



Mental health: People at the center



Mental health needs of Israelis and Jews worldwide since 7 October 2023

Tuesday, 14 May 11am CET (Switzerland) / 12pm IDT (Israel)

Speakers:

Sara Kivity, RN (Israel)

Miriam Popper, psychotherapist (Switzerland & Israel)

Moderator: Rebecca Laes-Kushner, policy analyst (Switzerland)



Rebecca Laes-Kushner, Consultant
Policy. Analysis. Advocacy.

Housekeeping

- This session is being recorded
- Slides posted at end of event
- Post questions in Chat, will answer at end



Speakers



Sara Kivity, RN, is the Director of Strategic Research and Development, Maccabi Health Services, an HMO in Israel. She is a growth-focused professional with a decade-long achievement record in the healthcare industry and extensive leadership experience. Professional focal points include treatment coordination, program management, operations management, patient care, human resource management, compliance, research and analysis, employee wellness, policy development, process optimization, and strategic planning.

Miriam Popper is a Swiss federally recognized psychotherapist FSP, yoga teacher AYA/SYV/EYU and founder of the Institute for Yoga Psychotherapy YoPT. She has been working in her own psychotherapeutic practice for over 27 years. She views experience, body, soul and spirit as different aspects of the same reality, which we can integrate, transform and fill with consciousness. She provided training to Israeli therapists treating child hostages who had been released.



Moderator



[Rebecca Laes-Kushner](#) is a public policy analyst who lives in Switzerland. She worked as a Health Policy analyst for the University of Massachusetts Medical School (USA), where one of her last projects involved developing a program to provide behavioral health services to inmates upon their release and return to the community. She currently works on development issues in low- and middle-income countries, including promoting the use of digital tools for monitoring and evaluation (M&E).



Agenda



1. Mental health crisis in Israel, by subpopulation

- ◆ Israel overall
- ◆ Massacre survivors and evacuees
- ◆ Hostages and released hostages
- ◆ Hostages' families
- ◆ Women
- ◆ Arab-Israelis

2. Mental health crisis among world Jews

3. The way forward in Israel: putting people at the center

1. Why this is relevant for you

2. Conclusion



Quick definitions



- **Jew:** someone of **Jewish religion**, from any country and ethnicity (European, African, Latin American, Asian; white, black, Asian, Latino); parents are Jewish or person converted to Judaism

- **Israeli: citizen of Israel; any religion** – Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Druze, etc.; **any ethnicity** – Arab, European, African, etc. Note: 20% of Israelis are Arabs.

- **Arab in Israel / Israeli-Arab** – refers to ethnic residents from region, who may be Muslims or Christian

Note, there are also Arab Jews – 800,000 were expelled from or forced to leave Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya from 1948 through 1950s and 1960s

- **Knesset** – Israeli parliament
- **IDF** – Israeli Defense Forces





Mental health crisis for Israelis

Plus understanding how the context affects
mental health



Maccabi's survey

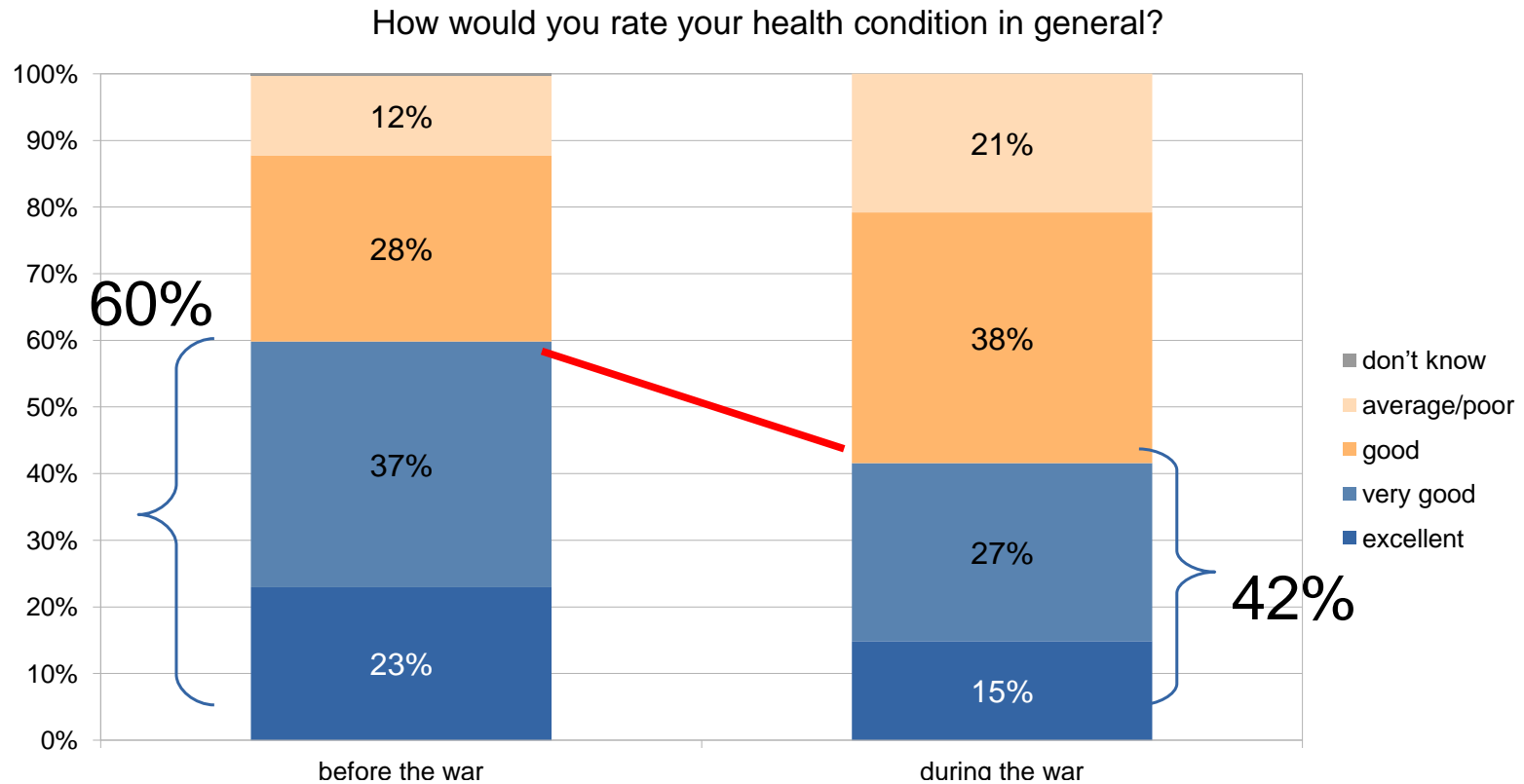
- Maccabi is one of 4 main HMOs in Israel, 2.5M members
- Conducted 2 surveys:
 - November 2023
 - general population
 - 501 random people asked about life before war vs. during war
 - Ages 20-75
 - Adjusted for HMO, age, sex and geographic region
 - November-December 2023
 - 245 families of hostages+ volunteers
 - Ages 18-75
 - Asked about life before war vs. during war

