

## THE WEEKLY PRINT

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AUGUST 1, 2025

## Judge Jeanine prioritizes fighting antisemitism in her new role as U.S. attorney

*Judge Jeanine prioritizes fighting antisemitism in her new role as U.S. attorney*

By Emily Jacobs, Marc Rod, Josh Kraushaar

When interim U.S. Attorney for D.C. Jeanine Pirro began her tenure as Westchester County, N.Y. district attorney on New Years Day in 1994, she walked into her new office to discover a backlog of antisemitism-related cases left behind by her predecessor.

"One had to do with a swastika cut into the grass at Winged Foot Golf Club. I don't know if you know Winged Foot, but it's the creme de la creme of golf courses," she remarked during an interview with *Jewish Insider* at her D.C. office on Tuesday.

Pirro said learning of the scope of antisemitism in Westchester County, which has long been home to a sizable Jewish population, opened her eyes to "the trauma and the revictimization" of the Jewish people and prompted her to get involved with efforts to promote Holocaust education through the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

"It's almost like this thing that follows me," Pirro said of prosecuting anti-Jewish hate crimes, calling it "so telling" that the fatal shooting of two Israeli Embassy staffers

in Washington — by a 31-year-old suspect who witnesses said shouted "free Palestine" and "I did it for Gaza" — took place during her first week in her current role.

"My introduction here was just stunning, and it kind of brought me back to where I started, as a local DA, right off the bat with antisemitism," she said of her initial days as U.S. attorney for the nation's capital.

President Donald Trump appointed Pirro, known colloquially as Judge Jeanine from her 11 years hosting "Justice with Judge Jeanine" on Fox News' weekend lineup, to serve as Washington's chief federal law enforcement officer in an acting capacity in mid-May. He formally nominated her for a full term in the position a month later.

The Senate Judiciary Committee voted along party lines last week to advance Pirro's nomination, and she's expected to come before the full Senate in the fall, when the chamber returns from its August recess.

Pirro emerged as one of Trump's most vocal defenders on the network, and is a personal friend of the president. She

aggressively disputed allegations at the start of his first term of collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia to swing the 2016 election in the president's favor. Her repeated on-air claims that Democrats had rigged the 2020 election for former President Joe Biden in the aftermath of Trump's defeat was referenced several times in Dominion Voting Systems' lawsuit against the network, which Fox ultimately settled for \$787.5 million in 2023.

She had been co-hosting Fox's "The Five," one of the network's top rated programs, in New York in early May when she agreed to join the Trump administration. The decision came after Ed Martin's nomination to the U.S. attorney role was pulled over collapsing support among Senate Republicans due to his lack of experience as a prosecutor, ties to alleged Nazi sympathizers and defense of rioters who stormed the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Within weeks, Pirro found herself speaking to the nation about the murder of two Israeli Embassy staffers, one of

the highest profile antisemitic crimes in the nation's capital — amid growing antisemitism taking place across the country.

"What I want to be clear about today, since this is the first time you are hearing from me, is that this is a horrific crime. And these crimes are not going to be tolerated by me and by this office. A young couple at the beginning of their life's journey, about to be engaged in another country, had their bodies removed in the cold of the night, in a foreign city, in a body bag," Pirro said at a press conference the morning after the May 21 slayings of Sarah Milgrim and Yaron Lischinsky.

"I am not unaware, based upon my own background, of the repercussions of this kind of case. This is the kind of case that picks at old sores and old scars, because these kinds of cases remind us of what has happened in the past that we can never and must never forget," she continued.

In addition to prosecuting the alleged assailant, Elias Rodriguez, Pirro has been doing outreach to Jewish groups to find ways to offer her office's resources and "highlight that I'm here. Call me."

She recently connected with the family of Malki Roth, the 15-year-old Israeli American killed in a 2001 suicide bombing at a Sbarro restaurant in Israel, who informed her that they had never heard from anyone at her senior level in the Justice Department about their daughter's death.

"I said to myself: I ain't high up, but it's sad they lost a daughter and they didn't get the attention that they needed. They will get that attention now, and I am determined to do whatever I can," Pirro said.

As part of that commitment, Pirro said she's "working on" securing the extradition from Jordan of Ahlam Tamimi, a Palestinian terrorist convicted by an Israeli court for her role in the bombing, to the U.S. in order to face federal charges for the attack, which Roth's parents have been advocating for since their daughter's death.

Tamimi was released from Israel to Jordan as part of a 2011 deal. Jordan has repeatedly refused U.S. extradition requests for Tamimi since the DOJ indictment against her became public in 2017.

Pirro noted that Tamimi has expressed no remorse for her actions and is living a life

of fame and freedom in Jordan, where she became well known for hosting a program on a Hamas-affiliated television network for years. "That hate has always been so incomprehensible to me, and that's why this has always been a mission. Now I'm back at my roots, and I continue with the mission," she said.

**"I don't want to look in anymore. I want to look out," Pirro said. "I want the people on the outside to know that there's someone on the inside that they have access to, that they can speak with, that they can go back into the community and say, 'She's taking a strong stand. She's going to prosecute these cases. She feels strongly about them, and if you're not sure, go talk to her.'"**

Pirro said that the office's national security division is also pursuing three active cases "in the Arab world."

Asked about what tools she could utilize as U.S. attorney in the broader fight against antisemitism, Pirro said that she and her team were reaching out to Jewish organizations to encourage community leaders to contact their office directly on local matters where they could be of assistance.

She argued that her emphasis on direct community outreach, rather than solely engaging with "other federal agencies that talk to each other all day long," marked a shift in approach.

"They're acronyms," she said of those agencies. "I don't want to look in anymore. I want to look out," Pirro said. "I want the people on the outside to know that there's someone on the inside that they have access to, that they can speak with, that they can go back into the community and say, 'She's taking a strong stand. She's going to prosecute these cases. She feels strongly about them, and if you're not sure, go talk to her.'"

Since taking over the role, Pirro has been connecting with D.C. leaders and other relevant stakeholders involved in efforts to address crime, domestic violence and antisemitism.

Pirro said she needed to tread carefully, in light of her ongoing confirmation

proceedings, on the subject of Zohran Mamdani's victory in the Democratic mayoral primary in New York. She argued that his plans would be "a disaster for business, a disaster for crime victims ... a disaster for quality of life in New York."

She argued that cutting the New York Police Department or trying to replace them with social services and mental health workers, as Mamdani has advocated for, would send the city in the wrong direction and make it more difficult to build business and community.

"When you see other Democrats joining, you say to yourself, it's about power," Pirro said. "And that's why we've got Donald Trump in, because people heard him loud and clear — they want to be safe, and if they're safe, then they can think about, you know, having a business, you know, making sure that maybe one day they can take a vacation, and, you know, their families can survive."

Democrats, highlighting that Pirro is a longtime friend and ally of the president, have argued that she can't be trusted to uphold the rule of law or the Constitution when they conflict with Trump's agenda and desires.

Pirro said she's had a positive working relationship with Washington, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser, and that she intends to work with city officials regardless of political differences. Still, she criticized the D.C. City Council for its approach to criminal justice issues.

"My relationship with Muriel Bowser is good. I want to work with her. That's the only way to make the city safe again. I think that the chief of police, Pamela Smith, is great. The mayor has a similar agenda. I think the mayor believes that D.C. needs to be safe," Pirro explained. "I think we've got a city council that's out of control, that is so defense oriented. They're totally tolerant of criminals."

