

THE WEEKLY PRINT

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MARCH 2, 2026

Trump posthumously honors WWII Sgt. Roddie Edmonds for saving American Jews

Edmonds refused to identify Jewish prisoners of war to SS soldiers, saving over 200 lives

By Matthew Shea

President Donald Trump posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor on Monday to Army Master Sgt. Roderick “Roddie” W. Edmonds, a World War II soldier whose defiance of a Nazi order saved more than 200 Jewish American prisoners of war.

“In 1941 Roddie Edmonds of Knoxville, Tenn., enlisted in the U.S. Army and soon rose to one of the youngest master sergeants in the military,” Trump said during the White House ceremony. “In 1944, he sailed to Europe to fight in World War II ... and soon found himself on the front lines of the Battle of the Bulge.”

During the battle, Edmonds and his unit were captured by German forces and interned at Stalag IXA, a prisoner-of-war camp in Germany. As the senior non-commissioned officer among more than 1,200 American POWs, Edmonds was responsible for the welfare of his fellow soldiers.

Trump recounted the pivotal moment that would define Edmonds’ wartime legacy: on January 26, 1945, an SS officer ordered “only American Jews” to assemble

for roll call the next morning, warning that anyone who disobeyed would be shot.

“There were more than 200 Jewish American soldiers in the camp,” Trump said. “Roddie knew their separation from the group would mean certain death, so that night, he summoned his team and devised a plan.”

Edmonds directed his senior leaders to have all 1,200 American prisoners present themselves for roll call. The next morning, the American soldiers “fell in line together, shoulder to shoulder.” The action enraged the Nazi commandant, who Trump said “pressed the barrel between Sgt. Edmonds’ eyes,” and demanded that Edmonds identify the Jewish soldiers or be shot.

“Staring right back into the raging face of evil, Sergeant Edmonds replied fearlessly: ‘We are all Jews here,’” said Trump. Edmonds also invoked the Geneva Convention, warning the commandant that executing prisoners for refusing to identify their religion would constitute a war crime.

“The Nazi officer lowered his weapon and the soldiers erupted,” said Trump.

“With total disregard for his own life, Roddie had saved over 200 of his fellow service members and their camp was liberated two months later.”

Edmonds’ actions have been recognized as extraordinary moral courage. In 2015, Israel’s Yad Vashem awarded him the title Righteous Among the Nations, the highest honor for non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. Edmonds is one of only five Americans on that list and the sole U.S. serviceman so honored.

Edmonds died in 1985 without ever having received official recognition for the actions that saved hundreds of lives. In fact, the events had remained unknown, even to his family, until uncovered decades later by his son, Chris Edmonds.

More than eight decades later, Trump said the Medal of Honor “so courageously earned” by Edmonds will not be forgotten. Edmonds’ son accepted the medal on his father’s behalf. ♦

MARCH 2, 2026

At J Street, Chris Murphy argues Jewish history demands resistance to Trump

Murphy: 'Not a single one of us is safe from a future that mirrors the thousands of years of persecution that the Jewish people, with no self-determination, suffered under'

By Gabby Deutch

Since the beginning of President Donald Trump's second term, Sen. Chris Murphy (D-CT) has routinely adopted the argument that Trump poses a unique threat to American democracy. In an address on Monday at the J Street conference in Washington, Murphy leaned on Jewish history to tailor his case to fight Trump specifically to American Jews.

Murphy, who is considered a possible 2028 presidential candidate, invoked three pivotal moments in Jewish history that he said should inspire American Jews to speak out against what he described as Trump's efforts to undercut democratic norms and procedures: the Bar Kokhba revolt against the Roman empire that led to the displacement of the Jewish diaspora; the Spanish Inquisition in 1492 that saw Jews flee Spain rather than face conversion or death; and pogroms under imperial Russia in which Jews had no recourse against state-sanctioned violence.

If American Jewry doesn't stand up to Trump, Murphy said, they risk facing a similar fate in the United States.