Shamir-Stein, N., Feldblum, I., Rotman, E., Cohen, S., Brand, E., Kivity, S., & Saban, M. (2024). Exploring the self-reported physical and psychological effects in a population exposed to a regional conflict. *Journal of community health*, 1-8.

survey of Israelis includes Jews, Muslims, Christians, etc.



General health perceptions, 2023

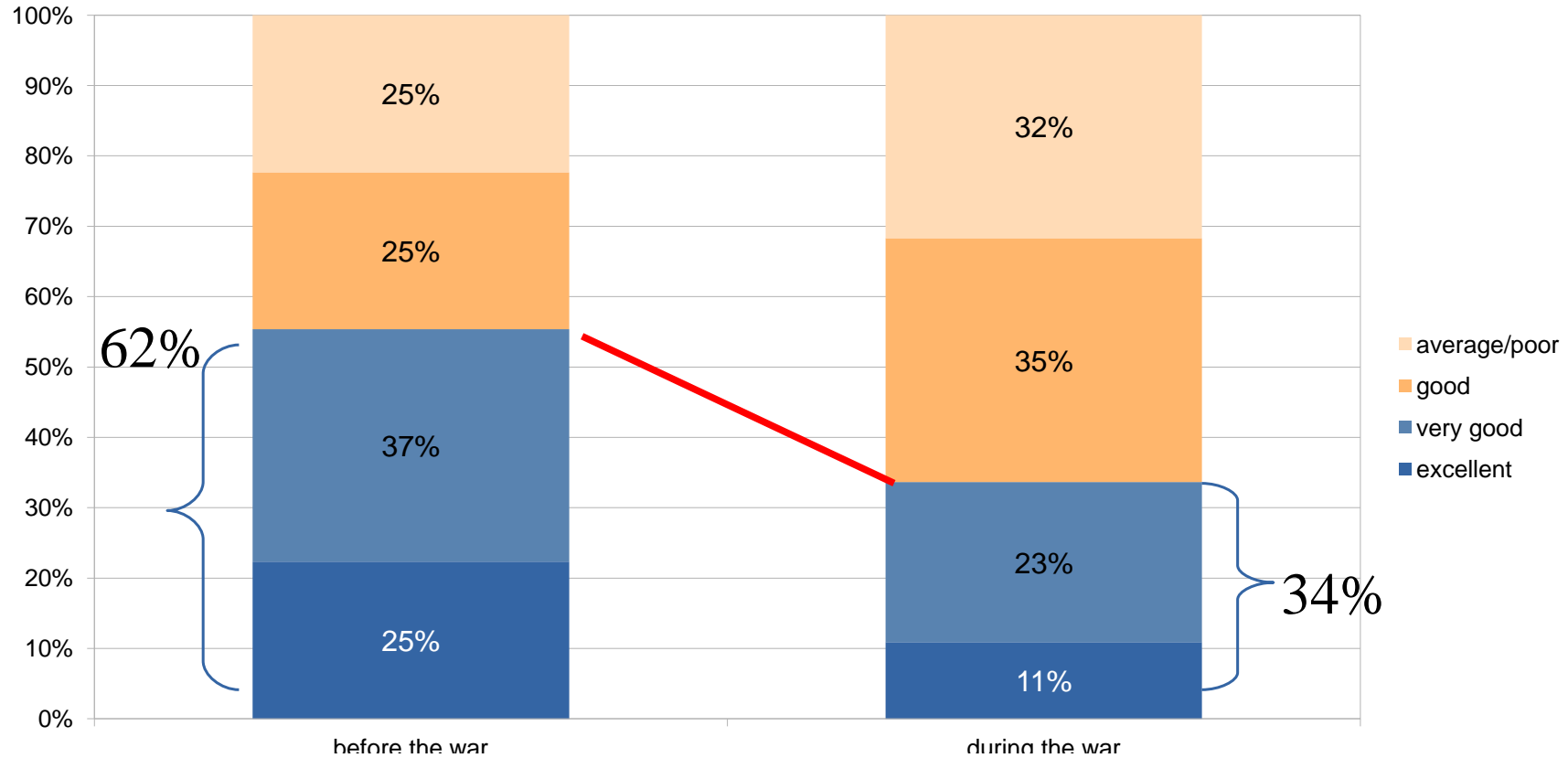


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Mental health needs 2023

How would you rate your mental health?



Shamir-Stein, N., Feldblum, I., Rotman, E., Cohen, S., Brand, E., Kivity, S., & Saban, M. (2024). Exploring the self-reported physical and psychological effects in a population exposed to a regional conflict. *Journal of community health*, 1-8.