While Pirro said that securing convictions in the Democratic stronghold was a tall task, she said she was undeterred.

**"We are in the center of the nation where laws are passed on a regular basis, and yet the enforcement of those laws is a very difficult thing to push in some areas," Pirro said. "I mean, in the**

**end, if we don't have the determination and if we don't have the will, then nothing happens, because there is a system that is geared toward the defendant."**

"I'm not going to worry about whether or not they're liberal judges. I'm not going to worry about whether or not you know, juries in Washington are very defense oriented, and my staff won't either," Pirro said. "They know that it's a hard fight in the district, but that's our job, and you know what? That's why I'm here. It's a challenge, and it's worth it."

Pressed about the slow response by municipalities like D.C. to anti-Israel protest encampments on university campuses, and if the decision by city leaders to act in some cases but not in others was an indication that changes could be made in the nation's capital, Pirro concurred.

"All law is a matter of will, it's all about

enforcement," Pirro said, adding that a longtime concern for her has been a lack of consideration for and rights of crime victims in the justice system.

"We are in the center of the nation where laws are passed on a regular basis, and yet the enforcement of those laws is a very difficult thing to push in some areas," Pirro said. "I mean, in the end, if we don't have the determination and if we don't have the will, then nothing happens, because there is a system that is geared toward the defendant."

Pirro said that the D.C. attorney's office is "neglected" and understaffed — relying on contractors — and in need of additional full-time staff and resources.

"I want more people, and I will get more people," Pirro said. "I'm hiring people who want to fight the good fight and [are] competent."

Trump, a longtime ally, has been "very gracious" in allowing her to hire more staff,

Pirro said. She said she'd also spoken to senators about the resource crunch and they've been "very receptive, very interested in making D.C. safe." She described the recent shooting of a congressional intern in the district as helping to motivate concern and interest from lawmakers.

Despite the lack of staff, Pirro lavished praise on the prosecutors in her office.

"What I'm most proud of in this office is the level of prosecutors and the level of talent. These are serious, well prepared, competent, aggressive prosecutors who are in a city that is not necessarily victim oriented. So we fight the good fight every day here. We fight it on behalf of many, many different segments of the community, whether it's seniors, whether it's just innocent victims, whether it's people of the Jewish faith, whether it's antisemitism, hate crimes of any type," she said. ♦

JULY 31, 2025

## Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO's leading Jewish lady

*A former French culture minister, Azoulay is the first Jewish leader of the controversial U.N. agency*

By Gabby Deutch

When Audrey Azoulay was elected director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in 2017, many U.N. watchers — including some of its staunchest critics — were pleasantly surprised that UNESCO's members had selected a Jew to lead the organization for the first time since it was founded in 1946.

The timing of Azoulay's come-from-behind two-vote victory over a Qatari competitor came with a tinge of irony: Just one day earlier, the United States and Israel had each announced their intention to withdraw from the body, citing its persistent anti-Israel slant and "extreme politicization."

The organization tasked with preserving

cultural heritage sites around the world has for decades faced accusations of political bias. President Ronald Reagan first pulled the U.S. out of the body in 1984 over allegations of anti-Western, pro-Soviet sentiment.

When UNESCO became the first U.N. body to vote to admit the "State of Palestine" as a full voting member in 2011, the U.S. cut funding to the organization. In 2016, UNESCO passed a controversial resolution about the Temple Mount in Jerusalem that ignored Jewish ties to the holy site. A year later, Israel and the U.S. cut ties entirely.

All of that was before Azoulay took the helm of UNESCO. Now her leadership is in the spotlight, after the Trump

administration said last week that it would again depart the body, following President Joe Biden's decision to reenter UNESCO in 2023. "UNESCO works to advance divisive social and cultural causes," State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said this month, arguing that the organization perpetuates "a globalist ideological agenda for international development at odds with our America First foreign policy."

But Azoulay, a former French culture minister who comes from an illustrious Moroccan Jewish family, said in a statement last week that "the situation has changed profoundly" since the U.S. departed UNESCO in 2018. "These claims also contradict the reality of UNESCO's efforts, particularly in

the field of Holocaust education and the fight against antisemitism,” she said. UNESCO declined to make Azoulay available for an interview, but a spokesperson noted that “the level of tension” within the body on Middle East issues “has been reduced, which is a unique situation in the U.N. system today.”

Her lobbying is unlikely to impact the Trump administration. But even without the U.S. as a member, UNESCO remains an important global organization with lofty goals: “to create solutions to some of the greatest challenges of our time, and foster a world of greater equality and peace.” Azoulay has bought into that mission, with the added challenge of trying to make the organization less politically toxic in a polarized world.

“She really came into office intent on changing UNESCO’s public image and internal work,” Deborah Lipstadt, the former U.S. special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism, told *Jewish Insider* this week. She has worked with Azoulay on antisemitism-related programming since 2018. “I think she recognized the flaws that had been prevalent before, and I think she was really trying to turn things around, and she deserves great credit for that.”

Azoulay grew up in France, but her family hails from Essaouira, a seaside Moroccan city that was once majority Jewish, though she rarely speaks about her family’s story. Her father, André Azoulay, spent the first two decades of his career climbing the ranks at Paribas Bank in Paris, before he returned to Morocco in 1990 to serve as an advisor to King Hassan II. Now, he is a senior advisor to King Mohammed VI, and his influence is rumored to be expansive.

**“She is a really remarkable person, to have come from this Moroccan Jewish background, to become so French that she’s a minister in the French government, and then to achieve this position in UNESCO,” said Jason Guberman, executive director of the American Sephardi Federation. Whatever people want to say about UNESCO, I think you have to judge her by what she has done.”**

“Azoulay is the kingdom’s all-purpose fixer, a man who gets stuff done thanks to an endless list of high-profile contacts who wouldn’t dare to ignore his calls,” *Tablet Magazine* wrote in a 2018 profile of the elder Azoulay.

When he inaugurated a structure called Beit Dakira — “House of Memory” — in Essaouira in 2020, to preserve the city’s Jewish heritage, his daughter attended the event on behalf of UNESCO. She has worked in several French government agencies, and before being named culture minister in 2016, Azoulay was an advisor to French President Francois Hollande.

“She is a really remarkable person, to have come from this Moroccan Jewish background, to become so French that she’s a minister in the French government, and then to achieve this position in UNESCO,” said Jason Guberman, executive director of the American Sephardi Federation, who spoke at the Essaouira event in 2020. He worked with Azoulay on a 2021 World Philosophy Event celebrating Muslim and Jewish poetry. “Whatever people want to say about UNESCO, I think you have to judge her by what she has done,” said Guberman.

UNESCO has worked closely with the World Jewish Congress in recent years, particularly on programming related to Holocaust education. Its president, Ronald Lauder, wrote in a 2018 op-ed that UNESCO’s history of dozens of resolutions condemning Israel “makes a mockery of the U.N.” Azoulay, he wrote, has been able to move the organization forward — to a point.

