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UNITED KINGDOM

JUNE 2024

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**STANDWITHUS MONTHLY
MAGAZINE FOR EDUCATORS**



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When it comes to arming your children with knowledge, StandWithUs is leading the way

Our children need more support.

Michelle Rosenberg made that very clear in her *Jewish News* article on 31st May (*Caught in the crossfire: what my teenage daughter taught me about the 'cult of woke'*) regarding her daughter's experience amongst her college friends. When it comes to discourse about Israel there is an incredible and relentless amount of misinformation. In this war and for so many years previously, Israel is guilty, even if it proves itself to be innocent.

Our children need more support.

How can it be that this misinformation has spread so easily and so quickly amongst young people? The answer to me, as a former teacher, is rather straightforward: the facts are not being presented to them, and spaces for critical thinking are not being prioritised.

Our children need more support. We are the ones that can offer it.

At StandWithUs UK, we offer the highest quality of education to ensure that our children are armed with the most important defence tool: knowledge. Our Explore course covers all topics relevant to Israel in enjoyable workshops that allow discussion amongst the participants as they delve into an essential part of their identity. Since its inception in 2022, Explore has reached thousands of school pupils across the country to overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Our children need more support. Now more than ever.

Following the tragedy of October 7th, StandWithUs educators were out every day for months running educational sessions about the conflict, and to reassure the audience that pride in their Jewish and Zionist identity has never been more important.

In March, we hosted 200 Sixth Formers at Swipe Up Rise Up, our inter-school conference that provides them with the knowledge and confidence to fight back against the relentless antisemitism on social media. TeachWithUs, our monthly magazine, provides news and resources for educators across the country in order to support them when navigating these challenging topics.

We support Israel and fight antisemitism unapologetically. I call to all schools, organisations, and communities to reach out to us so we can provide the tools to fight back.

Our children need more support. We are permanently ready to offer it.



Yehuda Fink, Director of Schools & Youth Programming and Editor of TeachWithUs

CHALLENGING DISCUSSIONS ENCOURAGE PROGRESS

There is a lot of caution around certain topics to do with Israel. Eva argues that for genuine dialogue about a future resolution to take place, then we have to explore these difficult topics to understand where certain perspectives come from.

The war that Hamas forced upon Israel after the horrific atrocities of October 7th has led to many difficult conversations. Both before and after October 7th, Israel has been held to a different standard on the international stage. The world is quick to condemn and judge Israel's actions, but people tend to shy away from the more complex discussions explaining and justifying Israel's actions. Despite the atrocities that Israelis suffered on October 7th, Israel has been subjected to boycotts, hearings at the ICJ and the recognition of a Palestinian state by some countries without there being any formal negotiations from both sides.



Efrat. (Photo Credit: Shutterstock)

A challenging topic is the status of the Israeli settlements in parts of Judea and Samaria (internationally referred to as the West Bank). According to international law, the settlements are considered illegal, but there has been clear legal disputations over this status. The word "settler" has such a negative connotation to it, mainly due to the appalling minority of violent invaders of Palestinian villages. The reality is very different. Israeli settlements make up approximately 2% of the entirety of Judea and Samaria, with over half a million Israeli residents. If we are to build dialogue about how to come up with solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, then it is essential that we do not paint over 500,000 people with the same brush.

It would be unfair to do the same with the millions of Palestinians living in the territories.

Settlements are an issue of political and legal controversy inside and outside Israel. Israel entered Judea and Samaria (renamed the West Bank by Jordan) only after being attacked by Jordan in 1967. UN Resolution 242 assumed Israel would administer the territories until Arab countries were willing to negotiate new borders.

Palestinian leaders have rejected every Israeli offer of peace and territorial compromise and delayed resuming negotiations to determine future borders.

