

ZF CONNECT

THE LEADING ISRAEL ADVOCACY MAGAZINE IN THE UK | ISSUE NO. 8 | SEPTEMBER 2019



**FROM
ANTISEMITE
TO ZIONIST:**
MY JOURNEY
VIA THE ZF

BA
OVER 70 YEARS
OF SERVING ISRAEL

AWARDING
GOLDEN GOLDAS

HEBREW, HUMUS
AND THE HOLY LAND

COVER ARTICLE
**15 SECONDS:
SDEROT'S REALITY**

PLEASE SUPPORT US

The ZF organises events and activities throughout the year to celebrate Israel & challenge her opponents - **but we can't do it without your support.**

Below is just a small selection of what we fund.



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Organising rallies whenever mass demonstrations of support for Israel are needed, such as during times of war
Yearly cost £34,757



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The UK's only Lobby of Parliament for Israel, engaging with over 150 MPs plus letter writing campaigns throughout the year
Yearly cost £95,122

Welcome to ZF Connect Magazine

Friends,

We take great pleasure in presenting you with the latest edition of the ZF Connect Magazine.



Our vision in planning the content of this magazine was to create a high-quality publication which would be relevant, challenging, thought-provoking, and inclusive of diverse ranges of voices and perspectives.

This year we have chosen a specific project in Sderot for our Rosh Hashanah appeal. Having taken an advocacy group to meet with Mayor Alon Davidi in 2018, we know first-hand just how vital a new and improved Resilience Centre is for the people of Sderot whose lives continue to be threatened on an almost daily basis from Gaza and who, quite literally, have only just 15 seconds to run for their lives. We do hope that you will agree that this is a very worthwhile cause and that you are able to help us to donate to their fund.

We would like to take this opportunity of thanking our Chairman Paul Charney for his ongoing support and involvement which the team appreciates sincerely.

We have some exciting events coming up and if you would like to be kept up to date then please do sign up to our weekly newsletter by emailing office@zionist.org.uk

Wishing you and your families a happy and healthy New Year!

Dalia Hajoiff, Leanne Sassi and Steve Winston

ZF Team

CONNECT

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The ZF also has to cover the administrative costs that enable us to do all this
To support the ZF in our work, please visit www.zionist.org.uk or call 020 8202 0202

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Dear reader,

Welcome to the Rosh Hashanah – Jewish New Year – edition of the ZF Connect magazine. Reflecting over the past year with the ZF, we recall how the commander of the IDF's Operation Good Neighbour, Lt. Col. (res.) Eyal Dror, addressed our Israel trip delegation overlooking the Syrian border from the foot of Mount Bental on the Golan Heights. That was the beginning of an ongoing relationship with the commander, who was one of our honoured guests at this year's ZF dinner, followed by a speaking tour in Ireland and the UK. He now travels the world telling the amazing story of Operation Good Neighbour, a story featured in this edition of Connect.

'This past year has seen a huge number of internationally renowned artists and performers flocking to Israel, including Madonna who was at this year's Israel-hosted Eurovision, and Jennifer Lopez who posted how much she loved Israel and would be coming back again. Glancing at other events over this past year, we had a national tour of 'Hebrew, Humus and the Holy Land' with Gil Hovav, a renowned Israeli culinary personality and great grandson of Eliezer ben Yehuda, who revived Hebrew as a spoken language. We shine a spotlight on Israeli artist Amit Shimoni whose 'Hipstory' series contains must-have pieces of art for the discerning Zionist.

2019 is also the 120th anniversary of the Zionist Federation which was formed in 1899 and you can read more about this in the article entitled '120 years of British Zionism'. Looking ahead, we have included 'Save the Dates' for our future events and I also take this opportunity to mention how the ZF are preparing to commemorate the centenary of the San Remo Conference in April 2020. It was the San Remo Resolution which incorporated the Balfour Declaration of 1917, marking the beginning of its international and legal ratification.

So as the year 5779 draws to a close and 5780 begins, I wish you all a Shana Tova, a happy and healthy New Year, and I look forward to continuing to work closely with the ZF team to educate, empower and engage for Israel.

Paul Charney
ZF Chairman



THE PRESIDENT

Jerusalem, September 16, 2019

Dear friends,

As we approach Rosh Hashana I send the Zionist Federation of the United Kingdom and Ireland warmest greetings from Jerusalem.

שלום מירושלים!

Another year has passed and a new year starts. In our prayers, we say 'let the new year and its blessings begin.' And our children sing 'Let the new year that is beginning today be better and different'. After a difficult year for the safety of Jewish communities and relations between Israel and the Jewish world. Let the new year be better and different.

Over the last year I have been honored to meet many members of the Anglo-Jewish community and from across the Jewish world. Your commitment to the future of the Jewish people and to the State of Israel is inspiring.

Despite the differences and the disagreements between us, we must take care to protect our relations and ensure they are strong and resilient. I believe our bonds are stronger than any difference.

We know that Israel faces many security challenges. We take care that the IDF is strong and the strong IDF takes care of us.

Israel has achieved amazing things this year. We got to the moon, even if the landing was not entirely successful. We hosted the Eurovision, we printed an artificial heart and we have a Judo world champion.

Many of those achievements are shared with you. I want to thank you for your partnership and for standing with the people and the State of Israel. Israel was and will remain your home, the home of all Jewish people.

Happy New Year!

שנה טובה ומבורכת

Reuven (Ruvi) Rivlin

The Ambassador's Office
Embassy of Israel
London



לשכת השגריר
שגרירות ישראל
לונדון

Message from HE Mark Regev, Ambassador of Israel to the Court of St James's

As we celebrate Rosh Hashanah and welcome in the New Year, I send my very warmest wishes to all the supporters, staff and friends of the Zionist Federation.

More than a century after Arthur James Balfour wrote to Lord Rothschild and the Zionist Federation pledging British Government support for a Jewish national home in the Land of Israel, and 71 years after the Jewish state was established, there is much we can be proud of. In a region plagued by brutality and bloodshed, we have built a democracy that stands out as a champion of freedom, tolerance and the rule of law. Any Jew may return to our homeland, and live in liberty and security.

We have also built a strong relationship with the United Kingdom. Our defence and counterterrorism cooperation is actively saving British and Israeli lives, with our militaries holding numerous joint exercises and exchanges in the past year alone. Israel-UK trade is booming, having reached a record £8.6bn high in 2018, and is set to grow further with the trade agreement we signed mere months ago. This will no doubt create still more jobs and prosperity for Israelis and Britons alike.

You know better than most that challenges remain. The Islamic Republic, together with its proxies, is not just a threat to Israel and the Middle East, but Europe too, as the recent exposure of its numerous terror plots proved. Tehran's brutal regime has developed long-range missiles that put European capitals in its reach, and is still advancing its nuclear ambitions. Despite this, until recently, its allies freely flew Hezbollah flags on the streets of London before the British Government correctly took robust action.

That is why the Zionist Federation's work and mission is so important. From playing a crucial part in our people's journey from stateless to sovereignty a century ago, to reminding others of the overwhelmingly strong moral, economic and political case for Israel and the Israel-UK partnership, you really are on the frontline, fighting for the truth and bringing our democracies even closer together. Thank you for all the good you continue to do, and I wish you and your families a *Shanah Tovah*.

Mark Regev
Ambassador of Israel to the Court of St James's

2 Palace Green, London, W8 4QB



שנה טובה

Shana Tova

to all our supporters



15 SECONDS: SDEROT'S REALITY

**SIRENS PIERCE THE AIR.
FEAR GRIPS LIKE A VICE.
15 SECONDS IS ALL THEY HAVE.
15 SECONDS TO RUN TO SAFETY.**

**IMAGINE HAVING JUST 15
SECONDS TO RUN FOR YOUR LIFE.**

Over the last 12 years, Hamas and other terrorist organisations operating in the Gaza Strip have fired thousands of rockets and weapons at Israel and its civilians, with increasing range and frequency. Having just 15 seconds to run for your life is hard to comprehend for most of us but, for the residents of Sderot, a small city in the Western Negev close to the Gaza border, this is the norm. Having just 15 seconds to run for their lives is their reality.

