

Larry Lockshin's remarks at October 7 memorial in Adelaide

I visited Israel with the UPJ Mission in May 2024. This was my first trip to Israel in many years and at first it seemed like a normal time. Trains, buses, and taxis were operating and crowded. But upon entering our hotel in Jerusalem, the differences from my previous visits began to sink in. Our large hotel was not very crowded with tourists, but there were many Israeli families with children and even their dogs in the lounges, in the restaurant and in the lobby. They were people displaced from the south. They and their children were living, eating, and playing in a hotel rather than in their homes. They and so many others are still displaced from their homes.

Our official visits to the Foreign Ministry and the Australian Ambassador's residence were important but did not really affect me emotionally. The day spent in the south visiting the Nova site, K'far Aza (where I volunteered in 1971), and Sderot were much more emotional, as we met soldiers and survivors from that terrible day a year ago.

Here is a poem written by Caryn Granek, a member of our mission, after that visit to the south.

I'm fighting to breathe
To contain my anger
Anger at evil
Anger at ignorance
Anger at intolerance
Anger at the Judgements by experts
I'm fighting not to cry
I know it's ok to cry
But if I do a dam will burst
The bewildering diaspora experience
Barely contained
Here in my other home on the other side of the world
I am looking through a smashed windscreen
Held together in fragile connections
I see a broken world
Each shard a microcosm of life.
Tiny views - a young soldier, a volunteer, a rabbi, a woman wrapped in her tallit, a man in a black hat and coat.
There is an old woman carrying her heavy shopping bags. A young mother pushing a baby in a pram. Shards of a normal life in the midst of madness.
There are no words..... only tearsand hope

We saw so much evidence of resilience during our visit: The Arab – Jewish Cultural Centre in Haifa, the rehabilitation unit at Sheba Hospital where we met a Druse soldier recuperating from saving Christians worshipping on Boxing Day in the north, Ronen Koehler founder of Brothers and Sisters in Arms, Women of the Wall still fighting to bring a Torah to the wall every Rosh Chodesh, Lee Siegel, brother of Keith Seigel, still a hostage, and Aviva Siegel, Keith's wife who was released in one of the early hostage releases.

But that was May and now it is a year since October 7, 2023, and that resilience is wearing thin.

Is there hope? Are there any positives we can use to build hope?

It has been said many times that the pogrom of October 7 served to bring Jews together in different ways. Over 30,000 Jews have made Aliyah since October 7. This is more than double the number in the years before. Many of those were feeling increased antisemitism in their home countries. Others decided now was the time to become one with Israel, rather than sit at home.

Another reason to hope is the increased link between Israelis and the Diaspora. You don't have to go too far back in time to hear prominent Israelis decrying the Diaspora as second-class Jews, unwilling to make Aliyah and stand directly with Israel's Jews.

When I was in Israel in May, almost every Israeli I met thanked us for being there and supporting them. Israelis have also seen the violent protests, the campus encampments, the weak response to antisemitism from governments in the west and now recognise that Diaspora Jews are also under threat. We are all Jews together. Donations from the Diaspora increased markedly but even more, so did direct help in the form of volunteering, buying and packing needed material, and hosting families of the hostages outside Israel for some respite.

Here in Adelaide, we have had people, who knew they had Jewish ancestry but remained silent and unaffiliated, start attending Jewish events. There were more than double the number of people at the anniversary of October 7 than there were at the original memorial in 2023.

We are a community.

We must stick together. Our governments have been weak at fighting antisemitism. As has happened historically, words and actions that would never be tolerated against other ethnic groups are allowed to continue against us. Threats and overt actions are tolerated in the name of multiculturalism.

So, we must continue to support each other, we must continue to make our governments understand, and continue to thank those who stood up and continue to stand with us. We must

maintain our local Jewish communities. You came today to be with others because it helps us to be together. Continue to come to events. Continue to join hands and stand up for ourselves.

Quoting from a Rosh Hashana card I received from a colleague in Israel,

Let the year end and its curses; let the year begin and its blessing.