Massacre on 7.10.23



- biggest slaughter of Jews since Holocaust
- 1200 people killed
- massacre:
 - ◆ elderly killed, people burned, baby cut out of mother's uterus, children decapitated
 - ◆ women raped so bad hips dislocated
 - ◆ houses burned
- took 253 people hostage, age 9 months to 85 years
- most hostages are civilians



Israeli trauma: massacre scenes

General public saw these types of photos in media, shared by friends – so population traumatized by what happened





War and threats to life



- Sons and daughters fighting in Gaza, now also at northern border

Everyone knows someone who is deployed – friend, neighbor, friend’s neighbor, neighbor’s friend

- Missiles regularly shot from Gaza into Israel (still!), Lebanon, Iran, Houthis in Yemen



<https://www.suryaa.com/150581-gaza-launches-fresh-rocket-attacks-on-israeli-border-areas.html>

Missiles being shot from Gaza into Israel, April 2024



Increased use of mental health services, 2023

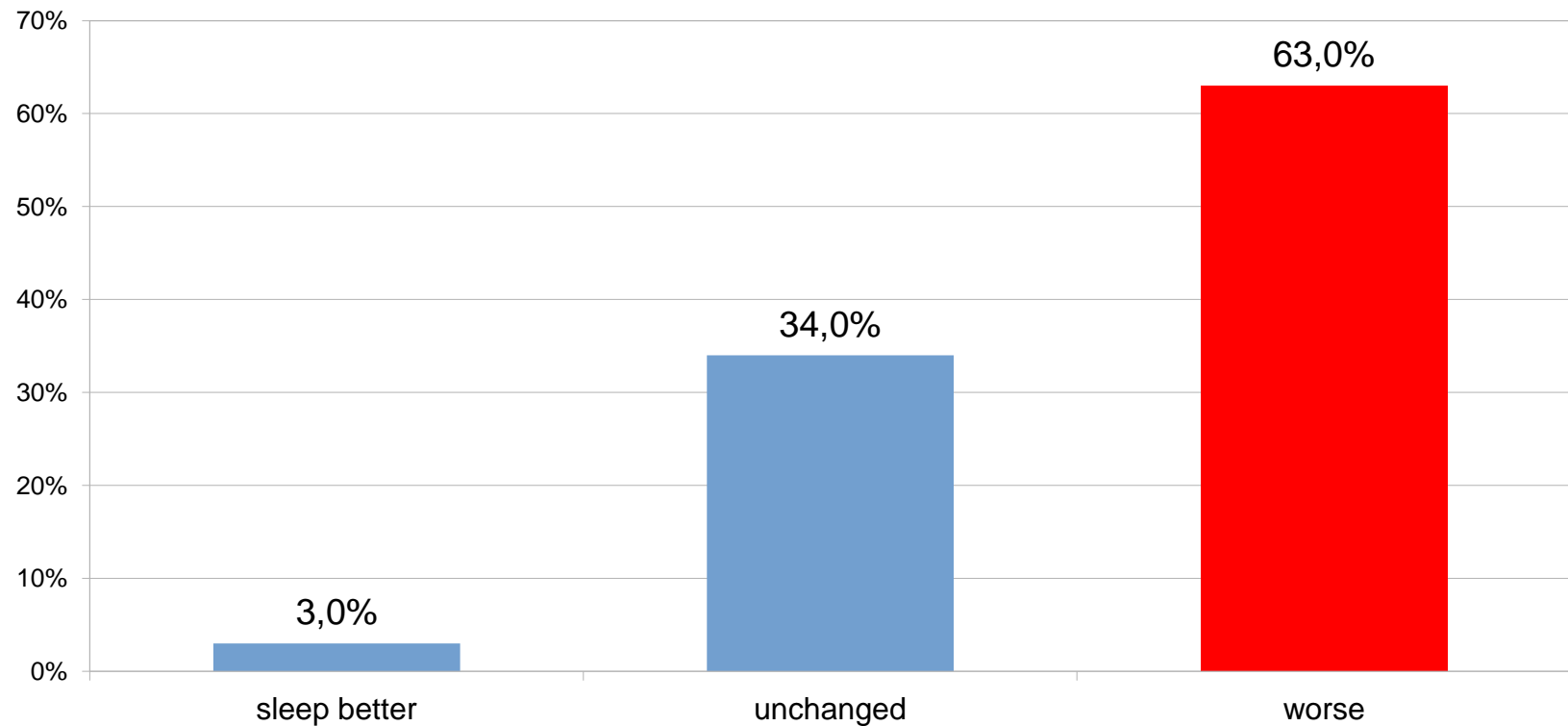
- increase ~30% in medical diagnosis for depression and anxiety
- increase ~90% in purchase of sedatives without prescription in the "Maccabi Pharm" chain of pharmacies
- No change in % taking medication to treat depression or anxiety, but of those who took medication before and during the war, 27% increased the dose or changed medications
- 18% of respondents said need to receive help from mental health professionals due to war

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Sleep quality

After the start of the war, to what extent do you feel there has been a change in the quality of your sleep?



source: Maccabi Health Services survey, 2024

Shamir-Stein, N., Feldblum, I., Rotman, E., Cohen, S., Brand, E., Kivity, S., & Saban, M. (2024). Exploring the self-reported physical and psychological effects in a population exposed to a regional conflict. *Journal of community health*, 1-8.





Massacre survivors and evacuees



Massacre survivors, evacuated communities

- **Massacre survivors** - Nova music festival, Kibbutz Be'eri, Kibbutz Kfar Aza, etc.
- **125,000 residents of towns in south evacuated to hotels** further north due to villages destroyed in massacre + rockets from Gaza
 - ◆ 27,000 still in hotels

Maccabi Healthcare Services survey of evacuees: (will be published soon!)

