

## THE WEEKLY PRINT

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OCTOBER 16, 2025

## With new higher ed compact, Trump's antisemitism crusade broadens to fight academic bias

*Many academics who have fought antisemitism in education said they have concerns towards Trump's plan*

By Gabby Deutch

As the Trump administration ratchets up its efforts to influence higher education, the latest White House proposal for colleges and universities is being met with skepticism from academics — even as its authors say its implementation should be a no-brainer.

That's in reference to a White House document called the "Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education," a 10-point plan that the federal government is asking universities to sign in order to get preferential treatment for the federal funds upon which many research universities rely.

If the schools don't agree to the terms in the compact — which include commitments to end race-based hiring and admissions, limits on foreign enrollment and a pledge to foster greater ideological diversity — they risk losing billions of dollars.

The compact reflects an evolution of a familiar Trump administration argument: that America's preeminent educational institutions have strayed from their mission, letting politics interfere with their *raison d'être* as centers of academic excellence. Combating antisemitism on college campuses — a cause the White House has prioritized this year — provided President Donald Trump a foray into greater oversight of higher education. But there appears to be no direct line from that fight against antisemitism to the broader ideological framework in this compact, which makes only a passing reference to antisemitism.

A White House official who worked on the compact called it a "basic, basic easy low hurdle," telling *Jewish Insider* that the document is "a nonpartisan, neutral concept."

Many academics, including several who have spoken out against antisemitism and against universities' handling of it in recent years, don't agree.

"Fundamentally, the premise of the document is inconsistent with our core belief that scientific funding should be based on scientific merit alone," Massachusetts Institute of Technology President Sally Kornbluth said last week, making MIT the first university to formally reject the compact.

The White House wrote to MIT and eight other campuses this month, giving them early access. Brown University joined MIT in rejecting the compact on Wednesday, but the other seven universities haven't yet responded ahead of the Oct. 20 deadline.

With the compact, Trump is making the case that universities have a fiduciary

responsibility to American citizens that they have not met, as academia has “lost its way,” according to the administration official.

“It’s for the taxpayers,” said the official, who requested anonymity to speak openly about a negotiating process that is mostly taking place behind closed doors. “This administration is here to support research ... but at the same time we also can’t abdicate our responsibility to you and myself. There are a lot of people who are cutting checks to the IRS because that’s what they have to do, and they don’t even go to college.”

But where the Trump administration sees “good hygiene,” according to the official, many academics worry the compact’s far-reaching goals could amount to an overreach that impinges on free speech and academic freedom.

“It’s something that everybody’s talking about, and people are taking it very seriously,” said David Myers, a professor and the chair of Jewish history at the University of California, Los Angeles. “It really seems to touch upon one of the cardinal principles of university governance, which is autonomy and independence.”

Menachem Rosensaft, an adjunct law professor who teaches about antisemitism and the Holocaust at Cornell University, called the compact “overkill, with a number of positive items in it, but overall problematic for any independent university of college.”

Rosensaft questioned how the compact addresses antisemitism, if at all: Antisemitism is only mentioned in a section about foreign students, which accuses those who are “not properly vetted” with “saturating the campus with noxious values such as antisemitism and other anti-American values.”

Academics concerned about antisemitism told JI that the Trump administration is right to point out that severe problems exist in higher education. But many are unsure how this compact will address the issues Jewish students face.

**“I often wonder if a compact like this had come out of the Biden administration or a Harris administration, whether, from the faculty, there’d be that same kind of**

**knee-jerk reaction [that] we have to oppose everything that comes out of the administration — when actually, when you read this line by line, there’s a lot of things we can agree with,”** said Miriam Elman, a former political science professor at Syracuse University.

“If you look at certain things individually, they’re OK. I don’t have any problem with freezing tuition, for example, or with arresting grade inflation. I don’t have any problem with teaching [Western civilization]. The problem is that, as a whole package, it’s kind of the antithesis of what universities are meant to do,” said Norman Goda, a historian and professor of Holocaust studies at the University of Florida. “And if the addressing of antisemitism is one of the aims of this, then I don’t know how that is done.”

Miriam Elman, a former political science professor at Syracuse University, said that some of the immediate skepticism of the compact is likely due to politics. But that doesn’t alleviate all of her concerns.

“I often wonder if a compact like this had come out of the Biden administration or a Harris administration, whether, from the faculty, there’d be that same kind of knee-jerk reaction [that] we have to oppose everything that comes out of the administration — when actually, when you read this line by line, there’s a lot of things we can agree with,” said Elman, who is the executive director of the Academic Engagement Network, which fights academic boycotts of Israel.

“But we also are not naive. The Trump administration does have an agenda. It does have priorities, and it is wrapping those priorities into the fight against campus antisemitism. So there is a lot of concern.”

The compact appears to be primarily directed at undergraduate programs. Dr. Philip Greenland, a professor of medicine at Northwestern University, said his colleagues at the medical school are generally not worried about the compact in the way many humanities professors are. “It could affect the medical school in a secondary way: If Northwestern is drawn into this and doesn’t comply, we may never get our federal

funding back,” said Greenland. The Trump administration froze \$790 million in federal funding for Northwestern in April.

**“Although the compact doesn’t seem to be talking about antisemitism, in the end, people will remember: How did the administration go after the universities?”** said Pamela Nadell, the chair in women’s and gender history at American University and the author of a new book about antisemitism in America. **“They said that they were promoting antisemitism.”**

“I think it’s in some sense a good thing that it doesn’t call out, specifically, that this is about antisemitism,” Greenland continued. “What the compact seems to be more about is a claim, which is justifiable, that universities have become very, very ideological in one direction ... People are claiming that the compact will deprive them of their free speech. But what that doesn’t recognize is that the current situation deprives other people of their free speech and their free expression.”

