Yom Hazikaron Ceremony, 2012, the National Institutions Compound

Rebecca Caspi, Director General, JFNA Israel, addressed those present
In attendance was the Sandler family

Friends,

Each and every year we gather here, in this courtyard, in this city. We stop our usually busy lives and, for a short time, we remember. We reflect on the thousands who have fallen, in wars and terror attacks.

Even in a year such as this, when, thankfully, there has been no major war and no significant wave of terror, new names are added to the list that is already far, far too long.

This year among a number of incidents, we saw the tragic, heart-breaking terror in Toulouse, anti-Semitic attacks in the Ukraine, missiles from Gaza and a major incident on the Egyptian border.

And then there are those that hit so close to home. Like the tragic accident on Har Herzl just this week, that saw one of our own lose her beloved daughter. Our hearts ache and our tears flow.

We, the people and organizations that operate from this building, spend our lives working for a better Jewish future. And as we promote many noble causes such as strengthening Jewish identity, closing income gaps, fighting poverty and increasing aliyah, we always have, in the back of our minds, the most basic of all our aims: To save Jewish lives and ensure Jewish survival.

Last month, I stood at the funeral of the victims of the terror attack in Toulouse and found myself thinking about the cost of Jewish education. Not the price of tuition or the longer school days, but something much more basic. I was thinking about how a father, who chose not to pursue fortune or fame, but instead to dedicate his life to teaching, lost his life because of that decision. And I thought about his wife – now a widow – who lost not only a husband, but her two beautiful sons. Aryeh was only six, and Gavriel just three. And I thought about Miriam Monsonego who got up to go to school and was brutally murdered instead. And I also thought about how, in our Jewish communities around the world, every single one of us is vulnerable.

We, at the Jewish Federations of North America, represent Jews from over 450 communities across North America and today, we too bow our heads and remember our Jewish brothers and sisters who have fallen in Israel's wars and in acts of terror.

We honor the brave soldiers of the IDF who defend this country and, by extension, the entire Jewish people. North American Jewry also owes them a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid.

Among those who have fallen in Israel's wars and in terror attacks are many North Americans, as well as Jews from elsewhere around the world. Today we embrace their families and honor their memories too.

Nobody can compare the ultimate sacrifices made by Israeli citizens that we commemorate today, but as part of the Jewish people, we weep with you, we mourn with you, and we feel the pain.

Those who fell in defense of this country, fell on behalf of the entire Jewish people. It is because of their sacrifice that we are safer and more secure. Today, we too honor their memory and bravery, and salute them and their families, who have taught us so much about service and sacrifice for our country and our people. Yehi zichram baruch.