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# WJC Future Leadership

WJC Jewish Diplomatic Corps &  
WJC NextGen Programs

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## WJC Jewish Diplomatic Corps and WJC NextGen Programs

As the WJC works each day to protect, defend, and ensure the betterment of Jewish communities across the globe, we recognize the importance of ensuring that the future of the Jewish people is safeguarded with the training of future leadership ready to commit and confront future challenges.

The WJC Jewish Diplomatic Corps and WJC NextGen programs work in symbiosis to develop and engage the future leadership of our Jewish communities, by educating them and providing them with the resources, networks, and opportunities needed to succeed in creating a meaningful impact, both today and tomorrow



## **WJC JDCorps in the Time of COVID-19**

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the WJC JDCorps is fully committed to supporting Jewish communities across the globe, as they confront unprecedented challenges caused by this global crisis, and we have undertaken a number of virtual advocacy projects to ensure that our work continues unabated. [Click here to visit the WJC JDCorps COVID-19 webpage.](#)

### **WJC WebTalks**

When in-person meetings, conferences and programs became impossible, the WJC launched its WebTalk series, inviting prominent guests to virtual discussions across WJC topics, which were hosted and led by WJC JDCorps members. These topics have included the fight against antisemitism in Europe, Israel's battle to end the bias at the UN, the impact of COVID-19 on Jewish communities worldwide, and more. To date, over [30 WJC WebTalks have been moderated by 23 JDs from 9 countries](#), all experts in their respective fields.

## **Major Events**

### **President Lauder Hosts Strategy Session with WJC JDCorps Steering Committee**

In August 2019, President Lauder hosted the WJC JDCorps Steering Committee at his estate outside New York. The sessions focused on establishing priorities and objectives for the coming months and years, with topics including the importance of Jewish education, WJC JDCorps members' contributions to community leadership, combating antisemitism in Europe and beyond, interfaith outreach, and targeted training and recruitment of additional members.





*Photo credit: Shahar Azran*

## **Meetings between President Lauder and WJC JDCorps**

President Lauder conducted regular meetings and consultations with WJC JDCorps members throughout 2019-2021. In October 2019, President Lauder conducted two meetings with 14 members from 10 countries in conjunction with the WJC Executive Committee in Munich, where he repeated his call for the WJC JDCorps to intensify their support to the local Jewish communities. In January 2020, President Lauder met with 28 members from 20 countries in Krakow, in conjunction with the WJC's events to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, and before the COVID-19 pandemic, he conducted numerous meetings with local members during his international travels.

In April 2020, President Lauder held a consultative session over Zoom with 22 WJC JDCorps members from 15 countries to discuss the impact of the health crisis and creative solutions for continued engagement.



*Photo credit: Shahar Azran*

## **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau**

In January 2020, a WJC JDCorps delegation of 28 members from 20 countries attended the WJC commemoration events in Poland. WJC JDCorps members introduced, moderated, and led sessions at the event on the importance of the transmission of the memory of the Holocaust, Holocaust denial, and Holocaust education in order to mitigate rising antisemitism worldwide.

At the welcome dinner for Holocaust survivors and their families, organized by the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Foundation in partnership with the WJC, Gila Baumohl, WJC JDCorps member (Germany), [delivered a powerful speech and a moving tribute](#) to her great-grandmother who perished at Auschwitz.





## WJC JDCorps United Against Racism Global Conference

In November 2020, the WJC JDCorps conducted its largest online event to date: the [United Against Racism Global Conference](#), empowering and training the WJC JDCorps members on the importance of building alliances with other communities and their members to counter racism and hatred. WJC JDCorps members conducted outreach to dozens of organizations, with the objective of taking the lessons they have learned back to their communities to interact and form alliances with fellow faith and minority communities on a long-term basis.

The conference included 17 sessions that were attended by close to 500 participants with speakers representing communities worldwide. Significant speakers included President Lauder; President and CEO of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Derrick Johnson; the Grand Mufti Emeritus of Bosnia; and Azza Karam, Secretary-General of Religions for Peace International.



## **WJC JDCorps Members Leading Major WJC Events**

Members of the WJC JDCorps played leading roles as hosts, moderators, or key speakers during the major WJC events in 2019-2021 including the virtual WJC Yom HaShoah Commemorative Ceremony on Facebook (April 2020); the event to commemorate the first anniversary of the attack in Halle, Germany (October 2020); the WJC Herzl Award Gala (November 2020); and the WJC's International Holocaust Remembrance Day Virtual Commemoration Event (January 2021).