Simultaneously, terrorists continue to threaten Israeli civilians, forcing Israel to maintain its security activity as agreed upon in the Oslo Accords. The concept that settlements are an obstacle to peace is simply unfounded and has been disproved by Hamas' rule over Gaza. Israel sought territorial compromise and peace in 2005 when it evacuated all settlements and military presence in Gaza. Instead of the Palestinians turning Gaza into the "Singapore of the Middle East", Hamas was democratically elected in 2006 and subsequently used Gaza as a ground for terrorist activity which has threatened the lives of Israelis ever since. The atrocities of October 7th have demonstrated to many in Israel that simply removing settlements will not lead to peace. These are part of challenging conversations that need to be had with our pupils. We cannot simply treat the issue of Israeli settlements as a black and white issue.

It is important for pupils to understand why so many want to live in these territories. Pupils need to know of the Jewish people's historic, legal, security claims and biblical connection to the West Bank, the heart of Jewish history and our ancestral homeland.

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Jewish communities existed in Hebron and Gush Etzion in 1920 when Arab leaders incited violence against the Jews, massacring many of them. For many Jewish people, it is inconceivable that the cities of Hebron, Gush Etzion and other parts of ancient Judea should become Judenrein – empty of Jews.

Pupils need to know of the real relationships between Israelis and Palestinians in Judea and Samaria. Efrat is one of the largest towns in Judea and Samaria. I have been to Efrat myself to visit friends. Residents of Efrat have always had a good relationship with Arab villages that border it. There is a Palestinian store outside the northern gate which many of the Jewish residents use. Efrat has a flourishing community which encourages peace and harmony with their Arab neighbours, not violence. Israeli businesses such as SodaStream demonstrated how Israelis and Palestinians could live in harmony. The sad reality is that SodaStream had to move its key warehouse out of the West Bank due to boycott threats. This had a significant impact on the workforce, who were mainly Palestinian.

Instead of focussing on the extremist margins, we have to embrace the decent majority who **are** the ones who can build the path to peace. Constantly labelling the Israelis who live in Judea and Samaria as “occupiers” and presenting them as key obstacles to peace will likely push them to become more hostile and isolated.

A two-state solution requires mutual recognition and mutual respect. Over the past 80 years, Israel has repeatedly shown its willingness to make compromises and accept a two-state solution. Israeli leaders accepted proposals in 1937 and 1947, and they offered Palestinians land for peace in 2000 and 2008. Palestinian leaders refused all these peace plans. To bring about a resolution there must be commitment on both sides.

We have to acknowledge that there has also been

a lack of a real effort from Israeli leaders. Yitzhak Rabin is the most prominent example of an Israeli PM who made significant steps and sacrifices (which he had no obligation to make) for the sake of peace. It cost him his life, taken by one of his own people. The process is not easy, especially when there are so many opinions of what that process should look like. Peace is only possible when both sides are willing and are not bullied into it. Countries declaring a Palestinian state without negotiations from both sides of the conflict do not make peace more likely, if anything, it hinders it.

Furthermore, since Israel’s response to October 7th, it has been the subject of many boycotts. Examples such as the treatment of Eden Golan during the Eurovision contest and the banning of Israeli citizens from the Maldives will not bring about a lasting peace that both Israelis and Palestinians yearn for. Such boycotts increase tensions.

Undoubtedly, both Israelis and Palestinians have suffered for decades as a result of this conflict. After the war Hamas forced upon Israel on October 7th, both Israelis and Palestinians have paid the price for Hamas’ terrorism. The world needs to remember why Israel is fighting against Hamas and not forget that Hamas’ barbarism started this war. Despite the desire by both Israeli and Palestinian civilians for peace; peace will not be achieved by trying to force it on one side of the conflict. Peace can be achieved when both sides come to the negotiating table with the desire to reach a long-lasting agreement which renounces the use of terrorism and hatred.



*Eva James, Lead Educator at StandWithUs UK
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MAY 2024 FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN – THANK YOU!

On 19th and 20th May, StandWithUs UK held its annual matched funding campaign. We want to thank you all for your support and are delighted that we reached our total, enabling us to continue to expand our work!