- 1/3 of war's evacuees reported change in health condition for the worse
- 45% increase in use of medications to treat depression or anxiety
- 45% need mental help from a professional – but 1/5 haven't sought help
- Less healthy behaviors - stopped exercising, smoke more/started to smoke again, sleep less

<https://news.walla.co.il/item/3654782>



Services to evacuated populations

- People evacuated to Dead Sea tourist area, no medical services nearby (middle of Negev desert)
- Had to find solutions – trucks for gynecology exams & mammograms; medical consultations by video; clinics on weekends – doctors, nurses, others volunteer for free
- Mental health – government services, HMO services, volunteers; support by phone and video
- Mental health hotlines expanded services





Hostages and released hostages



Hostages

- Hamas took 253 people hostage
 - ◆ age 9 months to 85 years, including 30 children under 16
 - ◆ Jews, Muslims/Arabs, others
 - ◆ Israelis as well as non-Israelis - Thai and Filipino guest workers, people from US, Tanzania, Nepal
- 109 hostages released by Hamas, 3 rescued by IDF
- Still 95 hostages believed alive (old people, ill people) + 37 bodies
- Babies still among the hostages
- **Hostages are drugged, raped, tortured physically and psychologically**

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7149492146981478400/>

testimony of (Ms.) Daniel Aloni who was kidnapped on October 7th with her 6 year old daughter Amelia by the Hamas terrorists



Released hostages and mental health

Experiences from released captives:

- ◆ Hamas told them: 'Israel doesn't care about you', family members dead
- ◆ "We were constantly kept in apartments with terrorists who threatened that we will die in Gaza, and that our families don't care about us."
- ◆ Children separated from families, shown "brutal videos", drugged (ketamine, benzodiazepines)
- ◆ Several released hostages kept in total darkness for 4+ days. **"They became psychotic, they had hallucinations."**
- ◆ **Some former hostages continue to experience dissociative states: "One minute they know that they are here at Ichilov Medical Center, and the next they think they are back with Hamas."**

Sources: <https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-793217>; <https://www.timesofisrael.com/one-girl-was-given-ketamine-israeli-doctor-says-hostages-abused-drugged-in-gaza/>



Protocols for care of released hostages: mental health focus

Health Ministry's February 2024 protocols (updated from Nov 2023):

- updated per **consultations with hospitals, community health systems, acute sexual abuse response teams, police and IDF**
- recommended minimum of four-day stays in hospitals' special areas for returned hostages, **to allow needed medical and mental care; constant set of healthcare professionals**
- each returned hostage **assigned nurse and social worker**; treatment plan includes transition to community
- medical staff at the hospitals underwent additional **training on treating cases of sexual abuse, war crimes and torture in captivity**

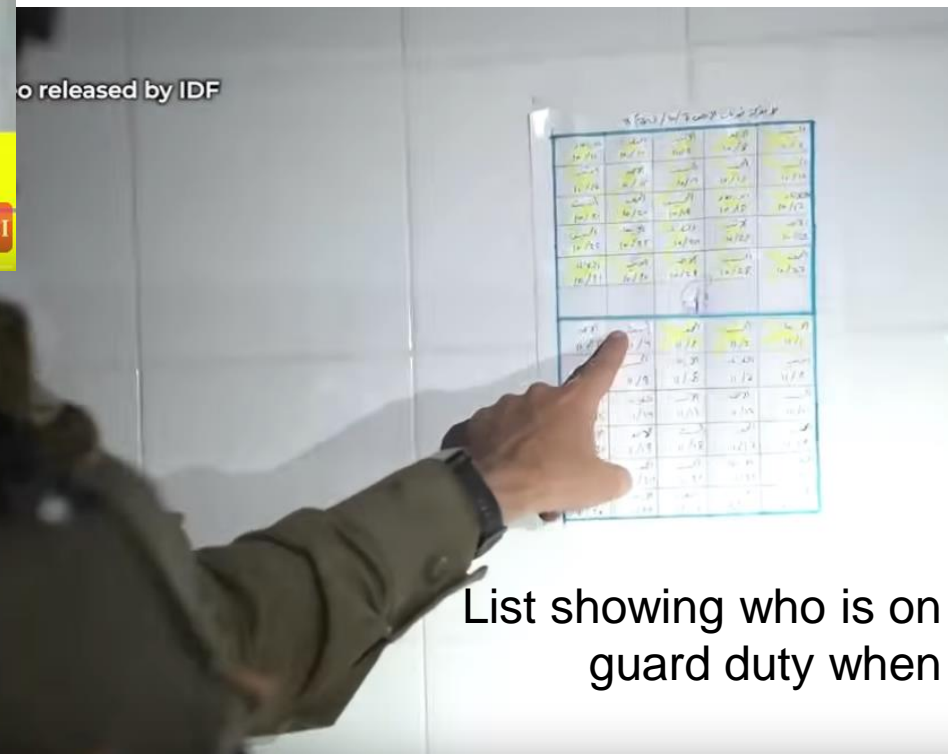


Hostages held in Gaza hospital



Baby bottle & diapers

Israel did DNA test on children's materials and know which babies were held in the hospital



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZrcSJDiq4w>



Hamas uses hospitals to store weapons & shoot at IDF

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZrcSJDiq4w>



Treating child hostages



- Trained Israeli therapists working with child hostages - body work / trauma relief techniques
- Provided trainings at Metiv and Hadassah
- Trauma, PTSD
- Children can't express verbally, need body movement
- Supporting traumatized therapists

Metiv <https://metiv.org/en/about/>

Our Vision: A society that gives voice to psychological trauma, cares for those who have suffered from it and commits to empowering those affected by trauma. We provide clinical interventions and a variety of therapeutic programming that heal and empower those exposed to traumatic life experiences.

Hadassah <https://www.hadassah.org.il/en/>

Since the establishment of Hadassah's first hospital [in] Jerusalem...in 1918...the Hadassah University Medical Center has expanded to include two University hospitals. The flagship of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, the two hospitals have 1,000 beds, 31 operating theaters, nine specially oriented intensive care units and five schools of allied medical professions, owned and operated in collaboration with the Hebrew University.





Hostages' families



Hostages' families – psychological hostages of Hamas



Family members of hostages speaking at Knesset Health Committee, March 4, 2024

“My wife and daughter [Sharon and Noam] were released from captivity [on November 25], but I am **still suffering physically and emotionally**. I have **lost eight kilos (17 pounds)**. I’m **smoking more** than in the past and am **taking more drugs**. I have **ongoing sleep problems and am unable to work.**”

--Hen Avigdori



Photo:
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/wife-and-daughter-freed-from-gaza-tv-writer-continues-fight-for-other-hostages/>

“How can I feel hungry or think about eating when I am always thinking about how my son is hungry all the time [in Gaza]?”



