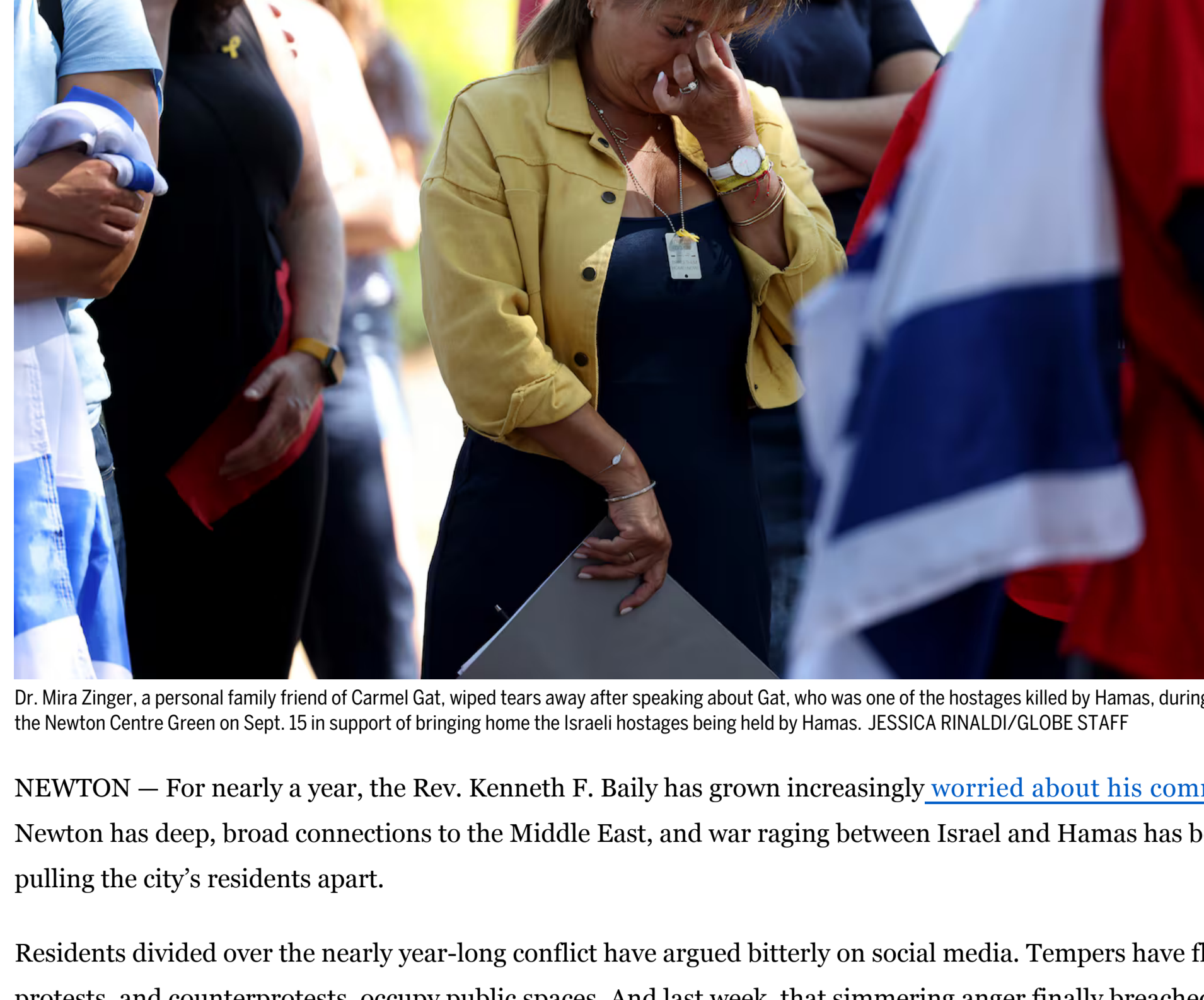


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'Widespread grief': Shooting deepens Israel-Hamas war divide in Newton

By John Hilliard Globe Staff, Updated September 16, 2024, 3:42 p.m.



Dr. Mira Zinger, a personal family friend of Carmel Gut, weeps tears away after speaking about Gut, who was one of the hostages killed by Hamas, during a rally at the Newton Centre Green on Sept. 15 in support of bringing home the Israeli hostages being held by Hamas. JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

NEWTON — For nearly a year, the Rev. Kenneth F. Baily has grown increasingly [worried about his community](#). Newton has deep, broad connections to the Middle East, and war raging between Israel and Hamas has been pulling the city's residents apart.