## **Diplomacy in Action**

A key activity of the WJC JDCorps is to elevate Jewish community concerns onto the diplomatic world stage, and to represent and advocate on behalf of world Jewry at international organizations such as the United Nations and its bodies.

## **Watch as WJC JDCorps Stands Up for World Jewry at the UN Human Rights Council**

Over the past 6 years, WJC JDCorps members have drafted and delivered over 90 statements at the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva, bringing much-needed attention to the Council's chronic anti-Israel bias, raising awareness of antisemitic attacks, as well as fighting for universal minority and human rights.



Between July 2019-March 2021, 13 members of the WJC JDCorps from 7 countries delivered 18 statements on behalf of the WJC at the UNHRC.

In March 2021, the WJC, represented by Marie-Sarah Seeberger, WJC JDCorps member (France), was the [first Jewish organization to participate in a UN Human Rights Council panel](#). The discussion commemorated the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and assessed the role of youth in combating racial discrimination, as well as intersecting forms of intolerance.

Watch as WJC JDCorps members urge the Council to...

- [Take action against the execution of juveniles in Iran](#)
- [End the abuse and the misapplication of international law and the wrongful condemnation of Israel](#)
- [Protect Jewish communities from violent hate groups](#)
- [Protect Christians in the Middle East](#)
- [Fight all forms of extremism, from neo-Nazi thuggery to Islamist extremism](#)
- [Condemn Hamas' human rights abuses of Palestinian women and children](#)



## MY MESSAGE TO THE UNHRC

So long as the international community continues to blame Israel indiscriminately for all of the Palestinian People's plights, the corrupt totalitarian regimes of Hamas and the PA will thrive and continue with impunity to violate the human rights of Palestinian women and children.

**GABRIEL SHOHET, WJC JEWISH DIPLOMATIC CORPS**

### **74<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly**

In September 2019, President of the WJC JDCorps Dr. Sonat Birnecker Hart (US) and members Tamara Fathi (Canada) and Ezequiel Sporn (Argentina) traveled to New York to represent the WJC during the high-level week of the UN General Assembly. They joined the WJC delegations, often led by President Lauder, in conducting 15 high-level meetings with diplomats and heads of state. Local WJC JDCorps members also represented the WJC at side-events and diplomatic meetings.



*Photo credit: Shahar Azran*

## **UN Regional Forums on Minority Issues**

The UN Forum on Minority Issues organized regional forums on "[Hate Speech, Social Media and Minorities](#)." WJC JDCorps members from five European countries submitted recommendations and delivered remarks at the European Regional. Dina Wyler, WJC JDCorps member (Switzerland), [delivered a statement on behalf of the WJC at the 13th session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues](#) urging the UN to lead the fight on an international level against online hate speech.

## **WJC JDCorps Fight to Remove Antisemitic Aalst Carnival from UNESCO Cultural Heritage List**

Members of the WJC JDCorps conducted meetings in November and December 2019 with the Permanent Delegations to UNESCO of Germany, the UK, Togo, Zambia, Cameroon, Guatemala, and Azerbaijan, to advocate for the removal of the Aalst carnival in Belgium - which featured floats with caricatures of Jews with hooked noses sitting on money bags - from the UNESCO cultural heritage list, as part of their long-term diplomatic engagement with UNESCO. On 13 December, UNESCO voted to remove the Aalst Carnival from the UNESCO cultural heritage list.





## WJC JDCorps-UAE Leadership Bridge

As [announced by President Lauder in 2020](#), the WJC JDCorps will be conducting long-term diplomatic outreach to counterparts in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), in partnership with the government and the Jewish Council of the Emirates (JCE). Members of the WJC JDCorps will be engaging in a series of working meetings with Emirati counterparts and will join with JCE leadership and other community members to support the JCE's growth and programming. Over 40 WJC JDCorps members have been selected to begin their training towards this objective.

## Supporting Our Communities

### Community Engagement

A main objective of the WJC JDCorps is to represent and strengthen Jewish communities worldwide. Working in close coordination with WJC affiliated communities, our members are engaged to assist and volunteer in support of the communities for the long-run. Currently, over 150 WJC JDCorps members

are continuously contributing towards this objective as lay leaders, board members or professional leaders within WJC affiliated communities around the world.

