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Terrorism alert leaves Rabinowitz shaken but undeterred

NICOLA MILTZ

Popular comedian Nik Rabinowitz was “shaken and unnerved” when he woke up last Thursday, 27 October, and saw his name splashed on the warning that his forthcoming Johannesburg comedy act could be the target of a terrorist attack.

“My agent called me the night before about a News24 journalist who wanted to speak to me about my show being a possible target,” he said.

Rabinowitz said he was busy preparing for an online Zoom shiur on his Barmitzvah portion and didn’t respond. After the shiur, Rabbi David Masinter, who had arranged the shiur, called him to say that while there had been some chatter about the forthcoming gay pride parade taking place in Sandton on Saturday, there was nothing known about his show being a possible target.

“Well, that made sense,” he thought. “It’s a little bit bizarre when you wake up to read it on the news, and we had to take precautions for the weekend shows targeted.”

Kuhn. She arranged extra security for the event, having only just started preparations for the shiur.

“This was, I think, a little bit of a wake-up call, and we’re all having to do the basics of safety,” she said.

He said 10-year-old Nik was particularly unnerved.

“I was quite shaken in the beginning. I was like, ‘What’s the actual…?’ I had a couple of wobbly moments, and the following two nights, I was like, ‘What if this is real? What would this be like?’ That’s the point of these things. They’re designed to make us afraid, and we can’t let them win, but obviously, we have to take the necessary precautions.”

The comedian had forwarded the previous night’s message from the journalist to Daphne Kuhn from Sandton Theatre on the Square, where Rabinowitz’s comedy act was due to open the following week.

According to him, Kuhn thought he had made it up and was joking.

“She thought I’d written it, and she said, ‘Oh my word Nik, you’re such a scream’,” he said (in a Joburg Jewish woman’s accent).

Little did Kuhn know that he was actually being serious, and the last thing her intimate theatre needed was talk of a terrorist threat in the area, having only just started experiencing sold-out shows post the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I heard about Nik’s show being a potential target only when I read about it in the paper,” said Kuhn this week.

“News that Nik’s show could be a potential target only when I read about it in the paper,” said Kuhn this week.

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The US government has advised staff to avoid crowds of people and other large public gatherings in the greater Sandton area of Johannesburg, South Africa, on 29 October 2022.

“There is no further information regarding the timing, method, or target of the potential attack. The US embassy has advised staff to avoid crowds of people and other large public gatherings in the greater Sandton area of Johannesburg, South Africa, on 29 October 2022.

Meanwhile, the security upheaval caused by last week’s terrorist alert rippled through state security, with numerous lessons learned and red flags raised.

President Cyril Ramaphosa criticised the US for failing to discuss the terror alert with local authorities.

Continued on page 7>>
Lula victory polarises Brazilian Jewish community

MARCUS M GILBAN – JTA

A left-wing former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva completed a triumphant return to political power by beating incumbent Jair Bolsonaro in a tight election on Sunday, 30 October, Brazilian Jewish groups welcomed him with a conciliatory message they hope will cool the polarisation within their deeply split 120,000-strong community.

"President Lula, we wish you every success in your four-year term. At the same time, we reiterate our preventative contribution for constructive and democratic dialogue," read a note signed by Claudino Lottenberg, the president of the Brazilian Israelite Confederation, the country's umbrella Jewish organisation.

Judaism has a deep tradition of supporting politics, and Lula da Silva was president of Brazil between 2003 and 2010, garnered 50.90% of all valid votes in the tight Sunday run-off. President Bolsonaro, a fervently Christian right-wing nationalist, received 49.10%.

Lottenberg's statement points to the fact that Jewish groups had a very rocky relationship with Da Silva, nicknamed Lula, during his tenure.

In 2009, Da Silva warmly welcomed former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a notorious Holocaust denier whose regime persecuted minorities and critics, for a visit that drew international criticism.

One year later, Da Silva became Brazil's first head of state to visit Israel since Brazilian Emperor Pedro II toured the holy land in 1876. However, he refused to visit Theodore Herzl's grave on part of the itinerary following foreign officials in honour of the 150th anniversary of the father of Zionism. Days after, he laid a wreath at Yasser Arafat's grave in Ramallah. In the final month of his administration, his government officially recognised a Palestinian state.

"I don't believe that the polarisation will end in the short term, but many voices and relevant actors are working effectively at least to mitigate it," Lottenberg told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "We'll continue to promote civilised and constructive debate between the different currents of Brazilian Jewry based on the defence of democracy, tolerance, and Jewish values."

The PalestinaHoy website went further, posting a piece that Bolsonaro's wife, Michelle, wore a T-shirt with an Israeli flag at a polling station on Sunday. The Brazil-Israel Institute, a non-affiliated left-Jewish group, accused the first lady of appropriating Jewish symbols.

In 2019, New Brazilian President Bolsonaro, a fervently Christian right-wing nationalist, officially recognised a Palestinian state. While in power, Da Silva had implemented various social programmes and prioritised foreign policy, but his tenure was plagued by scandal. In 2017, he was convicted of corruption and money laundering – which he denied – and was serving a 580-day prison sentence. His political ally and presidential successor, Dilma Rousseff, was eventually removed from office for manipulating the budget.

Bolsonaro, known for his highly controversial rhetoric, which has been widely labelled at different times as racist, misogynist, homophobic, and fascist, developed a historic closeness with Israel and his former prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Both Brazilian and Israeli media highlighted the fact that Bolsonaro's wife, Michelle, wore a T-shirt with an Israeli flag at a polling station on Sunday. The Brazil-Israel Institute, a non-affiliated left-Jewish group, accused the first lady of appropriating Jewish symbols.

MILLIONs have grown up in the modern world of the 21st century. Confident, ambitious, achievement-oriented are a few of the adjectives given to this age demographic. This generation is generally marked by elevated levels of status and social media. Ironically, in 2019, New Yorker magazine ran an article titled, "Astrology in the age of uncertainty," which focused on Millennials, who see no contradiction with the internet, mobile devices, and social media.

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"Democracy is at stake," says South African oleh Jonathan Schwartz, regarding the Israeli legislative elections that took place on 1 November to elect Israel's 25th Knesset. Though it may be the fifth elections in four years, he feels that now more than ever, Israelis need to decide what kind of future they want.

“If Bibi [Benjamin Netanyahu] puts together his ‘all right’ government, he’ll destroy the legal system to avoid going to jail and will politicise the civil service with political appointees,” says Schwartz, who made aliyah from Johannesburg in 1978, and lives in Kochav Ya’ar Tsoa Vidal in the Sharon area.

Like many of Israel’s 20,000 immigrants from South Africa, he has strong opinions about Israeli politics, democracy, and its Jewish identity.

“I’ve been living in Israel for nine years. I voted for [Itamar] Ben Gvir because I feel he’s the only one that will make a difference in Israel,” says Ami Kubalkin, also from Johannesburg and living in Netia, near Modi’in. “He’s the only person from the Knesset that actually goes to where there were terrorist attacks and speaks out. He also feels very strong about the country and the Jewish people and that it’s a Jewish country! Only Ben Gvir!”

Ben Gvir heads up the far-right Otzma Yehudit party. He’s known for defending Jewish radicals on trial in Israel and calling for the expulsion of Arab citizens who aren’t loyal to the country. He’s a member of the Knesset.

Other South African oleh believe Ben Gvir’s election could be the worst thing for Israel’s future as a Jewish and democratic state.

“This views are ultra-nationalist and Jewish supremacist in the extreme. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to define him as a fascist,” says Paul Mirbach, who made aliyah from Johannesburg in 1982 and lives on Kibbutz Tuval.

“I have just voted for Yesh Atid, but I’m convinced with fear that it’s not enough,” says Mirbach. “I’ve been in every election since 1984, and not once have I beenFEINBERG

getting along with Jews, and so we once again find ourselves in an election cycle which seems like it will never end.”

“I’m sure it’s not the only one who stood in the line today and was actually more confused than certain about who I wanted to be the next leader of Israel,” he says. “I don’t see an end to this cycle of repeated elections, and I really fear the country could become anarchic if we cannot form a budget and cannot have at least a government for a full term to try stabilise relations amongst Israeli Arabs and Jews, and to strengthen relations with the world.”

