

Drawing hope from tragedy - after the depravity of Oct. 7 comes realization that opposing antisemitism is a shared endeavor

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BEACHWOOD, Ohio -- Last month, the bodies of [six hostages](#), including one American, were found in a tunnel deep under Gaza. Five of the hostages had been abducted from a music festival and one from her home. They were [held in miserable conditions](#) for nearly a year before their captors murdered them in cold blood.

Learning of these six executions re-immersed me in the devastation that I felt nearly one year ago on Oct. 7, 2023. The [rape](#), [torture](#) and [depravity](#) that Hamas demonstrated that day is overwhelming.

When I gathered with my congregation that night, I said that our response to the terror must be pride – pride in Jewish heritage and history and faith. Something awful had happened. We were heartbroken. But we were there to observe a celebratory Jewish holiday and to be together as a community. So, I led my congregants in singing songs of Jewish peoplehood.

Maintaining that sense of strength this year has been a challenge as the Cleveland Jewish community has [experienced an outburst of harassment, intimidation and hate](#).

Now some members of the Jewish community understandably don't feel safe being identifiably Jewish. We have worked hard to protect them. Our synagogue, like most, has received Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) funds to enhance safety measures. On the morning of Oct. 7, we immediately increased protection at the synagogue, and have needed it elevated ever since.

The following Friday, Hamas [called for violence against Jews in America](#). That day, a caterer at our synagogue kept propping a door open. The officer on duty – one who was also there during the [Pittsburgh synagogue massacre](#) – was unsettled. He explained that we were on high alert. We don't leave doors open and unlocked in a synagogue.

Jewish day schools and preschools need armed security officers. Businesses have the burden of insurance, security equipment and more. I don't think that most people realize that, for Jews to go to synagogue and otherwise gather in Jewish settings, we incur a de facto [antisemitism tax](#). The costs are enormous and our security expenses have increased more than 500% in just the last five years.

There simply aren't enough funds from community institutions like the Jewish Federation or from government initiatives like the NSGP to cover everything. In fact, [only 43%](#) of applications for NSGP funding were fulfilled in the 2024 cycle.

The amount of security required for Jewish institutions is unusual — no other faith-based community is subject to this level of threat. When I participate in interfaith gatherings, I'm shocked to walk into a house of worship that is unguarded. I don't know that our non-Jewish friends understand what a privilege it is to be greeted at church by an open door.

The dangers facing the Jewish community have required [creative solutions](#) to address the [crisis of antisemitism on campus](#). But safety shouldn't be an individual responsibility, which is why the Senate must pass the [Antisemitism Awareness Act](#). This bill would give the U.S. Department of Education the ability to enforce anti-discrimination laws to protect Jewish students.

Passing this law is important for its content, but also because it shows that elected officials stand with the Jewish community. This is not Nazi Germany in the 1930s, and that is made clear thanks to the backing we get from political leaders and law enforcement. For every time my congregants and I experienced abuse for our support of Israel, there are also instances of strangers reaching out with encouragement and solidarity.

And so, if I can tear through the headlines and all of the incidents that seem scary and intimidating, I do still have hope. If our country can continue to work together on priorities like protecting houses of worship and the Antisemitism Awareness Act, America will continue to strive for its highest ideals.

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