

# Israeli & US Ambassadors Unite to Fight Against Domestic Violence & Terror at Home

New York - March 18, 2021 - Yesterday, Israel's Ambassador to the United States and United Nations Gilad Erdan and Representative of the United States of America to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield together with the Michal Sela Forum, and UJA-Federation of New York called on the world to unite and adopt the latest technologies and innovations in the fight against domestic violence.

At the event, Google.org President Jacquelline Fuller announced that the social media giant would provide a \$300,000 grant to the Michal Sela Forum to help domestic violence survivors. The Forum is an Israeli NGO named for a young woman murdered by her husband in front of her young daughter.

"Domestic violence is a despicable and horrifying phenomenon, and eliminating it from our homes and societies must be a priority for all of us," said Ambassador Erdan. "We need to fight this in the same way we fight against COVID-19 and terrorism. Terror at home is terror. We can no longer wait for a life to be ruined or taken before we act."

He continued: "If combating domestic violence was a priority for UN member states they would modify and apply existing technologies to fight against it. They would also use the wiretapping capabilities applied to preventing terrorist attacks, to prevent the next case of terror in the home. We call on all countries to adopt the necessary tools to bring an end to it."

"Stopping gender-based violence is a top priority of the Biden-Harris administration. For President Biden, this is a commitment that goes back

decades," said Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield. "It is time to bring gender-based violence out of the shadows. It is time to shine a light on it. And it is time to treat this like an emergency, with the urgency that it demands." She remarked that a week prior the WHO offered a stunning statement that 1 of 3 women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime.

Chairperson of the Michal Sela Forum Lili Ben Ami said: "I am excited to see the wall-to-wall international support for the efforts led by the Michal Sela Forum, to save the lives of women through innovation and technology. Tonight's event at the UN is the culmination of a collaboration with Ambassador Gilad Erdan, who has been involved from the beginning in standing with us at the forefront of this innovative move."

"Today, a year has passed, and behind us are dozens of startups, accelerators and more. Tonight, Wonder Woman also agreed to join us. The initiatives of the Michal Sela Forum are already cross-country, and we are on the way to the goal we have set of zero murders a year. When we finish, we will all say, 'Once upon a time there was a phenomenon of murder of women and domestic violence,' Ben Ami said.

The motivating factor behind Ben-Ami's initiative was the murder of her little sister by her sister's husband. Lili did not understand how she could not know this could happen but in half of the victims there was no physical evidence before the violence. The safety of women in the home is an issue neglected globally and all existing solutions are geared for after the violence, leaving the burden of prevention on the victim

herself. Lili called for a "#Me Too" movement to change this and the bringing of new technology used elsewhere effectively to this issue.

Actress Gal Gadot also spoke at the event making a special appeal for action that the world must unite to fight violence against women: "More than ever, this event today is so essential. It is time for a global forum like the United Nations to become involved in such an essential fight, a battle between life and death. We must share our knowledge and tools to prevent even one more woman from being a victim of abuse. Alone, we're strong. But together, we're stronger." Gadot also said that every year hundreds and thousands of women are abused or murdered by their partners in their own homes. She added, "The world has done little to address this second pandemic ... a shadow pandemic."

Jacquelline Fuller, President of Google.org, announced that Google's philanthropic arm would provide a \$300,000 grant to the Michal Sela Forum. This grant is part of a strategic collaboration between the Forum and Google and will be used to design and deliver an end-to-end tech empowerment program for survivors of all types of domestic violence.

Called "Nothing about us without us," the program will provide participants with technological and business skills and tools to enable them to create safety solutions and improve their economic livelihoods. Activities will include innovation workshops, the 2nd edition of the Michal Sela Safe@home hackathon and an accelerator program tailored to address the needs and the challenges of nascent projects aimed at

preventing domestic violence.

Eric Goldstein, CEO of UJA-Jewish Federation of New York: "We are here today under the auspices of the United Nations...because we know domestic violence is an issue that transcends all borders. As we know from our work supporting domestic violence survivors both here in New York and in Israel, this issue touches people of every nationality, ethnicity, and economic background. We're here to lay bare what is often hidden and to create a path forward for people who feel they have no way out." Eric Goldstein added that during COVID-19 women were trapped by their abusers at home with no relief and UJA-Federation was conducting local community studies to direct life saving resources to wherever it is needed.

UN Women Deputy Executive Director Asa Ragnar and EU Ambassador to the United Nations Olof Skoog, also participated in the event. Ragnar said that not only has COVID-19 accelerated intimate partner violence but 50% of women age 15-24 experienced violence from a man or boy they know during the last twelve months and online violence and harassment is at record levels for young women. Skoog said that 92 member countries of the UN including the US and Israel were working to eradicate violence against women but with 192 members 100 countries are missing in action.

The event was attended by dozens of ambassadors, senior UN officials, employees of technology companies around the world and representatives of the Jewish community. To learn more about Ben Ami's organization see her website: [michalsela.org.il](http://michalsela.org.il).



Top: (from left) *Lili Ben Ami*, Chair, the Michal Sela Forum; *Gilad Erdan*, Israel's UN Ambassador; *Linda Thomas-Greenfield*, Representative of the United States to the UN; *Ambassdor Olof Skoog*, Head of the EU Delegation to the UN. Bottom: (from left) *Hollywood's Israeli actress, Gal Gadot*; *Eric S. Goldstein*, CEO UJA-Federation of New York; *Jacquelline Fuller*, VP, Google and President of Google.com; *ASG Asa Regner*, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women.