Immigrants who made aliyah more recently also have strong opinions. “My hope for this election is to have a government with a strong security focus together with an interest in a more secular approach for its everyday modern Anglo citizens,” says Sandra Sparks, who moved from Israel from Johannesburg and lives in Ra’anana. She couldn’t vote in this election, but if she had done so, she would have voted Likud.

“I would like to see an increased interest in caring for the elderly in society – they are easily forgotten,” she says. “I would love to see an intensive recycling programme in place, with solid government backing. Lastly, a sterilisation programme for the street cats to halt uncontrolled breeding and neglect.”

Gluckman and her husband, David, made aliyah in October 2021 and live in Kfar Shemesh. They were “very excited” to vote in their first Israeli election.

“This is our country that Hashem promised to us. We’re voting for a purpose.”

Their voting station was “very quiet” but they were thrilled to see so many parties outside, including a religious party with a table set up for Shabbat. “We’re home, this is for us. We voted for a right-wing party. This is our land. Though our real leader will one day be Mosheh, we hope for a leader that’s good for the Jewish people and frum communities.”

Ronit Beleli made aliyah in April from Johannesburg, and lives in Bat Yam. “Israel is in such a difficult time now and I’m honoured to hopefully be able to part of choosing the right party to make a change here,” she says. She voted for Shas.

Twenty-six-year-old Tal Gorden made aliyah in 2019 from Johannesburg and lives in south Tel Aviv. “I hope people went out to vote because we’re really in need of a government that functions,” she says. “I voted for Meretz because I strongly support its values and believes it’s capable of creating positive change in Israel.”

Another oleh in his 30s who left Johannesburg in 2014 and lives in Tel Aviv, says, “Multiple things are at stake. First, the justice system and the separation of state powers – pillars of any healthy democracy – have been under attack. Second, the country is increasing under the control of a few influential companies and families. Free-market policies are the only way to bring prices under control. Third is the future of the Haredi schooling system and its ability to keep protection of minority rights and the addition of minority rights are at stake.”

He voted for Yisrael Beiteinu. “These items are its main agenda, and I’ve gained some respect for Avigdor Lieberman and his choices in the past few rounds of elections.”

Says Mirbach, “In Johannesburg [where he was born] and later South Africa, I never felt that it was my state. Here, in Israel, it’s my fight. This is my home. I have nowhere to go. There’s nowhere else I want to be. And so, I’ll stay and I’ll fight – for justice, for rights, for equality, and fairness. And also for our way of life and the character of our society so that I can feel proud to say ‘I’m Israeli’.”
Speculation surrounds the death of a 40-year-old Israeli Arab man, Abdel Fattah Nassar, shot dead in Cape Town at about 01:30 on Sunday, 30 October. The shooting took place on a road near the popular Oranjezicht City Farm Market and the Grand Africa Cafe & Beach on the outskirts of the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront.

“The circumstances surrounding a shooting incident in Haul Road, Table Bay Harbour, in which a security guard was shot and wounded and a 40-year-old male shot and fatally wounded are under investigation,” says Sergeant Wesley Twigg of the South African Police Service Western Cape Media Centre.

“According to reports, a shootout between the victim and the deceased occurred after they had an argument. Both were taken to a medical facility for medical treatment, where the 40-year-old male later died due to injuries sustained,” says Twigg. “Table Bay Harbour police registered cases of murder and attempted murder for investigation.”

“This scenario differs from what was reported in Israeli media. According to The Times of Israel (TOI), Nassar was “gunned down” in a gun battle. The Jerusalem Post said he was “stuck in the crossfire of a firefight between armed men”.

Israeli media identified the man as Nassar, but said he was 23. They reported that he was a resident of the so-called “triangle”, a concentration of Israeli Arab towns and villages adjacent to the Green Line. The 11 towns are home to about 250,000 Arab citizens of Israel, representing between 10% to 15% of Israel’s Palestinian Arab population.

TOI reported that Israel’s foreign ministry said in a statement that it was made aware that a citizen had been killed. Nassar’s family had hired a local attorney to help deal with South African authorities, and it was waiting for the results of an autopsy before his body was brought back to Israel.

The Israeli Embassy in Pretoria said, “An Israeli citizen was killed during a gun battle last Saturday in Cape Town. At the moment, we have no further information regarding this unfortunate incident as relevant authorities are overseeing the investigation. On the principle of confidentiality, we’re not at liberty to disclose any further details. The embassy is facilitating the repatriation of the deceased to Israel. We share our condolences with the family and friends of the deceased.”

A family member told the Walla news site that Nassar was “a good guy”, and that he had travelled to South Africa to join his cousin who lives there, hoping to study or find work, possibly in real estate.

But the Israel Hayom newspaper reported that Nassar had ties to organised crime in Israel. According to this report, Nassar was part of the Marwan Nassar crime family based in Tira and had been arrested several times in recent years on suspicion of violent crimes, including shootings and possession of firearms.

At the same time, Israel Hayom said that Nassar had moved to South Africa to distance himself from the gang-land fighting in Israel.

Confusion surrounds his death. According to Walla news, a relative said the family was originally told that he died in a car accident. “ Afterwards, there were all kinds of rumours that he was murdered. We still don’t really know exactly what happened.”

The Israeli foreign ministry said it was unaware of any other Israelis injured in the incident, and its department for Israelis abroad was helping to co-ordinate matters with local authorities.

Anyone with any information about this shooting incident can contact Crime Stop on 08600 10111.
Sisulu uses Jews to play the victim card

Tourism Minister Lindiwe Sisulu.

by Nicola Miltz

Tourism Minister Lindiwe Sisulu is using the Jewish community to play the victim in what appears to be a point scoring game in the African National Congress (ANC) presidential race.

Sisulu told SABC News on Sunday, 30 October, that the South African Jewish community was enraged with her when, as minister of international affairs and cooperation, she implemented the 2017 ANC resolution to downgrade the South African embassy in Israel to a liaison office. She went on to complain that President Cyril Ramaphosa didn’t “come to her rescue” at this tough time.

The minister, also an ANC national executive committee member, has open ambitions to become president of the ANC. She went on to tell SABC News political editor Mzwandile Mbeje that she was left “dangling alone” when she carried out this controversial decision.

She felt “punished by the Jewish community and the ANC”, she said, as no one stood up for her in saying that it was, in fact, an ANC resolution.

“The Israeli representatives in the country felt aggrieved,” Sisulu said, and she was “publicly humiliated in their newspapers”.

In the television interview, which covered many other issues as well, she said she expected Ramaphosa to come to her rescue as “it was a public matter everybody could see”.

“I would have expected him to say, ‘Look, this is my minister, and I’m going to respect the resolutions of government’. I was left dangling alone.” Asked if the president did anything, she said, “The president kept quiet.”

The interview took place just five weeks shy of the ANC’s elective conference, with the race for the top job intensifying and the tourism minister making her ambitions for the top job clear.

The minister is “dredging up grievances from years ago to score political points and attack the president”, said Professor Karen Milner, the SAJBD national chairperson.

“This seems to have more to do with internal ANC issues than the Jewish community. But it’s important to mention that the implication that the Jewish community was out of line in some way for holding the minister accountable for her actions must be expected.”

“As citizens of this country, the Jewish community is entitled to express its views on policies that affect it, and we’re surprised that the minister would think otherwise,” Milner said.

Steven Grund, an analyst at the South African Institute of International Affairs, said, president before it convened, the ANC’s elective conference in December to make President Ramaphosa look weak and indecisive.

“I don’t think this is a big issue for anyone in the ANC in the bigger picture. People are unlikely to fall for her desperation and exasperation. The anti-Ramaphosa are her target here. It’s election season, and strange things happen.”

Political analyst Daniel Silke agrees that Sisulu is trying to “show Ramaphosa up” in any way possible.

“Lindiwe Sisulu is attempting to campaign to become president of the ANC. She has spent the past number of months – and it’s reaching a crescendo – finding ways to criticise Ramaphosa. She’s suggested that the step-asides rule be applied to him in relation to the Phala Phala scandal, so she’s certainly becoming more and more outspoken as we move towards December in an attempt to put a clear blue line between her and the president, to disengage him, and show him up.