The Trump administration official told JI that the compact is “all-encompassing,” and argued that its broad mandate includes antisemitism — but not only that.

“It overlaps, but the compact isn’t a compact to stop antisemitism. It’s a compact to return to lawful academic excellence and a marketplace of ideas, [and] that includes eradicating antisemitism,” said the official.

Pamela Nadell, the chair in women’s and gender history at American University and the author of a new book about antisemitism in America, argued that the Trump administration’s earlier actions targeting antisemitism will come to be viewed as the pretext for what is now a much larger and more strategic rewriting of federal policy toward institutions of higher education.

“Although the compact doesn’t seem to be talking about antisemitism, in the end, people will remember: How did the administration go after the universities?” said Nadell. “They said that they were promoting antisemitism.” ♦

# As she emerges as populist GOP critic, Marjorie Taylor Greene amplifies antisemitic rhetoric

*The Georgia congresswoman has recently boosted claims Israel had a hand in assassinating Charlie Kirk, and has baselessly accused the Jewish state of meddling in American elections*

By Marc Rod

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) first became a household name for her embrace of a range of wild conspiracy theories — including antisemitic claims about the Rothschild family like the idea that space-based weapons controlled by the Jewish banking family were the cause of California wildfires.

But as the congresswoman has emerged as an unlikely star in liberal circles and mainstream media after breaking with her party on the government shutdown, health care funding and the Jeffrey Epstein files, her erstwhile critics have all but ignored her increasingly frequent use of antisemitic tropes and embrace of conspiracy theories targeting Jews.

Earlier this week, the controversial Georgia congresswoman vowed on X, “No bar codes on me. I’ll never take 30 shekels. I’m America only! And Christ is King!”

Her rejection of “30 shekels” appears to be a reference to the pieces of silver paid to Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus, and the currency of Israel. Greene’s mention of “bar codes” refers to claims by former Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL) about AIPAC fundraising events, which AIPAC has denied.

She has also repeatedly boosted claims that Israel and Jewish people were involved in last month’s killing of Turning Point USA founder Charlie Kirk and are seeking to co-opt his organization.

“Do not allow a foreign country, foreign agents, and another religion tell you about Charlie Kirk,” Greene said on X. “And I hope a foreign country and foreign agents and another religion does not take over Christian Patriotic Turning Point USA.”

Last week, Greene reposted an X post by Holocaust denier Evan Kilgore, in which Kilgore shared a video of Candace Owens — a primary propagator of Israel-related conspiracy theories about Kirk’s death —

claiming that Kirk had announced prior to his death that he was abandoning his support for Israel.

And she lauded a eulogy delivered by far-right commentator Tucker Carlson at Kirk’s funeral, in which Carlson compared Kirk’s killing to the death of Jesus.

**“It’s becoming increasingly clear that no matter which party is in charge, the secular government of Israel always gets its way,” Greene wrote on X.**

Greene has been one of the few Republican lawmakers to attack AIPAC and other pro-Israel advocacy groups, accusing them of exercising malign influence over the U.S. government and demanding they register as foreign agents. AIPAC is funded and led by American citizens, not the Israeli government.

She has accused Israel of “meddling in campaigns and elections” and of “meddling in government policy — government of the United States policy — as well as dictating what America does in foreign wars.”

“It’s becoming increasingly clear that no matter which party is in charge, the secular government of Israel always gets its way,” Greene added on X.

Regarding the war in Gaza, Greene has employed language sometimes indistinguishable from that of far-left Israel opponents, accusing Israel of committing genocide and of deliberately killing innocent people and children, particularly Christians. She led an effort in the House to cut off U.S. missile defense aid to Israel, which failed overwhelmingly.

She also shared posts suggesting that Israel had foreknowledge of Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023, attacks and chose to delay its response, and claimed that “Most of America has Israel fatigue” because politicians ignore domestic problems in order to “talk about Israel all

day” and that a GOP colleague is “fighting for his life to maintain his pro Israel money.”

**“I am not suicidal and one of the happiest healthiest people you will meet. I have full faith in God and Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. As a sinner, I am only saved through His grace and mercy,” Greene said. “With that said, if something happens to me, I ask you all to find out which foreign government or powerful people would take heinous actions to stop the information from coming out.”**

Greene described the Anti-Defamation League as a “dangerous hate group that targets Christians,” praising the FBI for recently cutting ties with the group.

Amid her escalating social media campaign against the pro-Israel world and her advocacy for the release of files related to the Epstein investigation, Greene suggested last month on X that a foreign government or other powerful individuals were planning to assassinate her.

“I am not suicidal and one of the happiest healthiest people you will meet. I have full faith in God and Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior. As a sinner, I am only saved through His grace and mercy,” Greene said. “With that said, if something happens to me, I ask you all to find out which foreign government or powerful people would take heinous actions to stop the information from coming out.”

The post was widely interpreted — including by at least one fellow lawmaker — as a suggestion that Israel or Jewish people were targeting Greene.

“Why do crazy people keep thinking ‘the Jews’ are trying to kill them?” Rep. Ted Cruz (R-TX) replied.

Greene has also claimed Israel is operating a social media campaign

targeting her.

Outside of Israel policy and the Jewish community, Greene has also continued to lean into other conspiracy theories, such as posting in August that it is “oddly consistent and strange” that several mass shooters have authored manifestos, asking, “who tells them to do that?” In the past, she has repeatedly spread conspiracy theories about mass shootings, speculating that demonic possession or military mind control may be responsible for school shootings.

Last month, she also shared a Carlson documentary claiming the truth of the 9/11 attacks had been covered up and convened a congressional hearing on weather modification that heavily featured conspiracy theories and false and misleading claims.