StandWithIsrael, StandWithUs

Following a year filled with unprecedented for the community, we were proud to highlight our contribution to the response to October 7th. We handed out thousands of pins in many businesses, schools, and communal events including the Yom Ha'atzmaut Ceremony at Kinloss.

The response from the community has been overwhelming and we cannot wait to get going with another year to support you all in your educational efforts.

Thank you for standing with Israel, and with us!

I DOUBTED THE VALUE OF SOLIDARITY MISSIONS, I COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE WRONG

Abi Laderman – Mazkira (National Secretary) of Bnei Akiva UK, a leading Religious Zionist youth movement, providing impactful programming nationwide.

I recently completed my second 'Solidarity Mission' to Israel in response to the horrific events of the 7th of October. In February, I had the opportunity to visit for the first time with the Board of Deputies and most recently, having taken inspiration from my initial trip, Bnei Akiva UK took 20 students to Israel for a week of volunteering and educational activities.

I initially struggled with the concept of 'Solidarity Missions'. They felt highly tokenistic, and I doubted the value of volunteering which could take place on them. I was uncomfortable with the idea of visiting locations where unspeakable acts took place, with hundreds of dignitaries and other figures from across the community turning up to see them as tourist. I have been privileged to come to Israel multiple times between my first and

second 'Solidarity Missions' and have come to realise how wrong I was for a number of reasons. On both trips we were taken to Hostage Square where we heard testimonies from family members of hostages about what had happened to their grandparents, parents, siblings and cousins. What struck me was the difference between my first trip in February and this recent one. In February, the long table which is the centre piece of all the artwork in the square, was brightly laid with coloured crockery and a white table cloth. Now, the table is black and charred, half laid and half constructed from cement, a representation of the fact that all of the hostages are still in Gaza, whether physically, mentally or both.

The second thing that was highly noticeable between my two visits was how busy the square was. When I visited in February the square was vibrant and busy, there were stalls set up by different organisations and associations in every corner and there were hundreds of people visiting. Four months on, attention is waning and although



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Find out more about StartUp at www.standwithus.com/startup-uk



at the time of writing this, there are still 120 hostages in Gaza, people are inevitably going back to their lives and carrying on.

For the hostages, for the families and friends, normality is not an option, and this is the first reason I was wrong to think these trips are not valuable.

For those directly affected, the most valuable thing we can do is to show up, to keep making noise, keep posting on social media and lobbying governments. Even if we feel it may not make a difference, to the loved ones of those held in captivity it was clear that it means everything.

We visited Kibbutz Alumim, located just 2km from the Gaza strip. On the October 7th a heroic battle took place within the kibbutz. We were shown horrific footage of the battle which was described in detail to us. We had the opportunity to walk around the kibbutz and travel up the road to the site of the Nova Festival. This also dawned on me that I was wrong. It is one thing to sit abroad and read the news or scroll through social media, however it is something else entirely to actually be there, to see the locations and to mourn at the sites where over 1000 were murdered.

As educators it is our responsibility to keep the

memory of what happened alive, and I cannot imagine being able to do this justice without having been able to appreciate it first-hand.

The volunteering does matter. Not only as a show of support and solidarity, but practically. Israel's agricultural and manual labour industries have been hit hard by the war. Kibbutzim in the Gaza envelope were set on fire and destroyed, and where they weren't they were left untouched for days with devastating and irreversible impact on livestock. With foreign workers having fled, there are few hands left to do the work. Even if it is just a day helping in the fields on kibbutzim, packing produce or parcels for soldiers, it is all needed and it all makes a difference.

Educationally, *where do we go from here?* As educators, our mission is to develop young people to see the importance in writing their own part of the history of our people. I think the best way to do that is to bring people to Israel, show them the sites where incredible acts of heroism have taken place over thousands of years, and introduce them to the ordinary heroes who are walking around. But most importantly, show them that this is their inheritance to be a part of and to take charge of.