“The Israel issue is always an issue that can be used as a political football, and she’s trying to drive a wedge between herself and the president in a bid to undermine his authority and his leadership, and to show him up as some sort of inadequate president in the case of this particular ANC resolution,” he said.

“It’s a terribly thin issue, and it has little relevance for the broader ANC. Her complaints seem to be extremely thin. ‘They don’t have much ground’.

According to reports, Sisulu has long positioned herself as a presidential hopeful, siding with the Radical Economic Transformation faction. More recently, she has reportedly teamed up with the candidate endorsed by former President Jacob Zuma, namely his ex-wife, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma.

In January this year, Sisulu landed in hot water after she launched an outrageous attack on the country’s Constitution and judiciary when she penned the now infamous open letter titled “Hi Mzansi, have we seen justice?” Which was published a day ahead of Ramaphosa’s delivery of the ANC’s annual January 8th Statement.

“The most dangerous African today is the mentally colonised African,” Sisulu wrote. “And when you put them in leadership positions or as interpreters of the law, they are worse than your oppressor… In America, these interpreters are called House Negroes.”

Sisulu was summoned by the president to account for the article, the presidency issued a statement claiming that she had retracted it and apologised, but she responded with a fierce denial (effectively accusing Ramaphosa of lying), and the presidency reiterated its statement and called the matter closed.

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When news broke last week that the United States government had warned of a planned terrorist attack scheduled to take place last weekend in Sandton, we were putting the final touches to our newspaper.

But, as journalists do, we immediately got back on the story trail, and went about furiously making calls and contacting people.

There was a fair bit of panic around and a lot of speculation. Oh boy, we heard all sorts of things! Can I say that it’s best not to share these crazy stories we heard because there’s a feeling that things might create more panic – and we don’t need that. Suffice to say, we couldn’t back up any one of them, so we left them by the wayside.

As journalists, we dare not put out speculation, particularly about threatened violence, that’s not substantiated. Our hot-shot team even triple-checked — in a very short space of time — that the warning was, indeed, from the American government. You see, in the days of fake news, it’s all too easy to mistake fiction for fact, and then find yourself in deep trouble.

There are websites that appear to be legitimate news sites and they look almost identical to genuine news sites, but they’re fake, and they put out destructive, false news that appears to be real and publishes false information as the real deal. These fake sites often put out ‘news’ relating to Israel, spreading horrific rumours that appear to be real and already hate Israel and believe the worst from the Jewish state. To them, it’s not a stretch of the imagination to read so-called news about Israeli soldiers boiling Palestinian children in huge pots. Seriously, I kid you not. Of course, such fake news spreads like wildfire, and only does damage.

Suffice to say, as journalists, we have to tread carefully and verify our stories to the best of our ability.

We couldn’t verify exactly what or who was under threat of attack in Sandton. We knew that Joburg Pride was scheduled to go through Sandton, but there were other events too, although none that anyone could firmly say was a real target.

So, when on Thursday morning we all woke up to online news that the Joburg Pride march and Jewish comedian Nik Rabinowitz’s show were supposedly being targeted, we were a little taken aback. The piece went on to say that sources said that the exact target hadn’t been identified, the pride march and the comedy show were to be held near one another.

But, as journalists do, we immediately got back on the story trail. Here’s the story we wrote about this.

On one foul swoop, what all our sources had claimed was definitively not a threat focused on the Jewish community, by virtue of Rabinowitz’s birthright, was made into a Jewish issue. This is, if, in fact, the sources were correct.

However, just a little surface digging uncovered the fact that Rabinowitz was going to be performing at the lovely Theatre on the Square, but he wasn’t going to be going anywhere near Sandton last weekend. His show started only this week. So, somehow, some sources got sauce on their face. Unfortunately, the damage is done. As many as 50 people cancelled tickets for the show that was actually showing at the Theatre on the Square last weekend.

And as many of us know, Daphne Kuhn has been admirable in being able to keep her theatre going through the pandemic when its doors were firmly shut and no shows could be performed there.

All performers and theatre folk battled beyond understanding over lockdown because there was no work. Now they’re back and starting to make a living again. In fact, this particular show that Rabinowitz is putting on is apparently about coming back to life after lockdown. In other words, this is his show to put the two years of pandemic behind him — and then this scare!

I appreciate that it’s true, then of course, the story must go out and everything must be done to prevent any attack, but how certain was this source or sources? I’m fully aware of this.

In the meantime, Kuhn has had to fork out lots of money to ensure that just in case there’s something to these threats, she has extra security around her theatre and stars. I’m fully aware of this and know that the information within the public. It’s our job, and I have no idea how much checking was done in regard to this information. It may have been absolutely verified, but if it wasn’t, it was unnecessarily cruel to put it out there. But then, they say there’s no such thing as bad publicity, so hopefully, it will draw more people to the theatre to see the show.

Meanwhile, as we get on with life here, Israel once again — for the fifth time in four years — went to the polls. (See story on page 3 and Biko Arran’s opinion piece on this page.)

Though an announcement had not yet been made at the time of going to print this week, it looked pretty certain that Bibi (Benjamin Netanyahu) was back in the prime minister’s seat.

What is it about this man that he keeps getting back into power? He’s already the longest serving prime minister. Does he have some secret way of manoeuvring the situation into his court, or does the Israeli population really believe that he’s the only one to take their country forward? He’s facing charges of corruption, but still seems to be accepted back into this role.

My opinions aside, I do find interesting that we could have a situation like this. I look forward to watching the scenario playing itself out and the changes that will be implemented in Israel.

But for now, I wish you all Shabbat Shalom!

Peta Kroes
Editor

Riding a tiger — what could go wrong for Bibi?

Israel’s polls closed hours ago, and it will take a day or two to get the final results, but every vote counts — even more so in such a close election. In Israel’s electoral system, you have to get a certain percentage (3.25%) of the votes to be in the allocation process for representatives in the Knesset. Four Knesset seats is usually the minimum, or nothing. In this election — the fifth in the past four years — too many parties are close to this threshold. My comments are based on different four exit polls of the Israeli media channels. I worked with late into the night (on Saturday, 5 November) all the way till the very last moment.

In all four samples, the direction is loud and clear: Benjamin Netanyahu and his bloc are closer to getting a majority in Israel’s parliament. It means that the prime minister will have after three years and five elections has been broken.

In that case, Bibi and Likud would be able to form a pure right-wing government backed by his three other allies: two haredi Ultra-Orthodox parties and one “religious Zionism” party. Those are the natural partners.

Because of the number of votes, Netanyahu could break another option of an alternative coalition.

Under the current direction of the results, it seems Bibi has a better deck of cards to play with.

On the other side, you find that some of the factions are disparate and still being to race in the one and reach enough votes: the right-wing parties who oppose Bibi personally, the centre and left parties; and two to three Arab parties. Their nightmare of getting even a few votes under the needed threshold isn’t yet over. But even if most of them survive, it seems that the overall number won’t stop Netanyahu from getting into the prime minister’s office again.

It’s not going to be a landslide or clear and solid victory. Don’t buy those declarations. That’s what politicians are supposed to say just as the polls close.

Like any good democracy, in this run, one side crossed the line a millisecond before the other, with a few more votes. Israel didn’t fundamentally change on the night of 1 November 2022.

On one side, the runner came better prepared, concentrated, and ready — and probably won. On the other, a bunch of-runners together — but not really a team. A group of haredi parties run to the line with the name. Not even in order to win, just to finish alive.

What can we say about the results, even with no official outcome yet?

There’s an American security analyst Beätzel Smotrich and Otzma Yehudit’s leader, Itamar Ben-Gvir, and their extreme-right wing parties had a joint run, gaining tremendous support of probably 15 to 12 seats in the Knesset. Their formal brand name is “The Religious Zionism” but its constituency represents more the “Kashrut” (haredi-religious Zionists) — the stricter side of religious Zionists.

