

Solidarity Mission to Israel participant Daniel Pedroso

The UPJ Solidarity Mission to Israel was a trip that left memories that won't be easily forgotten, especially as we commemorate the anniversary of the events of October 7. This mission was more than just a visit; it was a testament to the resilience, courage, and solidarity of the Jewish people.

During our time in Israel, we visited Kfar Aza - a place that exposes the scars of the October 7 events. Walking through homes that had been attacked, with the sounds of explosions still reverberating in the background, was a shocking reminder of the conflict. The stories of survivors who spent days locked in their saferooms, waiting for rescue, were deeply moving.

The mission was not only difficult experiences - it was also full of inspiring moments. One of the most inspirational experiences was witnessing (and helping, even if a little) the efforts of Potchim et Halev, where children volunteered to help displaced families in need of food. Their compassion was a beacon of hope in all the darkness. Similarly, the dedication of Achim L'neshek, civilians/reservists who drove to the Gaza envelope in their own cars to rescue families when the army could not show up, was a powerful reminder of the spirit of solidarity and bravery.

The mission also took us to Sheba Hospital, where some of us donated blood while others participated in a Holocaust Commemoration ceremony. Standing in silence as the sirens went off, a statement of our collective memory, was a reminder of the shared history and sacrifices - amplified by the war that was happening simultaneously. Meeting with various leaders and organisations, such as the Israel Religious Action Centre and the Israel Trauma Coalition, highlighted the incredible work that was already underway, but that suddenly became even more important. The dedication of individuals like Rabbi Yael Vurgan, who has had to deal with the massacre and displacement of her communities, showed us the impact and importance of our support.

As we remember the events of October 7, and with the rise of antisemitic incidents globally, it is important to think of the strength and unity that emerged in the face of adversity. The stories of bravery, compassion, and resilience that we witnessed on this mission are a testament to the enduring spirit of the people of Israel. It highlights the importance of solidarity and the power of coming together.