arm was blown off below the elbow. His fate is unknown. In the shelters and elsewhere, many young people survived the massacre by hiding under the bodies of their friends and others.

As of this writing, 144 of those kidnapped have been released or rescued and 134 are still held hostage in Gaza. Reports indicate that as many as 50 of those in Gaza may now be dead.

Sexual Violence

Survivors who witnessed gang-rapes describe terrorists mutilating women before murdering them. In at least one account, a terrorist shot a woman in the head, killing her while still raping her. Hamas later denied the rapes, but manuals recovered from Hamas terrorists included a list of Hebrew phrases for communicating with Israelis — including “take your pants off.” And when interrogated, terrorists admitted to the raping of even dead bodies, saying that despite religious prohibitions on mistreating or killing women and children, Hamas leaders instructed them to murder entire families and permitted them to perpetrate rape.

In testimony delivered at the United Nations headquarters in New York, first-responders and those tasked with handling women’s dead bodies reported that many of the murdered were found partially naked; some with broken pelvises, some with grotesque injuries to their genitals. The Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel recently issued a report revealing that terrorists inserted nails, grenades and knives in Israeli women’s vaginas. The report detailed evidence that the sexual violence perpetrated by Hamas on Oct. 7 was intentional, “systematic, targeted sexual abuse.”

Meanwhile, many women’s organizations around the world have remained silent. Those that eventually condemned Hamas did so only many weeks later. Some have even denied the sexual violence. The director of the University of Alberta Sexual Assault Centre signed an open letter that referred to Hamas terrorists as “Palestinian resistance,” called Israel “terrorist,” claimed that false reports about the Al-Ahli Hospital bombing were accurate, and asserted that testimony about Hamas rapes amounted to no more than “unverified accusations.”

Such appalling hypocrisy notwithstanding, a recent United Nations report noted a pattern among the murdered — mostly women — who were found naked, at least from the waist down, with their hands tied.

This and other evidence, along with witness testimony, provides what the report called “reasonable grounds to believe that conflict-related sexual violence occurred during the Oct. 7 attacks in multiple locations across Gaza periphery, including rape and gang rape.”

Regarding hostages, the report is equally unsettling. “The mission team found clear and convincing information that some have been subjected to various forms of conflict-related sexual violence including rape and sexualized torture and sexualized cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. The team also has “reasonable grounds to believe that such violence may be ongoing.”

Antisemitism and Shattered Illusions

If Jews in the Diaspora thought the events of Oct. 7 would turn the tide against anti-Zionist antisemitism, it took only one day to disabuse them. On Oct. 8, while Israel was still collecting bodies and eliminating terrorists within its own borders, more than 30 student groups at Harvard issued a joint statement declaring that “the Israel regime” was “entirely responsible for all the unfolding violence.” Across the country, identical posters advertising a “Day of Resistance” appeared, prominently displaying an image of a terrorist flying a motorized paraglider.

Despite such dispositive evidence to the contrary, on March 1, a New York Times news article (not an opinion piece) reported that this campus movement “*began* as general protests against *continuing* Israeli retaliation” (emphasis added).

Even as the depth of Hamas depravity and brutality is revealed, students, faculty and other illiberal activists continue to assert that what happened on Oct. 7 was not terrorism — it was “resistance.” And *resistance*, they insist, is justified “by any means necessary.” *Hamas* is an Arabic acronym for *Islamic “Resistance” Movement*.

A favorite campus chant, “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” is a Hamas slogan — a call to annihilate the Jewish state, which is bordered by the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. Some demonstrators prefer the Arabic version, which is more explicit: “From water to water, Palestine is Arab.”

By “Palestine,” they mean Israel.

Some protesters may not understand which river or what sea. But other slogans are less ambiguous: It’s difficult to see how “Globalize the intifada” and “There is only one solution, intifada revolution” are calls for peace rather than for violent attacks on Jews everywhere. If all that weren’t enough, many of the increasingly disruptive and even violent demonstrations in the United States incorporate the word “flood,” reflecting the name Hamas gave their Oct. 7 sadistic orgy of atrocities: *Operation Al Aqsa Flood*.

In a particularly cruel example of global anti-Zionist antisemitism, when posters of kidnapped Israelis appeared, they were quickly vandalized or torn down. At Harvard, a photo of baby Kfir was defaced with the words “evidence please” and “head still on.” On a picture of 4-year-old Ariel, graffiti read “google dancing Israelis,” a reference to an antisemitic conspiracy theory that Israel was behind the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers. And many of the faces of other kidnapped Israelis were obscured with red paint on a multi-part display.