"We are here today because we believe that this tragic history requires our world to make a home for the Jewish people in the Holy Land. That place is Israel. That place will always be Israel," said Murphy, who has taken a harsher stance toward Israel in recent years. "When we criticize the government of Israel, when we speak up against its policies in places like Gaza or the West Bank, it is because we love Israel. It is out of

our love for Israel and our belief that its current leaders are jeopardizing the future survival of that state."

Yet he argued that the existence of a Jewish state should not preclude American Jews from fighting for the future of their own country.

"The answer to thousands of years of the Jewish people's faith being decided by emperors and queens and czars is not and cannot simply be the State of Israel. No, the rest of the answer is simple. It's democracy," said Murphy. "In a working democracy, Jewish citizens are not subjects. They are not petitioners. They're not guests to be expelled at the whim of a monarch. They are, you are, we are citizens."

In the speech, Murphy criticized the U.S. attacks on Iran, saying Trump "launched an illegal war that the American people do not want" and that it amounts to "his most grievous assault on democracy." But Murphy mostly used the stage to raise the alarm about democracy generally, saying America is "in the middle" of "a totalitarian takeover" and rallying J Street's attendees to work to save it.

"You are here at maybe the most pivotal moment of all of our lifetimes when it comes to the preservation of self-determination, essential to the American project, essential to the future of the Jewish people all over the country," said Murphy.

He closed by using a story about former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir as a call to action. Murphy described her attendance

at the 1938 Evian Conference on the shores of Lake Geneva, where 32 nations — led by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt — discussed the plight of Jews in Europe. Meir attended as a Zionist representative of British Mandatory Palestine.

"She was assigned the status of observer, forced to watch in silence as one by one the representatives of 32 nations rose to express their deepest sympathy for the Jewish people in Europe, and then one by one explained why their countries could not take them in," said Murphy. "Years later, reflecting on what her experience at that pivotal conference had taught her, she put it simply. The Jews should not be dependent on anyone giving them permission to stay alive."

But where Meir used that sentiment to justify her support for Zionism, Murphy argued that it should also apply to American Jews living in the diaspora.

"Today, Jews in America and a multitude of other groups that are still facing discrimination and bias are not observers like Golda Meir was in the late 1930s. In our democracy, however imperfect, we have self-determination," said Murphy.

"What a gift to be alive," Murphy offered in closing, "when our mission is to save a country and to remember that without self-governance and self-determination, not a single one of us is safe from a future that mirrors the thousands of years of persecution that the Jewish people, with no self-determination, suffered under." ♦

MARCH 4, 2026

Gavin Newsom shifts hard left on Israel policy amid presidential primary considerations

The California governor said Tuesday the U.S. should reconsider its military support for Israel just months after having supported continuing U.S. aid

By Gabby Deutch

California Gov. Gavin Newsom said on Tuesday night on a popular liberal podcast that the U.S. should reconsider its military support for Israel, a marked evolution for a politician who traveled to Israel less than two weeks after the Oct. 7 terror attacks in 2023 and who said in an October interview that he would not consider eliminating U.S. military aid to Israel.

“Do you think, looking down the road, that the United States should consider maybe rethinking our military support for Israel?” Jon Favreau, the co-host of “Pod Save America,” asked Newsom during an event promoting the Democratic governor’s new book.

“It breaks my heart because the current leadership in Israel is walking us down that path where I don’t think you have a choice,” Newsom said in response. He also said in the conversation with Favreau and co-host Tommy Vietor, which came amid the joint U.S.-Israeli operation against Iran, that Israel could “appropriately” be described as an apartheid state.

The “Pod Save” hosts have been some of the leading voices in the Democratic Party hostile to Israel and pro-Israel groups, boosting progressive primary candidates including Graham Platner in Maine and Abdul El-Sayed in Michigan, who made criticism of Israel central to their campaigns.

Further, Newsom seemed to make the argument that military support for Israel comes at the expense of social welfare programs in the U.S.

“To say this is in America’s interest at a time when affordability is at crisis levels, where you have an administration who literally got elected saying this is exactly the opposite of what they would ever consider doing, the fact that we are in this now re-

gional war, all these proxies,” Newsom said, before trailing off into a conversation about corruption in the Trump administration.

