

This week,

David Horovitz, the Editor in Chief of the Times of Israel, is the JCRC's featured speaker for its June 12 event in Minneapolis. But before he comes to the Twin Cities, Horovitz is on this podcast to talk Israeli politics, a decade of TOI, and how to report on the Middle East.

I'm Lev Gringauz, and welcome to The Jews Are Tired, your podcast about Jewish news.

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A link to the store is in the podcast notes, so go take a look. And there's also a link to donate to Jewfolk in the podcast notes if you want to give directly. We appreciate any support you can give.

By the way, as of the release of this podcast, it's day 92 of Russia's war in Ukraine. If you want to donate to help Ukraine, there's a link in the podcast notes with resources to do that.

Also, just to take an aside on what I know is really on American's minds right now: You'll find a link in the podcast notes to a piece by Izzy Wellman, Jewfolk's social media and marketing strategist, with the headline "Tired of Excuses." It's about the mass shooting this week at an elementary school in Texas. I can't bring myself to say much about this right now, as I'm finding myself about to burst into tears at any moment, any time I think about the shooting, and every time I read a new update on what happened.

I think I'll let loose on a future podcast episode, I do have things to say about this. But for now, Izzy really captured what I and many others are feeling, and specifically the feeling of complete hopelessness that is just ever present as we watch our country and our home fundamentally fail, active choose to fail, to protect human life and dignity. Especially, for us, Izzy and I are both 24, as the generation that has really grown up with this reality. So go read her article.

Ok, let's talk David Horovitz, that's who this podcast is about, let's get to that.

Horovitz is a British-Israeli journalist and the founding editor-in-chief of the Times of Israel, a mainly English news site generally seen as being center-left. But more importantly, it has become a source of really serious and great reporting on Israel, the Palestinian territories, the Middle East, and the Jewish world more broadly.

Horovitz spent decades at The Jerusalem Post and The Jerusalem Report, serving as editor-in-chief at both publications, before starting up the Times of Israel in 2012.

And that's basically all the intro for Horovitz I have to do, I think TOI speaks for itself, and the quality of coverage is something I rely on all the time to understand what's happening in the world. If you're in the Twin Cities and want to hear Horovitz speak in person, by the way, he will be the featured speaker at the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas' annual event on June 12. The event link for that is in the podcast notes.

But otherwise, I mean, he's here on this podcast episode, so, y'know, stay tuned.

Before getting to the interview, which I did alongside Lonny Goldsmith, my editor at TC Jewfolk and the host of our Who The Folk?! podcast, there is a little bit of background I do have to give to the content of our conversation.

First of all, shortly before we recorded it on May 19, the Israeli government suffered yet another political crisis of just oh so many crises. So the government is formed by a coalition of political parties in the 120 seat Knesset, which is Israel's parliament. A government coalition needs to have minimum 61 seats to be able to properly function, with the obvious need to have a majority of votes when passing legislation.

This is also a super weird government at the moment, where a right-wing prime minister, Naftali Bennett, heads a coalition of right-wing to center to far-left political parties, along with an Islamist Arab party. This weirdness came out of Israel's two years

and four national elections of political gridlock, which stemmed from the previous long-time prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

If you want to know more about that, go and listen to episode 62 of this podcast, where Lonny and I interviewed Yossi Klein Halevi. The main point here is that a month ago, a Jewish right-wing member of the government left the coalition, saying it wasn't right-wing enough. That left the government with 60 seats in the Knesset. And then, right before this interview with Horovitz was recorded, another member of the government left the coalition, this time an Arab left-winger, saying the government was too right wing.

So with 59 Knesset seats, it felt like now, the government would finally collapse. So that's where we started the conversation with Horovitz. Funny enough a few days later, the Arab left-wing member of the Knesset rejoined the government, restabilising things for now. So this episode is kind of a crash course in trying to make sense of Israeli politics.

The second bit of context is that we talked for a bit about prominent Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who was shot and killed during an Israeli Defense Force raid on the Palestinian city of Jenin earlier in May. The raid itself was prompted by a series of terror attacks in Israel earlier this year, in which several of the perpetrators were allegedly Palestinians from Jenin.

If you want to learn more about those terror attacks, I covered them in episode 74 of this podcast. But Abu Akleh's death has become...I don't want to just resort to buzzwords like "flashpoint" or "disputed" or whatever. But her death has gotten a lot of attention because Palestinians say that the IDF deliberately killed her. The IDF insisted at first that it was shooting from Palestinian militants that accidentally hit Abu Akleh, before conceding there was a chance that the IDF had accidentally shot her while firing at the Palestinian militants.

