

# MAZON NEWS™

FALL 2024



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# LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

Dear Friends,

As the newly elected Chair of MAZON's Board of Directors, I am deeply honored and gratified to serve this organization in this leadership position and at this particular moment.

The world around us is changing quickly, presenting obstacles that test our resilience and adaptability — economic uncertainty, congressional gridlock, and geopolitical turmoil, to name a few. We live in a landscape of unpredictability, but we remain steadfast in our principles like *tzedek* (seeking justice) and *b'tselem Elohim* (respecting the inherent dignity of each person). These are values we live every day in our commitment to ensuring that policymakers at all levels of government prioritize long-term solutions to end hunger and its causes.

This clarity of purpose is a guiding light that navigates us through adversity, anchoring us as we speak truth to power and fight for what we know is right.

In the following pages, you will learn about how MAZON moved swiftly and strategically to support our partners in Israel in the wake of October 7th. You will read about how we are navigating complex and distressing politics in our continued push for a Farm Bill that reflects our values. You will be inspired, as I am, by the impact we are having on college campuses through Challah for Hunger. And you will see photos from our beautiful gala in Washington, D.C., Hunger Bites, where we honored the incredible leadership of several organizations and individuals, including my very own Senator Debbie Stabenow of Michigan.

In the coming months, we will start to commemorate MAZON's 40th year — four decades of fortifying the federal nutrition programs that help people put food on the table. Four decades of seeding, supporting, and strengthening the anti-hunger movement. Four decades of asking difficult questions and never settling for the status quo. Four decades of partnering with Jewish communities and congregations to build support for, awareness about, and consensus around anti-hunger advocacy efforts. Four decades of pursuing our mission with *kavanah*, clarity of purpose: ending hunger among people of all faiths and backgrounds.

Upon founding MAZON, Leonard "Leibel" Fein (z"l) wrote:

*God asks, always, "Where are you?" But the question is not in the wind and not in the earthquake and not in the fire; it is in the still small voice. The claims of justice do not thunder; they whisper, and will not be heard above the bedlam. Here and there, from the pulpit and the polling booth, there will be an answering "Here I am."*

I could not be prouder, nor more grateful, to be here, using my voice in the fight to end hunger alongside you. Thank you for your support and partnership.



With gratitude,

*Carolyn Tisdale*

**Carolyn Tisdale**  
MAZON BOARD CHAIR

# Crisis and Community in Israel

Hunger in Israel skyrocketed to **30.9%** of Israel's adult population after October 7th

address the roots of the crisis. It is on those essential foundations, built and strengthened over three decades by the MAZON community, that we have relied heavily in this last heartbreaking year.

## Responding with Urgency

In the first weeks following October 7, bolstered by MAZON's decades-long investments, the Israeli nonprofit sector quickly rose to meet emergency food needs throughout the country, but especially in the deeply impacted south. MAZON distributed \$200,000 in emergency grants to partner organizations serving the needs of two particularly vulnerable populations: Bedouins in unrecognized villages and asylum seekers.

## High Levels of Food Insecurity Persist

Following October 7 and the subsequent monumental strains on the Israeli economy, hunger in Israel skyrocketed to 30.9% of Israel's adult population. Of that, a staggering 62.7% of Israel's non-Jewish population is struggling with hunger.

For 30 years, MAZON has been building a path toward food security for Israelis of all faiths and backgrounds. When our work began, despite significant hunger across the country, there was neither a meaningful system of emergency, charitable aid to address hunger nor the necessary responsive, governmental policy needed to



## Moving Forward

MAZON and our partners, including our civil society partners from the last 30 years, continue to hold Israel's leaders accountable for ensuring that everyone in Israel can keep food on their tables. Amid crisis and continued instability, everyone should have at least the security of full plates for their children, their families, and themselves. We have identified new strategies for our work in Israel:

### ▪ Shift Advocacy Targets at National and Local Levels:

We will pivot more of our advocacy efforts away from the Knesset towards government ministries and career employees, where we still can have incremental impact on national food policies. We will also start focusing more on municipalities and regional councils to change locally what has been difficult to shift nationally. For example, with support of local councils, one of MAZON's partners is developing a pilot project to increase marginalized populations' access to healthy produce in cooperation with municipalities.

### ▪ Link Food Security, Health, and Agriculture:

With the collapse of farms and kibbutzim in both the south and the north, costs of living have skyrocketed, and farmers receive little to no support from the government. As such, many of MAZON's partners are turning their attention to drivers of hunger in the agricultural sector. One partner is working with the Ministry of Agriculture to compensate farmers for the produce they donate and fund logistics costs incurred by organizations during the food rescue and gleaning process.

As MAZON has done for decades in the U.S. and Israel, we will continue working to end hunger and ensure that all people can feed themselves with the dignity, freedom, and safety they deserve.

# NAVIGATING THE NEXT FARM BILL

The Farm Bill is one of the most transformational pieces of legislation regularly reauthorized by the U.S. Congress. Typically renewed every five years, it sets policy for programs like SNAP that serve tens of millions of Americans every day.

In May, the House and Senate introduced two starkly different visions for the next Farm Bill. House Agriculture Committee Chairman Glenn Thompson's bill proposes harmful changes to nutrition programs that would result in a \$30 billion cut to SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs over the next ten years. Meanwhile, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow's proposal protects and strengthens SNAP while also advancing several important provisions to help military families, support Tribal food sovereignty, and promote equity for the people of Puerto Rico.