Photo:
<https://www.timesofisrael.com/taken-captive-omer-shem-tovs-car-was-driven-into-gaza/>

--Shelly Shem-Tov, whose 21-year-old son Omer was kidnapped from the Supernova music festival





Women



Increase in need among women

- 84% of the female members of the families of the abductees feel they need mental assistance from professional (vs. 23% of general population)
 - ◆ About 2/3 receive assistance
- Daughters of kidnapped families have 2x increase in use of drugs to treat depression or anxiety (from 8% to 19%)

Source: Maccabi Health Services survey, 2023



Crimes against women

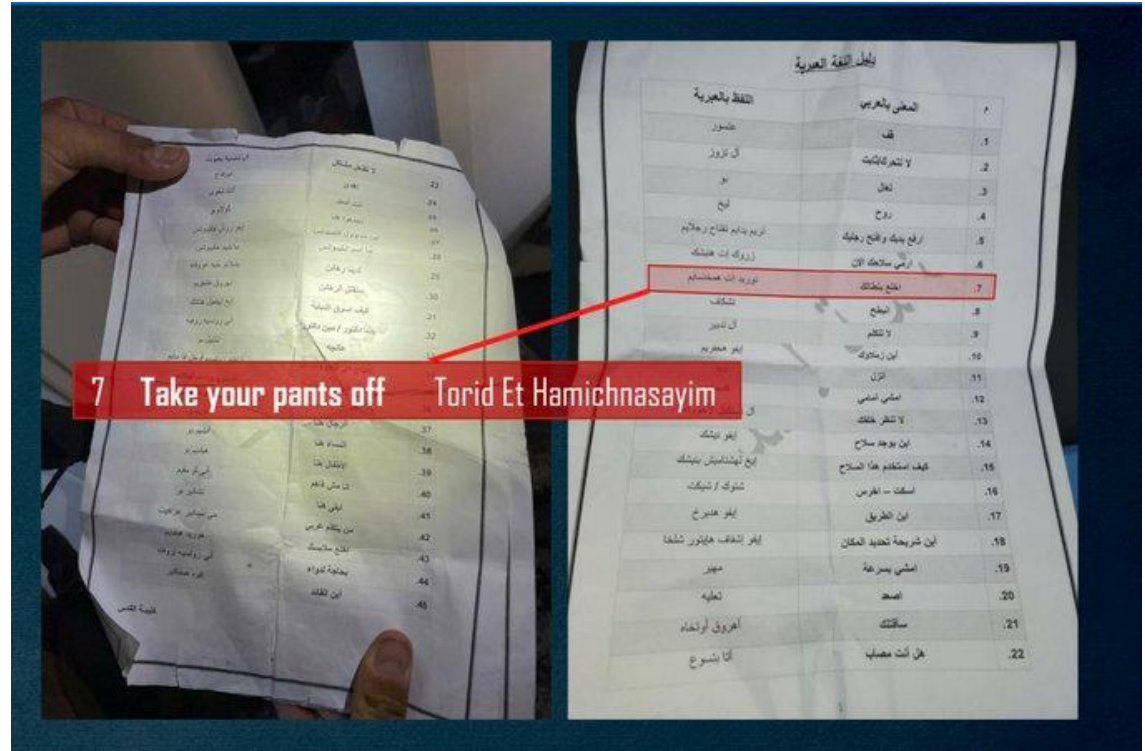
Special Forces Paramedic's testimony:

"I entered a home...While we're looking for injured people, civilians to rescue...terrorists are still holding houses..."

I opened with my team one of the rooms of that house and I see two girls lying, one on a bed, one on the floor...the girl, a 14, 15 years old teenager...she is lying on her stomach, her pants are pulled down...her legs spread out wide open, and there are remains of sperm on her back.

Someone executed her right after he brutally, brutally raped her..."

Source: <https://www.ynet.co.il/news/article/bjnxpwufp>



<https://twitter.com/Israel/status/1723759157960953981>

Arabic-Hebrew transliteration glossary belonging to Hamas was discovered in Israel with sexual terminology, including "take your pants off."

Silence from feminist groups

UN Women, #Metoo, national organizations

“UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) also failed to explicitly condemn Hamas’s atrocities, despite having previously denounced Islamic State’s systematic attacks and sexual violence against Yazidi women in Iraq, Boko Haram’s violence against Nigerian women and the targeting of Rohingya women and girls in Myanmar.”

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/global-womens-rights-groups-silent-as-israeli-women-testify-about-rapes-by-hamas/>

“ If we can't agree that rape is **wrong**, rape is **not** resistance, rape is **not** freedom fighting, then the question becomes **not** what is happening in the Middle East but

what is happening to our humanity? ”

Sheryl Sandberg
January 2024

HonestReporting[✓]





Arab-Israelis



Arab-Israeli experience

- **killed by Hamas during massacre; kidnapped by Hamas;** lives threatened by missiles from Gaza, Hezbollah and Iran
- ◆ Arab-Israeli who was released said his captors knew he was an Arab and took him anyway
- many also have family in Gaza

Mental health data included above with entire Israeli population

Arab Members of Knesset (parliament); Arab-Israeli woman voting



Arab-Israeli Yoseph Haddad rebutting claim that Israel is an apartheid state
https://www.instagram.com/p/CcN3nDGK0US/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Arab-Israelis are in IDF



Jews worldwide



Qualitative data on Jews in Switzerland

Thoughts about where
to emigrate to live most
safely as a Jew

*Testimonies from Jews in Switzerland about
their mental health since 7 October*

Feeling unprepared to **defend our
children**

Fear for the future (especially
for **safety of my children**, for
example in public school and
environment)

Seeing the rapes and violence
against women has changed the
approach to the body

Afraid of people
speaking Arabic near
me

What happened is completely unbearable. Mentally, I have to navigate around
black holes. As a philosophically inclined person I struggle with the phenomena dead, pain, and
hate...In the past I felt guilty, today I feel sad. It's difficult to keep some balance.