This reality affects Sderot's residents' lives in all sorts of ways. Seat belts are often left unfastened to allow for a quick escape from vehicles, and residents travel to and from work, school, or shopping centres along



Sderot residence running to the bomb shelters for safety

routes offering protection in the form of blast walls and shelters. The visual landscape of Sderot is shaped by more than 200 bomb shelters scattered around the city. Many buildings, including kindergartens and schools, feature metal windows and walls and roofs made from reinforced concrete. Areas from playgrounds to roadside objects can function as shelters.

Currently home to 28,000 people, Sderot enjoyed almost 3.5 years of relative quiet, thanks to the IDF's Operation Protective Edge in 2014. But with the start of the weekly so-called 'Great March of Return' demonstrations along the border fence between Gaza and Israel in March of 2018, the security situation deteriorated, and over the past year and a half there have been 11 rounds of intensive fighting, including hundreds of missiles falling on Sderot, as well as incendiary balloons and kites which to date have burnt thousands of acres of fields, forests and even national parks.

Just last month, on Sunday 25th August, Sderot was host to a music festival. Thousands of residents and visitors flocked to one of its parks with the sole aim of enjoying themselves. Hamas decided that this would be an opportune time to launch missiles at Sderot. Three missiles were fired. Two were intercepted by an Iron Dome system very close to the area where the event took place, and a third missile landed at the other side the city. Miraculously there were no physical injuries. The festival could have ended in a major disaster if the missiles had fallen at the stadium where the festival took place and if the residents had not known how to behave in such a situation. Thankfully, no physical injuries were reported. But... traumatic stress victims are often silent; we cannot see



The aftermath at a Sderot residence hit by rocket fire



A computer-generated image of Sderot's new Trauma Resilience Centre

their injuries, but emotionally they are injured in a way that is extremely difficult to deal with.

As a result of this multitude of terrifying incidents, the tension among the residents rises, as do their stress levels. Symptoms of trauma intensify and cause sleep difficulties. Children increasingly experience bedwetting, clinging to parents, fears, night-time nightmares, psychosomatic symptoms (stomach-aches, headaches, rashes), and refusal to leave the shelter/home, etc. It is estimated that a whopping 80% of Sderot's children suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

A Resilience Centre was established in Sderot in the wake of a government decision in 2008 to help the residents of Sderot and the surrounding towns and communities in coping with the security situation and



Mayor Alon Davidi pictured with a child using Pet Therapy to help with her recovery

its implications. The Resilience Centre presently treats more than 1,000 children, adolescents and adults every year in individual therapy treatments and reaches thousands of residents through activities aimed at strengthening community resilience. The centre provides 40,000 hours of treatment provided by a professional team of over 20 therapists, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and emotional therapists in just 11 treatment rooms which are fully

booked from 8:00 a.m. until 9.00 p.m. every day. With its resources already stretched, the Centre also operates in a space that is unsuitable for its wide range of activities and, more importantly, it is not protected against rocket fire and cannot provide the most basic need for a "safe space" for patients and trauma victims in times of emergency. As such, there is a real and urgent need to promote the construction of a larger and more spacious protected structure, so that it can

continue to provide an immediate, professional solution for the residents of Sderot. As it stands, the Centre has received hundreds of requests for resilience therapy for children who are in need of treatments but are unable to provide a response due to lack of space and treatment rooms.

Enter Alon Davidi, Mayor of Sderot since 2013. He and his wife Nurit arrived in Sderot about 22 years ago as a young couple, part of a nucleus of teachers and educators who came to strengthen and reinforce the city and its inhabitants. About a year ago, Davidi's municipality decided to allocate an appropriate protected area for the construction of a new Trauma Resilience Centre complex that will strengthen resilience and improve Sderot's population's ability to cope with the security situation.



The Mayor with Sderot school children

“It is estimated that a whopping 80% of Sderot’s children suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).”

There will be four treatment centres in the complex: a centre for individual therapy; a centre for family therapy; a conference building dealing with research and study in the field of resilience. This building will serve as a magnet for professionals in Israel and abroad who will come to learn from the Sderot's experience in preparing, coping and providing solutions for a population under constant threat; the fourth centre will be an animal-assisted therapy centre which is an important part of the

municipality's therapy program for children and youth.

The architectural design and plans for the Centre have been drawn up and permits have been granted. Efforts are now underway to raise funds so that, whilst the 15-second reality for Sderot is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, the new Trauma Resilience Centre can become a reality and bring much needed improved treatment and care for the people of Sderot.

And so, this year, the ZF are both excited and honoured to use our annual Rosh Hashanah appeal to raise much-needed funds for this much-needed new Trauma Resilience Centre.

So as we enter the Jewish new year 5780, spare a thought for the men, the women and the

children of Sderot – the children who suffer unprecedented levels of PTSD – and dig as deep as possible into your pockets so that together, we can help to create a new and more positive reality for them, one that will bring smiles for Sderot, despite the 15-second reality which they live daily.

Please visit: www.zionist.org.uk/appeal to donate online or call the office on 020 8202 0202 to donate over the phone.

REMEMBER, TOGETHER WE CAN DO THIS - TOGETHER WE CAN HELP SDEROT TO HELP ITS PEOPLE COPE WITH THEIR 15 SECOND REALITY.

ARTICLE BY STEVE WINSTON

'SMILES FOR SDEROT' APPEAL



Sirens pierce the air. Fear grips like a vice. 15 seconds is all they have. 15 seconds to run to safety.

In just 15 seconds, you could prepare to donate to our "Smiles for Sderot" appeal.

Help us to donate for a new Trauma Centre in Sderot

In Sderot, near to the Gaza border, it is estimated that approximately 63% of the children living there suffer from PTSD.

"Sderot is in a stage of emergency. Unfortunately, this reality is forced upon us every few months with no solution in sight and those who suffer the most are our children."

Alon Davidi, Mayor of Sderot



DONATE TODAY 020 8202 0202 WWW.ZIONIST.ORG.UK/APPEAL

A PERSONAL APPEAL FROM MAYOR OF SDEROT, ALON DAVIDI

שדרות
י"ח)ג"ח)ג"ח)



Dear Friends in the United Kingdom.

I have had the honour of serving as Mayor of Sderot for the past six years. The city of Sderot, located in the western Negev, close to the city of Gaza city, has a population of 28,000 residents and has grown by more than 30 percent during these six years! We are currently building five new neighborhoods and spacious parks, laying new roads and infrastructures, and investing a great deal in quality education for our children.

Sadly, the security situation forced upon us is a constant dark cloud on our horizon and makes day to day life very difficult.

When I started my first term in late 2013, hundreds of rockets landed in Sderot every week, and the security situation was extremely complex; our city was subject to countless terrorist threats from Gaza: terror tunnels, mortar shell fire and incessant rocket fire. In the years between 2001 and 2014, close to 9,000 Qassam rockets landed in Sderot!

At the end of 2014, the IDF embarked on Operation Protective Edge in which dozens of Israeli soldiers lost their lives. Eventually the quiet returned to the southern region, to the Gaza Envelope and Sderot.

Unfortunately, for the past year and a half we have seen how the Hamas has returned to its evil ways. Since 2018 Hamas has fired hundreds of missiles on Sderot, Ashkelon and the Jewish communities in the Gaza Envelope. Every few months a new barrage is shot from the Gaza Strip. Our communities, adults and children, are experienced and know how to run for shelter, praying to reach a safe spot within 15 seconds from the moment the 'Colour Red' alarm sounds.