After more than 150 days, anti-Israel rallies have continued on- and off-campus across America. As hostages languish in tunnels and in the homes of terrorist-captors (some of whom, like an UNRWA employee and a physician, have been referred to in the media as “civilians”), many demonstrations include calls for a one-sided Israeli “ceasefire” with no calls for Hamas to surrender — nor even release the hostages.

The Oakland, CA City Council even *voted down* a condemnation of Hamas when passing a ceasefire resolution. Oakland residents argued that “the notion that this was a massacre of Jews is a fabricated narrative,” “Israel murdered their own people on Oct. 7,” and “Hamas isn’t a terrorist organization.” One went as far as to say, “I support the right of Palestinians to resist occupation including through Hamas.”

In other words: It didn’t happen. But if it happened, the Jews did it. And anyway, they deserved it.

Meanwhile, video footage taken from a camera in Rafah on Oct. 7 was released in February, showing Shiri Bibas and her two young boys with six terrorists in civilian clothing. On Feb. 12, the IDF pulled off a spectacular rescue of two hostages held in a private home in Rafah.

Days later, students at Columbia University held an “all eyes on Rafah” rally. The demonstration was not to celebrate the daring commando rescue. Nor was it to demand the release of other hostages held in Rafah.

It was organized by two anti-Israel campus groups, Students for Justice in Palestine and Columbia University Apartheid Divest, to protest “Israel’s recent attacks on the city of Rafah.” The groups instructed members to obscure their faces with masks “for security.” During the rally, someone broke the glass in a door to the library.

Shattered Hopes for Peace

Though well aware of Hamas’ murderous intentions, many who lived near the border believed there was a bright line between Palestinian civilians and their violently oppressive, terrorist government.

Residents of Kibbutz Nir Oz like survivor Irit Lahav, and of Kibbutz Be’eri, like Vivian Silver, who was one of the founders of the organization “Women Wage Peace,” devoted time to driving Palestinians from the Gaza border to hospitals in Israel, where they received the same, high-quality medical care available to Israelis. For over a month, Silver was thought to be among the kidnapped, since no body was found in her house. Eventually, however, her remains, found in the debris of her badly burned home, were identified using techniques borrowed from archeology.

In recent years, Hamas developed a penchant for using kites and balloons to launch Molotov cocktails and other incendiary devices into Israel, often killing wildlife and damaging agriculture. Some airborne packages carried brightly colored toys in order to appeal to children, and if all went as planned, blow them up as they reached for the toys. In spite of this, every year, members of the kibbutzim near the border would fly kites bearing messages of peace, signaling their hopes for the future to their neighbors across the border.

Saturday, Oct. 7 was supposed to be that day.

For the last 15 years, the “Kites for Freedom” celebration in Kibbutz Kfar Aza was organized by Aviv Kutz. On Oct. 7, Aviv, his wife and their three children were slaughtered by terrorists.

Margalit, a pediatric nurse who worked primarily with Arab-speaking patients at Soroka Hospital in Be'er Sheva, had planned to fly kites for peace that day. Instead, she was kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz and spent 54 days as a hostage. Her father was murdered at Nir Oz and his body taken to Gaza.

For 12 hours Natali Yohanan and her family hid in their mamad, listening as Palestinian “civilians,” including a woman, rummaged through their belongings, and when they tired of trying to get the family out of their mamad, heated and ate the food Natali had left on the stove, and even switched the Netflix to Arabic to watch some shows before finally leaving with their booty.

For 12 hours, in the same kibbutz, Natali Yohanan and her family hid in their mamad, listening as Palestinian “civilians,” including a woman, rummaged through their belongings, and when they tired of trying to get the family out of the mamad, heated and ate the food Natali had left on the stove, and even switched Netflix to Arabic to watch some shows before finally leaving with their booty. Once the family emerged, they found that the looters had stolen everything from electronics, to Natali’s jewelry and makeup, to the family’s clothing — even Natali’s underwear.

In the aftermath of the massacres, residents of several kibbutzim were shattered to learn that Palestinians they had employed created maps of their communities for the terrorists, detailing the locations of their armories, the names of the residents, and even which homes belonged to members of security teams — the first to be murdered.