On Thursday, Newsom will appear in Portsmouth, N.H., for another book talk — a location sure to raise eyebrows because of the state’s importance in the presidential primary contest. He’ll be interviewed by Jack Cocchiarella, a self-described “progressive political YouTuber” who also frequently bashes Israel. Cocchiarella said in a post on X promoting the event that they will be discussing Israel. Earlier this week, the podcast host called Israel “a terrorist state that threatens and kill [sic] Americans.”

Izzy Gardon, a spokesperson for Newsom, told *The New York Times* on Wednesday that he “believes in Israel’s right to exist — and its right to defend itself. Period.” Newsom “is calling out a difficult truth,” added Gardon, saying that President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are “taking Israel down a course that threatens the safety of Israel — a democracy and America’s closest Middle East ally — as well as Israelis and American Jews.” Gardon declined to comment further to *JL*.

Newsom’s move away from military support for Israel is a shift even from his recent positions. In October, during an interview with the “Higher Learning” podcast, Newsom said he would not support ending U.S. military aid to Israel.

“No, I’m not prepared to say that I would support a blanket exemption for military support of Israel. That said, I’ve been very vocal in my opposition to Bibi Netanyahu,” said Newsom.

He touted his decision in December 2023 to send humanitarian aid to Gaza, while also defending Israel’s right to exist.

“I am sitting here on your behalf, you’re a taxpayer,” Newsom said on the podcast, “as the only governor in the United States that sent a field hospital to Gaza and got it in through a third party country, and is disgusted by what’s happened in Gaza as a human being, as a father, who sees these children and how this war has been perpetuated by Bibi Netanyahu. I also have deep respect for the right of the State of Israel to exist and defend itself. And I thought the attack by Hamas was a terrorist attack, and we have to be clear about that as well.”

Newsom is widely considered a 2028 presidential contender, and he has been shifting his public stances on Israel to the left in recent months in response to questions from progressive interviewers.

In the days immediately after Oct. 7, Newsom lit the state capital in blue and white and unequivocally condemned Hamas’ actions. Less than two weeks later, he added a one-day visit to Israel onto a pre-planned trip to Asia.

“Despite the horror, what I saw and heard from the people of Israel was a profound sense of resilience. A commitment to community and common purpose, especially in these most difficult of times,” Newsom said afterward. He first traveled to Israel in 2008, the first sitting mayor of San Francisco to do so, on a trip organized by the San Francisco Jewish Community Federation. Jewish allies of Newsom’s in California told *Jewish Insider* they disagreed with his choice of using the word “apartheid” but said his comments reflected sentiments familiar to those held by many pro-Israel Democrats who disagree with Netanyahu’s actions.

“I heard what he was saying as sort of a frustration, as, ‘I don’t want it to go there,’ but I’m hearing a lot of concerns and frus-

trations when he's saying 'it breaks my heart,'" said Andrew Lachman, a Culver City school board member and the former president of California Jewish Democrats.

Sam Lauter, a Democratic donor and activist in San Francisco, said he "would have preferred [Newsom] not use those words."

"I don't want the word apartheid to come up. I don't want someone to position themselves as being open to the idea of cutting off military aid to Israel," Lauter said. "I wouldn't say that his position has changed or evolved. I think it's just that the more that folks see Netanyahu and the Netanyahu government proceed down the path that they have proceeded down, the more you're going to hear people say, this is where he's put us."

During his October interview with the "Higher Learning" podcast, Newsom was

asked to discuss his views on AIPAC after Van Lathan, the show's host, said he would not vote for any candidate who accepted money from the pro-Israel lobby. At the time, Newsom appeared flummoxed and did not give a substantive answer.

"It's interesting. I haven't thought about AIPAC. And it's interesting, you're, like, the first to bring up AIPAC in years, which is interesting. It's not relevant to my day to day life," Newsom said.

Two months later, he was asked a similar question by Cocchiarella.

"I've never received a dollar from them in my entire political career. So that's sort of absolute. So I've had an opinion on that going back decades now," said Newsom.

