

We are still reeling from Oct 7

ZEDDY LAWRENCE

I recall the morning of September 11, 2001. I was working at *The Jewish News* in London when the reports started to filter through. As the world watched in horror, I remember thinking, “At least now people will realise what Israel has to put up with and why it acts the way it does.”

I’d call it youthful naivety, but I was already 31 and had lived through, and reported on, enough examples of the international community justifying Jewish suffering to know better.

Fast forward to October 7, 2023 and, 22 years older and wiser, I knew that despite the unimaginable and unprecedented pain inflicted, it would only be a matter of time, maybe a week or two, before any sense of sympathy evaporated, with the victim painted as the perpetrator.

Three years on,
we continue to pray
for peace.

In fact, it was virtually no time at all. The bodies of the 1200 brutalised victims were not yet cold before the celebrations began in Lakemba.

And while the heroes of ZAKA struggled to piece together the remains, just two days after the massacre, anti-Israel activists thronged to the Sydney Opera House in scenes splashed across global media, heralding the start of Australia’s campaign

to claim the title of ‘Antisemitic Capital of the World’.

And then there was the issue with the chants. Putting “f***k the Jews” to one side, there was – as if it mattered – a dispute over whether segments of the crowd called out “gas the Jews” or “where’s the Jews?”

When some audio experts declared that the recorded chant was “where’s the Jews?”, that was bizarrely presented as some kind of vindication that there was nothing antisemitic about the chanting at all.

Where were the Jews? Around 250 were languishing in the terror tunnels of Gaza. Thousands more, who had hoped to stage a peaceful vigil at the Opera House, had been led to understand that it would not be safe for them to head to the city.

It was a pattern that would repeat nationwide in the following months and years. Jews and Jewish rallies were confined to Jewish neighbourhoods for fear that their presence near pro-Palestinian protestors, who had taken over CBDs and college campuses, would upset the angry activists who would then become violent.

In short, the peaceful mourners were being penalised and pushed to the side to make way for a mob yelling hateful slogans and spreading social discord.

We even saw police drag away innocent Jews who were being harangued by protestors, rather than pull away the protestors who were the ones causing the problems.

At the same time, Jewish artists and performers had shows cancelled, as venues caved in to threats or simply feared a backlash.



Australian Jews stand across from the Opera House as it is lit blue and white on October 9, 2023.

In effect, rather than stand up to the mob, the society gave in to it.

As Kevin Costner, playing district attorney Jim Garrison, said in the movie *JFK*, “We’re through the looking glass here people. White is black and black is white.”

Abuse, graffiti, violence, arson and, ultimately, 15 dead.

Three years on from October 7, we wait to see if the recommendations of the Royal Commission can help turn the tide.

Other Diaspora communities watch with interest also, equally desperate to find a formula for halting the antisemitism unleashed that fateful day.

In the meantime, the repercussions reverberate across all sectors, with the most

unwitting of characters caught in the crossfire. Who would have ever thought romantic balladeer Ed Sheeran would be left counting the cost of the conflict in Gaza?

Three years on, the world is still reeling from October 7.

We continue to mourn the fallen: the Israelis slaughtered in cold blood; the IDF soldiers cut down in their prime; and the innocent Palestinians who have paid the price for the fatal fanaticism of their overlords.

Three years on, we continue to pray for peace.

Zeddy Lawrence is head of content at the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

Three years on, we remember.

Tel Aviv University mourns the members of our university family whose lives have been lost.

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| ✧ Undergraduate students | ✧ Master’s students |
| ✧ Doctoral students | ✧ Postdoctoral researchers |
| ✧ Partners & spouses | ✧ Daughters & sons |
| ✧ Mothers & fathers | ✧ Sisters & brothers |

We share the sorrow of all families who have lost loved ones on and since October 7, 2023. We stand with bereaved families, survivors of captivity and all who continue to live with injury and trauma, 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.

May the memory of those we have lost be a blessing. May those who grieve find comfort, and those who suffer find healing.

