

**President Herzog's special greeting to Jewish communities around the world on Israel's 76<sup>th</sup> Independence Day**

As Israel marked its 76<sup>th</sup> Independence Day under the shadow of war, and with 132 hostages still being held in captivity by Hamas in Gaza, Israel's president, Isaac Herzog sent an important message to Jewish communities around the world. He noted the importance and significance of the great unity and mutual responsibility that Israelis and Jews had shown for each other over the past weeks, and expressed his hope that Israel would go on to see the swift return of the hostages, and days of peace ahead.

**Full text of the President's greeting:**

Shalom, dear brothers and sisters around the world.

There is no question that this year, our Yom Ha'atzma'ut celebrations are different. Israel's 76<sup>th</sup> year has been marked by enormous pain and loss. Not just for Israel, but for Jewish communities throughout the world. The murder, torture, rape, and abduction of hundreds of our people by Hamas. The clear and present threats to Israel. The grief over our soldiers - our best, brightest and bravest - who fell and were injured protecting and defending. The shocking scale of the reemergence of antisemitism in so many forms throughout the world.

All of these have shaken the earth beneath our feet. But, my brothers and sisters, this is only part of the truth. We must recognize that these times of real loss have also been a time of important achievements. They have reminded us why we rose

up from tragedy and found the strength and determination to establish a beautiful and beloved national home – the miracle that is the State of Israel.

They have reminded us, also, of our core qualities, of our power as a people to stand up, again and again, against hatred. To survive and speak our truth. Of our deep and sustaining caring for one another. Of our connection to the call that we have carried across the ages: To do good, to pursue peace, *Tikum Olam* and to repair our fractured world.

My friends, we have seen our people step forward this year for one another. To offer one another protection, support, empathy, and care and love. We have shown that we truly belong to one another. And that, no matter what happens, we can tap into deep resources of caring, connection, love and belonging.

May we continue to raise our voices and fight for what matters - for the immediate release of our hostages. For our safety and our future in a thriving and secure Jewish and democratic State of Israel, and for a world of peace, harmony, and goodwill.

See you soon in Israel, in Jerusalem, Happy Independence Day, and Am Yisrael Chai.