**“The RJC has endorsed multiple GOP primary challengers to Marjorie Taylor Greene. She is out of step with the Republican Party, and with President Trump. The people of Georgia deserve better — and we are determined to do what we can to retire her,” RJC CEO Matt Brooks said.**

“While the president and congressional Republicans back our ally, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene is aligned with Reps. Ilhan Omar and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to demonize Israel and weaken a partnership that makes America safer, strong and more prosperous,” AIPAC spokesperson Marshall Wittmann told *Jewish Insider*. “Our 5 million members will not be deterred by her rancid anti-Israel and unhinged raving.”

The Republican Jewish Coalition, which has repeatedly opposed Greene, said it continues to support efforts to defeat her.

“The RJC has endorsed multiple GOP primary challengers to Marjorie Taylor Greene. She is out of step with the Republican Party, and with President Trump. The people of Georgia deserve better — and we are determined to do what we can to retire her,” RJC CEO Matt Brooks said.

Greene did not respond to a request for comment.

Greene has recently been a thorn in the side of GOP leadership for a number of reasons, including criticizing the party’s approach to a health care tax credit central to the current government shutdown, critiquing the Trump administration’s mass

deportation strategy and Middle East policy, backing an effort to force a House vote on the release of documents related to the Epstein investigation, accusing the party of blocking women from leadership roles and voting against other elements of the House Republican leadership’s agenda.

Her disputes with the Trump administration could create an opportunity for a Republican primary challenger to make a run against her — though Trump hasn’t personally spoken out against Greene as he has against Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY), another anti-Israel House GOP colleague, and Greene has continued to profess her loyalty to Trump and his movement.

She does not yet face any serious primary competition.

Greene previously accumulated influence in the House as a close ally of Trump and former House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) but has found herself increasingly sidelined. National Republican Party leaders did not back her as she considered a run for Georgia’s Senate seat against Sen. Jon Ossoff (D-GA) or the state’s governorship. ♦

OCTOBER 15, 2025

## Orthodox Union’s Rabbi Moshe Hauer remembered as ‘master teacher’ and ‘voice of Torah’

*OU Executive VP Rabbi Hauer unexpectedly passed of a heart attack earlier this week*

By Marc Rod

Rabbi Moshe Hauer, the executive vice president of the Orthodox Union, died suddenly on Monday evening after suffering a heart attack, his organization said. He was 60.

Jewish communal leaders remembered Hauer as a friend, a bridge-builder, a faithful and committed leader and a source of wise counsel.

Hauer had served in his role at the OU since May 2020, acting as the organization’s professional and rabbinic leader and

primary spokesperson, as well as helping to lead the organization’s outreach to U.S. administration officials and lawmakers.

“Rabbi Hauer was a true *talmid chacham*, a master teacher and communicator, the voice of Torah to the Orthodox community and the voice of Orthodoxy to the world. He personified what it means to be a Torah Jew and took nothing more seriously than his role of sharing the joy of Jewish life with our community and beyond,” OU President Mitchel Aeder and Chief Operating Officer

Rabbi Josh Joseph said in a joint statement.

“Rabbi Hauer’s leadership was marked by unwavering dedication, deep compassion, and a vision rooted in faith in Hashem, integrity, and love for Klal Yisrael,” Aeder and Joseph continued. “Whether through his inspiring words, thoughtful counsel, powerful advocacy, or quiet acts of kindness, Rabbi Hauer uplifted those around him and made an impact on every person he encountered.”

Prior to his role at the OU, Hauer served



for more than 26 years as the lead rabbi at Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation in Baltimore.

William Daroff, the CEO of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, told *Jewish Insider* he was “shattered by the sudden passing of my dear friend and partner, Rabbi Moshe Hauer.”

“We just spoke this past Friday and texted on Monday, when he was overflowing with joy at the miracle of the hostages’ freedom and the unmistakable hand of Hashem in it. Rabbi Hauer was a trusted advisor, cherished colleague, and wise counselor to me, a bridge-builder whose faith, humility, and moral clarity inspired all who knew him. His loss leaves a deep void for all who loved and learned from him,” Daroff continued.

“He was a wise and thoughtful leader for so many dimensions of the OU’s activities — That included his partnership with me in advocacy,” Nathan Diamant, the OU’s executive director of public policy, told JI. “Rabbi Hauer deeply believed in the imperative for the Orthodox community to be fully and proactively engaged with the world at large — not isolated from it. And for us to work to better society by advancing Torah values. In fact, the last time I was with him in person was just a couple of weeks ago — we met with senators and senior White

House officials to discuss key issues and values.”

Israeli President Isaac Herzog mourned Hauer as “a true leader and teacher in the Jewish world,” in a post on X.

“Each and every conversation I was privileged to have with him was so very meaningful [sic] and showed his warmth and kindness, and his unwavering love for Torah, Israel, Zionism, and the Jewish people,” Herzog wrote.

Despite ideological and theological differences, Hauer maintained friendships and partnerships with Jewish leaders across the ideological spectrum and rejected claims that progressive and liberal Jews were “self-hating,” telling *eJewishPhilanthropy* last year that he “bristle[s] and object[s]” to the canard.

Sheila Katz, the CEO of the National Council of Jewish Women, said in a Facebook post, “Some leaders shape institutions. Others shape hearts. Rabbi Moshe Hauer did both.”

“After October 7, we found ourselves advocating side by side at the Department of Education and Department of Justice, in Congress, in the White House, and in the Knesset, determined to show what Jewish unity could look like,” Katz said. “It wasn’t unity for its own sake, but unity in service of the Jewish people, to advocate together

for Jewish women, for the Orthodox community, and for all of us. Him, an Orthodox male rabbi. Me, a Reform Jewish progressive woman. Together, we were an unlikely duo that came together to advocate against antisemitism, to promote safety in Israel, and for the return of the hostages.”