Members of the WJC JDCorps are presidents of the community in Belgium, Finland, and Sweden; community CEOs in Australia, Austria, Slovakia, and Switzerland; and represented as lay leaders or professional leaders of Jewish communities in 30 countries.

Please find a few highlights from the period 2019-2021:

- Diego Sonnenschein (Uruguay), who is the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President of The Central Israeli Committee of Uruguay (C.C.I.U), was elected as the treasurer of The Latin American Jewish Congress (LAJC).
- Caroline Berdugo (France) was appointed to Directors' Committee, the second most important decision-making body of CRIF, the Representative Council of Jews of France.
- In the UK, Efrat Sopher, Natasha Hausdorff, and Aaron Cohen-Gold were appointed by their respective local organizations as Deputies for the Board of Deputies of British Jews.
- Eugen Balin (Germany) was elected as Chairman of the Advisory Council of the Jewish Community in Hamburg and to the Board of Directors of the Central Council of Jews in Germany.
- Shelly Wolkowicz (Israel) was elected as treasurer of the World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS)

## **Equality and Inclusion in Leadership**

In May 2020, the WJC JDCorps launched the Equality and Inclusion in Leadership in Jewish Communities project, working to advance this issue within the WJC JDCorps, WJC, and greater Jewish world.

Members of the WJC JDCorps Alana Baranov (South Africa), Déborah Lichentin (France), and Amichai Wise (Canada) were featured speakers at the WJC's parallel event on the sidelines of the 65<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women on [The Role of Women in Faith Based Organizations](#). WJC JDCorps members also drafted a statement on empowering women in faith communities for the 65<sup>th</sup> session, which was [published to the UN Women website](#).

Ariel Rodal-Spieler, WJC JDCorps member (Israel), [delivered a speech on behalf of the WJC during a Knesset hearing](#) at the Committee for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality, which was devoted to leadership roles of Diaspora women.

## **WJC JDCorps Speakers' Bureau**

The WJC JDCorps launched its Speakers' Bureau, an initiative to showcase the skillsets of the JDs across the globe for the benefit of WJC affiliated communities, conferences, and thematic meetings. The Speakers' Bureau provides access to insightful public speakers on WJC core topics. As circumstances around the world are varied with respect to COVID-19, members have the option of attending events in person or online. [A dedicated webpage has been created to showcase this resource from the WJC](#)

[JDCorps](#) containing the initial group of speakers (and their bios) organized by topic and language. This information is also available as a [virtual booklet](#).

