17th EUROPEAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF ICJW

May 19–22, 2024

Bratislava – Slovakia

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN

Matúš Vallo

Mayor of Bratislava
Capital City
of the Slovak Republic

takes auspices over the conference

International Council of Jewish Woman (ICJW)

May 19-23, 2024
in Bratislava

November 29, 2023 in Bratislava

Dear Colleagues and Distinguished Guests,

It is an honor for me to welcome you to the 17th European Regional Conference of the International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW). I would like to express my most sincere thanks to the organizing group constituted by Alice Vesela regional president of Europe, Cornelia Levi regional vice president of Europe, Marta Gyoriova President of Association Ester in Slovakia, Leonie de Piccioto UN representative in Geneva for their hard work and dedication in making this very important event possible.

During the next few days, an intense program full of information, learning and opportunities to strengthen ties awaits us. This conference will give us the opportunity to share experiences, knowledge and perspectives that will enrich our work and our commitment to the Jewish community and society in general.

We will never forget the tragic date of October 7 a day that changed our lives as human beings in the face of the events committed. Now more than ever we must remain united supporting the state of Israel, they are our roots that we must not forget.

As Jewish women, we all share a special bond, it is a time to reflect on our heritage, our identity and our role in this world.

I hope we make the most of these days of coexistence and collaboration. I am sure that together we will be able to make this conference a memorable and meaningful experience.

Welcome everyone.

Lilian Grinberg

President of the International Council
of Jewish Women (ICJW)

Dear friends,

It is with great warmth and enthusiasm that we extend our heartfelt welcome to Bratislava for the 17th ICJW European Regional Conference!

While we are accustomed to gathering virtually through our Zoom meetings, there is truly no substitute for coming together in person. In these uncertain times, the value of personal connections cannot be overstated, and we believe that our physical presence here will foster a stronger sense of unity and camaraderie among us all.

Our decision to convene in Bratislava was deliberate and thoughtful, driven by several compelling reasons. Firstly, we recognize that many of you may never have had the opportunity to visit this captivating city in Central Europe, and we are excited to unveil its hidden treasures together. Moreover, Bratislava holds significant historical and cultural significance for many of us, as it is a place with deep roots in Slovak Jewish history and heritage, intertwined with our own personal stories.

Throughout the conference, we invite you to delve deeper into the rich tapestry of history and heritage, as we have curated an engaging and enlightening program for your enjoyment and edification. May your time in Bratislava be filled with meaningful connections, enriching experiences, and moments of profound insight.

As we gather here in Bratislava for this momentous occasion, it is impossible to ignore the somber realities that cast their shadow over our proceedings. In the wake of recent events, particularly the unrest surrounding October 7 and the ongoing challenges faced by our brethren in Israel, our hearts weigh heavy with concern and solidarity. Moreover, the troubling resurgence of anti-Semitism across Europe and around the globe serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing struggle for tolerance, understanding, and justice. In this backdrop, our commitment to fostering unity, dialogue, and mutual respect within our community and beyond is more vital than ever before. Let us stand together in resilience and determination, drawing strength from our shared heritage and collective resolve to confront these pressing issues with courage and conviction.

With warm regards,

The Conference Organizing Committee
Alice, Marta, Cornelia

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Mary Lilling and Leonie De Piciotto for their invaluable contributions and wise counsel throughout the planning process. Their dedication, expertise, and unwavering support have been instrumental in shaping the success of this conference. We are deeply grateful for their commitment to our shared mission and vision, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration in the future.

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The history of Jews in Slovakia spans over a millennium, with the earliest documented records tracing back to the 11th century. Initially settling as merchants and traders in various urban centers, Jewish communities gradually flourished, particularly in cities like Bratislava, Kosice, and Presov.

Throughout the Middle Ages, Slovak Jews navigated a complex landscape of prosperity and persecution. Despite contributing significantly to commerce, finance, and crafts, they faced discriminatory laws and violent outbreaks, including expulsions and pogroms.

By the 18th and 19th centuries, Slovak Jews had become integral to the region‘s industrial and educational sectors. Notable figures emerged during this period, such as the industrialists and philanthropists.

However, the 20th century brought unprecedented challenges. Under the Nazi puppet state led by Jozef Tiso during World War II, Slovakia implemented anti-Jewish laws and participated in the deportation of around 70,000 Jews to concentration camps.

Following the war, Slovakia‘s Jewish community endured further hardships under communist rule, leading many to emigrate. Despite these challenges, individuals like Peter Weiss, a prominent mathematician known for his contributions to functional analysis and probability theory, persisted in their pursuits and achieved international recognition.

Since the fall of communism in 1989, Slovakia‘s Jewish community has experienced a modest revival. Notable efforts include the restoration of synagogues and the preservation of Jewish heritage. Organizations like the Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Slovakia, led by Rabbi Baruch Myers, have played a pivotal role in fostering Jewish cultural and religious life.

Today, while the Jewish population in Slovakia remains relatively small compared to pre-war numbers, individuals like Pavol Demitra, a celebrated ice hockey player who represented Slovakia internationally, continue to exemplify the community‘s resilience and contributions to Slovak society. Through their perseverance and dedication, Slovakia‘s Jewish community ensures that its rich history and heritage are remembered and celebrated for generations to come.

Here are some additional well-known Slovak Jews:

Peter Lorre: Born as László Löwenstein in Rózsahegy (now Ruzomberok), he became a renowned actor known for his roles in classic films such as „Casablanca“ and „The Maltese Falcon.“
Ladislav Grosman: A Slovak writer and Holocaust survivor known for his novel „The Shop on Main Street,“ which was later adapted into an Academy Award-winning film.
Alexander Spitzmüller: A distinguished physicist and mathematician, Spitzmüller made significant contributions to the field of quantum mechanics and served as a professor at Comenius University in Bratislava.
Arnošt Lustig: Though born in what is now the Czech Republic, Lustig spent part of his childhood in Slovakia. He was a prominent writer and Holocaust survivor, known for his novels and short stories depicting Jewish life during World War II.
Pavol Hochschorner and Peter Hochschorner: Identical twin brothers and Olympic gold medalists in canoe slalom, the Hochschorner brothers represented Slovakia in numerous international competitions and became icons in Slovak sports.
Ladislav Bielik: A Slovak photographer best known for his iconic photograph capturing the moment of an unarmed civilian facing a Soviet tank during the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, known as the „Prague Spring.“
Pavol Demitra: As previously mentioned, Demitra was a highly regarded ice hockey player who represented Slovakia internationally and played in the NHL for teams like the St. Louis Blues and the Minnesota Wild.

17th European Regional Conference
May 19–22, 2024

FROM TRADITION TO THE FUTURE
– Diversity and Unity of Judaism in Europe

Under the patronage of Mr. Matus Vallo Mayor of Bratislava

VENUE: Radisson Blu Carlton Hotel, Bratislava

Sunday, May 19:

OPENING

14:00–16:00 Registration

17:00 **Reception in the Bratislava City Hall:**
Welcome by **Mr. Matus Vallo**, *Mayor of Bratislava*
Folklore intermezzo
Greetings by **Mr. Juraj Droba,** *Governor for the Bratislava Region*
Mr. Misha Kapustin, *Rabbi of the Jewish Federation of Slovakia*
Words of thanks: Alice Vesela and Marta Gyoriova

19:30 **Welcome Dinner**
Welcome words by **Marta Gyoriova,** *Ester Association Slovakia*
and **Lilian Grinberg,** *International ICJW President*
The guest speakers will be introduced by **Alice Vesela,** *ICJW European President:*
H.E. Mr. Eitan Levon, *Ambassador of Israel to Slovakia*
Mr. Richard Duda, *President of the Jewish Federation in Slovakia*

Monday, May 20:

SAFEGUARDING OUR HERITAGE IN A CHALLENGING WORLD

09:00 **Jews in Slovakia in the 20th century**
Dr. Martin Korcok
Director of the Sered Holocaust Museum

09:45 **Jewish women who influenced the world**
Lecture and exhibition
Dr. Michal Vanek
Director of the Bratislava Jewish Museum

10:30 **Transformation of the Jewish Community of Slovakia from Chatam Sofer until today**
PhDr. Peter Salner, DrSc.
Ethnologist, Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology, SASc
Speakers will be introduced and discussion
moderated by **PhDr. Eva Salner,** *former Political Advisor at the American Embassy in Slovakia*

11:15 Coffee break

11:30 **Personal testimonies - first and second generation**
Hana Berger Moran, *born to survive*
Marta Gyoriova, *daughter of Shoah survivors*

12:15 **In the footsteps of the Jewish heroes**
Presentation: **Karin Vik**
Chair of the association Vrba Wetzler Memorial

13:00 Lunch

14:00 **Panel discussion - Women, solidarity and collective action in the fight against discrimination**
in partnership with National Democratic Institute (www.ndi.org)
Katalin Pécsi, Teodora Kosturkova, Anna Zielińska, Eliza Gaust
moderator **Anna Makowka,** *Program Manager NDI Poland*

16:00 Coffee break

17:00 **Discovering Jewish Bratislava** by **Tomáš Stern** and **Martin Záni**
Guided tour (Holocaust Monument, Chatam Sofer, Synagogue, Old Town)

19:30 back at the hotel, free evening

Tuesday, May 21:

09:00 **Presentation of the ICJW video**
Lilian Grinberg
ICJW International President

09:15 **Stand in Your Spotlight**
Jennifer Prisk (from New Zealand via zoom)
Coach for Women's Empowerment

QUO VADIS EUROPE

10:00 **In the Shadow of October 7th**
Vivian Teitelbaum, *Journalist and author, Member of the Brussels Parliament, Co-founder and President of the Feminist Observatory for Violence Against Women* (video)

10:30 Coffee break

10:45 **Anna Staroselski**, *Spokesperson for WerteInitiative e.V., political and non-profit association that has established itself as a voice of the Jewish society in Germany*
Sharon Shenhav, *International Women's Rights Lawyer, Israel*
Gilian Gold, *ICJW life member, Head of the Constitution Committee, former ICJW European President, UK*
Evelyn Askolovich, *President of the ICJW Committee on Anti-Semitism and Racism, France*
Moderated by **Cornelia Levi**, *ICJW European Vice President, Germany*

12:30 Lunch

13:30 **Workshop: Round table discussions**

15:15 Coffee break

15:30 Panel: **Future of Judaism in Europe**
Dagmar Gavornikova, *President of Maccabi Europe*
Anna Makowka, *Jewish Association Czulent Krakow, Program Manager NDI*
Anna Staroselski, *spokesperson for Werteinitiative e. V.*
NN, (TBC) *Young Ambassador WJC*
Moderated by **Alice Vesela**

17:00 **Conclusion of the conference: Léonie de Picciotto**
ICJW representative at the UN Geneva
Vice Chair of the NGO Committee on Human Rights

19:00 **Closing dinner** on the Danube river

Wednesday, May 22: DEPARTURES

The National Democratic Institute is an international organization, with headquarters in Washington, D.C. NDI has been supporting democratic institutions and democratic practices for over 40 years. Since its founding in 1983, NDI has worked at the local level around the world to strengthen and protect democratic institutions, processes, norms and values to ensure a better quality of life for all. The institute has operated in over 156 countries and currently has over 50 offices working to strengthen and support democracy around the world.

Among others, in Central Europe, NDI implements the "Promoting Religious Freedom and Combating Anti-Semitism" initiative in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine. The initiative is funded by the U.S. State Department's Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. NDI sees religious freedom as the right to choose, express, and change religious belief and affiliation.

Integral to this right is peaceful coexistence and mutual tolerance among religious communities and in society as a whole.

Our topic: Navigating Intersectional Discrimination: A Panel Discussion on women, solidarity, and collective action in the fight against discrimination

The panel discussion will deeply explore the intricate dynamics of intersectional discrimination faced by women, with a particular focus on antisemitism and the indispensable role of interfaith collaboration in confronting such challenges. To foster dialogue, exchange of best practices, and underscore the significance of cities' involvement in championing inclusivity and equality, the event brings together a diverse array of experts, activists, and community leaders. Through a lens of intersectionality, the panel will dissect how various forms of discrimination intersect, exacerbating the hurdles faced by marginalized groups, especially women. Panelists will draw upon their experiences and insights to share strategies for combating multifaceted layers of discrimination, reflecting on successful initiatives and collaborations that have effectively promoted tolerance and empowered communities. Emphasizing the pivotal role of cities in driving positive change, the discussion will showcase innovative city-led initiatives that advance inclusivity, diversity, and social justice. Attendees will have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of intersectional discrimination, exchange ideas, and explore actionable steps toward building more equitable and inclusive communities, thus contributing to the broader mission of fostering equality and justice for all.

Panelists:

Eliza Gaust, an antidiscrimination trainer and consultant specializing in Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. She serves as a Plenipotentiary for Equality Policy under the Mayor of Łódź, advocating for equitable practices in public policy. Eliza holds the position of Vice President at the HaKoach Association, where she leads numerous projects, including the social campaign „We Catch Your Words" in 2023, ahead of the parliamentary elections in Poland. This initiative focused on recognizing and addressing hate speech in political discourse. As one of the pioneers of the Living Library concept in Poland, Eliza has been coordinating these efforts in Łódź since 2014, promoting dialogue and understanding through innovative community engagement. Additionally, she leads the Refugee Rights Team as part of the „Our Advocate" initiative, championing the rights of refugees and marginalized communities.

Katalin Pécsi, an educator and a literary historian. Her main field of research is: women's narratives of the Holocaust. Her two anthologies of „Untold Stories of Jewish Women" have been published in Hungarian, English & German. Katalin has set up a traveling exhibition, as well as written several articles and conference presentations on women's specific memories and narratives. Her Jewish women's group, the Esthers'Hous Association for Jewish Culture and Feminist Values, was founded in 2007. They have had a regular book club since 2014 and a new discussion program called FemIntell. They organize conferences and workshops and participate in research on different topics of Jewish women. They cooperate with several Jewish, feminist and human rights organizations. Eszters'Haus Association is the Hungarian affiliate of the International Council of Jewish Women.

Teodora Kosturková has a Master degree in Philosophy, MA degree in international relations. Steering committee member of CCADD (Permanent Conference on Christian Approach to Defence and Disarmament), executive member of NGO Parliament of the World's Religions Slovakia. Her main areas of professional expertise and interests are Christian approach to peace and war with focus on nuclear armament from ethical point of view, peace processes at both global level (nuclear disarmament) and grassroot level as peaceful coexistence between different ethnic and religious communities, interfaith and intercultural dialogue, political and social preconditions for overcoming mistrust, intolerance, extremism and xenophobia. Currently she coordinates the initiative for interfaith dialogue in Slovakia.

Anna Zielińska is an expert on tolerance and non-discrimination and combatting antisemitism. Currently, she holds a position as a board member of the Jewish Association Czulent, where she focuses on addressing hate crimes, hate speech, antisemitism, and advocacy. As a civil society activist, Anna holds various positions in international and local organizations - she is a member of the Steering Committee of the ENCATE Network and a member of the Executive Committee of the International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW). She sits on the advisory board of the Centre for Combating Antisemitism and Intolerance in Belgrade, Serbia. In her previous position, Anna served as an anti-Semitism Advisor to the Office for Security and Cooperation in Europe / Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, where she was responsible for monitoring trends and developments in 57 countries. She also served as an antisemitism advisor to the Jewish Community of Warsaw. Anna graduated in law from the University of Warsaw and Cambridge British Law School. In addition, she completed postgraduate studies in Middle East politics and history at Tel Aviv University. Her advocacy work began with a fellowship at the American Jewish Committee DC office. She held the position of conference director for Poland and oversaw the organization of conferences in the Middle East for AIPAC. Anna also authorizes international law and tolerance and non-discrimination and antisemitism publications

Anna Makówka-Kwapisiewicz is a historian, journalist, social activist, and expert in civic engagement and human rights protection. Since 2016, she has been collaborating with the National Democratic Institute, implementing projects to strengthen political and civic organizations and promote civic participation, government transparency, and accountability. With twenty years of experience in advocacy, promoting tolerance, and shaping attitudes of openness towards national, ethnic, religious, and LGBT+ minorities, with a particular emphasis on combating antisemitism and discrimination, including intersectional discrimination. In her international activities, she focuses on supporting and developing non-governmental organizations working for an inclusive society, as well as combating discrimination and hate crimes. In this regard, she has cooperated with organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), European Liberal Forum (ELF), European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Ombudsman for Citizens' Rights, Religions for Peace, Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW), and American Jewish Committee (AJC). Currently member of the Advisory Expert Board at the European Network on Monitoring Antisemitism (ENMA).