The other “spice” and ingredient in this highly controversial dish is Itamar Ben-Gvir — the cockpit of the election campaign’s slogan. His campaign was “Let’s show who the real bosses and landlords of this country are.” With a gun in his hand, he arrived at state terrorist attacks and shocked this message at Arabs.

In the past four decades, Ben-Gvir has been the provocateur of the far, far right. Now, he wants to be minister of homeland security. This is the person who stole the emblem off Yitzchak Rabin’s car a few minutes before he was assassinated. At the time, he said on camera, “We got this sign, and we can get you.” In his living room, Ben-Gvir proudly hung a photograph honouring Baruch Goldstein who murdered 29 Muslims in the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre in Hebron.

Ben-Gvir is the true successor of the Kahana racist, fascist, extreme-right movement. The only difference is that its original leader, Meir Kahana, was boycotted even by the then Likud prime minister. The prime minister left the ballot and all members of the Knesset in this election in order not to hear Kahana’s address. Now, his follower is the kingmaker and a popular figure in the media and on the street.

What does it say that the Israelis who followed him with so much support? It’s shocking and all too similar to hear those kind of results for the Economic Freedom Fighters in South Africa or for similar extreme-right parties in Italy, Sweden, or France.

Nationalism, xenophobia, and the lack of personal security are key factors everywhere. It’s the voice of this era and generation — we have to listen.

The success of a Ben-Gvir in Israel raises more questions about populist leaders, poor media, and fragile democracies than about the Israeli society.

What does it say about Netanyahu’s new government? Bibi is responsible for the legitimisation of Ben-Gvir. Netanyahu personally urged in previous elections acceptance of this extreme faction into the political pact in order so get few more votes to his side. He was riding a tiger, and created a poisonous mixture. Now he’ll get a taste of his own medicine.

Bibi might prefer partners from the centre-right like Benny Gantz’s HaMachane HaMa’lamichti, but no-one from that party or the others (for that matter), trusts Bibi anymore. He has stabbed all his potential moderate partners in the back.

Another more critical reason why other Israeli parties don’t want to join with Ben-Gvir and Likud is that they haven’t been back Netanyahu’s plans for “judicial and legal reforms”. In other words, they won’t back him in stopping his criminal trial.

It’s too close to call, but we’ve seen enough to say that Netanyahu has won, but it’s not his victory. The Likud got the same support and even less than previous elections. It’s a victory for who gained support from fresh electorates and brought a crucial addition to Bibi’s block.

And on the other side, the split among Arab parties and within other Zionist parties meant they didn’t quite make it to enough seats to block Bibi. That’s democracy. Not “may the best person win”, only the better.”

Netanyahu, like a sphinx, will rise and rule again.

He recently celebrated his 73rd birthday. He’s already the longest serving Israeli prime minister. And he’s in contention for three more terms. He’s heard and heard his name heard on a daily basis. He also has solid opposition to him personally, politically, and publicly. Now he has a lunatic political party! It can’t go wrong.

That, unless he decides to make it his last tenure, after he stole the emblem off Yitzchak Rabin’s car a few minutes before he was assassinated. At the time, he said on camera, “We got this sign, and we can get you.” In his living room, Ben-Gvir proudly hung a photograph honouring Baruch Goldstein who murdered 29 Muslims in the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre in Hebron.

Riding a tiger — what could go wrong for Bibi?
First Jewish SRC member in a decade aims to make UCT a ‘welcoming place for all’

Erin Dodo

E rinn Dodo has just faced the most intense period of her life, battling it out for one of 15 spots in the University of Cape Town’s (UCT) highly politicised Student Representative Council (SRC). She broke all boundaries: standing as ActionSA’s first nominee in a university SRC election, being the first to stand for election as a South African Jewish Student (SAJUS) in the Western Cape was the start of this journey. “I joined SAJUS because I felt that Jewish people were left out of the narrative and activism. People don’t see us. But then I realised that I had a lot more to give and do. I wanted to make my voice heard on an even bigger scale.”

It’s been that running “more major and important in the SRC elections was a major undertaking, but chose the leap. She didn’t want to run as an independent candidate or for the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), so ActionSA decided to put its weight behind her. Dodo became its communications director, and was nominated by the party.

“I’ve been a long process,” she says. “There was a lot of push back and politics. If you imagine university as like a country, then the SRC elections is about choosing the government. So, obviously, there will be politics and people using anything they can against you. It’s about rising above that with tenacity and strength. People are willing to use anything to put you down and weaken your morale. You deal it with by having a strong team behind you and realising that it isn’t about you. In the grander scheme of things, you have to realise that you’re doing this for the university and it’s a lot bigger than yourself.”

Two ActionSA candidates.

“It was an amazing feeling and a big relief. This is the first time that ActionSA has put forward candidates, and we won two seats. It felt like all our hard work paid off. And as a Jewish woman, it felt like an unparalleled accomplishment. I’ve done a lot, but this is the first time I felt like I really handled this for me. It was a beautiful feeling.”

May have been a beautiful moment, but Dodo has been warned that student politics can get ugly. “I’ve been told that everything about me will be used against me, that people will use bullying tactics. I said, ‘I know this, and I will rise above it.’”

Dodo always wanted to move to Cape Town and go to UCT. She attended Crawford College Sandton where she enjoyed the diversity of campus, and a feeling of warmth, where everyone feels welcome, regardless of who you are and where you come from.”

That means she wants Jewish students to “walk in and feel seen and heard, and never feel like they are on the sidelines.” She wants them to get involved in their university, which they worked hard to get into, and “deserve to feel part of.”

“Regretting Israel Apartheid Week, Dodo says, “Everything that happens needs to be documented and reported, and if anyone on either side says anything untoward, it must be dealt with by the student committee. Though freedom of expression is important, it can border on hurtful and hateful. Our role is to monitor that. People should know that what they say has consequences.”

Dodo says the community, her family, ActionSA, mentors, friends, and fellow students have all been incredibly supportive as she took this path. But at the same time, she has had to blaze her own trail. She feels that more Jewish students should get involved in student politics, and that the community can do more to prepare young people to do that.

“You do need to learn to be strong and not react. If you react, it will be used against you. So you have to put your same energy into the student committee. Though the party says anything untoward, it must be dealt with by the student committee. Though freedom of expression is important, it can border on hurtful and hateful. Our role is to monitor that. People should know that what they say has consequences.”

It can be uncomfortable, but ignorance is the shadow of ideology. “If we stay in the shadows, we’re never going to be heard.” And, equipping youth with the tools and knowledge they need to step up to start young, Dodo says. “We’re told to ‘be Jewish and proud’, but we also need to know why and how to stand up and defend our people. Teach your kids and re-teach yourself so that you can stand up for yourself and your beliefs. It can be uncomfortable, but ignorance is the shadow of progress.”

Terrorism alert leaves Rabinowitz shaken but undeterred

>>Continued from page 1

Security expert Jasmine Opperman told the SA Jewish Report that there were many lessons learned. “The weekend has come and gone. Terrorism hasn’t come and gone. The region’s vulnerability to terrorism is on the increase. We can’t sit back and relax now. If ever there was vulnerability to terrorism is on the increase. We can’t sit back and relax now. If ever there was vulnerability to terrorism is on the increase. We can’t sit back and relax now. If ever there was vulnerability to terrorism is on the increase. We can’t sit back and relax now.”

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SAUL KAMIONSKY

Adversity leads to innovation, says iconic biomedical engineer Adam Osrin. "This is about using technology to save lives. Hopefully, we'll have a new generation of really well-equipped surgeons that finished the programmes, "she says. "We have open enrolment for anyone who completes the
promotion...So the value of this programme is permissionless. "On re-training our data, we
correctly just to raise their bar of

students who have come through the programmes using the ambulances. Adam Osrin and others turned
few samples left to prove that what we did was actually useful. We started to think about the principle
of data protection. We manipulated a single image to allow us to amplify the data and get all sorts of insights into what different people may look like. With a single image, we were able to produce something like 150 life-like images."

The "underlying rationale of this is that it's costly to get out and data about people wearing their masks poorly, or not, or not wearing masks at all."