“Are these the people I wanted to help? These are people who want peace?” Irit Lahav now asks herself. She was equally astonished that after murdering her neighbors, terrorists took their dead bodies into Gaza — and sometimes only their heads. “What kind of human being would want to take somebody’s head ...?”

After the beheading of 19-year-old soldier Adir Tahar was recorded on video, a terrorist in Gaza tried to sell Adir’s head for \$10,000. The boy’s father was finally able to complete his son’s burial after the IDF found the head in a duffel bag — in an ice cream store freezer in Gaza.

A poll by The Palestinian Center for Policy Survey and Research found that more than 50% of Palestinians in Gaza and 85% in the West Bank support the Oct. 7 attacks. Most claim to not have seen videos of the atrocities and say they do not believe they happened.

Still, the Palestinian Authority (PA), which governs the West Bank, pays a monthly stipend to terrorists who slaughter Jews, and the pay scale is based on how many Israelis they murder. According to news reports, the PA recently added 661 of the Oct. 7 terrorists to the payroll, increasing last year's \$161,000,000 payments for murdering Israelis by \$16,000,000.

These “*pay for slay*” incentives are enshrined in Palestinian law.

“This is outrageous,” Adele Raemer, who survived the massacre at Kibbutz Nirim, told the Jewish News Syndicate. “We teach our children coexistence while our neighbors make a living off our deaths.”

There are many stories of heroic Arab Israelis who saved lives that day—including four who spent hours rescuing dozens of people on their way to save a cousin, and Youssef Ziadna, a bus driver who drove straight into the massacre to help, rescuing 30 Jews, many of them wounded, even as he was constantly under fire. After news of his courage and selflessness went viral on social media, he received a death threat from someone who claimed to be from Gaza. “You saved 30 Jews’ lives,” the man said, adding, “Don’t worry, we’ll get to you.” Ziadna’s cousin was murdered, and four other family members were kidnapped. Only the two teenage family members were released.

It is currently unknown how many of the roughly 150,000 Palestinians who had work permits to legally enter Israel (including 18,000 from Gaza) participated in the attacks or aided terrorists. It is also unclear how many would participate in or aid future attacks if given the opportunity.

I’ve heard stories of Palestinians with work permits who immediately went to authorities on October 7 when they realized what was happening. But it is currently unknown how many of the roughly 150,000 Palestinians who legally worked in Israel (including 18,000 from Gaza) participated in the attacks or aided terrorists. It is also

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Those permits have been suspended indefinitely.

Taher El-Nounou, a Hamas media adviser, told The New York Times, “I hope that the state of war with Israel will become permanent on all the borders.”

Hamas abhors the democratic and Jewish values that allow equal rights for all regardless of sex, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation ... etc. Their intention, which is shared by other Islamist terrorist groups like Hezbollah, the Houthis and Iran, is to conquer the West and establish a global caliphate. Israel is just the beginning.

Israeli Anti-fragility

The red anemones, which have come to symbolize Israel’s south, are now in bloom. Seeing them after everything that happened is hard, Vered Libstein of Kibbutz Kfar Aza told The Times of Israel. Almost 20 years ago, she and her husband, Ofir, founded the annual festival known as *Darom Adom* (Red South). Annually, more than 400,000 visitors would come to see the red blossoms, celebrate nature and enjoy the many family-friendly events.

On Oct. 7, Ofir was among the 62 residents murdered at Kfar Aza. Their 19-year-old son was also murdered, as were Vered’s mother and nephew — who jumped on a grenade, saving his fiancée’s life. Nineteen from their kibbutz were taken hostage. “Life is stronger than everything,” Vered insists, with typical Israeli resilience, adding, “We’ll need to find the strength to renew ourselves as well.”

Whether observant or secular, conservative or progressive, soldier or survivor, one thing I hear is a fierce determination not to let terrorists rob Israelis of more than what’s already been taken. “It’s the first and last time I’m ever leaving,” the owner of a shawarma spot near the Gaza border told American journalist Nancy Rommelmann. He and his wife have returned and reopened their store. “I won’t let Hamas win” he says.

Still, the country's economy has been significantly disrupted. Not only are more than 150,000 Palestinian employees no longer working in Israel, until recently, more than 350,000 reservists across all business sectors were serving in the IDF instead of going to work as usual. (Now the number is roughly 130,000.) At the same time, tourism, which had only been back in business for less than two years since COVID, has nearly ground to a halt.