**“She was able to accomplish some things diplomatically with Israel that hadn’t been done before. She got the president to come to Holocaust Remembrance Day, and that was the first time that ever happened,” said David Killion, who served as U.S. ambassador to UNESCO in the Obama administration.**

“Audrey Azoulay, the new head of UNESCO, is making great strides correcting this and we applaud her for what she’s doing. But after decades of bad behavior at UNESCO, its reputation cannot be cleansed overnight. Especially when this virus of

antisemitism still runs throughout the entire body of the U.N.,” Lauder wrote.

Azoulay reportedly urged Israel not to exit the organization in 2018, arguing at the time that UNESCO had made progress in fighting bias. Israel still left. But she pulled off a strategic victory in 2022.

“She was able to accomplish some things diplomatically with Israel that hadn’t been done before. She got the president to come to Holocaust Remembrance Day, and that was the first time that ever happened,” said David Killion, who served as U.S. ambassador to UNESCO in the Obama administration.

In Israeli President Isaac Herzog’s virtual remarks at a UNESCO Holocaust remembrance event in 2022, he directly praised Azoulay. They were unexpected words from a country that had previously offered sharp criticism of the organization.

“UNESCO has the tools with which to inform the younger generation about what happened and teach them what must never be allowed to happen again,” Herzog said. “I wish to recognize UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay for her strong leadership.”

Azoulay said in a speech soon after the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas terror attacks that UNESCO “was born out of the ashes of the Holocaust and the Second World War,” which is why, she said, fighting Holocaust denial remains a key priority of the organization.

That work has been done in partnership with the World Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and, for a period, the Biden administration. Former Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff met with Azoulay at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris last year and pledged that the U.S. would contribute \$2.2 million to a UNESCO program to teach about the Holocaust and genocide.

But the agency’s commitment to fighting antisemitism has been tested since Oct. 7.

Speaking to a global gathering of antisemitism special envoys two weeks after the attacks, Azoulay said the Hamas terrorists operated “in the same modus operandi as the pogroms.” After the “massacres” that day, Azoulay added, “We have seen a new wave of antisemitism, regrettably with all the hallmarks of our time.”



Since then, though, UNESCO has mostly directed its ire at Israel's actions in Gaza. Critics have noted, for instance, that UNESCO has warned of damage to cultural heritage sites in Gaza and Lebanon, while not expressing the same degree of concern about sites in Israel. At a recent meeting of UNESCO's executive board, the agency

voted to approve several measures calling out Israel's actions in Gaza, the West Bank and the Golan Heights.

"That kind of stuff remains, and it's really bigger than her, because I think that's the point with any U.N. [agency]. The system is so geared against Israel," said Anne Herzberg, legal advisor at NGO Monitor, a

research institute that is critical of the U.N. system. "I do think she's well-intentioned, and I do think she has made efforts to try to depoliticize the agency. I don't want to cast aspersions on her at all, but I do think the problem is, you're operating in a system that's almost impossible to change." ♦

JULY 31, 2025

## Turning mourning into action to address a modern tragedy, Jewish Earth Alliance holds pre-Tisha B'Av environmental lobbying day

*395 volunteers met with 51 lawmakers or their representatives in 26 states last week, pushing for greater legislative efforts to address climate change*

By Jay Deitcher

*The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.*

Jews have survived many tragedies. Temples destroyed; revolts quelled; expulsion, expulsion, Holocaust. This Saturday night, on Tisha B'Av, the ninth of Av, Jews around the world fast in recognition of these horrors.

Now, environmental activists want to add global warming to the list.

Last Wednesday, in a pre-Tisha B'Av virtual lobbying day, the volunteer-run Jewish Earth Alliance partnered with 57 Jewish synagogues and nonprofits to commend lawmakers for positive moves for the environment while calling on them to do more. Across 26 states, 395 volunteers met with 51 lawmakers or their representatives, turning the holiday of mourning into a day of action.

Founded in 2019, the Jewish Earth Alliance is a Washington-based environmental advocacy group. In its early years, the group held monthly education and advocacy meetings with experts, but in 2022, Jewish Earth Alliance's co-founder, Rabbi Deborah Lynn, "bemoaned" to her friend, Rabbi Melanie Aron, that "because of COVID, they could no longer go into congressional offices," Aron told

*eJewishPhilanthropy.*

"Previously, they had collected letters from all around the country and hand-delivered them. I said, 'Well, you know, you could do virtual meetings,'" Aron, a former California-based Reform rabbi who moved to Washington in 2022, said.

Since 2023, the Jewish Earth Alliance has held two annual virtual lobby days, on Tu B'Shvat, which fell this year in early February, and on Tisha B'Av. After the current Trump administration slashed funding and programs protecting the environment, volunteers attended this year's events in droves, leading to a record turnout for the Tisha B'Av lobbying. The efforts are co-sponsored by Adamah, Aleph: Alliance for Jewish Renewal, Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, Women of Reform Judaism and others.

"If the Earth Alliance asks me to do something, I try to say 'yes,'" Rondi Brower, the co-lead of Michigan's contingent, told eJP. As co-chair of Metro Detroit Reform Temple Kol Ami's "Green Team" and social action committee, she says, "It's not enough to just change what I do [to halt climate

change]. It's not enough to just change what the congregation does. We've got to work more broadly."

The lobby days are "the easiest sort of high-level lobbying that you can imagine," Brower said.

Attendees work off a script created by the Jewish Earth Alliance steering committee, which includes a former EPA employee, a geologist, an Orthodox rabbi, a Renewal rabbi, and a communications expert. In states with smaller Jewish demographics, meetings were supplemented by leaders in the movement from other states.

Because "in Washington, evangelical Christianity has been assumed to be the moral voice," Brower said, it's essential that Jewish values are heard.

"It was easier locating legislation that we could support in the Biden administration," Aron said. "Right now, we're asking people to protect the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], which has suffered tremendous cutbacks, FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency], which is being disabled from being able to help people, and NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] on which we depend to understand [and predict climate, weather and ocean changes]."

Just this week, in fact, the EPA Administrator, Lee Zeldin, announced that the agency was revoking the so-called “endangerment finding,” the scientific determination that greenhouse gases threaten public health, which Rabbi Jennie Rosenn, the founder and CEO of Dayenu, likened to “tossing out the Ten Commandments.”

Even if group members didn’t vote for the sitting legislators, they can find common ground, Ellen Siegel, a representative from Gainesville, Fla., told eJP. “It’s valuable to talk to our legislators and their staff who don’t see the world the way we do. We might learn something about how they see the world that we could then help them understand that if they moved towards the way we see the world, all of us would benefit.”

She gave the example of some people

wanting to plant trees in a community to improve aesthetics, while others aim to increase carbon sequestration. It doesn’t matter why someone does something, just that they do it, Siegel suggested

“One must posit no enemies in these conversations,” Siegel said. “You’ve got to go in knowing that we all want the best for our family, our loved ones, our cities, our communities, our state. So how do we find where we intersect on that? That’s the only way anything’s going to get done. Either that or we’re going to have an armed coup, which I would rather not have to deal with.”

While Tisha B’Av is a holiday mourning the past, the Jewish community keeps its eye trained on the future, Aron said. “We’re part of a chain of generations, so we don’t just worry about what happens today, we also look to what’s going to happen to our

children or our grandchildren, and I think that motivates a lot of the people who volunteer with us.”