They generated a fake photorealistic face through this process, which is not something people usually wear, and they used processing techniques to mask those faces, allowing them to produce their own dataset without ever having to go out and gathering data on real people.

Pantanowitz believes innovation is permissionless. "On reflection, we need to make sure we're doing the right things. When we wold all this magic and power, we have a responsibility to society. When we bring about a new technology and release it into the wild, so to speak, there are countless examples of second-order and third-order effects which technology brings about. With all that in mind, you're in this amazing environment in the university in which you're able to, without necessarily asking for permission, give a technology something. That's a powerful thought and a huge privilege to all we in working in these spaces."

People wore face masks differently during the pandemic, Pantanowitz said. "Some wore a face mask covering their mouth and the nose; others wore masks under the chin."

"People didn't wear masks at all. We thought we could use computer vision and image processing to help a person was practising CPR and another was carrying someone who was unconscious. We had a little infrared camera, so they had a lot of opportunities to observe what was happening."

"It's about breaking a problem down to its simplest form, brings in, allowing a solution to bubble up."

"We went to the Magic Company, which runs big arcades in South Africa," Pantanowitz said. "It has a huge warehouse with old broken video games..."

"We were able to have donated one of the sets of motors that moves the toy crane around. We repurposed it to our Surgewii system (a surgery automation system which ultimately became a patent). We were able to control a computer remotely by bouncing infrared light and using Wi-fi remotes to control the environment. Then we had this overhead crane directing light where we needed it..."

"We've noticed a huge disconnect between Israel and the diaspora, and we've discovered it by closing the gap amongst the young and upcoming generation," says Bracha Singer, a South African student who has participated in the programme. She was so impressed with it, she's now a recruitment officer. "It's not a political or religious organisation and has no agenda other than being a platform for open dialogue," Singer says.

Pantano says project coordinator Oliy Hebelie, "The ultimate goal is to address the huge disconnect between Israel and the diaspora by humanising the relationship between Israelis and diaspora students on a conversation at a time. We want participants to think in new ways and to develop new perspectives about Jewish identity, Israel, anti-Semitism, and the desire to have an impact on their own Jewish communities."

"Seven South Africans have taken part in the programme since it began a year ago. One of them is Adam Osrin, from Cape Town. He attended Uitreding High School and is a 24-year-old student with a BCom Honours in Economics. He is a member of the Strategic Brand Management from Vega Cape Town. He heard about the AACI programme from a friend. I decided to join in chat with others and finding out about their experiences," Osrin says.

"Students get to know each other using the prompts provided. There is also an incentive of a $50 (R914) Amazon gift card for anyone who completes the programme."

"The experience was amazing as we spoke about topics that wouldn't usually come up in conversation, or the things we're passionate about," Pantano says. "The Israelis I was partnered with was funny, great to chat to, and very friendly. She's studying at the moment, majoring in economics. We've planned to meet up either when she comes to Cape Town or when I visit Israel."

Modern “pen pal” programme connects SA and Israeli students

TALI FEBINERG

M any people might remember growing up with the joy of a pen pal. They may have even become life-long friends. In today's digital age, letters have gone out the window, but the benefits of connecting with another young person remain timeless. It's one of the reasons that the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel (AACI) has started a programme called Student Connect, which connects university students from America, Canada, and South Africa to students in Israel..."The experience was amazing as we spoke about topics that wouldn't usually come up in conversation, or the things we're passionate about," Pantano says. "The Israelis I was partnered with was funny, great to chat to, and very friendly. She's studying at the moment, majoring in economics. We've planned to meet up either when she comes to Cape Town or when I visit Israel."
Anti-abuse group Koleinu SA makes voice heard in Cape Town

Koleinu SA is making its voice against abuse and domestic violence even louder by expanding to Cape Town.

Koleinu SA, which translates as “hear our voices”, is a non-profit organisation which assists victims of abuse in the community. It was started in Johannesburg eight years ago by Robbenzt Wendy Hendler and Rozanne Sack after their own experiences of abuse at the hands of a trusted doctor. Since then, it has had a major impact in educating and supporting the Jewish community and beyond, from starting “talking conversations to supporting victims.”

Melanie Uranovsky, who will lead Koleinu SA in the Cape, says “domestic violence, gender-based violence, or any harassment is intolerable. Perhaps the need to be involved began when I witnessed an abusive scene, or the day a little 11 year-old girl walked into my office to tell me what her grandmother had been doing to her over the years. The memory of both those events will stay with me forever.”

“Phoning that little girl’s mother to break the news to her that her father-in-law had been sexually abusing her daughter was the most difficult call I have ever had to make,” she says. “I fought hard for that case. Along the way, the police lost her statement, so we had to start over, and the grandfather and father kept on denying it and told me I would be ‘annihilated’ in court because it was a big lie. But I urged on, and eventually, after our court appearance and being grilled by their defence, we won the case. The perpetrator was jailed for only two years. “We’ve had a bit of a breakthrough in reporting in Cape Town,” says Sack. “We have three cases going through the court system. It’s really gratifying, and we’re waiting for similar momentum in Johannesburg. The more people will feel safe reporting, and the safer our community will be. Perpetrators will know they will face consequences and cannot act with impunity, and victims will make progress towards healing. We’re working hard to break that stigma in Johannesburg.”

Sack says they were, on the whole, warmly received in Cape Town. “The reception in Cape Town been absolutely amazing,” says Hendler. “For many, especially in the older generation, this is the first time they have heard that abuse and domestic violence is as prevalent in the Jewish community as in other communities.”

Expansion to Cape Town started when members of the board of the Jewish community in Johannesburg approached them, Hendler says. She has been working on cases over the past two years. “We would like to open in Durban as well. We’ve become more established and get a lot of calls from all over the country.”

They launched the organisation at the Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation (Marais Road Shul), where they say the audience was “absolutely transfixed”. “The next day was a watershed moment, as they made a presentation to the teenagers for the first time. “We visited Cape Town Torah High [CTH], where we presented to a few back-to-back talks with four groups of CTH high school kids aged 13 to 18. “We spoke to the boys and girls separately about sexual abuse, and also to older teens about consent. We’ve never done talks with teenagers, but they were amazing. It made a particular impact on the older boys.”

When speaking to the rabbis at the school, Hendler says they emphasised that these topics should be discussed when pupils are younger, and that “halacha covers all of these things”. They then attended the Union of Jewish Women’s “Women of Courage” event, where Sack told her personal story. “You could have heard a pin drop. There were tears,” says Hendler.

The women then travelled to Hermanus to meet activists and lawyers working on “the surf school case”. Ryan Halkett, 41, is alleged to have assaulted at least four female tourists and one local woman at his Hermanus Surf School and Lodge. He appeared in the Hermanus Magistrate’s Court on Thursday, 9 June, on charges of rape and sexual assault, and was released on bail of R1 000. The arrest followed months of tireless effort by Hendler and Sack. They hope the docket will be finalised by December.

The Cape Town trip ended with a visit to United H евra School to do a training workshop with its mental health professionals, and to meet the Cape South African Jewish Board of Deputies. “We have exciting things coming up, including introducing a WhatsApp hotline to allow people to interact directly with us,” says Hendler.

“We’re now working in almost all Jewish schools in Johannesburg,” says Sack. They are also seeking to engage with children beyond the Jewish community. After that, their next big goal is to open a walk-in centre.

Melanie Uranovsky can be contacted on 074 180 5687.

Judging Achievers – a thorough and tough process

People from all over the world are flocking to our website to vote for this year’s Ahia Jewish Achiever Award winners in all nine categories.

Though we had a record number of nominees this year – 693 – we’ve also on track to break records in the number of people voting online as the excitement builds. The site makes it so easy to see who’s, learn a little about each nominee, and vote. It’s vital to know that all nominations will be received from members of the public. There are four panels of expert judges who ruminate, discuss, and thrash out all the information they have gleaned to find the winners.

For the Europcar Women in Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Professional Excellence, and Leadership Award sections, each person who accepts their nomination is called on to make their own video, send their CVs, and accept their nomination is called on to make their own video, send their CVs, and present to two panels of judges who assess their suitability.