With over 44 million Americans facing food insecurity, MAZON and our partners have been clear that the next Farm Bill must defend safety net programs if we hope to reverse the course of hunger in this country. Congress must approach the Farm Bill reauthorization process by exploring effective policy solutions and acting with compassion and humanity toward those in need of assistance.

**"When we talk about the Farm Bill, we are talking about the foundation of how we support every aspect of food — its production, the distribution of it, and making sure everyone gets enough of it."**

- Congressman Jim McGovern, Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee and Co-Chair of the Bipartisan House Hunger Caucus at MAZON's Hunger Bites Gala, May 2024

**While the fate of the next Farm Bill is unclear, it is crucial to keep the facts in mind:**



**MORE THAN 12%**

of Americans — 44 million people, including more than 13 million children — are food insecure



Every \$1 in SNAP benefits generates more than

**\$1.50**

in economic activity that helps create jobs and boost local businesses



The average SNAP recipient receives just

**\$2.03** per meal



Food insecurity rates are nearly double among Black, Latino, and Native American households

In addition to authorizing SNAP and other federal nutrition programs, the Farm Bill presents an opportunity to advance long-overdue policy solutions to help populations that face unique food security challenges. These include currently serving military families, veterans, Indigenous communities, college students, the people of Puerto Rico and the territories, single mothers, and LGBTQ+ older adults.

**MAZON believes that the next Farm Bill must:**

- Protect and strengthen SNAP
- Allow federal nutrition benefits to keep pace with the cost of a healthy, realistic diet
- Promote food security among currently serving military families
- Empower Tribal food sovereignty and address food insecurity in Indian country
- Improve equity and food security for the people of Puerto Rico
- Address food insecurity among veterans
- Remove barriers to SNAP for single mothers and college students
- Improve nutrition support for LGBTQ+ seniors



NEARLY

**25%**

of Indigenous communities are food insecure



ONLY **14%**

of food insecure military families report getting assistance from federal programs like SNAP or private charities like food pantries



ABOUT

**1.5 MILLION**

Puerto Ricans receive food assistance from the Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) block grant every month — nearly half of the island's total population



Households that include a veteran with a disability are nearly twice as likely to struggle with food insecurity

The current Farm Bill is set to expire on September 30, 2024. As of this writing, neither the House nor Senate has passed its version of the bill, and the two parties are not negotiating with each other.

**Please join MAZON as we urge Congress to act swiftly to ensure struggling families and individuals can access critical nutrition benefits. Scan here for more about our policy priorities and the latest updates about the Farm Bill.**



# HUNGER BITES

## RECAP



On May 21, MAZON's Hunger Bites gala brought advocates and supporters together in Washington, D.C. to honor leaders dedicated to ending hunger and ensuring dignity for all who struggle with food insecurity.

At the event, MAZON's leadership presented the Justice Award for Advancing the Response to Hunger to three individuals and one institution

— **Senator Debbie Stabenow**, Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee; **Congressman Jim McGovern**; **Josh Protas**, MAZON's former Vice President of Public Policy who recently became Chief Advocacy and Policy Officer at Meals on Wheels America; and **CEO Action for Racial Equity**, which brings together top talent and resources to advance public policies and corporate engagement strategies that address systemic racism and social injustice. These honorees have made significant contributions to advancing anti-hunger policies and supporting vulnerable communities. Renowned cookbook author **Joan Nathan** also joined the celebration, donating signed copies of her new memoir, *My Life in Recipes*.



# CHALLAH FOR HUNGER™

A project of MAZON



This summer marks the end of MAZON's first year of stewarding Challah for Hunger. Through this program, we supported 38 active chapters on college campuses nationwide, where students raised over \$65,000 to support anti-hunger work in their communities and around the U.S.

## Here's what our students are saying:



"We raised a substantial amount to help Indigenous homeless women and feel great about it."

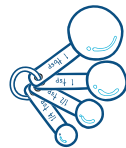
"We bridge the gap between Jews and non-Jews by uniting people through bread."



"We have showcased the impact that we can have on campus."

"I loved my time with Challah for Hunger and it probably had the largest impact on my college career out of any campus organization."

"We were able to volunteer in person. Building that relationship has been amazing."



"We were able to spread Jewish joy."

"I hope that you can support the group for years to come."



## Support MAZON now *and* in the future

If you notify MAZON about your intention to leave a legacy gift by the end of 2024, the Gene and Marlene Epstein Humanitarian Fund will generously donate \$1,000\* to MAZON's important work right now in celebration of your long-term support.

We envision a world where no one goes hungry, and your legacy gift empowers us to pursue this vision with renewed vigor and hope.

Visit [mazon.org/give/planned-giving](https://mazon.org/give/planned-giving) to make your gift.

\*Up to \$10,000



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[mazon.org](http://mazon.org)

### BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR!

Invest in the fight to end hunger. Please call us at  
(800) 813-0557 or visit [mazon.org](http://mazon.org) to join our  
monthly giving program today!

### LEGACY GIVING AND GIFT PLANNING

Find out about giving through your will, life-income  
gifts, or other creative ways to support MAZON.  
Please contact Yael Rosen at [yrosen@mazon.org](mailto:yrosen@mazon.org)  
or by phone at (424) 208-7238.

### WHO IS MAZON?

Inspired by Jewish values and ideals,  
MAZON is a national advocacy  
organization working to end hunger among  
people of all faiths and backgrounds  
in the United States and Israel.

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