

The ZOA Gala Uplifts Spirits

Supports Israel, Jewish Students and the Fight Against Antisemitism at the UN and on Campuses

It was at the all-volunteer non-profit, The ZOA Gala Uplifts Spirits Supports Israel, Jewish Students and the Fight Against Antisemitism at the UN and on Campuses

The Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) annual national Superstar Gala is one of the outstanding events of the season in the pro-Israel Jewish world. This year, an overflowing crowd of almost 700 including numerous students and young people, heard and learned from Jewish luminaries while enjoying uplifting, inspiring speeches; music by the Yeshiva University Studs (Y-Studs) and a klezmer group; and delicious food at the architectural gem of Cipriani's event hall.

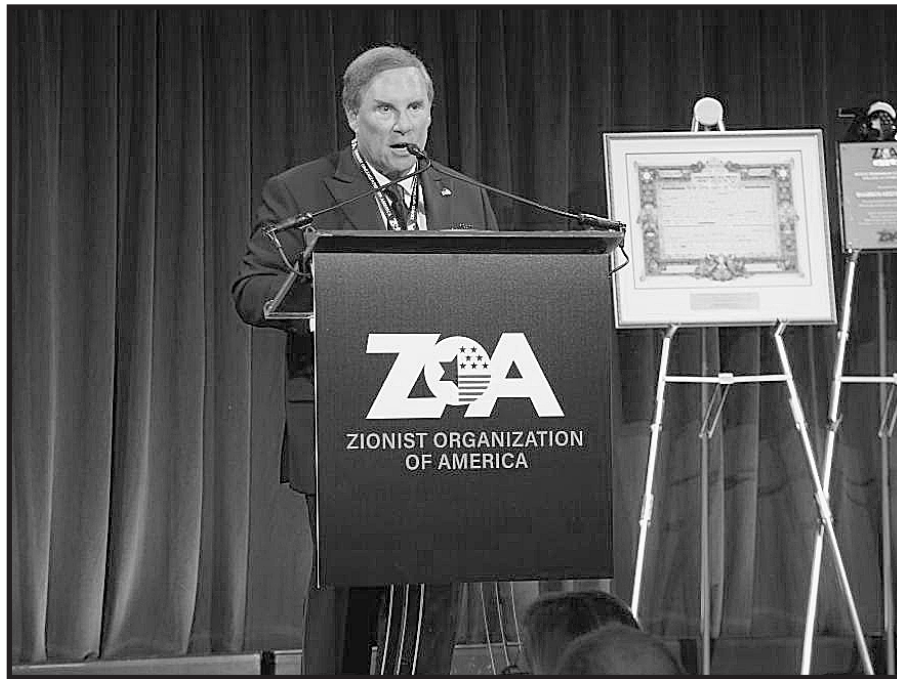
The ZOA Gala theme was "Fight for Israel Now." Speakers emphasized the importance of Jews and Jewish students standing strong and taking universities and the media to task; defunding the United Nations; preventing the creation of a terrorist Palestinian state; staying united to enable Israel to win decisively by destroying the Hamas and Hezbollah terror organizations so that Israel can bring the hostages home and live in safety; and educating students about Israel's history and right to the land of Israel.

The evening's inspirational speakers included ZOA's award winners – former Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations, Magen David Adom head, and incoming head of Israel's space industry Gilad Erdan; philanthropist Gary Schottenstein; former U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman; recent Harvard student activist Shabbos Kestenbaum and Brig. General Amir Avivi (res); Consul General of NY, Amb. Ofir Akunis – as well as ZOA National President Morton Klein; Emcee Rita Cosby; and presenters including Harvard Law professor Alan Dershowitz; Newsmax founder & CEO Chris Ruddy; ZOA VP and noted philanthropist Myron Zimmerman; Philanthropist Steven Sass; ZOA Vice Chair Michael Orbach; journalist and pro-Israel activist Irit Tratt; World Zionist Organization President Yaakov Hagoel (by video); ZOA Chair Rubin Margules; and ZOA Campus Director Jonathan Ginsburg and five ZOA Campus professionals.

