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SEPTEMBER 2025

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MAGAZINE FOR EDUCATORS**



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Editor-in-Chief – Yehuda Fink

Editor – Eva James

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This Year, Resilience is the Key

As we begin a new year, our community faces ongoing challenges from rising antisemitism and anti-Israel hatred in the United Kingdom. **The reality is clear: anti-Israel hatred and antisemitism are not separate. They are two faces of the same hostility.** Nowhere is this more evident than on university campuses, where Jewish and Zionist students are often singled out, isolated and intimidated for their beliefs.

At StandWithUs UK, we are proud to stand alongside our community. We support school pupils, teachers and university students who are determined to live openly and proudly as Jews and Zionists. We know that when institutions allow antisemitism and anti-Israel hatred to go unchecked, it creates an unsafe environment for young people.

We will continue to hold those institutions to account and to insist on a culture of responsibility and respect.

Resilience is going to be the key this year. Resilience in the face of hostility. Resilience in standing tall with pride in who we are. Resilience in teaching the truth about Israel and the Jewish people. **Zionist is not a dirty word.** It is a source of strength, identity and connection. Zionism is the movement for Jewish self-determination in our historic homeland, and it should be embraced with confidence and pride.

We are inspired every day by the courage and leadership of the younger generation. From pupils in schools to students on campuses, they are showing us that fear will not define them. Their resilience and commitment to truth are a reminder to all of us that **the future is in good hands.**

At the same time, we must remember that resilience does not mean standing alone. Parents and teachers, now is not the time to be afraid. **Now is the time to empower and encourage.** Our young people need to know that their families and educators are behind them, giving them the confidence to speak proudly about their identity and beliefs.

This year, as challenges continue, let us strengthen our collective resolve. Let us invest in resilience, in truth and in pride. Together, we can build a community that not only endures but flourishes.

Wishing you a *Shana Tova* - A Happy New Year - and may it be so for our community and for Israel.



*Yehuda Fink, SWU UK Managing Director
and Editor-in-Chief of TeachWithUs*

My Experience: StartUp

by StartUp 2025 Graduates

'When I applied for StartUp, I didn't know exactly what I was applying for, but I was looking forward to an opportunity to make friends and memories. Through Start Up I did just that and so much more. I really enjoyed getting to know new people and putting our ideas together to create a successful project. The best bit was seeing all the ideas and parts piece together perfectly. I got to look at Israel in a refreshing light in contrast to all the negativity we hear about it these days. I feel like I gained great team building skills and better knowledge about Israel especially when doing research to make our project successful. I am so grateful for the experience I had at StartUp.'

Jessi Ross – StartUp Graduate

'I loved being part of StartUp and the experience has been truly transformative. I made lasting friendships and was continually supported by the amazing staff at StandWithUs, whose dedication and encouragement made a real difference. Through the programme I gained valuable knowledge, strengthened my public speaking skills, and built greater confidence in leading and inspiring a group. It has been an experience that will stay with me and one that I would highly recommend to others.'

Izzy Lyons – StartUp Graduate

'I thoroughly enjoyed taking part in StartUp, where I not only made new friends but also gained a deeper understanding of Israel's history, innovation, and resilience. My admiration for Israel has grown even stronger, and I feel proud of its achievements as a start-up nation despite the decades of challenges and wars it has faced from its neighbours. Being part of this programme has strengthened my desire to contribute to Israel's future and to remain engaged in its story. I am truly grateful for this opportunity and would wholeheartedly recommend Start Up to anyone looking for a meaningful and inspiring experience.'

Rachel Sylvester – StartUp Graduate

'StartUp was an amazing experience from start to finish and has had a real impact on me both personally and professionally. When I think back to my first interview, I can clearly see how much I have grown since then. I now work far better within a team, feel more confident in my abilities, and have developed important leadership skills. Alongside this, I have deepened my knowledge and connection to Israel, gaining new insights into its history, society, and resilience.. I am truly grateful to StandWithUs for giving me this opportunity.'

Maya Levene – StartUp Graduate







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Beyond the Battlefield: Israel's Struggle and the Role of Education



The past year has been one of the most challenging in Israel's history. The war in Gaza has dominated headlines, but Israel has also faced attacks and threats from Iran and its proxies in Yemen. Each front has revealed not only the dangers Israel faces but also its resilience, achievements, and determination to defend its people.