In some sense, there's no way to know what happened. The Palestinian Authority, which nominally controls Palestinian areas of the West Bank, won't release the bullet that killed Abu Akleh for analysis. The IDF started a probe, but will not do a criminal investigation without further evidence, aka, the bullet that the Palestinian Authority has.

However, reporting from the Associated Press says a review shows it's more likely than not that it was an IDF soldier who killed Abu Akleh, but whether it was an accident or on purpose isn't clear. At the same time, a CNN investigation has concluded that Israeli

soldiers were deliberately targeting Abu Akleh to kill her. You can find links to both reports in the podcast notes. The IDF disputes CNN's findings, of course.

Abu Akleh's funeral was also a disaster, with Israeli police beating pallbearers and mourners, allegedly for throwing stones and for trying to steal Abu Akleh's casket from the family. Her family disputed the police narrative, by the way. To read more about that, look to the podcast notes for two columns by David Horovitz about this, which are referenced during our conversation.

So with that, you should be all caught up. Our conversation has been edited for length and clarity — enjoy.

Lev Gringauz

Hello, everyone. My name is Lev Gringauz. I'm the host of the Jews are tired podcast.

David Horovitz 09:03

Hi, this is David Horovitz. I'm the editor of the Times of Israel on my way to you but speaking to you from Jerusalem,

Lonny Goldsmith 09:09

and I am Lonny Goldsmith, the editor of TC Jewfolk and very happy to be a fly on the wall and sort of participant for this conversation.

Lev Gringauz 09:17

So David, just to start out before getting to anything else, I of course have to ask, what's your expectation of when Israel's government is going to sort of fully collapse again and what might happen next, because it's honestly kind of frustrating. I'm sure it's more frustrating for you and everyone in Israel to see this government and two years and four election cycles of uncertainty only for some Knesset members to seemingly be ready to plunge Israel back into sort of endless elections for legitimate or not legitimate reasons, that sort of but you know, it's sort of interesting how the whole how the cookie crumbles, I guess. So what's your perception of what's going on? What's going to happen?

David Horovitz 09:52

Okay, well, we have to make plain I'm speaking to you on a Thursday, early evening, on the night. 19th of May in Jerusalem. And as of three hours ago, I would have answered that question very differently. So any answer I give you, when you're listening to it a few days from now, bear in mind that this is Israeli politics. Yeah, we have four elections in

two years. But we also have hourly political mini crises and weekly political major crises. So today, a coalition that had 60 supporters in the 120 seat Knesset slipped to 59 supporters, when a member from Meretz announced that she was resigning.

David Horovitz 10:38

If you thought that arithmetic was everything, that means the coalition is over. Right? They've got it, they've got less votes than the other guys. But it's not as simple and it could have played out in many ways between me talking and and people listening to this, including the coalition falling below could lead lead opposition wants to bring down this government, they have a process to do that, where they can bring a bill for the dissolution of the Knesset, it only needs a simple majority to pass its first stage its preliminary vote. After that, though, it needs 61 of the 120. And although those opposed to the coalition, now, as I'm speaking to you do, indeed, number 61. That doesn't mean they'll vote with the opposition to bring down the coalition. So for example, the lawmaker who has just resigned is very critical of the coalition very unhappy about some of his policies, that doesn't mean that she necessarily wants to see new elections, merits her party actually are one of the more invested in this coalition, I would say, as a party more reluctant to see it for. So it could play out in many, many ways. And indeed, could have played out in many, many ways. But at the root of this, and this, you know, probably will be relevant a few days from now, is that we have all kinds of instabilities within our political system, we have a very pure electoral system, in some ways, you might say, it's great. It's ultra democratic, unlike in the American system, or the British system, almost every vote genuinely counts, we have pure proportional representation. You don't have a constituency or a state, we think, why bother, we know what's going to happen here, it doesn't work like that at all. We just have a threshold. If any party gets more than three and a quarter percent of the votes nationwide, they get their seats in Parliament, and therefore, you know, there's a very pure reflection of the voters will, but at the same time that makes for lots of small parties in Parliament. And then you add to that some of the realities of Israeli politics of late and there's really two that are relevant here. One is that Israel has moved to the right, in a fairly significant way, I would say, in the past two decades since the Second Intifada since that onslaught of suicide bombers and Palestinian terrorism, and therefore, you know, the right is in the ascendancy. And in the current class, it the the right, the people who ideologically are very wary of the Palestinians, the ultra orthodox parties, the parties who are in the orbit of Netanyahu is liquid, they have a clear majority. And therefore that begs the question, well, then why aren't they running Israel? Why isn't Netanyahu the Prime Minister, because at the same time, there is considerable hostility, I think is fair to say. Soon as Danielle in some of the right, three of the policies in the Bennett led coalition, are led by people who've worked very closely with their tongue out, then it's only Amina Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu, and get on SARS new hope these are all people who notice me out

