



SOUTHERN ISRAEL REPORT

JULY 2024

FOREWORD

Beyond Conflict is the mental health charity for victims of war, terrorism and displacement. On October 7 2023, Hamas launched an attack on Israel which resulted in thousands of people being impacted and “around 1200 people” killed, according to a revised official Israeli foreign office figure. More than 200 people were taken hostage with 120 people still unaccounted for, according to Israeli government figures in July 2024. The October 2023 attack targeted the Nova music festival in southern Israel, where many young people were in attendance and 364 were killed.

The mental health impact on Israeli civilians, young people at the Nova festival and the hostage families, has been profound. After being offered funding by the London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG) Foundation, Beyond Conflict explored options for offering trauma support to victims with our partner, United Jewish Israel Appeal (UJIA). We wanted to boost MHPSS help on the ground for young people attending the Nova festival and hostage families, as well as support frontline workers such as doctors and medics.

Our partner, UJIA is one of the oldest and most respected NGOs serving the British Jewish and Israeli community. BC and UJIA wanted this project to be aimed specifically at helping young people and families suffering from trauma as a result of the October 2023 attack. We are proud to support this project and share an edited report from UJIA below. The project ran from January to May 2024. We hope this report will help draw additional financial support to this work, which remains more urgent than ever and needs to continue over the long term in order to be fully effective.

It is especially important to provide MHPSS for children and young people because of the profound long term and inter-generational impact of war trauma. Young people represent the future of a country and in order to become fully integrated members of society and their country's economy, it is vital to address the psychological effects of conflict.

Beyond Conflict believes in order to have hope of securing enduring peace in the future, the psychological fallout of conflict must be addressed now. Beyond Conflict thanks the LSEG Foundation for funding this project.

BEYOND CONFLICT BOARD



Introduction

UJIA is the UK Jewish community's leading organization for providing support for Israelis and has been working to strengthen Israeli society for all its citizens for over 100 years. Prior to October 7th, UJIA's focus was creating educational and employment opportunities for minority populations (including Ethiopian Israelis, Palestinians with Israeli citizenship, Druze, Bedouin, and Jewish ultra-orthodox communities) as well as responding to provide trauma relief during emergencies and crises.

UJIA's work radically changed after October 7th. Our team in Israel immediately addressed the needs of survivors and then began supporting thousands of evacuated families with food and hygiene supplies. UJIA worked with local partners to establish temporary daycare facilities, pop-up schools, and playrooms for thousands of evacuees.

And all of this is in addition to the thousands of hours of trauma support our work has made possible for those who experienced the Hamas attack of 7th October.

After a conversation with Beyond Conflict, we decided that it was essential to support young adults who had experienced severe trauma during the Hamas attack at the Nova Festival.

Background

On 7 October 2023, Hamas launched an attack on southern Israel, deemed to be the most serious in the country's history. This attack included targeting the Nova music festival. Thousands of people were impacted. Official revised Israeli foreign office figures stated that "around 1200 people" were killed, including 364 people at the Nova festival itself. More than 200 people were taken hostage, with 120 still unaccounted for, according to Israeli government figures in July 2024. The events have led to deep trauma for those families impacted.

After a process of due diligence, Beyond Conflict via UJIA decided to support the work of the local NGO Healing Space that set up a multi-purpose facility in the town of Rishpon. This decision was made following an initial seed grant made available by UJIA that proved that the project had the ability to meet the unmet needs of trauma relief for the young adult population impacted by the Nova attack.

Established as a groundbreaking response to the mental and emotional trauma following October 7, Healing Space Rishpon recognizes both the ongoing nature of the trauma and its ripple effect throughout Israeli society. The initiative's unique in-nature setting supports trauma recovery and builds resilience in the best possible manner.

The Project

In the months after opening its doors to survivors of the Nova festivals in October 2023, Healing Space has continued to develop and grow. The centre encompasses an increasing number of groups including bereaved families, survivors' parents, young adults who have been affected and first-response medical teams.

Healing Space's various programs include:

Programs for Nova survivors:

Open-Door Days

The community of festival survivors meet twice a week, spend time together, and take part in specially tailored workshops which provide support and tools for growth following trauma. These sessions are an opportunity to spend time together, get support and take part in specially tailored mental health support workshops, including counselling.

Bereaved family members of those who were killed at the festival meet every two weeks and will continue to do so throughout the first year. This community of survivors now comprises over 100 families. The Healing Space is a place to share grief, sorrow and help people rebuild their lives.