AIPAC only started spending in political races in 2022, and they have never donated to state candidates, only to congressional

campaigns. But Newsom doubled down and compared AIPAC to other groups deemed politically toxic to Democrats.

"I don't take tobacco money, oil money. I've never taken AIPAC money. I mean, there's certain absolutes that are the lines that have been drawn for decades for me," he said.

Lauter, who used to be involved with AIPAC and now sits on the board of Democratic Majority for Israel, called Newsom's comments on AIPAC "immensely unfortunate."

"I'm disappointed that AIPAC has become such an easy target, even for folks that we should consider friends," Lauter told *J* on Wednesday. ♦

MARCH 4, 2026

American Jewry 'Un-Conference' offers concrete plans for Jewish leaders to create new 'golden era'

Invite-only gathering brings together leaders and thinkers for discussions on the future of U.S. Jews amid a period of crisis

By Jay Deitcher

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

MIAMI — Last year, journalist Franklin Foer — a scion of one of American Jewry's most prominent families — declared in an extended essay in *The Atlantic* that "the golden age of American Jews is coming to an end," a prophecy that has since been repeated by a wide array of Jewish leaders and public intellectuals.

Gidi Grinstein, the founder and president of the Reut USA think tank, is not so sure, or at least believes that it is not the end of the story.

While "our history teaches that [growing polarization and heightened antisemitism] are very concerning trends, we are better and bigger than surrendering to pessimism," Grinstein said in his opening remarks at Wednesday's American Jewry Un-Con-

ference, subtitled "Toward a Decade of Renewal of American Jewry," held in Miami.

Instead, "we believe that another golden era may lie ahead," he said. "The current crisis is also an opportunity for community growth. We're here to build a mindset and identify the avenues that will make a great future feasible."

The event, which coincides with the 250th anniversary of American independence, was deemed an "un-conference" because there was no hierarchy between the speakers and the attendees, who were also experts in the Jewish world and who voiced their opinions during panels. It gathered over 100 American Jewish leaders and philanthropists to develop concrete steps to combat this generation's biggest issues.

Last July's un-conference, held in New York, came up with an 11-point agenda consisting of pivotal issues, with the goal of

revitalizing the American Jewish community by 2054 — 400 years after the first Jews from Brazil set foot on what was then New Amsterdam.

But the first un-conference was "not ambitious enough," Grinstein told *eJewishPhilanthropy* at this year's event, because attendees weren't given steps to take to combat the issues. This year would be different. This year, attendees would have a plan.

The event, which cost around \$60,000 to run, was a partnership between Reut USA, the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History and the Greater Miami Jewish Federation, as well as eJP, the media partner for the conference. Attendees didn't pay to attend; panelists weren't paid; and no one — except special guest, doyen of American Jewish history Jonathan Sarna — was allowed to speak for over four minutes. The

goal: 250 new ideas to nudge the Jewish world forward.

“Funding our ideas will require a lot of money, but we are the wealthiest generation in Jewish history,” Grinstein told the crowd. “Our challenge is to bring forward good ideas and the leaders.”

Israeli President Issac Herzog addressed the event virtually, sending greetings from war-torn Israel. “As a people, our strength lies not in military power at all,” Herzog said. “It is the inner resources of our nation, our creativity, our connection, our belief in one another.”

Many issues already firmly in the Jewish communal zeitgeist came up repeatedly during panels — particularly the high cost of tuition for formal Jewish education and the importance of better welcoming interfaith families. But other, more novel ideas, were also floated, including: training college students to attain positions in student governments; giving firm “nos” to funders when programs won’t push the community forward; being willing to shutter programs that are failing; investing in technology, data and research that are difficult to raise money for, but can advance the community; not simply sending people to Israel but setting expectations for them once they return; and uplifting Israeli voices living in the Diaspora to serve as a bridge between communities.

Mark Penn, president and managing partner of The Stagwell Group, called for attendees to take back the media to “reclaim the young people” who were stolen by TikTok, offering Bari Weiss, who started her career as a pro-Israel activist at Columbia University and was recently named editor-in-chief of CBS, as an example of a success.

