

## October 7th - Thoughts from students and teachers in Tel Mond

### My name is Itay, and I live in Israel.

Throughout my life, I have lived through multiple wars and terror attacks; this has become our reality. Since October 7th, I have made it a habit to wake up every morning and check the news apps. Almost without fail, I come across the announcements of brave soldiers' deaths and updates on the condition of our hostages. Being only 17 years old, I recognize that there is not much I can do to contribute directly. However, I volunteer with my friends, donate money and clothes to the evacuees, and do everything in my power to provide assistance.

While the war continues, soldiers are in Gaza and hostages are still held in captivity - our country is starting to make its way back to reality. Restaurants are open, all theatres in safe areas returned and small to medium scale music shows are being produced.

While the country tries to get back on its feet - a question arises: should we, the people of Israel go back to the normal day to day life?

In my opinion we absolutely have to. It's because of the solidier fighting on the line of defence we are able to go out or go to school or even go for a walk.

If we let fear and uncertainty dictate our actions, the terrorists win. So, while we must always remain vigilant and cautious, we cannot let the threat of war and terror control us. We must continue to live our lives, pursue our dreams, and strive for a better future. It is the resilience and determination of the people of Israel that ultimately triumphs over the darkness of war and terror.

It is our home, and we'll never give it away. **#bringthembackhome**

**Here's a really tough question,** many cannot answer this one quickly, some can't answer this question at all.

But who am I?

So let's start with my name.

My name is Amit Avraham. I'm sixteen years old. I love sports and hiking and oh yeah I'm a Jew in Israel.

Based on this Information you will probably think I have a pretty decent life. Well, I did until my life changed. That's a tough one isn't it?

But if living in Israel taught me something, then this - that life is tough and unfair. The only way to change it is to get tougher than life, but actually I do have a precise date: October 7th; the unfathomable horror attack by Hamas's terrorists. On this day, lives were taken brutally away, women, men and children were taken hostage. This Saturday morning is burnt in my memory forever.

I had a driving lesson that morning. As I drove, my driving teacher heard on the radio that our world was slowly collapsing: 60 casualties became 100, 100 became 240 and 240 became 1400. What will the final number be? Every day another mother's world gets demolished as her most precious love in this life, her children were taken away unfairly. And why? Because they were living in Israel - that was the only crime they ever did! I never wanted to get home so quickly but the joy of coming home was quickly turned into sadness. I was torn apart by the sight of my sister crying in my father's arms; her best friend Noa Farag was murdered at the Nova music festival. She went to celebrate life and died doing so. Noa came to my house to meet up with my sister the day before the massacre. She tried to convince my sister to come with her to the festival. "Come with me sis we will have fun" she said. By sheer luck my sister was saved, maybe someone from up above kept an eye on her. Three weeks after Noa's funeral my sister was recruited to the army.

Every day I start my morning with a cup of coffee, three biscuits and the news. Truth be told, I started to dislike some things since the war began; for example, after the words: "cleared for

publication" we never heard good news. Moreover, loud sounds: every time an item falls from the table or from a shelf it reminds me of the rockets in the sky and the explosions. Lat, social media: everywhere I go on the Internet there is misinformation about the war.

To be honest I really can't put up with the misinformation; it seems like the world is trying its hardest to blame Israel on everything. My grandfather told me what he thought on the war "The Jews will always be persecuted".

It doesn't matter what we do we will always be blamed. Anti-zionism became the new Anti-Semitism. My friends and families give their soul and body to defend my people, but the world doesn't care; the whole world has something against Israel but no one knows what is really going on here.

So yeah, my life is tough and rough now, but I'm hopeful for better days. I'm ready to act and to do what it takes for better days. I'm focused on giving from myself to others in need in my country. So this is me, this is who I am!

**But now let me ask you a question to the people sitting on their computer all day or going to protest to shame and hurt Israel, please answer my question.**

**Who are you?**

**Who do you talk to?**

**Who are you to judge?**

**Who are you to hate?**

**Who are you to decide?**

**Who are you?**

**Do you find the sound of a motorcycle riding nearby alerting? I believe not, but I do.**

My name is Shira, I am an Israeli teenager and whenever I hear motorcycles outside, I immediately stop and listen to make sure it's not a rocket siren.

October 7th, 2023 6:30 in the morning.

I'm the first one to wake up to the rocket alarm. 90 seconds to realise what's happening, I wake everyone in my family, look for our dog and get everyone into the bomb shelter we have on the first floor... we wait. For 10 minutes we sit in the shelter and wait. "Oh, Tomer, happy birthday...". Not only did we not celebrate my brother's birthday that day, but no more than 4 hours later, my sister (who is done with her army service only 2 months prior the war), finds her way to the south to the base she used to serve at. The first few days everyone is confused as the number of those murdered goes up. Schools aren't open so I help a family whose father was also called back to the army as a combat soldier. Now I would love to ask, how do you explain to a 2-year-old and a 5-year-old why their dad has been missing for weeks and why we spend most of the time playing games in the bomb shelter? A lot has changed since the first few weeks of the war but the fear and horror are still in each and every one of us.

It's been 3 months since October 7th, the day we will no longer celebrate in my family. As time goes by, our amazing defence forces control issues in the south and decreased the frequency of the bombing. As it gets safer for us citizens, we think about the Israelis in Gaza, from soldiers to hostages. Instead of fears I fill myself with wishes. I wish the world understood that HAMAS are no "freedom fighters" but extreme terrorists. I wish for safety and I wish for peace. Amen.

**Hi! Our names are Roni and Rona, and we took part in the student exchange to Germany last October.** We would like to share our thoughts and feelings about the situation in Israel. Since October 7th we lived in constant fear, we find ourselves going to funerals and watching the news 24/7 to stay updated.

