

The Story Behind the Headlines: Israel Right Now

Featuring: Haviv Rettig Gur

Attendance: 325



Session 1: U.S.-Israel Relations

Featuring: Bret Stephens and Jeremy Ben-Ami

Attendance: 355



Adam Teitelbaum (Moderator)

"Tonight is about listening. It's about learning. It's about being uncomfortable, getting curious, and leaving in a much smarter and better place."



Bret Stephens

"The purpose of Zionism is Jewish self-rule... not to be ruled by others, and not to rule others."



Jeremy Ben-Ami

"Come Curious. Leave Wiser. I think it is a great thematic. I'd love to see every single JCC all over the country adopt that as a mantra."



Session 2: Understanding Israeli Politics

Featuring: Dr. Nasreen Haddad-Haj Yahya, Tal Shalev, and Nadav Asher Eyal

Attendance: 187



Yisrael Klitsner (Series Moderator)

"I think this really embodied what we had envisioned when we put this program together, and that is having open dialogue, a conversation that is bringing a different plethora of views together in the same room."



Nadav Eyal

"First and foremost, listen to Jews abroad. Listen to the diaspora. Listen to the leaders of the diaspora."



Dr. Nasreen Haddad-Haj Yahya

"We need to have a discussion about us and about our future with us, not without us."



Tal Shalev

"The most important thing is ... to keep connected and to keep engaging. Because if we disconnect, that's the win. And so I think the gain is to keep on talking about it."

An Evening of Flavor and Story

Featuring: Adeena Sussman, Michael Solomonov, and Bill Fuller

Attendance: 283



Session 3: Israel's Geopolitical Outlook

Featuring: Brig. Gen. (Res.) Nitzan Nuriel and Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib



Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib
@afalkhatib

Attendance: 199

I recently spent several hours in deep conversation with Israeli Brigadier General (res.) Nitzan Nuriel, a career commander with extensive experience in special operations, counter-terrorism, and Israeli cooperation with the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East.



Thanks to the JCC of Pittsburgh, we recorded a podcast together and then joined a large public panel examining the current Middle East landscape and its implications for Israel's posture, vulnerabilities, and strategic dilemmas.



I laid out my assessments on Gaza, the West Bank, Israeli-Palestinian dynamics, and the long-term work required to rebuild trust and create pragmatic frameworks for security and shared prosperity.



I spoke openly about my background and my family's history, Palestinian perspectives on 1948 and the origins of the conflict, the criminality and devastation Hamas has inflicted, the horrors of what has happened to my family members and many other noncombatants during the war, and the humanity of ordinary Gazans who want a future free from violence, ruin, and displacement. I emphasized my focus on developing new model communities across the "Yellow Line" in Gaza – safe, prosperous, Hamas-free zones that can anchor a different future.

I pressed the General on difficult questions: why Israel allowed Hamas to seize Gaza in 2007; how the October 7 attacks went undetected; why Hamas was allowed to grow unchecked; why tactical IDF successes have not translated into strategic gains; the recurring discipline issues that surface in videos of IDF misconduct; and the rise of extremist settler violence against Palestinian communities. His candor was appreciated.

He drew a clear distinction between military strategy and political agendas that may at times be separate from professional judgment

General Nuriel described Israel's paralysis in 2007, when it felt unable to confront Hamas; recounted commanding a West Bank unit that had to shift from protecting settlers to protecting Palestinians from settler attacks – something he attributed primarily to political decisions; and reflected on how promising Oslo once seemed before Hamas's sabotage and Yasser Arafat's double games eroded trust.

On IDF discipline since October 7, he cited exhaustion and weak mid-level leadership as drivers of misconduct, while insisting the IDF still investigates violations even if the outside world doubts it.

Beyond the specifics, and we discussed many pertinent and important issues privately, the larger point is this: conversation works. Dialogue, exchange, and engagement are infinitely more powerful than boycott, disruption, or assumptions based on someone's identity or uniform.

We should always say yes to more conversations, especially on emotional, painful, or uncomfortable subjects.

We should never yield to intimidation from those who want to shut down respectful, evidence-based, empathetic engagement.

Regardless of his military rank and background, Nitzan is a human being who cares about his people and country, and about solutions, cooperation, coexistence, and a deep desire to see an end to the Israel and Palestine conflict for the sake of his children and grandchildren.

Thank you to the JCC of Pittsburgh and to everyone who came to hear Brigadier General Nuriel and me speak.



Session 3: Israel's Geopolitical Outlook

Featuring: Brig. Gen. (Res.) Nitzan Nuriel and Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib



Brig. Gen. (Res.) Nitzan Nuriel

"If you cannot create an atmosphere of hope, it's going to be very problematic for the next generations."



Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib

"You can be pro-Palestine while being vehemently against terrorism, against Hamas, and against the delegitimization of Israelis' humanity."



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Attendees Testimonials

Deeply educated and experienced speakers who could share their personal and professional experience.

Learning from experts on the ground. The things that sometimes don't get said! Your series is excellent thank you!

I am learning so much and leave with a lot of information I didn't have before.
I am leaving wiser!

Thoughtful and objective information regarding a very complicated set of issues is very welcomed and not just about Israel but the Middle East in general.

We are not of "one mind," if we ever were, and still, thankfully, we can share these moments together.

Panelists had deep knowledge so they could answer any question. Thank you for providing perspective.

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JCCPGH Podcast Engagement



YouTube

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Social Media Engagement



Facebook

Views: 14,745



Instagram

Interactions: 227



Demand, Depth and Sustained Engagement

Come curious. Leave Wiser.

300+

**participants in
major Israel
engagement
programs**

1,001+

**participants
across 44
zip codes**

430+

**unique
participants
in pilot
dialogue series**

\$130K+

**raised and
earned
support**

50,000+

**digital
impressions
with strong
engagement
patterns**

These numbers reflect sustained engagement over time, not isolated events.

We see participants returning across multiple programs and engaging more deeply with each experience.