The campaign in Gaza has now stretched close to two years. Israel's aim has been to dismantle Hamas's military capabilities and ensure that the horrific attacks of 7 October can never be repeated. The fighting has been complex and costly. Urban warfare in a densely populated strip presents immense challenges. It is important to recognise the contrast between this prolonged effort in Gaza and Israel's operation in Iran earlier this year, which lasted just twelve days. That difference highlights how cautious and deliberate Israel is being in Gaza. While some voices accuse Israel of indiscriminate action, the length of the campaign shows the opposite. Israel is taking great care, even as it faces false accusations of genocide, to act precisely against Hamas while limiting civilian casualties.

Israel's achievements should not be overlooked. In Gaza, many of Hamas's senior commanders have been removed and its network of tunnels has been heavily damaged. In Iran, Israel demonstrated that even a powerful regime is vulnerable to its intelligence and operational reach, as it dismantled much of its armoury and nuclear capabilities in just 12 days. In Yemen, Israel has confronted Houthi attacks on shipping lanes, reminding the world that its security concerns extend far beyond its immediate borders. Each of these successes reinforces Israel's ability to defend its citizens while balancing military necessity with moral responsibility.

Looking forward, we hope that the war will soon give way to peace and that the hostages will be returned home safely. This is not only Israel's concern but a humanitarian imperative for all. When that day comes, the region will face questions about how to rebuild trust, provide education, and prevent future violence.

For educators, this moment is also an opportunity. The war has raised difficult debates about morality in warfare, international law, and the responsibilities of democratic states. Teachers can guide students to explore these questions critically and with empathy. Education can play a vital role in shaping a generation that seeks understanding rather than division. Israel's struggle is not only military, it is also about values.

The future will depend on how well we teach those values alongside the history unfolding before us.



Eva James, Education Manager at StandWithUs UK and Editor of TeachWithUs (evaj@standwithus.com)

Why Royal Holloway Needs an Israel Society

by Evaldas Barstys, StandWithUs UK Emerson Fellow 2026

Establishing an Israel Society at Royal Holloway has been anything but simple. The aim was straightforward: to create a space where students could engage with Israel openly and without fear. Yet the process has revealed how difficult—and sometimes unsafe—it has become to hold pro-Israel views on campus. Universities should be places where ideas are exchanged and debate encouraged. Instead, dissent from dominant pro-Palestine activism is too often met with hostility.

That hostility was clear from the start. Nearly 900 students signed a petition to block our ratification, while a campaign spread false claims about us. Some members were even harassed for speaking out. I share this not for sympathy, but to highlight why an Israel Society is needed. Once ratified, it will give students who support Israel—or simply want to learn about it without prejudice—a genuine community.

Our main goal is education. Israel is too often reduced to headlines and slogans, stripped of nuance. The society will create space for discussion and for celebrating Israel's culture, food, and music. This should not be controversial. At its core, it is about community: a place for Jewish and Zionist students, as well as non-Jewish students, to explore Israel in a balanced and welcoming environment. Royal

Holloway already has a Jewish Society, but there is value in a group that focuses directly on Israel. Judaism and Israel are deeply connected, and that link deserves to be embraced with pride.

For many, this may be their only chance to encounter Israel beyond the headlines. There is also the question of legacy. I will soon graduate and may not see the society flourish, but planting the seed matters. Even modest beginnings—organising events, building friendships, showing resilience in the face of hostility—lay the foundation for the future.

Other universities should follow suit. Each new Israel Society chips away at the culture of fear and strengthens our community nationwide. It shows that Jewish and pro-Israel students are defined not by the hostility they face, but by resilience and positivity.

The process has revealed how difficult—and sometimes unsafe—it has become to hold pro-Israel views on campus.

Ultimately, this is about more than forming another student group. It is about inclusion, fairness, and representation. Above all, it is about building a community that will endure. That is worth standing for—even when the odds feel stacked against us.

As I begin my role as a StandWithUs UK Emerson Fellow this year, I look forward to strengthening this mission and helping to create meaningful, positive change for students.



INTRODUCING THE EMERSON FELLOWSHIP CLASS OF 2026

Amy Maurer – University of Leeds
Anthony Bowe – Dublin City University
Avital Cohen – LSE
Brocha Jacobs – University of Birmingham
Cara Fitzpatrick – Queen's University, Belfast
Daniela Maruani – UCL
Evaldas Barstys – Royal Holloway
Ezra Aaron – University of Birmingham
Inbar Nehemia – University of Westminster
James Rogers – University of Bristol
Joshua Sinai-Sinelnikoff – Queen Mary University
Leah Welch – University of Nottingham
Mark Ben Mikhelson – UCL
Max Lanzkron – University of Leeds
Miles Bloom – University of York
Nikita Vorobyoff – City, St. George's
Reuben Messik – University of Manchester
Sienna Faye Phillip – Royal Holloway
Sofia Hakimian – King's College London
Uriah Shalom – University of Birmingham
Yahel Halevi – Glasgow School of Art
Yosef Hurst – University of Leeds



200% Surge in Distress Calls: War with Iran Shakes the Israeli Psyche

This article was written by Ilana Stutland and published in Hebrew on Maariv, 25th June 2025

Mental health organisations, already stretched since 7 October, have been inundated with calls since the campaign against Iran began. Managers describe the nature of these calls to their helplines—the questions, the fears—and how they try to calm those seeking help.