(a) The Show Must Go On

The composition and writing course, designed specifically for trauma processing and community building, instills in participants a restored sense of self-confidence and capability. The first program cycle, run in collaboration with the Rimon School of Music, culminated in March with a moving performance by its participants.

The launch of a musical program, in collaboration with the Rimon School of Music, offers participants an opportunity to process trauma through creative expression and musical composition, whilst providing a supportive framework.

(b) Vocational Rehabilitation

At Healing Space, an on-site candle-making and pottery workshop integrates participants into an active and productive environment that is nurturing and inclusive, fostering opportunities for personal growth and contributing to society.

This includes:

- 1) a year-long program providing special trauma therapy to help comfort and rehabilitate bereaved families. Our community now comprises over 100 families - a variety of healing methods and creative workshops help them confront and process their

pain and loss, as they begin the long process of recovery from trauma.

2) a special memorial event for and in collaboration with bereaved families. More than 100 participants attended the emotional event on May 17th which included a candle lighting ceremony, songs performed by mothers of the victims, moving speeches by parents to their children, and creating a personal memorial space for each family.

3) Healing Space is continuing to develop new programs such as a writing workshop for trauma processing for Nova survivors that will begin this month, as well as programs for additional target audiences including treatment teams for frontline workers like doctors and recently orphaned children.

Achievement Highlights:

Supporting a trauma and bereavement programme for 100 families

A music therapy programme

A memorial event for grieving families attended by 100 people

Trauma teams for orphans and frontline workers

A writing workshop for Nova survivors.

Feedback from participants:

The Healing Space takes place in the boundless nature of the campus. Here is some of the feedback we've received from some of the people who took part in the sessions:

1) *"This was a real gift - I was able to pause, breathe and create calm amidst total chaos."*

2) *"This is such an incredible activity, the kind that hasn't been done before and must continue in the future."*

3) *"A huge thank you to the organizers, the therapists and counsellors. I learned about different ways to handle stress and was finally able to have a restful sleep."*

4) *"This was such a significant day for me. It gave me breathing room and energy. I have never participated in such a well-organized and important activity."*

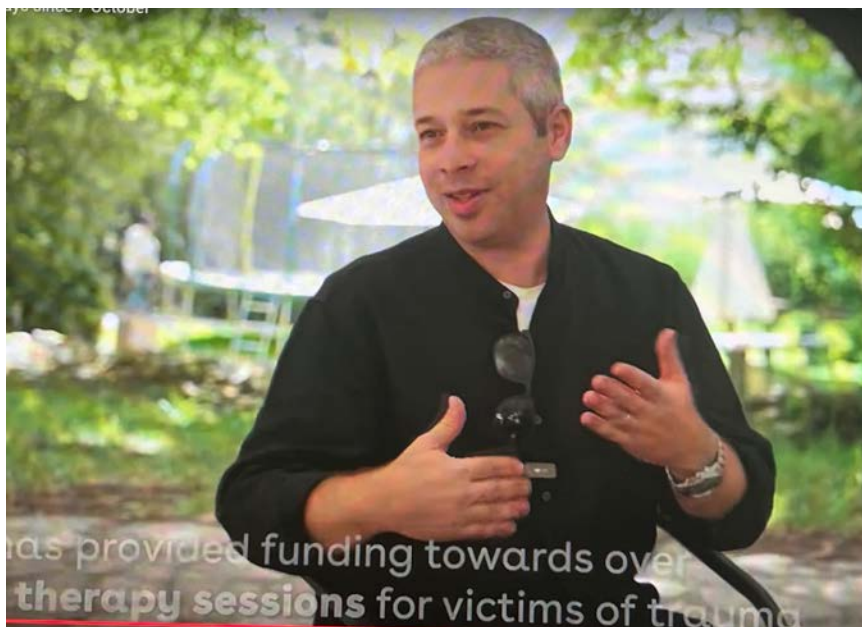
Conclusion

Nine months on, UJIA is shifting its work to helping communities in the South recover and rebuild. Trauma relief continues to be the cornerstone of our response. Recovery will take time and UJIA will be there to aid these families and the wider community for the long term.

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for your kind support of Healing Space's activities. Your generous donation has been instrumental in meeting the needs of those who have suffered trauma in the wake of October 7 2023.

Photo stills taken from UJIA video on trauma support and relief for victims of the October 2023 attack:





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