

A year after Hamas attack, we praise Miami for its solidarity with Israel

Miami Herald

October 4, 2024

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Within days of Hamas' invasion of Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, Israeli Consul General Maor Elbaz-Starinsky in Miami spoke at Temple Beth Am in Pinecrest, where I serve as senior rabbi.

Hundreds of South Florida residents, including Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava, gathered to hear him mourn those murdered by the terrorists. It was a solemn evening.

As we would learn, the Oct. 7 attack wasn't just about a distant conflict. There were many families here impacted directly by Hamas' brutality. Following his remarks, Elbaz-Starinsky went to [inform](#) a local family that their brother, a [38-year-old father of four](#), had been killed fighting Hamas.

Hollywood Mayor Josh Levy's relatives—a 3-year-old boy, twin 6-year-old sisters and their parents—were also murdered as their house was burned down by Hamas terrorists who [shot them dead as they fled the smoke](#).

When I woke up on Oct. 7 and saw the headlines streaming out of Israel, I knew nothing would ever be the same for the Jewish community. I prepared to address my congregation during the Sabbath prayers. I asked a friend who lives in Sderot, an Israeli city about one mile away from the Gaza border, what was happening.

He told me, "We're under siege." Later, I would see the [videos of Hamas fighters](#) piled in pickup trucks, just like ISIS, roaming through Sderot's streets looking for Jews to kill.

One year later, despite the scars and sadness, our community has emerged as a model for combating the [resurgence of antisemitism](#) across the United States.

When a man [vandalized](#) a kosher bagel shop in Miami, Mayor Francis Suarez and U.S. District Judge Roy Altman personally helped [erase](#) the graffiti. When bomb threats were [emailed](#) to more than 50 Florida synagogues, Gov. Ron DeSantis responded, "Florida is prepared. We have put our money where our mouth is and if you are going to try to bring that to our state you are going to end up hitting a brick wall," he warned.

Indeed, Florida has invested in the protection of its Jewish citizens. Just weeks after Hamas' horrific attacks, Florida's legislature [passed](#) a bill providing \$45 million for Jewish institutions at risk of violent attacks or hate crimes.

Sadly, these federal funds are wholly insufficient; [57 percent](#) of applications for Nonprofit Security Grant Program funding were unfulfilled in the 2024 grant cycle.

On campus too, Florida has been a model for the rest of the nation. When anti-Israel protesters harassed Jewish college students around the country, our state showed it would not sanction this bigotry. Police [arrested](#) criminal protesters, and the University of Florida suspended some of these students and [banned](#) them from campus for three years.

Now it is time for the U.S. Senate to pass a federal law—the [Antisemitism Awareness Act](#)—that would give the Department of Education the ability to enforce federal anti-discrimination laws in order to protect Jewish students.

I'm proud of our solidarity with Israel. Just ten days after the Oct. 7 attack, Miami-Dade announced it would [purchase](#) more Israeli bonds to help the Jewish state. While some American city councils were passing [resolutions](#) demanding that Israel leave Hamas in a position to repeat the attacks, Florida cities were passing [resolutions](#) calling to defend Israel.

And, when the Miami Marlins [celebrated](#) Jewish Heritage Day, local cantors sang the Star-Spangled Banner and Hatikvah, Israel's national anthem. Jewish pride filled the stadium, the crowd was singing and there were no protests — something unthinkable in many American cities.

Miami has been a welcome bright spot amid the blight of anti-semitism surging across the U.S.

As Jews deal with their open wounds on the one-year anniversary of Hamas' Oct. 7 massacre, compounded by increased attacks on Jews in America, I know our city will continue to shine as an example of mutual respect, tolerance for others and intolerance for bigotry and hate.

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