The movement has grown significantly since its first lobby days in 2023. Early on, Brower knew everyone participating in the meetings and attendees introduced themselves to lawmakers one by one. Today, so many people attend that introductions need to be made in the chat. Senators know who the group is and set meetings well in advance. Average people are finding their voice.

“Have we changed anything about what our senators are doing specifically?” Brower said. “I don’t know. But it never hurts to say thank you to the people who are supporting you.” ♦

JULY 30, 2025

## Pro-Israel students: University reforms must go beyond cash payments

*At the Israel on Campus Coalition’s conference, some students praised Trump’s campus crackdowns — but want lasting changes over financial settlements*

By Haley Cohen

WASHINGTON — When hundreds of pro-Israel college students from around the country gathered in the nation’s capital earlier this week for the Israel on Campus Coalition’s three-day annual national leadership summit, the rise of antisemitism on campuses sparked by the aftermath of the Oct. 7th terrorist attacks nearly two years ago was still a topic of conversation throughout panels and hallways.

This year, however, some students also said that antisemitism is lessening — though they offered mixed views about what is leading to the improved campus climate.

Some attributed it to the Trump administration’s ongoing pressure campaign on universities to crack down on antisemitic behavior, which has included federal funding cuts from dozens of schools. Others said their campuses started to take

a serious approach to antisemitism, before President Donald Trump was reelected, in the fall semester following the wave of anti-Israel encampments from the previous spring.

But many student leaders from universities that have been targeted by the Trump administration — facing billions of dollars in slashed funds — said that if their school enters into negotiations to restore the money, they would like a deal to include structural reforms, unlike the one made last week between the federal government and Columbia University.

The penalties under that deal were largely financial, with Columbia agreeing to pay a \$200 million settlement over three years to the government.

Harvard University has signaled a willingness to settle next, *The New York Times* reported this week, which could see the school agree to the Trump

administration’s demand for as much as \$500 million to end its clash.

“If there is a settlement in the coming days, I don’t think that Harvard paying a fine would be helpful,” Kyra Esrig, an incoming sophomore at Harvard, told *Jewish Insider* at the ICC summit. Instead, Esrig hopes to see “more of a focus on antisemitism itself without this maneuvering to get it to be a DEI incentive that every time they talk about antisemitism they have to add that they’re not anti-Muslim as well.”

“I want to see something specific in writing — [outlining] the steps the university will take to change antisemitism. I want to see an action-specific type of agreement. If the university treads more carefully around the issue, if the university is at least a little more responsive to people’s concerns around antisemitism, I think that will be a good thing.”

Esrig does not believe antisemitism

has improved on campus since the Trump administration slashed \$2.6 billion in funding from the university in the spring.

"It's not like the Trump administration came into power and then there was sweeping change. For Harvard to change its culture, that's an incredibly difficult thing to do and I don't know that the Trump administration can go about issuing that."

**"I'm not entirely sure what the Trump administration is trying to gain," Ezra Galperin, an incoming junior at the Ithaca, N.Y. school, told JI. "I think Cornell's administration has been pretty effective in combating antisemitism — before there were threats from the Trump administration — with President Kotlikoff coming on. [Kotlikoff] makes a point of listening to Jewish students."**

Rather, "a lot of the positive changes are coming from the original backlash after Oct. 7," she said, pointing to the university expanding its kosher lunch options in August 2024.

"That's a result of the powerful force of Jewish students at Harvard saying that we need certain resources," Esrig said.

Cornell University faced a \$1 billion funding cut in April from the federal government amid a civil rights investigation into its handling of antisemitism. Ezra Galperin, an incoming junior at the Ithaca, N.Y., school studying government, noted an improvement in campus antisemitism this year compared to last.

But he attributes the shift to the university's new president, Michael Kotlikoff, who stepped into the role in March.

"I'm not entirely sure what the Trump administration is trying to gain," Galperin told JI. "I think Cornell's administration has been pretty effective in combating antisemitism — before there were threats from the Trump administration — with President Kotlikoff coming on. [Kotlikoff] makes a point of listening to Jewish students."

"There's progress to be made, but I don't think it warrants a millions of dollars fine," Galperin said.

If Cornell does enter into a settlement with the government, there are two reforms Galperin hopes to see. "I want to make sure organizations like Students for Justice in Palestine that stir things up on campus are held accountable," he said. "I want to see accountability for the grad students union who is seemingly selective in the students they choose to represent, alienating those who are pro-Israel. That's my main hope for the year." (Cornell SJP was suspended in March for disrupting the "Pathways to Peace" event where former Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro and former Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad spoke.)

**"What I would like to see, in light of the cuts, is a deal to be made which would include a mask ban imposed and enforced, for regulations to be actually written down more clearly and then enforced and then for punishments to be enforced on those who have breached the regulations that are made," said Maximillian Meyer, a rising junior at Princeton University and student president of the campus group Princeton's Tigers for Israel.**

"If a deal is to be struck, I do hope it's something tangible," Galperin continued. "There is a sense that the Columbia deal was insufficient and a bit of a ploy."

Maximillian Meyer, a rising junior at Princeton University and student president of the campus group Princeton's Tigers for Israel, said he is taking a wait-and-see approach to the government's crackdown on his campus, which also faced a funding freeze in April.

"I would be in support of a settlement — but not just any settlement," Meyer told JI.

"What I would hope the Trump administration's cuts would do, at a minimum, is to compel the university administration to enforce its own regulations. Even since the Trump administration made its cuts, the Princeton administration has not enforced its policies on time, place and manner restrictions.

"What I would like to see, in light of the cuts, is a deal to be made which would include a mask ban imposed and enforced, for regulations to be actually written down

more clearly and then enforced and then for punishments to be enforced on those who have breached the regulations that are made," Meyer continued, pointing to anti-Israel demonstrators repeatedly disrupting former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's speech at the university — including pulling a fire alarm — just days after the Trump administration slashed funding.

"The university should have been prepared for disruptions, but was undeterred by Trump's funding cuts," Meyer said. He called on Princeton to "work with the Trump administration to do something about [antisemitism]" rather than "the university's current posture which is fighting against the administration."

But Uriel Alvin, a student at City College of the City University of New York, expressed concern that any government intervention does more harm than good on campus.

**"After the [Gaza solidarity] encampments [in spring 2024], we saw protests afterwards because of NYPD's involvement shutting down the encampments," said Uriel Alvin, a student at City College of the City University of New York. "I think having intervention causes more problems — adds to the flame more than it puts it out. I don't think it was helpful for Columbia either."**

Alvin said he has worried about wearing a *kippah* on campus since Oct. 7, and that he "hasn't felt any better this year."

Earlier this month, Félix Matos Rodriguez, chancellor of CUNY, was called to testify during a House Committee on Education and Workforce hearing over his alleged failure to address campus antisemitism. That hearing, or any approach that involves the government, "wouldn't help things," Alvin said.

"After the [Gaza solidarity] encampments [in spring 2024], we saw protests afterwards because of NYPD's involvement shutting down the encampments," he said.

"I think having intervention causes more problems — adds to the flame more than it puts it out. I don't think it was helpful for Columbia either." ♦

# Nadler draws primary challenger calling for generational change

*Liam Elkind, 26, leads a nonprofit organization to deliver food and medicine to vulnerable New Yorkers*

By Matthew Kassel

**L**iam Elkind, a Jewish nonprofit leader in New York City, announced a primary challenge on Wednesday to Rep. Jerry Nadler (D-NY), calling on the veteran lawmaker to step aside to make room for a younger generation of Democratic activists who have grown impatient with the party's largely aging leadership.