Collaboration of ICJW with NDI

ICJW has been cooperating with NDI since 2016. Our members from Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic participate in educational seminars on the topic of the democratization process, coalitions of national and religious minorities, the fight against xenophobia, etc. Together we create various projects. Cooperation with NDI is a valuable benefit for us.

Evelyn Askolovich

was born in the Netherlands to German-Jewish parents in exile in Amsterdam. When she was four years old, she and her parents were arrested after a tip-off and deported. Due to the terrible experiences, the doors of her memory were closed. She does not remember the second but the doors opened in the third concentration camp Bergen Belsen where her family and she stayed for a year.
After having been exchanged end January, 100 Jews with a South American passport, amongst which her family, were transported to a British internees camp where the 30 children went to classes held by her mother and a close friend of her and she learned to write, read and count and to become real child again.
Her family and others owed their survival to fake passports, but duly signed by the concerned countries which were neutral during the war.
Now she lives in Paris, goes to schools, tells students about the Holocaust and participates in many projects.
The French Republic recognized her for this two times: in 2017 the highest remark of the Palmes Académiques and in 2021 Chevalier de la Legion d'honneur.
As an eighty-five-year-old survivor of the Nazi camps, she looks back on her life in a book she wrote with her son Claude.
Evelyn is also the President of the ICJW Commission on Anti-Semitism and Racism.

Dr. med. Dagmar Gavornikova

is the daughter of a Holocaust survivor who survived the Auschwitz-Birkenau and Vrchlabi concentration camps. Inspired by her mother, Herta Vysna, who dedicated her life to social work for members of the Jewish community, Dagmar has followed in her footsteps.
Since 2001, she has led the Slovak Maccabi Organization, and since 2019, she has been the President of Maccabi Europe. In addition, she is a member of the board of the Jewish communities of Slovakia, member of B'nai B'rith and the European Jewish Parliament.
Professionally, she works as a gynecologist and currently heads the gynecological department of the Interklinik - private clinic in Bratislava.
Dagmar is President of the Maccabi Europe: Promoting Sports and Jewish Identity. In addition to these activities, Maccabi in the last years is more involved in social and humanitarian work than ever before.
Recognition and Awards: The highest international Maccabi award - the Yakir Maccabi Award in 2022 and the Award of the Olympic Committee in 2023 for her significant contribution to the development of Olympism and sport, with a proposal / offer to include Maccabi in the structures of the Olympic Committee.

Gillian Gold

joined the League of Jewish Women in 1972. She served on the Executive Committee of the League from 1977 in a number of positions, becoming President in 1991. She was also involved in hands on voluntary work, including founding a kosher meals on wheel service with a partner (here today), which then became a Day Centre for elderly and disabled people, open four days a week, serving 40 people, with another 40 receiving meals on wheels.
Gillian first became involved with ICJW in 1977 when the European Conference was held in London. She was Convention Secretary for the 1984 Bournemouth Convention and joined the ICJW Executive as affiliate president in 1991. Since that time she has been UK Vice President, European Regional Chair and co-chaired the Nominations, Isobel Brown Training Grant and Grants Committees. She presently chairs the Constitution Committee.
Gillian was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1981, chairing criminal, family and youth courts, retiring after 30 years service. She was also appointed to the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee for her area, which advises on appointment and disciplining of lay magistrates, and served on interview panels for 11 years.

Martin Korčok

was born in 1979 in Košice. He studied at the Department of Ethnology and Non-European Studies of the Faculty of Arts of University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava. After graduation, he began working for the Slovak National Museum – Museum of Jewish Culture, where he was the deputy director. Currently he is the Head of the Sereď Holocaust Museum. While working for the museum, he absolved external studies at the Department of Ethnology and Museology of the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava, where he obtained his PhD.

Since 2005 he has been serving as a permanent expert of the Slovak Ministry of Culture for Holocaust memorial creation, and in the same year he became a member of the Slovak delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). In 2020 he led the Commitee on the Genocide of Roma, and during this time the IHRA adopted a non-legally binding working definition of antigypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination. Since 2021 he has represented the IHRA on the Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers Issues ADI-ROM in the Council of Europe.

He founded Edah, a non-profit association, where he produced 50 films with survivors, published supporting educational materials about Holocaust for secondary schools, and organized training programs for teachers and students at home and abroad. Under his leadership, the Sereď Holocaust Museum became the largest educational centre in the field of human rights in Slovakia. Annually, it educates more than 15,000 young people, mostly between the ages of 14 and 19, as well as educators and state and local government officials. This activity makes a fundamental contribution to the fight against anti-Semitism, racism, and xenophobia and to the building of a democratic society in a global context, also thanks to the cooperation with foreign partners, mainly through their embassies in the Slovak Republic.

He has published studies in domestic and foreign publications dealing with Holocaust and education. He has put on several photo exhibitions on the topic of the Holocaust, which were seen by visitors in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Israel, China, Canada and USA.

He has received multiple awards, for example from the Public Ombudsman for contributions in the area of protection of basic human rights and freedoms in 2021, and the Anton Srholec Freedom Award for outstanding contributions to the protection of human rights, strengthening democracy and the rule of law, and manifestations of exceptional civic courage in 2021.

Hana Berger Moran, Ph.D.

Born April 1945 in a concentration/ slave labor camp, Freiberg/ Sachsen near Dresden.

Her whole family was annihilated and it was Hana's mother, great uncle and Hana's one aunt who stayed alive.

She decided to study chemistry, to be able to make medications. That continued after the 1968 invasion when she and a father of her son, that she was expecting, left and emigrated to Israel. There she started to work and later study in The Weitzman Institute of Science and after the completion of her degree she came to USA, to Chicago, to complete her education as a postdoctoral fellow.

The goal all her life was to give back – to save as many people as possible – she did not wish to be a physician – she wanted to make medications which would help people and hopefully save them from suffering.

And that is what she did until her retirement.

Jenni Prisk

founded Prisk Communication in 1990 in San Diego, California, to provide exemplary public speaking and communication skills. She has coached hundreds of individuals and corporate teams internationally. Jenni is a dynamic motivational speaker.

Jenni was born and raised in New Zeeland; she has a diploma in Adult Teaching and qualified as a Communications Instructor, and a diploma from Trinity College, London, for speech and drama.

In 1983 she moved with her husband to San Diego, where she was a faculty professor at the San Diego University in the Nonprofit Management and Leadership Program. From 2016-2018 she chaired the Association of the California Commission on the Status of Women!

Eva Salnerová

Political specialist advising on Slovak political parties, their players and other areas of public life in Slovakia (e.g. governmental system, parliament, educational and research institutes, media, labor organizations, local governments, ethnic and religious minorities. My portfolio included, among others, contacts and working with the Jewish community of Slovakia
She represent the Slovak JC at the Annual Meeting of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), based in N.Y. and Washington D.C. In the following years Eva participated at a number of AJC meetings, several times as a speaker in panel discussions concerning my Jewish experience in the Communist Czechoslovakia and also presented the topic of the Revival of the JC of Slovakia. Together with the chairman of the Federation of JC of Slovakia she became a local advisor to the leaders of AJC on various issues concerning Slovak Jewry, such as antisemitism, education on the Holocaust and Jewish history, financial compensation of the Slovak Jewish community for stolen property during the Holocaust.

PhDr. Peter Salner, DrSc

Ethnologist, Senior researcher
Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava
In my research I have been focusing on the Ethnological research of social culture of the Jews in Slovakia in the 20-21st centuries, I authored 20 professional books and numerous scientific studies published at home and abroad. From 1990-2017 I was also a member of the Jewish Community of Bratislava Board and from 1996-2013 I served as the Head of the Jewish Community. In the years of 1999-2002 I was actively involved in the reconstruction of the Chatam Sofer Memorial.
Married, with one son.

Sharon Shenhav

Born in Chicago in July,1939, Sharon graduated from the University of Chicago with a B.A. in Sociology with Special Honors in 1959. She worked as a social worker in several cities in the US for 5 years and then studied law at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. in 1969. She practiced law in a small public interest firm in Washington, becoming a partner before making Aliyah to Israel in 1979.In 1980 Sharon established a women's legal service for the labor federation Histadrut which expanded to 43 legal offices across the country. She represented hundreds of agunot, women chained to unwanted or non-existent marriages in the Rabbinical Courts of Israel and was elected to the 10 member statutory Commission to Appoint Dayanim (rabbinical court judges) in 1992 where she served two terms. In 1997 Sharon established the International Jewish Women's Rights Project of ICJW. She was the director of this project which was dedicated to freeing agunot until 2017 and visited almost 30 affiliates, meeting with community groups, women's organizations , law students, lawyers and rabbis. Sharon is married to Eliezer and the mother of two and grandmother of 5.

Anna Staroselski

is a spokesperson for WerteInitiative e.V., a political and non-profit association that has established itself as a voice of the Jewish society in Germany. The association is committed to strengthening the values of the liberal-democratic constitution from a Jewish perspective by promoting value-based political, social and media discourse, civic-Jewish engagement in Germany and supporting German-Israeli relations. The focus of the association's activities is internal security, integration, prevention and countering of extremism, antisemitism, and xenophobia. As part of her work, Ms. Staroselski conducts background discussions with members of the Bundestag, other politicians and socially relevant actors, makes public statements and recommendations, is active

in social media daily, and hosts panel discussions and political salons. She previously served as policy advisor and staffer to FDP Bundestag Members Linda Teuteberg and Till Mansmann, as well as President of the Jewish Student Union which represents more than 25,000 young Jews between the ages of 18 and 35.

MUDr. Tomas Stern

Former Chairman of the Slovak Union of Jewish Students, and Chairman of the Bratislava Jewish Community.
He has been actively involved in Jewish community life since 1989. He worked as editor-in-chief of Chochmes magazine, later editor-in-chief of Kehila magazine. He is the co-founder of Czech-Slovak Internet television Tachles. For 30 years, he has been documenting the history of the Jewish community and its monuments (synagogues and cemeteries) in Slovakia.
He is a member of the Supervisory Board of the Institute of National Remembrance and the founder of the non-profit organization Jewrope, whose main goal is the support of cultural and social activities in Slovakia, the development of extensive humanitarian aid abroad and the support of the printing of periodicals aimed at promoting human rights.

MA Michal Vaněk, PhD.

Director of the Museum of Jewish Culture
Since 2008, he has been working at the Slovak National Museum – Museum of Jewish Culture in Bratislava, where he was hired as head of documentation and later curator. Since 2009 in the position of deputy director of this institution and since 2021 as its director. As part of the Museum of Jewish Culture, he carries out and solves scientific research and development tasks and research and development work in the field of the history of Jews in Slovakia and the Holocaust. He creatively applies the achieved results to all areas of museum and pedagogical activities. In the presentation area, it uses collection items and visual and textual documents about the history of the Jewish community for the organization of exhibitions and educational events of the Museum of Jewish Culture.

Karin Vik

Since 2019, I have been working at the global organization – International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, as a project manager. ICEJ is dedicated to Israel and anti-Semitism topics, educational and humanitarian activities and to building bridges between Jews and Christians. One of ICEJ's projects is the Vrba Wetzler Memorial, established in 2014.
I have lived in Prague for more than half of my life, where I studied Media Studies. Before joining ICEJ, I was an interviewer at a Christian radio station – Trans world media, where my work was mainly focused on Jewish thematic. Currently, I am the Chair of the newly formed civic association, Vrba Weztler Memorial, whose goal is to gain corporate and individual sponsors for the development of the long-term goals of VWM.
I am newly married and recently moved from Bratislava to the nearby Moravian capital – Brno.

Dr. Martin Záni

Guide and lecturer at the Jewish Community Museum. He cooperates with Slovak Radio on the Dominant and Alleys of the Old Town program sessions, which you will learn about history and architecture.
In the past, he was the chairman of the Slovak Union of Jewish Youth and a madrich in the Jewish children's camps Moadon and Szarvash.

The League of Jewish Women

Wishes the
International Council of Jewish Women
a successful
17th European Regional Conference
19th May-22nd May 2024
Bratislava, Slovakia

The League is a national welfare organisation founded in 1943.
Our dedicated volunteers undertake projects in the wider community
adding value to the lives of people of all ages.

BIANNUAL REPORTS FOR ICJW, BRATISLAVA CONFERENCE MAY 2024

Council of Jewish Women of Belgium, CFJB/LJVB

In these difficult times for Israel and Am Israel, people from all the Jewish organisations in Belgium, including our members, support Israel and participate in various activities, including initiatives against antisemitism.

Every Sunday at 11pm in different locations in Brussels, Jewish people gather to walk or run for about one hour with T-shirts and pictures of the hostages, in order to raise awareness among the population about the plight of the hostages in Gaza. At the end of the walk, they create a short video and send it to the hostages' families, who receive the same videos from all over the world, showing them our solidarity.

Every Jewish community in each of the big cities in Belgium (especially in Antwerp and Brussels) is organising different initiatives to support Israel. Our members and representatives participate in different activities in their cities. Antwerp organised an evening with some of the hostages who returned from Gaza after 50 days. Brit Am organisation will organise a similar evening, in Brussels on 15 April, to mark 6 months of the war with two of the hostages who returned from Gaza after 50 days.

CFJB/LJVB, our organisation, had the usual annual General Assembly on 17 March. In that meeting members from all the organisations which are under our wings came together by person or by Zoom.

Mary Liling also attended the General Assembly, as she does for most of our meetings, by Zoom from Israel. She presented her report from the Council of Human Rights in Geneve.

Lucette Pilcer is our member, and she is ICJW representative to the European Women's Lobby. As at every meeting she presented her report also.

Our representatives presented reports about their activities in Belgian organisations, we discussed and made decisions about recent issues whilst enjoying coffee, cakes and fruits.

FORUM of the Jewish Organisation, by Nadine Iarchy

The FORUM is a Jewish organisation in Antwerp. Of course, in the last months the topic has been antisemitism. Our relations with the local and national police are very good as with the Antwerp mayor. After few Jewish children got problems on their way to school, a special meeting with all the

headmasters of schools from kindergarten till high school has been organised. A special day of get together will take place with workshops about inclusion, exclusion, bulling, intimidation etc.

But the number of lectures about Judaism to non-Jewish schools and public collapse, for all kind of reasons.

At the Forum we are anxious to see the results of the European and national elections on 9 June and the local elections in the Autumn. Some of our Antwerp Ulta-Orthodox members are lobbying to vote for the Extreme-Right party, because they are against the migration from Muslim countries!

They definitely never learnt something about history.

Interfaith, by Nadine Iarchy

Since October 7, 2023, our meetings, the nationals as the locals, are held in a tense atmosphere.

The participants are caution by using some words, which might be taken by one or the others in a wrong way. It makes working together more difficult.

On April 2 in the main synagogue of Belgium in Brussels there was a special service to thank the former head of the Catholic church of Belgium for his work in the last 10 years and to introduce the new Archbishop. By Catholic standard he is very young (55). We will see if his approach to dialogue is as open as it was before.

CCOJB, report by Denise Sadeh, our representative

CCOJB is the committee of Coordination of Jewish Organisation of Belgium.

On 25 October 2023 they organised a meeting of families of Israeli hostages with George Bouchez, the president of MR, the French speaking Liberal party, at the European institutions and with Alexander De Croo, the Belgian Prime Minister, whose empathetic remarks at the time became hostile to Israel. On the same day, the CCOJB organised in Brussels a dinner table with empty chairs, with the pictures of the hostages. A solidarity trip to Israel organised on 30-31 October, a visit to Sderot and a meeting with the Mayor Amir Peretz, the former Israeli Minister of Defence. They had discussions with the army spokesman, with families of hostages, with displaced families and interviews with the press.

On 12 December there was a National March against antisemitism. All the political parties were represented. It was not a successful March; we have a very hostile environment in Belgium.

On 20 December 2023 Yeves Oschinsky, CCOJB president, receives a Royal Audience together with Regina Sluszny, Forum president, Julien Klener and Philippe Markiewicz.

In the media: a permanent presence of the CCOJB in the press, interviews relating to the desecration of Jewish cemeteries, to hostile declarations of our ministers, to the antisemitic scandal in the Senate in the presence of the Israeli ambassador, to the subject of the Belgian position in relation to UNRWA.

Brussels Advisory Council for the Elimination of Racism: CCOJB application was not accepted.