Residents divided over the nearly year-long conflict have argued bitterly on social media. Tempers have flared as protests, and counterprotests, occupy public spaces. And last week, that simmering anger finally breached when a pro-Israel demonstrator allegedly shot [a Palestinian supporter who had started a streetside brawl](#).

"Anger is usually a reflection of pain, and for me, and my colleagues and companions, there's just so much pain around this," said Baily, who leads both the city's interfaith organization and the Newton Highlands Congregational Church. "I perceive a widespread grief."

Victoria Danberg, who has served as a Newton city councilor for more than 20 years, said since the shooting, many constituents have shared their concerns.

"They call and say they don't feel safe," Danberg said. "The fear is escalating, as well as the emotion. I don't remember it ever being this intense."

The conflict, which began Oct. 7 with Hamas's invasion of Israel, has inflicted a deeply personal wound for many in this Boston suburb of about 89,000, where upwards of a third of its residents are Jewish, and about 1,700 are of Arab ancestry.



Protesters on the Harvard Street overpass along the Mass Pike on Sunday after gathering at the Newton Centre Green to rally for Israeli hostages still being held by Hamas. JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Adding to the complexity, all sides have been careful not to describe this as a schism between Jewish and Muslim residents since neither group is monolithic over opinions about Israel and the war in Gaza.

Palestinian supporters have blasted Israel's prosecution of the war and assailed its military strikes that kill large numbers of civilians. Israel's backers say the blame lies squarely with Hamas, as Israel defends itself.

Sana Fadel, 50, who is Muslim, is among residents who oppose the war and have called for an Israeli cease-fire. She helped organize Sawa: Newton-Area Alliance for Peace and Justice, a pro-Palestinian group that holds events in the city.

"I'm having a hard time emotionally dealing with the genocide that is being justified every single day by our highest officials," Fadel said. "That is painful and that makes it hard to function."

Sally Goldstein-Elkind, 37, who grew up in Newton and now lives in Brookline, has for months helped organize weekly pro-Israel demonstrations on Newton Centre Green.

"I got involved because it became a really scary time to be Jewish, and to show any outward support for Israel," Goldstein-Elkind said at a protest on Sunday.

That fissure deepened Thursday evening when a pro-Israel demonstrator, Scott Hayes of Framingham, shot a Palestinian supporter during a fight at the corner of Washington and Harvard streets, according to the Middlesex district attorney's office.

Authorities said Caleb Gannon of Newton got into an argument with a small group of demonstrators, including Hayes, and then ran across the street and tackled Hayes. Hayes was carrying a pistol, and shot Gannon once in the chest, authorities said.

Hayes has been charged in connection with the shooting and pleaded not guilty. Hayes has been ordered to stay out of Newton and his gun license was suspended. Gannon, who was hospitalized after suffering a life-threatening gunshot wound, is expected to face charges related to the fight, according to the district attorney's office.

Rabbi Keith Stern, who serves on the city's Human Rights Commission, said the turmoil is increasing as Jews prepare to celebrate their high holy days in the next few weeks.

"The role of a rabbi ... is to lift up their congregation, and to provide a sense of hope and joy and happiness," said Stern, senior rabbi at Temple Beth Avodah. "And on the other hand, what is the honest assessment of where we're at right now... actually, I am worried."

Jill Charney, a Jewish Newton resident who supports the Palestinian cause, said that following the shooting, the city and its local officials must prevent any escalation of violence.

"They have to quell what is going on, they need to make public statements, [they] have to take the lead in making sure that this is not tolerated," Charney said.