"Today, I'm respectfully asking my congressman, Jerry Nadler, to consider retiring," Elkind, 26, said of the 78-year-old incumbent in a campaign launch video. "I appreciate his 50 years in office. I grew up voting for him. But we need new leaders to meet this moment."

Elkind, a Yale graduate and Rhodes Scholar who leads a nonprofit organization he launched during the COVID pandemic to deliver food and medicine to vulnerable New Yorkers, is part of a new wave of Democratic primary challengers raising frustrations with the party's elderly membership in Washington and its efforts to oppose President Donald Trump as he enacts his sweeping agenda.

Rather than positioning himself to Nadler's left, as some political observers had expected of a primary challenger, Elkind is instead framing his campaign as a referendum on what he criticized as the party's strategic miscalculations in confronting Trump and the congressman's enabling of a status quo sorely in need of a fresh generational shake-up.

"The same people are using the same old tactics, but they're losing," Elkind argues in his campaign video. "Our leaders need to answer the call now, and they aren't."

Nadler, who filed a statement of candidacy just this month to run for reelection next year, has confirmed he plans to seek another term — even as some strategists speculate he could still choose to retire.

The congressman's decision to endorse Zohran Mamdani, the Democratic nominee for mayor of New York City, a day after the primary last month, was seen by some political observers as a sign that Nadler was seeking to forestall a primary challenge from the left — though his team has rejected such claims.

Rob Gottheim, a spokesperson for Nadler, refused to comment on the new challenge, accusing *Jewish Insider* of having published what he dismissed as a "slanted" article this month that cited backlash from Jewish community leaders over the congressman's support for Mamdani — whose hostile positions on Israel have continued to raise alarms among Jewish New Yorkers.

Nadler, a co-chair of the Congressional Jewish Caucus who identifies as a Zionist and has vocally criticized the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, has said he does not agree with Mamdani's more antagonistic views on Israel and antisemitism, including his refusal to condemn calls to "globalize the intifada" and support for boycotting the Jewish state, among other points of division. Earlier in the month, Nadler organized a meeting with Mamdani and local Jewish officials to address their concerns.

A majority of voters in Nadler's heavily Jewish district, which includes Manhattan's Upper West and East Sides, voted in the primary for Mamdani and Brad Lander, the progressive city comptroller.

For his part, Elkind, who was unavailable for an interview with *JI* on Wednesday, has no apparent record of commentary on Israel or the Middle East. He plans to emphasize a message of affordability and generational change, issues that helped propel Mamdani to a come-from-behind victory last month.

In an interview with CNN published on Wednesday, Elkind said he ranked Mamdani

fifth on his ballot in the June primary, noting he did not agree with the nominee on some issues, including his position on the phrase "globalize the intifada," which critics regard as a call to antisemitic violence.

Elkind, now completing a doctoral dissertation on campaign finance reform, was a summer intern for Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) in 2018, according to his LinkedIn page. The nonprofit he co-founded, called Invisible Hands, was acquired by Commonpoint Queens, a human services group, where he now serves on the board.

Elkind's newly launched campaign is reportedly expected to draw significant financial backing from Reid Hoffman, the billionaire LinkedIn co-founder and a major Democratic donor who has previously supported moderate, pro-Israel candidates, fueling online criticism from the activist left.

Some Jewish residents of the district said that they were unfamiliar with Elkind but expressed interest in learning more about his approach to key issues of concern to the community.

"It's not hard to honor Rep. Nadler's decades of service while also recognizing that there is a new generation of existing and potential Democratic Party voters looking for more contemporary and relatable leaders," Amanda Berman, CEO of the Zioness Action Fund, a progressive pro-Israel advocacy group, told *JI*. "Democrats have been struggling to connect with voters, and it's healthy and exciting to see young, dynamic, pragmatic progressives stepping up to reclaim our politics from both MAGA extremism and dangerous leftist populism."

Berman said she "looks forward to hearing more about Liam Elkind and his commitment to our twin values: unabashed progressivism and unapologetic Zionism."

Avi Lichtschein, a Jewish resident



of the Upper West Side, accused Nadler of “hypocrisy” for staunchly opposing the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel — which he has described as a form of “pernicious antisemitism” — while backing Mamdani, “a vocal BDS supporter.”

“So while I may not know much about Liam Elkind, I’m certain he’ll be better than Nadler,” Lichtschein told JI.

Despite a desire for new representation among some constituents, strategists say that Elkind, a first-time candidate largely unknown to voters in the district, is facing an uphill battle as he seeks to go up against Nadler, the widely respected dean of New York City’s congressional delegation.

The congressman, who has served in the

House since 1992, easily fended off a handful of younger challengers in 2020, claiming nearly 70% of the vote. In 2022, he defeated former Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) in a bitterly contested intraparty fight in which the two Democratic colleagues chose to compete for a redrawn district that merged their seats.

While Elkind is the first challenger of the cycle to take on Nadler, he may not have the opposing field entirely to himself as others weigh bids of their own. Whitney Tilson, a former hedge fund executive who ran a failed campaign for New York City mayor as a moderate Democrat, has been mulling a challenge to Nadler, according to one person familiar with his thinking.

Natalie Barth, a philanthropist and pro-

Israel activist who previously served as the president of Park Avenue Synagogue, has also been rumored to be considering a bid, said another person familiar with the matter, though it was unclear if she would mount a challenge or wait until Nadler steps down, as some have suggested he could do at the end of his term.

In an open-seat primary, the field could also widen considerably to include such potential candidates as Scott Stringer, a former city comptroller and Nadler protégé; Micah Lasher, an assemblyman close to the congressman; Keith Powers, a city councilman; and Liz Krueger, a state senator. ♦

JULY 29, 2025

## Jewish philanthropist Wesley LePatner killed in Manhattan shooting

*LePatner, a Blackstone executive, served on the boards of the Abraham Joshua Heschel School and UJA-Federation of New York*

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By Gabby Deutch

**W**esley LePatner, a Blackstone executive who was involved with Jewish communal organizations in New York City, was killed in the Monday shooting at the firm’s Midtown headquarters, the company confirmed on Tuesday.

LePatner was the global head of Core+ Real Estate at Blackstone and CEO of Blackstone Real Estate Income Trust, according to Blackstone’s website. A Yale graduate, she joined the company in 2014 after more than a decade at Goldman Sachs.

She served on the board of trustees at the Abraham Joshua Heschel School, a pluralistic Jewish day school in New York, and she joined the board of directors at UJA-Federation of New York earlier this month.

“We are devastated by the tragic loss of Wesley LePatner, a beloved member of UJA’s community and a member of our board of directors, who was killed in yesterday’s mass shooting in Midtown,” the federation said in a statement.

“Wesley was extraordinary in every way — personally, professionally, and philanthropically,” the organization said. “In the wake of Oct. 7, Wesley led a solidarity mission with UJA to Israel, demonstrating her enduring commitment in Israel’s moment of heartache. She lived with courage and conviction, instilling in her two children a deep love for Judaism and the Jewish people.”