NA'AMAT report, by Denise Sadeh, president

From November 2023 to April 2024, we organised once a week conferences about different subjects with interesting speakers + a very popular lunch and a musical afternoon. We will continue organising the same in the coming months. All the money we collected from the participants we sent to NA'AMAT Israel. 7 new members joined us and it seems that they enjoy our activities.

We are looking forward for better days in the months to come.

Kol Hakavod to Denise Sadeh, the president, who is doing most of the work by herself!

WIZO Belgium-Luxemburg Federation report, by Varda Cywie, President

Many ladies from our federation participate regularly in various solidarity actions with Israel and against antisemitism in Brussels and Antwerp as well.

Our newsletter is published every month, but since October 2023, it has focused solely on matters concerning the situation in Israel.

Since October we have started some activities very timidly, such as conferences, guided museum tours, bridge tournament, Yoga lessons etc. It is not because the desire is lacking, but the heart is not there.

We launched in November a new fundraising campaign titled "I'm not doing well". This campaign emphasizes the psychological traumas experienced in Israel since the "Black Saturday" and WIZO's mobilisation to address them.

In December our Federation sponsored a Chanukkah party for the children of Neve Nof in Lod, an institute sponsored regularly by us.

We launched in March a new fundraising campaign to fund WIZO's Open House in Sderot.

VROUWENRAAD report, by Ayala Bleys, our representative

The Vrouwenraad, Council of Dutch (=Flemish) Speaking Women of Belgium, is a not-for-profit association.

We, the Council of Jewish Women of Belgium, left the Vrouwenraad Board of Directors for different reasons, but we stayed as members of the Vrouwenraad General Assembly. The Vrouwenraad was working on the new laws for the not-for-profit associations in Belgium. As the Directors had not previously finalised the new laws and explained the new status of the association, we had a special General Assembly on 15 December 2023. In that meeting there was a legal advisor present, who explained everything about the new laws. Because we, CFJB/LJVB, are not a member of the Board of Directors, we have less responsibility, which is a positive in the event that there is a significant problem in the Vrouwenraad.

In the General Assembly of 26 March 2024, we dealt with the Vrouwenraad multi-year plan which, the association needs to present to the Flemish government by 1st July in order to continue receiving the yearly subsidy. We also voted for 3 new organisations that asked to join the Vrouwenraad. One of them is the organisation of women from Ukraine, which was unanimously accepted.

CFFB report, by Clara Klener, our representative

CFFB is the Council of French Speaking Women of Belgium. The Council is also a not-for-Profit Association and renewed part of its Board of Administration.

Renewal of the board saw the election of new members, both from association and individual members, reflecting a diversity of commitments and expertise within the Council.

In 2023 operating accounts and 2024 budget were unanimously approved.

The 2023 activity report was unanimously approved, highlighting the CFFB's effort in various crucial areas, such as improving socio-economic conditions, combating violence against women, women's health, gender education and the presence of the CFFB internationally.

The 2024 projects were unanimously approved, highlighting the Education Commission, socio-Economic Commission, International Relations and Europe Commission, Gynaecological and Obstetric Violence, Women in Entrepreneurship Conference, etc.

The meeting ended with a drink of friendship!

Our (CFJB/LJVB) summer meeting will be in June.

We are all trying to do our best to continue to be active in our initiatives despite these very difficult times, both in terms of recruiting new young members and the extremely difficult times for Am Israel.

WE STAND WITH ISRAEL!

Ayala Bleys
President

Bulgarian Council of Jewish Women (BCJW)
Activity Report
Timeframe: 1 January 2023 – 30 November 2023

This year was associated with the commemoration of two round anniversaries – the proclamation of the Jewish State, and the tragic memorable events that happened to the Jews in Bulgaria, Aegean Thrace and the Western Provinces during the World War II.

In the last week of January we all went to the Odeon Cinema where a week of movies in commemoration of the Holocaust victims was taking place; it was organized jointly by the Odeon Cinema and the Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria "Shalom" (OJB). That event opened the commemoration of the beginning of the persecution, internal relocation and subsequent rescue of the Jews in Bulgaria, and also the death of more than 11300 of our Jewish compatriots in the lands which were under the Bulgarian State administration during the WWII.

In the beginning of March 2023 (03 - 05 March) we travelled to the towns of Plovdiv, Haskovo and Stara Zagora where we met women from our community. Together we visited the Plovdiv Synagogue and also invited along some of our Bulgarian friends who were glad to get acquainted with the history of the Jews there. We presented floral tributes at the Gratitude Monument that had been built to express the gratitude of the Bulgarian Jews towards their rescuers. We also celebrated Passover there.

On 9 March 2023 many of us travelled once more to the town of Plovdiv to take part in the official ceremony for commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the rescue of the Bulgarian Jews. On 10 March we participated in the March of Tolerance and gave floral tribute at the Salvation Monument in Sofia.

To celebrate Passover, we organized a visit to the Sofia Synagogue for the Shabbat service. Maybe this idea of ours to gather and celebrate there was a herald of the subsequent initiative of Maxim Delchev, named "Shabbat in the Synagogue". We were met very cordially by the rabbi with whom we discussed the holiday after the service. We were given a festive dinner and so revived the essence of the Synagogue as a place for meetings, talks and for the observation of the rituals of our religion. Then we had a walk and went on talking and drinking coffee in a nearby coffee bar. We had a very pleasant time and were satisfied by the way we chose to spend the holiday.

On 18 May BCJW together with Cultural Club "Emil Shekerdjiisky" and Center "Hai" organized a talk named *Memory and Succession* dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the proclamation of Israel as an independent state and also to the 80th anniversary of the rescue of the Bulgarian Jews. Special thanks go to our new member Vihra Benmayor for her efforts in organizing that talk.

On 4 September, as planned and eagerly awaited, we attended the opening of the restored building of the Vidin Synagogue and the Cultural Center "Jules Pascin" located therein. It was an exciting and unforgettable experience for the entire Bulgarian Jewish community and we were most delighted to participate and witness.

In the middle of September we organized a trip to Prague and Dresden for us and some of our Bulgarian friends. There we visited not only the usual tourist attractions but also places related to the history of the Jewish communities in the Czech Republic and Germany.

On 11 October we organized the next lecture of Jackie Assa's series. Its topic was: *Israel – Stormy Present and Obscure Future*. Although the lecture was planned well in advance, it turned out to be prophetical because it happened only a few days after the horrible attack of Hamas on 7 October.

Since that day - 7 October – we have been worried about all the Jews in Israel, our sons and daughters, relatives and friends. We take to heart the horror they are living with, we participate in the prayers in the Sofia Synagogue, we take part in the charity initiatives which our community conducts for helping Israel. Apart from the official events organized by OJB, the women from BCJW and from the Plovdiv Club "Rosh Hodesh" jointly prayed for the quick return of the hostages, for the strength and the safety of the

Israeli soldiers and for the peace of the souls of the innocent Israeli victims who died during this "Black Saturday".

The health of our women has always been an important consideration for us. We have often organized a number of seminars and free examinations for them. At the beginning of the year we raised a request for our members to be included in the existing contract for supplementary health insurance with Insurance Health Fund "Doverie" – the one that OJB staff employees have. Becka Lazarova, a member of BCJW, undertook that task and by using her assertiveness, persistence and authority she succeeded in convincing the management of OJB "Shalom" to review its contract with the insurance health fund, so that every regular member of OJB "Shalom" can sign up at preferential rates and conditions upon request.

I would like to express my personal gratitude to Tanya Yudina for her tireless energy and organizational skills, and also to Raya Farhy for her dedication and strict management of our finances. The three of us made a very good team thanks to which our plans came to fruition.

We all know that our women have inspired, initiated and performed a lot of the activities of the Sofia Jewish Community and also of the various communities across the country. I can say they are the soul of our Jewish life. They are heads of clubs of interest, they organize and perform Shabbatons, they participate in volunteering activities, they organize events and holiday celebrations. I would like to note that the activities mentioned above are only a subset of the initiatives in which BCJW members take part and support with joy.

In the beginning of June we joined a 3-day long seminar named *Dances and Friends* of the Jewish Dance Club that took place at Minkovo Mineral Baths. The head and one of the chief organizers of the seminar was our long-term member and ex-president Lidia Yulzary.

In July we actively took part in the traditional seminar "Rosh Hodesh" which took place in the village of Chavdar. The seminar was headed and organized by our long-term member Roza Berger. We also attend on a regular basis the traditional monthly Shabbatons, led by our members Becka Lazarova, Roza Berger, Lidia Yulzary, Lika Eshkenazy and Yaffa Avramova. Along with Emil Behar, Lidia Yulzary is a cofounder of a newly founded and very interesting and promising Discussion Forum Club.

We are grateful to all our members, all of them with active civil position, who invest a lot of energy and love and via their initiatives and personal example bring together our women of different generations and contribute to the development of mutual aid within our community. I would like to also express our deep gratitude to the management of the Organization of the Jews in Bulgaria "Shalom" which has always supported and facilitated our activities.

22 November 2023
Despina Staneva
/BCJW President/

Union of Jewish women in Croatia

The Union of Jewish women in Croatia is an umbrella organization for Jewish women in Croatia, with four affiliates: Zagreb, Split. Rijeka and Osijek. Union of Jewish women in Croatia is the oldest organization, established in year 1887 and persist through all changes in Jewish population and Croatia.

But it is important to know what is Jewish women organization today, their activity, and what changed in relation with their Jewish community.

The main changes are that the membership of Jewish women's organizations (we are talking about circumstances in the biggest organization in Zagreb) consists mostly of women of older Jewish age and that there is no exchange of generations and intergenerational cooperation.

With the loss of its traditional humanitarian role, voluntary and social work (which was taken over by the Claims Conference with its social funds) and the cessation of its invaluable role in maintaining Jewish tradition (which was taken over by the rabbis), the activities and position of women's organizations in the community changed, their marginalization occurred.

Now organization develop activities for its membership: Literal club, visits exhibitions, gymnastics, lectures on health, excursions and visits other organizations etc. Jewish women organization becomes similar to other organizations, and there are even proposals to unite all them into one organization under roof of Jewish municipality, so that they would lose their independence and identity.

In small Jewish municipalities (about 100 members), not only was the traditional role of women in humanitarian work maintained, but they also became the main organizers of cultural and traditional activities:

In Rijeka community women organization: publish book: Rina Brummini:" Jewish community Rijeka ", organize exhibitions, visit and lectures in schools, organize "Storytelling" and concert of Jewish music in synagogue, cooperate with other minorities and in Gorizia participate in EU project "Ponti". Organized, together with town authority that in front of houses of holocaust victims are installed "Stolpersteine" ….

In Split community women organized, together with Israel Embassy, big exhibition "Israeli discovery which influenced the World". Memorial plaque has been installed, about June 12, 1942 when Nazi demolished synagogue in Split, they organized exhibition about Jews in Split, concert in synagogue, promote book about importance of food for health. Women organized distribution of food package for the needy Jews.

In Osijek community women organized celebration "20 anniversary of Jewish Dance club" in town theatre building, organized panel discussion and storytelling during the "Days of Jewish culture and heritage" and, as every year, organize gathering (all ex-yu community) in Đakovo with commemoration on the cemetery for women and children perished in camp.

It is important to make report also of activities of younger and intellectual Jewish women which are not members of Jewish women organization.

They are leaders (presidents) of Jewish communities in Split, Dubrovnik, Koprivnica, vice president in Zagreb community. They are members of boards in different cultural organisation, president of Shoa academy for education about Holocaust, director of Research and documentation Centre, president of Association of Holocaust survivors in Croatia. They established Jewish Museum in Zagreb, art gallery in community, organized days of Jewish culture and tradition, keep connection with organizations in ex-Yugoslavia. Women is redactor of Jewish newspaper Ha-Kol, director of Jewish old age home and Children Garden. Women organized learning Hebrew, education for Jewish youth,gathering of Jung families (Mishpocha) etc.

In many towns where are no more Jewish community (Karlovac, Pula, Vinkovci, Đakovo) Jewish women organized exhibitions, different manifestation, lectures and research Jewish history of town. ..

Jewish women are author of many books, they are artist, translators, educator, they fight against antisemitism, support Israel and have important new roles.

I think that is time for reorganisation of Jewish women organisations and that they must develop programs how to include more women from next generations and offer more intergenerational solidarity and cooperation.

We wish not to analyse complex but positive Croatian political decisions, but conclude that many of old Jewish problems in Croatia (return of property, education in school about Holocaust, supports) still need to be resolved.

Melita Švob
president of Union

CCJW
Společnost židovských žen ČR

Activities of Czech Council of Jewish Women
November 2023 – April 2024

In these difficult time for all Jewish people, Czech Council of Jewish Women (CCJW) has been focused on the activities toward Israel and Ukraine.

In light of the recent atrocities against Jewish people on their land, CCJW with other Czech Jewish organizations is working to assist those affected by the pogrom, carried out by Hamas on October7th. The ‚Bring them home' joint effort to release hostages taken by Hamas terrorists was organised immediately also in our Community. CCJW promptly raised funds to produce and distribute posters with the ‚Bring them home' message, which were posted throughout the city.

Our organization with other Jewish communities has also organised fundraising campaign to support affected individuals and families in the kibbutzim. Financial support of Jewish organizations has been collected from October until now to help to the families and kibbutzim that were damaged and massacred by Hamas terrorists, almost to the area Chadera-Ejn Iron.

1th November 2023, a large gathering called ‚Together for Israel' was organised in Prague. On that day, people filled the Old Town Square in the centre of Prague. They came to condemn the unprecedented murder of civilians, committed by the Hamas terrorist movement on October 7th, to remember the more than 230 hostages taken, and to support the right of the State of Israel to defend itself and its people.

Also Czech Prime Minister attended the event and stated that Israel is in desperate need of friends. He added that the Czech Republic is one of them and will be a voice for Israelis in Europe.

27th January – the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we rememberred this memorial day on commemorative meeting on 26 January in the Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic with the survivers and their descendents. The meeting was held under the auspices of the President of the Senate, who in his opening speech focused on the importance of remembering and commemorating the Holocaust. The Czech Prime Minister stressed the importance of commemorating the Holocaust and spoke out against manifestations of ant-Semitism: „We should be concerned of the increasing anti-Semitism".

In **February 2024** has increased the Czech financial support of humanitarian aid to Israel from the part of Czech governement. The Czech politicians including president of Czech republic Petr Pavel visited Israel and confirmed their right to legitimately fight and defend their state.

Purim: It is our 11th year of doing a women's megilah reading and we were so proud of all those wonderful women who read!

This year was the reading without costumes but thinking about all those in Israel who can't celebrate with their families.

Czech Republic is one of the biggest supporters of Israel from all the Europe.

We also feel this positive support of our government for Ukraine's heroic resistance and fighting against Russian aggression.

In our Jewish organizations we are continuing in the help to the Ukraine Jewish families.

Written by
Verona Miletinova,
ICJW Vice President, on April 13, 2024

EWL report dated March 2024

Since Dec. last is the Lobby vey busy already to prepare a G.A. early in the season because of the Eur. Election which take place on June 9. We are having several meetings by Zoom asking members their support in the Lobby's objectives. We are advised to take into account women who already are members of Eur. Parliament, vote for them or for other feminists but no extremists.

A first law has been voted by member countries against violences made to women, genital mutilation, forced wedding, forced sterilization, sexual harassment. Help services and shelters for women are now obligatory.

Gender equality is still not perfect. Women represent 33% in European politics, but they are still unequal in the labour market, in wages or benefits. On the good news' side: there are now over 2000 women organizations in Europe, there is for the first time a woman heading the Eur. Commission, and right to abortion is now mentioned in the French Constitution.

In preparation to the G.A. members were asked to suggest discussion topics and guess what is the one chosen and supported: « Back to Peace ».

Bratislava May 2024

Report for the Executive Committee Meeting

Betty Teicher

Presentation of the activities that have taken place since the last Zurich executive committee,

In France, despite the earthquake of October 7, which shocked us all so much, we tried to help Israel.
In UNESCO, work continues in a useful way in the areas for which it is responsible: education, science, culture. But everything is politicized. And since October 7, all plenary decisions have led to an outburst of hatred against Israel.

Summary

Activities in France:

Call: "Let's dare to say it."
The Paris ICJW group
Coopération Féminine

International Activities at UNESCO:

General Conference and Executive Council

Interfaith Group

Activities in France

Call: "Let's dare to say it."
Since December, we have been working on drafting an appeal to denounce the atrocities committed

against women on October 7, and the lack of defense of these horrors by other women's associations (I made this known to you through a message to the president)
We tried to spread it as much as possible by all kinds of ways.