But eighteen years of living in the shadow of terrorist threats, alarms and missiles is not normal! Children growing up in Sderot are raised in an unnatural reality and do not know that a peaceful existence without sirens and alarms actually exists. They don't deserve such a life, and want to live normally like other children in Israel.

Because of this abnormal existence and our understanding that we are the frontier of the southern part of Israel - or more exactly of the entire State of Israel - we must give the best care possible to our children and to all residents by helping them cope with the traumatic situations they face almost daily. Ten years ago we established a resilience centre to help trauma victims. The centre provides professional treatment for hundreds of children and adults every week, and for many thousands of patients every year. But, as the article by the Zionist Federation mentions, the centre and its resources are too stretched and the building itself is not protected against rocket fire.

The new Sderot Resilience Centre Complex will consist of four treatment centres as described in the ZF's article. We already have all the permits and building will begin immediately after the High Holy days. However, whilst there are other partners in this important project - the Israeli government, the municipality of Sderot and donors from other parts of the world - this is a big venture with a large financial outlay. As you all understand, time is of utmost importance. We must finish the entire complex within no more than two years. Although you live far away from the events in southern Israel, I am sure you have been asking yourself how you can be part of this important Zionist undertaking and how to help the heroes of Sderot.

This is your chance to be an actual part of the building and development of our city! I assure you that we will continue to be strong; we will continue our important mission and stand at the forefront of the war against terror, for you and for all residents of Israel and our brothers overseas.

I would like to thank the Zionist Federation of the UK and Ireland, our partner in this important project, and urge you to join them in this important undertaking and help us build the new Sderot Resilience Complex.

Thank you!

Wishing you a Happy, Healthy and Peaceful New Year

Alon Davidi, Mayor of Sderot

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120 years of British Zionism

In recent years, we have certainly celebrated quite a few milestones. 2017 was the centenary anniversary of the Balfour Declaration as well as the 50-year anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem after the Six Day War. Last year, 2018, we celebrated 70 years of Israeli independence.



And this year? Well, aside from celebrating 71 years of Israeli independence, the Zionist Federation is celebrating its 120th anniversary. Almost 2 years after the First Zionist Congress was called by Theodor Herzl as a symbolic Parliament for those in sympathy with the implementation of Zionist goals, the British Zionist Federation was established in 1899 to campaign for a permanent homeland for the Jewish people. The ZF held its first Annual Conference on June 26, 1899 which was attended by delegates from London, Birmingham, Blackburn, Belfast, Glasgow, Grimsby, Leeds, Liverpool, Limerick, Manchester and Sheffield. At the time it was

formed, few people in Britain considered the likelihood that they were witnessing the emergence of a political movement which would transform the Anglo-Jewish community and play an important part in World Zionism and the establishment of a Jewish State.

In 1917 Chaim Weizmann became president of the British Zionist Federation and the de-facto leader of World Zionism and was intimately involved from the Zionist side with the discussions that led to the Balfour declaration sent to Lord Rothschild for the attention of the Zionist Federation.



The Balfour declaration was of course the first official statement of support by any government for Zionist aspirations and was subsequently endorsed 3 years later in 1920 by the Allied Powers at the San Remo Conference and was further ratified by the 52 League of Nations governments on 24th July 1922. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Fast forward to today and the Zionist Federation of the UK and Ireland is an umbrella organisation for the Zionist movement in the United Kingdom, representing more than 30 organisations, over 50,000 affiliated members and is the UK affiliate of the World Zionist Organisation. The ZF is the UK's leading Israel advocacy and grassroots organisation and works tirelessly up and down the country to Educate, Empower and Engage its members and supporters to proudly celebrate Israel and challenge its enemies in the UK.



So whilst we are three quarters of the way through 2019, we wish all our Jewish readers a happy Rosh Hashanah, and to all of you who support the ZF, we thank you sincerely and look forward to the next 120 years, and more, of British Zionism.

ARTICLE BY STEVE WINSTON

OPERATION GOOD NEIGHBOUR

Lt. Col. (res.) Eyal Dror, Commander of the “Good Neighbour” operation in the Golan Heights, shares in his own words, his experiences, thoughts and feelings on the almost 700 humanitarian aid operations on the Israel-Syria border, which he helped facilitate.

July 2018: Jets from the Assad Regime heavily bombarded the Syrian Golan Heights as part of their strategy to reoccupy the Dar’a Kuneitra area (near the Israeli-Syrian Border). Tens of thousands of Syrian citizens fled the threat of bombing and settled in open areas near the entrance to the Israeli border, because they knew that the bombings wouldn’t reach those areas.

As the Commander of the “Good Neighbour” Project, a series of 41 special operations were carried out to help Syrians who fled with nothing but the clothes on their backs. In order to meet the demands, we worked day and night, but after over two years, the activities only took place at night, due to the security dangers to our forces. We gave out close to 700 tents to the exhausted group of people, along with hundreds of tons of food, flour for baking, baby formulas, tens of thousands of litres of diesel for heating and a huge amount of clothing.

These operations made us aware of all the advantages of running “Good Neighbour” - a



small, strong team capable of carrying out large and continuous sequence of activities, enabling us to provide immediate solutions to the challenges that arose from the field, and building trust with people who, until then, considered us to be terrible enemies and were taught to fear us.



We never imagined that this project would become so successful on such a large scale when, only two years prior, I was asked to establish a military unit from scratch - from choosing my people and building a dedicated military compound with complex logistics, to developing designated procedures for aid operations on the Syrian border. None of this was in any way similar to any other humanitarian operations in areas such as the West Bank and Gaza.

In one of my first conversations with a Syrian doctor, I understood that the Syrians were seeking additional help beyond assisting the wounded, and were relying on local religious ruling to authorise the Syrians to receive help from the State of Israel only if they needed a life-saving operation. This is why, until 2016, 3000



“We managed with relatively low resources to form a basic level of trust with the Syrian population and expose them to the real face of Israeli society.”

injured Syrians entered Israel and did not suffer harassment when returning.

Once I understood this, I determined that the initial aid operations that the “Good Neighbour” administration created would focus in the medical area, which led us to initiate an extraordinary operation called “Doctor’s Visit”. During this operation, 1,400 Syrian children were treated for chronic diseases

and were seen by a specialist, a resource that was unavailable at this time in Syria. We managed with relatively low resources to form a basic level of trust with the Syrian population and expose them to the real face of Israeli society. All in all, 72 “Doctor’s Visit” operations took place once a week, even during the harshest winter days in the Golan Heights.

During these operations, we heard the horrific stories about what is happening inside Syria and the reality in which these citizens were living - a reality of daily mortal danger, despair and fear of acts of rape and robbery. We realised that beyond being part of the defence effort on the Israel-Syria border, we were simply doing the right thing as human beings.





The “Doctor’s Visit” operation proved very successful, and we expanded by building a field clinic operated by a Christian organisation east of the border fence, which handled 8,000 Syrian citizens, building a maternity hospital in a Syrian village where more than 1,000 babies were delivered, a modern bakery and provided thousands of tons of food, warm clothing for the cold winter days and diesel fuel for heating and more. All this was in the framework of almost 700 humanitarian aid operations - 700 times when my soldiers and I risked our lives - in the rain, fog and the heavy heat against a host of enemies such as Hezbollah, ISIS, Al Qaeda and more, in order to provide food and medicine to a needy population.