"THE SOLDIERS GUARD THE COUNTRY, WE GUARD THE STUDENTS": THE TEACHERS OF WAR

This article was written by Tamar Trabelsi-Hadad in Hebrew for Ynet, 21st May 2024

While the fighters defended the country's borders, many teachers mobilised to support the students of Israel who had to experience the consequences of the war, both in the south and the north, as well as those who were evacuated from their homes and classrooms. On "Teachers' Day," observed this morning, the education system honoured the educators who joined the national effort and commemorated those who were murdered. Among the teachers who received an appreciation award were Ada Shagai and Liat Atsili from Kibbutz Nir Oz, who were released from Hamas captivity.

The education system dedicated Tuesday 21st May to honouring the educators who joined the war effort and commemorating the teachers who were murdered in the war. Education Minister Yoav Kisch awarded certificates of excellence to 41 educators who assisted students who lost parents, siblings, were evacuated from their homes, returned from Hamas captivity, as well as those who joined the reserves and maintained continuous contact with their students. A token of appreciation was also awarded to the families of the educators who were killed in the war and to the educators who were taken captive and later released, Liat Atsili and Ada Shagai.

With a Laptop and a Suitcase in the Car

Among the recipients of the certificates of excellence for their immense contribution to the war effort is Ravit Rosenthal. The Subaru car of the principal of the regional school "Har V'Gai" in Kibbutz Dafna in the north became her office. From there, she manages the daily schedule of the students during her long journeys from her kibbutz, Kfar Szold, under attack, to her brother in central Israel and back to the Galilee, and with jumps to the learning centres where the evacuated children were placed. With a laptop and a suitcase in the car, Rosenthal takes care of about 1,200 students, most of whom were placed in five learning centres in the north, while others moved with their families to settlements across the country.

"We moved to alternative learning places until we settled in five centres, including the Technological

“With a laptop and a suitcase in the car, Rosenthal takes care of about 1,200 students...”

College in Hatzor, elementary schools in Rosh Pina and Yesod Hamaala, and the community centre in Poria," she says. "It's crazy logistics, but we make sure to hold joint events for all students to keep in touch. The feelings are not simple, the situation is complex, but the teachers understand that this is the beautiful hour of education, that we have a role and responsibility. Our soldiers guard the country, we guard the students."

Sleepless Nights

On the morning of October 7, while packing suitcases in preparation for returning from a trip to Montenegro, Rami Zevili, who at that time was managing the junior high school at "Nofei Habsor," was horrified to receive a WhatsApp message from one of the teachers: "Terrorists are roaming my house, I have terrorists in my house, I am trembling with fear in the safe room." Zevili, shocked, asked the teacher if she was sure they were terrorists. Only when the plane landed in Israel, he was horrified by the magnitude of the national and personal disaster: 11 students and three educational staff members were murdered. Two teachers, Liat Atsili and Ada Shagai, were kidnapped and have since been released.

"When I heard that our students and teachers were murdered and teachers kidnapped, it was very hard," says Zevili, who was appointed to

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manage the high school as well. "I still can't digest that the children and teachers who were murdered will no longer be with us. Their pictures accompany me, I remember their laughter, their joy of life."

More than a thousand students from the schools in the surrounding kibbutzim were evacuated to hotels and over the following weeks dispersed to learning outposts in the Arava, the Dead Sea, Eilat, and the Negev Highlands. "It's a difficult process," says Zevili, "but we keep in touch with the students and hold joint activities."

"I salute the teachers and take my hat off to them. We cling to routine to gain resilience. It's very important for the students as well," he adds. "The heart aches, the mind is busy, and there is no sleep at night. Some teachers receive psychological treatment. If we fall apart, others will fall apart too."