But we noticed that it did not receive much support among other women's defense associations.

The Paris ICJW group

We reflected on our recurring theme of "transmission" and the different angles to approach it. But everything was suspended by the current drama, and we looked for ways to provide help to children in Israel.

Coopération Féminine

Our affiliated association in France continues its activities You will find attached the copy and its translation of its latest Newsletter, which lists all the activities and events of the month.

International Activities

Invitation in December 2023, to the private residence of the Embassy of Israel in Paris by Ms. Fisher-Khan, (Chargé d'affaires pending the appointment of an ambassador in Paris), with some other women's associations, for an exchange of views on the current situation of Israeli women. It also enabled us to make contacts to act together in the face of the political and media environment in France, which has become hostile to Israel. Since we continue some meetings.

- UNESCO

There is always a lot going on, at UNESCO, both in the work and in resolutions adopted by member states, and in the relations between non-governmental organizations:

On 30 June 2023,
Special Session of the General Conference on the Reintegration of the USA. Despite very critical comments from some Member States, reintegration was approved.

October 2023,
Session of the Executive Board on relations with non-governmental partners, in order to better disseminate Unesco's priorities to the public through the 418 NGOs officially represented.

November 2023,
Plenary meeting of the General Conference, the governing body of Unesco, which brings together every 2 years all the member states
and decides on the program of its actions until its next meeting.

March 2024

Meeting of the 58 states forming the Executive Board, which ensures the proper implementation of the program adopted by the General Conference. It meets twice a year.

A new resolution on "Impact and consequences of the current situation in the Gaza Strip/Palestine in all aspects of UNESCO's mandate", has come to discussion at a meeting This resolution was adopted by consensus, which means that there was no debate to present amendments. However, member states and observers were allowed to comment, and so did about 45 of them.

Even if the Arab states have accepted the consensus, in order to accelerate the work of UNESCO to solve the humanitarian crisis in Gaza in its areas of competence, they were very critical in their comments on the wording of the DG report ,which introduces the resolution, and namely by the paragraph 2 which starts by "the military operations launched by Israel following the Hamas attack

in Israel on October 7,2023, with more than 1200 persons killed, more of 5000 others injured, and dozens taken hostage ". They criticized the use of the word "terrorist", saying that this wording is in contradiction with the UN resolutions wording.

March 2024

International Women's Day

More lightly, an example among all that was presented:

IN FOOTBALL

It was marked by the slogan: "Scoring a goal for women" in an exchange session on women's football that has long faced discrimination and stigma.

Interfaith group

As mentioned in my former report in Zürich, our interfaith group was supposed to organize a round table in UNESCO, and we got the support of Oman Sultanate for a meeting in July 2023. However, this could not take place, first due to internal problems in this Member state. Then, the event was cancelled following the October 7 events and their consequences.

Still, our group continues to meet and work along its goals and its mission" to promote dialogue between religions and to participate in a culture of peace and non-violence"

Report of – Council of Women Organizations in Israel –March 2024

Dear President Lilian Grinberg, Dear ICJW

It is our pleasure to share with you the following report referring to the main activities and actions undertaken during the year 2023 by the major affiliated women organizations which are under the umbrella of the Israeli Council.

From January to September 2023, all activities were geared towards women's empowerment in all spheres of society, in line with ICW Triennium theme "Women's Empowerment: Peace and Sustainable Development"; as well as the Adopted Resolutions and Plans of Action to be implemented by 2025, and the SDGs. Accordingly, the emphasis was put on political and economic empowerment of women, through attendance at parliamentary debates on gender issues, and through an active participation in programs, events and meetings, creating more awareness and the joining of forces to combat crucial issues, such violence against women.

Unfortunately, in the last few months, women's organizations in Israel have found themselves confronting issues resulting from a still ongoing nightmare which started on Saturday 7 October 2023 in an act of barbarism, when some 2000 Hamas terrorists from the Gaza Strip infiltrated Israel at several locations in the south of the country. Families were slaughtered in their beds, women were viciously raped, and innocent civilians were maimed, killed and in some instances beheaded. Civilians were burnt alive, babies were butchered… Over 200 Israeli citizens were abducted, and today, 5months after, 134 hostages are still in the hands of Hamas. Also, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of families from their homes in the communities around the Gaza Strip, and the on-going rocket fire on border localities in the North, are posing a significant challenge to the Israeli women's organizations that have found themselves deeply engaged in wartime activities, adapting their programs to the specific acute needs of women in such a fragile situation.

The following is a summary based on reports received from some CWOI members organizations:

1. **Wizo** highlighted its **initiatives in the arena of public policy** for the promotion of the status of women, women's empowerment, violence against women and domestic violence; taking part in special debates at the Knesset (parliament) and drafting, on behalf of women's organizations, a document of requirements for the socio-economic cabinet regarding domestic violence. A resume of Wizo activities in that specific field underlines the following:

- **Launch of a legal-therapeutic consultation center** – unique in Israel – specializing in domestic violence, providing integrated counseling and assistance that also includes legal support for past victims.

- **Programs for the prevention of domestic violence** have included: 1856 study days on the issue of children exposed to domestic violence; workshops for male abusers and victims of abuse; training programs on how to identify and deal with cycles of violence, specially designed for human resource managers in public organizations, including staff of the Jewish Agency's immigrants' absorption centers, pedagogical teams in schools, hospital multidisciplinary staff; workshops for teenagers to prevent violence and creating healthy relationships.

- **Out-of-home and community treatment of domestic violence:** support to women who left shelters; and implementation of a community program called "Growing together" that assists victims of violence to build an independent and safe life for them and for their children.

- **Community programs** for women living in crisis following separation/divorce, also for single mothers; as well as for parenthood preparation and for women before retirement.

- **Educational programs** for girls regarding: body image, prostitution prevention, empowerment, and also for adolescent girls on the edge of the autistic spectrum.

- **Public involvement:** Drafting a letter to the Israeli authorities, as well as to relevant influencers abroad, calling for action regarding the release of the hostages; calling for the inclusion of women into the governmental team engaged in negotiations for the release of the hostages; calling for the establishment of a civilian cabinet for improvement of the situation faced by citizens as a direct consequence of the on-going war in the borders; debating the issue of the rights of women reservists called up to the front lines, as well as the rights of wives of male reservists who have had to leave their families, jobs and businesses for a period of several months, whose wives are facing financial and emotional difficulties.

2. **Emunah** has provided professional emotional assistance for senior citizens, women and national service girls, as well as professional workshops according to the needs of the evacuees in the areas of the Dead Sea, Eilat and Jerusalem; assistance to evacuees with meals, laundry, donations for equipment, etc.... also, emotional support for mothers of young children who are wives of male reservists and for mothers of soldiers. Emuna has also been engaged in the submission of a position paper to the Knesset (Parliament) on the issue of solving the economic and mental challenges of the entire family unit, and not just for the reservists who have been called-up to the fronts.

3. **Hadassa Israel** focused its activities on women at risk, on the elderly Holocaust survivors, on day centers with a population with special needs (preschoolers and adults), and on projects in welfare centers for the benefit of children of parents who are divorced or in process of divorce; focusing also on some of the volunteering highlights at wart time: support to displaced families and community services assisting traumatized communities.

4. **Bnei Brit** has been engaged in assisting single-parent women – refugees from Ukraine who have found asylum in Israel. Since the outbreak of the current war, Bnei Brit has volunteered to assist families of the evacuated population to the city of Holon. Members have donated groceries worth the amount of 12,000 Euro which have been packed by their volunteers and delivered to the Municipality of Holon for the benefit of families in need.

5. **Soroptimist** clubs have continued to initiate and support educational and empowerment programs for women and girls; granting scholarships for students from disadvantaged backgrounds; organizing group activities with mothers and children at risk; mentoring new immigrants and refugees for a better integration into the country; assisting women suffering from domestic violence; taking part too in a special pilot program for young Arab and Jewish girls to develop mutual understanding, and creating positive and respectful relationships with each other. Members are continuing to be involved in activities with youth with special needs who are very much in need of social meetings and enrichment in the process.

   In conclusion, we must point out that due to the on-going situation, the majority of the members of the above-mentioned women's organizations are volunteering in the effort to help displaced families to cope with difficulties; and notably stand-by the families of hostages, taking part in their campaign and demonstrations; and also, are being involved in activities of the civil society throughout the country, and helping, as much as possible, communities to cope with the reality of the war… Some are even volunteering in farms, picking vegetables and other crops that will prevent a massive shortage in the Israeli market! In short, during the last four months, CWOI members have felt the need to take an active part in community service, helping with anything needed, from cooking to assistance in day care centers, schools, social frameworks for the elderly, displaced populations, women and girls at risk, ensuring that no one is left alone...

   Lessons learnt, insights and recommendations:

   From the above, we have realized the importance of an integrated approach of community organization in times of crisis, and for better articulation between actors. To contribute to a more resilient future, emphasis should be put on crisis preparedness. According to a recent publication of the World Bank: "The world is facing a perfect storm of intertwined challenges – from the intensifying climate impacts and growing pandemic risks to deepening conflicts…That poses an unprecedented threat to poverty reduction and economic development, making it harder for families to put food on the table, send their children to school, and cope with disasters… We can no longer afford to treat crises as surprises. Enhancing crisis preparedness and response and building resilience must be central to our solutions…"

   It is therefore recommended that women's organizations should be part of the preparedness process and mass casualties situation organization including a trauma system.

   To better respond to crises and prepare for future shocks, preventive actions should include:

- the creation of an emergency fund that would respond to the urgent needs of the needed community, such as shelter, food, water, health services.
- psycho-social support to fragile population such as children, the elderly, women/girls at risk.
- Organizing volunteer teams according to profession/availability, and providing them with periodical training that would enable them to perform in an effective way, avoid duplication and time consumption, and loss of financial resources.
- Establishing effective networks through cooperative mechanisms within a community, municipality, social workers, local leaders, health and emergency services, for an effective inter-action.

   We hope and pray for better days which will enable us to renew and strengthen our regular activities, and to concentrate our efforts on our agenda for the betterment of women's rights and empowerment, which are our priorities.

   Best wishes to ICJW and all Board Members, Standing Committee members, Life and Honorary Members.

Sincerely yours,
Clara Rubinowicz Lewi & Rama Enav

UJW Durban – Report on Education in South Africa 2024 written by Sue Jacobson, co-chairman of the Durban branch.

It is a well-known fact that education in South Africa currently is ineffective and in a state of disarray. Our education system from playschool through to tertiary level is in crisis. The narrative is that far too many of our children are being marginalised by ways of their economic status, lacklustre teaching, inadequate facilities, overcrowding, financially strapped schools, and ultimately little no effective learning taking place.

This crisis poses several questions for the Union of Jewish Women.

- What impact could the Union of Jewish Women in South Africa, and even abroad has on this crisis?
- Should we be involved, and to what extent should we involve ourselves?
- Where would we be the most effective; at an early childhood development level (preschool), at a primary or high school level or at a tertiary level?
- Is the Union of Jewish Women South Africa - as an organisation - 'qualified' to involve itself in education?
- What are the outcomes we expect for ourselves and our own organisation?
- What are we currently doing in education field to aid children in crisis?
- How do educate the girl child of her rights to an equal education?
- Do we try and educate about the narrative and information we are exposed to with regard the gender based violence that occurred on October 7 2023?
- Are we able to articulate and relate these heinous acts into helping women and children in our own country?
- Do we believe in "All Women Count" and can we use or educational opportunities to bring that message home?

As mentioned above, there is an educational crisis in South Africa; this is supported by the following statistics.

- Eight out of 10 children struggle to read by the age of ten. South Africa was ranked last out of 57 countries assessed in the Progress in International Reading Literacy.
- Nearly 4 million adults were functionally illiterate in 2021.
- There are 11 252 rural schools in South Africa – 3 060 are secondary (high) schools and 8 192 are primary schools, with 5 153 of those schools being multi grade schools, (two or more grade taught in the same classroom.) None of these schools include preschool or an early childhood development program.
- Of the 928 050 grade 11 in 2023, only 740 566 enrolled in grade 12 (matric), a disappearance of almost 40% - 468 407 pupils.
- The 82.9% pass rate for 2023 of matriculants is misleading as it does not take into account the number of dropouts before or during matric (grade 12).
- The dropout rate for 2023 is at 62% - this actually reflects an actual pass rate is only just over 55%
- Over 900 rural schools have been closed – they were determined as non- viable schools
- 80% of our government schools are dysfunctional
- South Africa is ranked close to the bottom, 139 out of 143 countries when it comes to our overall education quality.
- 25% of a girls' school year will be lost due to her menstrual management and resulting absenteeism.
- 7 million girls miss the aforementioned 25% of their school year due to their periods.
- 2/3 of school going children report having been exposed to domestic violence.

The Union of Jewish Women in South Africa have historically always aligned themselves with education, and more especially the education of children in poverty stricken areas, marginalised communities, and we have even crossed apartheid lines to help children.

It is vital that the branches continue to reach out to these schools and communities and continue supporting any educational endeavours these beneficiaries bring to the table.

We need to develop partnerships with people abroad to bring in material and financial support. Port Elizabeth does a wonderful job of bringing in literature from Australia for distribution to children at their centres.

There is nothing wrong in steering your particular branch into a specific educational direction, dependant on the interests of your committee. However, I do believe we would be more impactful and more effectual if each branch covered several sectors of education.

The Durban branch has a long standing relationship with the Open Air School – a hospital school for the physically handicapped, and has been involved in various nursery schools over the many decades of its existence. Currently, we support two preschools in Chesterville – St. Barnabas and Nobantwana, and a local high school – Brettonwood High School.

Johannesburg support an aftercare program in Alexandra Township, they provide food for the feeding scheme run through the aftercare. This attends to one of the greatest barriers to effective learning – hunger and poverty among our disadvantaged children results in little to no positive learning taking place.

Cape Town support Mama Flo – an organisation that gets sanitary ware and period education to girl children so they do not miss school simply because of they are menstruating, their aim is to halt period poverty.

Proudly, all our branches have an educational project they support. We, as a women's organisation can be proud that we are attempting to make a difference to our disadvantaged children and the communities they live in. We may not necessarily see the results immediately or ever, but we can put the Union's name to an educational portfolio.

There is a caveat to this report though. It is time we, as an organisation stop throwing money at a bottomless pit, and make it work for us as a Jewish organisation and as part of the larger Jewish community in South Africa. It is time to band together as a women's organisation, make our voices heard on issues of education, perhaps most importantly for the girl child. We need to speak out on, and support organisations, school projects on gender based violence, and the protection of the girl student.

- If we hand out books, put in a label that says it is from the Union of Jewish Women. And that goes for any educational material we hand out to schools or educational programs.
- If you hand out trophies (labelled donated by UJW), at a prize giving, send representation, with our badges on.
- If you make a donation of any sort, make sure ALL the recipients understand where this comes from, not just you the messenger, but the Union of Jewish Women, from your Jewish community.
- Be present for handovers and chat PRO style to those present.
- Educate our recipients on who we are and who the Jewish people are.
- Educate our recipients on women rights, domestic violence
- Create safe spaces or offer pathways for victims of gender-based violence (especially after 7 October 2023) Our voices need to heard – all women should count.
- We should be leading in the provision of appropriate programs, spaces, materials for victims of abuse of any kind.

We, as the Union of Jewish Women owe it to ourselves, to our community, and to those who have fought for equality and freedoms; the likes of Helen Suzman, Ruth First, Sadie Foreman, Phyllis Altman, Jacqueline Arenstein, Ester Barsel, Hilda Bernstein, Sonia Bunting, Sarah Carneson, Hilary Claire, Sally Gross, Nadine Gordimer, Eve Hall, Olga Kirsch, Gill Marcus, Janet Love, and many, many more. All of whom were Jewish women who made a difference to our country and the constitution. We owe it to the children of South Africa to do better as an organisation, both locally and internationally in the quest for better education for all and safer, productive spaces to receive that education.

On behalf of ICJW, Professor Marcelo Kohen spoke – for the allotted 2 minutes!

as representative of civil society, during the High level Opening Session of the 55th Human Rights Council

Peace and security are preconditions for the enjoyment of all human rights

By Marcelo Kohen, Emeritus Professor of International Law, Geneva Graduate Institute

Former Secretary-General of the Institute of International Law (Nobel Peace Prize 1904)

“On the threshold of the first quarter of the twenty-first century, the widespread development of war directly impacts on human rights at all their dimensions.

The idea that war is a means to settle conflicts or to advance just causes has proven to be a deep mistake time and again. To this culture of force, it is necessary to oppose the culture of peace.