ZOA President Morton Klein told the Jewish Press: "The ZOA Gala is like a three-day pro-Israel conference crammed into one celebratory, lively, information-packed evening, that educates attendees and sends vital policy messages to the powers-that-be. Every year, people say that it was the best gala ever. Even more people told me this year that this was our best gala ever."

Newsmax CEO Chris Ruddy introduced the first speaker and Louis D. Brandeis Award winner, the great philanthropist and real estate giant Gary Schottenstein. Mr. Ruddy stated that Mr. Schottenstein is passionate about his Judaism, his beautiful family and wife, children and grandchildren, his country America, love of G-d, and Israel. Mr. Ruddy added that Israel "is our true sister democracy, and we must do everything within our power to

support her," and to fight against her enemies, both the terror groups surrounding her and media distortion.



Gary L. Schottenstein, Justice Louis D. Brandeis Award honoree

He noted that ZOA and Mort Klein, in his frequent Newsmax appearances, have done an incredible job fighting for truth and against media distortion.

Mr. Schottenstein humbly stated that he wished to share his award with all, including many who are unsung, who have done so much since October 7 on behalf of our people and nations. He added that an award is only the beginning of an opportunity to continue to strive to make our world better.

Mr. Schottenstein noted that Louis Brandeis explained that America's ideals are almost identical to the ideals found in the Torah and Talmud, which the Jews have diligently practiced for thousands of years. Mr. Schottenstein described many ways that our ideals are aligned, and that the majority of our non-Jewish great American fellow citizens support Israel, and that ZOA has made great contributions to this.

He further explained: "It needs to be very clear that 'Let my people go' and 'never again' are indisputable and non-negotiable credos in the essence our people. The Jewish people have the notarized deed for the land of Israel, as our eternal inheritance, and it is signed by HaShem in the Torah. We have the deed."

Mr. Schottenstein added: "Jews should aggressively take advantage of the power and success we have earned in so many areas . . . to go on the offensive against countries, institutions, colleges and groups for their knowing or unknowing actions promoting antisemitism or not supporting Israel or Jews in the Diaspora."

He concluded by praising our young people and others and expressing optimism for the future, thanking his wife and children, family and friends, and Chris Ruddy, and thanking ZOA President Morton Klein for his great leadership of the ZOA, with the assistance of Mort's wife Rita.

ZOA Chair Rubin Margules warmly welcomed the winner of the Dr. Miriam

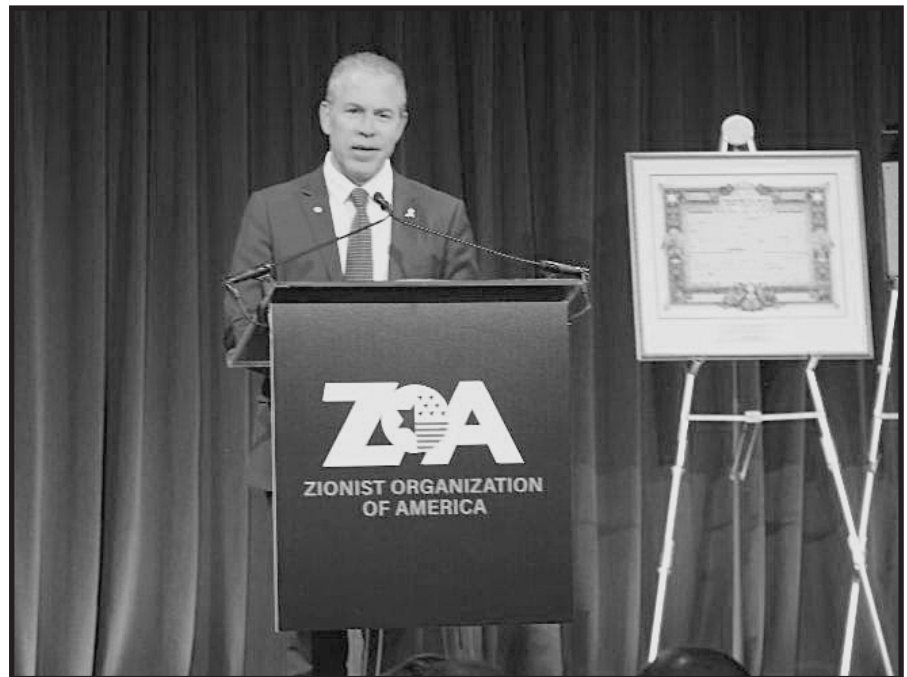
and Sheldon G. Adelson Defender of Israel Award, Ambassador Gilad Erdan.