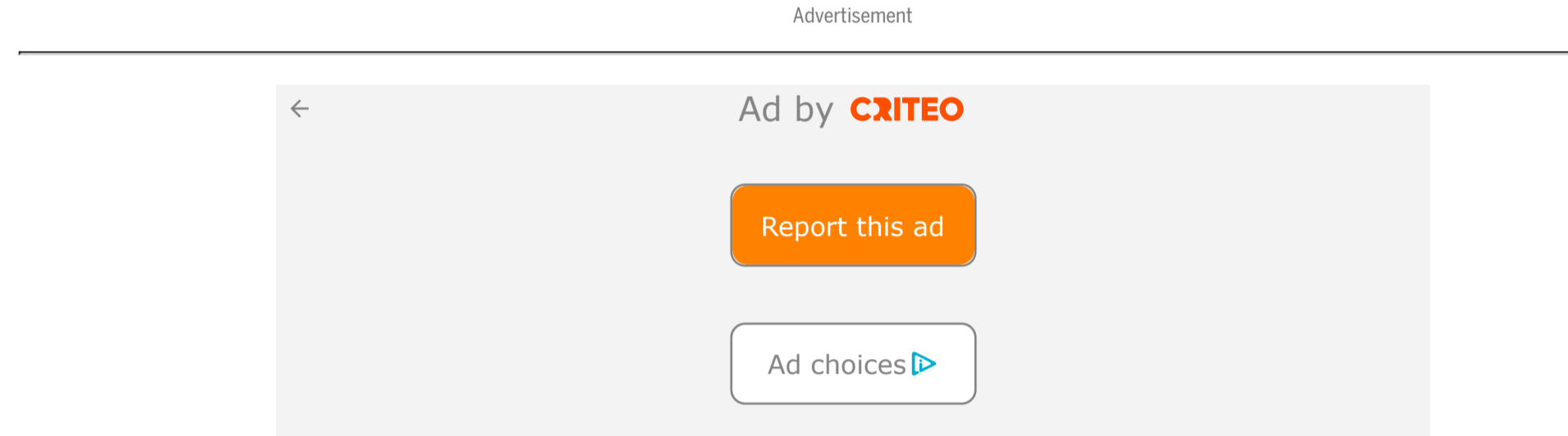
Security at Newton synagogues has been stepped up since the shooting. In the spring, Mayor Ruthanne Fuller reported an increase in the number of antisemitic and hate incidents in the city. Rocks had been thrown through the windows of two homes with signs that read "Boston Strong, Israel Strong," while other pro-Israel signs were defaced.

In May, furor erupted at Newton's public library over the display of photographs depicting people and landscapes of the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Pro-Israel demonstrators disrupted the reception for the exhibit, while Palestinian supporters shouted "rallying calls" in response, the [Newton Beacon community news site reported](#).

Local leaders including Danberg, Stern, and Baily said they want to ease tensions. David Micley, a city councilor whose ward includes the shooting scene, extended hopes and prayers to Gannon and offered support for Hayes's right to demonstrate, in a statement to constituents Friday night.

"I'm saddened that this series of events happened and continues to unfold right here in Newton. And I'm hopeful that as individuals, each of us can take the responsibility to be kinder, more caring, and more considerate of one another, and to remember that we are all neighbors," Micley said.

Stern said the city's clergy commission would be meeting Tuesday and expected they would discuss how to promote those efforts.



A Newton police officer stood watch as protesters rallied on the Harvard Street overpass along the Mass Pike in Newton on Sunday. JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

"I really do think there are enough people who feel like I do, and who are willing to erase the boundaries that serve no purpose other than to keep us [apart]," Stern said. "There's too much at stake."

"This genocide is devastating, and we are all complicit in this, with our money, with our taxes," Charney said.

Healing the divisions in Newton is possible, leaders said, but it could take years.

"One of the blessings of Newton is people talk to each other," said Baily, of the Newton Highlands Congregational Church. "There's just so much common hope and commitment [to be] together."

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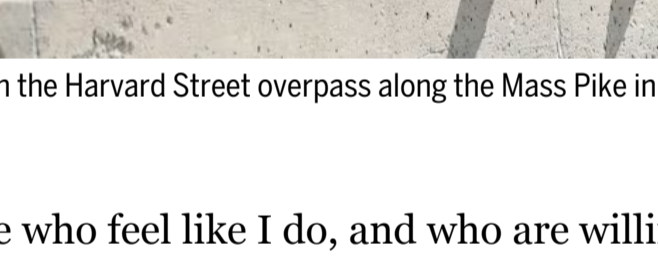
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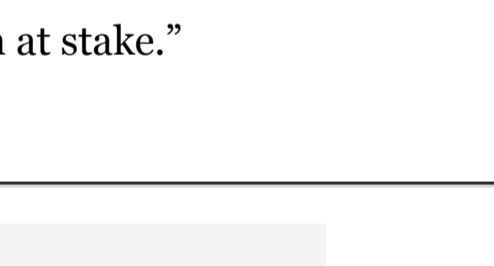
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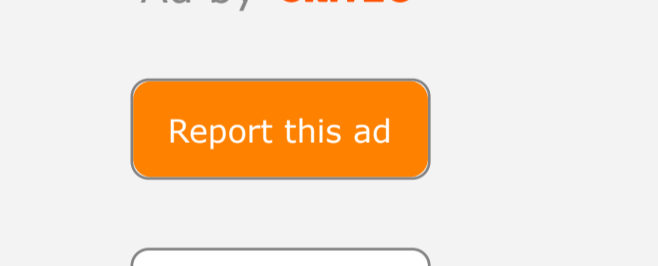
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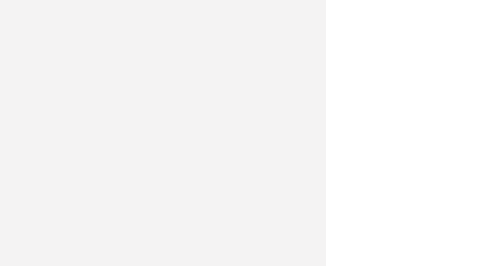
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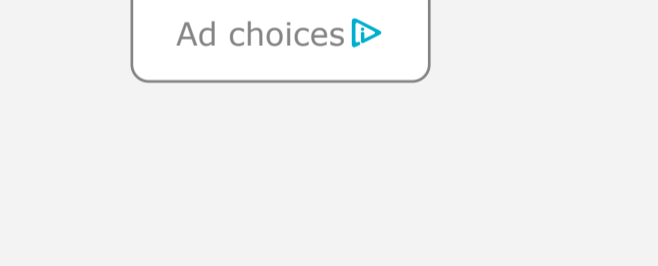
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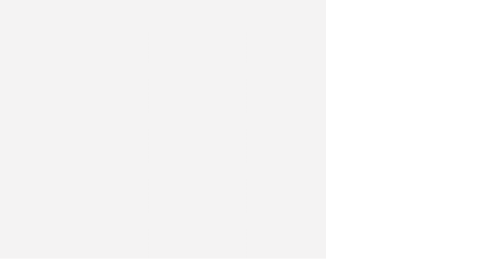
Vermont town official, his wife, and her son found shot to death in their home; no one in custody, officials say
Brian Crossman was a member of the town Select Board and served as liaison to the Buildings and Development and Town Highway departments.