In 2023, LePatner was awarded the Alan C. Greenberg Young Leadership Award at UJA’s 2023 annual Wall Street dinner. In a speech, she outlined her involvement with the organization, dating back nearly two decades.

“I first attended the UJA Wall Street dinner as a young analyst in 2004, where I am pretty certain I sat in one of the last tables at the back of the room,” LePatner said at the event, which took place two months after the Oct. 7 attacks. “Never in my wildest imagination could I have believed that I would be up on this stage two decades later.

UJA has many super-powers, but its most important in my view is its power to create a sense of community and belonging, and that ability to create a sense of community and belonging matters now more than ever.”

LePatner also sat on the board of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Yale University Library Council and Nareit, a real estate organization.

The shooting also claimed a second Jewish victim, Julia Hyman. A Cornell graduate, Hyman worked for Rudin Management in the Midtown skyscraper.

Ofir Akunis, consul general of Israel in New York, called the murder of LePatner and Hyman — as well as NYPD Officer Didarul Islam — “horrific and senseless” at the Israel on Campus Coalition’s National Leadership Summit in Washington on Tuesday. “In this difficult moment, Israel stands in solidarity with New Yorkers and all Americans,” Akunis said. ♦

# New York Jewish leaders reluctant to fight against Mamdani

*One Jewish political leader: 'No one thinks it's going to be good for the Jewish community to be hostile and to be in constant war with the next mayor'*

By Matthew Kassel

In recent weeks, a creeping sense of frustration has settled in among many Jewish leaders in New York City as they have reckoned with the dawning reality that no one is stepping up to organize opposition to Zohran Mamdani, the Democratic nominee for mayor. Without a well-funded outside effort, Mamdani faces few obstacles in the general election despite numerous political vulnerabilities.

The complacency comes even as top Democratic leaders in New York have so far declined to endorse Mamdani, whose antagonistic views on Israel and democratic socialist affiliation have engendered criticism. But with a divided field of warring and baggage-laden candidates, Jewish leaders have privately voiced disappointment at the current state of the race.

"Big-money people are talking every week about how we have to do something, but I haven't seen a real plan," said one Jewish community leader who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations. "People are just grasping," he added. "There's a sense of frustration out there and fear of a letdown."

"You can't beat somebody with nobody," another Jewish leader said in assessing Mamdani's rivals, including incumbent Mayor Eric Adams, former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Curtis Sliwa, the GOP nominee — all of whom have so far resisted pleas to suspend their campaigns in order to avoid splitting the vote.

While some independent expenditure committees are preparing to spend heavily in the race to target Mamdani, an assemblyman from Queens whose far-left policies have provoked anxiety among

Jewish New Yorkers, moderate voters and business leaders, the Jewish leader expressed skepticism that such efforts would ultimately "make a difference" as long as the election remains crowded with multiple opponents.

In the Hasidic enclave of Williamsburg, "the rank and file and donors are concerned" about Mamdani, said a source familiar with the situation. "But at the leadership level, people are mostly thinking that it's a foregone conclusion" that Mamdani will prevail in November. "There's not much to do and we have to start adapting and have to try to make amends with him and work with him."

Jim Walden, an attorney, is also running as an independent alongside Adams and Cuomo, who in recent days have exchanged criticism as Mamdani, leading most polls with a plurality of the vote, stayed away from the headlines while celebrating his recent marriage in his birthplace of Uganda.

**In the Hasidic enclave of Williamsburg, "the rank and file and donors are concerned" about Mamdani, said a source familiar with the situation. "But at the leadership level, people are mostly thinking that it's a foregone conclusion" that Mamdani will prevail in November. "There's not much to do and we have to start adapting and have to try to make amends with him and work with him."**

"No one thinks it's going to be good for the Jewish community to be hostile and to be in constant war with the next mayor," the source said on Monday. "For the community's sake, we have to move on."

As the anti-Mamdani coalition has

struggled to coalesce more than a month after his shocking primary upset, the organized Jewish community is now largely taking a "wait-and-see" approach to the upcoming election, several Jewish activists told Jewish Insider on Monday.

David Greenfield, who leads the Jewish anti-poverty group Met Council and has been a fierce critic of Mamdani, said that many Jewish leaders are "watching closely to determine if he'll moderate his socialist positions now that he has secured the Democratic nomination."

"Zohran has floated possibly keeping NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch and that has caught the attention of several community leaders," Greenfield told JI. "Currently, the race is quiet, partly due to Zohran himself being on vacation this month, but we expect it will significantly heat up again after Labor Day."

A Jewish political activist who was not authorized to speak on the record echoed that assessment, even as he noted that some Jewish community leaders have been seeking to register new voters and working on "community structuring" in advance of the general election.

Still, he speculated that "if the race stays as is, then there will be a quiet shift to have conversations with Mamdani."

For now, most mainstream Jewish groups remain hesitant to meet privately with Mamdani, according to a Jewish activist familiar with the matter, but the Democratic nominee has stepped up his outreach to Jewish voters and elected officials — while slightly softening his widely criticized defense of the slogan "globalize the intifada," a phrase that many Jews interpret as a call to antisemitic violence. Mamdani has

refused to personally condemn the slogan, but recently said he now discourages its use, marking a reversal from his primary comments as he seeks to grow his coalition.

“We’re planning to get started in August with messaging,” Jeff Leb, a political consultant who is leading a new super PAC called “New Yorkers for a Better Future Mayor 2025,” said on Monday. “I don’t think that people are sleeping on Zohran,” he said of the race. “I just think they’re making sure they have the resources they have to be active. Right now it’s a little bit early.”

Despite his evolution on the phrase, Mamdani remains a staunch opponent of Israel, backing the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement he has indicated he could implement if elected. He has also suggested he would not visit Israel as mayor — defying a long-standing precedent in a place that is home to the largest Jewish population of any city in the world.

There are, to be sure, a range of anti-Mamdani initiatives underway in the Jewish community and beyond — some of which are expected to pick up in the coming weeks as summer begins to wind down after a period of relative inactivity, people involved in the efforts told JI.

Jeff Leb, a political consultant who is leading a new super PAC called “New Yorkers for a Better Future Mayor 2025” that plans to raise at least \$20 million to hit Mamdani, told JI the group has in recent weeks held Zoom calls with more than 500 people and secured commitments as it readies attacks “to educate the public on Zohran’s priorities.”

**“We’re planning to get started in August with messaging,” Leb said on Monday, noting that the super PAC is currently “candidate-agnostic” and will get behind Adams or Cuomo later in the race when polling indicates who is most favored. “I don’t think that people are sleeping on Zohran,” he said of the race. “I just think they’re making sure they have the resources they have to be active. Right now it’s a little bit early.”**

Meanwhile, Eric Levine, a top GOP fundraiser in New York and a board member of the Republican Jewish coalition, is now organizing a fundraiser for Adams on Aug. 13, featuring former New York Gov. David Paterson and several donors from the legal and financial communities, according to an invite he has circulated within his network in recent days.

The Flatbush Jewish Community Coalition, which endorsed Cuomo in the primary but has not made a decision in the general election, recently launched a voter registration drive to boost Jewish turnout in November, Josh Mehlman, the group’s chairman, said on Monday.