"My Mission is to Calm and Strengthen"

Rabbi Yitzhak Tzadok, a teacher and a fighter in a special rescue unit in the Northern Command, educates 10th grade at the "Amit" high school yeshiva in Safed. Since October 7, he has been serving in the reserves. He was called up on Simchat Torah and returned to school only after two months. After a month of teaching, he was called up for another month of service in Judea and Samaria. Now he has returned to training with the unit, which deals with rescuing victims from enemy territory.

Tzadok, born in Kiryat Shmona, whose parents were evacuated from their home, kept in touch with his students through WhatsApp and Zoom during his months of service. "I understood that my most important mission was to gather the students, strengthen, and embrace them from afar," he says, "and to provide perspective on the harsh reality we live in."

When he took short breaks from the unit, he visited the classroom. "It was important for me to look each student in the eye, to see that he is okay. In my eyes, this is the most significant lesson in education," he adds. "In the early days of the war, the students were very afraid of an invasion from the northern border. I believed my role was to

“It was important for me to look each student in the eye, to see that he is okay...”

calm and strengthen the spirit. I begged them to minimise screen time, especially on Telegram, where they are exposed to weakening images."

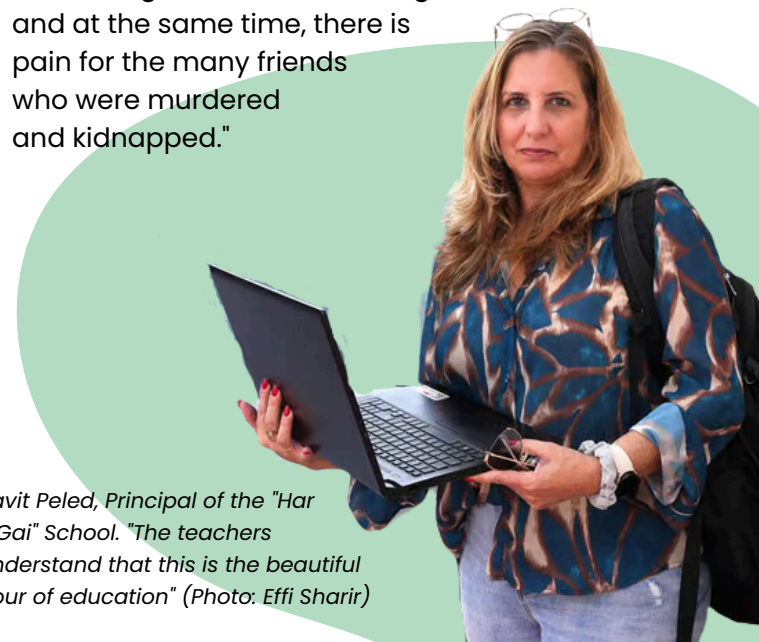
Pain and More Pain

Ada Shagai, 75, a member of Kibbutz Nir Oz, will receive an appreciation award today. On October 7, Shagai was kidnapped from her home by Hamas terrorists, and since then, she has been released. The reasons for her selection state that "Ada is an inspiring and admirable figure in the education system. In captivity, she used her knowledge of Arabic and managed to survive under harsh conditions. Since her release, she has been engaged in the rehabilitation of the Nir Oz community and in activities to return the hostages."

Shagai retired at the age of 70 after 40 years of teaching Arabic, language, and expression at "Maale Habsor" and "Nofei Habsor" high schools. At one point, one of the terrorists guarding her asked her to teach him Hebrew words.

"After we were released, I learned about the many murdered, including my students over the years," she said. Regarding receiving the appreciation award, she said: "I don't think I'm special.

The feeling is mixed, it's exciting, and at the same time, there is pain for the many friends who were murdered and kidnapped."



Ravit Peled, Principal of the "Har V'Gai" School. "The teachers understand that this is the beautiful hour of education" (Photo: Effi Sharir)

CURRENT EVENTS IN ISRAEL

The Israel-Hamas war has raged on, coming close to entering its ninth month, whilst escalations continue to threaten to erupt in northern Israel.

