

“October is a fallen leaf, but it is also the wider horizon more clearly seen.”
HAL BORLAN ‘THIS HILL, THIS VALLEY’

Jewish community vigil marks two years since Oct. 7 attacks

BY JAKE ROBBINS, LEO NYBERG
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About 100 people gathered at the Women's Table Sunday evening for a vigil to commemorate the two-year anniversary of the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led attacks in Israel.

The event was hosted by the Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life and Yale in partnership with Chabad at Yale, according to a Slifka invite. The vigil — which consisted of speeches, music and prayer — followed a daylong memorial display on Cross Campus of pictures of hostages held by Hamas in Gaza and signs calling for their return.

Uri Cohen, the executive director of the Slifka Center, said in an interview after the event that remembrance, rather than a particular political message, was central to the vigil.

“If there’s a message, it’s that of peace. We’re here, we remember, we pray for peace for Israelis, for Palestinians and for the whole region,” Cohen said.

On Oct. 7, 2023, Palestinian militants from Gaza attacked Israel, killing over 1,300 Israelis and taking around 250 hostages captive. Israel subsequently invaded the Gaza strip, launching a war in which, the Gaza Health Ministry estimates, more than 67,000 people in Gaza have been killed.

According to the New York Times, Israel’s leaders believe Hamas still

holds around 20 hostages and the bodies of at least 25 more.

At the vigil, students reflected on the events of Oct. 7 and all that has followed.

Elijah Wiesel ’28, who spoke at the event, told the News following the vigil that he sees a connection between the collective memory of Americans and the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks to the Jewish and Israeli community’s continuing commemoration of Oct. 7.

“Our generation is called to remember 9/11,” Wiesel told the News. “For a lot of us, this is something we cannot forget. It is something that impacts us everyday, follows us home and follows us on campus.”

During the vigil, Alex Ozar, the campus rabbi and co-director of Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus, spoke to the group about the importance of mourning the dead and remembering the hostages. He thanked the approximately 100-person crowd for “doing the hard, impossible, beautiful and transcendent work of the Jewish community.”

“This is supposed to commemorate the victims, who were murdered on Oct. 7 and those who were kidnapped,” Yossi Moff ’27, a board member of Yale Friends of Israel told the News while cleaning the memorial off Cross Campus. “Both the ones who, thank God, came back, and the hostages who are still being held, some dead, some alive, in Gaza now.”



JAKE ROBBINS / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Two Jewish student groups hosted a vigil at the Women’s Table honoring those who have been killed since Oct. 7, 2023.

Last year’s commemoration was similar to the one on Sunday, but it included videos and interviews from Oct. 7 survivors, Moff said.

Moff said he hopes all the hostages will be released well before the third anniversary of the attacks, and future commemorations will focus on remembering the dead and honoring their lives.

Sabrina Kastner ’26 reflected on the significance of holding the memorial and vigil on a day that coincided with the start of Sukkot, a Jewish fall harvest festival, noting

that the community sought to balance mourning and celebration. She said it would not be appropriate to hold a formal mourning during the holiday, but that the events on Sunday created a shared space for reflection and remembrance while many students were still on campus.

Kastner added that being at the vigil brought back difficult memories from the past two years, including the immediate aftermath of the Oct. 7 attacks and the ongoing hostage crisis in Gaza. She emphasized the importance of

coming together as a community to remember and find strength, describing the vigil as part of a long tradition of resilience in Jewish history.

The Slifka Center for Jewish Life is on 80 Wall St.

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Yarvin argues for American monarchy at closed-door debate

BY JERRY GAO AND EMILY AKBAR
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Curtis Yarvin, a blogger known for his anti-democracy views, debated Yale Law School professor Jed Rubenfeld at a debate Tuesday evening hosted by the Yale Political Union, or YPU.

Yarvin argued in favor of the resolution “end the democratic experiment” against Law School professor Jed Rubenfeld. The

resolution failed, with 60 voting against and 23 voting in favor, Hassaan Qadir ’26, who attended the debate, told the News. The News could not immediately confirm the vote with YPU leadership.

Yarvin has promoted the idea of an American monarchy online under the pen name Mencius Moldbug, and his ideas were cited by JD Vance LAW ’13 on a podcast in 2021 supporting Trump replacing civil servants with Trumployalists.

In an email to the News prior to the event, YPU President Brennan Columbia-Walsh ’26 asked that a reporter not attend Yarvin’s debate — a break from recent YPU custom. A News reporter was initially let into the event but asked to leave by Columbia-Walsh before the debate began. Columbia-Walsh declined to explain why the News reporter had to leave the event, referring back to his initial email.

Yarvin told the News that he was unaware of the policy barring a News reporter as he entered a dinner before the debate at Mory’s.

“I don’t know the rules, someone will have to see,” Yarvin said. “I would ask the organizers. I really don’t know.”

Qadir said in an interview after the debate that he believed a lack of news coverage enabled participants to speak freely.