After an attendee recommended rebranding Israel away from the focus on democracy and instead focusing on the country’s agriculture technology, Brooke Goldstein, executive director and founder of The Lawfare Project, recommended instead focusing the Jewish community’s effort on speaking out on the threat of Islam to America. “We learned this Passover, every generation Amalek is coming,” she said, misquoting both the *Haggadah* and the Torah to compare Arab Israelis to the Jews’ eternal biblical enemy, which they are

ordered by God to kill, including women, children and livestock, soon after saying that Jews love human and civil rights. “Why? Because Moshe Rabbeinu did not extinguish every last member [of Amalek].” (On Passover, Jews recite the liturgical poem “Vehi She’amda,” which refers generally to an enemy rising up to destroy the Jews every generation, not only the Amalekites; and traditionally, King Saul is remembered for his failure to kill all Amalekites despite being ordered to by God, not Moses.)

Sarna, who wasn’t able to attend in person but appeared via Zoom, discussed another difficult period in the American Jewish story, the interwar period. During that time, Henry Ford went on an antisemitic crusade in the United States, new technologies undermined traditional Shabbat observance, and the American government effectively shut down Jewish immigration. It was the worst of times, but it was also a time of great innovation in the Jewish world. Synagogues became community centers as country clubs rejected Jewish members, Sarna said. The labor movement brought America five-day work weeks, offering Jews Shabbat off, allowing them to further integrate into the wider workforce. Day schools were created. The Joint Distribution Committee, which was established before World War I, expanded during the interwar period and allowed Jews of all backgrounds to support the Jewish community living in what would become Israel.

Innovative ideas often come from the fringes and are often criticized at first, Sarna said, but “innovation could come from anywhere.” In the darkest periods come sparks, he said, adding: “Don’t give up.”

Today’s “next generation of Jewish leaders [were] created on campuses,” Sarna said. There has also been an influx of people converting to Judaism post-Oct. 7. As people rush to join the Jewish community, they need to be embraced. “We need to not leave them dripping at the mikveh,” Sarna said, referring to the ritual immersion that marks the formal end of the conversion process.

At numerous times during the gathering, there were even calls for American Jews to

flood into Miami, a trend of migration occurring as many Jews are choosing the city over traditional Jewish hubs like New York and California. Scott Kaufman, CEO, Miami Federation, who opened the un-conference, joked that the city was “like Tel Aviv, only more Zionist.”

There were appeals from the floor to invest in Jewish-owned and Israeli businesses. “The reason why every single person [is at this un-conference] is because of our economic success,” Brian Spivak, founder and CEO of Barzel Media, said. “Philanthropy does not exist without economic success, without investing in Jewish businesses, without investing in Israel.”

Ethan Bazak, an undergraduate student at Florida International University, recommended that the Jewish community invest in teaching young leaders how to manage money. “My generation has a hard time understanding money,” he said. “I don’t think it’s something new. The wealth inheritance that’s about to happen for my generation is so grand, and the knowledge of money and understanding of how things work is becoming more grand.”

Reut USA did not intend to include the entirety of American Jewry in the future-imagining event, focusing on the community’s core center and excluding the extremes on the right and left, Grinstein said.

The invite-only event included attendees from numerous Jewish federations, organizations and institutions of higher learning, but there were no representatives from organizations that specifically cater to more marginalized groups within the Jewish community, such as Jews of color or the LGBTQ community.

“It’s a point we need to improve on,” Grinstein acknowledged. “We could have had more diverse voices, but we are only having people who are invested in the community, so if you are out there throwing stones at the building, it’s not for you.”

Perhaps surprisingly, Zionism and anti-semitism were not core topics at the event because they are the two issues that “sap the energy out of the room they consume,” Grinstein said. “If we were to start with these topics, we’re going nowhere. It’s going to be impossible to talk about education,

leadership, institutional renewal, all these non-sexy things that are really the determinants of the long-term well-being of the community.”