Here is what we know as of June 5th, 2024:

- In an incredible operation, Israeli forces rescued 4 hostages held by Hamas in Gaza: Noa Argamani, Shlomi Ziv, Andrey Kozlov and Almog Meir. Commander Arnon Zamora fell during the rescue mission, and it has been named "Operation Arnon" in honour of his heroism.
- The IDF has sent flyers, texts and radio messages to get the residents of Rafah to move to the expanded humanitarian area.
- In the northern Gaza Strip, the IDF eliminated the terrorist Ahmed Ali, the Commander of Hamas' Naval Division in Gaza City.
- In the southern Gaza Strip, in Eastern Rafah, forces of the 162nd Division are continuing to operate against terror targets and the smuggling of weapons in the eastern Rafah area. This activity supports the intelligence that Hamas has been using the Rafah crossing for terrorism.
- In northern Gaza, the IDF had been fighting to prevent Hamas regrouping and rebuilding themselves.
- In the central Gaza Strip, troops from the 99th Division have been conducting a wide-scale operation in the Zeitoun area. Troops have located dozens of weapons in a school in the area.
- The bodies of Israeli hostages have been recovered from Gaza. They are those of Hanan Yablonka, Michel Nisenbaum, Dolev Yehud and Orion Hernandez.
- The families of Nadav Popplewell, Yoram Metzger, Amiram Cooper and Haim Perry were informed that they are "no longer alive" and that Hamas has their remains.
- The IDF have said that 1,858 aid trucks have entered Gaza over the past week.
- The IDF has been working constantly to minimise civilian casualties in Gaza despite Hamas' best efforts to prevent this. Over 36,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since October 7th.
- Over 600 IDF soldiers have been killed since the outbreak of the war on October 7th.

On the northern border of Israel, clashes with Hezbollah continue:

- In recent days the IDF has eliminated 9 Hezbollah terrorists in southern Lebanon and struck approximately 115 Hezbollah targets in the area of southern Lebanon.
- After IAF strikes in southern Lebanon, launches from Hezbollah resulted in a fire near Kiryat Shmona and the damage of several spots in the city.
- An armed UAV exploded in the Metula area, resulting in one soldier being seriously wounded and two additional soldiers sustaining minor injuries.
- The situation in the north is getting worse everyday whilst thousands of Israelis are still unable to return to their homes.



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How much responsibility should Israel have in the rebuilding of Gaza?

Throughout this war, the IDF has had to destroy much of Hamas' infrastructure which has been used in the heart of civilians areas of Gaza.

There have been discussions that following the war, there will be an effort to rebuild much of Gaza, so does Israel have a duty to invest in this following a just war that was launched against them by Hamas?

As a result of Hamas' atrocities on October 7th Israel was forced into a war. The IDF and IAF have targeted terrorist cells and weapons throughout the Gaza Strip for several months. Unfortunately, in violation of international law, Hamas has used civilian infrastructure for their terror activity and have used the people of Gaza as human shields. Despite, the IDF's huge efforts to minimise civilian casualties, innocent people have died, and large parts of Gaza have been destroyed. It can be argued that Israel should bear some of the responsibility of rebuilding Gaza. It will cost billions to rebuild the Gaza Strip and Palestinian civilians have lost family members, homes and their livelihoods as a result of Hamas' barbarism. Someone will have to pay the bill to get Gaza up and running again. There will be many people who think that Israel should be the one who bears the bill as the Israelis have been bombing Gaza continuously for many months.

On the other hand, the idea of Israel having to pay billions to rebuild Gaza after the war Hamas forced upon them would seem ridiculous to most Israelis. Despite Hamas imposing this war on Israel after their atrocities, they will not pay for the damage done to Gaza and Israel. The war Israel has faced during these months has also taken its toll on Israel's economy. Israel has waged a war against Hamas for its survival and to defeat terrorism on its border once and for all. Although, innocent civilians in Gaza have suffered, Hamas is responsible, and it should not have to be Israel who bears all the responsibility for rebuilding Gaza.



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