One of the main challenges stemmed from the fact that the situation in which we operated was unique, complex and constantly changing. In order to adapt ourselves to these conditions, we often had to think out of the box and be creative. One particular example occurred when we were required to support a number of villages located east of Mount Hermon. These are mountainous and rugged trails,

which no vehicles can access. In one of the discussions, I was asked by my commanders to find mules in order to transfer humanitarian aid to the Syrians, as that was the only mode of transport which could be operated in that area. There is no doubt that this is the most strange and impossible task I have ever been given in my military service, but after about a month, I was able to proudly report that four mules were transferred to the Syrian side (and another 12 thereafter).

One of our most exciting and impressive of all the operations happened when we rescued

over 400 members of the ‘White Helmets’ and their families in the dead of night.

As the person who coordinated their arrival at the border, it was an extraordinary sight to see entire families crossing the border, in fear and terror of the Syrian government, but as soon as they entered the State of Israel - a country that was not long ago considered a terrible enemy - they smiled with the understanding that their lives were saved. When the campaign was over, the families were taken to Jordan, where they were given a new identity, hoping for happiness and rest, while always remembering the country that worked for their rescue.

The “Good Neighbour” operation shut down with the return of the Assad regime by the border. Our mission had been successfully completed, but more importantly, we have succeeded in changing the attitude of 250,000 Syrian residents living near the border, of their perception of the State of Israel and what they thought of us. I personally have no doubt that they will not forget our actions in the years to come and am proud to have played a part in it.



Eyal Dror with the 2018 ZF delegation near the Syrian border

COGAT

THROUGH THE EYES OF A SOLDIER

COGAT is an extremely important unit in the IDF but unfortunately not that well known. The ZF therefore took the opportunity to interview British Israeli Yonatan Wegier, a former officer in COGAT, who gives us his firsthand accounts of the unit and what it’s like to work there.



What is COGAT and why is it important?

COGAT is the Coordination Of Governmental Activities in the Territories and is under the Defence Ministry for communicating between the Israeli government, army and other organisations, with the Palestinians.

What was your personal involvement in COGAT?

The front man in COGAT for all coordination and all governmental activities that all international

organizations (160) in Gaza, any questions went to him. I also approved visas for foreigners and diplomats to visit Gaza. COGAT has different officers for different services such as the import and export of materials, the approval of projects and approval of movement. I was the front man for anything to do with the movement of people working for the international community who needed to come in and out of Gaza

How was your view on the Palestinian issue affected after joining COGAT?

My view didn’t change. I gained more of an insight into the humanitarian and political situation and how it is being dealt with at strategical levels. On a personal note I can say that the international organisations are struggling to continue with their project efforts because of lack of funding. There are tremendous fundraising efforts made by the PA, the Palestinian private sector and the organisations

themselves, for the situation in Gaza but, in my opinion – one gained from my experience there, the world sees that Hamas has enough money to take care of its own but chooses not to. Before joining the army, Gaza wasn’t an issue I had come across enough to have an informed opinion about, but today I feel very sympathetic towards the Palestinians living in Gaza, who simply want to live a normal life but are subjected to many restrictions from Hamas, the PA, Egypt and Israel.

Do you believe there needs to be any improvements in the Unit, if so what?

No. The Unit functions very well and it gives the correct support that the international community needs in-order to function correctly.

What was the most challenging experience you came across during your service?

It’s very important to differentiate the situation in Judaea and Samaria



to the one in Gaza. There has been no Israeli presence in Gaza since 2005 whilst there is still an Israeli presence in Judea and Samaria, causing constant friction and violence. What I'm saying here is that Palestinians, especially around the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron, both provoke and are provoked by the Jewish presence in Hebron. The insight I gained from my experience here is that whilst both sides may not be completely satisfied by whatever support the receive from COGAT, the constant efforts of infrastructural improvement, financial development, and development of services is, in my opinion, the correct way to alleviate tensions, especially in areas such as Hebron.

Another difficult experience was during October / November / 2018 when Israel was under constant rocket fire. Whilst our base was



under constant fire day and night, our office stayed open for business as usual. The challenge here was convincing my soldiers to continue their work and not "protest" against still helping the Palestinians whilst they're firing rockets at us. It was always imperative to ensure that we controlled our personal emotions whilst making sure our work stayed unbiased.

How much of your work does the public hear about?

When there is good news it gets published – Facebook and Twitter – and it's published frequently. There are some projects I can't speak about because of the project and people involved. Many projects are funded and operated by Arab/Muslim states who prefer that their contributions are not made public by Israel. The only country who goes public with its support is Qatar which donates roughly \$15 million a month for impoverished families, as well as other varied construction projects across Gaza.

Israel is not known to have the best reputation, how does the COGAT unit help fight that?

Many of the day to day events that

are published in the media such as "clashes" at checkpoints, the denial of permits to enter Israel, Palestinian buildings being destroyed, all occur with COGAT's presence. Whilst we cannot sway international opinion, our job is to make sure that agitating events such as the aforementioned are done so legally and as sensitively as possible. In some ways, COGAT serves as an "ambassador" of the Palestinians towards the IDF, and vice versa. On the other hand, active development projects which COGAT participates in, are published widely and do receive international recognition from donor countries and / or the UN.

What, in your opinion, are the most important issues that COGAT must take on?

COGAT is really the face of the Israeli administration towards the Palestinians. Many things that need to change – security and bureaucracy. However, COGAT does not decide that, those decisions are made by the Israeli administration. (Government) Improvements to made regarding bureaucracy the Israeli administration. There are many requests that are denied on security grounds, whether

for movement or for import and export, and no explanations are given, neither to COGAT nor to the Palestinian Authority or the international community. I believe that the applying entity should have the information as to why they cannot pursue their wishes, should they wish to take measures in light of said information- such as Hamas's infiltration to an organisation which has happened several times in the past few years, or knowledge of Hamas's intent to intercept import of certain materials into Gaza.

In the West Bank and Gaza, IDF soldiers are known not to have the best image. Therefore, we imagine that part of the job as a COGAT soldier is to show the 'other side' who the real IDF soldiers are. How does this manifest itself in your work and how does it affect your communications with the Palestinians?

The Palestinians know and recognise the unit logo. Any time there's a confrontation, the COGAT soldiers are known to be there and dealing with the situation. A commander



will also be in the area to call upon whenever needed. We act as mediators, because all soldiers are trained in Arabic. Services are administered in Arabic, such as applying for permits to enter into Israel, acquiring and registering lands and approving projects. COGAT has bases spread over the West Bank, where Palestinians come to ask for permits, digital ID cards, buying land, and to get licenses to do work in Israel. Some of them speak Hebrew and some don't, so COGAT's soldiers learn Arabic in order to communicate as best they can with the Palestinians.

10) Is there anything else you would like to add?

I'm very interested in international relations and representing Israel on the frontline. The Palestinian issue is one of international importance. I would like to learn about government and policy as I want to pursue a career in government service, so I'm happy that I worked in COGAT during my army service as it has given me a lot of experience in this area.



Yonatan Wegier with the 2017 ZF delegation

INTERVIEW BY ARIELLE LIEBERMAN

From Antisemite to Zionist: MY JOURNEY VIA THE ZF

Walking in to a room with 50 or so Jewish people in the summer of 2007 was among one of the most nerve-racking and surreal experiences of my life up to that point. But that weekend in North London would have an impact that still shapes my life to this day.

I had returned from my first ever trip to Israel just months earlier. I was an avowed Antisemite and was flirting with the idea of going to a jihadist training camp to learn how to fight the 'evil Jews'. But a chance encounter with a copy of the book, 'The Case For Israel' by Alan Dershowitz, in Waterstones in Nottingham would eventually lead to a visit to Israel and seeing first-hand, that many of the ideas I believed and propagated about Israel, were in fact lies without any basis in reality.