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Also, why is Robert Kraft having such a difficult time getting elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame?

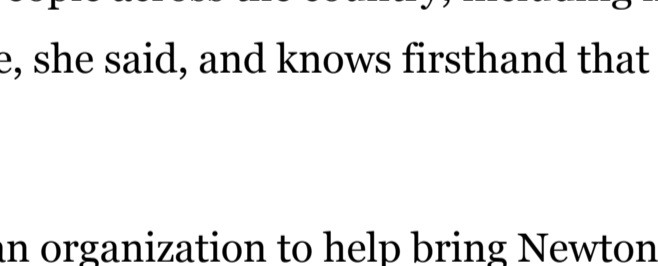


Sarah Huckabee Sanders criticized Harris for not having biological children. Some in the GOP think it's bad strategy.
"My kids keep me humble. Unfortunately, Kamala Harris doesn't have anything keeping her humble," the Arkansas governor said.

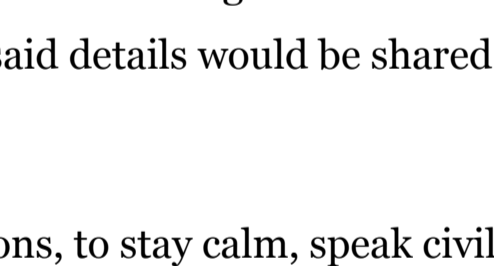


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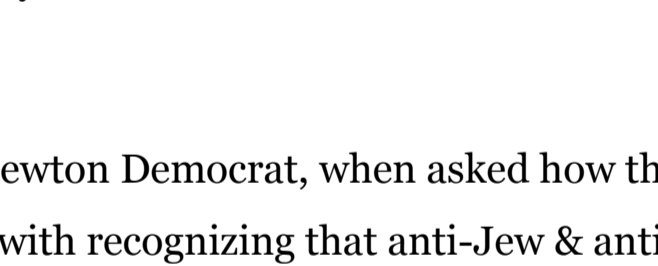
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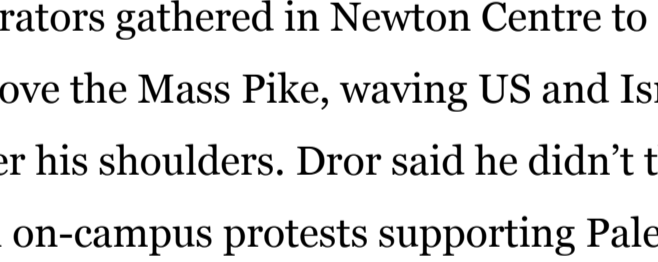
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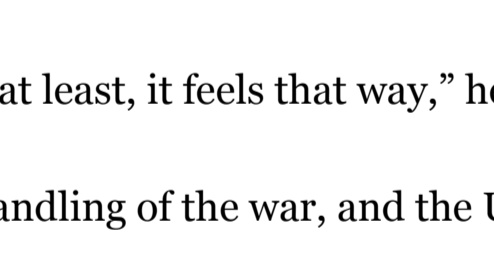
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