

Rabbi Kogan's Murder: Reminder of the Fragility of Peace in a Fractured World

The world lost a radiant light with the brutal kidnapping and murder of Rabbi Zvi Kogan, the 28-year-old Chabad emissary in Abu Dhabi. His death at the hands of those consumed by hatred is a devastating loss, not just for his family or the Chabad community, but for all who cherish faith, unity and the sanctity of life. Yet the headlines of his death—like the quiet, profound light of his life—went largely unnoticed by the world. This lack of attention is as heartbreaking as his loss, reflecting the challenge of ensuring that those who bring goodness into the world are not overshadowed by the hatred that seeks to destroy it.

Kogan's life was a reflection of the incredible mission of Chabad emissaries worldwide—selfless men and women who dedicate their lives to bringing light to even the darkest corners of the earth. These emissaries represent the values of faith, kindness and human connection, carrying the belief that no soul is beyond redemption and no bridge is too fragile to build. Kogan carried this mission to Abu Dhabi with extraordinary courage, moving to an Arab country as a proud Israeli Orthodox Jew to foster dialogue and friendship between Jews and Muslims. He believed deeply that every human being is created in the image of God, and he refused to let fear dictate his actions.

His courage was not passive; it was the kind of active bravery that understands the risks but chooses hope anyway. He lived by the conviction that dialogue, not division, is the most powerful weapon against hatred. In the face of senseless hatred, Kogan chose a path of light. He reminds us that real courage is not in avoiding danger, but in meeting it with

hope, faith and an open heart.

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But the forces that took Kogan's life sought to extinguish the light he carried. They are the same forces that have fueled antisemitism for generations—a hatred that reflects something universal, a rejection of human dignity and the sanctity of life. Antisemitism is not only an attack on Jews but a symptom of a broader sickness: a world that chooses darkness over light, fear over unity. It is a reminder that hatred is never confined; it begins with one group and spreads wherever it is left unchecked.

Kogan knew this, which is why he refused to let hatred have the final word. He believed that the answer to hatred is not despair but action, and he dedicated his life to bringing light where it was most needed. His murder was an attempt to silence that light, but it only strengthens the resolve of those who carry forward his mission. As his life teaches us, the most meaningful way to honor his memory is to continue his mission: to spread light, to build bridges and to choose love over hatred, no matter the cost.

The organization I am privileged to lead, the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (The Fellowship), shares this mission. For over 41 years, we have worked to spread light in dark places—feeding the hungry, building bomb shelters for innocent victims of war and bringing Jewish immigrants to Israel. Our more than 750,000 active Christian supporters stand shoulder to shoulder with the Jewish people, inspired by shared values and a shared belief in the sanctity of life. Together, we refuse to give in to hatred; instead, we use it as fuel to strengthen our love, our faith and our commitment to goodness.

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This partnership reflects the vision of my father, Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, who founded The Fellowship with the belief that Christians and Jews, united by their faith, could bring healing to a fractured world. When I heard of Kogan's tragic murder, my first thought was of my father and the foundation he laid. "Abba, because of the strong partnership you built between faiths, we have the sturdy foundation to fight these forces of darkness which are trying to destroy any semblance of hope and brotherhood," I thought. "We can bring light. We will win over darkness."

Kogan's murder was not only a personal tragedy but a reminder of the fragility of peace in a fractured world. His life was a reflection of the hope and courage required to walk the path of peace, even when it feels most uncertain. His murder reminds us that while the path to peace is fragile and fraught with obstacles, it is also essential. Kogan's life stands as a testament to the courage required to walk that path, knowing that darkness often fights hardest against the light.

As antisemitism and hatred grow, so does the urgency of spreading light. Kogan's legacy is not only a challenge to the Jewish people but to all people of faith and goodwill. Together, through acts of kindness and faith, we can carry forward his mission. In his memory, let us ask: How can we bring light into the darkness? How can we ensure that hatred is met not with despair but with hope? At The Fellowship, we are committed to ensuring that Kogan's light continues to shine, because as darkness grows, the only answer is to bring more light.

Kogan's story teaches us that courage is contagious, that even one life can change the world and that hatred, no matter how fierce, can never extinguish the power of faith. Together, in his memory, we vow to carry his light forward. Darkness will

not win. We will bring more light.

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Yael Eckstein is president and CEO of The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, one of the world's largest religious charitable organizations. The Jerusalem Post's 2023 Humanitarian Award recipient and a four-time honoree on its 50 Most Influential Jews list, Yael is a Chicago-area native based in Israel with her husband and their four children.