On my return from Israel, I felt compelled to speak out - to tell the truth - but how? Where do you even go? Is it even a thing? All these questions I had swimming around in my head. Now back in England, I was filled with a desire, a need, to share the reality. I set about trying to find organisations to reach out to in an attempt to do something. Well, the United States had a plethora of such organisations back then, but the UK not so much. However, a Google search eventually led me to the Zionist Federation. So, I reached out and received a

response from them explaining how I could join and that they had an advocacy seminar coming up. Feeling hopeful, I decided to register and after a few telephone conversations with Dalia Hajioff, I was all set.

That's how I ended up in a room with 50 Jewish people in North London. Whilst I initially felt really out of place, I will never forget the warmth that Dalia from the ZF showed towards me. She introduced herself to me and was incredibly welcoming - literally the popular definition of a Jewish

“I was an avowed Antisemite and was flirting with the idea of going to a jihadist training camp to learn how to fight the ‘evil Jews’”



mother. It was at that moment that I felt a sense of belonging in this strange new world of Israel advocacy.

I went on to attend multiple ZF events; workshops and other training events. We covered topics such as how to speak in public, dealing with media interviews, writing letters whilst also hearing from world-renowned speakers. At the time, while these training sessions were helpful, I doubted if I'd ever need them. I mean, who was going to interview me?

Fast-forward to 2019, and the foundations laid by the Zionist Federation training sessions undoubtedly helped me as a newly-passionate Zionist looking for a way to play his part today. They have led me to the path of a lifelong defender of the Jewish State. Today I'm in my fourth year as a Middle East Analyst working for Christians United for Israel

(CUFI) in the United States; with 7.2 million members, we are America's largest pro-Israel organisation.

I have been fortunate to speak all over the world, from South Africa to Canada and beyond. I have been published in various print media



and interviewed in both print and television. In 2017 I was named on the Algemeiner 'J100' list of the top one hundred individuals who have positively influenced Jewish life. In March 2019 I spoke up in support of Israel at the United Nations Human Rights Council.

I don't say these things to brag, but rather to express my gratitude to how a kid from a Pakistani Muslim household was welcomed and embraced by the Zionist Federation. With the skills I learnt at the ZF workshops and seminars, I was empowered to stand up and defend Israel and the Jewish people at this critical time.

Thank you to the Zionist Federation. I'm so sincerely grateful for what you do every single day in creating the next generation of Israel advocates.

ARTICLE BY KASIM HAFEEZ

ZF EVENTS

ACROSS 2018-2019

SOME OF THE EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES THE ZF HAVE ORGANISED RECENTLY

HERZOG 100 TRIP TO IRELAND



BALFOUR DECLARATION



AFRICANS FOR PEACE



ISRAEL TRIP



ACTIVATE FOR ISRAEL SEMINAR



LOBBY DAY



ANNUAL DINNER

AL QUDS COUNTER RALLY



YOM HA'ATZMAUT 71



SPEAKER EVENT - EYAL DROR



DAVID BEDEIN



BRITISH AMBASSADOR

A spotlight on Ambassador Neil Wigan OBE

On the 31st January 2019, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office announced the appointment of Mr Neil Wigan OBE as Her Majesty's new Ambassador to the state of Israel.

Succeeding David Quarrey who had served as Britain's Ambassador to Israel since 2015, the appointment of Neil Wigan makes his third ambassadorship, having served as British Ambassador to Somalia, from June 2013 to July 2015, and British Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo from March 2010 to March 2013. His appointment also marked a return to Tel Aviv where he served at the embassy's political attaché between 2002 and 2006. It was during this time that Mr Wigan met his Israeli wife, Yael Banaji with whom he has two children.

One of Ambassador Wigan's ambitions is to be able to conduct an entire interview in Hebrew before the end of his Ambassadorship, and says how he is grateful for Netflix's help in improving his Hebrew, as he watches, with subtitles, the Israeli drama series Fauda and Israeli comedy Hashoter Hatov, or The Good Cop, which he loves.



Earlier in the summer, the ZF held a welcome event for the new Ambassador. ZF Chairman Paul Charney welcomed Mr Wigan who spoke about the ever-strengthening ties between Israel and Britain, how Israel is acting as an ever more important ally in the Middle East and how the bilateral trade between Israel and Britain went up by 15 percent last year to \$10billion (currently £7.9billion) and that there are more Israeli companies investing in Britain since the Brexit referendum than before it. Israel's Deputy Ambassador, Sharon Bar-Li also welcomed Mr Wigan to his new appointment and expressed how the Israeli embassy in the UK were looking forward to working with him.

Paul Charney then presented the new Ambassador with a copy of the book 'The Zionist Ideas: Visions for the Jewish Homeland—Then, Now, Tomorrow' and, to help with his immersion into Israeli culture, Paul also presented Mr Wigan with a Matkot set; Matkot being the popular paddle ball game in Israel similar to beach tennis,

often referred to by Israelis as their national beach sport!

After returning to Israel to commence his Ambassadorship, Neil Wigan presented his credentials, accompanied by his wife and two children, to Israel's President Reuven Rivlin in fluent Hebrew. President Rivlin, with a smile on his face, said that he was sure that his wife and children would feel at home, shook hands with the children warmly and said that he was delighted they had come back. President Rivlin also quoted the famous Liverpool FC song, 'You'll Never Walk Alone', telling the new Ambassador that "Our relations are strong and strategic, including in the field of counter-terrorism, and that is how they will remain".

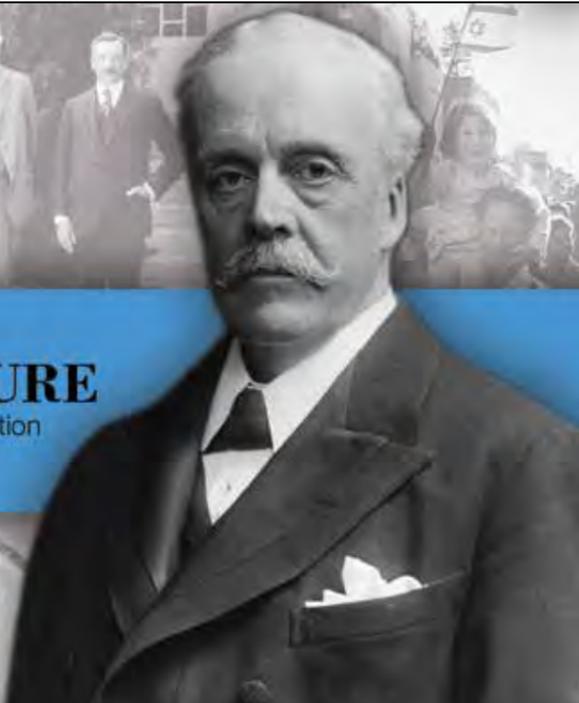
On behalf of the ZF and Zionist community in the UK, we wish Ambassador Wigan the best of luck in his ambassadorship and look forward to a further strengthening of ties to the already strong bond between the two countries.

ARTICLE BY STEVE WINSTON

SAVE THE DATES

FOR OUR FUTURE EVENTS





SAVE THE DATE

ZF ANNUAL BALFOUR LECTURE
Commemorating 102 years of the signing of the Balfour Declaration

THURSDAY 31 OCTOBER 2019

SAVE THE DATE



ZF ANNUAL DINNER 2020
FOR ISRAEL

SUNDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2020

SAVE THE DATE

COMMEMORATING THE UN PARTITION PLAN

THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2019





SAVE THE DATE

LOBBY DAY FOR ISRAEL

Join us and hundreds of activists to share your support for Israel with our MPs.

WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH 2020




BA OVER 70 YEARS OF SERVING ISRAEL



In the Halcyon days of pioneering aviation, British Airways' predecessor flew to the Land of Israel from as early as the 1930's. Shorts Flying Boats used Lake Kinneret as a refuelling point on the Imperial Airways route from Great Britain to the East. These weekly flights were the first air links between our two countries, and in 1947, BOAC (British Overseas Airways Corporation) began serving Lydda airport - now known as Ben Gurion Airport - using Dakota aircraft. Over the years these flights continued on to Tehran and Dhahran, places

which today are impossible to fly to from Israel. After BOAC withdrew services due to capacity constraints in 1955, BEA (British European Airways) extended its Nicosia route onto Tel Aviv with two weekly services using Viscount aircraft. As the new decade saw the dawn of jet travel, BEA began services with Comet 4B's via Athens and Rome. In 1961 BOAC operated the then state of the art Boeing 707's to Tehran via Zurich and Tel Aviv. In 1969 BOAC flew an inaugural Manchester-Tel Aviv flight bringing UK-Tel Aviv services to nine per week.

BOAC and BEA merged in 1974 to form British Airways as it is today. Tridents, 707's and wide bodied TriStars all helped develop the route and in 1984 two Concorde's landed in Israel with QE2 cruise passengers. By 1992 a daily Boeing

"During the last conflict with Gaza, they were one of the few International airlines not to suspend services to Israel, reaffirming their commitment to the Jewish State."

767 flight began, and the following year this was supplemented by three flights a week from Gatwick on a 737. Tel Aviv became a long-haul destination for BA in 1998, with a daily Boeing 777 flight from Heathrow and DC10 services from Gatwick. The Millennium saw all flights move to Heathrow using 777 aircraft only. Ex BMI Airbus A321's also fly from Heathrow to Tel Aviv with BA now serving the route up to three times a day.

BA fly on Saturdays, connecting Israel to the world each and every day and offer a full flat bed in its Club World Business class, but whichever class you fly in today, you will be looked after award winning cabin crew and served delicious complimentary kosher food (must be ordered in advance).

Tel Aviv is BA's most served destination in the Middle East and they have a new Executive Lounge



Now BEA operates the Trident Two London/Tel Aviv 5 times a week

2 Direct London/Tel Aviv 3 Via Athens

See BEA Summer Timetable for full details

opening at Ben Gurion Airport this autumn. During the last conflict with Gaza, they were one of the few international airlines not to suspend services to Israel, reaffirming their commitment to the Jewish State. Only last year, the BA charity Flying Start, together with Technion University, flew Eurovision winner Netta to London to perform an exclusive charity concert at BA's own global headquarters near Heathrow, to mark 70 years of Israel's independence. This year BA celebrates 100 years and to help mark this, the airline are staging a series of fashion shows in Israel in November featuring their uniforms from the last 10 decades.

British Airways employs many Jewish staff and I am proud to say I am one of them. We regularly

have Hebrew speaking crew on our Tel Aviv flights. At BA, Jews and Muslims work in harmony, learning from each other to better understand differences and misconceptions. It's great travelling to Arab countries and immersing yourself in their rich culture and seeing Muslim crew come to Tel Aviv and go back to the UK loving Israel.

This December sees another significant development with BA's brand-new Business Class Club Suite arrive in Israel on our brand-new Airbus A350 planes.

Better for the environment - Better product - Better to try us on your next flight to Tel Aviv!

To book go to Ba.com

ARTICLE BY SPENCER BARNETT

AND THE REST, AS THEY SAY, IS HIPSTORY

Amit Shimoni is a professional illustrator who brings a sense of adventure and boundless creativity in his namesake art series HIPSTORY- iconic leaders of modern history reimagined as nowadays hipsters.

Shimoni's love of travel and art exploration took him from his final academy project in visual communication, with just a few HIPSTORY characters, to his current 50 world leader series- HIPSTORY. Today, Shimoni continues to expand his artistic and affordable range of art, much of which has been featured in leading magazines such as Wired, Vice, Forbes and Entertainment Weekly. His artwork is also exhibited in galleries around the world including Paris, Berlin, Madrid, Tel Aviv, New York and more.



his wife Noga and their adorable dog Adam. Alongside his work, Shimoni also lectures in campus on his vision of why art should be more affordable and how this is all happening through the era of social media.

In February 2015, at the age of 28, Shimoni was selected to the most promising - 30 under 30 - Israeli list of Forbes.

It all started with Shimoni's final academy project in visual communication. The assignment was to create communication through a preferred art. That's when HIPSTORY was born, when Shimoni was looking for a way to connect generation Y to history's finest leaders. The idea to 'Hipsterise' them struck Shimoni when he was searching online for photos of past world leaders but all he could find were

black & white, faded old pictures. His deep frustration with this reality brought to life his art series HIPSTORY - Shimoni's way to connect the Y generation with political and cultural visionaries of our past and giving them a new way of expression in modern times.

HIPSTORY started as Shimoni's final academy project. His first characters were the great leaders of the 20th century, people with great ideologies like Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King and Gandhi. HIPSTORY doesn't talk about politics, it talks about generation Y. Shimoni explains: "I often find myself wondering how different my generation, the Y generation, is from the generation of these great leaders of modern history. How different was their belief system, the way they thought and



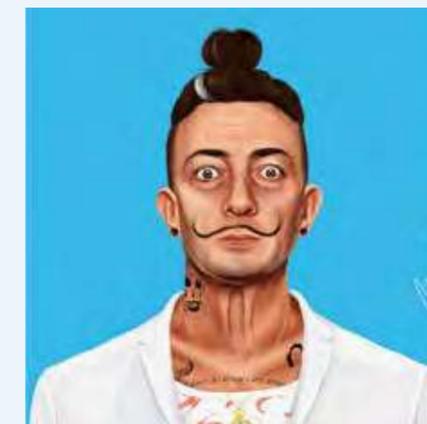
what motivated them, compared to our more self-centered generation which is in a constant chase after fashion, style and trends as a way of self-expression, while steering away from the big ideologies and meanings of life. I wanted HIPSTORY to re-imagine these great leaders and place them in a different time and culture: ours. I wanted to create a sort of mirror, a mirror that on the one hand is supposed to make one smile, but on the other, to make one also think."

Explaining the creation process for each character, Shimoni says, "For every character, I try putting my own interpretation, but I'm always leaving a place for the viewers' own interpretation. During my thinking process, I study each character as a leader and as a person for at least a few days. I try bringing a new twist

to the smallest details that define the character. for example, on Obama's chest you can find the words "Hope" and "Change" which are slogans anyone can immediately recognise. But I also try leaving details that are less notable and less recognised by most viewers, like the tattoo on Obama's right shoulder which represents a scene from the book Moby-Dick, which is Obama's favourite novel."

On choosing the figures and their style, he explains, "HIPSTORY is an ongoing project with a new character every 2 months. I try keeping the series as international as possible so I take leaders from all around the world. Sometimes I ask my followers who should be next? And on my website, hipstoryart.com, people are able to suggest and recommend. Some characters were born

by request of my followers like Princess Diana and Kim Jong Un. Others were born more formally: A HIPSTORY Hilary Clinton portrait was requested by the New York Times, HIPSTORY Vladimir Putin by one of the leading TV channels in Russia and last year, I was asked by the campaign manager of Erna Solberg, the prime minister of Norway, to Hipsterise Erna as part of her election campaign."



Following the success of HIPSTORY, HIPSTORY II is a new set of iconic figures seen as your friendly neighbourhood hipster, but this time, not politicians. "Whereas HIPSTORY created a new kind of discourse concerning the differences between these great leaders, their beliefs and motivations, and our self-centered generation, it will be interesting to see HIPSTORY II's pop icons



Shimoni is the founder and operator of his design studio Amit Shimoni Illustration based in Tel Aviv where he happily lives with

such as Marilyn Monroe or Michael Jackson will fit in with this respectable bunch.”