<h2>Alana Baranov</h2> <p><b>Presenting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No Place for Hate: Hate Crimes and Antisemitism in South Africa and Beyond</b></li> <li>• <b>Combating Racism and Antisemitism Through Interfaith Outreach – South Africa as a Case Study</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Biography</b></p> <p>Alana Baranov, originally from Zimbabwe, is a freelance writer, researcher and social justice activist based in Durban, South Africa. Formerly the first Diplomatic Liaison for the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD) national office and the Vice President of the Council of KwaZulu-Natal Jewry, Alana currently runs the Adult Education and Social Justice portfolio at the Durban Holocaust Centre.</p> <p>Alana is a founding member of the Hate Crimes Working Group, a multi-sectoral network of civil society groups that advocate for hate crimes awareness and legislation, on which she sits on the Steering Committee as the representative of the Jewish community.</p> <p>She has written for various national and international newspapers and websites, as well as broadcast media, on international affairs, African politics, and Jewish issues. Alana has an MPhil degree in Justice and Transformation from the University of Cape Town, completing her thesis on the topic "Justice and Identity: the 'non-Jewish Jew', Cosmopolitanism and the Anti-Apartheid Struggle in Twentieth Century South Africa."</p>  <p>Durban, South Africa English, Afrikaans</p>	<h2>Yohan Benizri</h2> <p><b>Presenting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Israel or the Holocaust Do Not Define Jews - What Does?</b></li> <li>• <b>Racist, Antisemitic, or Both: How Do You Defeat BDS with Legal and Advocacy Initiatives</b></li> <li>• <b>Combating Antisemitism: How We Should Educate the Class, Not the Bully</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Biography</b></p> <p>Yohan Benizri is the President of the Belgian Federation of Jewish Organizations (CCOJB). Yohan combines a demanding career as an international trade lawyer based in Brussels with a continuous Jewish engagement in a community that faces significant challenges: terror attack in the Jewish Museum in 2014, terror attacks at the airport and the metro in 2015, rising antisemitic incidents from certain parts of the Muslim community against Jews in schools, rising populism, as well as several instances of hate speech and Holocaust denials. For the past several years, he has been involved in a variety of nonprofit organizations, among which several are active in cross-cultural educational activities.</p>  <p>Brussels, Belgium English, French</p>
<h2>Yana Barinova</h2> <p><b>Presenting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Holocaust Memorials as Tools for Human Rights Education</b></li> <li>• <b>The Babyn Yar Massacre – The Pre-Meditated Murder of 33,771 Jews in Two Days During the Holocaust</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Biography</b></p> <p>Yana Barinova, born in Odessa and currently living in London and Kiev, is a public activist and a consultant at the Our Common Destiny project which is an effort to bridge the gap between Israel and the Diaspora, initiated by the Genesis Philanthropy Group and the State of Israel under the auspices of President Reuven Rivlin.</p> <p>She is the former Chief Operating Officer of the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center. Her key areas of activity are in the promotion of human rights, contributing to peace and the commemoration of the Holocaust. Yana has authored more than 100 articles on human rights, cultural policy, the policy of memory, and has delivered statements at the U.N. Human Rights Council on behalf of the World Jewish Congress.</p> <p>Currently, Yana is a PhD student at Sorbonne University and works on her doctoral thesis on the role of new media in commemorative practices. In February 2019, Kyiv mayor Vitaly Klitschko appointed her as an adviser for humanities and culture.</p>  <p>London, United Kingdom &amp; Kiev, Ukraine English, Russian, Ukrainian</p>	<h2>Caroline Berdugo</h2> <p><b>Presenting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Should French Jews fear for their future?</b></li> <li>• <b>Contemporary Antisemitism: When the Far-Left Meets the Far-Right in Their Hatred for Jews</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Biography</b></p> <p>Caroline Berdugo is a member of the Directors' Committee of the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions (CRIF), the French affiliate of the World Jewish Congress.</p> <p>Caroline is a frequent public speaker and she has delivered statements on behalf of the World Jewish Congress at the U.N. Human Rights Council on antisemitism in France and the Council's anti-bias bias. She has also led numerous training sessions on contemporary antisemitism, including for UNESCO diplomats based in Paris.</p> <p>Caroline holds a master's degree in Management from EDHEC Business School in Lille, France; and a master's degree in Management from IESE, Universidad Pontificia Comillas in Madrid, Spain.</p>  <p>Paris, France English, French</p>

## The Legacy of Jewish communities across the Middle East and North Africa

Members of the WJC JDCorps have embarked on a project to educate about the history, heritage, and plight of the Jews throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). This initiative was sparked by many of our members whose families hail from these regions. [A webpage was created which is a virtual home for the future](#), where we highlight a few of the many important Jewish figures that contributed to the region through articles and social media content.



## **November 30th has been designated as the Memorial Day to mark the departure and expulsion of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa.**

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The date follows November 29, 1947, when the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine was adopted, and Jewish communities in many countries in the region faced hostility and were forced to leave their countries.



[c] Zoltan Kluger, GPO

## **Atidenu – Jewish Community Continuity Project**

In September 2020, the WJC JDCorps launched the Atidenu project which aims to future-proof and safeguard essential Jewish community organizations and services to ensure the continuity and growth of Jewish life. WJC JDCorps members will volunteer to assist Jewish communities and community organizations faced with difficult organizational decisions, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of operations and funding, in order to protect their community's services and programs. The Atidenu project was initiated and developed by WJC JDCorps member Yohan Benizri (Belgium), the President of the Belgian Federation of Jewish Organizations (CCOJB).

## **Diplomatic Campaigns and Actions**

### **Commemoration Campaign on the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide**

Over the course of July 2020, the WJC JDCorps executed a global campaign led by members Gila Baumoebl (Germany) and Vladimir Andrlje (Bosnia and Herzegovina) bringing international attention to the 25th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, to honor the victims and prevent future genocides, and call for unity to combat all forms of racism, Islamophobia, and antisemitism.

Members conducted outreach to 14 diplomatic missions of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 12 countries to acknowledge the commemoration and to establish long-term relationships to further joint goals, resulting in WJC JDCorps representation at commemoration events worldwide. In addition, WJC JDCorps members published 8 op-eds in 8 countries and 6 languages and executed a social media campaign that reached over 500,000 people. [Click here to view the campaign summary report.](#)



We commemorate the 8,000 innocent men and boys murdered because of their ethnicity and religion.