“I’m grateful he lived to see all the living hostages come home. But I’m heartbroken that we won’t get to be with him for all that’s next, for the rebuilding, the hope, and the unity he modeled so powerfully,” Katz continued. “All we can do is continue to build a better world with love, and with Jewish life and wisdom, to honor the memory of our dear friend, Rabbi Hauer.”

Hauer was ordained at Ner Israel in Maryland and received a graduate degree from Johns Hopkins University.

According to the OU, during his time at Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion he “was active in local communal leadership in many areas, with an emphasis on education, children-at-risk, and social service organizations serving the Jewish community... led a leadership training program for rabbis and communal leaders, and was a founding editor of the online journal *Klal Perspectives*.” ♦

*eJewishPhilanthropy’s Judah Ari Gross contributed to this report.*

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## Israel’s conflict in Gaza may be winding down, but for reservist families, the battle continues

*With spouses and parents away for long stretches over the past two years, many Israeli families are struggling financially and emotionally, and the state resources are often insufficient, experts say*

By Rachel Gutman

The article first appeared in *eJewishPhilanthropy*.

Every morning, Neta Vizel wakes up and thanks her husband, Eldad, a reserve commander in the Israel Defense Forces, for being home. “I thank him for being here, someone I can rest my head on, someone I can share the household duties with.”

It’s a ritual born of struggle, following two

years of her husband’s lengthy absences for reserve duty in Gaza and fear for his safety. For Vizel, a global organizational consultant and a military psychologist in the reserves, life changed dramatically on the morning of Oct. 7, 2023, when Eldad was called up. For the next two years, with no relatives nearby to help with the household, Vizel trained her children to take on responsibilities at home.

Help from the military, unfortunately,

fell short. “The army offers families things like a night at a hotel at a reduced price,” she said. “But at the end of the day, what we needed most was for someone to come to my house and help me fold laundry. And that never happened.”

As Israel’s longest-running war in recent history appears to wind down, the toll on reservist families is far from abating. And despite the current ceasefire, the IDF has

announced plans to significantly increase the amount of mandatory reserve duty per year going forward, to double or triple prewar levels.

Israel's military policy has long been based on a reserve model, with a relatively small number of active-duty troops for day-to-day operations that can be joined by a far larger number of reservists as needed. Indeed, after the Oct. 7 attacks, the IDF called up more than 300,000 reservists — several times the size of the standing army — which was one of the largest mobilizations in the country's history.

But ordinarily, this model only pulls in large numbers of reservists for a few weeks, not two years, leaving tens of thousands of families struggling with a crisis that NGOs and the government are still scrambling to address. And as Rachel Azaria, founder of HaOgen for Reservist Families, is careful to point out, even the current armistice is not a sure thing. "It's a ceasefire. It's not peace accords. Even in the best-case scenario, reservists will continue serving for months to come," Azaria said.

Of the hundreds of thousands of reservists called up since Oct. 7, 2023, approximately 118,000 are parents with children at home. Many of these reservists have served multiple stints, totaling an average of 136 days per year.

Most of the children affected by these prolonged absences are young — preschool and elementary school age. "How do you explain to a 6-month-old baby that her father is going away for a few months?" Azaria asked.

HaOgen partnered with Herzliya's Reichman University to create a program teaching parents how to build resilience in toddlers, with thousands of families participating over two years. "If these kids don't finish school properly, if they're having too many problems, it's going to continue with them for years," Azaria said. "These are very important years in their lives."

Reservists also represent the backbone of Israel's economy — doctors, lawyers and high-tech professionals, most of them in their prime working years, from their mid-20s to their late 40s.

"These are the most important families for Israeli society, they're holding the economy," Azaria said. "Without

major political changes — such as ultra-Orthodox citizens joining the military and sharing the burden — the pressure falls disproportionately on this same population of professionals and taxpayers. If we don't take care of them, our economy will be in trouble," she warned. A March 2025 survey by Israel's Employment Service found that most reservists are facing financial strains, with 41% saying they had lost or left their jobs because of their service and half describing the economic toll as "significant" (compared to 27% who said they could manage to cope).

Azaria founded HaOgen immediately after the Oct. 7 attacks, basing it on a similar initiative she launched during the 2014 Gaza war. "No one thought the war would last so long," she said.

Now, nearly two years later, her organization helps support 35,000 families through a network of 20,000 volunteers across over 800 cities and towns throughout Israel. This includes hands-on help with babysitting, meals, errands, as well as communal events. For this work, the organization received Israel's 2025 Presidential Volunteer Award.

But that help doesn't necessarily reach everyone. Sharon Cohen-Karp, a clinical social worker who treats reservists who have served more than 100 days through the Welfare Ministry's Youth and Children Division and Sderot's resilience center, has seen the isolation many of their wives feel. "In the beginning, there was major mobilization among Israeli civilians to support the families," she said. "Now that it's been two years, people forget they are still there."

"In many ways, the wives have been through a more difficult time than the men," said Lavi Zamir, CEO of Bshvil Hamachar ("Path for Tomorrow," in English), a nonprofit that helps IDF combat reservists process battlefield trauma and reintegrate into civilian life through nature-based group retreats. "We've got each other, we've got our camaraderie, while they need to pick up kids from school, go to work, leave early, come home late and live with the knowledge that someone can die," Zamir said.

For reservists, straddling the war and home life can be challenging. It's what Zamir calls the "war-life balance." "We need to balance our life in the war and still

remember that we are part of a family and to be a good husband and a good father," he said.

"There are different kinds of *miluimnikim* [reservists]," Azaria said. "Some can make the transformation — they manage to hold on to their two selves — their self as a warrior and their self as whatever they are in regular life: a lawyer, a father, a husband. They can do it together."

But for others, especially those who served for extended periods, the transition can prove far more difficult. "For instance, in the army, you give commands. Your mind learns how to process short messages," Azaria said. "Then you come home, and you have a 3-year-old who can't finish a sentence." Some soldiers, she said, sleep on the floor when they first return because they can't adjust to a bed after months of sleeping in combat conditions.

