

My name is Natalie Sanandaji. On October 7th, I was at the Nova music festival in Israel. A lot of people will stand up and talk about what happened that day. But I didn't just study it. I didn't just watch it on a screen. I lived it.

I ran for my life for hours. I watched Hamas terrorists shoot people right in front of me. I survived, I was one of the lucky ones. But over 1,200 others who were not as lucky were slaughtered on that day.

I'm one of the few American survivors of October 7th. When I came back to the United States, I thought I'd finally feel safe. I thought I'd be able to breathe again. But I didn't feel relief. I felt tense. Like my body was still in survival mode.

Instead of being welcomed home by peace and quiet, I was met by angry crowds chanting in the streets.

Let me be clear about something. My issue has never been with people caring about innocent civilians in Gaza. Of course people should care about human life.

My issue is with people chanting for another October 7th.

On October 7th, there was no war in Gaza. There was no battlefield. There was a massacre. Hamas attacked civilians, people dancing, hiding, running, begging for their lives.

So when people chant slogans calling for that day to be repeated, they are not calling for peace. When they are chanting "glory to the martyrs" they are not mourning the men, women, teenagers, babies and senior citizens butchered, raped, burned and mutilated by Hamas on Oct 7. No, they are celebrating those who committed the atrocities that day.

You can care about Palestinians without praising Hamas.

You can want peace without celebrating the worst day for Jews since the Holocaust.

That distinction matters. And that is exactly why the IHRA definition matters.

Many of the people murdered in their homes in the kibbutzim in southern Israel were deeply left wing. They believed in coexistence. They spent their free time

driving Gazans to Israeli hospitals. They lived on the border for a reason, because they believed in peace with their neighbors.

And even after everything they went through, many of them still care about innocent people in Gaza.

They prove something very important:

Caring about Palestinians and supporting Hamas are not the same thing.

For me, as an American survivor of October 7th, watching these protests here forces me to relive that day over and over again. This is the place I called home my whole life. This was supposed to be my safe haven. But instead, it has become a place where I feel less and less safe, as a survivor, and as a Jew.

The IHRA definition gives us clarity. It protects free speech, but it also draws a line when criticism turns into incitement.

We cannot fight antisemitism if we're afraid to name it.

And we cannot build peace if we normalize calls for Jewish death.

That's why I'm here. Not as an activist reading talking points.  
But as a survivor speaking from firsthand experience.

Thank you.