

## CUIMC Commemorates October 7<sup>th</sup>

On October 7, 2024, over 150 faculty, students, staff, and friends, almost all wearing Yellow Ribbons, and many others on zoom, came together to mark the one-year anniversary of the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel. Hosted by the CUIMC Jewish Cultural Employee Resource Group (JERG) and Chabad at CUIMC, the event was an opportunity for the CUIMC community, Jews and non-Jews alike, to mourn those killed in the massacre, pray for the safe return of the hostages, and reflect on the past year's events, in Israel and on campus.

After lunch provided by Chabad Uptown and opening remarks by JERG member Rivka Shoulson, the program kicked off with the recitation of prayers lead by Cantor David Farhi and a tribute to members of the Israeli Defense Forces.

The most compelling part of the program was remarks by Elinor Bitton, a resident of Kfar Aza, a kibbutz in southern Israel located between Netivot and Sderot around five Kilometers east of the Israeli/Gaza border. On October 7<sup>th</sup>, approximately Hamas terrorist attacked Kfar Aza, massacred residents, and left the village in ruins. Ms. Bitton spoke of her experiences that day and showed pictures that she and others had taken. While she and her family all survived, many of her friends and neighbors did not.

After Ms. Bitton's remarks, the audience once came together and led by Cantor Zevi Muller, sang the Hatikvah (the Hope), the Israeli National Anthem.

Ross Frommer, CUIMC JERG Executive Sponsor and Co-Chair, remarked, "I cannot thank Elinor enough for being with us. Hearing firsthand about that awful day was profoundly moving. Hers and the stories of other survivors must be told again and again so people truly understand what happened that day. We can never let the world forget."

"I want to thank all those who attended whether virtually or in person. I also want to thank all the JERG members who worked so hard to make this event. Special thanks as well to the CUIMC Human Resources team, CUIMC facilities and CU Public safety for their support. Finally, a huge thanks to Rabbi Yudi Shmotkin of Chabad Uptown for their great partnership on this and so many other events.

Several JERG members also remarked on the event. Ms. Shoulson said, "I wasn't sure how many people would come but was amazed that so many people took time out of their busy day to bear witness to the tragedy that occurred on October 7. It is moments like this that bring us together, providing a shared space for remembrance and healing. It gave me hope for a better future."

Oscar Lebwohl added, "The program on October 7th was well organized and attended by students, faculty, and staff. The featured speaker was a survivor of the October 7th attack on a kibbutz near the Gaza border who gave a riveting talk on the harrowing experience of her family on the kibbutz during the attack and the subsequent displacement of her family after October 7th."

Esther Rotlevi, President of the CUIMC Jewish Graduate Student Alliance, said, “Marking one year since the horrific events in Israel, knowing there is a supportive and welcoming community at CUIMC where we can come together to share our grief has been a light in this darkness.”

Rabbi Shmotkin noted, “Coming together on October 7th to mark the anniversary of the atrocities, pray for the hostages and our soldiers, and hear from a survivor was a remarkable event of unity and solidarity from the CUIMC Jewish community.”

The CUIMC commemoration was just one of several events across the Columbia and New York Presbyterian campuses that occurred on and around October 7<sup>th</sup>.



