

No, your Jewish and Palestinian friends are not doing okay



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PUBLISHED 5 HOURS AGO

UPDATED 4 HOURS AGO

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People light candles during a vigil for Israel in London, on Oct. 9, two days after Hamas fighters launched an unprecedented, multi-front attack on Israel.

KIN CHEUNG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

If you're wondering how your Jewish friends were doing over the Thanksgiving weekend, I know I shouldn't really speak for the lot of us, but: not well.

Canadian Jews – and everyone else – awoke on Saturday to the stunning news of [an invasion by Hamas](#) into Israel. The images were too much to bear. Little children and elderly people – including a Holocaust survivor in a wheelchair – rounded up and taken hostage. A woman's naked body being paraded through the streets on the back of a pickup truck. Families kidnapped and taken to Gaza. The crimes recorded on video for maximum humiliation.

And then, oh my God, the music festival. Dead young people, everywhere. Slaughtered. Parents desperately searching for their missing kids. Living their worst nightmare.

On Facebook, personal accounts from friends-of-friends and others in Jewish communities were excruciating. One described what happened to a woman's Israeli grandmother: "A terrorist came home to her, killed her, took her phone, filmed the horror and published it on her Facebook wall. This is how we found out."

The known death toll in Israel, as of Monday, stands at more than 800 people. Saturday's casualties amounted to [the most Jews killed in a single day since the Holocaust](#). All in one very small country.

It was immediately clear what would come next: [an Israeli bombardment on Gaza](#), where hundreds of innocent people have now already died as a result. All in one tiny territory.

On Monday, the Israeli military ordered [a blockade of food, fuel and electricity](#) to Gaza, where life is already miserable for so many people who had nothing to do with these attacks.

The attacks were carried out by [Hamas](#), which the Canadian government [lists as a terrorist organization](#) and whose founding charter called for the destruction of the State of Israel.

Over the weekend, social media was flooded by messages of support for Israel – from the Prime Minister and Premiers, opposition leaders, community leaders.

But also, something else. Videos of [people celebrating](#). The barbaric murder of civilians was being commended as resistance, the cruelty applauded. Not just in Gaza or the West Bank. Here, in Canada.

And then there were the justifications and victim-blaming. One Canadian journalist I follow on X (formerly Twitter) wrote about the need for context, whether you "agree with the tactics or not."

Who would agree with the tactic of taking children and old ladies hostage? Murdering them?

On Saturday, in a now-deleted post on X, a union representing academic workers at McMaster University, celebrated the attacks: “Palestine is rising, long live the resistance,” followed by a flower emoji. (When I contacted CUPE Local 3906 to inquire, I received an out-of-office message.) Meanwhile, at Harvard, more than 30 student organizations [released a statement](#) saying Israel was “entirely responsible” for the unfolding violence. Imagine being a Jewish student, professor or employee at these schools.

The dislocation and oppression of Palestinian people is despised by many liberal Jews like myself – in Israel and in the diaspora. Many Canadian Jews support a State of Israel but oppose, even loathe, the current government. The hardline, anti-democratic, right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu has brought [tens of thousands of Israelis](#) into the streets to protest.

But to hold triumphant pro-Palestinian rallies while bullet-ridden bodies are still lying in Israeli streets, shot-up cars and invaded homes? While their families are still searching for their loved ones? This feels like more than a betrayal.

It feels scary.

For some, the events of the past three days have actually been triggering. Many Jews are descended from Holocaust survivors, victims of pogroms, and other violent campaigns against our ancestors who were targeted because they were Jewish. My parents were Holocaust survivors and I promise you the inherited trauma is real. I have spent my life having nightmares about being hunted, hiding for my life.

We tell ourselves we are not being rational; the Holocaust was long ago and we are safe and under no threat. We, maybe with the help of professionals, try to calm our irrational, epigenetically altered minds.

And then we see Jews being rounded up, humiliated and slaughtered. Just like our ancestors were.

I know this sounds bizarre, but trust me, this is a real thing. I wrote a whole book about it.

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