In the coming days, Reut USA plans to send action items to attendees including the need to push for American Jewish studies at the college level; throwing distinctly Jewish celebrations for America’s 250th anniversary; developing curriculum for schools and camps about the resiliency of Jewish Americans; seeing polarization as an issue of national security to American Jewry; focusing on “purple issues” that overlap political parties in the center; and investing in community relations with other minority communities.

Attendee Enrico Ravenna, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Arkansas, said he is returning to his home community emboldened. He began his position six months ago and was excited to “learn from the best in the business” at the un-conference, he told eJP.

At the event, Ravenna recommended funders invest in smaller Jewish communities because they are often the only Jews whom non-Jews meet in their cities and states. Additionally, Jewish leaders in small communities are, practically by defin-

ition, experts at cross-cultural relationships because they have no other choice. This year, on July 4, Ravenna said he plans to further his friendships across cultures by partnering with other communities for Independence Day celebrations. Prior to accepting the job at the Arkansas federation, he didn’t know a single Jew lived in the state. Today, he wants the world to know that the Arkansas Jewish community dates back to the mid-19th century.

Jessie Dowsakul, CEO of the Columbia (S.C.) Jewish Federation, a similarly small federation, said she wished there were similar events for a cohort of young Jewish leaders. “When you talk to someone in their 30s and 40s, they’re hungry,” she told eJP.

Last year’s un-conference skewed older, Kaufman, the Miami federation CEO, told eJP, but more young leaders are entering the conversation as large donors who are used to doing things a certain way are learning they need to listen to other voices.

“The secret weapon of Jewish Miami is [people in their] 20s and 30s,” he said. There are “a zillion” talented young Jews who are “wired” to be involved in the Jewish community.

Kaufman wished there were more senior management from the biggest foundations

present at the un-conference, but there may have been a scheduling conflict due to the Jewish Funders Network Conference in San Diego later this month.

Having an event like this, which brings everyone together for partnerships, was important, he said, because often, leaders “start from zero.” Post-conference, he has a list of experts he plans to reach out to for support.

The final panel concluded with attorney Kathy Manning, a former Jewish Federations of North America board chair and former United States representative from North Carolina, leading the audience in the *Shehecheyanu* blessing. It was her way of concluding a monumental event, she said.

In 2054, when people look back on this post-Oct. 7 moment, “the question will not be whether we faced a setback” in the years after the attacks, Caryl Stern, executive director of the LionTree Foundation, said at the event. “The question is going to be, did we use it as a turning point. Renewal is not guaranteed, but it is available. And it’s our responsibility to choose it.”

Reut USA provided eJewishPhilanthropy’s travel and accommodations for the conference. ♦

MARCH 4, 2026

Vast majority of Israelis support the war against Iran, while most Americans oppose it, polls find

Polls find a sharp divide between Republicans and Democrats and a further split between MAGA-aligned Republicans and other Republicans

By Lahav Harkov

More than 80% of Israelis support the war against Iran, polls by two major Israeli research institutions found this week, while several U.S. polls found that a majority of Americans oppose it.

The Israel Democracy Institute found that 82% of Israelis — 93% of Jewish Israelis and 26% of Israeli Arabs — support the war with Iran.

Among Jewish Israelis, the war has strong support across the political spec-

trum, with 76% of respondents on the left backing it, 93% of voters from the center and 97% from the right.

Similarly, the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University found that 81% of Israelis back the war against Iran, and 63% support continuing military efforts until the Iranian regime falls.

Among Jewish Israelis, support for the war was at 92%, while only 38% of Israeli Arabs support it. About half (49%) of Israeli

Arabs oppose the war, while the rest said they did not know.

According to the IDI poll, three-fourths (74%) of Jewish Israelis said they supported continuing the war until the Iranian regime is overthrown, while only 18% of Israeli Arabs agreed; 61% of Israeli Arabs called for a ceasefire as soon as possible, while only 3% of Jewish Israelis chose that as their preferred option.

Over a third of respondents (37%) to the INSS poll said that Israelis would be able to live under the current war situation for up to a month, while 29% said they could continue for over a month.

At the start of last year's Iran war, half of the respondents said it could continue for over a month.