The organization is expecting to register “tens of thousands of new voters,” Mehlman confirmed in a statement to JI. “With the political turbulence and antisemitism that unfortunately surrounds us, it is more clear than ever that the importance of every resident registering to vote for the upcoming and future elections will shape the quality of life and security of our communities,” he explained. “Our renewed efforts reflect that

urgency.”

**“No one wants to be fighting with the guy,” one Jewish leader said of Mamdani, acknowledging his rhetoric on Israel had evolved but not far enough to satisfy his most ardent skeptics. “No one wants to be in this position. But at the same time, I would put the onus on him. He’s the one who’s going to need to make changes.”**

Sara Forman, the executive director of the New York Solidarity Network, a local pro-Israel group whose super PAC endorsed Cuomo in the primary, said the organization is now “keeping a close eye on everything that’s happening” in the race “and on its impact on the Jewish community,” while cautioning against “premature” conclusions at this stage of the election.

“Whether the field of candidates is able to coalesce in some way and what that looks like in September is very different from the end of July,” she told JI on Monday.

Privately, many Jewish leaders have fretted about the seemingly disaggregated and inchoate efforts to oppose Mamdani at a pivotal point in the race — as the current field continues to remain unsettled with limited time until the election.

“No one wants to be fighting with the guy,” one Jewish leader said of Mamdani, acknowledging his rhetoric on Israel had evolved but not far enough to satisfy his most ardent skeptics. “No one wants to be in this position. But at the same time, I would put the onus on him. He’s the one who’s going to need to make changes.” ♦

# Under pressure, FEMA opens applications for 2025 Nonprofit Security Grant Program funding

*Nonprofits have until Aug. 11 to apply for a grant from the \$274.5 million allocated by Congress; FEMA has not announced when it will release additional funds already applied for*

By Marc Rod

*The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.*

**T**he Federal Emergency Management Agency opened applications on Monday for 2025 Nonprofit Security Grant Program funding, months after the applications traditionally open and amid pressure from lawmakers and community stakeholders.

Applications for the funding round are due Aug. 11. This application round pertains to the \$274.5 million in funding that Congress appropriated for the 2025 grant cycle.

An additional \$126 million in funding for the NSGP remains outstanding from the national security supplemental bill Congress passed last year. Organizations have already applied for that funding tranche. FEMA did not respond to a request for comment on when that funding will be allocated.

Delays in opening the application had been a source of frustration among both Jewish groups and the program's advocates on Capitol Hill. One Senate lawmaker told *Jewish Insider* last week that they had been pushing the administration to release the remaining security grant funding, calling the delays "dumb."

A coalition of Jewish groups and other nonprofits also said earlier this month in a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem that the funding would become unavailable on Sept. 30, at the end of the fiscal year, even if applications have not yet been released or evaluated by FEMA.

"The Nonprofit Security Grant Program is a vital resource for faith-based and community institutions facing growing security threats," Sen. James Lankford (R-OK), who has been pressing the

administration to release the funding, told *Jewish Insider* on Monday. "As Jewish communities have endured a surge in antisemitic threats and violence and now prepare for the High Holidays, this funding could not come at a more critical time."

"I've long been a strong advocate of this program and have worked closely with [the Department of Homeland Security] and [the Office of Management and Budget] to help ensure that this funding moves forward," he said. "I'm glad to see the application window now open. These grants don't just strengthen security, they protect lives and ensure that Americans can worship without fear."

Lankford said last month that the funding had "already been held up too long."

Lauren Wolman, the senior director of government relations and policy for the Anti-Defamation League, highlighted the need for the outstanding funds from the supplemental bill to be released.

"We appreciate the Administration's release of \$274.5 million in urgently needed Nonprofit Security Grant Program funds, which will help protect at-risk communities facing real threats. But the job isn't done," Wolman said in a statement. "FEMA must urgently release the NSGP supplemental funds Congress appropriated to meet overwhelming demand. Every day of delay puts lives at risk."

Nathan Diamant, executive director of public policy for the Orthodox Union, thanked the administration and congressional advocates for their advocacy.

"We [at Orthodox Union Advocacy] are very grateful to our allies in the Trump Administration — especially Amb.-Designate [Yehuda] Kaploun and the White

House Faith Office — for working to get this critical funding released," Diamant said. "We also thank our allies in Congress — especially Senators [James] Lankford, [Katie] Britt and [Susan] Collins. At this time of heightened antisemitism the NSGP grants are essential to protect the American Jewish community."

Eric Fingerhut, the CEO of the Jewish Federations of North America, linked the announcement to JFNA's advocacy on the issue last month.

"This is an important step for our community's safety, and it is the direct result of the collective advocacy work that we carried out in June during the *United for Security* mission and our presentation of the Six-Point Policy on Security Plan," Fingerhut said. "We should all be proud to see that our work moved the Administration to act."

Amy Spitalnick, the CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, who said she had raised the issue at a meeting with House Homeland Security Committee members last week, said that the delays have "cost Jewish and other communities precious time at a dire moment for our security."

"The funding allocated by Congress through the NSGP has a critical role to play in that process, and we're glad that after an intensive advocacy push, our communities will finally have the opportunity to apply for these funds," Spitalnick continued. "We also cannot simply barricade or prosecute our way out of this crisis of violent hate — and measures like this must go hand-in-hand with the broader policies aimed at building resiliency to hate and extremism in the first place." ♦



# ‘Like Tylenol for a cancer patient:’ Israeli aid measures unlikely to allay European pressure

*Israel's former ambassador to France said the airdrops of aid are a result of condemnation from European capitals*

By Lahav Harkov

For European leaders who are ratcheting up pressure on Israel to end the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the Jewish state's moves to pause military activity to allow a freer flow of humanitarian aid and begin airdrops of aid are “steps in the right direction,” the German foreign minister said on Sunday.

But the aid crisis is inextricably linked, observers say, to a much larger and even thornier issue — a deal to end the grinding 21-month war with Hamas and a release of the hostages. Until such a deal is struck, the pressure from Europe, and from some inside Israel, likely won't ease. And it could worsen, with some experts warning that European sanctions on Israel aren't out of the question.

Daniel Shek, a former Israeli ambassador to France and a member of the Hostage Families Forum's diplomatic team, said that the aid airdrops are “a result of international pressure and not sudden altruism.”

However, Shek said, they are “like Tylenol for a cancer patient. Surgery is needed, meaning the end of the war.”

A spokesperson for German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said that he is “prepared to increase the pressure if progress [on a ceasefire and humanitarian aid] is not made.”

French President Emmanuel Macron announced last week that his country would recognize a Palestinian state. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot argued that the move “proves [Hamas] wrong. It supports the side of peace against that of

war,” because “Hamas has always rejected the two-state solution.”

The terrorist group praised France's “positive step in the right direction.”

England and Germany declined to join France in recognizing a Palestinian state, but their leaders released a statement with Macron focusing on the “humanitarian catastrophe” in Gaza and calling for “the most basic needs of the civilian population, including access to water and food [to be] met without further delay” and for Israel “to immediately lift restrictions on the flow of aid.”

Israel has argued that it is not restricting the flow of aid into Gaza, but that the U.N. refuses to cooperate with the U.S. and Israel supported Gaza Humanitarian Foundation to distribute it.

U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said that he is “unequivocal” in his support for a Palestinian state, but that recognition must come as “part of a wider plan which ultimately results in a two-state solution and lasting security for Palestinians and Israelis. This is the way to ensure it is a tool of maximum utility.”

