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CONTRIBUTORS

Opinion | Reach out to our Jewish communities with love

In the wake of attacks, the silence and the lack of support from the greater community is incomprehensible, writes Dianne Rinehart.

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Police stand in front of the Son of Jacob Synagogue in Belleville where a man armed with a shotgun opened fire at an officer. My Jewish friends and colleagues tell me that the most disturbing part in this explosion of antisemitism is the silence surrounding it, Dianne Rinehart writes.

Ian MacAlpine/The Canadian Press file photo

By Dianne Rinehart

Dianne Rinehart is a journalist and writer.

A Jewish friend once confided in me that she had told her son that he could never be complacent about antisemitism. It could explode and endanger him at any time.

I can't remember how many years ago that was. Maybe 10 or even 20? But I do remember my naivety in thinking: "Really? It can't happen again. Not here."

So, I thought of that friend's words Monday morning when I read the news of the shooting at Sons of Jacob Synagogue in Belleville (small-town Belleville!) on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur.

And then later in the day I heard her fearful caution again, as I read about a 19-year-old man arrested over the weekend after an online threat was posted threatening to carry out a shooting at a Durham region synagogue.

Sadly, since news broke of the massacre of Jews in their homes and at a music festival in Israel on the morning of Oct. 7, 2023, her words have been ringing through my head on almost a daily basis.

Indeed, details of the attack were just starting to trickle in of people being burned in their homes, raped, murdered and kidnapped when I ran into a neighbour and asked her if she had heard the terrible news about the massacre.

"Yes," she replied. And then proclaimed self-righteously: "Israel deserves everything it gets!"

How could this be happening?

It makes no sense in light of how the world responds to other terrorist attacks with love and support for those who are targeted.

When Islamic terrorists flew hijacked planes into the World Trade Center, killing nearly 3,000 people, the world joined hands and hearts in grief and outrage, and supported the Muslim community at large, who were collectively — and wrongly — under attack.

And when journalists and freelance cartoonists at the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten were threatened with death after the paper published 12 satirical cartoons depicting the Islamic Prophet Muhammad, the world responded in solidarity with this phrase: "We are all Danish now."

But when the Jewish community is under attack all over the world — from people of disparate races and religions, like my white, Christian neighbour — the silence is too often deafening, and the lack of community support incomprehensible.



Police patrol following a fatal shooting at Sydney's Bondi Beach on Dec. 15, 2025. Two men opened fire on people gathered to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah.

Mark Baker/The Associated Press file photo

Indeed, a government-commissioned report released last August found 95.7 per cent of Jewish students had experienced or witnessed at least one instance of antisemitism in the last year.

As one student reported: “Have been spat on and had someone rev car engine at me in crosswalk while wearing kippah. Have seen a Jewish student punched, have heard a Jewish friend ... called a Zionist whore and spat on for having a Magen David (Star of David) visible. Have seen antisemitic graffiti in bathroom stalls and all over campus.”

Those students are not alone. Last spring I was having lunch in Collingwood with a visitor from Toronto. She was wearing the Star of David on a necklace and realized it was showing. “Is it safe to wear this here?” she asked.

My first reaction was to reassure her: “This is Collingwood! No need to fear.” But then I remembered my neighbour's remarks and how only a few months after Oct. 7, I saw a swastika and the words “F--- the Jews,” spray-painted in huge letters on a park bridge.

My Jewish friends and colleagues tell me that the most disturbing part in this explosion of antisemitism is the silence surrounding it.

Is it because we are all afraid of being “cancelled” from our livelihoods by activists, as singer Ed Sheeran has been?

Or do we fear that thugs who try to break through police cordons into Jewish neighbourhoods so they can chant verses calling for the genocide of Jews will turn their attention to us?

We may not know how to stop terrorism. But when synagogues and Jewish schools are shot at, and when Jews celebrating holy days are murdered, like those gathered on Australia’s Bondi Beach last December to celebrate Hanukkah, we can show solidarity against hate.

We all know the famous confessional by German pastor Martin Niemoller: “Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me.”

Will we ever learn that terrorists of any race or religion, from any form of radical advocacy, care not who they kill, and we do not know who they will target next?

We need to stand together and support any community that is under attack. For we are all Jewish now.

Opinion articles are based on the author’s interpretations and judgments of facts, data and events. More details

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