### **Diplomatic Outreach Campaigns on Abraham Accords**

Over 50 WJC JDCorps members in 30 countries carried out global outreach campaigns to 60 diplomatic missions of Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, and the UAE to congratulate them for their normalization agreements with Israel. In anticipation of the signing of the UAE-Israel and Bahrain-Israel normalization accords, the WJC JDCorps held an exclusive webinar to discuss these historical accords and the regional implications.

### **Initiatives for Jewish Holidays**

#### **#SpreadLight: WJC JDCorps Stands with Victims of Antisemitic Attacks in the United States**

As details of the brutal antisemitic stabbing attack in Monsey, New York unfolded on 28 December 2019, members of the [WJC JDCorps took action](#) to share the reactions felt by the Jewish community and allies worldwide - expressing shock, grief, and anger at yet another violent attack on Jews.



Implementing an immediate, visible act to show unity and resolve, members all around the world lit Hanukkah candles on the eighth night of the holiday both privately and publicly across social media feeds, choosing to #SpreadLight proudly, rather than to hide in the shadows.



### High Holidays in 2020

In 2020, the WJC JDCorps brought a taste of the holidays online to lift the spirits of Jewish communities worldwide and provide inspirational content to those who may be deprived of their usual holiday experience.

For Rosh Hashanah, the WJC JDCorps gathered and [published sermons](#) from rabbis all around the world. In honor of Sukkot, WJC JDCorps members wrote personal pieces describing their family traditions and personal reflections on our [Sukkot webpage](#). And for Hanukkah, members joined together with their guests to learn together about Jewish culture and baked goods.

### **Virtual Passover Event 2021**

The WJC JDCorps [organized a Virtual Passover Event](#) in March 2021 with over 200 prominent participants from around the world including ambassadors, members of parliament; and leaders of Hindu, Christian, Islamic, and Bahá'í organizations to reflect on the importance of togetherness and share Passover traditions, inspired by the annual model seder conducted by WJC Israel.

Speakers including President Lauder, Chief Rabbi of the UAE Yehuda Sarna, and WJC JDCorps members that shared their personal perspectives, stories, traditions, and special Passover foods with their guests. They also touched on current issues facing their communities and ways for the guests to strengthen their ties with the WJC in the spirit of long-term collaboration and alliances.



# WJC NextGen

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Engaging Jewish youth to meet tomorrow's challenges.

In August 2019, the WJC made the strategic decision to consolidate all of its projects geared toward college and university students under the umbrella of [WJC on Campus](#), encompassing the Ronald S. Lauder Fellowship, the Campus Pitch Competition, and Start-Up Nation Mentorship.

After a period of dynamic growth and activity on campuses across the globe, the WJC is proud to announce the relaunch of WJC on Campus as WJC NextGen in April 2021. This program holds a comprehensive suite of projects geared toward engaging, training, and supporting Jewish young adults, on campus and beyond.

WJC NextGen is aimed towards audiences in the age range from 16 to 26 and will work toward identifying and training high-performing youth leaders on campuses and beyond, to eventually go on to join the ranks of the WJC Jewish Diplomatic Corps and undertake leadership roles within their own communities. WJC NextGen will comprise individuals who are keen and able to make a meaningful impact today, as they prepare to become the future Jewish leaders of tomorrow.

## The Ronald S. Lauder Fellowship

Campuses today are rife with anti-Israel sentiment, but students must also contend with various forms of antisemitism, Holocaust denial and distortion, anti-religionist sentiments, and more. To address Jewish student concerns also beyond engagement with Israel, the WJC launched the [Ronald S. Lauder Fellowship](#), an international network of elite Jewish student leaders working to advocate on behalf of their local Jewish student communities.

**Structure:** The Ronald S. Lauder Fellowship recruits an exclusive group of students on an annual basis from campuses across the globe who have demonstrated their dedication to creating impact within their local Jewish student community. The first two cohorts of Fellows, for 2019 and 2020, comprised of 29 hand-picked student leaders from Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States,

The Fellowship provides in-depth orientation into each of the WJC's focus areas with a three-day training seminar at the WJC administrative headquarters in New York City. The Fellowship seminar also includes workshops on networking, and team building.

