



ALICIA ALVAREZ | SPARTAN DAILY

Community members and students gather at the Tower Lawn Fountain to mourn Israeli victims during a vigil through prayer and song on Wednesday afternoon.

## Israeli deaths mourned at vigil

By Irene Adeline Milanez  
NEWS EDITOR

The Jewish Faculty and Staff Association hosted a vigil for Israeli victims on Wednesday afternoon at the Tower Lawn Fountain.

The Jewish Faculty and Staff Association represents the Jewish community's interests at San José State University according to the university's website.

More than 50 people attended the event, some holding electronic candles or the national flag of the State of Israel.

The Israeli government declared war in retaliation against Hamas, a political and militant organization currently governing the Gaza Strip, after they attacked communities in Southern Israel on Saturday, according to a Saturday AP News article.

Mitch Reitman, assistant director of Hillel of Silicon Valley and organizer of the vigil, said other campuses around the country held vigils on Saturday, the day of the attack.

Hillel of Silicon Valley is a multi-campus organization that supports Jewish students at San José State University, Santa Clara University, West Valley College, Foothill College, De Anza College and across Silicon Valley, according to its website.

Reitman said SJSU organized the vigil three days later so students, Jewish Faculty and Staff Association, Hillel and ministers could gather to participate to show their support.

"We want to involve the student groups and we need to be here to be able to access the students during the work week," Reitman said. "So that's why it hasn't happened till now."

Shaya Bernstein, a rabbi at Chabad at SJSU, said the vigil was held to honor those who have been killed, injured or missing through prayer.

Bernstein said Chabad is a space for Jewish students to celebrate Jewish holidays, festivals, to do study classes together and to engage in



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An individual leads vigil attendees through a prayer of mourning Wednesday.

other activities.

"We traditionally used to pray for those that are wounded, so just coming together to pray we believe is powerful," Bernstein said.

Bernstein said he read from the book of Psalms, a traditional religious text in Jewish and Christian literature, because it is a source of inspiration to encourage others during a time of healing.

Reitman said he was grateful to members of SJSU's administration, members of Associated Students, the police department and Mosaic Cross Cultural Center for attending to show support for the Jewish community on campus.

"We want people to feel comforted, we want people to feel safe," Reitman said. "We want them to know what resources are available to them."

Bernstein said the vigil also serves to uplift and strengthen the Jewish community, especially those connected to Israel.

"I spoke to some people who are here or actually are from Israel, and they're here all alone," Bernstein said. "That really is the power of community to realize that you're not alone and not here by yourself."

Jonathan Roth, history professor and organizer of the vigil, said the

vigil was not a rally or political statement, but a gathering to support each other, mourn their losses and pray for peace.

Reitman said the statement written by SJSU's administration sounded vague and not as supportive as he was hoping for to help support Jewish students.

"While many have strong feelings about the long history of struggle in the Middle East, no matter one's perspective, the violence and terror taking place halfway around the world reverberate here," Dawn Lee, interim chief diversity officer, stated in a Tuesday university email.

Members of Student Affairs have reached out to multiple student groups who represent affected communities, according to the same email.

"Having a vigil is not a rally, not a political statement, but to support each other, mourn our loss and pray for peace," Reitman said.

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