“Since the attack on Iran began, we’ve received around ten thousand distress calls—a 200% increase compared to the same period before the escalation,” says Dr Shiri Daniels, National Professional Director of the ERAN Association – Mental First Aid. “We immediately reinforced the lines with volunteers from Israel, as well as from the United States and Australia, to ensure a continuous response day and night.”

She adds that calls also come from people whose homes or neighbourhoods have been damaged by rocket fire, and from reservists who have been called up and speak about the pressure of returning to the front. “We also get calls from Israelis stranded abroad, as well as from their family members who feel powerless,” Daniels says. “The overall feeling is one of panic, insecurity and uncertainty—not knowing what this means or when it will end. We are facing a multi-front war, there are still hostages, and soldiers are still fighting in Gaza. It’s a deep sense of helplessness and lack of control. Holding on to hope is proving very difficult.”

‘Mostly, We Listen’

Gili Hagai, a clinical social worker and Director of the Helplines at the NATAL Association—which supports victims of war- and terror-related trauma—also reports a significant rise in anxiety among the public.



(Photo: Eran Association)

Since the beginning of the operation, our helplines have received 2,385 calls—a 200% increase on the week before,” she says. “On the first day alone, we received about 300 calls, which is enormous. The increased sirens and direct hits on homes have led to many calls characterised by anxiety and helplessness. People want someone to be with them, to listen, to reassure them. Many callers are people living alone who feel anxious, or those with inadequate protection in their homes and who cannot easily evacuate—for example, people with disabilities.”

We also get calls from Israelis stranded abroad, as well as from their family members who feel powerless.

Some even call during the sirens, from within protected rooms, in deep distress. “Sometimes they can barely speak from fear; other times, they speak at great speed.

Some adults say they haven't left their shelter for days, turning it into a place where they eat, sleep and live."

Hagai recounts: "A survivor of the 7 October massacre told us, 'Since the attack on Iran began, I've been triggered- I don't leave the shelter, I'm afraid of dying.' A mother of three whose husband is serving in the reserves asked, 'What should I do if there's a direct hit on our home?' One of the most distressing calls I heard was from a man in a village where the shelter can't hold everyone- women and babies go in first, and some men are left outside. He was extremely anxious. Others call to describe the explosions, the shaking of their homes."

Advice for Callers

Daniels says the focus is less on giving advice and more on listening: "People need to vent-to talk about their feelings and fears. Some say, 'I've always managed, but now I can't cope with the children and the house.' Many are unable to sleep, waiting for the next siren. We listen, practise calming techniques, identify support networks, and provide information about additional resources. Just talking can be soothing. Human connection builds resilience-even in a shelter, we suggest making eye contact, smiling at others."



(Photo: Ingame)

Hagai points out the resilience she sees: "People call for help, but after short calming conversations, they return to functioning. We help them reduce their anxiety-say, from 8 out of 10 to 4-so they can resume daily life."

One of the most distressing calls I heard was from a man in a village where the shelter can't hold everyone-women and babies go in first, and some men are left outside.

Processing the Trauma

Moshe Notovitz, a clinical social worker and Director of the Support and Emergency Lines at the Ezer Mizion charity, says the organisation-though ultra-Orthodox-serves the entire population. "Since the Meron disaster, we've had an emergency mental health line staffed by trained professionals."

On 13 June, we realised we were entering a complex situation. We kept the line open even on Shabbat, because it was a matter of saving lives-and indeed, calls came in."

At first, questions were mainly informational-for example, relaying Home Front Command instructions. "Anxiety often comes from not knowing what to do. Once rocket fire began, fear took centre stage. "A mother called at night saying a missile had landed nearby, her two-year-old was crying, and she asked how to calm her. We realised we first needed to calm her, so she could then calm her child."

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Yonatan Haber

IDF Reservist,
Deployed to Kfar Aza

StandWithUs UK will be commemorating the anniversary of the October 7th massacre by bringing four inspiring figures to tell their accounts of that fateful day. This delegation will be meeting thousands of people of all ages across the UK throughout the week in pre-scheduled events. Follow our social media accounts for highlights of what will be a powerful week for the community.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT
OUR ACTIVITIES AND
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