Testimony from Swiss therapist who treats Jewish patients

Since October 7th of last year, I have observed changes in the mental and emotional well-being of Israeli and Jewish clients. Initially, they expressed a **strong need to grieve and process the pain** and sadness about the attack and consecutive events.

As time has passed and tensions in the region have escalated alongside international pressures, I have noticed a shift in the themes they bring up during our sessions. They have begun to exhibit **heightened emotional distress**, and to present an **increase in signs of anxiety and depression**.

My perception is that their **fear** is becoming more eminent, resulting in a significant increase in **stress and anxiety**. The focus during our sessions has been often their perceived **sense of insecurity in their daily lives in Switzerland, including fear of harassment in public spaces** based on reports from other places. Some clients have also started expressing **existential fears about the future**, emphasizing the necessity to address their fundamental needs for security and emotional stability.

--Graziela Birrer, Psychosoziale Beraterin mit Eidgenössische Diplom (psychosocial counselor, Switzerland)



Demonize Jews

Not about Israel's policies and actions, but rejection of Israel's existence & hatred of all Jews



Tear down posters of hostages, including babies held hostage

USA - <https://nypost.com/2023/11/07/metro/two-young-activists-caught-ripping-down-posters-of-hamas-hostages/>



Hate-filled protests

“We say justice, you say how. Burn Tel Aviv to the ground!”

“ Hamas we love you. We support your rockets too!”

"Al-Qassam you make us proud, kill another soldier now!"



<https://twitter.com/thizzl/status/1781520706640982159>

"Never forget the 7th of October. That will happen not one more time, not five more times, not 10...100...1000...10,000...The 7th of October is going to be every day for you."

<https://twitter.com/jonasydu/status/1781178975147917797>



Switzerland – civic spaces

- Women’s Day march in Lausanne...
group holding signs “We believe Israeli women [were raped]” – because people said rapes didn’t occur





- Turned into...
militant
Palestinian rally

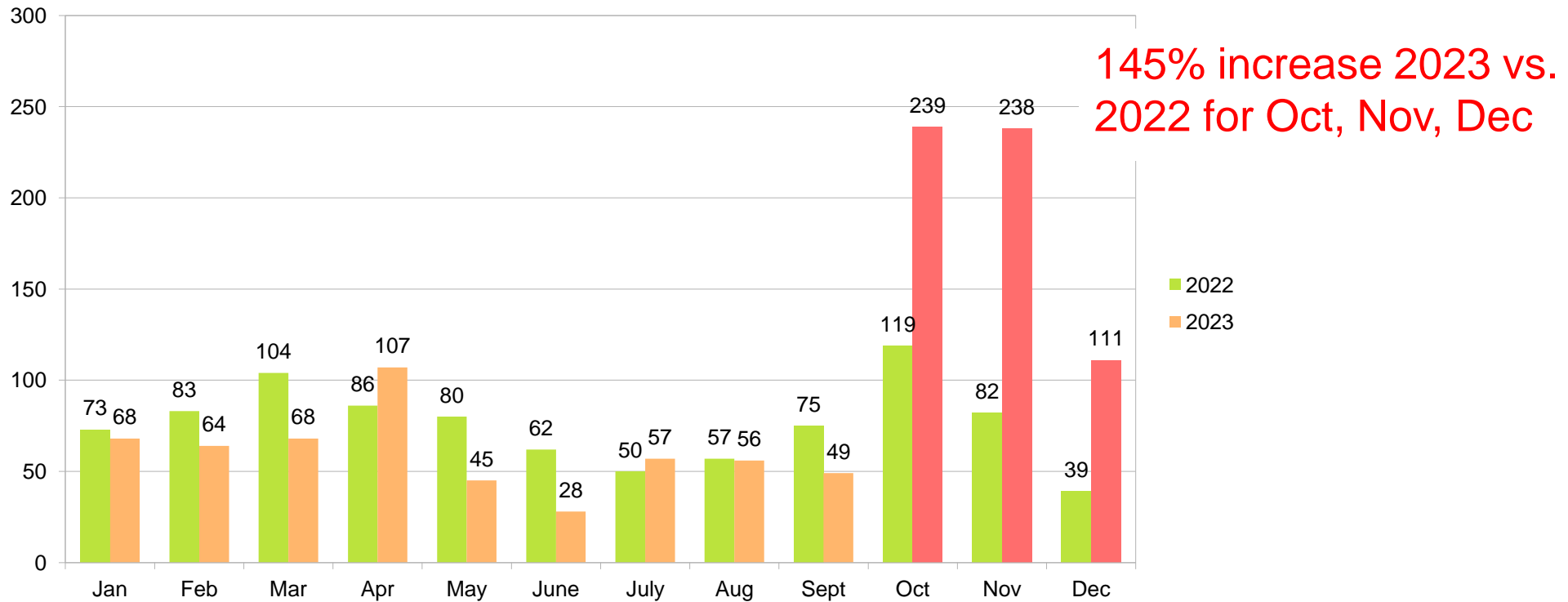
Police told supporters
of Israeli women to
leave because it was
not safe for them



Increase in anti-Semitism worldwide, including Switzerland

- German-speaking cantons

of anti-Semitic incidents, German-speaking cantons
source: SIG / FSCI Anti-Semitism report 2023



Anti-Semitism report 2023 for the German, Italian and Romansh languages speaking Switzerland, SIG/FSCI