intimately, who share much of his political ideology, but thought that the imperative for Israel to oust Netanyahu was stronger than the imperative for Israel to necessarily pursue all of the right wing ideological policies that they would champion. So you've got this curious situation where the right is a majority, but the right isn't solely in power. And all of those factors and the just the sheer improbability of this coalition, a coalition, all the way from ideological rights across the center, into the left merits, you know, the most left wing Zionist left wing party, and most unlikely of all ran an Islamist Arab party, much of whose leadership and guiding counsel I think, is very, very wary about sitting in government, but a party led by one politician, Mansoor Abbas, who is extolling the possibilities of greater Arab Jewish harmony in Israel, and has hung in there, even as members of Bennett's party, and now members of merits are a member of merits that have resigned and defected. So that's the shortest coherent answer I can give to your impossible question. So

Lonny Goldsmith 14:55

if Netanyahu were to say If I won't run for Prime Minister, like I'll step aside out of leadership, would that pave the way for Likud to return to the ascendancy in a controlling role?

David Horovitz 15:11

I think it's fair to say, although by this by necessity speculative they have been assigned to in the last election, or even after the last election, when the votes were in, had said, look, I can see that there's so many people who are so hostile to me. I think it's outrageous. But it's more important to me that our ideology leads Israel, if he were to have said that the current coalition would not have taken shape, it would have been a different coalition with a different leader headed by a different leader of the could, or some other constellation at the moment. Again, everyone, I'm not prophesizing you're listening to this a few days after I said it. At the moment, I think Netanyahu will be thinking that the day is drawing ever nearer when he can return as prime minister at the head of liquored and be vindicated in not having stepped down and not having said, you know, okay, I won't be Prime Minister let could run the country with someone other than me, I think he may see that the prospect of that happening is closer than it has been certainly in the in the 11 months that this coalition has been in power, it's not going to be straightforward from where it looks on the 19th of may. But who knows, maybe it'll look a little more straightforward for him. By the time we're listening to this.

Lev Gringauz 16:26

So, Lonny, that wonderful look on your face of like, this is kind of crazy.

Lonny Goldsmith 16:31

It's just it's dizzying, though, like, again, we're talking a week before this is going to drop and who knows how many different permutations we could see between, you know, in the next seven days between now and then,

David Horovitz 16:43

not only that, Lonny, if you'd asked me a day ago, to name for you, the 10 Knesset members who might do in this coalition, the one who quit today would not have been on my list. And therefore, I promise you that in the in the intervening period, even if we tried to cover all the bases in this conversation, we will be exposed, as you know, not capable of understanding all the endless potential twists and turns of Israeli politics.

Lev Gringauz 17:12

Fascinating. So with that window into the absolute utter chaos of the region, I want to take kind of a step back as 2022 marks a decade of the existence of Times of Israel, the news organization that you lead, and kind of wanted to ask, like, how has it been starting to die and watching it grow to the place that is now one of the foremost Israeli and Jewish news sites in the world?

David Horovitz 17:34

That's a very common question. And, and I'm very proud of that. It's kind of a mini miracle to where there was nothing, there's now this very resonant, journalistic outlet, that that tries to do responsible journalism that doesn't always get everything right, but tries to correct it, if it gets it wrong. That is independent, we're not in thrall to any party or any particular leader on the Israeli political spectrum or anywhere else. I have a partner who has financially supported what we do, as the business becomes more viable as a business, not up not an easy thing to do. But the editorial operation here is independent people find that hard to believe because it's so atypical, but it truly is in as far as we have biases and, and faults there are there are our own faults, not not biases imposed upon us. And I think that's incredibly important. You know, I think I think Israel benefits from a website such as ours, which tries to tell people what's going on in a fair minded fashion, and then has this incredibly vibrant blogs platform, with a with a range of opinions, including some of yours Lev, as I noticed before I go on this call God,

Lev Gringauz 18:53

no, please no, wait, I started to mention that I have to tell listeners to never ever look up any of my blogs, because I was like a stupid 20 year old writing about how I fell in love with an Israeli at camp. None of it is worthwhile. So I kind of think that you brought that up, but it's very funny that you did anyway. Sorry, keep going.