The right to life, together with the right to dignity, are the two most important and fundamental human rights. Hundreds of thousands of human beings, including children and elderly people, have been deprived of them. International humanitarian law is just a stopgap within an international legal system that prohibits the threat or the use of force. Even its basic foundations, particularly the protection of the civilian population, are widely ignored in multiple scenarios. How could we reach this stage of lack of humanity? How can we speak about human rights if their elementary rules are disregarded and the international community not only is unable to stop their breaches, but gives the impression of being resigned to this state of affairs?

The credibility of the multilateral system and international law, including human rights, is at stake. The time of inertia and sterile confrontation must finish before it is too late. Exponential aggravation of conflicts can lead to a major tragedy. The point is not to ignore opposite views. The point is to put rationality in the search for concrete solutions. This Council is a political organ, not a judicial one. Its main concern should be to find a common ground for the promotion of human rights, notwithstanding the divergences.

Peace and security are preconditions for the enjoyment of all human rights. Peace often implies some risks. War, instead, implies certitudes: dead, devastation, hate.

Learn the lessons from the period preceding the major catastrophe of the twentieth century. The mission of this Council is to avoid repeating the same mistakes”.

55th Session of the UN Human Rights Council, Geneva, 28 February 2024.

Submitted by
Léonie de Picciotto

UNION OF JEWISH WOMEN SOUTH AFRICA
REPORT on RACISM and ANTISEMITISM – 2024

"No human race is superior; no religious faith is inferior.
All collective judgments are wrong. Only racists make them."
Elie Wiesel, Romanian-born American writer, professor,
political activist, Nobel laureate, and Holocaust survivor.

On 21 March 2024, the theme for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was "A Decade of Recognition, Justice, and Development: Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent".

This day is observed annually on the date that the police in Sharpeville, South Africa, opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against apartheid *"pass laws"* in 1960.

In 1979, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) decided that a week of solidarity with the peoples struggling against racism and racial discrimination, beginning on 21 March, would be organized annually across the world.

In its 1978 Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, UNESCO wrote: *"Any restriction on the complete self-fulfilment of human beings and free communication between them which is based on racial or ethnic considerations is contrary to the principle of equality in dignity and rights; it cannot be admitted. One of the most serious violations of this principle is represented by apartheid, which, like genocide, is a crime against humanity, and gravely disturbs international peace and security."*

Racism in South Africa has always been a huge problem, exacerbated by the use of the word "*apartheid*" which defined the actions of the former Nationalist government and was subsequently used widely by Israel's enemies to accuse her of being an "*apartheid state*". This despite the myriad of good relationships existing between peoples of different colours and cultures; and the growth of the small "*black diamond*" class of middle-class Blacks who have benefited greatly from many of the ANC government's policies and principles.

Yet recently, a provincial leader of one of South Africa's most outspoken political parties called for racial violence on Facebook as follows: *"We need to unite as Black People, there are less than 5 million whites in South Africa vs 45 million of us. We can kill all this white within two weeks. We have the army and the police. If those who are killing farmers can do it, what are you waiting for. Shoot the boer, kill the farmer*."

After the murder of a 76-year-old white professor a few years back, a black senior South African National Defence Force major posted a comment on Facebook in reaction to the murder, stating "*It is your turn now, white people... [he] should have had his eyes and tongue cut out so that the faces of his attackers would be the last thing he sees".*

Also on Facebook, a Gauteng (Johannesburg) government official wrote, *"White people in South Africa deserve to be hacked and killed like Jews. You have the same venom. Look at Palestine. You must be burnt alive and skinned and your offspring used as garden fertiliser*".

There are those who point out that racism aimed at white people is often overlooked compared to racism aimed at black people, noting that the former elicits little reaction from the populace. A comparative study by one of the trade unions confirmed that South African media give more attention to white-on-black racism; it also found that the South African Human Rights Commission is more likely to self-initiate investigations into white-on-black racism and is more lenient in cases of black-on-white racism.

However, the vicious attack on Israel by Hamas on 7 October 2023, and the subsequent defence mounted by the IDF against the Gaza Strip to prevent further such atrocities happening, has ignited a slew not only of antisemitism but of racist antisemitism, targeting South African Jews for their support of "*racist Israel which is committing genocide against the Palestinian people*", a specific reference to the case of genocide brought against Israel by the South African government at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Among many attacks on Jews since 7 October include the confrontation in front of a shul in Johannesburg where a Jewish man was accosted by a male who spat in his direction as he stood by the shul door. After being asked what he'd meant by this, the male put his hand on community member's shoulder, looked into his eyes and said, "You're a murderer; you're causing genocide. You've done nothing to object to what's happening. The Muslims are gonna [sic] come and kill you."

From Charles Small of ISGAP, "*Hamas in its very constitution not only openly calls for a genocide of Jewish people around the world, it calls for the subjugation of women and the elimination of democracy — the antithesis of the ANC Freedom Charter. Nelson Mandela, who was close to the Jewish community, must be turning in his grave as his party betrays its very core beliefs. Instead of siding with the liberal democracy facing the Islamist terrorist organisation whose own charter calls for the genocide of Jews, the ANC Government now supports the movement in Gaza that at its core calls for the destruction of Israel and the murder of all Jewish people."*

No further proof needed that the claims being made by South Africa's government at the Hague are nothing short of a modern-day blood libel, with the scapegoating rationale as cynical as ever.

While the incidence of antisemitism in South Africa still remains fairly low compared with that in many other countries, the increasing vitriol expressed against Israel conflates Judaism with Zionism, seeing them as inseparable, and using the 7th October tragedy to exploit the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Print and social media pay little if any attention to the start of the conflict, to the Hamas invasion of Israel by terrorists who knew with absolute certainty what Israel's response would be, using it to continue exposing Israel as ***the*** world's pariah state, intensifying both racism and antisemitism across the country.

Bev Goldman
National President
Union of Jewish Women South Africa

UNION OF JEWISH WOMEN SOUTH AFRICA

BIANNUAL AFFILIATION REPORT for ICJW EUROPEAN CONFERENCE and EXECUTIVE MEETING in SLOVAKIA 2024

No-one in the Jewish diaspora can ***not*** be affected by what is happening in Israel.

While Israel has every right to, and MUST, defend her people and her territory, especially in light of the barbaric, cruel and sadistic actions of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the PLO, one cannot help but feel absolutely horrified at how they use their women and children as human shields; how UNRWA teaches the Palestinian children to hate and curse and murder; how women are brainwashed into believing that martyrdom, through the deaths of their children, is Allah's reward support them; and more than that, how so many in the world support Hamas and vilify Israel.

Although the UJW is a-political, our thoughts and prayers, our compassion and our sensitivities, are inextricably linked with our revulsion at the atrocities perpetrated against the women and girls. We stand with all of Israel.

At the start, I wish to thank all the active, passionate and committed chairmen and volunteers of all the UJW branches for the amazing and consistently successful work they do, and for the rewards they reap in the form of the appreciation of their beneficiaries. They achieve so much and make, and have made, a notable impact on those with whom they deal. They bring light and life to those who have so little and help them where they can with their problems and challenges.

7th October 2023 projects

Catering to the anxieties of so many in the community because of the situation in Israel and our own concern over the actions of our government vis-à-vis the case at the ICJ, the UJW hosted "Feeling Fragile" workshops facilitated by professionals, offering women (mostly) a safe space to bring comfort and insight to those attending. We also hosted "Hug-in-a-Mug" mornings for parents/grandparents with children in Israel, affording them a safe space to unload and share their fears and concerns about their children there.

Hundreds of beanies were knitted and sent to IDF soldiers, sometimes by women of church groups with whom the UJW has strong relationships. A collection was made of additional much needed items for the soldiers including toiletries, socks, thermal underwear, face clothes, earplugs, playing cards and t-shirts; and a donation was made to JNF/KKL for the Be'eri forest where the Nova Music Festival was held, towards the planting of trees to replace those ruined on 7 October.

Children's projects

As always, the UJW works tirelessly for the very underprivileged children across South Africa through our many and varied outreach projects. Branches run daily, weekly and/or monthly feeding schemes for children, for those coming from school and needing nourishment, for preschools and crèches in impoverished communities. Freshly cooked nourishing food is provided even through the challenges faced so often of frequent power outages / load shedding and often interrupted water services.

Impoverished schools receive donations of books, puzzles, educational material, stationery and other resources. Outdoor play areas are created; vegetable gardens are planted and children taught how to care for them; school uniforms and school shoes are provided for the very indigent; our after-care centres offer homework supervision, access to materials, and arts and crafts activities. The successful tutoring from groups of senior student girls from Jewish Day Schools, as well as local high school children, continues with help mostly in Maths and English

Soft toys are donated to hospitals' HIV clinics, and to the Teddy Bears Picnic, which gives toys to children attending the Children Sex Offenders courts. Year-end parties are held for these disadvantaged children and in addition to the scrumptious meals given them, they receive gifts and are entertained and cosseted as much as possible, all with love.

Within our Jewish community, children are also cared for when necessary; they are addressed on issues

of abuse, bullying and other sensitive topics; and needy children attending Jewish camps are given toiletry bags and various other goodies, including camp clothing, sleeping bags, trommels (special waterproof cases for clothing etc) and stretchers.

Additional Projects

Our "Bags for New Beginnings**" projects, which gifts large bags filled with everything a new baby needs for at least the first couple of weeks after birth to indigent mothers leaving hospitals with almost nothing, remains our most emotive and possibly popular project.
Our **Sewing School, which teaches women and men quite ignorant of sewing or sewing machines to become proficient in dressmaking, empowers the students with excellent skills enabling them either to start their own businesses or to find employment in related industries.
** The **Mama Flo** project educates and assists young girls to learn about their own bodies and about feminine hygiene, and to understand that despite tribal norms, menstruation is neither unclean nor ugly. Through it, hundreds of young girls who would otherwise miss at least one week every month of their senior school years because of insufficient sanitary wear and/or concomitant embarrassment are schooled and educated, and are given the necessary sanitary wear, in many cases reuseable pads which they are taught how to make themselves and hopefully sell to others. ** We offer outings, events and companionship to **Senior Citizens** both within and outside of the Jewish community, and these are often the highlight of their daily lives.

Numerous other UJW projects undertaken across the country include group gatherings with professionals for people in the early stages of dementia; support for victims of human trafficking and domestic violence; lending and simultaneously offering medical equipment where needed; distributing thousands of Easter eggs to impoverished children; supporting and caring for residents of children's homes and women's centres; bingo games for the elderly and challah bakes pre-Shabbat; prizes for achieving students at disadvantaged schools; different and exciting projects specifically for Mandela Day and Mitzvah Day; and a host of others.

Some UJW volunteers are working with the newly created **Women's Action Campaign South Africa,** or **WACSA**, whose mandate is to draw attention both to the silence of women around the world to the horrors inflicted on Israeli women on 7 October, and possibly still on the hostages; and to call on the international community to condemn unequivocally rape and sexual violence in any situation, whether war or domestic violence. To date the Campaign has been enormously successful with excellent media coverage even internationally, and the movement is growing.

We continue our strong and valuable relationship with the ICJW, primarily through the Vice-Presidency that we hold and through the Communications and PR Portfolio. We are a proud affiliate and privileged to belong to this august body.

Countries across the world are experiencing the negative effects of political and other upheavals and disturbances. Climate change is impacting everywhere; government leaders are making decisions and taking steps often counter to the wishes and needs of the general populace but focused on their desires to retain power; the cost of living internationally is rising at an alarming rate; and the influence and repercussions of the astonishing growth of technology, especially in regard to AI, could bring about even global uncertainty and insecurity.

This is the concluding statement I made to the latest UJW National Executive Committee held recently. I repeat it here as it is very pertinent to the South African affiliate:

"Thank you to the chairmen of all our branches for the courage you show in continuing to do so much good in the face of rising antisemitism, your own anxieties about Israel and the safety of your families both there and here at home, and the increasingly growing anger from our South African fellow citizens trying to navigate the destruction facing the country because of the incompetence and inefficiency of our government and its overt and unapologetic hostility to Israel which is exacerbating the insecurity of the Jewish community."

The Union of Jewish Women remains committed to investing in all the peoples of South Africa and helping to create a better life for all.

ESTER Association activities from November 2023 to 15 April 2024

In November 2023, Marta Gyoriová, President of the ESTER Association, participated in a conference in Panama. The conference was stimulating for further activities and was also an opportunity to get to know the women and their work in this country.

In November 2024, together with the President of the Jewish Religious Community, we participated in an ecumenical service for the end of the wars in Israel, Ukraine and the suffering of the people.

In December, as part of the Christmas with Neighbors project, we organized Hanukkah celebration in cooperation with the VKJB Library in Košice. This evening was very successful, we lit the first Hanukkah candle together with cantor Foršt and sang songs for the Hanukkah holiday. There were also typical doughnuts.

On 27 January, 2024 we commemorated the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which is symbolically linked to the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp.

In February, we organized projecting of a documentary about Alexander Jedlovsky, who, despite surviving the horrors of the concentration camp, was an outstanding Jewish doctor who healed also with his heart.

On March 8, we had a meeting of women members on the occasion of International Women‘s Day.

President of the Jewish Community in Košice surprised us with beautiful roses. Children from the Children‘s Club also came to greet us.

On March 25, 2024 we participated in the Commemoration of the 1st transport of Jews from Slovakia at the railway station in Poprad. There were 999 young women and girls, out of whom only 8 women returned.

On March 26, 2024 we co-organized an exhibition Empty Chair

The project and exhibition Empty Chair is a project of the teachers and students of the Evangelical Collegiate Gymnasium, Legionary Square 3, Prešov. This exhibition and project is dedicated to the fate of Jewish students who were expelled from schools on the basis of the Slovak state government‘s decree of 1.9.1940. The aim of the project and exhibition is that such events should never happen again,

Photo: Women‘s meeting on the occasion of the International Women‘s Day 8 March 2024

that no empty chairs should be left behind in schools and families, that no regulations in Slovakia should liquidate the rights, lives and hopes of people. We do not want to forget what happened.

On March 25, we celebrated the joyous holiday of Purim together with rabbi Stiefel. There was no shortage of good cheer, reading of the Megillah Esther, and delicious food.

We are still involved in the international project NDI/National Democratic Institute. It is a new initiative aimed at the support and protection of religious freedoms and the fight against anti-

Semitism in Central Europe, specifically in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

On April 14-17, NDI members from different countries will meet in Košice.

The ESTER Association is cooperating in the creation of the programme and also in the provision of material conditions.

Members of the Association regularly attend lectures on Judaism by rabbi Stiefel and rabbi Kapustin.

We have been working intensively on the preparation of the European Conference of Jewish Women in Bratislava in cooperation with the preparatory committee, Alicka Vesela, Cornelia Levi and Leonie de Picciotto. Our common goal is that the conference, its programme, will meet the expectations of all participants and provide a valuable and inspiring experience.“

Report for the Bratislava Executive Meeting of Standing Committee Antisemitism and Racism

This report will treat essentially the reactions of the French Jewish Community after the attacks of Hamas on October 7th 2023 against the kibboutzim in the South of Israel and the youngsters of the festival taking place there.
The slaughter of 1200 men, women, children, babies, the savagery and the more than 250 hostages taken shuttered whole Israel and all the Jewish communities in the world, there was and stil is a before and after October 7th and the world, during that day,was solidaire with the state of Israel and horrifiied seeing and realising the savagery of the assault.

When Israel, the next day, started the war in Gaza, bombing without restraint the territory of the Gaza strip, resulting with more and more deaths of the civil population shown and being seen on TV and on the social media, the solidarity with Israel and its population became solidarity with the Gazan population, the Palestinian people in Cisjordanie in Israel. Thus, very quickly, an antisemitism, becoming more and more violent, was shown against the Jewish communities and the Jews in general who were solidaire with the Israelis and became somehow Israelis in their proper countries.

In France antisemitisme acts grew with 1000%, going from slogans like « Palestine will win », « Jews go home to Israel » and physical acts against Jews wearing kippot or maguen david.

The result was that many Jews were afraid, changed their names on letter boxes, omitted to give their names when ordening food or a taxi.

The Président of the CRIF, the Représentative council of Jewish organisations alerted and goes on speaking about this perturbing climate which goes on as the Gaza war goes on, making more and more deaths among the Gazan population since the Israeli army entered into the Gazan stroke, even if on TV this was and is not the only onr taking place in the world. Antisemitism in France is totally condemned by most of the political parties,but the ultra left party is openly against Israel and pro-Palestine.