"The UN must be defunded"

Ambassador Erdan thanked his "Dear, dear friend Morton Klein," adding, "Mort, your unwavering commitment to Israel and Zionism is truly remarkable. Under your leadership, the ZOA has become a beacon of truth and a staunch defender of Israel. You are not only a trusted ally and friend, but also an inspiration above all. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Amb. Erdan then explained: "In this dark year, an unexpected ray of light emerged. A generation of lions emerged, defending our homeland with unbreakable resolve. .



Amb. Gilad Erdan, Dr. Miriam & Sheldon G. Adelson Defender of Israel Award honoree

. . . Their courage has made one thing clear: Our enemies can never defeat us on the conventional battlefield." He noted that after October 7, that in addition to rockets, the enemy's "secret weapon" against us is "the United Nations, the house of lies." The enemy knew that the United Nations would rush to tie Israel's hands, and brand Israel as a "human rights abuser" to stop and prevent Israel's victory. What the UN does "is not just bias. It is a weapon in the

terrorist arsenal, to help them survive."

Amb. Erdan added: "An institution born to prevent genocide has been hijacked by those who plot it." Fifty-six countries, nearly one-third of the UN's 193 countries, are Muslim countries "who obviously support the Palestinian Arabs in every war against the Jewish state, even if we are fighting a terror organization. . . . Over half of the UN states today are not even democracies" – and this causes moral distortions. "Cuba, Sudan, Somalia and Eritria . . . are on the Human Rights Council; you cannot make this up. . . . Saudi Arabia was chosen recently to chair the council on the status of women. . . . The President of the International Court of Justice, the ICJ, the very court on a witch hunt to accuse Israel of genocide, is from Lebanon run by Hezbollah. A judge from a country at war with Israel now sits in judgment over us. An absurdity. So Israel, a country that represents only one-tenth of one percent of the world's population . . . receives 70% of the UN's condemnations. We get more condemnations than Russia, Syria, North Korea and Iran combined."

Amb. Erdan continued: "Since October 7, we have witnessed a new low, even for the UN. Over 400 days have passed with our hostages in captivity. Yet the Security Council hasn't even held one single meeting to advance their release. Not a single UN body has even condemned Hamas. Disgusting. The conclusion, friends, is that today, the UN has become a stain on humanity. This stain . . . costs \$75 billion dollars per year." The U.S. "is still the biggest funder of the UN, almost \$20 billion dollars every year, . . . literally fi-

nancing an institution run by dictators and jihadists.

Friends, the UN must be defunded. (The crowd cheered at this.) I am hopeful that the Trump administration will get this done. President Trump understands what a scam looks like. Remember UNRWA? The UN agency breeding terror. President Trump saw through them. He cut off their funding, just like that. Zero dollars for terror. Zero dollars for antisemitism.

Now it's time to do the same to the entire UN. Every tax dollar sent to the UN today is a dollar funding our shared enemies. The time has come to defund the UN completely. And together we can end this madness. As long as the UN spews lies, we will never stay silent. We will expose the falsehoods."

Ambassador Erdan explained that at the UN, he knew that he represented the world's most moral nation and most moral military, and thus he went on the offensive to stand up for the truth. Amb. Erdan recounted that he called for UN Secretary General Guterres to resign when Guterres claimed that October 7 did not occur in a vacuum; and that Amb. Erdan was detained for protesting Iranian mass murderer Raisi's speech in the UN General Assembly. When the Russian Foreign Minister held an anti-Israel event on Yom HaZikaron, Erdan lit a memorial candle for Israel's heroes and walked out.

