

Board of Governors
Zoom Meeting on Jewish Student Resilience on Campuses and High Schools
January 27, 2025

Opening Remarks

Mark Wilf, Chair of the Board, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanked Natan Sharansky, Chair of the Task Force on Jewish Student Resilience on Campuses and High Schools and the members of the Task Force for their commitment and leadership.

Doron Almog mentioned that today is the International Holocaust Remembrance Day and stressed that it is important to be aware of the risks this recent wave of antisemitism is raising. He mentioned the jump of antisemitic acts all over the world since October 7th between 350% to almost 500%. Doron Almog concluded by stressing that we must work on the inside, strengthen ourselves, strengthen our resilience and be much more united.

Background and Vision

Natan Sharansky, Chair of the Task Force, spoke of the huge failure that strike us on October 7th and of the optimism and inspiration we all felt when we saw the great things done by the younger generation immediately following the massacre. At the same time, we were all surprised to see the pictures of many lonely Jewish students on campuses that started to feel very insecure. Still, we were very optimistic to see many Jewish students ready to fight back and stand by Israel, but the moment things were public, people were very afraid to be exposed.

Mr. Sharansky explained that the Task Force discussed the background and the various difficulties and realized that we don't have the time or means to invent new weapons and we need to use our own weapons, the ones that the Jewish Agency developed when we established the Israel Fellows project. The idea is to use current programs that work well and make them more powerful to make a bigger change. Natan stressed that we are the leading experts in the field of Jewish identity and the connection between Israel and the Diaspora and we must use this advantage.

Review of Recommendations

Avigail Ben Aryeh shared a little about the task force's work in recent months and detailed the relevant professionals the team met with. The team members worked to define what resilience is and how it is built, focusing on our challenge to be proud that is the foundation stone of resilience. The team essentially began to explore what we need for our national immune system to develop resilience. From there, the team focused on the various aspects of resilience as well as old and new nationalities to ensure that all the projects we would recommend were fit for purpose.

The team decided to recommend five new projects: National Organization's Shlichut; Training Camp Directors; "Campus Ready" program for high schools; Israel mission for university faculty and professors; and support mechanism for grassroots strategic initiatives.

It also recommended expanding existing projects in the areas of Israel Fellows and Shinshinim.

An Overview of the Situation on Campuses Today

Nati Szczupak spoke about anti-Semitism on campuses, which has somewhat receded from the headlines but still exists as a very widespread phenomenon. She emphasized that there is a huge increase in harassment and threats against Jews on campuses and provided several examples, including of the successes of our shlichim on campuses.

During the discussion towards the end of the meeting, the following points were raised:

- Only after receiving feedback regarding the interim recommendations we will be able to address the budgetary issue.
- A copy of the anti-Semitism report compiled last week by the WZO and the Jewish Agency will be sent to the members of the Board.

- A question was raised regarding other organizations that operate in the campus area on issues of education or research on anti-Semitism. Avigail Ben-Aryeh answered that the activities of the other organizations are a critical part of the research that the team is conducting.
- Collaboration with the AJC and Greek Life initiatives will be examined by the team.
- The importance of combating propaganda and the importance of positive outreach.
- It is important to include Europe in discussions on anti-Semitism and the need to expand the mission.
- The minutes of this meeting will be sent to the members of the Board along with the PowerPoint presentation presented by Avigail Ben-Aryeh.

Minutes: Aviva Shetreet