In Universities, the anti-israël feeling is very strong, like in the US and the Jewish student organisation is combatting this, organising debates in the universities.

The official Jewish organisation is not dealing with the internel politics in Israel, the President of the CRIF has regularly links with the Israeli goverrnent and has organised trips to Israel with parlementarians to show his solidarity with Israel. Every Friday morning he joins the meeting in front of the Eiffel Tower of the Women's organisations demonstrating for the freeing of the women and children hostages still detained in Gaza.

As to the Chief Rabbin of France, very recently he has organised a solidarity trip of Rabbis of France, doing voluntariate, filling boxes with food for the families in need and talking with the families of the hostages.

The head of the French parlemement is a Jewish person and at the very beginning after the calamity of October 7th went to Israel to show her solidarity.

As a conclusion one thing is sure : in France, which has the biggest Jewish population of Europe, the whole atmosphere regarding Israel and the Jews as such has changed, it is admitted now to be anti-sionist becoming antisemite even it is prohibited by law and condemned by the government !

PS I have to add a paragraphe to this report, which, I feel, is not complete after the first four days I spent in Israel.

There has always been antisemitism in France and whole Europe, it started even before the Middle Age, went from one part to the other in Europe, and everywhere in the world, waves and waves coming and going and coming back again and, since 1948, the State of Israel was meant to be the haven for the Jews, to have their country to go to when life bécame unbearable in their own one.

This wave of virulent antisemitism taking place in the whole world after the massacre against the South of Israel and the reply of the Israeli army against thé Palestinians is unique, englobing all the Jews, considered being Israelis from the outside, totally solidaire without any restriction with Israel and its gouvernement : Right or wrong, my country.

The real question for us, women of ICJW, représented in the whole world, i show can we combat it, houw can we try to go on talking with the Other, especially with the Muslim women because this is our task.

The organisation Women Wage Peace in Israel started again to have common activities, like before October 7th, in France Langage de Femmes is demonstrating with the Jewish women's organisations every Friday morning in Paris for the release of the hostages.

We cannot just sit and lament and be afraid for our children and families potential and real victims of antisemitism, we have to try and play our rôle and be part of the combat of the horrors of antisemitism.

Respectfully yours,
Evelyn Askolovitch (Ascot)
Chair Standing Committee Antisemitism and Racism ICJW

Biannual Report
Stockholm, Sweden
May 2024

JKK, the Stockholm affiliate, has held one or two well attended meetings in view of the war in Gaza and of the demonstrations by Palestine supporters in Sweden.

We have continued our work for the elderly.

And in February we held our popular bazaar, in order to raise money, but above all to give the Jews in Stockholm a joyful occasion

Harriet Maler
Jewish Women's Club
Stockholm, Sweden

BSJF USFJ

Swiss Union of Jewish Women's Organizations

Prepared for the ICJW Executive Meeting in Bratislava May 22, 2024

Report submitted by Irene Scheiner and Mirjam Cahn

Still overwhelmed by the actual situation in Israel and the daily tragic news with the increasing rise of antisemitism as well as the attitude of the world, we must continue for the benefit of our women and continue to fully support our friends and families in Israel.

The Swiss Union of Jewish Women's Organizations is an umbrella Organization with 16 member affiliates under its roof. Each affiliate works for the welfare of jewish women in various kind of activities, also Wizo and Emuna.

We are representing our jewish women in public, e.g. we are member at organizations like allianceF = Association of Swiss Women's Organization, we work with the Association of Swiss Refugee Aid and Welfare Organization, social arm of the SIG = Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities which is the umbrella organization of Swiss Jews with whom we collaborate in political matters.

We are delegates at the meetings of NGO Post Beijing where our presence is important, explaining the actual situation for a deeper comprehension of the situation in Israel.We participated and are involved in the promulgation/ consultation at the Swiss Parliament for an initiative for a supplement to the penal law with regard to stalking, we signed a petition for the participation of the Government for new regulations regarding childcare. Furthermore, we signed the petition (promulgation) regarding the partial revision of the federal Old Age and widow/widower Pension.

Special committees were formed, especially in the bigger cities, organizing manifestations/ demonstration for Israel where we also participated.

We still focus on the Prenuptial Agreement for Switzerland which must be more promoted to be applied at the marriage ceremony (Chupa) in all Jewish Communities.

Our affiliates are actively supporting Israel in many ways, with money, clothes, electronics, goods for the soldiers, etc. They are also active in their daily work, looking after Jewish women in difficult situation. They volunteer by taking care of elderly people with support in many aspects of life. In Zurich, the affiliate maintains a daycare for small children “Maon Jom”. We support them with active lobbying in Parliament regarding the grants for parents and the institution itself. Wizo and Emuna, also affiliated to us, work both hard for the well-being of Israel’s children and women, supporting various institutions regardless of any political and religious beliefs.

We are busy preparing our jubilee General Assembly of the Delegates.(100 years since the founding of the Swiss Union of Jewish Women’s Organizations).

Zurich, April 10, 2024

LEAGUE OF JEWISH WOMEN

Report for ICJW Executive meeting in Bratislava, May 2024

No real change to report from the League - in December we held our regular Human Rights Day event, and were encouraged to learn from Ruth Dearnley of Stop the Traffik, that they are making some progress in limiting the awful actions of some of those who make their livelihood by deceiving vulnerable people into becoming part of their wicked trade. Slow progress, but at least it sometimes has positive results.

Our members, particularly in the northwest of England in the Manchester area, continue their various rotas of voluntary work in day centres and hospitals. Their Care Concern counselling service is also active.

In the London area, as previously mentioned, much of the work has been taken over by large communal organisations, although some of our members continue their work directly with those larger bodies. Many of the members are themselves aging and unwell and our local groups do their best to offer support, but unfortunately it has become extremely difficult to attract new members.

Groups have been collecting items to send to Israel for those who have been displaced by the ongoing war situation. Also, members have been contributing to food banks which sadly have been proliferating due to the continuing needs of many people suffering as a result of the big rises in food, energy and living costs.

Sadly, also, there has been very much concern about the increase in anti-semitic incidents across the big cities.

I hope I am able to send a more positive report in the not too distant future.

Looking forward to seeing many of you in Bratislava, and with good wishes for Pesach to you all and your families.

Judith Lever – ICJW Vice President for UK
April 2024

ICJW Representatives to UN Headquarters in NY: Report for the Executive Committee Meeting MAY 2024

Prepared by: Carole Benson, Joan Lurie Goldberg, Judy Lear, Judy Mintz and Sara Winkowski

Included are updates about EASAPP, Activities Related to the Hamas War, Committee on the Status of Women (CSW), Committee to Stop the Traffic of Persons & Working Group on Girls

Thoughts After 10-7

Reported by Joan Lurie

The Hamas war is still very much with us and the support for the state of Israel is decreasing all over the world. We must work to keep the world aware of how the war started and how Hamas leaders are determined to continue killing Jews. Now, even the US, which had supported Israel, is withdrawing much of its help and for the first time in my 70 years of being a Zionist I fear for the future of the state of Israel, the world's only Jewish state, and our brothers and sisters who live there.

My biggest uncertainty - What is our responsibility as a Jewish women's organization at the UN?

I have no doubt that UN antisemitism has driven the terrorists to ever bolder and more destructive tactics. Now we hear that Hezbollah may start a second front from Lebanon and is already firing rockets into the north of Israel.

Can Israel hope to win a two front war as it fights alone? **If we believe that UN antisemitism has emboldened terrorism against Israel, are we obligated to take this position or do we need to be politically correct and back UN policy? To me, this is a question of conscience – both Jews and Palestinians are being displaced and dying and the UN is at least partly responsible.**

Report on UN Team activities in NY

UPDATE ON EASAPP - NGO Committee to End Antisemitism and Promote Peace

Jewish NGOs have formed a new committee of the CoNGO (*Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations). T*he committee to End Antisemitism and Promote Peace (EASAPP) is to be an Affiliate Substantive Committee of CoNGO in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations. We Jewish NGOs, as a group, have gone through a long and intricate process to achieve this membership; we were first approved at a meeting in Geneva in April 2023 but not officially recognized by Dr. Levi Bautista, President of CoNGO, until Tuesday, March 26, 2024 at a meeting in New York. Dr. Bautista convened the meeting so that the EASAPP could be duly constituted under the by-laws of CoNGO. Representatives of NGOs that wrote letters of support for our application to be accepted as an NGO Committee who were nearby were invited to the meeting. Sixteen attended.

A nominating committee has been formed. The deadline for nominations for officers and at-large members is April 22. The formal election will take place on May 22. Since the deliberations about elections and the final form of EASAPP and its officers are still going on, I will report more fully in Bratislava.

Activities and Programs Concerning the Hamas War

- **December 4, 2023 - "HEAR OUR VOICES" Special Testimonial Session at the United Nations - On Sexual-Based Violent War Crimes that were committed by Hamas on October 7th 2023 in Israel.**

ICJW was represented by the UN team: Carole Benson, Joan Lurie Goldberg, Judy Mintz, and Sara Winkowski. This was a very important event meant to protest the fact that, two months after the original attack by Hamas with its devastating sexual brutality, not a single group at the UN which is charged with preventing and/or documenting brutality against women had even mentioned that Israel women were attacked, mutilated and either murdered or taken hostage in Gaza. Judy Mintz and I wrote and circulated a full report on this meeting.

- **January 26,2024 – Holocaust Memorial Day Assembly – the most relevant speaker to the topic of Hamas' war was H. E. Gilad Erdan, Ambassador of Israel to the United Nations**

To quote him "When I stand before you today, standing with me are the six million Jewish victims of the Shoah, the 1200 innocents murdered on Oct 7 and the hostages who cannot rise. The screams of the hostages cannot be heard from the terror tunnels so I will be their voice."

From the Nazis until today, the genocidal desire to murder the Jews is still with us. On Oct 7, bodies were strewn as at Babi Yar. Communities were turned to ash. This was attempted genocide. Hamas murderers came to exterminate Jews; they pledge to continue until they have killed all of them.

As of today, January 26, not a single UN institution has condemned Hamas' actions on October 7. Even the International Court of Justice (the UN's highest judicial organization) did not condemn Hamas. This silence is unfathomable.

The UN was founded to be a weapon against discrimination and murder**. Instead, the UN has been weaponized to kill Jews.**

Just today, UN employees were exposed as having supported Hamas efforts in Israel. Twelve were identified. My personal opinion, and I am sure Ambassador Erdan would not disagree, is that the real number of UNRWA employees supporting Hamas is closer to 1200.

Antisemitism at the UN has risen to an unprecedented level. **The UN has failed in its mission.** The Ambassador then stated that he would not discuss the treatment of Israel by the UN – the number of resolutions against a single country and the disrespect experienced by Israel. **But, he said, Israel, outside this building, is not considered a threat to world peace.**

We Jews understand genocide better than anyone else. Hitler sealed it in the DNA of our memory. Today, the ICJ of the UN proved that the UN has not understood it.

A note from the author – Ambassador Erdan should be praised for his courage in speaking the truth about the UN – something the Secretary General cannot manage to do.

- **March 14-Elluminate program – Speaker was Tamar Schwartz**

See related report by Carole Benson on the event held at NCJW.

- **April 4 - Magen David Adom program: Sponsored by World Jewish Congress**

I fill in for our officers on the Board of World Jewish Congress, American Section and often get invited to other functions at World Jewish Congress. I attended the Magen David Adom program on April 4, at which Ofir Peretz, an MDA paramedic for 27 years who works near the Gaza border described his experiences on October 7 when he was on call at the Netivot Station near the Gaza border. His presentation was incredible; all in the room were extremely impressed by his dedication and what he accomplished.

He showed us videos of the flood of injuries. Even more telling, were texts between two medics relating the worsening reports as the hours passed. By around 11 in the morning, they knew that terrorists were inside the kibbutz. By then many injured at the Nova music festival were already in ambulances or waiting for them. They tried to call for reinforcements but there were none. Many police and IDF personnel were repelled by rocket fire early in the day. He often put five injured in one ambulance and drove them to a hospital; then went back for more. The terrorists burned houses; many people suffocated in their safe rooms because of the smoke.

Currently, MDA has 31,000 volunteers and is working to create a resilience program by connecting to other health care workers, e.g. local MDs and nurses.

Joan's Webinars and Letters

- **Webinar, January 26 with Dina Rovner of UN Watch**

This program, entitled "Systemic Antisemitism at the United Nations was sponsored by CAEF, (Canadian Antisemitism Education Foundation). Dina Rovner, the legal advisor for UN Watch, concentrated on the UN in Geneva and I covered the UN in New York. Andria Spindel is the Executive Director of CAEF and was the moderator. For those of you who have not seen it, it was recorded and can be found on You Tube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0W8GomwpmU

- **Webinar, April 18 - with Anne Herzberg of NGO Monitor**

Working title is "Is the UN capable of playing a positive role in the Israel/Palestinian Conflict?" This event will be discussed in Bratislava during Joan's report.

- **The shortest letter I have written about the Hamas War**

November 8, 2023: I wrote a letter about why Israel must win this war

Dear Friends,
I was walking home today in midtown Manhattan and, to my horror, there was a brightly lit up truck declaring "NYC for the Palestinians, Israel must be stopped". This started me thinking –we need to start believing what various Palestinian entities are saying rather than take our usual "stop killing" attitude. And we need to react to save ourselves and our children. So here is the shortest email I will ever write about this war:

- Hamas says they will keep Israel fighting forever; they will never relent and never stop killing Jews.
- "Palestine will be free from the River to the Sea" is a declaration by Palestinians and their sympathizers of the War of Return. The Palestinians including, I presume, Hamas will take all the land currently inhabited by Israeli Jews. The implication is that all the Jews will be dead. There is a song sung in second grade in UNRWA schools that declares the remnants of the war of Return will be drowned in the Sea. Over 6.5 million Jews live in Israel. The result of the River to the Sea plan will result in more dead Jews than those killed in the Holocaust.

These two points are all you need to know to understand why Israel must keep fighting and we, the USA, must keep supporting the Israelis. The moral of this story: We need to start believing what the Arab leaders say in Arabic!

Am Yisrael Chai,

Joan

- **Letter to Senator Schumer after his scathing speech against the Hamas war in which he stated four obstacles to peace.**

Senator Schumer holds the highest political office of any Jew in America. He has served many terms in the US Senate. Schumer left out what is probably the most serious obstacle to peace – he named four but the fifth is even more critical. Here is the letter I sent; his office replied to thank me! I suspect it was not read.

Dear Senator Schumer, I have studied your speech and the four obstacles to peace in Gaza that you mention. As someone who had devoted the last 15 years of my life to studying problems at the UN which prevent peace in the Middle East, I believe that you left out the 5th and probably most important obstacle to peace. I intend to publish an article and possibly do a webinar on this subject; would like

comments from your office. I am the co leader of all Jewish NGOs at the UN in New York and know how important this is. By the way, I am an alumna of Lincoln High School in Brooklyn so the Senator and I both got good educations at two rival schools!

For three generations UNRWA, the UN Relief and Works Agency, whose mission is to provide health care, housing and education to Palestinians, has been allowed to do two things which make peace and two states an impossible goal. First, for the only time in human history, they have declared that all descendants of Palestinian refugees are also refugees. So, instead of an estimated 20,000 or so Palestinian refugees, the world has millions. All of these millions have several things in common- they have not been resettled so live in so-called camps (really cities in most cases) ,which are crowded havens for terrorism to grow. And now, the biggest obstacle to peace for Israel: the education the UN provides for Palestinian children (over half a million in hundreds of schools in Gaza, West Bank and elsewhere). There is no Israel on any map, the texts support martyrdom and holy war (jihad), they learn little English and no Hebrew. They are taught to start and win a war of return by murdering all the Jews and occupying all the land from the River to the Sea and on and on. In addition, UNRWA runs summer camps in which children are trained to be soldiers from age 10 or so - with real guns and training on obstacle courses etc. Every morning I wake up and know that peace is at least 25 years away - we must provide a real education with modern training to enable students to get jobs in technology and the modern world in general, instead of martyring themselves by killing Jews. In the meantime, UNRWA, a UN agency, plays a key role in the growth of terrorism and the lack of peace. Israel is a UN member; this behavior is a disgrace to the UN Charter.

Other Activities

#BringThemHomeNow – organization which has been holding rallies to urge the return of all hostages. ICJW has become a sponsor along with literally dozens of other organizations including NCJW, our American affiliate. On Sunday, April 7, exactly a half year after the original attack on Israel including the taking of hostages, rallies were held in Washington, DC and in New York at the Dag Hammarskold Plaza adjacent to the UN. I attended the rally in New York – it was huge; estimates of attendees were around 7,000.