To make matters worse, many of Israel's farms are in areas that have been evacuated. The kibbutzim that terrorists attacked provided close to 60% of Israel's produce, and operated dairy farms, hen houses, and cattle ranches.

Many of the kibbutzim employed people from Thailand. At Kibbutz Nir Oz alone, 11 Thai employees were murdered, five were kidnapped, and only two have been released. But farm workers from Thailand are beginning to return. And there is a fairly steady stream of mostly (but not entirely) Jewish volunteers from other countries coming to Israel to pick avocados and citrus fruits, package food and undertake various other tasks disrupted by the war. Some visitors are here to console grieving friends and family. Others are here to participate in solidarity missions.

Still others, such as investors in OurCrowd, an Israeli startup investing platform, come looking for opportunities to donate or invest. The shekel has already rebounded to pre-war levels, and if history is any guide, now is the time to invest in Israel. Between 2008 and 2021, in the aftermath of each Hamas attack and IDF response, the Israeli stock market quickly not only rebounded, but surpassed pre-conflict levels. That may be why OurCrowd was able to raise and commit the financing for its *Israel Resilience Fund* in record time. It may also be why international investors have been investing in the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange — including billionaire Bill Ackman and his wife, Neri Oxman. But perhaps most emblematic of Israel's anti-fragility: When everything was shattering and reservists were called to serve, 150% of the number summoned reported for duty. And despite the political fractures of 2023, this war's young soldiers are proving to be Israel's new "Greatest Generation."

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This type of Holocaust inversion, a central feature of contemporary antisemitism, codes empowered and self-determined Jews as “Zionists,” and casts Zionists as Nazis. This is how, on the day after Hamas circulated a video claiming to have murdered seven of the hostages, film director Jonathan Glazer, who says he is a Jew, can use an Oscars acceptance speech for “The Zone of Interest,” a movie about the Holocaust, to claim that the “occupation” has “hijacked the Holocaust” and that this “occupation” — rather than sadistic, genocidal terrorism — is to blame for “conflict” and by extension, for “the ongoing attack in Gaza” and even for the suffering of “the victims of October 7 in Israel.”

In other words: *Whatever happened to Jews is their own damn fault.*

Only in an upside-down world can a man who made a movie about the dehumanization and genocide of Jews make a speech dehumanizing both the victims of the largest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust and Jews now risking their lives to ensure that the latest attempted genocide fails. In this inversion, the lesson of the Holocaust is not the imperative to clearly identify and marginalize those who disseminate and act on hate. And it is not the moral obligation to stand against evil. It is a moral indictment of Jews, whose stubborn refusal to be annihilated and creative ability to overcome even genocide only serve to increase the believability of conspiracy theories that paint the Jew — and the Jew among the nations — as the powerful villain.

People outside of Israel still make the mistake of thinking Israel exists because the Holocaust happened. The truth is precisely the reverse: The Holocaust happened because Israel did not exist. With global antisemitism at record levels, Jews around the world are awakening to this reality.

The truth is much simpler. Throughout history, as a small minority group, when Jews in the Diaspora were violently attacked, they fled. With an army of Israelis, however, Jews have been able to fight back. Israel's Special Envoy on Combating Antisemitism, Michal Cotler-Wunsh, told an assembly at the United Nations that people outside of Israel still make the mistake of thinking Israel exists because the Holocaust happened. The truth, she says, is precisely the reverse: The Holocaust happened because Israel did not exist. With global antisemitism at record levels, Jews around the world are awakening to this reality.

Naomi Petel survived the massacre at Kibbutz Nahal Oz with her husband and their three young children because a terrorist's bullet jammed the lock on her front door, making it inoperable, and looters in the other half of her duplex caused a flood, preventing the house from burning when terrorists tried to set it on fire. Even after their ordeal, she told me, there's nowhere else she wants to live. Israel's south is her home. Her family, along with most of their displaced kibbutz, are temporarily living in the north. They don't know how long it will take before they can go back home. She and her husband now have red anemone tattoos.

On the "Walk-Ins Welcome" podcast, she told writer Bridget Phetasy, "What Jews have done throughout history is be kicked out, try to make it again in a different place ... contribute as much as you can to society, and [hope that] maybe they'll like us enough that they don't try to kill us." Over and over. Again and again.

"This time," she said, "we're not going anywhere."

A version of this essay was first published in the [Jewish Journal](#) and [The State of Tel Aviv](#).

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