

September 13, 2024

Thousands of members of the Jewish Community gathered last week to mourn the cold-blooded murder of a young American and 5 others held captive in Gaza by Hamas for almost 330 days. Hersh Goldberg-Polin spent his childhood in Virginia. He was kidnapped from a musical festival celebrating peace and unity that came to an abrupt and bloody end on October 7. Hersh spent his life building bridges between peoples of different faiths and upbringings. He strove for coexistence between Jews and Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians. His left arm was blown off by a grenade before being taken from the world of light and stolen into the terrorists' tunnels that run under Gaza. Hamas built those tunnels with the international humanitarian aid it received over the course of 20 years – aid that might have built a thriving home for millions of Palestinians if Hamas had intended to provide for its people. For 11 months, Hersh Goldberg-Polin survived with limited oxygen, suffering tortures that we can only imagine. For 11 months, his captors held him captive as a cynical bargaining chip. And then, two weeks ago, deep in a narrow tunnel, Hamas terrorists executed him alongside five other hostages: Eden Yerushalmi, Carmel Gat, Almog Sarusi, Alex Lobanov and Ori Danino. All were shot at close range, their bodies found 20 meters below a child's bedroom, with gun shots to the head, evidence of resistance and bottles filled with their own urine nearby.

Loud voices in our region have been calling for you to take up a ceasefire resolution or divest from Israel. Many of those voices simply don't want Israel to exist. These are not voices of coexistence and peace. Giving heed to them now, in the immediate aftermath of the October 7 assault and the cold-blooded murder of an Israeli American young man whose life yearned for peace and coexistence, will do nothing to advance peace and will serve only to feed division in the local community. As you surely know, Hamas breached a ceasefire on October 7. Hamas also breached a ceasefire deal last November

when it reneged on its commitment to release Hersh, Carmel and Eden, all of whom were on the list that had been agreed to by Israel and Hamas. Hamas simply changed its mind.

It is not the City of Alexandria's role to weigh in on these international affairs. Alexandria needs you focused on Alexandria – ensuring good schools, good roads, good communities. You are close to the ground on those issues; you have expertise and advisors on those issues; you know this community better than anyone else – and you are best situated to ensure that it thrives in these concrete ways. Unlike you, our federal representatives receive security briefings on the ongoing international negotiations for peace and security. They are uniquely situated to evaluate America's response and strategy to the terrorist massacre of October 7 and the ensuing war. Your commentary on Israel, Hamas and the Palestinians can serve only to divide the community here at home. On behalf of the Jewish community of Alexandria, I implore you not to feed the antisemitism and hate that has unfolded here at home.

Respectfully submitted,



Vicki E Fishman, Esq.  
Virginia Director of  
Government and Community  
Relations  
JCRC of Greater Washington  
703-214-1687  
[vfishman@jcouncil.org](mailto:vfishman@jcouncil.org)  
[www.jcouncil.org](http://www.jcouncil.org)  
[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#)