David Horovitz 19:11

Yeah, but you have anything power of this podcast love. So we may never hear

Lev Gringauz 19:14

oh, no, it's definitely Eric. You said it. Yeah, yeah,

David Horovitz 19:18

it has. So anyway, you know, that that been a very, very wide mix of, of ideas and opinions. It's a good combination. It's obviously proved very resonant with people. And, you know, I do think people appreciate it. This is a very difficult period for journalism, economically and also in terms of, of the importance people attached to it. And by the way, this simple challenge of journalism and the Internet era, right, where, if you're not fast, you risk being irrelevant. And if you're too fast, you risk being inaccurate, and finding the balance and it's an impossible balance, but doing your best to be both relevant and therefore relative really fast and accurate? That's a huge challenge. There's another challenge in that we're 24/7 sites. And we're 24/7 site whose headquarters and the base of almost all the not all, almost all of our journalists, is Israel. We're covering Israel and the Middle East and the Jewish world. We're covering it. I mean, we have foreign language sites, we have versions of the site in French and in Hebrew, and an Arabic and in Farsi. But an awful lot of our readership, probably half our readership maybe a little more is in North America. So as we're getting exhausted towards the end of every day at say, midnight, Israel time for for you guys. And it's five for New York. Correct. So you're still in the, you know, the not the middle. But you know, in the work de la, of course, it's just getting past lunch, and we're all exhausted, and it never ends. So that 24/7 endlessness of it is incredibly challenging for everyone who works here. And but we do, we do the best we can. And it's extremely gratifying to see how resonant the site is how much traffic there is, and also that people read. A lot of people read the things that we want them to read, as well as the things we know that they would read. So you know, to digress beyond the question you asked me. But there are issues that are that are in the niche of what we cover Israel, the Jewish world, the Middle East. And then there are issues that just leap the nice jumpers in each writes, anything we write about archaeology. household pets, anything that touches on sex, I have to tell you in the spirit of candor, resonates more than some of the things that are very limited to the particular interests of the specific readers who come to us all the time. We had a story a few years ago about an exhibition at the Israel Museum of alabaster wall plaster work from ancient Iraq, showing sexual congress between household pets, I promise you, I'm not making that up. As you would gather from the beginning of that answer, that was a very resonant and extremely high minded I have to say, but a very well written article.

Lonny Goldsmith 22:15

You got all the topics in there in one archaeology patson sex all in one headline? That

David Horovitz 22:20

was the yes, the tribe trifecta is what it's called.

Lonny Goldsmith 22:22

Yeah. But okay, so outside of that, though, through this this decade, what do you think the most important story that either you directly or Times of Israel, in general has covered?

David Horovitz 22:34

Wow, that's a really good question. I don't know if I can pin that down to a single story. I mean, there are lots of things that are very important. You know, the advance of the Iranian nuclear program, and all of the ups and downs around efforts to stop it is incredibly important. From a Israel centered point of view. This is a regime that is so hostile to Israel, the Iranian public, does not share that hostility, as far as we can tell, it's quite extraordinary, but the regime is hostile. And you have to take it seriously. Obviously, all of the chaos that we discussed already in Israeli politics, which is, which we've talked about lightly. But instability in government is extremely damaging the challenges to democracy, I suppose that's the big theme in Israel, around the free world. And that comes into journalism and journalism, having such a difficult economic time of it now. So you know, that combination of being part of a profession that I think is noble, when it's done properly, I think, you know, democracies rely on independent journalism to make sure that the people that we choose to run our macro lives for us do so honorably and do so in the spirit with which we chose them. That the difficulties in being able to do that work, because of financial considerations, and then the difficulties of getting at the truth. And I don't think I mean, you're asking about Israel in the Times of Israel for 10 years. But I think that's, you know, that's the big story for journalism, and therefore for journalism's role in democracy, you know, journalists able to do their job effectively and independently, are readers interested in getting at the truth? The you know, this notion that there isn't one truth I mean, there are there is a truth, it doesn't mean that you can always capture it effectively, but to strive for objectivity and fair mindedness and truth. I think it has been the big challenge. And I also think, you know, you guys are considerably younger than I am. I think this is a difficult period. I think my generation ish kind of generalizing widely had it relatively easy in terms of in terms of where humanity was headed and, and the values that were being championed and advanced and so on. I don't think the generation before mine had anywhere near as easy of course, if you think of that generation as being the world war two generation Um, I think your generation is having a harder, it's having a harder economically, I think

psychologically, it's a very difficult period. I'm not making comparisons between, you know, who had it worse and so on. But I think I think this is a pretty challenging period,

Lev Gringauz 25:13

everybody would make me feel so good about myself. Thank you. Sorry.

David Horovitz 25:17

You're young. And that's, you know, that's a huge advantage. So enjoy that. Thank you.