IDI found that most Jewish Israelis (74%) feel protected from Iranian attacks, whereas only 15% Israeli Arabs feel the same. Among Israelis who have a safe room in their homes, 76% feel safe, whereas among those who have to go to a shelter elsewhere, 63% feel safe.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Jewish Israelis feel that Israel's security is a central consideration for President Donald Trump, while only 43% of Israeli Arabs do.

Meanwhile, in the U.S., a CNN poll, conducted by SSRS shortly after the war began on Saturday, found that nearly 41% of Americans approve of the U.S. military action in Iran, with a sharp divide between

Republicans, Democrats and independents — 77% of Republicans approve of the launch of the operation, compared to 32% of independents and 18% of Democrats. The poll found that 59% of Americans disapprove of the U.S. decision to strike.

Similarly, an NBC poll found that 41% of American registered voters approve of Trump's approach to Iran, while 54% disapprove and 5% aren't sure. Just 8% of Democrats approve of the president's handling of the situation, while 79% of Republicans and 28% of independents approve of it. In addition, the poll found that 52% oppose the current U.S. military operation. A sizable majority of Republicans (77%) agree with the U.S. decision to strike Iran, while 89% of Democrats and 58% of independents disagree.

There is a further divide between self-identified MAGA-aligned Republicans and other Republicans, the poll found: 90% of the former back the strikes, while 54% of

the latter support them. The CNN poll found that MAGA Republicans are 30 points more likely than non-MAGA Republicans to strongly approve of the decision to take military action.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll found that just 27% of Americans approve of U.S. strikes — 55% of Republicans, 7% of Democrats and 19% of others. According to the poll, some 56% see President Donald Trump as too willing to use military force to advance U.S. interests — with 87% of Democrats holding this view, 23% of Republicans and 60% of people who don't identify with either major party.

A Fox News poll found that Americans were evenly split between support and disapproval of the current U.S. action against Iran with Republicans overwhelmingly supportive and Democrats overwhelmingly against. Most American respondents (61%) saw Iran as a "real national security threat," and only 38% did not. ♦

MARCH 5, 2026

Ruben Gallego transforms from pro-Israel moderate to face of antiwar opposition

The Arizona senator's outspoken commentary has repeatedly placed blame for the military operation on Israel, leading one Jewish Democrat to pull her support

By Marc Rod

With a series of pugnacious tweets and media appearances, Sen. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ) has made himself a face of the Democratic opposition to the war in Iran, issuing one of the first comments from a U.S. lawmaker opposing the effort in the early hours of Saturday morning.

Gallego's outspoken commentary, which has repeatedly pinned blame for the operation on Israel — a notion that colleagues on both sides of the aisle have disputed — also coincide with Gallego's endorsement of Graham Platner, the progressive Maine Senate candidate who has faced a series of scandals related to antisemitism.

The high-profile moves come as Gallego, who claimed victory in Arizona in 2024 even as President Donald Trump won the state, is seen by political observers as positioning himself for a 2028 presidential campaign — and as anti-Israel policies have become a litmus test for the progressive left.

"So Netanyahu now decides when we go to war? So much for America First," Gallego said earlier this week, in response to comments by Secretary of State Marco Rubio that seemed to suggest that the timing of the war was dictated by Israel.

"What the f*** happened to America First?" Gallego wrote in another post, adding that the U.S. should have left Israel to go ahead with the operation alone.

Though some lawmakers emerged from a Monday briefing echoing that line, Rubio has since said his comments were misrepresented, and others on both sides of the aisle have denied that Israel forced the U.S. into the conflict.

"They're following Netanyahu, who has literally told us ... that he's been trying to do this for 47 years. I know — I suffered the first attempt at this in 2005, and now America is suffering again because of it," Gallego said on MS NOW this week, referencing his service in Iraq. "There's a lot of ways that we can be supportive of Israel. There's a lot of ways that we could defend Israel's existence, its sovereignty. I'm 100% for that. We

don't need to go to war for them, especially when it's a dumb war."

He said that the U.S. should have threatened to withhold intelligence, support and munitions from Israel if it went ahead with an attack on Iran.