"When the family connects again, it's not like you're coming and restarting the computer," Zamir said. "You need some time, and you need some tools to understand how to get back to being a family again."

The mental health toll runs deep. Cohen-Karp reported seeing dozens of suicide cases among reservists. "Reservists don't receive enough treatment for themselves and their families," she said. The state provides NIS 1,500 (approximately \$450) in total for therapy to all reservists — funding that quickly runs out after a handful of sessions with a psychologist or couples counselor.

As a military psychologist, Vizel said she sees another disturbing pattern: a growing number of separations and divorces. "At some point after a year, the wife understands that she can handle the family and household on her own," she said.

Azaria is blunt about the scope of the problem: "There are not enough therapists in Israel to deal with everything that has to be dealt with." This is why HaOgen focuses on building community resilience. "When you're part of a community, when you feel that you're not alone and when you feel that you're part of something bigger, that's what builds resilience," she said.

Nonprofits like Path for Tomorrow provide emotional and psychological support to male and female reservists. Zamir, a lieutenant colonel who served 400 days as a deputy commander of the

IDF's Nahal Brigade and a veteran of many Israeli wars, personally understands the toll that reserve duty exacts on families. His organization, which runs healing retreats for reservists, has begun offering programs for parents and spouses.

Zamir stressed the need for far greater state intervention to address the challenges that reservists and their families are facing. "It's not my job to chase after funding for

these programs. It's the Israeli government's job to give me the funding. My job should be to carry out the programs," he said.

For the Vizels and families like them, the path to healing involves getting back to the basics. "We are hankering to return to routine. Boring routine," Vazel said. "None of us is 100%. It's an entire nation that needs to be rehabilitated."

Cohen-Karp agreed but remains hopeful.

"In Sderot, I am seeing that children are really resilient and strong. I feel good about their abilities," she said.

Azaria too believes in Israeli society's ability to cope with hardship. "We are an amazing nation," she said. "It's hard to comprehend how people are willing to volunteer for such a long time and to be there for people they don't know." ♦

OCTOBER 13, 2025

## Jewish studies scholar argues modern-day antisemitism akin to 1950s-era discrimination in new book

*American University Professor Pamela Nadell: 'The closing off of spaces to Jews today is happening once again'*

By Gabby Deutch

Historian Pamela Nadell is very familiar with the rituals of publishing a book, as she has written nine of them: Secure a release date, present at academic conferences, maybe headline a handful of general-public events. Although she is at the forefront of her field at American University — chair in Women's and Gender History, director of the Jewish studies program and past president of the Association of Jewish Studies — Nadell knows that success in academia does not often translate to strong book sales.

Things appear to be different for her latest book, *Antisemitism: An American Tradition*.

Nadell began to understand how much interest a book on antisemitism would generate when her publisher assigned a full-time publicist to promote the book, which will be published on Oct. 14. Nadell is booked at speaking engagements across the country into 2027, starting with an event at the Washington bookstore Politics and Prose this week.

The book that she began researching six years ago will now appear on bookshelves at a time when antisemitism has reached record levels since the Anti-Defamation

League began tracking data in 1979.

"I had hoped, frankly, that the subject would be seen as a historic subject by the time [the book] came out into the world," Nadell told Jewish Insider in a recent interview. "And that's absolutely not the case."

Nadell argues in her book that antisemitism is not an aberration in the United States. Instead, she writes, it is intricately woven into the American experience — as American as, say, apple pie.

Jews came from Europe seeking freedom from religious persecution, and while they escaped the pogroms that had haunted them overseas, they did not arrive in a world magically free from antisemitism. She traced the history of anti-Jewish sentiment in America from colonial days to the present, identifying the aftermath of the Civil War as the moment it really gained a foothold in American society.

"America is different [from Europe] in that we never had state sponsored violence against American Jews," Nadell said. "But the roots of anti-Judaism in America start immediately ... the roots of anti-Judaism in America rest on traditional Christian ideas about who the Jews are and what they did

to Jesus."

While antisemitism has always been present in America, the tenor and intensity of it has ebbed and flowed. "We're in a moment," she said, "where it's really bad."

The reason she is most concerned about the state of antisemitism in America is not just the frequency of antisemitic incidents or the toll of violent attacks on Jews. According to a study published this week by the Anti-Defamation League and Jewish Federations of North America, more than half of American Jews now say antisemitism is a normal part of the Jewish experience.

It's that doors are once again closing to Jews in a way that reminds her of the quotas, housing covenants and employment restrictions that were baked into American life until the 1950s and 1960s.

"The perception that [antisemitism] was over was because of how much American Jews ascended into American life as those structural barriers fell," Nadell said. "The doors to corporations opened up, the doors to the colleges opened up. But antisemitism — it's like it was a nagging factor."

America is now experiencing another period "where Jewish life once again seems to be constricting," Nadell argued. "Not in

exactly the same ways that it did in those years between World War I and World War II, when there were so many structural limitations. But the closing off of spaces to Jews today is happening once again.”

She pointed to boycotts of Jewish and Zionist writers in the publishing industry, and antisemitic litmus tests appearing in unexpected places like the mental health profession.

“Being told that you have to denounce Israel in order to join a student club? Those students are going to carry those memories forward into their future,” said Nadell.

In recent years, and particularly following the wave of antisemitism that was unleashed after the Oct. 7 attacks two years ago, several Jewish thinkers have posited

that the American Jewish community’s best days are behind it. Franklin Foer wrote an *Atlantic* cover story under the alarming headline, “The Golden Age of American Jews is ending.”

Nadell argues that the notion that there ever was a “golden age” is a myth. “The idea that there was a golden age of Jews in Spain actually emerges during the Dreyfus Affair [in 1894], when things are so terrible in Europe,” she noted. Similarly, Nadell argues that the supposedly now-over golden age for American Jews after the end of quotas and *de jure* discrimination is not really so straightforward.