Throughout the year, Fellows are tasked with developing and implementing a unique work plan specialized toward unique areas of interest in their university or local Jewish community. During their time as Fellows, students proceed with their projects with the full support and allocated resources of the WJC.



Each month, the WJC invites the Fellows to a virtual “brainstorming” session with members of staff and guest experts. Each session engages the Fellows on a new topic, provides them with fresh ideas, and allows them to collaborate in order to progress with their work plan and further engage with their network of peers.

Fellows are also provided special access to WJC events and functions. Since the Fellowship’s inception, students have attended the WJC Theodor Herzl Award Dinner and the commemoration events of the [75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz](#), among other events, and have served as delegates representing WJC at the UN ECOSOC Youth Forum, and more.

Fellows are brought to Europe at the end of their year for a high-level diplomatic trip. The cohort travels between two or three cities to meet with diplomats, Jewish community leaders, and peer organizations to engage on the issues they have dealt with throughout the year. With the COVID-19 pandemic raging in the summer of 2020, the cohort’s Europe trip was virtual, with guest speakers including EU Coordinator on Combating Antisemitism Katharina van Schnurbein and Israel’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva Aviva Raz Shechter.

**Accomplishments & Successes:** In the 18 months since its launch, our Fellows have effected tangible change in their communities as well as internationally.

Highlights:

- Adam Shapiro, as [Founder & CEO of Start-Up Nation Mentorship \(SUNM\)](#), built a universally recognized initiative to pair non-Jewish students with Israeli industry leaders and executives to learn about Israel through a career-oriented lens, rather than through news of conflict and politics.
- Aidan Golub (Harvard) spearheaded the [2021 Israel Summit](#), an international week-long conference held virtually, hosting world leaders and celebrities, to discuss Israel in a new light. The Summit welcomed thousands of students from over 100 universities worldwide.
- Elie Codron launched and now oversees the [Rimon Movement](#), re-shaping education on Israel for university students across the world.
- Elizaveta Zaidman, after just being a Fellow for 4 months, was [hired by the World Jewish Congress](#) to serve as an International Relations Officer in Geneva.
- Elliot Cina (New Zealand) launched a new chapter of the Australasian Union of Jewish Students for his community in Wellington, New Zealand.
- Gila Aberman (University of the Witwatersrand) hosted powerful virtual community events for South African students, focusing on [mental health](#) and [LGBTQ+ inclusion](#). She also ran the campaign countering Israel Apartheid Week in South Africa, [launching an online campaign](#) and [hosting an event](#), in the face of heinous levels of hate.
- Joseph Mabry (University of Texas, Austin) built a coalition, bringing together the Presidents of five different Jewish and pro-Israel organizations on his campus, to ensure collaboration in programming and unity in the face of any antisemitic incidents.



Many of our Fellows serve as high-level leaders within their local Jewish student Unions, Hillel chapters, and other Jewish bodies. Highlights include:

- Caterina Cognini (Italy) – Board Member, World Union of Jewish Students
- Gabrielle Davis (Australia) – Vice-Chairperson, Australasian Union of Jewish Students | Board Member, World Union of Jewish Students
- Kayla Ginsberg (South Africa) – Vice-Chairperson, South African Union of Jewish Students
- Dan Alpert (United States) – Student Body President, University of Maryland College Park

## Campus Pitch Competition 2020 & 2021

The [Campus Pitch Competition](#) gave students the opportunity to pitch innovative ideas for changing the discourse about Israel, Jewish culture, and antisemitism at their respective schools. Operated in partnership between the WJC and the Consulate General of Israel in New York, the initiative saw a major change ahead of the 2020 competition, with applications being opened to students worldwide. This provided the opportunity to any student, anywhere, to propose a new idea that might positively impact Jewish life and awareness on their campus.

The winner of the 2020 Campus Pitch Competition was [Stephanie Margulis of UMass Amherst](#), who created an initiative entitled The Israel Connection, which took the form of a six-foot black and white felt cube onto which students were invited to add images of Israel, from their own experiences. The cube, set up in the center of her campus, aimed to showcase that Israel contains within it both beauty and complexity, and is not – like the cube – simply black and white.

The [2021 Competition, held virtually in light of the pandemic](#), saw creative ideas submitted from around the world. With a slightly different structure to accommodate the pandemic restrictions, three winners were selected to launch their projects:

Deborah Coopersmith and Sruli Fruchter of Yeshiva University have developed a structure in which a group of ten students apply and are accepted for a session of the *Jewish Forum for Dialogue*, during which they learn how to engage in productive discourse and hold discussions and hear expert opinions on the most pressing issues facing the Jewish people and State of Israel.

