



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

## Lohud: Massive crowd packs Westchester synagogue to support Israel and condemn Hamas attack

CHRIS MCKENNA October 11, 2023

WHITE PLAINS — A crowd of 1,500 listened somberly and roared with applause on Tuesday night as speakers recounted the unspeakable butchery of civilians by Hamas terrorists and vowed to back Israel's response every step of the way.

With the Israeli death toll climbing past 1,000, supporters of a shocked and grieving nation packed the Temple Israel Center with Israeli flags in hand for a show of solidarity organized by the Westchester Jewish Council. So many people had registered to attend that the council had to close its signups by 2 p.m. when it reached capacity.



For more than an hour, speaker after speaker — rabbis, Jewish community leaders, elected officials — listed the heinous acts that invaders from Gaza carried out in a surprise attack on southern Israel Saturday. They called for unified support for Israel regardless of political differences, and vehemently rejected any attempts to cloud or even justify the stark horror.



"We cannot let others play the comparison game between Israel and Hamas, and not just for all the reasons that we already know," said Belle Yoeli, chief advocacy officer for the American Jewish Committee. "The sheer brutality of Saturday stands on its own as evidence. Hamas must be strongly condemned and held accountable, period."

"There is no justification for their actions," she added, "and anyone who tells you otherwise or says otherwise is sympathizing with terrorists."

A slew of Westchester County elected officials attended the rally and several made speeches, including state Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins of Yonkers, County Executive George Latimer and Board of Legislators Chairman Vedat Gashi.

Latimer was greeted with thunderous applause after he excoriated any fellow Democrat who "stands behind this action."



"How dare they! How dare they try to put a human face on the inhumanity," he said. "We stand with Israel. There are government policies that are popular with some Israel politicians and officials that I deeply oppose. But it is a long stretch from those disagreements to allowing for the termination of Israel as a country."

Latimer warned: "Democracies are imperfect — ours is imperfect, Israel's is imperfect. But if we do not back democracy here, we will see democracy fail in every corner of the world. This is a time for unambiguous American unity. Evil cannot be countenanced in any form."

State Sen. Shelley Mayer urged the audience to stand fast in spite of the horror of what happened.



"Our hearts are broken, but we are here and full of resolve," she said. "We will not be weary, we will not be broken, we will not be divided by politics or anything else. We put all that aside. We show up for the people of Israel."

Among those in the audience was Andrea Lightman of Westchester, who said she had 75 relatives living in Israel. None had been harmed, but some were being mobilized for Israel's military response.

"We're here because we stand with Israel," she said before the program began. "We feel helpless; this is one of the things that we can do. And we need to share this with people who are Jewish, who are non-Jewish, so they understand the atrocities and that Hamas is not the Palestinians. Hamas is a terrorist organization, and it's barbaric."

Read the article here: <https://www.lohud.com/story/news/politics/2023/10/10/westchester-solidarity-rally-for-israel-draws-crowd-of-1500/71130897007/>