Lonny Goldsmith 25:21

Although I am considerably older than Lev, so I, you know, so I, you know, you mentioned something you mentioned about times of Israel in terms of the, the risk of being, you know, fastest is getting it wrong, and taking your time as being last in reporting something and I come from, you know, a world of, you know, newspaper reporting, not totally pre internet, but close. And certainly pre social media. So, you know, there wasn't the same kind of race to be first it was the race to be correct. And now, I think it's in a very different place. journalistically.

David Horovitz 25:56

So I think that's right. And I think, I mean, one of the ways we've tried to tackle it is we've grown the staff, we have more editors, we have more people working, because we would like to be fairly speedy. And we would like to be accurate. And what's been playing out today in Israeli politics, when a resignation from the coalition was first announced. The initial assumption was, well, that's the end of the coalition. As I speak to you now, it's not clear to me whether all the as I said before, whether all the people no longer in the coalition will vote against it, that you know, that things are evolving in a way that journalism couldn't cover, you know, 10 or 20 years ago, right? I said, The Jerusalem Post until 10 years ago, a little over 10 years ago. And, and it's still the case with print newspapers, at the end of the day, when the first edition or the only edition has to go to the press. That's the end of the story for that day's print edition. That remains the case and that print edition, you want to make as accurate as you possibly can. And you know, by definition, and your readers know, by definition, that when they're picking them up in the morning, yeah, that closed six 810 hours ago, and it's not going to be and they're going to be checking stuff online. And we know there's all of these phenomena are obvious to everybody. But, you know, the challenges that we face in journalism, are a function of that incredible capacity to communicate incredibly fast to everybody. You know, everything you put out there is available, including your blogs, for example, that right, that's the point. And that, you know, that brings tremendous responsibility. And if you want to be a credible journalistic outlet, that does impose a great responsibility, it's very easy to be resonant, and

sensationalist and frequently wrong. And you can get a lot of traffic with very sensationalist material, right or wrong. If you want to be responsible if you want to be a force that enables people to understand and again, we're not perfect, but we try it, we try to get it right. And we try to minimize the costs of needing to be fairly accurate. It's very challenging of needing to be fairly fast. It's very, very challenging.

Lev Gringauz 28:08

So to ask you a question that sort of hits at the intersection of a lot of these different sorts of issues that you're talking about. Journalistically. You wrote a couple of great pieces last week, the first hand account of slain Al Jazeera, journalist Shireen Abu Akleh's funeral march. And another piece critical of the police for the behavior in the incident, others in sort of, in general, about police behavior. So we're curious to ask you, what type of pushback do you get when you publish pieces that may either come off as or be outright critical of Israeli authorities, because Israel, of course, has freedom of speech, but there's also a military sensor and sort of different culture around that. So what do you run into? What are your concerns when printing stuff like that? Or printing, I guess, in air quotes?

David Horowitz 28:50

Yeah. Okay. I mean, that censorship is not a fact that there must be censorship, broadly speaking, is a gentleman's agreement, or I don't know how you would more properly define that in this era. But it's an agreement that only works if both if journalists are prepared to recognize why material is being asked to be submitted for censorship or is being censored. And it's been. And by the way, the Israeli courts will intervene, you can go to court, if you think material is being censored for some reason, censorship, you know, usually relates to something terrible has happened and the family hasn't been told yet. Or given that Israel is a pretty small country on the western edge, largely not completely hostile landmass. And you know, if you were to want to write an article detailing the specifics of Israel's military deployments and so on, you might have a battle with the center. It doesn't it's not a factor in almost any conceivable opinion piece that one would write unless you know, your opinion piece has lapsed into those areas where there would be some legitimate potential reason for that. censorship, but nothing I write almost nothing I write, certainly not in an opinion piece would be submitted for censorship. And it's very unlikely that that would be effective. Right. In terms of other responses, I mean, they're I don't think they're any different to anywhere else in the world, right? We're out there online. And people can comment. And people do comment, and they comment across the spectrum, in terms of the Times of Israel, you know, were perceived to be remember left and right in Israel, and not not always the same as they would be in the States. They're not they, you know, they are to some extent, socio economic, but then more factors of ideology when it comes to the