Of HIPSTORY II's characters, Shimoni explains that “Although not politicians or leaders per se, I believe that these people have managed to survive in our collective memory since they were truly larger-than-life and represented something more than just outstanding individuals”.

“‘Hipster’ is a weird term”, says Shimoni. “It seems like almost every young urban person you meet can fall under a certain description of ‘Hipster’. Which is a part of my point – we all try to express ourselves and our individuality and it becomes the main thing we do, and eventually we all look the same.”

Like its predecessor, HIPSTORY II will be presented on the internet and social media and printed on items like smartphone cases and coasters. “I think that art belongs on one’s phone or coffee table just as it belongs in a museum. And when you think about it – Facebook, Instagram and Google are the world’s greatest galleries” says Shimoni about the way he sees art today. “I create something new and release it to the world, and I want everybody to be able to afford themselves to enjoy it.”

“I try keeping the series as international as possible so I take leaders from all around the world. Sometimes I ask my followers who should be next? And on my website, hipstoryart.com, people are able to suggest and recommend.”



In a video Shimoni released via social media, he gives us a sneak peek into his work process – this time giving the hipster treatment to none other than the great Albert Einstein.

You can follow Shimoni’s HIPSTORY series on social media:

Facebook facebook.com/HIPSTORYbyShimoni/
Twitter twitter.com/shimoni_amit
Instagram instagram.com/hipstory_shimoni/

And his amazing and engaging art can be viewed and purchased across a variety of mediums via his website, www.hipstoryart.com

ARTICLE BY ARIELLE LIEBERMAN

Awarding GOLDEN GOLDAS

Earlier this summer, the World Zionist Organization held its International “Golden Golda” awards. Held in London, the “Golden Golda” is an international award given to women who have made a significant contribution to Zionism, the promotion of Aliyah and Israel.

Three deserving women from communities across the UK were the lucky winners of this prestigious award. Here is a little bit about each of them.

Ilana Metzger has a history of over 20 years in WIZO and currently serves as the vice co-chairwoman of WIZO UK.

She is an activist for Israel on social media and a CST volunteer. Be warned: don’t mess with Ilana as she is a krav Maga instructor. Ilana has also been involved with Holocaust education for the past 20 years and even produced a documentary film for that purpose. This Golden Golda instilled her passion and love for Israel in her children and her daughter is now serving in the IDF as a lone soldier.

Ruth Jacobs is the current chair of the Representative Council of Birmingham and West Midlands Jewry and is the founder of the West Midlands Friends of Israel group. Ruth was director of Birmingham’s Israel Information Centre and



has been involved with the JNF in Birmingham for 20 years. This Golden Golda has set up many Hasbara skills workshops and has ongoing involvement with the Zionist Federation, We Believe in Israel, the Board of Deputies, Magen David Adom, Honest Reporting, StandWithUs and other Israel-focused organisations.

Joy Wolfe is a public speaker and a relentless activist for Israel who has a long history of countering media bias and misinformation. Joy was previously awarded an MBE for her contributions to community. She has organised numerous and varied events promoting Israel and continues to be involved with many

Jewish organisations. This Golden Golda is Life president of Manchester Zionist Central Council and Life Vice President of British Zionist Federation, as well as being Life President of Manchester WIZO and the President of Stand With Us UK, which she founded and served as its Chair for 10 Years.



The Stars shine in Israel



LANA DEL REY
POSTPONES
ISRAEL CONCERT
FOLLOWING
BACKLASH.

LORDE CANCELS
TEL AVIV CONCERT
AFTER CALLS TO
BOYCOTT ISRAEL.

STARS URGE BBC
TO ASK FOR
EUROVISION TO
BE MOVED OUT OF
ISRAEL.



We regularly see headlines announcing that this star or that artist has cancelled a performance in Israel. In the overwhelming number of cases, it's due to the hate-fuelled tactics of the Boycott, Divest, Sanction (BDS) movement which, led by the ageing Pink Floyd star Roger Waters, all too often resort to Bullying, Defamation and Slander in order to discourage performers from performing in Israel. Their biggest effort to date was to call for a boycott of this year's Eurovision Song Contest in Tel Aviv. With a record 200 million viewers and not a single performer dropping out of the Contest, this could arguably be deemed to be BDS's most epic fail to date.

So despite a handful of so-called "victories" by the BDS movement, their failures are far more numerous.



Madonna



Tom Jones



Enrique Iglesias

2018/2019 saw a wide variety of famous names and faces all eager and excited to grace Israel's shores – some for the first time, and others returning to once again experience the awesome welcome and appreciation of the Israeli public.

From stars such as Tom Jones and Madonna, to Jennifer Lopez (J-Lo) and A-ha, it is worth reminding ourselves that, despite the odd famous boycotter here and there, there are far more out there who refuse to bow to the Bullying, Defamation and Slander hurled at them by the BDS movement and its supporters.

ARTICLE BY STEVE WINSTON



Bon Jovi



Steve Wilson



Air Supply



Suede



Ziggy Marley



Jamiroquai



The Scorpions



David Guetta



Ozzy Osbourne



Backstreet Boys



A-ha



Jason Derulo



Alanis Morissette



Ringo Starr



Alice in Chains



Tears for Fears



Jennifer Lopez



Jethro Tull

Hebrew, Humus

AND THE HOLY LAND

Early this summer, the ZF and WZO brought the legendary Israeli food critic and TV food personality, Gil Hovav, to the UK where he spoke to audiences across the UK, including in Dublin, Brighton, Cambridge, Leeds and London.

Aside from being an Israeli culinary personality, Gil is also a great-grandson of Eliezer Ben Yehuda who revived Hebrew as a spoken language. Gil shared stories about the Hebrew Language, food, Jerusalem, love and family. Gil Hovav is Gordon Ramsay, Jamie Oliver and JK Rowling all rolled into one ... the multi-talented chef known by Israelis as "Captain Cook".

The ZF were honoured to have been able to grab 10 minutes with the great man himself before he entertained the audience at the Mill Hill synagogue. Below are the questions we asked him and his responses, minus of course the energy, laughter and expressions that Gil exudes in person.



Your career as journalist draws on elements of your great grandfather, your grandfather and your parents.

I am 5th generation Israeli but my ancestors came from Tunisia, Russia and Yemen. My great Grandfather Eliezer Ben-Yehuda died 40 years before I was born but he was always with us in spirit. He was one of the reasons we have the Hebrew culture and he revived the Hebrew language. My grandfather, Itamar Ben Avi, who I also didn't get to meet, was a prominent journalist and he

continued with his father's work. However, I was brought up by my grandmother who was madly in love with Itamar even after he died, and we had a big oil portrait of him in the lounge.

My mother Drora Ben Avi was their daughter and she was a founding member of Israeli radio. My father, Moshe Hovav, was a well-known radio news announcer at the time. He announced when Jerusalem was unified in the '67 war and his voice is still heard until today, reading the 'Shema' when transmission of the radio station Kol Yisrael begins. My mother was my father's boss first and then he was hers when he became head of the IBA (Israel Broadcasting Authority), but she was always the boss at home.

We all love food. Us Jews love food. But tell us, how did you get into critiquing restaurants?

I was a student at Hebrew U in Jerusalem. I wanted to earn my own money because I didn't want to ask my father to have to pay for my tuition. My mother died while I was in the army and my father had just remarried and I didn't want to be a burden on a newly married couple. I wanted to pay my own way. I had 4 jobs - bartender at the Sheraton, cleaning houses, teaching Arabic and working in a shady bar. In fact, it was at that bar where the biggest bank robbery at Bank Hapoa'lim was planned, while they were drinking whisky and coke. I still needed more money, so a friend said if you can write as well as you can speak then you should become a journalist. I went to the local paper in Jerusalem and they asked what I would write about. I was not prepared for that question. What did I know? I thought they would tell me. Then they said they were looking for a bar critic and I

shouted "Perfect! I'm a barman, I can write about bars" and from there I became a restaurant critic and the rest is history.