During Ambassador Erdan's speech, a few protestors started screaming anti-Israel "free Palestine" slogans. They were quickly ejected by security. A gala guest commented, "I noticed that they made sure to eat the dinner here before they started protesting! I guess Israel-haters have no problem eating our Zionist food!" Ambassador Erdan remained unflappable, and commented: "Palestine never existed, by the way," which elicited cheers from the crowd.

During the four years that Amb. Erdan stood alone at the UN, he remembered the words of the Lubavitcher Rebbe "A little light dispels much darkness." He also remembered that the ambassadors of the Babylonian and Roman Empires, and the delegations of the Moabites and Amorites and Amalek were nowhere to be found. Empires have crumbled and disappeared. But as long as we stand united, we will survive and thrive and destroy Hamas and bring the hostages home.

After a warm introduction by ZOA Vice Chair Michael Orbach, Brigadier General (res.) Amir Avivi noted that today, after October 7, everyone in Israel understands that the Oslo Accords which brought Palestinian terrorists into Israel and Israel's disengagement from Gaza were terrible mistakes.

General Avivi then explained: "But thirty years ago, there was only one organization here in the west, standing strong and saying this [Oslo] is wrong; standing against the other organizations who were saying that Oslo is the right path; and this organization standing strong is the ZOA, and I thank you Morton Klein, for this leadership. Because it's not easy to stand against the stream, and say the truth. And it took 30 years [for others] to realize how wrong everything was for the past three decades, which brought us at the end of the day to the seventh of October. . . ."

General Aviv added: "Our soldiers are fighting fiercely in Gaza, in Lebanon." General Avivi asked the gala attendees to fill out postcards on their tables thanking the soldiers for their service. "Our soldiers want to know only one thing. They want to know that the Jewish people are behind them, supporting them, that we appreciate what they are doing for Israel." Numerous audience members filled out the postcards with warm messages thanking Israel's courageous soldiers.

General Avivi and other generals did an



Myron Zimmerman (right), Morton Klein (2nd from right), Rita Cosby (center) and Jonathan Ginsburg with ZOA Campus staff presenting the Myron Zimmerman Outstanding College Activism Award to Harvard graduate Shabbos Kestenbaum

assessment three years ago that an existential war was imminent. From October 7, Jews woke up to the need to fight two big wars. The war on the ground and the war that ZOA is fighting to make clear that we need to eradicate our enemies.

The Myron Zimmerman Award for Outstanding Student Activism honoree, Harvard graduate Shabbos Kestenbaum, was warmly introduced by ZOA Campus Director Jonathan Ginsburg and five ZOA campus professionals and delivered a stirring speech about standing up proudly on campuses and elsewhere to antisemitic hatred.

Mr. Kestenbaum also thanked Mort Klein and ZOA for standing alone in amplifying the voice of students, encouraged everyone to join ZOA, and called Mort Klein a visionary leader and giant and said he is what a leader looks like and acts like.

Professor Alan Dershowitz introduced and praised former U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman's great contributions as ambassador, including promoting U.S. recognition of the Golan Heights as sovereign Israeli land. Prof. Dershowitz declared that the Golan must never be given to Syria.

"There can never, ever, ever be a Palestinian state"

Amb. Friedman then gave a brilliant speech describing the importance of the survival of the one Jewish state; condemning Hamas' use of all the aid money it received to build its terror infrastructure; and explaining that a Palestinian state would be a disaster and should never be created.

Amb. Friedman declared that after October 7, "We have clarity today like never before. We know who our friends are. We know who our enemies are. We know what works and doesn't work. . . . If there's one thing that's more clear than anything else, abundantly clear, perhaps nothing is more clear: There can never, ever, ever be a Palestinian state. Period." The audience cheered.

