

Chabad Aurora Rabbi calls for united voice following Israel attacks



‘Evil doesn’t know politics,’ but a united voice will make a world of difference.

So says Rabbi Yossi Hecht of Chabad Aurora in the face of the Israel-Hamas war.

Following the attacks on Israel on October 7, the single deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust, the local leader is calling on his counterparts on all levels of government to come together with a strong, united message.

‘This was a big shock and it just reminds the world, and should remind everyone, that evil has reared its ugly head again and we need to stand very clearly,’ he says, noting that ‘any decent moral leader’ needs to rise and condemn ‘with every fibre of their being’ the hate, the evil, the atrocities, the horrific, barbaric things that were done.’

‘Evil knows no boundaries,’ he says. ‘When we stand strong and when we speak with moral clarity that this is evil and we stand with Israel’ unity brings strength.’

It’s a matter of stating the facts, he says, as ‘to politicise things doesn’t root out the problem’ but merely ‘kicks it down the road.’

‘The events of October 7’ was a reminder to the world to put politics aside,’ he says. ‘Together, we need to fight this, together we need to eradicate this, and everyone will be able to do their part in making sure this does not raise its ugly head anywhere in the world.’

Since the attacks, there has been a heightened concern over rising anti-Semitism and hatred in York Region and around the world, not only among the Jewish community, but the community as a whole.

On Friday, York Regional Police announced they had set up a ‘command post’ at Thornhill’s Promenade Shopping Centre where officers were set to engage with citizens and discuss community concerns ‘in light of calls for civic unrest globally.’

‘York Regional Police is actively monitoring the situation and has deployed police resources strategically,’ they said. ‘Officers have been assigned to additional patrols to increase police visibility around synagogues and mosques, additional faith-based locations and institutions, as well as community centres, faith-based educational facilities and other local gathering places. There is zero tolerance for incidents motivated by hate in our community. We will thoroughly investigate any reports of hate-motivated offences, incidents, or acts.’

York Regional Police continues to share an open dialogue with community and faith leaders. We understand and appreciate the feelings of conflict and pain in our community as events around the world continue to be felt here in York Region. We will continue to assess and reassess the impact that global events are having on our communities to ensure that York Regional Police meets the needs of its community.

York Regional Police urged citizens to report possible demonstrations and gatherings in the area via email at demonstrations@yrp.ca, while encouraging emergencies to be reported via 9-1-1.

Locally, Rabbi Hecht has called for, in addition to a unified voice from our leaders, other visible signs of solidarity, including that men wear tefillin - small boxes with passages from the Torah included inside - as a message.

When a person puts that on and recites those scriptures, it brings a tremendous amount of blessing, he says. Non-Jews can continue to do this in kindness - when they see those around the world with them it will bring them strength that they are not alone in this fight. Government officials need to stand up and be clear. I know some politicians have contacted me and have reached out, some I haven't seen at all. They should stand up, speak clear and speak out. The moral leaders need to stand up and really proclaim the same very clearly and very decisively to clearly explain and say this is evil and we stand with Israel.

I speak to my local leaders, I speak to my provincial leaders, I speak to those who serve in Ottawa and our communities, those who serve on a local level, because when people see our leaders are standing up and speaking with moral clarity, then that sends a very strong message and a very important message to our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land: that we're with them, we're here and we're going to stay with them and unite with them and we're going to be with them.

I often say this to people: if there is so much bad in the world and so much evil, that means there is so much good because often you will look at it as a balance. Let's focus on what we can do positively. First call out the evil for what it is [and now] with our positive actions and with the good deeds, we can counteract this evil because if there is that balance that means there's a tremendous amount of good energy we can tap into.

There is so much good we can tap into every day, every week: be there for another person, give to charity, pray. These are things that are at our disposal, things we can do as individual citizens and citizens of this great country of Canada, that will have an effect. We hope and pray this will bring us to better times, more happier times, more joyful times and the world will come to a time where we can live peacefully with our brothers and sisters.

In the meantime, the YRP will keep its command post operational until Monday, October 23, at least, operating between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m.

We remind our community that in coordination with our federal and provincial partners, York Regional Police has not identified a credible threat within the Region at this time. However, we are actively monitoring the situation and will continue to deploy police resources strategically, including additional patrols to increase police visibility around synagogues and mosques, additional faith-based locations and institutions, as well as community centres, faith-based educational facilities and other local gathering places.

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By Brock Weir
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