American Jewish International Research Institute - I am a member of the Advisory Board of AJIRI. AJIRI has recently become part of B'nai Brith which gives ICJW wider opportunities to do meaningful work. AJIRI's primary goal is to change the votes against Israel at the UN. Many nations abstain, a very few (usually including the US) vote no and the vast majority usually vote for condemnation of the Jewish state. AJIRI concentrates on those countries which abstain or vote against Israel even though they are so-called allies of the Jewish state.

United Nations Committee on Status of Women
CSW

March 11-22

Reported by: Sara Winkowski

The U.N. Committee on Status of Women met once more in New York from March 11 – 22.

I have been attending these meetings since 1992. For too many years I would say: We have seen progress made on women's rights, but we have also seen a lot of "blah, blah". NGOs bring up women's problems, governments say they will solve them, but honestly, there is a lot more to be done.

With Donna Gary and June Jacobs we used to go every day from morning to late afternoon, attending all the interesting sessions, but mostly the parallel events. I did not see too many interesting sessions or parallel events this year, so I just went to those organized with reference to the Palestinian women. Usually we could raise our hand, and clarify concepts, or fake information, I thought I could do it again… but I couldn`t.

These are the three sessions I attended:

Unveiling the Untold: The Devastating Effects of Conflict on Women and Girls, organized by the Ministry of Family and Social Services of Turkey, which I knew would refer to the Palestinian women, *Palestinian Women's Rights and Civil Protection,* organized by the Palestinian State (sic) and UN Women, *Invisible Struggles and Bravehearts: Being a Woman in Palestine*, a session organized also by Turkey, KADEM (Women and Democracy Foundation).

Of course, there was almost no mention to Hamas, but to be honest there was neither too much fake information. Which does not mean there was none, as everything was Israel's fault mostly they centralized in women's plight, and never mentioned that it is because Hamas started this war that they are suffering so much. Here is what they stressed more:

> There is no education going on,
> There are lot of health problem, there are no medicines. Many pregnant women but no one to take care of their health, nor a hospital where to have their babies. A lot of babies are born prematurely, or very small.
> They try to write their children's name in their arms and legs, so they can be identified if their parents die. A lot of orphan children.
> There is no food, or very difficult to get some. They claim that the aid that is coming in is delayed by the long checking of the Israeli army.
> A lot of children with disabilities, and a lot of people with psychological problems.
> A huge number of displaced people, and nowhere to go or stay.

One of the speakers was a Palestinian Authority observer at the UN. She claimed that the UN is doing nothing, neither is the Security Council. She also spoke about what is going to happen after the war.

Another speaker was a parliamentarian in Chile. She was the only one to mention what Hamas did, and she asked for a cease fire; she also mentioned that the settlements were illegal.

Before closing, I want to mention the presence of three men (I cannot call them gentlemen) from Neturei Karta in the last session. They sat in the first row, with their hats on, and their payes, and wearing a Palestinian keffiyeh. After leaving the room, I approach on of them, and asked him if he supported Hamas. He answered asking me if I supported the Jewish People.

When I said I was Jewish, he then jumped to say "well, then you know why we lost our land 2000 years ago, and why the Shoa happened. Because Jews started to become secular, and did not follow the Torah as they should. And that is why the State of Israel should not exist until the Jews come back to the Torah, and the Messiah comes".

When he stopped for a moment to breathe, I said, "Sorry, we are speaking different languages, and I can't talk with you". This was my second encounter with the Neturei Karta. It is really unbelievable what they say and how they act, and in my opinion: a disgrace for the Jewish People.

There was nothing organized by the Israeli Embassy, nor any Jewish NGO. Usually, we have some. Another CSW which will not bring too many improvements to women´s life.

More CSW: Survivors of Abuse

Reported by Carole Benson

Carole arranged a presentation by Tamar Schwartz, CEO of Women's Spirit, to speak at her NCJW USA section after she participated at the UN as part of CSW. Women's Spirit is the only NGO in Israel providing women survivors of abuse with long-term solutions to escape the vicious cycle of abuse through a focus on employment and financial empowerment. She explained the connection between abuse, control and access to financial resources and the work of Women's Spirit. She also reviewed the impact of the current war in Israel and Gaza on women survivors of abuse.

More CSW: Focusing on Ageing

Reported by Judy Lear

Judy Lear represents ICJW with the issue of ageing when she helped the SCOW Committee (Sub-Committee on Older Women) get speakers for their CSW parallel event on March 14, 2024 titled "The Effect of Poverty and Abuse on Women Across the Life Course."

Committee to Stop the Traffic of Persons

Reported by Sara Winkowski

Human trafficking is a serious issue involving the illegal trade of human beings for the purposes of forced labor, sexual exploitation, or other forms of exploitation. It is a global problem that affects millions of people, often the most vulnerable, including women, children, and marginalized groups, and has been going on for centuries.

We cannot forget that it was due to sexual exploitation that ICJW was founded. By the end of 1890 a group of Jewish Women from the United States and Germany very concerned about the young Jewish Women lured from the "klein statelaj" to work in the big city, started what was afterwards going to be the International Council of Jewish Women. Guided by Berta Pappenheim they used to go the train station in Frankfurt to rescue these girls, who would otherwise end in prostitution.

130 years after, we are still seeing that trafficking in persons is more lucrative every day. The prevalence and profiteering of this illegal commerce have increased to $236 billion dollars per year, in spite of the billions spent on efforts, but without really understanding which programs are effectively working to reduce it.

One good news is that the Council and the European Parliament have reached a provisional deal on the regulation prohibiting market products made with force labor in the EU. The provisional agreement supports the main objective of the proposal to prohibit the placing and making available on the EU market, or the export from the EU market, of any product made using forced labor.

Sweden is now punishing the users of prostitution, but not the prostitutes themselves. We do hope that other countries will follow. Governments, organizations, and individuals around the world are working to combat this scourge through various means, including awareness campaigns, legislative measures, and support for victims, but much more has to be done.

Working Group on Girls (WGG)

Reported by Judy Mintz

Background: WGG is a coalition of NGO's committed to safeguarding girls' rights and promoting their full and meaningful participation in global decision-making by collaborating directly with them and sharing their voices at the UN.

Annually the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) provides the Working Group on Girls the opportunity to highlight the important issues facing girls. The committee member NGOS- along with girls world-wide-created documents stressing recommendations serving to educate CSW participants as well as member-states. There was a teen orientation, an interactive dialogue with youth representatives, and a youth forum. Many girl-centered events were planned filling each day. Some examples were Hear Girls Now: Girls Dialogue for Girls' Priorities; Bridging Gender, Climate Justice and Well-being; We deserve Better! Unlocking the power of social protection for women and girls; Break the Cycle of poverty: Empower Girls; Access to Education for Girls; and Financing Elimination of FMG (Female Mutilation).

For this year there were nine recommendations for member-states to consider in support of girls' right and well-being.

Girls' participation and leadership/Girls' Inclusion and Meaningful Participation
Discrimination (protect human rights for all ages)
Climate Change (policies that promote clean air, energy, water, sanitation, food)
Education (access to safe and inclusive education, elimination of financial barriers)
Health (access including mental help, universal child benefits, ensure food security)
Gender-based violence (prevention including in conflict areas and child marriage)
Economic Empowerment & Social Participation (eliminate child labor, equal pay for all)
Disaggregated data for gender equality (support gender analysis, address poverty)
Financing for Gender Equality (sustainable financing and providing legal mechanisms)

In the coming months, WGG will be concentrating its effort on commemorating International Day of the Girl (October 11th). IDG highlights and addresses the needs and challenges facing girls. I hope we can all take action through our affiliates to foster education and awareness in our own communities and countries.

BIANNUAL REPORT
UNITED NATIONS/VIENNA
May 2024

Deborah Kamil

Vienna Human Rights Conference, December 10th to 11th,2023 at Vienna City Hall
Political commitment and challenges
Civil society as the guardians of success
Human Rights in practice
Human Rights and the economy- a complicated affair?
Human Rights and the Environment-a growing challenge
I sent you already a short report and pictures

 # We remember January 27,2024
It is the day on which survivors of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp were liberated in 1945.
"We remember" refers to the international commemoration with an exhibition at the UN.
I sent you pictures.

Seminary at FRA (The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
They help defend the fundamental rights of all people living in the EU.
Fundamental rights define minimum standards to ensure everyone is treated with dignity. They help promote and protect these rights, including:
the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of age, disability or ethnic background;
the right to have your personal data protected;
the right to get access to justice

Best regards,
Deborah Denise Kamil

ICJW Status of Women Report, April 2024

ICJW Status of Women Committee members contributed to this half-yearly information.

All around the world women have been jolted into shock and horror over the events in Israel on October 7. The ongoing war which erupted has been the focus of the world ever since and remains unresolved. The plight of girls and women who remain hostages after months is unbearable and beyond our assistance.

Leaders, affiliates, members of ICJW and millions of women around the globe have struggled to maintain the normality of their lives in the past half year.

World bodies, such as ICJW, have continued to support communities and families in whatever way they can.

Argentina report – Mirta Goldstein

In these last 6 months, Argentine society has been plagued by political and economic difficulties and the increase in poverty.
This mainly affects older women whose retirement pension reaches $200 starting in March. This means that those who do not have other resources cannot buy their remedies.
Of course there is a minority that has access to health, but the deterioration of the situation of older women is very great.

I would have liked to give better news.

USA report – Judy Lear

NCJW USA spearheaded a UN session using rape as a weapon of war after the tragic October 7th Hamas' actions. The ambassador of Israel and other prominent figures participated. It seemed to spur recognition of women's rights from the UN.

Swedish report – Harriet Maler

The events in Israel 7/10 have darkened the situation for Jewish women as well as men also in Sweden. Many feels frustration and fear.

JKK has arranged at least one well attended program to explain and help women to cope with their anxiety. Many members have participated in activities arranged by others.

Australian report

NCJWA set up on WhatsApp an outstanding day by day synopsis of the situation in Israel – it ran for more than 100 consecutive days and provided minute by minute information. NCJWA National President Melinda Jones worked with her sister in Israel, Peta Jones, to provide this remarkable program.

NCJWA was invited by the Embassy of Israel in New Zealand to participate in a zoom with NCJW members in New Zealand, honouring International Women's Day.

Beyond our Jewish world some matters affecting all women include:

This year the *UN Commission on the Status of Women* (CSW) unanimously appointed the Saudi Ambassador to the UN as Chair of the Gender Equality Forum. This patriarchal country is known for its authoritarianism, lack of freedom and extreme inequality in the rights of men and women. Among other complaints about this appointment from organisations like *Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International* called out Saudi Arabia for its notorious treatment of women.

Global Rights for Women: "Femicide constitutes the most serious form of violence against women, taking the lives of about 87,000 women each year." More than half of these women are killed by a family member, one third of them by an intimate partner. *Global Rights*, through a process called *Fatality Review* works to help mobilise the community to end femicide.

The Taliban's supreme leader announced the Afghanistan – Taliban edict resuming the public stoning of women to death, enforcing its interpretation of sharia law. Human rights groups state that this has been enabled by the international communities' silence in the face of these violations of women's rights. Female lawyers and judges have been banned by the Taliban since 2021.

An extraordinary change in anti-female prejudice has developed in recent years. As Claire Lehmann from *Quillette* online magazine points out, the denial of sex differences has led to the neglect of women's health needs and emergence of new forms of prejudice such as lack of single-sex bathrooms and change rooms. A recent study of young adults used brain scans to confirm that the sex of males and females could be detected in their brains. 'The denial of sex differences has led to the neglect of women's health needs and the emergence of new forms of prejudice unimaginable just a decade ago.'

ICJW Status of Women Committee

Chair Robyn Lenn

"Honoring and loving them, even if it seems just a moment and it's an eternity. Our women of October 7... And you and I, here + now."

In a vibrant and energetic atmosphere, women of various ages attended the conference "Honoring and loving them, even if it seems just a moment and it's an eternity. Our women of October 7... and you and I, here + now", organized by Na'amat celebrating their Na'amat Day.

Lina Holtzman was born in Mexico City, descendant of Holocaust survivors. Experienced Founder with a demonstrated history of working in the broadcast media industry. Skilled in Entrepreneurship, Communication, Radio, YouTube, and Creative Writing, she graduated from Universidad Iberoamericana and is editor for the Glow and Black magazines.

Lina likes to talk about beauty, the real one, the one that comes from within. And love, the first one, the self-love, in order to love everything and everyone. The path is dialogue, that's why she was happy to talk with us, taking us on an introspective journey about the value of honoring and loving the women in our

lives. She reminded us of the importance of recognizing the fundamental role that women play in our society, from historical figures to the ordinary women who surround us daily.

She spoke about the glow women have, which is “the light that emanates from your gaze when your inner spark ignites”, and about “Teruma”, rebirth, and how we have the possibilities to be reborn in different areas always. Dahlia Neumann, Cultural and Press Attaché of the Embassy of Israel in Mexico, shared her unique perspective on the topic, showing how respect and admiration for women transcend borders and cultures.

Additionally, Liora Pupko, Cadena Director and prominent figure in the female field, provided us with a guided meditation experience focused on gratitude, and invited us to reflect on the women who have left a mark in our lives.

The conference was a space for reflection, for meeting and connecting among diverse women, united by the desire to celebrate and honor femininity in all its manifestations, a reminder of the importance of valuing, respecting, and loving the women in our lives, recognizing their crucial role in building a more equitable and compassionate world.

Gina Laban- Past president

Na’amat, México

Women’s Division Keren Hayesod Opening Campaign

Twenty-six volunteer Jewish women’s organizations attended this amazing event where we showed our support and solidarity with the State of Israel. Besides their meaningful work, these organizations do fund-raising events with Keren Hayesod and the Jewish Agency. Vivian, the president, explained how we will work for the next two years to help the people of Israel move forward.

A panel of important personalities shared their deep, moving and transforming experiences after Oct. 7. Israel’s

Ambassador to Mexico, Einat Krantz Neiger, spoke about the bilateral relations between Mexico and Israel after Oct 7, and the difficult challenges she now faces with both the Mexican Government and journalists.

Rabbi Emeritus, Marcelo Rittner, shared his meaningful, deep moving and life-changing experience with his trip with the Massorti Movement to Israel a few days after Oct. 7.

Adina Chelminsky is an important feminist activist in Mexico, considered one of the 100 most influential feminists in our country. She shared with us her experience of traveling to Israel after October 7, her personal unrest and conflict with a cruel, unresponsive and neutral feminist movement.

In a very moving and personal manner, Yakir Keren, Director for Keren Hayesod Mexico shared with us how, during his personal vacation period, he joined his lifetime peers in the army and served and fulfilled his duties as a Jayal inside Gaza.

In closing the event, Vivian Ehrenwald, President of Women's Division of Keren Hayesod, delivered some beautiful words reminding us all that the emergency is ongoing and that we must join efforts and continue working with energy and an open heart.

Vicky Cohen Cain
Women's Division
Keren Hayesod

National Newsletter for ICJW April 2024

We are truly shaping the next chapter for NCJWC. The National Board is committed to strengthening our role as a collective Canadian voice of Jewish women in Canada. Through a collaboration of 21 NCJWC leaders we are moving our Strategic Plan forward. Sheila Neuberger, Toronto President; Jordana Corenblum, Vancouver President and Debbie Wasserman, National Past President are each leading an Implementation Focus Group. Their discussions bring excitement, reflection and endless possibilities for a stronger, more cohesive and vibrant National organization

Mazel Tov to Monika Simon a NCJWC VP and the 20 members of the newly recreated Montreal Section. We are so excited and look forward to working with our newest Section on Council initiatives.

NCJWC is honoured to be nominated for a Mitzvah Day International Award. Sections across Canada held impactful Mitzvah Day projects for their communities.

Meanwhile, our National committees are developing inspirational educational programs and webinars, which support the **pillars** of our Board's Agenda and contribute to the work of our 6 Sections.

The **Antisemitism Committee** has planned a series of webinars on 'Women on the Front Lines' which will culminate in an event at our AGM and ICJW conference in November. The Committee created two templates to assist Sections with outreach programs. One provides the elements to build an antisemitism presentation which includes a short video on the history of antisemitism, an account of a Holocaust survivor, and the personal stories of antisemitism experienced by members.

The other template seeks to help each Section to advocate in its own city equipped with a list of questions to ask municipal leaders what action they have taken to stem the rise of antisemitism locally.