“By the time we get to the late ‘60s and on in the 20th century, American Jews feel really secure. The places that used to be

closed to us have now opened, and that’s what leads to the perception of the golden age,” said Nadell. “The problem ... is the assumption that antisemitism disappeared, but it didn’t.”

Still, Nadell considers herself an optimist. Antisemitism is part of the American fabric. And while that might be a demoralizing conclusion, she views it the other way: Jews have thrived in this country despite antisemitism, and they will continue to do so.

“The reality is that it is part of the normative Jewish experience to experience antisemitism,” said Nadell. “But I think ultimately, American Jews will be okay in the United States.” ♦

OCTOBER 13, 2025

## Rep. Steve Cohen draws younger, far-left challenger hostile to Israel in primary

*Tennessee’s first Jewish congressman, a progressive Democrat, is facing a well-organized primary challenge from 30-year-old activist Justin Pearson*

By Matthew Kassel

Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN), a 10-term congressman from Memphis, Tenn., has long occupied a unique position in U.S. politics. The 76-year-old lawmaker, who became Tennessee’s first Jewish member of the delegation when he took office in 2007, is the only Democratic House member in his solidly conservative state.

And as the lone white member of either party to represent a majority-Black district, Cohen has also managed to deftly navigate a delicate racial dynamic in his district, only facing occasional primary challenges from Black challengers. Through it all, he has been a political powerhouse in Memphis, holding onto his seat by building a broad and diverse coalition of support.

Now, he is facing what could be his biggest test in years as he prepares to go up against a formidable new challenger in the 2026 primaries, at a moment when some veteran Democratic House members are under growing pressure from a crop

of younger opponents who are pushing for generational change to revive the party’s declining image among younger, disillusioned voters.

Justin Pearson, a Democratic state legislator from Memphis who rose to national prominence in 2023 when he and a fellow Black colleague were expelled from the Tennessee General Assembly for leading a gun control protest on the House floor, announced last week that he would challenge Cohen in what is shaping up to be a bitterly contested and expensive primary, highlighting differences over identity as well as hot-button issues such as Israel and the war in Gaza.

In his kickoff video, Pearson, 30, described himself as “a Memphian, born and raised, who understands how to build bridges across race, identity, ethnicity and generations in order to build the future that we want to live into.”

He added he would “always stand up

against those who try to silence us, push us to the periphery, push us to the back — in the places that should represent us.”

Pearson’s launch came with backing from Justice Democrats, a far-left group that has helped to buoy a number of Squad members, and Leaders We Deserve, a new political organization co-founded by activist David Hogg, which has pledged to spend \$1 million in the race.

While Pearson, who assumed office in 2023 and is well-known in Memphis, has so far emphasized that while he does not intend to focus on Cohen’s age as a factor in the race, he argues that the district needs more active leadership amid concerns about President Donald Trump’s decision to deploy National Guard troops to the city to fight violent crime, which the congressman has opposed.

Among the sharpest ideological distinctions in the race are their dueling approaches to Israel and Gaza. In recent



comments, Pearson, whose campaign did not respond to requests for an interview, has called Israel's actions in Gaza a genocide and suggested he would support withholding U.S. military funding to Israel — joining a chorus of far-left lawmakers who are now urging the party to distance itself from the Jewish state.

Pearson, who advocates for what he calls a “diplomacy-first mindset” on the foreign policy section of his campaign site, has not weighed in on the new ceasefire and hostage-release deal between Israel and Hamas.

For his part, Cohen, who has drawn protesters in his district over his support for Israel, says that he disagrees with Pearson's claims of genocide in Gaza — even as he acknowledged “some things that have happened” that have “concerned me greatly,” citing child malnourishment in Gaza, among other problems. Still, “I've resisted that pressure” to use the term, he said in an interview with *Jewish Insider* on Friday. “And I've had a lot of pressure.”

Cohen, who has frequently pushed for increasing humanitarian aid into Gaza and signed a letter last year accusing Israel of violating U.S. arms sales law, said he had “not advocated to cut off weapon sales” to Israel. “I've thought about offensive weapons but haven't come out for it,” he explained, noting he had been convinced otherwise by a recent opinion piece against the move by Benny Gantz, the former Israeli defense minister whose argument Cohen described as “substantive.”

“On occasion, I've had a couple of town halls, and I've had people that are pro-Gaza that come up and berate me for this and berate me for that because of Israel and all,” Cohen told *JJ*. “They would naturally be inclined to be for Justin Pearson — and I imagine he'd be likely inclined to support their position.”

But Cohen, who serves on the House Intelligence Committee, countered that Pearson “should never be against the sale of weapons” because “the war is not just against Hamas,” as Israel continues to face active threats from Iran and its proxies in Lebanon and Yemen. He said he had recently returned from a House delegation to Lebanon and concluded that Hezbollah is a “possible force that could come back

again,” while predicting Iran “will take another shot at Israel.”

Despite their differences, Cohen said he preferred that Israel would not be a major source of division in the race, especially as the ceasefire deal goes into effect and hostages are set to be released. “It would be an issue locally if the war was still going on,” said Cohen, who welcomed the agreement in a statement last week. “Hopefully that issue is going to go away,” he added, expressing optimism that the war was ending.

Unlike other races in which pro-Israel Democrats have been targeted from their left, the matchup between Cohen and Pearson does not fit neatly in the typical framework for such intraparty contests, which have occurred with increasing regularity in recent cycles. Cohen, for example, is not endorsed by AIPAC, the pro-Israel lobbying group whose political arm has actively engaged in primaries where divisions over Israel have fueled tension.

He also said he was not familiar with Democratic Majority for Israel, whose super PAC has likewise intensely feuded with Justice Democrats on Middle East policy.

