

saves lives on the battlefield. The other shows how Zionism saves souls by refusing to let us collapse into victimhood.

This is what October 7 revealed. Zionism is not an abstract ideology. It is a living, breathing movement. Ordinary people doing extraordinary things. The refusal to be defined by our enemies. The determination to shape our own destiny.

And I see it everywhere today. In Israel, civil society has surged to fill the gaps where the state falls short. In Australia, our youth movements are buzzing with talent and inspiring new leaders. Around the world, Jews are fundraising, influencing online, standing tall in hostile spaces, advancing our people's interests in public and in private.

Zionism is the global immune system of the Jewish people. It reacts when we are attacked, but it also strengthens us in ordinary times through education, culture, identity and the shared pride of building something greater than ourselves.

At the ZFA, this is our focus and our source of inspiration. We are doubling the number of young Australians travelling to Israel. Investing in our next generation and their connection to Israel. Bringing Israelis and Australians together to form deep bonds. Advocating for our community's interests where it matters. Making sure our voice is heard.

October 7 was a warning, but it was also a reminder. We are not alone. We are not victims. We are Zionists. And when Zionism rises, the Jewish people not only endure – we thrive.

Alon Cassuto is CEO of the
Zionist Federation of Australia.

Paying tribute to Ofir

DORON LAZARUS

It has now been two years since the horrific attacks of October 7 and the pain remains as raw as ever. For JNF Australia, the tragedy cut deeply because it struck at the very heart of the communities we have stood beside for decades – the kibbutzim and towns of Israel's north and south. These border communities have long been the focus of our support, and the relationships built with their leaders and families over generations meant that, when they were attacked, it felt as though our own families were under siege.

Among the many lives lost that day was our dear partner and friend, Ofir Libstein, Mayor of Sha'ar HaNegev. Ofir embodied the vision, resilience and optimism of the Negev. He was a man who never accepted “no” for an answer, who believed in building bridges, strengthening economies, and creating hope for families living on Israel's borders. His energy was infectious, his determination unshakable.

Rebuilding is not only about bricks and mortar – it is about restoring trust, healing wounds and reigniting hope.

For JNF Australia, Ofir was not only a leader but also a partner, a collaborator and a source of inspiration. Losing him was a personal loss and his absence is felt profoundly.



Ofir Libstein was killed in Kfar Aza on October 7, 2023.

Photo: Flash90

And yet, Ofir's legacy continues to guide us. His vision for thriving communities, for peace and prosperity on Israel's frontiers, is now our responsibility to carry forward. We honour him and all the visionaries who chose to build lives in the Negev and in Israel's north by deepening our commitment to their families, their children and their dreams.

In the days and weeks after October 7, JNF Australia was able to mobilise quickly, providing urgent support: food, shelter, clothing, psychological care, temporary schooling and medical supplies. Two years on, that work has not stopped. We remain alongside the families who are still displaced, and now, as some begin the painful yet hopeful return to their destroyed

kibbutzim and homes, we are committed to standing with them every step of the way.

Rebuilding is not only about bricks and mortar – it is about restoring trust, healing wounds and reigniting hope. JNF Australia will always support these communities. As families come home, we will be there – to help them rebuild, to renew what was broken, to grow what was lost, and to heal together.

This is our promise. This is our responsibility. And this is how we will honour Ofir's legacy and all the other visionaries like him, who understand the critical role that these communities play in Israel's future strength and security.

Doron Lazarus is the CEO of JNF Australia.

With a heavy heart Tel Aviv University mourns the loss of the fallen members of our university family.

- ☆ Undergraduate students
- ☆ Masters students
- ☆ Doctoral students
- ☆ Post-doctoral researchers
- ☆ Partners & spouses
- ☆ Daughters & sons
- ☆ Mothers & fathers
- ☆ Sisters & brothers

As Israel's deepest crisis in decades continues, we share the sorrow with all families who have lost loved ones over the past 2 years. We pray for the return of the remaining hostages and the healing of everyone affected in Israel and the diaspora.

May this anniversary serve as a ray of light and bolster our resilience as both a nation and a global people.”

