

Honored guests, community leaders, ladies and gentlemen,

Tonight, the eve of Yom HaZikaron, we are here to show our respect to all those hurt in Israel's various wars. Please respect the ceremony and their memory by turning off your cell phones.

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As an Israeli, Yom Hazikaron has always been a central part of my identity. It is a day that reminds us, in the words of Natan Alterman, that the country wasn't given to us on a silver platter. It is a day that reminds us of those who fought so that a Jewish state will turn from dream to reality.

It is a reminder that at times also the women shopping at the supermarket, the children traveling to school and the couple walking in the park, are part of the frontline just as much as the soldiers who wear uniform.

Standing here, in Sydney, it's heartwarming to see that this day isn't important only to those who grew up in Israel, but to Jews around the world who proudly support our national homeland and who gather to remember the price paid in blood to keep it safe.

Every name has a face, and every person has a family. Today we remember not only those directly hurt, injured or killed in Israel's wars and in terror attacks, but also the other circles impacted by these personal tragedies.

We remember that 18-year-olds had parents and grandparents; that reservists had children; that every person hurt has friends and relatives, who too were affected by the injury or death of their loved one.

Zeev Jabotinsky once said, “A pioneer doesn’t live for himself, but for those who come after him.”

It’s possible not all those who were killed viewed themselves as pioneers or leaders. But, non the less, their deaths were part of the ongoing struggle for Israel’s security and prosperity. It is our job to make sure their lives and deaths weren’t in vain.

As we gather in Sydney, we remember that Yom HaZikaron isn’t only a personal day of grieving – rather, it’s a national day of remembrance. And, as such, it’s also a day of educating those around us.

With us today there are representatives of the five Zionist youth movements active in Sydney, who – along with schools, synagogues and the Board of Jewish Education – spearhead our efforts to install in our children a strong Jewish and Zionist identity.

Tonight we show our unity as a proud Jewish community. In this room there are people with many different backgrounds; men and women, young and old, immigrants and people born in Australia. Despite these differences, we are all here.

We are here because we have a strong connection to the Jewish state.

We are here because we know someone whose friend or relative was hurt while serving Israel.

We are here to educate those around us about the struggles Israel faced and still faces.

We are here to show our solidarity with others.

We are here to remember.