After visiting Germany and meeting with German teenagers, we noticed how welcoming and warm they were and still are. We believe it is crucial to show and explain to the world about the reality of our lives since October 7th, and the importance of teens all around the world getting involved and seeing the truth about Israel.

**My name is Hagit K. I was born and raised in Israel and have been teaching English for twenty-two years now.**

Being Israeli has always meant living alongside wars. Sounds depressing, however, growing up here my friends and I have never perceived Israel as a war zone. On the contrary, we have always perceived it as heaven on earth, the only Jewish homeland and therefore, the safest place for Jews on the globe.

As kids, we all learned about the Holocaust, met or heard survivors' stories and celebrated our independence and strength a week later on our Independence Day. Yes, we have also been through some rough times – wars, (always initiated by Arab countries) endless terror attacks, an outrageous number of rockets and missiles launched above our cities for years, suicidal martyrs bombing themselves in restaurants, on buses or busy streets along with the ongoing attempts to stab Jews whenever possible. Simply because they were Jews. Despite all that, we felt safe and secure. We trusted our leadership and ran our lives with faith and pride. Until October 7<sup>th</sup>.

October 7<sup>th</sup> wasn't just another terror attack. It was a second Holocaust. The reason it was so horrific lies in the fact that the atrocities carried out by monstrous Hamas were only a first glance to a much broader catastrophe. The world's perception and conception.

While most of the moral world would naturally condemn such horrific deeds of rape, beheading babies, putting whole families on fire after torturing them and taking more than two hundred innocent people and children hostages – the world not only remained silent but also enabled those murderers' supporters give "their own side" of the story.

When Israel struck back, thousands of people marched in the streets of Europe and the US campuses proudly raising the flags of the attackers, screaming for the extermination of – Israel! The one that had just been brutally attacked. And the absurdity just went on and on. The most prestigious Universities around the world and the UN failed to protect the Jews and shamefully stressed that "calling for the genocide of Jews is not considered as violating campus codes" and that the Hamas barbaric attack "didn't happen in a vacuum" as if there is justification for abducting a ten months old baby from his crib and still keep him hostage.

Even International women's organizations surprisingly remained silent only because the victims were, again, Jews.

When confronting those hideous institutions as well as various broadcasters around the world they claim they wish to be balanced concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Meaning, the truth and morality are irrelevant.

The Palestinians claim their land had been "stolen" by the Jews who never lived in it before 1948 and have only wronged them ever since. (Which is obviously not true but let's pretend it is for the sake of the argument) Therefore, any terror attacks no matter how severe it is towards Jews – is considered resistance. Due to that they are entitled to kill, mutilate, rape, behead, abduct or murder Jews anywhere or anytime. Realizing that has made me wonder. **What if, according to this logic, the Jews felt the same way towards the Germans?** I mean, we all agree on what happened in Germany and Europe during World War II. What if the Jews refused to move on claiming the Germans took everything from them? What if the Jews dedicated their lives to educate their children and grandchildren to hate Germans and exterminate them as a matter of principle? What if Jews bombed themselves on the main streets of Munich as an act of vengeance? Instead, the Jewish people focus on thriving and prospering. Not only we do not wish to harm Germans, but we put efforts in bridging and cooperating, creating cycles of friendships in the hope that such history would not repeat itself.

Having said that, I consider coming to Germany nowadays as a crucial step in the right direction. Israel and Germany should be the world compass and a lighthouse of sanity in an

ocean of fanaticism, ignorance and hatred. We should all be courageous enough to speak up and tell the truth regardless of a certain "narrative" that is forced upon us. Together, we will bring back to life values of humanity and compassion and will immediately condemn any call for murder. I believe that by getting together and passing the torch to the next generations we are capable of making a huge difference.

Nelson Mandela once said;

***"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world"***

Let's educate our students to do so.

**Hi all, my name is Healey K. Everything has changed for us Israelis.**

Thank you for this opportunity to share some thought and wishes for a better future for us in Israel and for people of Germany and the world. We have rekindled our relationships in the past years due to the many exchange programs which were so successful. I, too, was in the teachers' exchange just over a year ago and my visit was exceptional. Indeed, it warms my heart to know that there is so much love, care, understanding and support coming from the Germans, so thank you.

Living in Israel these days is living in two parallel worlds. One world includes many of us who live in central Israel, mostly away from the sirens, missiles, and the eminent threat. We go to work, school, and try to engage in everyday activities. For many other civilians the threat is real and the trauma as well because they live or lived in the south or north of Israel. Moreover, it is likely that these civilians have already been evacuated or will soon be evacuated due to the threat of missiles showering our skies nearly every day.

This is the reality in Israel for babies, kids, teens, adults, and the elderly.

**Everything has changed for the world because no one is safe anymore if terror conquers our future.** It is clear what is right and what is wrong. Terror is wrong and we can all agree that the unfathomable events of October 7th are evil and betray the values we hold true as people of the earth. I cannot believe that 133 hostages are kept captive in dreadful and inhumane conditions and the silence is deafening. I think about them every day. I think about their parents. I weep at night because I know they are helpless and afraid. I pray for the world to see the truth and understand that we must stand together to face and abolish all evil in form of terror groups. The world must understand that Hamas is a terror organization that will stop at nothing. Today their agenda is to kill Israelis but tomorrow it will be to kill other civilians in the world.

Hamas wishes to kill and destroy life as we know it. Their soldiers aim to kill as many people as possible as opposed to Israeli soldiers who die in their effort to save and protect as many people as possible. This is the main difference that I wish the world to see.

I pray for this upcoming year that we continue to stand together to envision a better hopeful future filled with pure thoughts of love, solidarity, and unity. Amen.