For the Europcar Women in Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Professional Excellence, and Leadership Award sections, each person who accepts their nomination is called on to make their own video, send their CVs, and present to two panels of judges who assess their suitability.

Entrepreneurship category judges: Heidi Brauer, Ari Mishan, Rob Fibher, and Namou Kumalo

Howard Sackstein, Sarah Mattisson, Dana Diamond, Herchel Javitz, and Benji Porter.

The selection of judges of each section is formidable, and they take their jobs extraordinarily seriously, sometimes debating for days in order to find the best- of-the-best winners.

It’s important to note that public votes guide the judging teams, whose decisions on the matter are final. So, don’t stop now: Go ahead and vote! Go to: https://bit.ly/3a2WZ2zvote.

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NEW

NEW

NEW

NEW

NEW
Habonim gets a much delayed HUG

TALI FEINBERG

“South Africa is ground zero for the BDS movement, and has one of the most violent and antisemitic Jewish organisations in the world,” says Noa Raman, the director of partnerships in Israel, who has been leading StandWithUs efforts in South Africa for the past four years.

For this reason, StandWithUs is opening offices in South Africa. “We’re making the full resources of our global efforts available to our partners, young people, and the community at large in South Africa,” says Michael Dickson, the executive director of StandWithUs South Africa.

This includes educational curricula, research, fact sheets and booklets, best practices, our vast social media presence, our Holocaust Education Centre, and our Centre for Combating Antisemitism.

Cassandra Mayekiso has been appointed executive director of the local StandWithUs office in Johannesburg, and Kayla Ginsberg is the new campus regional director.

StandWithUs South Africa will provide educational material, curriculum, seminars, and access to a broad network of Israeli educators directed at schools, university campuses, and community events.

“Establishing StandWithUs South Africa on the ground will empower the next generation to learn the history, facts, and skills needed to educate about Israel and push back against falsehoods about the Jewish state and anti-Jewish bigotry,” Raman says.

“StandWithUs South Africa will inspire communities to be proud of their culture, religion, identities, and beliefs.”

The program is open to students as well as educators who wish to engage outside the school system, and includes support for schools, university students, and communities in sharing my very real experiences as a black, Christian, woman living in South Africa.

StandWithUs South Africa has opened an office in Johannesburg, and is launching the Emerson Fellowship, which is open to South African and international university students “who want to learn and grow in combating antisemitism and the BDS movement.

“StandWithUs South Africa will also assist SAJCC to counter demonizations during IAW,” along with highly trained on-the-ground educators and programs that will best equip students and community members. There will also be virtual learning opportunities for students who wish to engage outside the confines of IAW,” says Mayekiso.

Asked how StandWithUs will respond to the jaded attitude of many young people towards Israel, “StandWithUs South Africa aims to engage these youth with effective programming, access to interesting speakers, virtual tours of Israel, and through the opportunity to apply to the Emerson Fellowship, which is all of this and much more.”

The StandWithUs fellowship will be launching on Friday, November 4, with applications for cohort one opening the following week.

“With the opportunity for university student leaders to commit to a one-year learning programme in which they will connect with Emersons all over the world while learning about Israel,” says Wendy Kahn, the national director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, “We welcome StandWithUs to South Africa. For many years, it has supported our community in preparing our students to stand against the assault on our right to have a reliable, safe and secure future. I am excited to see what our young people the tools and know-how to defend their rights to be proud Jews in South Africa against political and social forces that want to push us back against the egregious and slanderous claims made by antisemites.”

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THE GREAT BIG CHALLAH BAKE

10 NOV | 5:00 PM
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11-12 NOV

Dis-Chem Pharmacies
Dis-Chem BabyCity
v. vatIT
Discovery
When Biden heard that she had 12 children, he fell to his knees in respect.

She had to learn a lot, and learn it fast: “It was a professional and important committee. I saw words I couldn’t even pronounce, and I had to learn to speak them. I took a lot of paperwork, learning them the whole long night for meetings the next day.”

When Ravitz was pregnant with her first child at the age of 19, her mother was pregnant with her tenth. Her sister was pregnant two weeks before her daughter was born. “It wasn’t easy,” she said. “I was basically pregnant every year and a half. My eldest is 26 – she’s a mother of five! But there was never a man in the house, so she had to do everything herself. It was a difficult time.”

Ravitz and her husband made a point of being there ourselves, even if it meant going back to the States. “We’d go to meetings the next day.”

Her children sometimes didn’t like her job much, but were proud of her. “We didn’t use babysitters,” she said. “My children were always with me.”

She met former United States President Donald Trump (after he was in office) and spoke to them. “I wasn’t sure, as a haredi woman, if I would get lost,” Ravitz said, “but it soon became clear that I was well received.”

In 2021, Ravitz accompanied Rivlin to a meeting with US President Joe Biden in the Oval Office at the White House. Biden wanted to shake hands with Ravitz, but Ravitz explained that she didn’t shake hands with men for religious reasons. When Biden explained that he would be shaking hands with his children, he fell to his knees in respect. He showed her a framed picture of Obama, Biden, and Biden’s mother. “This was the power of a mother. Even the most powerful man in the world remembers and loves his mother. He has her picture in the Oval Office!”

Ravitz hasn’t ruled out running for a political position in the future, but says haredi parties don’t welcome female members and need to sort that out first.

She believes the rift between secular and religious Israelis can be bridged by getting to know one another better.

When asked why she was coming to South Africa, Ravitz said, “I believe in young people, young communities, and was delighted to have been invited by Aish. I will deliver a message of being able to succeed and supporting young people’s beliefs.” She will also speak to women, telling them that a woman can achieve her goals even with a big family.

Ravitz has to look for a believer gave me power,” she said. “I was a believer for a long time, and I’ll always be a believer.”

She entered her first tournament, and returned with an armful of prizes. I was hooked. Sandra Meyberg nicknamed me “Boy Wonder”, and called me until that I was well into my forties. My wife was “Mrs Wonder” to Sandra.

As a rather introverted teen, I remained fascinated by the game, and I had to study words. In those days, there was no internet, anagramming apps, or online Scrabble Go. I compiled my own lists by hand using anagram books. My mom and I joined the JSC. I spent many a sleepless midnight with anagrams and boards whisking through my head for hours after leaving the club.

There are many Yiddish and a handful of Hebrew words playable in English Scrabble. You can play “PLOTZ”, “SCHWITZ”, or “NUDNICK”. You can play “MAZELTOV”, “BIMA”, and “TREFP”. You can play all the Hebrew letters, from “ALEPH” to “TAV”. There are lots of South African words too, including “BRAAI”, “ROEI”, and “NAARTJIE”.

In a recent controversial move – following the Black Lives Matter Movement – about 400 apparently offensive terms were expunged from the Scrabble lexicon. These included “JEW” (meaning to cheat or to lie), “KOFO”, and “FUCK”. Most players were against removing words with the lexicon, but fearing a loss of support from Mattel, the game’s copyright owner, the removes have been grudgingly accepted.

Many countries like New Zealand and most of Australia have rebelled, and are continuing to use them in competitive play.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person tournaments were halted, but we arranged online test matches with countries like England, Pakistan, and New Zealand. Apps like Scrabble Go are extremely popular, as are websites like the Internet Scrabble Club and Woogles. Words can be learned using apps like Ulo or Zynzya (literally the last word in Scrabble, a tropical American word). There are numerous Scrabble groups on Facebook and WhatsApp.

Scrabble has opened up my world. I’ve developed a national championship and have been privileged to represent South Africa at World Scrabble Championships in New York, London (where I came fourth), Washington DC, Melbourne, Las Vegas, Kuala Lumpur, and Warsaw. I’ve played in the African Scrabble Championships in Nairobi, Cape Town, and Lusaka. I came a slightly disappointing 41st out of 86 in this year’s event in October in the Zambian capital.

But most importantly, Scrabble has helped me find my tribe, my community, my world of word nuts. I’m honoured to share a passion with people from all walks of life, from teachers and students to lawyers, doctors, mathematicians, interior designers, and even travel agents. One of our national championships was a contestant on South African Survivor. Our Scrabble family also includes individuals from different nations, and we share one another’s joys and challenges. I’ve become friends with such a diverse group of women from all walks of life that I simply wouldn’t have encountered but for my irrepressible, obsessive love of words.