The work of the 'Women 2 Women (W2W) Committee Against Racism' is on hold following October 7th.

The rise of Antisemitic incidents throughout Canada is escalating beyond belief. Our government's response is greatly lacking and fuelling a toxic environment. Many rallies are being held throughout

the country in response. National members joined Toronto Section at the 'Canadian Women Against Antisemitism' rally on March 24. The speakers included 2 university students who spoke about their horrific antisemetic experiences on campus which resulted in these women stepping away from their studies. This well organized rally is a testament of the determination of women to fight hatred. Our NCJWC presence was featured on local news.

Dr. Allison Sekuler, who is one of the most accomplished Neuroscientists in North America with groundbreaking research that aims to develop methods to prevent, detect and treat age-related sensory and cognitive decline, will present 'Defy Dementia' on June 5th**,** the second webinar planned by the **Ageism Committee**.

Responding to **ALUMA's** unprecedented need for more trauma therapy counsellors following October 7th, our Sections raised funds in an emergency campaign. This is in addition to the funds raised yearly for our Israeli project of 50 + years. Additional money was raised for the creation of a children's computer centre in Yoseftal Hospital in Eilat. This centre has become even more important with the displacement of so many Israeli's following October 7th.

Plans are underway for NCJWC's AGM and the International Council of Jewish Women's Conference and Executive meeting November 3-6, 2024 in Toronto. We look forward to the opportunity to introduce the ICJW members to our members in events which overlap.

Debbie Wasserman and myself attended the ICJW conference in Panama last fall. Debbie will attend the conference in Slovakia this May. I will be visiting our Sections across Canada in the coming months.

I am in awe of the passion, creativity, and productivity of our Section leaders and Boards, especially in these most difficult times. Their programs and partnerships in their communities are outstanding. NCJWC has a rich history of serving our communities for 127 years and our National Board and 6 Sections in Canada continue to carry the torch.

Edmonton Section through partnerships with other organizations in their community, provides meaningful programs through a Jewish lens. Their leadership in Mitzvah Day projects, support to the program ' Seniors Making Age Related Transitions', the Aviv Israeli Folk Dance Association, Jewish Film Festival and Antisemitism programs is well recognized in Edmonton.

Montreal Section newly created in March 2024 participated in Mitzvah Day projects in the 11 months leading up to their official status as a Section. Their work continues drafting Bylaws and firming up their administrative structure. A source of great pride for Montreal and NCJWC members.

Simcoe County Section formed in 2018**,** has created a welcoming community which is spread over a large area, for new Canadians and families who have relocated from Toronto. Members are connected with a Jewish community and engage in meaningful activities. Two monthly programs which introduce potential members to Council, include a book club and drop-in-lunch at a local restaurant. The PJ Library connector has joined the Executive Committee with the goal of engaging younger women. A restorative yoga/meditation evening 'Restoring Resilience' has been planned.

Members participated in Mitzvah Day and plan to expand their activities for November. Partnering with Am Shalom Congregation and PJ Library, Simcoe members collected essential medical supplies for Israel and their Social Action Committee has been knitting hats for the Israeli soldiers.

In January members gathered in person at Am Shalom Congregation to view a heart wrenching presentation by Shye Weinstein, a photographer who grew up in Simcoe County, but now lives in Israel, of his experience photographing, escaping and surviving the Hamas massacre at the Supernova Music Festival on October 7th. He has had several speaking engagements throughout North America and posts informative information on his Instagram: @shyeklein

This Passover, families will be asked to put a few more chairs at their tables, to host an area family who would otherwise be alone for Seder. "Adopt a Family" for Passover.

Their annual mahj/canasta day fundraiser always draws a large enthusiastic crowd. Raffle prizes add to the excitement.

Toronto Section members have continued to build new relationships and partnerships to leverage the passions and interests of their volunteers with organizations that have important connections to the local community. The leadership of Toronto Section was invited by Minister Ya'ara Sacks and Foreign Minister Melanie Jolie to a consultation which provided NCJWC with the opportunity to express their collective concerns about growing

antisemitism in the GTA and Canada. Toronto Section also participated in an event organized by Secure Canada with Muslim Leaders from around the globe speaking out against antisemitism.

The Passover Food Drive which is one of Toronto Section's signature programs, prepared 2500 boxes with the help of volunteers and groups for delivery to recipients.

The women of the Toronto Jewish Quilting Project who meet weekly have gifted 500 Angel Quilts to date, 12 in the last few months, to those touched by cancer.

L'CHAIM CANCER SUPPORT developed a new focus to address the needs and interests of young women diagnosed with cancer. 'Planning a Family in the Face of Cancer', a program featuring a panel of leading medical experts will be offered in the spring. A follow-up program, centered on adoption, surrogacy, finding spiritual meaning, and addressing mental health, is also in the works..

After many years of devoted work on this project, the remarkable group of multi-faith women, the One Voice members, have completed their comprehensive toolkit ' Faith Leaders on the Front Line' Responding to Domestic Violence in our Communities. All faith leaders in the GTA will receive a copy and an invite to a virtual event featuring faith leaders, professionals in the field of domestic violence, and survivors

Winnipeg Section organized another successful Mitzvah Day, collecting books and art supplies for an inner-city youth drop-in centre. Approximately 20 other local organizations participated in their own mitzvah projects. Winnipeg Section spearheaded the first Canadian participation in International Mitzvah Day in 2019, and are so excited to see the increased participation in Mitzvah Day, especially across NCJWC Sections! They hosted a well attended Games Day event to raise funds for the Yoseftal Hospital in Eilat.

At this annual event, members and volunteers baked hamentashens and assembled mishloach manot packages for Jewish Child and Family Services for distribution to their clients during Purim.

Winnipeg launched their Instagram in April and their followers continue to grow daily. Follow us at: https://www.instagram.com/p/C5gnGrxup1Y/?igsh=YnVmaDZpcDMzb3Zx

The Section's new 'Women Working' branch continues to meet monthly and provides support and friendship for newcomers to Winnipeg to share job searching and career advancement tips.

An Intergenerational 'Baking 4 a Cause' fundraising event is planned for May. They will be baking knishes and burekas and proceeds will go towards Aluma and Section programming.

Vancouver Section, established in 1924, held two large events in the last several months as they have stepped into their 100th year. The Games Day for Israel was a huge success; 120 people gathered for a fun filled afternoon and they were able to send $8000 to support Aluma.

A stellar event was held in Honour of International Women's Day. NCJWC Vancouver proudly welcomed over 140 people to the first live recording of the *Beyond a Ballot* podcast. They were so thrilled with the opportunity to partner with this incredible company. We value the importance of women not only having the right to vote (which was not established federally in Canada until 1920!) but also, exercising that right in an informed way.

Vancouver Section is very excited about their upcoming food security programs. They are collaborating with Jewish Family Services and a Jewish community garden to bring farm to table interactive educational programming to families.

NCJWC Sections have contributed greatly to their local communities and I look forward to sharing our ideas and learning more from our affiliates when we meet in Toronto , November 2024.

Respectfully submitted

Linda Steinberg

President NCJWC

ICJW Asia Pacific Region Report
May 2024
Di Hirsh OAM and Sunny Gold

For International Women's Day the Council of Jewish Women New Zealand held a very successful joint webinar with the Israel Embassy in New Zealand highlighting the work of some women's organisations in Israel. The emphasis was on hearing women's voices especially in regard to domestic violence and gender based violence, as well as in peace negotiations. The speakers were Yifat Bitton, Israeli Law professor and activist, Idit Codish, from Michal Sela Forum in Israel, and Melinda Jones, President NCJWA and co-founder of the Kiverstein Institute. Members of NCJWA we also invited to attend the webinar, which made this the first time that an event was held for both the Australian and NZ affiliates together.

NCJW Australia has held a number of webinars and zoom events, including the establishment of a connection with Women Wage Peace in Israel. NCJWA will be holding a Jewish Women's Summit, as part of their National Conference, in Melbourne, Australia 3 – 5 August.

As I am stopping in Singapore on my way back from Bratislava, I am endeavouring to meet up with the Women's Rosh Chodesh group to talk to them about ICJW and hopefully spark their interest in becoming involved. The connection has been made through a male Muslim friend of mine who lived in Australia for many years and now lives in Singapore. We were both part of an interfaith group of 12 Jewish, Muslim and Christian women and men who travelled together to Jerusalem from Melbourne 10 years ago.

Geneva Bi-Annual Activity Report
Between Panama City (November, 2023) and Bratislava (May, 2024)

Over the past months the silence and denials by UN bodies and International Women's NGOs, concerning the systematic sexual assaults and rapes, as well as other atrocities, committed by Hamas on October 7, underlined in our Panama Report, are slowly and gradually being reconsidered.

Official UN recognition followed the visit to Israel and the West Bank (from January 29-February 14, 2024) of UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Ms. Pramila Patten and her team. Based on the information it gathered, the mission team found "convincing information that sexual violence, including rape, sexualized torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment "has been committed on October 7, also against hostages. They have "reasonable grounds to believe that such violence may be ongoing against those still held in captivity".
https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/press-release/israel-west-bank-mission/

55th Session of the Human Rights Council (26 February – 5 April 2024)

In her report, Léonie de Picciotto (VP of the Geneva NGO Committee on Human Rights) presents the inspiring speech of Marcelo Kohen: "Peace and security are preconditions for the enjoyment of all human rights". Marcelo Kohen, Emeritus Professor of International Law, Geneva Graduate Institute, Former Secretary-General of the Institute of International Law was thanks to Léonie, CJW's candidate chosen this year as one of the four civil society speakers to address the Council after the high-level segment of dignitaries of 110 countries.

Participating since many years in the UN Geneva NGO FORB Committee (Freedom of Religion or Belief), on behalf of ICJW, I felt obliged to stress at the Committee meeting of March 8 that not once, did someone on the FORB WhatsApp group mention the violent outbreak of antisemitism all over, which restricts the freedom of religion and the security of Jews, also on campuses. I added that I don't understand the silence, and referred to the 2019 UN Report on Global Antisemitism of the former FORB Special Rapporteur Ahmed Shaheed who underlined that antisemitism doesn't concern only Jews but the entire society, being toxic to democracy and an assault on Human Rights.

At later dates, on the FORB WhatsApp group I countered the fake news that prayers on Al Aqsa Mosque were forbidden during Ramadan by giving a polite answer and by posting a YouTube video of prayers highly attended the first day of Ramadan at Al Aqsa.

Without pursuing sterile discussions with aggressive members of the FORB WhatsApp group, I answered on behalf of ICJW that I agreed that the petition condemning the rape of Israeli hostages is "unfitting for such a group as the Geneva NGO FORB Committee" as expressed by Ani Zonneveld, founder and President of Muslims for Progressive Values. What I didn't understand was why she thought that "this was downright Islamophobia"? What ensued was an outpouring of hostile anti-Israel explanations and comments. After answering her with different facts, I mentioned the Toronto meeting of March 3 "Muslim Leaders speak out against the sexual violence of October 7." I concluded by adding that the petition someone else sent "Open letter to the Israeli and US governments weaponizing the issue of rape" was also out of place in this FORB WhatsApp group.

https://stopmanipulatingsexualassault.org

At the opening of this 55th session, this year's President of the HRC, the Moroccan Omar Zniber, noted that this session was the longest since the Council's creation. Its main objective: "to achieve concrete progress in the field of human rights". No comment.

The draft resolution voted on March 26 (item 2 55HRC L30) after the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur of the Occupied Palestinian Territories Francesca Albanese (for the first time a woman) as well as the 5 "traditional" anti-Israel resolutions under item 7 voted on April 5, deserve a report in themselves.

I was able to follow the debates from Jerusalem on UN Web TV. These can still be seen on the UN website.

On April 5 I wrote the following for the ICJW Europe WhatsApp: the vote of the draft resolution on the OPT was: 6 against (US, Germany, Bulgaria, Argentina) 13 abstained (among them The Netherlands, France, Romania, also India and Japan). Among those who approved the "unbalanced resolution* which doesn't even mention Hamas, nor the events of October 7 (Finland, Luxembourg and Belgium).

In my many years at the UN in Geneva I don't remember ever having heard such applause after the vote of a resolution!!!

What I left out until now, were the shocking words I heard and saw coming out of the mouth of SR Francesca Albanese when she presented her report on March 26.

Some examples: what's happening in Gaza "is the worst that humanity is capable of", "the crime of crimes", UNWRA is the main "lifeline", "the genocidal intent has been internalized by soldiers".

In her concluding remarks, SR Albanese thanked all those who endorsed her report.

She also added that "the UN contributed to create the problem 75 years ago".

Unbelievable, coming from an UN expert!!!

Mary Liling

April 25, 2024

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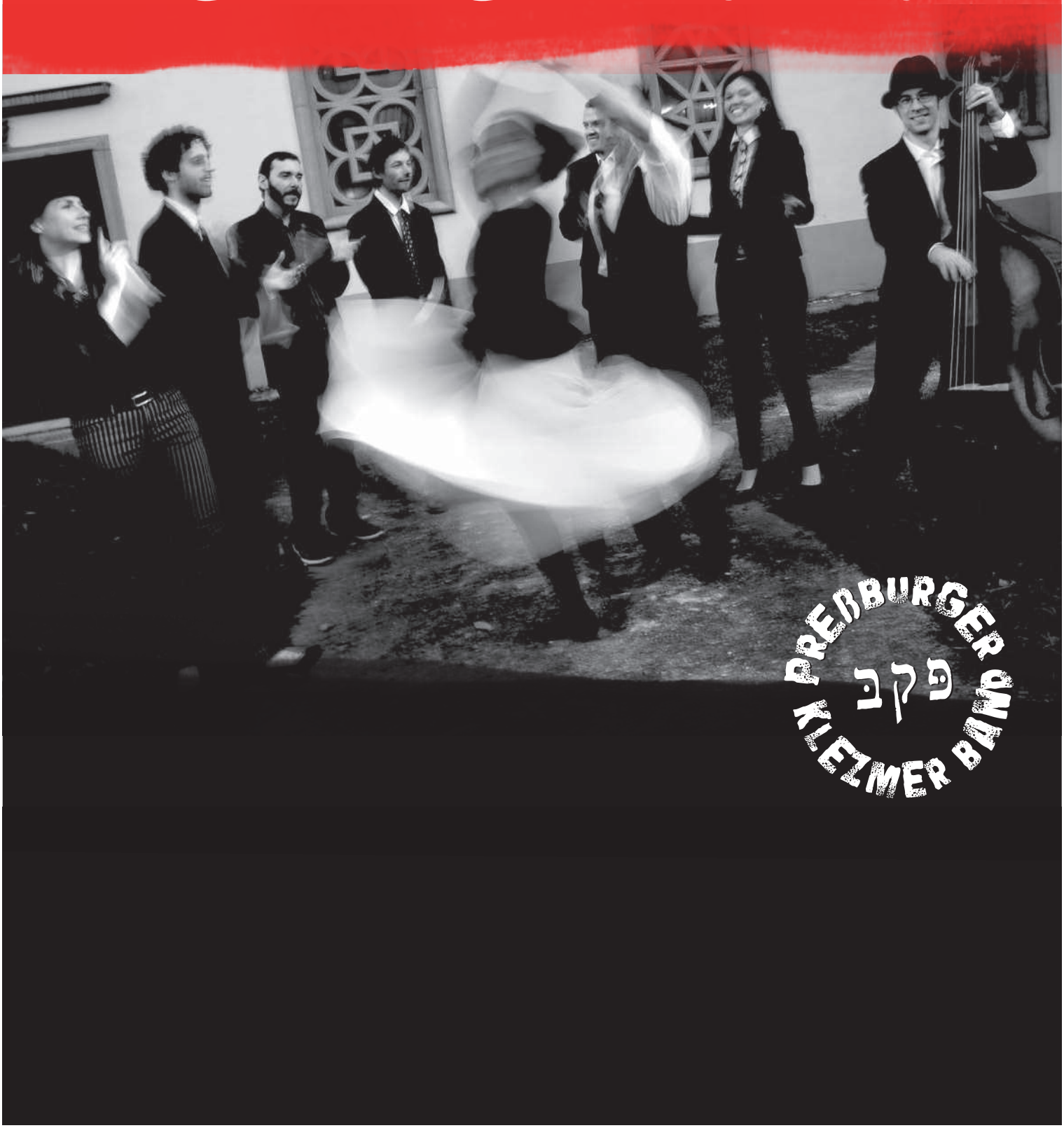

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