Palestinians, especially in Israel's place in the region, and so on. Right. So there are plenty people who think that the size of Israel is very left wing, and there are plenty of people who think that ties with Israel is very right wing. And I would say that's a necessary but not sufficient condition for a website that's actually trying to be fair minded. And the same applies when when I write something I might, you know, might you get criticism from, from all parts of the spectrum? criticisms that I would think are some, some cases entirely spot on, and other cases, you know, wildly misdirected, and suggest that the person has fired off the criticism without actually reading the article. But you have to write what you feel is right. You know, I don't even know, criticism, I really don't, I take it, and I and I think about it, and it, you know, like all the sources of information and opinion that filter into our worldviews, you know, your views are moved and circumstances change, and so on. But broadly speaking, I write what I think is fair. So the couple of pieces that you mentioned, I didn't I wasn't at the part of the funeral where outside the hospital where police attacked mourners, including people carrying the casket at an early stage of the funeral inside Jerusalem. I was at the subsequent part of the procession, which was just inside Jaffa Gate. And I wrote what I saw. And that's, you know, that's what that piece was, it was I described it as a sort of reporter's notebook, it was less than opinion piece, Danner, here's what played out where I saw it, and what we could understand from it. And then the second place you mentioned, which was certainly critical of the police's handling of the funeral, the policy that guided what went on that day. I wanted to take care of that piece to stress how hard the work of the police is. And I talked about all the other responsibilities and and work that they do, without which this would be an untenable reality in Israel, you know, they they're trying to prevent terrorism, they're trying to crack down on crime. It's not a simple job of being a police officer in this country. They're also under underfunded, and understaffed, you know, those are not insignificant issues. So even in a piece where I felt that the, the really the policy, most of all of how that funeral was handled the notion that, you know, I would have thought that intervening would have been a real last resort, given all the sensitivity surrounding that funeral. And yet, it seems that intervention was almost a necessity, if what what we understand is accurate about the orders that the cops were given? And then I think I think the policy was misguided at the very top. I tried to write that, and I tried to write it in a context that was not just heaping criticism on a police force that that has this vital role.

Lonny Goldsmith 33:50

So the the circumstances around Shireen's shooting are still rather mysterious. I don't necessarily know if we're ever going to know who's responsible for that. And I sort of was given that context. Does that concern you? You know, either for yourself in the field or your Times of Israel colleagues, when you're out reporting in the middle of something that might be a little, you know, spicier than usual?

David Horovitz 34:25

Ah, that's a that's a very good question. You know, again, because there's, there's, there's, there's a time lapse between when I'm saying this and when you're hearing it, I don't know if we're going to know definitively. It seems to me that the Israeli army's investigation is making progress. They've you know, as of several days ago, already had they think pin this down to two possible moments during what was an IDF operation in Geneen. A series of escalated IDF operations because they've been a stream of terrorist attacks, many of them, several of them carried out by people from the Geneen area. And Shareen, Abu Aquila was some distance from so many parts of where the gunfire was exchanged as far as we can tell. The one thing I think we, you know, I would say, as definitively as one daresay, is I don't think she was deliberately targeted. And that's worth saying, because the Palestinian Authority, nevermind, the master said that Israel executed her. And I've even seen headlines and assertions in Western media, where that has been asserted or alleged, I don't think she was deliberately targeted. I don't think she was deliberately targeted, whether it was indiscriminate Palestinian gunfire, or an Israeli shot that missed its intended Palestinian gunmen target. In neither of those cases, from what I understand of of what's been identified, by the way, including I've seen material from open source people over abroad trying to get to the bottom of this. So I think that's very important to say, it was an errant gunfire, that that killed her. And that really brings me to the essence of your question, because it underlines that this was a very experienced reporter, who I do not think for a moment was interested in placing herself in the line of fire or in danger, quite the reverse. And yes, he was killed. So it highlights the dangers. I mean, life is potentially dangerous at any moment, as we all know, right. But you try to minimize the dangers. Now in journalism, some journalists are prepared to take greater risks calculated risks than people who are not doing this profession. And then and then some other people in this profession, you know, we try to ensure that our reporters are out of harm's way I do not want people to take unnecessary risks in order to do their job. In fact, I you know, when we've talked about where we have, we've had people in Ukraine in recent weeks and months, where do we send people where, you know, there is nowhere that is without risk? Where do you send people that is responsible? And these are things that editors and people responsible for journalists and journalists themselves? These are issues that grapple with in almost every context, I can tell you a good many years ago, somebody approached me about going to Iran to cover an election. And I was incredibly wary about sending someone to Iran simply because if you're writing for an Israeli outlet from Iran, you know, that's that's a that's real danger. And there were lots of there's lots of back and forth, and it was quite complicated. In the end, this person did go to Iran, and it was not a foolhardy thing for that person to have done, and nothing bad happened. But you know, again, that underlines in there there are circumstances where