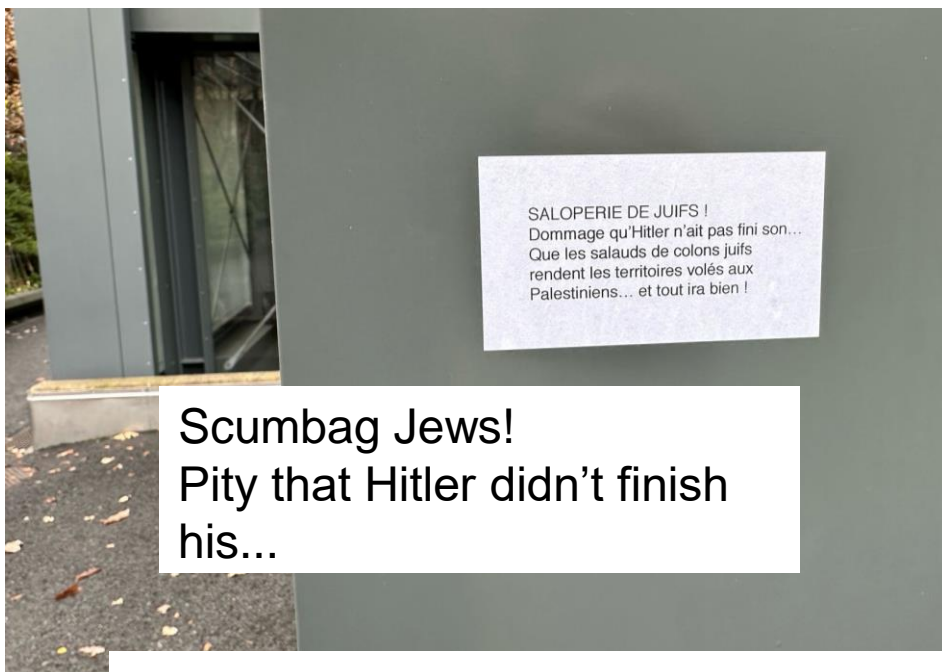
No dates from Israel



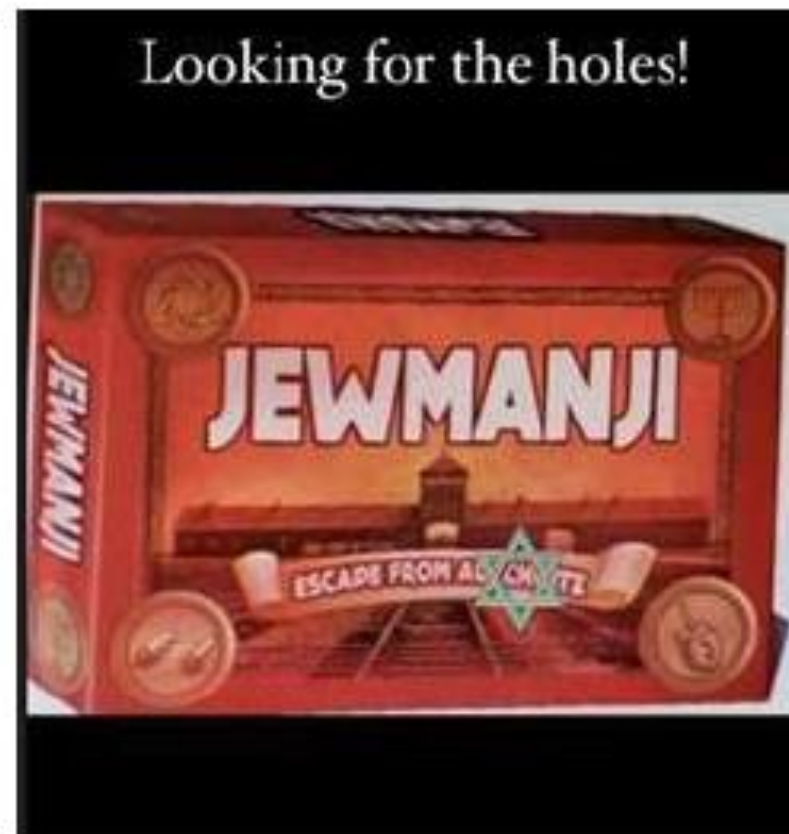
Jewish man stabbed in Zürich in January 2024, gravely wounded, in hospital for weeks

assailant said he was from [al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade](#)

- French speaking cantons



Tag reported in the Servette district of Geneva



Instagram story from a Vaudois internet user

Annual Report – Anti-Semitism
Switzerland 2023 - CICAD

Trauma for Jews outside of Israel

- Don't feel safe, lost security
- Invokes generational memories of Holocaust
- Preparing for more to come
- Modern anti-Semitism
- Missing empathy for Jews



Rejection of facts and logic

- Facts:
 - ◆ Hamas recorded massacre on GoPro cams, uploaded videos to Telegram (chat platform)
 - ◆ Dead, mutilated bodies in Israel – all show massacre against civilians
- Hamas document “Our Narrative: Operation Al-Aqsa Flood” (Jan 2024) says Hamas didn’t harm civilians:

“Al-Qassam Brigades fighters...avoid[ed] harm to civilians, especially children, women, and elderly people.”
- ◆ Pro-Palestinian supporters worldwide believe such lies





the way forward in Israel: putting people at the center

Remember: “Israelis” means Jews, Arabs, Muslims, Druze, Bedouins, immigrants from Ethiopia, Ukraine, Russia, etc.



Mental health - reinventing selves

Systemic changes country-wide:

- Mental health services transferred in 2015 from government to HMOs, but HMOs still building infrastructure
- Government, organizations - spending funds to open clinics, build new clinics, train psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, art therapists, etc.
- Building system that didn't exist before war
- Will benefit Israelis post-war



Maccabi HMO – increasing services

- Call high-need people weekly, connect them with care
- App to call doctors/video calls
- Finding new ways to reach people
- All 4 major HMOs offered 3 free mental health “visits” by phone or online





Mass-treatment of trauma

- Building new centers to treat trauma
- First time country undergoes trauma AND getting care (*vs. Cambodia, Rwanda, etc. - trauma but no care*)
- Trying to prevent trans-generational trauma
- Building pool of therapists to treat trauma



Training more professionals

NATAL's Multidisciplinary Center for Trauma Studies

- training hundreds of trauma therapists in Israel and globally
- launched specialized trauma therapy courses

Metiv - Training for mental-health professionals

- contacted by more than 2,500 psychologists and social workers
- per request by Ministry of Health and the Council of Psychologists – created three-session course in psychological first response; launched course within two weeks after attacks and trained 1,200 psychologists.
- offer condensed versions of trauma therapy trainings for mental-health professionals
- provide supervision for therapists unaccustomed to treating trauma

NATAL: <https://il.natal.org.il/about-natal/?lang=en>

NATAL, an apolitical nonprofit organization, offers a unique model of multidisciplinary psychological support, both direct and indirect, and has affected the lives of over 500,000 people through its innovative Helpline, Clinic and other units. NATAL is a recognized expert in the field of psychological trauma and aims to advance the resiliency of Israeli society through prevention, preparedness, intervention, treatment, public awareness, and research.