Amb. Friedman explained that the simple answer to those who argue that Palestinian Arabs are entitled to self-determination is that "We tried this already" – in

Gaza since 2005. When the Palestinians were given Gaza, they could have developed beautiful hotels along Gaza's beautiful shoreline on the Mediterranean, schools, hospitals and homes, but instead they elected Hamas. The Palestinians used the billions of dollars they got from U.S. administrations (other than the Trump administration), the EU and the Gulf states and others "to build terror tunnels and weapons of mass destruction. . . . So whatever you might have thought of a Palestinian state before October 7, we have definitive proof after October 7 that there can never be a Palestinian state. Left to their own devices, left with autonomy and control over territory, the Palestinians will take whatever they have and use it to murder, slaughter, kidnap, rape and torture the Jewish people. We can never let that happen again.

Journalist and Jewish activist Irit Tratt introduced ZOA President Mort Klein, calling Mr. Klein "the incomparable Mort

Klein"; "Mort is not just tireless, he is fearless, even if he stands alone"; and a "fierce, courageous warrior for Israel and the Jewish people." Ms. Tratt gave the examples of Mort opposing the Oslo Accords and Gaza withdrawal, while the rest of the American Jewish world embraced these decisions. Mort and the ZOA understood that the Oslo and Gaza withdrawal decisions "would lead to more terrorism against Israelis. Tragically, they were right."

Mr. Klein then gave a passionate, informative speech about the Jewish people's longstanding right to the land of Israel and the existential dangers of a Palestinian state. He praised many of President Trump's nominees' friendship for Jews, Israel and ZOA, and thanked everyone at the dinner.

Mr. Klein also described how ZOA fights the information wars and the Jew-bashing seen all across America, with ZOA's Department of Research and Spe-



Alan Dershowitz, Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law at Harvard Law School

cial Projects; Government Relations Department, which educates lawmakers; the ZOA Center for Law and Justice, which files numerous lawsuits protecting Jewish students from harassment and discrimination; the ZOA Campus Department, which teaches students how to respond to lies about Israel; articles in the media; appearances on television and radio; and lectures throughout the country.

Mr. Klein noted that the ZOA Center for Law and Justice singlehandedly fought a successful six-year battle to reinterpret

organizations to stop supporting a Palestinian state.

Mr. Klein added that it is comforting and inspiring to remember that the United States has had a love affair with the idea of establishing a Jewish state since America's earliest days 250 years ago. President Abraham Lincoln called reestablishing the Jewish state a noble dream. President John Adams stated that he wished for the Jews to reestablish in Judea an independent nation. Pres. Adams called Judea by its true name. He didn't call it the "West Bank."



(L to R) Steven Sass, Rita Cosby, Steven Sass Award for Outstanding Diplomacy honoree Amb. David Friedman, Prof. Alan Dershowitz and Morton Klein

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to protect Jewish students. Other Jewish organizations said no when ZOA asked them to help ZOA's effort to reinterpret Title VI. All the lawsuits today under Title VI are because of ZOA's groundbreaking battle.

Mr. Klein also described ZOA's successful battles to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, to pass the Taylor Force Act, and to stop five different anti-Israel nominees from being confirmed. Mr. Klein praised President Trump for signing the Taylor Force Act – which calls for cutting off funding to the Palestinian Authority (PA) as long as the PA continues to pay terrorists to murder Jews; praised Pres. Trump for cutting off funding to the Palestinian Authority during Trump's first term in office; and criticized Pres. Biden for resuming and increasing funding to the Palestinian Authority.

Mr. Klein noted that Israel is one eighth of one percent of the Middle East land mass, and yet the world, including the Biden administration, is demanding that Israel give away parts of the holy Jewish land to establish what would surely be a Palestinian terrorist state, on Israel's longest border. After Israel gave Gaza to the Palestinians, they elected Hamas – 80% of Palestinians voted for Hamas; Hamas built 400 miles of terror tunnels; and launched 35,000 rockets against Israel to try to murder Jews.