it's obvious that there are real risks. And the trouble starts in circumstances where the risk was not obvious where you have been prudent, where you've we think you have placed yourself in a location where you can do your job responsibly, your important job, as I've said, already, without undue risk, but of course there you know, there are no absolute defenses. And just just one more thing on this point, in, in Israel and and in other parts of the world, well, where people have had to deal with so much terrorism. It's not just journalism. In the Second Intifada, and I've written about this, Israelis became basically domestic security consultants. Everybody was weighing what is an undue risk? You know, is it safe to take the buses? Is it safe to go shopping in Macedonia? And there are no absolute answers to those questions. There's Threat Assessment risk assessment. So Israelis do it. Lots of people in lots of places all around the world do it. And it used to be that you'd speak to as to visiting groups about terrorism. And you were describing things that were not familiar to them. The tragedy of recent years, not just the last few years, but recent years is that the notion of calculating your risks in the face of semi arbitrary terrorism is not unfamiliar to lots and lots of people nowadays around the world.

Lonny Goldsmith 39:26

So to get into some hopefully, juicy Israel diaspora stuff, what do you consider the greatest threat to Israel? And what's the role of diaspora Jewry in helping Israel either avoid or fight back against that?

David Horovitz 39:41

Okay, again, it's a good question. You know, I talked about the greatest, you know, potential military threat, which is the Iranian nuclear program and Iran's state championing of of forces that seek Israel's elimination, some of which are now directly on Israel's borders. I'm thinking of course of Hizballah, which is an Iranian tool and Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza and so on. But I, you know, I have immense faith in Israel's military capabilities, and its national resilience, which kind of brings me to the answer that I would give to your question, which is the I think the biggest danger to Israel is the danger that has doomed ancient efforts to maintain Jewish sovereignty in our historic homeland, which is internal division and hatred. And, you know, we've come very close to the brink. In Israel, we assassinated our own Prime Minister a little over a quarter of a century ago. And I think we kind of pulled Blackpool back after that. But that disunity and that internal nastiness is an understatement is a real threat. And it's internal intolerance really, and, and ironically, even though I think Israel in the diaspora, you know, they have they've gone to some extent in different ways in that Israel has been around now for almost a quarter of a century, and people made their choices, you know, people have chosen to come and live in Israel, people have chosen to support Israel, from outside in the Jewish Diaspora. And there are many Jews who, who are very

disconnected to Israel, of course, you know, lots of establishment Jewry, and lots of individuals incredibly invested and connected to Israel. What I think is striking, I think, for Israelis, often when they go to diaspora communities is the internal tolerance. I mean, we can be so nasty to each other, as Jews in Israel, to a degree that Jewish communities around the world would consider unthinkable, my goodness. And there's, there seems to me to be an easier internal Jewish harmony, despite differences between the streams of Judaism and so on. There's there's a greater harmony and a greater awareness that so much more connects us than divides us in diaspora jury than there is in Israel. Because maybe, because we're the majority here, you know, we allow ourselves to think we can be not we can afford to be nasty to nasty to each other and more intolerant of each other. So, you know, I think, broadly speaking, Israel has to make its own decisions about issues of national security, and the big things that shape our capacity to survive and flourish here. But I think we need all the input that we can get, first of all, as as in terms of dialogue on everything, not in terms of prescriptive material from the diaspora, but in terms of internal Jewish capacity to work well together, and find compromises and harmony. There, I think we have a lot to learn from the diaspora. And that's central to our capacity to be resilient and to and to be sufficiently unified to face down the threats, the more conventional threats that we face.

Lev Gringauz 42:58

So I'm a sort of note of nastiness. I know this is maybe a point to unpack further for listeners in a later episode. But I do just want to say something I think about occasionally is the fact that when I lived in Israel, as a sort of more secular person, I've never been more swept up in hatred of other Jews than when I lived in Israel, particularly towards Haredim, the ultra orthodox, who were, for example, beating up my friends at the Western Wall when they were going there with Women of the Wall. And it's really amazing to sort of step back. And I've never felt that kind of hatred when living in America or sort of seeing any other Jewish community. It's kind of amazing and awful, how that becomes so present in Israel. But the last question I actually have for you is as sort of sideways to that kind of a tangent a little bit weird and wonky, but also a really constant issue. You know, I know many of us face and I face both the consumer and a producer of news, the issue of media bias when it comes to Israel. And this is obviously a convoluted subject pro Israel, people often say the news sort of writ large, mainstream media's anti Israel, pro Palestinian People often say the news is pro Israel, I don't actually want to get into sort of what isn't isn't media bias. What I want to ask you instead, is what to you is the best way to report on Israel and Palestinians and legitimately balanced the oftentimes really conflicting views on what is or should be the truth about what happens in the region? How do you report authentically on sort of all the complexities you have to dig through?

