



## Media Statement

October 7, 2023

Once again, on a holy day of the Jewish calendar, the people of Israel have come under attack. Once again, the brave military forces of the State of Israel are responding and will defend our beloved Jewish state. Once again, the Jewish communities of North America stand in complete solidarity with our Israeli brethren. We pray for their safety and will do everything we can to ensure the success of their efforts. And once again, Jewish Federations across North America will act immediately and comprehensively to support our brothers and sisters as they defend Israel.

**Heidi Gantwerk, president and Chief Executive Officer of [Jewish Federation of San Diego](#), shared the following message about the death of Ofir Libstein, Mayor of Sha'ar HaNegev. Mayor Libstein was killed in a firefight with terrorists earlier today.**

*"Our San Diego community is shocked and heartbroken at the situation in Sha'ar HaNegev, and we are beyond devastated to learn of the death of Mayor Ofir Libstein. Ofir was an outstanding friend to San Diego and recently hosted more than 200 of us on our CommUNITY Trip to Israel, making every single person there feel special and welcome. He cared deeply about the relationship between San Diego and Sha'ar HaNegev, and had countless ideas for strengthening the region and deepening our partnership. Our hearts go out to his family and to the entire region."*

Hamas, an Iran-backed terrorist organization that seeks Israel's destruction, launched this unprecedented and unprovoked attack on Israel during the holiday of Shemini Atzeret. This is the most significant attack on Israel since the Yom Kippur War, which was launched 50 years ago. The terror group has fired thousands of rockets toward Israel's major population centers, breached Israel's borders, infiltrated Israeli communities, and kidnapped civilians. The attacks have killed hundreds of Israelis, injuring even more while inflicting significant damage on border communities like Sha'ar HaNegev.

Jewish Federation of San Diego has been in partnership with the region of [Sha'ar HaNegev](#) for 25 years, supporting economic development, creating cultural exchanges, and providing social services for many of its residents. In May 2023, Federation brought together more than 200 individuals from across the San Diego Jewish community, including clergy, heads of local Jewish nonprofits, lay leaders and more, for a once-in-a-life time trip to Israel – including Sha'ar HaNegev. And, just last week, the City of San Diego and Mayor Todd Gloria named Sha'ar HaNegev and San Diego official friendship cities.

**Over the years, San Diego has responded to each terrorist attack and military operation that has affected Sha'ar HaNegev. Today is no exception, and an emergency fundraising effort has been launched to support all those in Sha'ar HaNegev impacted by this devastating attack. To make a donation, visit [jewishinsandiego.org](http://jewishinsandiego.org).**

###

## Media Contact:

Ashley Bendas, Director of Marketing

Jewish Federation of San Diego

[ashleyb@jewishinsandiego.org](mailto:ashleyb@jewishinsandiego.org), 858.221.5111