



Shai Rubinstein, Yuval Teperburg, Jonathan Elkhoury, and Bar Suisa spoke at the JCC last Sunday.

At JCC, Israelis remember victims

BY STEVE MARANTZ([HTTPS://JEWISHJOURNAL.ORG/AUTHOR/STEVE-MARANTZ/](https://JewishJournal.org/author/Steve-Marantz/))

November 9, 2023



While Israel campaigns to rid Gaza of Hamas terrorists, its struggle on another battlefield – for worldwide opinion – is no less crucial.

Four Israelis came to the Jewish Community Center of the North Shore last Sunday to rally support for Israel's legitimacy and to humanize its suffering. They are foot soldiers of Frontline Reserves, an association that "trains outstanding Israeli students to defend Israel and the Zionist idea in the international consciousness." Through a program called DiploAct, students are coached in public speaking, history, and debate, and then deployed to bolster Israel's besieged image.

"A lot of people don't want to listen," said Yuval Teperberg, 25, a former infantry instructor in the IDF. "I was at an event at U-Penn, and one person yelled at me, 'you kill babies, you kill babies'. I was so angry, but somehow, I managed to control myself. I looked at him and said, 'Okay, I'm listening, what do you have to say?' He kept yelling and I said, 'Where did you get that information?' I stayed calm and we began to talk. The conversation became an hour and a half. He told me some of his family came from Iran. That evening we had an event that was supposed to be with Jewish students. And he came to listen. The guy who yelled at me came to listen.

"One person at a time. If each person in here can reach one person, that is the change I am hoping for. I really believe we can bring this change."

The first Israeli speaker was Jonathan Elkhoury, once a Christian Lebanese refugee, who serves as International Relations Director

of the DiploAct program. Elkhoury spoke of the Israelis massacred on Oct. 7 at the Nova music festival.

“On the one side you have the tribe of Nova, enthusiastic young adults who wanted to celebrate their shared history of music, to celebrate their love and freedom and whatever they believed in and who they were and who they wanted to be.

“On the other side was the tribe of Hamas, a terror organization. In their minds their freedom can only be obtained by the destruction of Israel and the killing of innocents.”

Elkhoury showed the 80-person audience a map depicting where more than 1,400 Israelis were murdered, where 242 Israelis were kidnapped, and where 8,500 missiles were fired into Israel. He showed social media videos posted by Hamas celebrating their massacre.

“It’s important to give names to some of those who are not with us anymore, and commemorate their memory,” Elkhoury said.

One by one, the Israelis rose, taut with emotion, to memorialize friends murdered at the Nova music festival.

Teperberg told of Noam Shalom, 25, a former army paramedic and a social media manager for corporate brands, who died after she abandoned her ‘safe’ hideout to treat a wounded woman.

“She was hiding in a trailer, and she saw a girl outside that had been shot in the leg,” Teperberg said. “She chose to risk her life and get out of the trailer to take this girl to an abandoned ambulance. She had been a medic so she knew what to do. And that’s all she cared about even though she knew her life was in danger.”

Shalom was captured and next seen frightened and harried in a video posted online by Hamas. A week later her body was found and identified.

“Noam had so many friends,” Teperberg said. “She had an Instagram page she called a self-love blog. It was how she [could] be a better person, how she [could] give more to the people around her. That’s what I’m taking from Noam. I’m making sure everybody I know knows how much I love them, and I’m making sure to love myself, and post those motivation sentences she used to. I think that is something that reflects her, and it’s how I would want you to remember Noam.”

Bar Suisa, a law student at Reichman University, spoke of Yonatan Chai Azulai, 25, who died from a grenade explosion inside his shelter. Yonatan’s late father had been the driver for Sara Netanyahu, wife of prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Yonatan was named for Netanyahu’s older brother, Yoni Netanyahu, who was killed while leading the famous rescue of Jewish hostages in Entebbe in 1976.

“I met Yonatan in my military service; I was a social worker for a combat unit,” Suisa said.

“Yonatan was one of the soldiers I cared for, one of the few who really got into my heart. He was like this really enthusiastic kid that every teacher has in her class who makes a lot of trouble but she loves him the most. That was Yonatan for me – a lot of trouble, but he was so funny no matter where we were. And no matter how harsh things got he was always upbeat.