Mr. Klein declared that ZOA will continue to work to let Congress and others know that a Palestinian state would be a disaster, and to not let that happen. Mr. Klein urged everyone to write to the other major Jewish organizations that still support a Palestinian state even after October 7 (AIPAC, American Jewish Committee, ADL, the Washington Institute of Near East Policy, Dennis Ross) to urge those

Teddy Roosevelt supported a Jewish state around Jerusalem. He understood Jerusalem's holiness to the Jewish people. Mr. Klein explained that Jerusalem is not holy to Muslims. Jerusalem is never mentioned in the Koran. Mohammed merely had a dream described in the Koran about going to heaven from the "farthest mosque" – which could not have been from Jerusalem because there were no mosques in Jerusalem then.

Mr. Klein also noted that in 1891, Methodist leader William Blackstone presented a petition to President Benjamin Harrison, signed by 400 prominent U.S. leaders, urging the Ottoman Empire to turn Palestine over to the Jews. Palestine was merely an area, not a country; and has never been a country. The petition signatories included future President William McKinley, leaders of both houses of Congress, mayors of major cities, prominent industrialists and editors of leading U.S. newspapers, and Episcopal and Catholic clergy. In 1891, the Jewish people were not large or powerful; none of the Jewish organizations of today existed; and there was no Israel lobby. Mr. Klein stated: "Yet the leaders of America understood the justice of reestablishing the Jewish state of Israel. The leaders of the gentile community went on record urging the reestablishment of the Jewish state on the land that the Bible, the Torah, states was given to the Jewish people by G-d almighty. It is just and right. How right they all were."

Mr. Klein added that Ben Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and John Adams fought to make the great seal of the United States show Moses splitting the sea. And in 1948, Clark Clifford quoted from Deuteronomy when urging Truman to recognize the reconstituted state of Israel. Polls showed that Americans supported recognizing the newly reconstituted state of Israel by 3

to 1. And today, polls show that 82% of Americans support Israel over its enemies in Israel's war for survival.

Mr. Klein then added that Donald Trump is "the greatest friend we Jews have ever had in the White House," and listed some of President Trump's achievements, including moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem; recognizing the Golan Heights as sovereign Israeli land; cancelling the horrific Iran deal; and beginning powerful sanctions on Iran that bankrupted Iran and reduced Iran's reserves to \$4 billion. If the sanctions had continued, Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis could not have been armed and funded by Iran. October 7 would never have happened if we had maintained Trump's sanctions on Iran. Pres. Trump also signed the Taylor Force Act to end aid to the Palestinian Authority; and ended aid to UNRWA, which teaches Arabs to hate and commit violence and even murder Jews. Mr. Klein noted that this week, President Biden sent nearly \$300 million to the Palestinian Authority. And that was after PA President Mahmoud Abbas bragged that Palestinians participated in October 7, and said that Sinwar was his great friend and a great leader.