What has been your favourite TV cooking or food show so far, and why?

I've done quite a few food shows, but the two that were the most fun were 'Captain Cook' where I travelled around the world looking for the best 3 Michelin Stars restaurants and 'Going to the Market' which was the complete opposite. For that, I went to different markets all over Israel. The Israeli market traders treat you like you are their best friend and everywhere I went they hugged me and told me stories about my father and it was just amazing. I then changed the format of my show with a programme called 'Food for Thought', interviewing Nobel Prize Laureates from all over the world, which was such a privilege, getting to meet people from all aspects of life. The next series was called 'Meals that made History' which took me to Westminster, the Smithsonian, monasteries in Japan etc.

The Israeli food and restaurant business is thriving. What do you attribute this to?

I think there is a good reason for that. It's the right food for the moment because Israeli food and restaurants are bolder, brighter and very Instagram friendly! Eastern European food is brown – very brown – but Israeli food has very vibrant yellow, orange and red colours.

If you could only recommend one place in Israel for Humus, where would it be? And why.

I love this question.... all Israelis have their own secret favourite Humus place. Mine is in Jerusalem, just across the road from the

GIL HOVAV'S FAVOURITE HUMUS RECIPE

Yield: 25 tasting portions (to be served with wedges of pita bread)

INGREDIENTS

400 gr small dry chickpeas	Juice of 3 lemons
6 peeled garlic cloves	Cumin
1/2 green chilli pepper	Salt
1/2 cup parsley	Hot paprika
1 cup good quality tahini	Olive oil

PREPARATION

1. Soak the chickpeas for at least 6 hours.
2. Drain, wash and cook in fresh water until soft but not mushy (this takes about 3 hours). While cooking, discard of any foam which forms on top of the water.
3. When soft, take off the hob, let cool and drain but save about 1 cup of the cooking liquid.
4. Put garlic, chilli pepper and parsley in a food processor and puree.
5. Add chickpeas and process again. Add as much cooking liquid as is needed to form a smooth paste, but do not over process.
6. Add the tahini, lemon juice and salt to taste and process again.
7. Serve topped with olive oil and garnished with hot paprika, cumin and chopped parsley.



Damascus Gate, on the Israeli side, called 'Akramawi' (it means he who comes from Ein Kerem). It's an Arab humus place and theirs is a bit different from the regular humus, in that it's not beige, but green, because they add chilli and parsley and it tastes amazing. (see recipe above) If you do go there you should bear in mind that humus is eaten for breakfast in Arab culture and their humus places close around 12 noon, so it's best to go for brunch if you don't want to have it for breakfast.

You've published 4 best-selling novels so far. Tell us a little

about them, and how your life experiences have impacted them.

My best-known work is called the 'Jerusalem Trilogy'; three memoirs I wrote about growing up in Jerusalem in the 60's and 70's. It's a 'Foodoir' – short stories which include the recipes of the food we ate at the time of the events written about. One of the books is translated into English and is called 'Candies from Heaven' and recently it was also translated into Chinese which I find amazing.

INTERVIEWED BY DALIA HAJIOFF AND STEVE WINSTON

We believe that food is the essence of every celebration. Our experienced team are here to make sure that every aspect of your party is catered to perfection.

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Shana Tova from the ZF and WZO

This Rosh Hashanah, remember a loved one at the heart of Israel's National Memorial.

Mount Herzl is the National Memorial site of the Jewish People and the State of Israel. Interred there are Theodor Herzl, the father of modern Zionism, together with other founders of Israel, Prime Ministers and Presidents, as well as many of Israel's fallen soldiers.

The Zionist Federation of the UK and Ireland, in partnership with the World Zionist Organisation, is proud to offer this opportunity to remember a loved one at the resting place of so many great leaders of Israel and the Jewish people, on a Memorial Board at the entrance to Mount Herzl and the Herzl Museum.

If you require any further information, please contact Dalia Hajioff on 020 8202 0202 or email dalia@zionist.org.uk

The ZF is the UK's leading Israel advocacy organisation, which offer projects with the opportunities to educate, empower and engage with people about Israel and Zionism in the UK.



Shana Tova & Happy New Year!

Thank you to our dear Ulpan students, partners and all participants who attended our Hebrew classes and events and made them even more exciting than we planned - Toda!

See you all in happiness and good health in the upcoming WZO activities

World Zionist Organisation In UK Team



שנת תש"פ טובה

wzouk@wzo.org.il | www.zionist.org.uk/speak-hebrew-like-an-israeli



Nefesh
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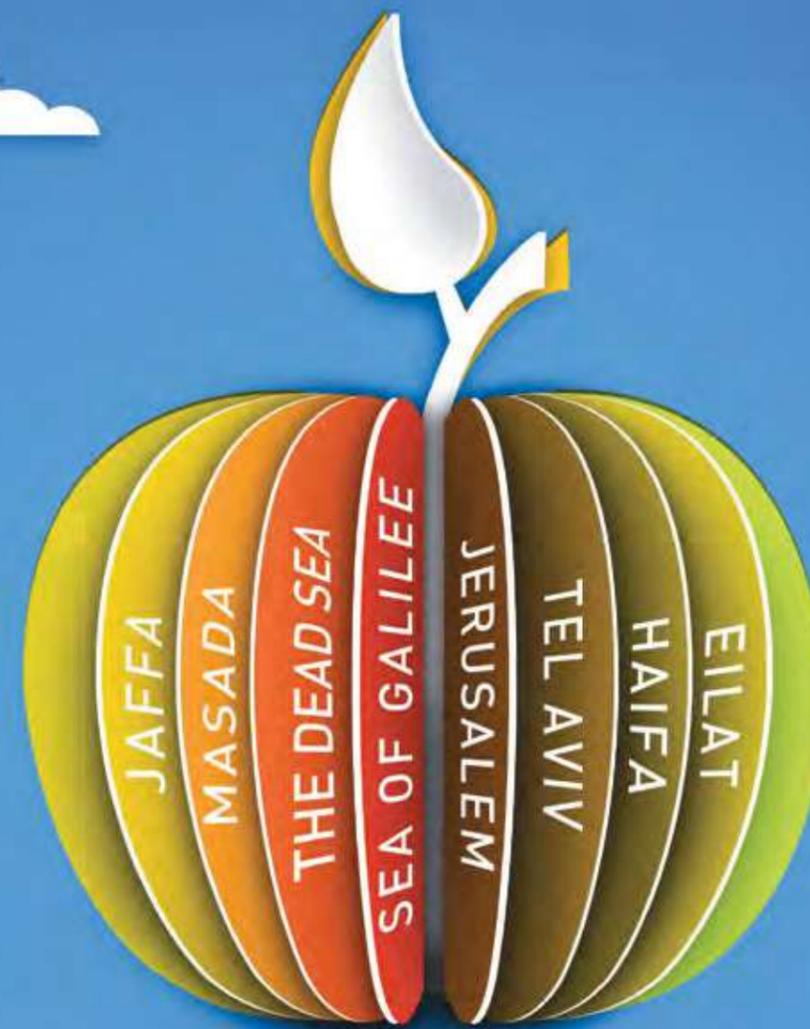
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- Guided tour of Ramallah, Rawabi and Bethlehem

**Please note the itinerary
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To book www.zionist.org.uk/event/Israeltrip2019
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THE LEADING ISRAEL ADVOCACY MAGAZINE IN THE UK | ISSUE NO. 7 | SEPTEMBER 2017



CONNECT MAGAZINE IS THE LEADING ISRAEL ADVOCACY MAGAZINE IN THE UK

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