

I'm a rabbi in Austin. Our pain since Oct. 7 has mostly been felt in isolation

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After Hamas attacked Israel on October 7 last year, many Austin Jews turned to Temple Beth Shalom, where I am the senior rabbi, to mourn and come together. But too many others have stayed away, afraid that such a clearly Jewish building could be a target.

When Jewish residents of Austin turned out to support Israel at an Austin City Council meeting this spring, they were spat upon. Others have had anti-Jewish slurs hurled at them, or anti-Jewish stereotypes dropped into casual conversation.

Jewish teenagers have told me they are constantly being baited by their peers or made to answer for a conflict they have no part in. For many, it's the first time in their lives that they've felt attacked for their religion. Previously they could choose whether and how to express their background. Now they are being publicly identified and forced to defend their faith.

For those in college, it can be much worse. We have students at universities who, before entering a building, were confronted with, "Are you a Zionist? Are you a Jew?" Parents who sent students off to school this fall are asking about their children's safety, and they are terrified.

As a rabbi, I have held a lot of congregants' pain, sadness and angst since that terrible October day last year. Unfortunately, outside of my community, I've largely held these feelings alone.

The post-October 7 isolation many in the Jewish community have experienced has been one of the hardest aspects of the past year. As a Jew who supports Israel, I have felt totally excluded as a lesbian woman from LGBTQ spaces. The silence and erasure of Jewish pain by former allies has been overwhelming.

Often the attitude expressed is that there's Palestinian pain and there's Jewish aggression. But in reality, there is Palestinian pain *and* there is Israeli Jewish, Druze and Arab pain. There are millions of people who have suffered intense trauma and dislocation on both sides of the war.

I feel it all, but too often I see no sympathy offered for the catastrophic loss and suffering in Israel. No acknowledgement of the hostages or hopes that they will be freed. No understanding that Israel continues to feel vulnerable as Hamas has vowed to repeat the

attacks of October 7. No appreciation for my community's risk from calls to "globalize the intifada."

It hasn't helped that a group claiming to speak for Jews – Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) – embraces the same one-sided view in which only Israel is to blame. This is a fringe position and in no way represents the Jewish community. Given that [85% of American Jewish](#) adults believe it is important for the U.S. to support Israel, groups like JVP shouldn't be given a megaphone by others.

This is not to say the Jewish community hasn't been warmly embraced by some. Several public figures have stood shoulder to shoulder with us and worked to keep us safe. But there should be more. I received wonderful support from fellow clergy of other faiths who did reach out – but they number less than five.

I hope that as we mark the anniversary of October 7, more leaders will reach out to have conversations that don't ignore the situation in Israel and Gaza but allow us to live in community together. It would mean so much to hear them say, "I see that you and your community are in pain. You are not alone."

The Jewish community needs strong partners who are willing to listen and engage. Together we need to find new ways of holding one another's pain and learning from each other respectfully and peacefully – ways that allow us to see the humanity in one another.

I'm ready. Who will join me?

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