Creativity to meet needs

- **Metiv:** 3 MH professionals stay in hotel with 1,500 elderly & vulnerable people evacuated from Sderot (very close to Gazan rockets)
 - ◆ provide individual treatment
 - ◆ provide workshops for hotel staff & volunteers on dealing with prolonged stress
 - ◆ trauma-informed play spaces in other hotels with evacuees
 - ◆ Peace of Mind – emotional support hotline for soldiers and veterans
 - ◆ At request of IDF – running short-term interventions for groups
- **Enosh:** Mobile mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS) units – access to essential services for those impacted by crisis



ENOSH: <https://www.enosh.org.il/english/>

Mission: To provide quality and professional community-based mental health services for people with psychosocial disabilities and to support their families

To increase awareness around mental health and fight society's stigmas towards people with psychosocial disabilities

To promote the rights of people with psychosocial disabilities and their family members



More funding

- Government's January 2024 budget added funds for mental health
- Government's plan for rebuilding southern region destroyed by massacre – includes mental health clinics for residents, especially children, affected by Hamas hostilities
- Need more funding!





Why this is relevant for you



Jews in your countries are suffering

- Jews deserve support from public health, health and mental health systems, as well as civil society



Jews made to feel as “other”

- Silence from world organizations – call for ceasefire but not for freeing of hostages
- Groups that fight hate (against LGBTQ+, Muslims, non-white) – don't fight hate of Jews
- **Civil society is silent**
- Attacking Zionism = attacking Jews - since most Jews support existence of Israel - i.e., are Zionists (even if don't agree with all Israeli policies)

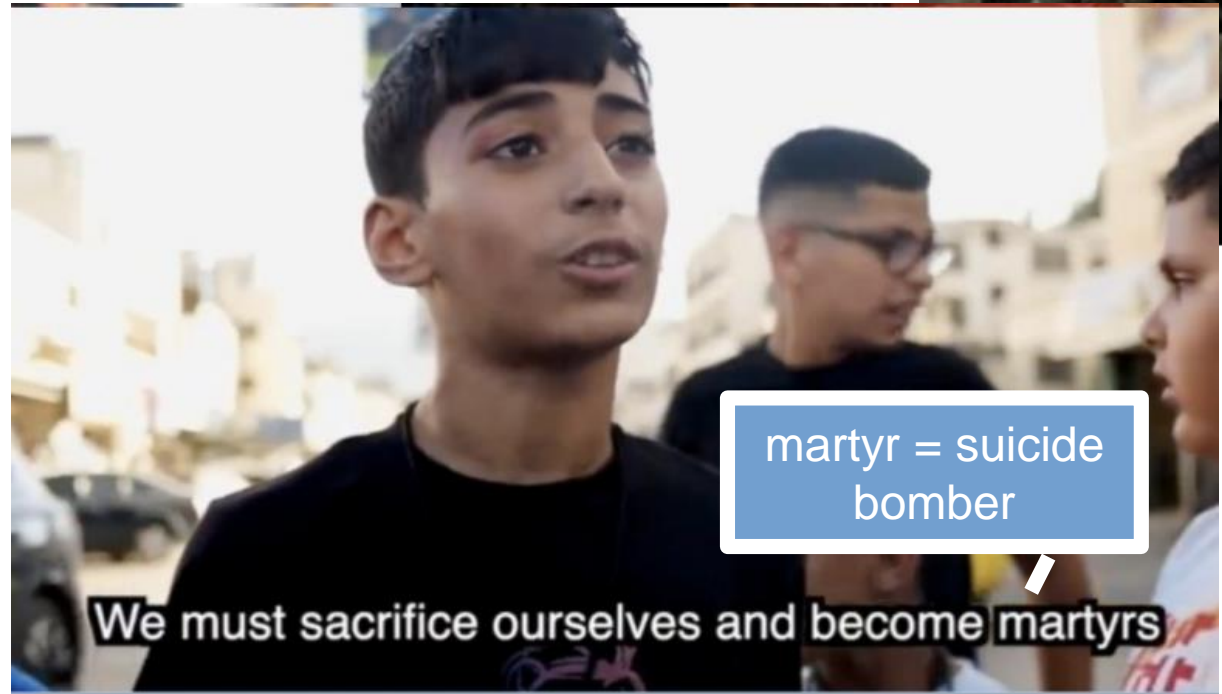
So maybe the whole world doesn't hate Israel...

--Israeli chatting with Rebecca before Eurovision Grand Final



Crimes against humanity

- Rape as weapon of war, crimes against women, mutilated genitals of men & women
- Using children as weapons
- Hiding behind civilians, weaponizing civilians



Hamas' values vs. Western values



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bACNYtaLBQI>

“Mom, your son is a hero! Kill, kill, kill.”
- terrorist at massacre calling his parents to brag about how many Jews he killed; his parents respond “Oh my son, Allah bless you”



Conclusion



Long-term effects of massacre and war

Hamas war sparks a mental health crisis of Israeli generational trauma

"Second generation" trauma in Israel was evidenced by the children of Holocaust survivors and the generation after the Yom Kippur War [in 1973]. The fallout from October 7 may be even worse.

<https://www.jpost.com/health-and-wellness/mind-and-spirit/article-780938>

Dr. Renana Eitan, director of the psychiatric division of the Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center-Ichilov:
The mental health toll is staggering, with around **five percent of Israel's population — some 400,000 people — expected to suffer some symptoms of PTSD**

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/one-girl-was-given-ketamine-israeli-doctor-says-hostages-abused-drugged-in-gaza/>



Questions

Thank you and questions

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