**The IDF noted that “responsibility for food distribution to the population lies with the U.N. and international aid organizations. Therefore, the U.N. and international organizations are expected to improve the effectiveness of aid distribution and to ensure that the aid does not reach Hamas.”**

Israel initiated on Sunday 10-hour “pauses” in the coming days in areas of Gaza in which there are no IDF ground troops, daily until further notice, “aimed at improving the humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip and to refute the false claim of deliberate starvation.”

In addition to 28 airdrops on the first day, the IDF established corridors to allow the safe movement of U.N. convoys of food and medicine. The military also noted that “responsibility for food distribution to the population lies with the U.N. and international aid organizations. Therefore, the U.N. and international organizations are expected to improve the effectiveness of aid distribution and to ensure that the aid does not reach Hamas.”

Starmer, however, said after the airdrops were announced on Saturday that “Israel must allow aid in over land...The situation is desperate.”

**German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul said that “humanitarian pauses and aid deliveries into Gaza are steps in the right direction, results of many direct conversations in the last few days. Yet the situation remains unbearable: Hamas must release all hostages, a comprehensive ceasefire is badly needed.”**

Starmer reportedly plans to ask President Donald Trump to return to ceasefire talks with Hamas, during the president's visit to Scotland on Monday. A source in his

office told *The Guardian* over the weekend that Starmer will “discuss further with [Trump] what more can be done to secure the ceasefire urgently, bring an end to the unspeakable suffering and starvation in Gaza and free the hostages who have been held so cruelly for so long.”

The U.S. and Israel withdrew their teams from the negotiations in Doha, Qatar, last week, after Hamas rejected a ceasefire and hostage deal by making new demands in areas that had previously been resolved. U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff said that Washington was looking for “alternative options,” which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu later echoed.

Germany similarly remained concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, with Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul saying that “humanitarian pauses and aid deliveries into Gaza are steps in the right direction, results of many direct conversations in the last few days. Yet the situation remains unbearable: Hamas must release all hostages, a comprehensive ceasefire is badly needed.”

Merz and Netanyahu spoke on the phone on Sunday. Following the call, Merz said he asked Netanyahu “to do everything in his power to bring about an immediate ceasefire and called on him to allow urgently needed humanitarian aid to reach the starving civilian population in Gaza without delay.”

Israel is taking a different approach to each major European capital and its statements and actions on Israel, a Foreign Ministry source told *Jewish Insider*.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry summoned the French charge d'affaires for a demarche by Director-General Eden Bar-Tal on Sunday. A statement from the ministry said that France “chose to harm Israel in its most difficult hour...France directly harmed the negotiations to return the hostages and for a ceasefire and all future diplomatic negotiations.”

Soon after Macron's announcement on Thursday, Netanyahu said that it “rewards

terror and risks creating another Iranian proxy, just as Gaza became. A Palestinian state in these conditions would be a launch pad to annihilate Israel — not to live in peace beside it. Let's be clear: the Palestinians do not seek a state alongside Israel; they seek a state instead of Israel.”

**If the war continues, Daniel Shek, a former Israeli ambassador to France and a member of the Hostage Families Forum's diplomatic team, warned, “we could find ourselves under real pressure, such as sanctions, even from friendly countries that blocked [such steps] until now. Israel is isolating itself.”**

Though Berlin has continued to make critical statements, the Foreign Ministry source indicated that Jerusalem still views Germany as a largely supportive country.

The source noted that while there was significant domestic pressure over Germany's Israel policy, it has not backed down, such as last week when Berlin declined to join a letter of 28 countries calling to end the war immediately.

In addition, Germany did not support moves to reexamine Israel's “association agreement” with the EU, which could result in a chill in relations between Israel and its largest trade partner. Changes in the association agreement would require consensus from all 28 EU member states, several of whom would be unlikely to support downgrading ties with Israel.

Wadephul and Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar have met three times since the former entered office three months ago. In one of the meetings he said that Germany would not cut off arms sales to Israel.

Emmanuel Navon, an international relations lecturer at Tel Aviv University and fellow at the Jerusalem Institute for Security Studies, said that the aid drops would likely be enough to stop Germany from taking action against Israel.

“I find it hard to believe that Germany, who we have very close ties with, would do something like [downgrade the association agreement] unless Israel has totally cut off humanitarian aid ... For German public agreement, you need aid flowing into Gaza,” he added.

Shek was skeptical that Germany would follow Macron in recognizing a Palestinian state, but said “even Germany is showing signs of impatience and urgency,” and that there are other steps that Berlin could take.

The former ambassador also said he thought that canceling the EU-Israel Association Agreement was unlikely, because Hungary and Eastern European states would not support it. However, he said that the Brussels bureaucracy could slow-walk agreements and cooperation with Jerusalem in areas that often depend on EU grants such as scientific research and culture.

If the war continues, Shek warned, “we could find ourselves under real pressure, such as sanctions, even from friendly countries that blocked [such steps] until now. Israel is isolating itself.”

That being said, Shek and Navon doubted that the latest moves from Europe actually constituted pressure on Jerusalem.

Shek dismissed angry Israeli reactions to Macron's “recognition of a virtual Palestinian state state that doesn't exist ... Those reactions are only aimed at the Israeli voter and have no value in international relations.”

**“We need to say Hamas is looting and the U.N. won't distribute the aid — we don't need to wait to be accused of starving [Gazans] to say it,” said Emmanuel Navon, an international relations lecturer at Tel Aviv University and fellow at the Jerusalem Institute for Security Studies. “The problem is that we wait to be attacked and then we react. Once the accusation is out, it's hard to correct.”**

Navon noted that other G7 countries were not on board with Macron's initiatives, even those with left-wing governments like the U.K. and Canada.

"Macron has brought relations with Israel to the low of the early to mid 1970s ... when France was graded as hostile in Israel's foreign policy," Navon said. "It will take years to repair after [Macron]."

Navon said that Israel needs to be more proactive in communicating what is happening in Gaza: "We need to say Hamas is looting and the U.N. won't distribute the aid — we don't need to wait to be accused of starving [Gazans] to say it. The problem

is that we wait to be attacked and then we react. Once the accusation is out, it's hard to correct."

In addition, Navon said, "Netanyahu needs to get his act together and tell his ministers to shut up or take away their phones."

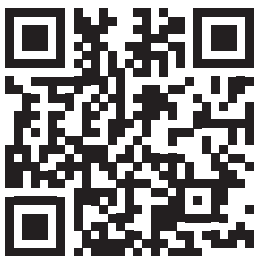
He referred to remarks by Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu in a radio interview last week that "the government is racing ahead to wipe out Gaza ... All of Gaza will be Jewish."

"The prime minister has to have better control of rogue members of his government and party who are causing us terrible

damage," Navon added.

Shek, however, said the way to improve Israel's relations with Europe and the rest of the world is to end the war in Gaza.

The former ambassador argued that the issue is not one of Israel doing a poor job at explaining the situation to the world: "If all of these countries have reached the conclusion that the war needs to end, then Israel needs to have a discussion with them to find out how they can contribute to a better reality after the war ... We need to just get into a conversation about an exit strategy ... which is something that the Israeli government has refused to do from Oct. 8, 2023, to this day." ♦



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