The congressman indicated that he is most closely aligned with the left-wing Israel advocacy group J Street, a frequent AIPAC foe that occasionally aligns with Justice Democrats, even as he said he does not have a negative relationship with AIPAC and joined one of its sponsored House delegations to Israel last year.

**Though he has not hesitated to criticize the Israeli government during his tenure in office, Cohen said that Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attacks had bolstered his commitment to supporting the world's only Jewish state. “It's just important to me to know that Israel always exists, that it's needed to exist — and it's still threatened,” he said. “We need to be aware of that.”**

In a recent statement to *JJ*, Jeremy Ben-Ami, the president of J Street, said that Cohen “was one of JStreetPAC's first-ever endorsees in 2008, and we have had a warm and close relationship ever since.”

“Steve exemplifies how one can support the state and people of Israel while

simultaneously criticizing the Netanyahu government and the damage it has inflicted upon the U.S.-Israel relationship and the prospects for long-term peace,” added Ben-Ami, whose group has endorsed Cohen's reelection bid.

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Speaking more broadly, Cohen said he anticipated that race and age would play a part in the primary, acknowledging that Pearson may hold a better grip on the activist zeitgeist that is driving challenges to the party's older and more moderate incumbents.

But he rejected accusations that he is out of touch with the district's needs and has failed to forcefully oppose the Trump administration, touting his votes to impeach the president and his successes in securing federal funding for the Memphis area. “I'm as effective as I've ever been,” Cohen said. “I've got a record on those issues,” he added, saying Pearson “does not.”

“There's no question he's smart,” Cohen said of Pearson, whom he supported when he ran for the state legislature. “He's charismatic. He sounds like Dr. [Martin Luther] King when he speaks. He's really impassioned.”

“His style is different from mine,” Cohen added. “I don't quote the Bible, and I don't jump around,” he said. “He jumps around when he speaks, like he's on the pulpit or something.”

While Pearson said recently that Cohen had been “very condescending and very arrogant” when he called to inform the congressman of his challenge, Cohen disputed that characterization, claiming they had a relatively tame conversation on the evening before Pearson's campaign launch.

“I said, ‘Justin, I understand you called,’” Cohen recounted of their exchange. “And he said, ‘Yes, I wanted to call you before I announce tomorrow.’ I said, ‘Oh, you're gonna announce.’ He said, ‘Yes.’ I said, ‘Did

you not know I was running?" He said, "Well, I'd heard it in some places, and I'd seen it in some papers." And I said, "Well, I'm running." And he said, "Well, I'll be running right there with you." And I said, "No, you'll be running behind me." And he said, "No, I'll be ahead of you." And that was the conversation."

Cohen admitted that he was "not really happy about" Pearson's decision to run, particularly given his past support for the state lawmaker. "You're not going to say, 'Good luck, may the best man win,'" he told JI, chuckling. "Maybe somebody would have said that, but not me."

**Michael Nelson, a political scientist at Rhodes College in Memphis, called Pearson a strong candidate but said Cohen would be hard to beat. "Cohen is going to have to take him seriously, but he'll be in Congress now for what will have been 20 years by the end of this race, and he has fended off previous challenges from other truly prominent Black politicians in Memphis," he told JI.**

Still, Cohen, whose campaign had \$1.8 million on hand as of late June, said he was largely undaunted by the challenge, citing past races where he handily prevailed over his rivals. He won nearly 74% of the vote in the 2024 primary — a figure consistent with his showings in previous races since he claimed the seat.

"I haven't really had to work in a campaign since 2014," he said, alluding to the last race he recalled facing a "significant opponent" like Pearson. "So I'm not that concerned, but I am concerned I'm going to have to do a lot more work than I had expected," he said. "I had polio as a kid, and my leg is not as good as it has been and is better than it's going to be," he added to JI. "A campaign involves a lot of standing."

Michael Nelson, a political scientist at Rhodes College in Memphis, called Pearson a strong candidate but said Cohen would be hard to beat. "Cohen is going to have to take him seriously, but he'll be in Congress now for what will have been 20 years by the end of this race, and he has fended off previous challenges from other truly prominent Black

politicians in Memphis," he told JI.

"Although Pearson is not to be lightly regarded, I would be surprised if he is able to defeat Cohen," Nelson said, noting that the congressman "has been really assiduous and successful in maintaining close contact with the local Black community as well as the business community, which means he never lacks for funds."

Nelson also said he did not envision that Pearson would win "anything close to unanimous support" within the Black community. "He jumped the line in terms of local Black political leaders who have been waiting for Cohen to retire, and they're not going to be happy about this," he speculated last week.

Cohen, who once said he votes like a Black woman, told JI he has long enjoyed a "good, broad coalition" spanning "the range of age, religion, race, gender — it makes no difference."

"I've always been progressive," he insisted. "I've always been kind of the liberal voice of Tennessee." ♦

OCTOBER 13, 2025

## Jewish self-protection initiative offers gateway into larger community, volunteers say

*Members of the Community Security Service's ROAM program say a desire to provide security to synagogues in the wake of the Oct. 7 attacks has brought them closer to Judaism as well*

By Jay Deitcher

*The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.*

After the Oct. 7 massacres, Ben knew he needed to do something. While other American Jews "Surged" into temples, attending services wasn't an option for him.

"As a kid, my parents were both Reform rabbis," Ben told *eJewishPhilanthropy*. "That's a big part of the reason that I really moved away from it."

But Ben always had an interest in security and had trained in multiple forms of martial arts. Growing up, he dreamed of joining the police. Less than three weeks

after the Hamas attacks, he Googled "Jewish volunteer security" and came upon the website of the Community Security Service, a nonprofit that trains Jews to protect their own communities. "I applied immediately," he said.