“What his family and friends say about him is that he always said that happiness is the root of living, happiness brings blessing, so always be happy. Even when happiness is thousands of miles away from us and it’s really hard to fulfill his wish. But you know we’re going to get through this, from the history of Israel and the Jewish people. After the darkness the light always comes, and we know there will be happier days.”

Shai Rubinstein, 27, a Diplomacy student at Reichman University, and a former commander and trainer in the IDF, remembered his friend Omri Ram, 28, whom he had met while both were exchange students at Sciences Po in Paris. Ram had an economics degree but was best known as a poker player and coach.

“He wanted to travel the world and he did,” Rubinstein said. “He loved surfing and hiking, such a happy guy, always smiling. I always asked him about restaurants and where to party; I valued his attitude for life, of joy and happiness.

“After his death I visited his family in southern Israel and also his girlfriend’s family. His father, Menachem, told me he wanted his son to be remembered as always smiling, as a good friend, and a guy who enjoyed life. His father requests for all of us to fight for our country, fight for our freedom, and to make sure after this tragedy that we make Israel a better place for generations to come.”

The NSJCC event was organized by Yael Magen, a Marblehead resident born in Israel, an attorney, public speaker, and mother of three. Magen joined the Israelis in drawing a clear distinction between human rights observed and protected by the state of Israel, and their utter disregard by Hamas terrorists. Magen pointed out another distinction: Israel builds bomb shelters and ‘safe rooms’ in homes to safeguard its civilians.

“And how does the other side treat their civilians?” she asked. “Well, Hamas has not built even one bomb shelter for civilians.”

DiploAct’s U.S. tour included events in Boston, Lynn, and at Brandeis University, before it moved on to Philadelphia, New Jersey and New York. After the JCCNS event, Magen allowed that DiploAct probably was “preaching to the choir,” but said such events are useful, nonetheless.

“Supporters need the tools to talk to people who are so on the other side, who brand Israel as a colonialist genocidal oppressor, which it’s

not,” Magen said. “The choir still needs tools to negotiate friends and family members.”

One effective tool, she said, is to humanize the victims of Hamas brutality, as the Israeli speakers did.

“They cried and we all cried with them,” Magen said. “Empathy is extremely powerful.”



(<https://jewishjoy.co/>)

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Comment *

Name *

Email *

POST COMMENT

TOP STORIES

Lew will offer sound counsel as U.S. ambassador to Israel, but will Netanyahu listen?
(<https://jewishjournal.org/2023/11/09/lew-will-offer-sound-counsel-as-u-s-ambassador-to-israel-but-will-netanyahu-listen/>)

BY DAVID M. SHRIBMAN

HONORABLE MENSCHION: Larry Groipen
(<https://jewishjournal.org/2023/11/09/honorable-menschion-larry-groipen/>)

BY STEVEN A. ROSENBERG

Hear the joy and resilience in the music of Terezin at Boston concert
(<https://jewishjournal.org/2023/11/09/hear-the-joy-and-resilience-in-the-music-of-terezin-at-boston-concert/>)

BY PENNY SCHWARTZ

The Millennials: Abby Price, 27
(<https://jewishjournal.org/2023/11/09/the-millennials-abby-price-27/>)

BY GAVI KLEIN

Editorial: Like Brandeis, colleges should ban student groups that support terror
(<https://jewishjournal.org/2023/11/09/editorial-like-brandeis-colleges-should-ban-student-groups-that-support-terror/>)

BY JEWISH JOURNAL

Jewish Journal is reader supported

DONATE
(HTTPS://WWW.PAYPAL.COM/CGI-BIN/WEBSCR?CMD=_S-
XCLICK&HOSTED_BUTTON_ID=Z5VSKBEUW2PQ6&SOURCE=URL)

SUBSCRIBE
(HTTPS://JEWISHJOURNAL.ORG/SUBSCRIBE/)

About Us

Contact Us

Advertise With Us

Archived Issues

Privacy Policy

(<https://jewishjournal.org>)



□

Jewish Journal (<https://jewishjournal.org>)