“I think it’s useful for the Yale Political Union to be a relatively private space for dialogue,” Qadir said, explaining that speeches could be misrepresented. “But on the other hand, it can be useful to publicize and let other people know, even for the simple sake of getting more people to come to the YPU.”

Another student, Antonio Padilla ’27, said that the move to bar a reporter was unnecessary due to a lack of controversial statements said throughout the debate. Padilla expressed his disagreement with the YPU’s decision, stressing the importance of publicizing Yarvin’s statements.

“I do think that if he’s gonna espouse these views, talk about the institution that he’s speaking in, and talk about the students within these institutions, then the people should be able to hear,” Padilla said. “That’s kind of the democratic ideal, I guess.”

Student attendees summarized the character of the debate. Yarvin argued that the democratic experiment has already failed, while Rubenfeld contested that ending the experiment is not worth the consequences of tyranny, two students said.

Alden Okoh-Aduako ’28 said that Yarvin advocated for a government structured like a corporation, in which there is an absolute monarch accountable to some outside body — analogous

to the way a chief executive officer is accountable to a board of directors.

Padilla said Yarvin assessed democracies and oligarchies around the world to be “not working,” and thus concluded that “monarchy seems like the obvious solution here.” On democracy specifically, Padilla said that Yarvin attributed homelessness and political polarization as some of the signs of failure.

“He said, ‘When I walked down Chapel Street, I had to think to myself the project failed, right?’” Padilla recalled Yarvin saying, in reference to homeless people on a street in downtown New Haven.

Two students interviewed by the News questioned Yarvin’s proposed monarchical system and if his ideal government would actually lead to human flourishing.

“But then it’s like, okay, well, what’s keeping that board of directors in check?” Miles Moore ’29 said.

Padilla criticized Yarvin’s theoretical system of government on the basis of who would run it, pointing to the possibility of immoral leaders.

Students in support of the resolution spoke about the need for decentralized governments to check malicious incentives and inefficiencies from the federal government, Qadir said.

Padilla described how stu-

dents speaking in the affirmative proposed more interesting arguments as they “pulled from more sources,” including Carl Schmitt, a German political theorist, or philosophies from ancient Athens.

In response to Yarvin, Rubenfeld argued that ending the democratic experiment could result in complete totalitarianism, which is not worth the possible gains of a successful monarchy, Qadir said.

“Sure, you could end up with a benevolent king who works efficiently for the common good, but who’s to ensure we don’t get a tyrant instead?” said Okoh-Aduako, recalling Rubenfeld’s speech.

Columbia-Walsh could not be reached for comment about the debate after it ended.

Yale Public Safety personnel were present outside William L. Harkness Hall during the event, and attendees’ bags were checked by security. The YPU previously tightened its security measures for a debate the week after the killing of Charlie Kirk.

Yarvin is scheduled to debate Garrett Jones, a George Mason University professor, on Wednesday at an event hosted by the Yale Federalist Society.

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ELLIE PARK / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Curtis Yarvin argued to “end the democratic experiment” against Jed Rubenfeld at the Yale Political Union.

Pro-Palestinian group hosts vigil mourning lives lost in Gaza

BY ANAYAH ACCILLEN AND
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Around 30 students gathered around dimly lit candles on the New Haven Green to mourn and commemorate the Palestinians who have lost their lives in the ongoing war in Gaza and over decades of Israeli military actions.

The event was hosted by Yalies4Palestine, or Y4P, as part of the group’s three-day commemoration of the two-year anniversary of the Gaza war.

A student speaker who did not share her full name with the News said Israel was responsible for “the destruction of homes, the uprooting of families, the demolition of schools and hospitals, the erasure of towns and villages, the theft of

land and the silencing of dreams” over more than a century.

In a speech, Rohan Lokanadham ’28 shared a story about a friend from Gaza who he said has had a typical experience there among Palestinians who have endured “for the last two years of active genocide” — an accusation Israeli officials have denied.

Lokanadham said his friend was paralyzed from the waist down under Israeli bombardment and had moved farther and farther south in Gaza. He is “a son, brother, husband and father, and is truly one of the kindest people I have ever met,” Lokanadham said.

Another student speaker led the crowd in a rendition of “from New Haven to Gaza, we shall not be moved.”

Lokanadham said more people are beginning to recognize Palestinians’ rights to dignity, safety and life — an acknowledgment

that many at the event viewed as the first step toward lasting justice and rebuilding.

“I’m hoping that we will help in creating the conditions for a Palestinian state, creating the conditions for Palestinian dignity and life without genocide,” he said.

The event ended with a moment of silence, followed by a call to action: to share the stories of Palestinians.

Yalies4Palestine lost its status as a registered student organization in April after pro-Palestinian protests coinciding with a visit to New Haven by the far-right Israeli minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.

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ANAYAH ACCILLEN / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
Around 30 students gathered on the New Haven Green and listened to several student speeches at a vigil organized by Yalies4Palestine.