David Horovitz 44:27

Okay, so I don't have magical answers to a question as complicated as that, but and I'm not sure I have anything hugely fresh to say but you know, journalists do better when they see stuff for themselves. The more that you're out there. And you have the, you know, I feel the same about about consumers of information about Israel. There's no real substitute for being in Israel and seeing stuff for yourself. That doesn't mean you go to every focus of conflict, but you know, people who've been to Israel, you allow you sells yourself love to talk about something that you saw in us because you saw it. You know, there's a bigger picture there for sure. But but you know what you saw? I would, I would say and you know, in, I would add to what what you said about hatred manifested in the era of the Western Wall. It's not only a one way street, you know, there's incredible non ultra orthodox weariness and some acute intolerance of non ultra orthodox Israelis towards the ultra orthodox it's, there's there's a great deal of complexity to that picture. There's resentment that many ultra orthodox youngsters do not serve in the military. There's resentment at the capacity for the two ultra orthodox parties in the class set to obtain concessions or things for their community that might be disproportionate because of their political power. It's not the case with the current coalition, but it has been for most Israeli coalition's there. And there's all sorts of issues in both directions there. You know, I personally am

David Horovitz 46:10

extremely troubled at the ultra orthodox monopoly over life cycle events in Israel, you basically can't be born, married, divorced or tore dead in this country without the approval of the Rabbinate, which is increasingly an ultra orthodox entity. But it's an incredibly complicated issue. And the more you know that the smarter you can be, as journalists in reporting it, and as as people who care about Israel and understanding it. So the key thing is, is seeing stuff for yourself as much as possible. And knowing as much as you can, right, which, you know, I always encourage people to read widely when groups come to Israel. And by the way, I think this is a really important thing to say. It's my belief that the more you understand Israel, really understand it, the more likely you are to empathize with it in a nuanced way. I don't think that spending a lot of time in Israel open mindedly and seeing stuff and speaking to a wide range of people, and going into the West Bank and the biblical Julian scenario and visiting settlements and speaking to Palestinians. I don't think it's safe to go into Gaza, but in theory, being able to understand what's going on, I think at the end of that, if you've really entered open mindedly and and asked questions without preconceptions, and listened closely, and you've formed a wider view, I don't think that needs to make you anti Palestinian, I do think it would give you considerable empathy for Israel and the challenges that it faces. I met with a group a few years ago now, who had been brought here by the South African Zionist Federation. It was the first time they brought such a group, but it was

people from academia and journalism, and politics, who had been very active in the anti apartheid movement. And therefore it's risky for the South African Zionist Federation to bring group like that to Israel, because there is a narrative. And it is quite resonant in South Africa, that asserts, unfairly, in my opinion, that Israel is some kind of apartheid state. And I met this group at the very end of that trip. And, broadly speaking, I would say to you that they were so empathetic to Israel, that I worried for their credibility when they went home. And I asked him when he that you met, he did go into the territories, and you this is a settlement. And you spoke to Palestinian officials, and they told me everything that they had done, and they've done all of those things. They had had a genuinely diverse itinerary. And they were, I can only say, to put it mildly, they were not hostile to Israel, smart people who had some context, who had room to make comparisons and draw parallels ended a lot, a fairly lengthy, sophisticated, diverse trip to Israel in the territories, broadly speaking, empathetic to Israel. So it happens to be in my opinion, that if you do if you do understand this country properly, and that's what we tried to work with, it's the time zones are for goodness sake, that we couldn't be clear that we are an entity that that wants this country to thrive. I want Israel to thrive as a Jewish and democratic state. And there's complexity in that statement, as you know, believe me, but we try to report it fairly. And, you know, other other media, you know, you phrase your question, very nice that you didn't even ask me to respond. I don't think you can generalize. I think there are media outlets, and there are journalists who do Israel a disservice and others who do not. I think, I think it's, you know, you didn't ask me to generalize, I'm not going to generalize, but I hope I've given you my sense of, of how to get it But at the essence of what's terrible is

Lev Gringauz 50:02

amazing. So just to sort of wrap up, first of all, thank you David for of course taking time to speak with us. You're going to be the featured speaker at the JCRC annual event on Sunday June 12. And for listeners and this will also be in the intro a link to to the JCRC page for that event will be in the podcast notes. So if you want to go and sign up and see what that's about, you can do that.

End:

This has been this week's The Jews Are Tired podcast, I'm Lev Gringauz, don't forget to subscribe and share, and hopefully next week, the Jews will get some rest.

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