In fact, I found out more about competitive Scrabble in South Africa, contact Andrew +27 83 260 7530.

Steven Gruzd is the vice president for Scrabble SA, and a five-time national champion.
Sharks and sewerage change the tides of tourism this December

GILLIAN KLAWANSKY

from sharks in Plettenberg Bay to high E. coli levels in Umhlanga, popular seaside destinations are working around the clock to ensure that their beaches are open for bathing this holiday season.

First it was the COVID-19 pandemic, now it’s contaminated water in Umhlanga and sharks, says Ashleigh Elad of Ask Ashleigh, which specialises in timeshare sales and rentals, speaking of the challenges she’s facing as December approaches. “The resorts in these towns are taking every precaution to accommodate their guests. They’re not ignoring the situation, but I’d say it does have a huge impact on tourism.”

“There are ways to adapt your holiday though,” she says. “The kids are so well entertained at Umhlanga Sands, Cabana Beach, and at the Breakers Resort. So, though the beach challenges do have an impact, they’re not enough to change your holiday plans.”

Plett’s Beacon Isle Hotel remains a hot property for the upcoming holiday season. Having recently returned home to Cape Town after a week-long stay at the hotel, Adam Green says he and his family had a wonderful time.

“I know there were some cancellations because of the sharks, but we never considered that,” he says. “Swimming in the sea was banned at all Plett beaches but the hotel has a great pool, so it wasn’t an issue for us. We were able to use and walk on the beaches, there was just no entering the sea. Plett has so much else to offer but I think you would at least need access to a pool if swimming in the sea is still banned in December.”

Yet, says Jaco Kruger, the chairperson of the Plett Shark Action Group (PSAG) and Station Commander of the National Sea Rescue Institute Plettenberg Bay, some beaches have already been opened for swimming, depending on sightings. Others will follow suit under new shark safety protocols. The shark alert comes after two tragic shark deaths in Plett this year – of Jewish stockbroker Bruce Wolow in July, and restaurateur and humanitarian Etienne Bisogno in September. Following Bisogno’s death, beaches were closed, and shark surveillance boosted. The PSAG counted 12 white shark attacks in the Plett coastline following an aerial survey in early October.

Great white sharks in Plett, says Kruger, naturally move from these high areas as summer approaches. “We’ve already experienced a decrease in the number of white sharks in the area over the past two weeks,” he says. As part of its plan for peak season, the PSAG has erected shark information boards.

The focus is on repairing the Olhanga sewerage pump station, which has been the primary cause of the contamination upstream on the Olhanga River.

The Umgeni River also has an impact on Umhlanga’s water quality. “An eThekwini municipal contractor is repairing the Northern Waste Water Works, the primary contributor to sewer contamination, with repairs expected to be completed before the end of November,” Wright says.

Those who visited Umhlanga in October while beaches remained closed had varying experiences. “None of us got sick,” says one Joburg mom who stayed at an Umhlanga beachfront hotel with her family. “We didn’t go to Umhlanga beach, but we had beautiful walks on the promenade daily and we went to Ballito beach, which was lovely.”

Yet Dena Pantanowitz, who also stayed in Umhlanga in October, had a different experience. “We didn’t go near the beach, we drank and brushed our teeth with only bottled water, and we had no ice,” she says. “Yet the night before they were due to fly home, Pantanowitz’s son was violently ill. She began to feel sick on the aeroplane. “I had to sit down as soon as we disembarked otherwise I would have fainted. I had hot sweats, an upset stomach, I wanted to vomit, and couldn’t breathe. More than two weeks later, I’m still battling.”

Pantanowitz’s mother had to come home early to be put on a drip. The family all received positive E. coli tests.

“It must have been from the restaurants, as they clean their plates and utensils with the water,” Pantanowitz says. “I don’t know what they’re going to do in December.”

Yet, if the UIP’s plans come to fruition, the picture looks far more promising.

In the face of these seaside challenges, year-end berg and bush holidays are an up-and-coming trend. “In previous Decembers, I hardly ever sold any hotels in the Drakensberg and at the Kruger Park, but now people are nervous,” says Elad. “Pilanesberg and Sun City, in particular, are major attractions this year.”

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Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu playing for the Junior Boks.

Blood, sweat, and tears pay off for rugby prodigy

SAUL KAMIONSKY

Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu, born in 2002, is the son of lawyer Gabriella Berkowitz and her husband Gregg Bernstein. Sacha is the grandson of Andrew Anthony, who has been training his son since he was five or six. “I played [rugby] when I was five or six...and playing tag rugby every Friday at school when the pressure was on, when it counted,” he says.

The weightlifters didn’t have to go through a qualification process for this year’s championships. “Usually, there’s a standard you have to lift in club competitions,” Berkowitz says. “If you manage to hit a certain number for your weight class, you’re invited to compete at national championships, but this year, they did away with the qualifying standards because they thought that was promoting more participation. That prompted more people to come. It was nice to have extra weightlifters there.”

“I’m elated because playing rugby is what my son does, and getting a call-up for the Springboks is obviously the pinnacle of the sport,” Berkowitz says of his son being included in the squad for the Rugby World Cup. “It was always the dream. I thought I must learn how to do this. I had never been in club competitions, I had never actually even seen the sport before.”

“Back then, apart from being a rugby player on YouTube, the sport wasn’t televised or covered in any other form of mainstream media in South Africa unless the Olympics was on. It’s a small sport, but it’s much bigger now than it used to be. I’m elated because playing rugby is what my son does, and getting a call-up for the Springboks is obviously the pinnacle of the sport.”

Bekezela Bokako

The weightlifting community in South Africa is growing. “From the unknown to the unlimited suffering from some sort of injury during previous attempts.” Berkowitz says it feels incredible to have won his first competition. “I wasn’t expecting to win. It was a real spectacle. Three people competed in my division. I won by about 15kg to 25kg.” The 60kg he lifted in the snatch was a personal best for her by 4kg. “In the clean and jerk, I lifted 75kg, which is about 99% of my personal best.”

Berkowitz went up against one of his rivals who has consistently beaten him over the past two or three years. “I knew it was going to be quite a difficult challenge to defeat him, but basically had the best training cycle I’ve had since I started weightlifting. I felt like it was 50-50 going against him.”

Berkowitz has won medals in the Gauteng provincial championships, and won the Arnold Classic Africa weightlifting event. “I’ve never been selected to compete overseas. I’m hoping that will change with the results I’ve achieved. My medium-term goal is to go to the African Championships next year. I would like to be able to snatch 140kg and clean 180kg. The Commonwealth Games is probably my greatest aspiration. I’ve got four years to train for the next one [in Victoria, Australia].”

South Africa has never garnered a weightlifting medal at the Olympic Games; best known was in the sport at the Commonwealth Games.

Berkowitz says weightlifting is one of the least developed sports in South Africa, but is becoming.
Ye got yessef into this, now get yessef out

When I was 15, I was friendly with a guy by the name of James. We weren’t great friends as he was a bit wild, and I was a bit of a nerdy. But every now and then when we went together, we would chat. On one of those occasions, he told me a crazy story. I had already heard the headlines from my appropriately horrified parents, but it was the text that was more interesting.

It was a regular Saturday night in a leafy Johannesburg suburb when James and company made the decision to “borrow” his mother’s car. After a very successful night out, and after a fair amount of alcohol having been consumed, James drove home. On the way to the pub, racism Africa driveway where he had found it, he managed to submerge it in the family swimming pool.

Unfazed, he exited the pool, and went to bed. He was, after all, quite tired.

When he woke up, his mother was sitting at the end of his bed, waiting to have a conversation.

Slowly, many of the events of the night began to return to him. The magnitude of his actions and the trouble he was in became a reality and he knew, without doubt, that the next days would feel like a dream. “James,” said his mom, looking at him sadly, “Are you very angry?” And just like that, James had his direction, his way out, and his strategy. He was an “angry” 15-year-old, and all he would have to do was to find a way to make things right again.

Power that he could use for good, not evil.