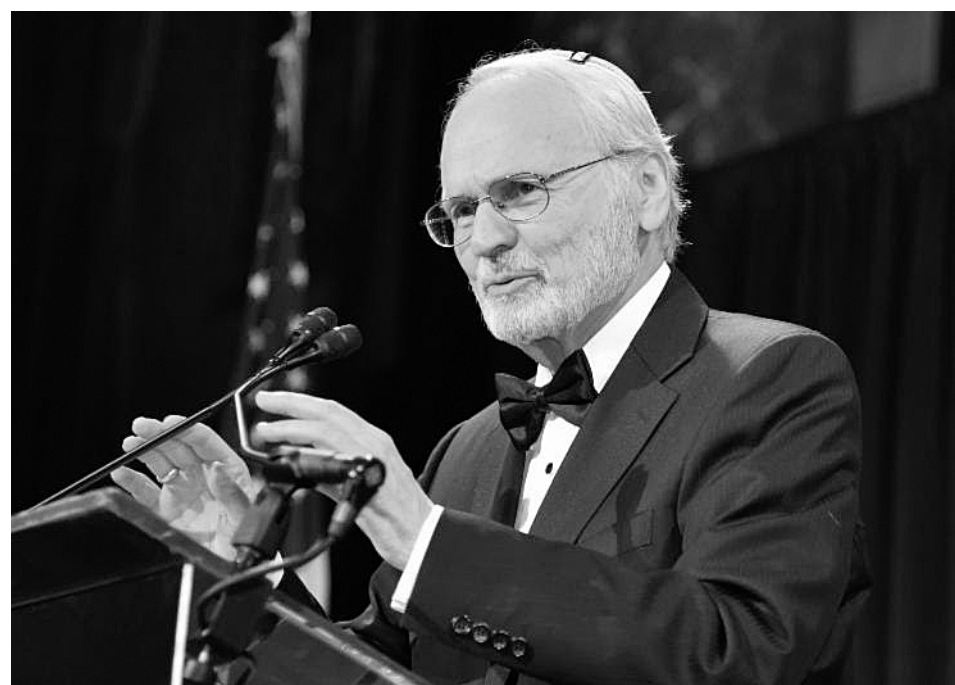
Donald Trump also publicly proclaimed that the Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria are legal under international law (the crowd applauded), and established the famous Abraham Accords. And since he has been elected, Pres. Trump has nominated the most pro-Israel cabinet in history since Israel was reestablished. Mr. Klein praised Pres. Trump's extraordinary nominees who are great friends of Israel, including Mike Huckabee, Senator Rubio; Rep. Elise Stefanik, Peter Hegseth – who said there is no reason we cannot establish a Jewish Temple

state solution" – that would be a disaster for Israel; And never ever talk about "occupation" – there is none. There has never been a Palestinian country. This is holy Jewish land, called Judea and Samaria. We Jews and Judeans. The land was not only given to us by G-d, but also under international law, including the League of Nations mandate and UN action. Mike Huckabee understands this. Mr. Klein shared an email from Mike Huckabee, in which Gov. Huckabee stated that he wants to be as bold an advocate for Israel as Mr. Klein is.

Pres. Trump's appointments are the polar opposite of Pres. Biden's appointments – which were hostile to Israel. Mr. Klein found it remarkable that other Jewish leaders are condemning some of these appointments – who are actually pro-Israel – when those same Jewish leaders never said a word about Biden appointees Maher Bitar – who made speeches on how to demonize Israel, Hady Amr – who said he was inspired by the intifada terror war against Jews, or about numerous other hostile-to-Israel appointments.

Donald Trump also said that on day one, he will end slow-walking and restricting critically needed arms to Israel; reinstate sanctions on Iran; and reinstate cutting U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority and UNRWA. Since October 7, the PA has received \$2.1 billion from the Biden administration. Mr. Klein believes that Pres. Trump will end appeasement and end the Biden administration's going beyond appeasement and are intentionally strengthening Iran and the PA.

Mr. Klein also pointed out that President Trump stated that he will defend our Jewish citizens and inform every college president that if they don't stop allowing antisemitism, they will lose their accreditation and all federal support, and that he will hold schools accountable for violating the civil rights laws. Pres. Trump declared that Jewish Americans must have



ZOA National President Morton A. Klein

on the Temple Mount; Rep. Mike Waltz; Gov. Kristi Noem; John Ratcliff; Rep. Lee Zeldin; and RFK Jr., to whom Mort Klein is an advisor on Israel.

Mike Huckabee, Elise Stefanik and Lee Zeldin have all been ZOA Gala honorees.

Gov. Huckabee quoted the Talmud about the power of words, and said: Never say "West Bank" – it's Judea and Samaria; Never say "settlements" – it's Jewish communities; Never talk about a "Palestinian

equal protection under the law, and we must move swiftly to restore Jewish safety for students on campus, and on American streets.

Mr. Klein ended with the inspiring reminders that the Jewish people are an eternal people and will prevail.

ZOA thanks Alan Jay, Nancy Hollander, Jackie Shafer and many other fabulous ZOA employees for their hard work in making this Gala so extraordinary. ☆