Karen Shalev's project *Shattering Glass Ceilings* will include the building of a walk-through exhibit on the Worcester State University campus to showcase the amazing successes in Israel and how all types of people in the country are successful shattering their own glass ceilings.

The project of Lika Torikashvili, from Bennington College, aims to teach peacebuilding to children at an early age. The idea, *Peace in our Schools*, will create an educational system that builds sustainable understanding and dialogue between even the youngest of children to build long-lasting peace.

## **NextGen Inc.**

NextGen Inc. is a further development of Campus Pitch and a project of WJC NextGen in partnership with WUJS (World Union of Jewish Students). As Jewish students bring innovative ideas on a continuous basis, this initiative welcomes applicants year-round. Students that are accepted into this incubator are provided with the knowledge base, resources, access to software solutions, and expert networks to develop and implement their initiative on their own.

## **Growth & Expansion of Start-Up Nation Mentorship**

In 2018, Adam Shapiro – then a student at Cornell University –brought an idea to the WJC Campus Pitch competition to build a mentorship program to pair non-Jewish students with Israeli industry leaders and executives to learn about Israel through a career-oriented lens, rather than through news of conflict and politics.

After a successful first year, the WJC took on Start-Up Nation Mentorship as a project within its *WJC on Campus* program. Since then, SUNM has grown exponentially and is now active at over 20 leading universities on six continents, including Duke University (USA), Harvard University (USA), McGill University (Canada), Monash University (Australia), Oxford University (England), Princeton University (USA), Sciences Po (France), Stanford University (USA), University of Pennsylvania (USA), University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa), Yale Nus College (Singapore), Yale University (USA), The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and more.

In the 2020-2021 academic year, SUNM has paired over 100 students with Israeli mentors. The initiative has also partnered with major Israeli companies and has over 150 executives prepared to mentor these students. Companies partnered with include, but are not limited to Apple, Bombardier, Cisco, Goldman Sachs, Google, Hilton, KPMG, McKinsey, Monday.com, Visa, Wix, and more.

In addition to this work, SUNM has launched a podcast, *Start-Up Nation Voices* featuring many of their mentors and other high-level officials in Israel, discussing their stories, advice for students, and trajectories for their industries in Israel and around the world. As of April 2021, Start-Up Nation Voices has produced over 20 episodes with top executives at major Israeli companies sharing their stories and offering career advice.

## **Building Partnerships to Support a Global Jewish Student Community**

To ensure that Jewish students are supported and given the right resources, it is crucial that Jewish organizations work together, across the globe. In its efforts to develop the skills and success of these Jewish student leaders, and provide support to grow the local student community, the WJC has launched strategic partnerships with several organizations in multiple countries and regions around the world:

- European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS)
- FeJLA

- Israel on Campus Coalition
- World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS)

## **Preserving Holocaust Memory on Campus**

[For the #WeRemember campaign for the last two years, WJC has partnered with EUJS](#) to create a [toolkit that provides insight, materials, and detailed activities](#) that organizations can use to host educational and memorial events surrounding International Holocaust Remembrance Day or Yom Hashoah. [IMAGE]

## **Building a cohesive internship program**

In April 2021, the WJC launched a cohesive internship program to create a network of eager young professional interns, regardless of physical location, who work together and learn from one another, engage in the crucial work of the WJC, and garner a unique and crucial perspective on how international diplomacy and Jewish organizations thrive.

## **Finding the niche in Jewish leadership development – the launch of WJC NextGen**

It has become increasingly clear that the WJC has a unique array of opportunities to offer young Jewish leaders around the world, including training and development for them to be able to grow and succeed. Through our campus initiatives, we have helped these emerging leaders learn, understand, and create real change within their communities.

The WJC NextGen unit, launched in April 2021, will oversee each of the core initiatives that the WJC Campus Affairs Unit has engaged in over the last 18 months, specifically the Ronald S. Lauder Fellowship, the Start-Up Nation Mentorship, and NextGen Inc. It is our hope that the graduates of WJC NextGen will one day be able to join the WJC Jewish Diplomatic Corps as a crucial contributing member – and from there go on to even bigger and more impactful roles in Jewish leadership.