Ben is one of over 200 active members of CSS's young professional team, ROAM, which stands for "respond, organize, act, maintain." Most ROAM volunteers are unaffiliated Jews, and for many, the program acts as a gateway into the larger Jewish community, according to CSS. (Ben and other CSS volunteers interviewed for this article asked to be identified by their first

names only for personal safety reasons.)

As antisemitism has skyrocketed in the United States, so has the cost of security for Jewish institutions, making volunteer initiatives more attractive. Local Jewish volunteers also have a better understanding of the community, giving them a better instinct for when something is amiss.

The model proved its value on Yom Kippur in England, during the Manchester terror attack, when volunteer security guards barricaded the door and prevented even more deaths as the bomb-carrying terrorist was kept outside.

Richard Priem, the CEO of Community

Security Service, is now dedicated to the Jewish community, but, like Ben, he too was not religiously engaged. "I grew up in Amsterdam," he told eJP. "I wasn't religious or very active in the Jewish community at all."

An experience protecting a local synagogue at 17 led to Priem taking on a leadership role in Netherland's main Jewish security organization. Then came a move to Israel, where he served as an IDF paratrooper, followed by stints as a counterterrorism advisor for the United Nations Security Council and as director of international affairs at the Anti-Defamation League. In 2020, he joined the CSS as head of operations.

Jews protecting Jews is nothing new and is common in communities around the world, he said. In England, there is the Community Security Trust, which launched in 1986, but has roots in organizations born in the early 20th century. Argentina has a security organization, as does Netherlands, where Priem served.

"Historically, the Jewish community couldn't always rely on their governments to protect them," Priem said, noting wryly that it was a "special police officer who pulled my grandparents out of their home during World War II."

CSS began in 2007 as a volunteer organization, but ballooned in the following years due to increasing attacks on the Jewish community. The 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh's Squirrel Hill neighborhood led to a rush of philanthropy to the organization, allowing it to transition from a volunteer-run initiative to having a staff of full-time professionals, including Priem. Today, CSS has headquarters in New York, Washington, Los Angeles and Miami with volunteer-led chapters throughout the country.

"When it comes to security, nobody knows the community better than people from the community," Priem said. "And nobody's going to care more about the safety of the people inside the Jewish event or the synagogue than people whose own friends and family are members."

These self-security models also face challenges in ensuring that Jews from more marginalized communities are not made

to feel under scrutiny or unwanted. Priem acknowledged that some Jews of color have experienced profiling by untrained members of the community who were attempting to act as security, though he said there have been no reports of it occurring when a CSS-trained volunteer was on duty. He added that it would be taken seriously if it were reported. "Good security means people feel welcomed," he said.

While the CSS website makes no reference to Jews of color or LGBTQ Jews, Priem said that the ROAM training includes a curriculum on unconscious bias and about Jews of color that was co-created with Tamara Fish, the co-founder of the Jewish diversity nonprofit Khazbar.

Originally launched at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ROAM program has gone from protecting 20 synagogues to guarding over a hundred yearly. ROAM volunteers, aged between 20 and 35, train for three months and serve, on average, for three to five years. "That's our goal," Priem said. "Some of them move on to become leaders themselves, and really, our vision is a life cycle of Jewish service."

Volunteers are exposed to different sects of Judaism and ways to connect to the faith and culture. It "becomes a pathway to the Jewish community," Priem said. Last year, two volunteers even got married after meeting through the program.

Interest in ROAM erupted after June's deadly firebombing at a "Run for Their Lives" event in Boulder, Colo., and today there are teams in Washington, Philadelphia and Los Angeles with plans to expand to ten cities over the next three years. There has never been an attack under their watch, yet their surveillance has deterred attacks and put would-be terrorists behind bars with the help of the police, Priem said.

Ben, a voice actor by day, was so determined to enroll in ROAM that he studied for days before the introductory interview. Not only did he research surveillance, "I had Menachem Begin quotes ready," he said, referring to the former Israeli prime minister.

Soon, Ben was the captain of a New York-based squad, and since joining, he's served hundreds of hours at over 50 events ranging from a small fundraiser for United Hatzalah

to the Israel Day on Fifth parade. "It gives me that sense of purpose," he said.

In colleges, CSS is also helping introduce young Jews to the larger community. Through its "Krav and Keshet" program, launched after the October 2023 "Cooper Union Siege," students learn situational awareness, conflict deescalation and self-defense.

Like Ben, Sydney, a college student at Georgetown University, had a background in self-defense, having studied Taekwondo. She joined Krav and Keshet as a way for her to connect to Jewish culture through Krav Maga, the Israeli martial arts for, and today, she serves as her school's campus fellow. The experience has introduced her to peers who aren't as connected to Jewish life as she is.

"On campus, we talk about having safe spaces, but for a lot of Jewish students, there aren't a lot of safe spaces," she said. CSS's training, she said, gives Jews the confidence to explore their heritage without fear. After graduating at the end of the school year, Sydney plans to join ROAM.

For Ben, it's knowing people appreciate his service that makes it worth it. "You get this constant stream of upsetting news," he said. "And you could go on social media and rage back. That doesn't help anybody. But when you're standing for a shift and making people feel safe and people are telling you, 'Thank you for your service. Thank you for being here. I feel safe.' Nothing is more gratifying than that. Nothing makes me feel like more than I am in the right place, the place I'm supposed to be."

Since joining ROAM, his family has increasingly donated to Jewish causes while halting donations to causes that are no longer aligned with their values. They joined a synagogue, and Ben's trying to bring CSS into the congregation. Prior to the Hamas attacks, he hadn't been to synagogue for six years; now he attends most Friday nights. He was in synagogue during the High Holy Days and has volunteered as an usher.

"It even gave me the opportunity to even reconnect with my father," he said, "and talk about the book of Maccabees and stuff that I never in a million years would have guessed I would be interested in." ♦