James’ parents chose a different approach. From what I hear, he has gone on to lead a productive and successful life. For him, the days of wild Saturday nights are long past, although he might well be facing the challenges of his own children.

Kanye West doesn’t deserve a free pass.

His “anger” doesn’t just have an impact him and his family, it has shifted the Jewish community, it has shifted the world. He has aimed his car in the direction of the pool, put his foot on the accelerator, and refused all offers of detox and assistance.

And now, even though he’s under water, it’s up to him alone to choose to swim to the surface. Only once he does so can we stretch out our hand to him to help him rest the way he was designed.

The magnitude of his hate.

The success of his hatred. For him, for his family, it has shifted the Jewish community, it has shifted the world.

Against this background, it will be readily understood why Lipstadt’s visit is of special importance at this time. It will provide many opportunities via speaking engagements and in meetings with senior members of government, to educate and raise awareness about the dangers of antisemitism and the need to confront it. We look forward to engaging with her and learning about what’s being done at the highest levels to counteract this scourge.

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South African Jewish Board of Deputies

Gauteng Conference 2022

Letters

CORPORATE SA SPINELESS THEN AND NOW

Treating our cowering, spineless corporate class to the truth, to say nothing because they were making lots of money for their shareholders. Today, the same is true as many companies choose to do the correct thing, but only because the SA government’s Congress regime’s bidding. Then and now, it’s immoral to select a person for a job based on their skin colour. Making racist legislation for the past 30 years against the working 4% white minority is immoral and will do nothing for job creation. Hence, on this Labour Day, I’m warning future dangers of the Afrika is now classified as a failed state.

– Frank Cohen, Johannesburg

ABOVE BOARD

Karen Milner

Winter 2022

Lipstadt’s visit comes at opportune time

For all preparations are taking place for the

South African Jewish Board of Deputies’ (SAJBD’s) Gauteng Conference conference on 10 November. This includes finalising the programme for the United States special envoy for monitoring and combating antisemitism, Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, who in addition to being keynote speaker will also meet the government and universities.

The visit of someone of Lipstadt’s stature comes at an opportune time for our community and, in fact, South African society as a whole. There has undoubtedly been an upsurge in hateful rhetoric in this country, primarily by no means exclusively online platforms. Regardless of who the targets are, this proliferation of hate speech is everyone’s problem. As Lipstadt herself aptly puts it, “in the fight against hatred and evil, neutrality isn’t an option. There are no bystanders.”

Antisemitism is often referred to as “the oldest form of hatred”, and it’s also one of the most complex, taking multiple and sometimes contradictory forms. One thus finds Jews being reviled both as subversive communists and as greedy exploitative capitalists; or seeking the destruction of the white race while also being seen as whites who are especially guilty of exploiting blacks; or being “rootless cosmopolitans” hostile to national sovereignty, while also being ultra-nationalist colonisers and oppressors. A common theme in antisemitic thinking is the notion that Jews secretly control events behind the scenes through a theme in antisemitic thinking is the notion that Jews secretly control events behind the scenes through domination of the global financial system, the entertainment industry, and other such means. All of these canards, as well as others, have featured in the flurry of antisemitic comments that have appeared online in recent weeks, the future over Dis Chem.

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

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– Frank Cohen, Johannesburg

SA JEWISH WEEK 15
3 – 10 November 2022

T

orah Academy’s Inter-Jewish Cricket Festival at Wanderers Cricket Club on 25 and 26 October brought sport and spirit together.

King David Linksfield, King David Victory Park, King David Sandton, and Yeshiva College, participated in a spread of 90 format matches.

Each team batted and bowled 10 overs.

The days were split into junior and senior categories, with the Toreros teams playing on the Tuesday, and the Commonwealth playing on the Wednesday.

Sunday 6 November

• Chev Radhika Beneveno hosts a support group called Growth from Grief. Venue: Donald Gordon Centre, Sandringham Gardens Campus. Time: 10.00. Contact: thecg@jhbchev.co.za

Tuesday 8 November

• The Franz Auerbach Memorial lecture presents guest speaker Albie Sachs. Venue: Beit Emanuel Shul or Donald Gordon Centre, Sandringham Gardens Campus. Time: 10:00. Entry: free. Contact: dowy@jhbholocaust.co.za or 011 640 3100.

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Tea and toasts for domestic workers at UJW gathering

The spread at the UJW Domestic Workers’ Appreciation Tea

KDVP triumphs at Israel Quiz again

Sir David Victoria Park High School (KDVP) Grade 10 pupils Liana Wes won the Israel Quiz, held at Beyachad in Johannesburg on Sunday, 2 October 2022. She was among seven KDVP pupils to make the final rounds of the competition.

Seven out of 11 finalists came from KDVPHS. Through their participation, Grade 10 students Samantha Gomer; Daniel Kapelushnik; Daniella Reubenson; Dani Scop; and Liana Wes; and Grade 11 students Lior Hyman and Daniel Segal brought honour to the school and gained enormous knowledge about Israel.

Organised by the Israel Centre’s Liat Amar Arran and Ronit Doshan, the Israel Quiz covers the history of Israel since the establishment of the Zionist movement, including the struggle to rebuild the Jewish state, and current affairs.

The material includes innovation and current achievements. At the end of the final round, Samantha Gomer and Daniella Reubenson tied in eighth place, Lior Hyman and Daniel Segal tied sixth, and Daniel Kapelushnik came fourth. Dani Scop was runner up, and Liana Wes came first.

KDVP has won the competition 10 times in the 15 years that it has been running.

Yeshiva Primary pupils elected to mini city council

Elisha Slotow and Raphi Gerson of Bnos Yisroel College Primary School were elected mini city councilors for 2023.

World ORT and Scholas joint venture to create future leaders

Students from South Africa and worldwide travelled to Panama to participate in the Scholas World Youth event from 24 to 27 October. The event, in partnership with ORT, one of the largest educational networks in the world and the Pope’s Scholas organisation, aims to create future leaders by promoting understanding, tolerance, and cultural exchange as part of a joint initiative with Pope Francis.

This event continues the ORT network’s collaboration with the Pope’s Scholas Occurrentes Foundation.

WIZO garden day a feast for the eyes followed by legendary tea

More than 150 garden enthusiasts turned out to see two of Johannesburg’s most spectacular privately owned gardens at the annual WIZO (Women’s International Zionist Organisation) garden day on Sunday, 23 October.

The 18th WIZO garden day was convened by Helen Maisel Trisk, the vice-president of WIZO SA, and the committee of WIZO Johannesburg.

The gardens are located on neighbouring sites, and the visitors were able to view them together. The result of several years of labour and love, these gardens are magnificent.

Opening them to public view was an act of extraordinary generosity on the part of Collette and Anthony Ball and their daughter and son-in-law, Sarah and Greg Whitaker.

Guests were met with a renowned WIZO tea at the end of their wandering. The tea was held in the host’s pool house, and it was followed by a talk from Shirley Wallington, a well-known landscape designer and the creator of the magnificent spaces they had just viewed.

Wallington told a captivating story about the work that had been expended in taking care of the land, preserving trees wherever possible, and overcoming numerous hurdles before nature was ready to present the magnificent spectacle they had seen.

Maisel Trisk spoke about WIZO’s history, and detailed its beneficiaries in Israel and South Africa, to which all funds raised at the garden day are donated. WIZO’s outreach programme in South Africa, Wheelchairs of Hope, donates state-of-the-art wheelchairs made in Israel to disabled youngsters in institutions throughout South Africa. WIZO’s projects in Israel include the advancement and protection of the rights of women, running day care centres, schools, foster homes, and shelters for abused women.

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BOOK A TABLE


Absa Jewish Achiever Awards 2022
We invite you or your company to purchase a table for the Awards Ceremony & Back to Life party

Date: 19 November 2022
Time: 20:00 for 20:15
Venue: Sandton Convention Centre
Dress Code: Party

Table of 10 people R45 000 ex VAT
Seat R4 500 ex VAT

Party in person at the Sandton Convention Centre or celebrate in the comfort of your own home with a gourmet meal delivered to your doorstep.

All money raised supports the free publication and distribution of the SA Jewish Report newspaper.