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'We don't understand what the students are talking about. They need to see what happened here.'

Warren Kinsella

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Rita Lifshitz, holding up a shirt bearing a photo of her father-in-law, pea newhere in Gaza. WARREN KINSELLA/TORONTO SUN torsun

KIBBUTZ NIR OZ AND SDEROT — On this, Holocaus that is difficult to forget is found on a bed at Nir Oz.

It is of a child's clothing, fresh out of the laundry: A stack of tiny, carefully folded underwear, toddler-sized, placed on the corner of a bed. The child's clothing is covered in ash and dust and dirt, frozen in time. There's a Cookie Monster shirt, and what looks like some little dresses. All unused, all untouched since Oct. 7.

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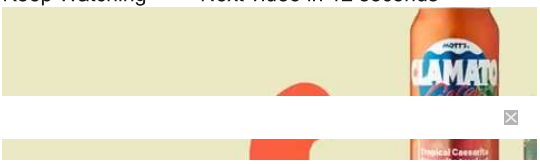

The room that it is in resembles the inside of a long-unattended pizza oven — blackened and blistered from the Hamas attack. Bits and pieces of a former life are seen everywhere: broken dishes, a melted television, charred children's toys.

No shell casings or bodies can be seen — those are long gone. But 30 people were slaughtered in Nir Oz, some still in their beds. Children, too.

In the abandoned homes of the 400 people who once lived there, we wonder if the shadows on the walls and the floors are bloodstains.

The room is surveyed by resident Rita Lifshitz, who looked after the seniors at this kibbutz, but is showing some Canadians a massive crime scene on this day. She finally speaks: "It's like a holocaust."

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watching the sunsets over Gaza, looking West over the Negev. He was one of the first to be killed by Hamas.

From where we stand, Gaza is just a kilometre or so away. It looks quite lovely, from here. Certainly not an "open-air prison."

The Sun's political columnist Warren Kinsella shows us what Hostage Square looks like in Tel Aviv.

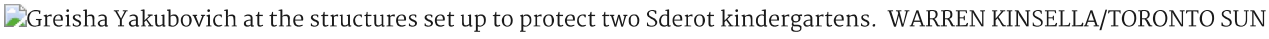
STORY CONTINUES BELOW

and a transgression. But every Israeli you meet wants you here, to bear witness. Over and over, they mention the protests and the campus occupations in Canada and elsewhere.

"We don't understand what the students are talking about," says Rita. "They need to see what happened here." She regards the gaggle of Canadian journalists She points at us. "You need to tell the world the real story about Hamas." Some of us nod and say that we will. We will try.

Sderot isn't a kibbutz — it isn't a farm community, but it's also in the Negev desert — the population is about 33,000. In Sderot, the images to remember are not a child's underclothing, covered in ash. The images are found in different places.

One is found on the south edge of town, where Greisha Yakubovich now stands.


Greisha Yakubovich at the structures set up to protect two Sderot kindergartens. WARREN KINSELLA/TORONTO SUN

Greisha Yakubovich at the structures set up to protect two Sderot kindergartens. WARREN KINSELLA/TORONTO SUN torsun

Yakubovich was born in the former Soviet Union, and came to Israel as a child. He served in the IDF as an officer, and has worked for 30 years to provide Gaza — where he was long stationed — with food, water and power. He points at a row of tall concrete barricades.

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Put in place a few weeks ago, the barricades were required to prevent Hanna's rockets from hitting two of Sderot's newest kindergartens, Meitar and Tzlil. Hamas has outposts within eyeshot, within range of artillery, to the West.

Says Greisha, pointing at the kindergartens: "Until October 7, nobody imagined it could happen here. Nobody expected a kindergarten would become a target."

But Hamas targeted and targets kindergartens.

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Greisha goes to speak again, and then stops as a loud siren is heard. It isn't a warning to head to a bomb shelter — it is precisely 10 a.m. on May 6, the time when everyone and everything stops in Israel to remember the six million victims of the Holocaust.

But not everything stops. As the siren rings out, a barrage of gunfire is heard. Is it Hamas?

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It isn't. It is the IDF. Hamas knows that all of Israel would come to a halt at 10 o'clock. So the IDF commenced firing artillery to deter them — to literally provide cover fire for ten million people.

That reality of this place has necessitated other unsettling changes to everyone's lives, including those of children. At the Good Wishes Park for example — in the shadow of the Chabad Center of Sderot — bomb shelters have been painted to look like play structures for children.

Greisha looks at them, and wonders aloud: "Why can't Hamas do the same thing? Why don't they create shelters for the children in Gaza?" He pauses. "But they don't."

They don't. They haven't. And they never will.

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