And he said on "Pod Save America" that the U.S. should have tried "calling Iran, saying 'This is not us, we're going to be staying out of this.' No, we just decided that we're going to let Netanyahu choose our wars. This is very disturbing to me."

The Arizona senator also said he would not support funding to replenish U.S. munitions expended in the war, saying that Middle Eastern partners should be responsible.

"When the bill comes to pay for the replenishment of interceptors and munitions, the Middle Eastern countries that we have been protecting need to pay for it," Gallego said on X. "We aren't cutting more Medicaid, food stamps for protecting these countries in a war of choice and not in our interest."

In a podcast appearance on *The Bulwark* this week, he also urged fellow Democrats to reject the war forcefully and wholeheartedly, without caveats or appeals to constitutional authority as other lawmakers have used to justify their opposition.

"Why are we spending all this money? All these countries in the Middle East have a lot of money. Why are we spending all this money?" Gallego continued, explaining questions he's hearing from constituents. "These are the things that are very simple for people to understand. I think we should not be afraid to communicate that."

Endorsing Platner, Gallego called him "the kind of fighter Maine hasn't seen in a long time, someone who tells you exactly what he thinks, doesn't owe anything to the special interests, and wakes up every day thinking about working families," also referencing their shared history as veterans.

Platner most recently faced scrutiny for appearing on a podcast in January with an antisemitic conspiracy theorist of whom Platner said he was a "longtime fan." Just before that podcast appearance came to light, Platner came under fire for retweeting a prominent neo-Nazi influencer. Platner

also, for decades, had a tattoo that closely mirrored a Nazi emblem on his chest.

While Platner has claimed not to have been aware of the significance of the symbol, both *Jewish Insider* and CNN reported that Platner described the tattoo as a Totenkopf, a symbol used by an SS unit.

Gallego and Platner are both represented by the same consulting firm, Fight Agency, which has signed on a number of far-left candidates who have made opposition to Israel a central focus of their campaigns. Another one of the Fight Agency's clients is New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, who the senator defended during his polarizing mayoral campaign.

Gallego, who has a Jewish child with his ex-wife, has spoken in the past about his concerns about antisemitism and its impacts on his own family. But pressed this week on Platner's antisemitic ties, a Gallego spokesperson referred JI to an interview Gallego conducted on "Pod Save America" about the endorsement.

Asked about Platner's appearance on and praise for the antisemitic podcaster, Gallego downplayed the situation, noting that many Democrats have appeared on Joe Rogan's podcast, which has also spread antisemitic conspiracy theories.

"A working class man goes and has a conversation on a platform that is very similar to what Joe Rogan talks about ... but everyone freaks out on this guy," Gallego said. "Why? Because the establishment doesn't want him. This is very simple ... so they're going to make sure that he looks bad."

Gallego also said that Platner was "young and stupid" when he got the tattoo but argued that it was not clearly identifiable as a Nazi symbol, and that subsequent security checks and physicals did not identify the tattoo as a problem.

And he argued that Democrats are too focused on finding "perfect" candidates who are ultimately unable to appeal to voters.

The Arizona senator separately said on a *Bulwark* podcast this week, "I also endorsed Haley Stevens and Angie Craig, right? And, I was accused by the left of being in the pocket of Israel." He said that

he's supporting people he believes can win general elections.

Arizona state Rep. Alma Hernandez, a Jewish Democrat and outspoken supporter of Israel, said she was surprised and disappointed by Gallego's endorsement of Platner.

"It is a really hard one to justify. I, quite frankly, do not care if they are both veterans. There are plenty of veterans who are not complete bigots and jerks who you could endorse," Hernandez told JI. "There is a woman who's running, who is the governor, who has not had any history of being a bigot like this individual. I mean, for God's sake, he has a Nazi tattoo."

She added, "you can't excuse and pretend that there is no pattern of bigotry and, quite frankly, just a real disregard for Democratic values" from Platner, pointing to offensive comments about people of color and women that the Maine candidate has made.

"I'm disappointed as an Arizonan, as a woman and as a Jewish woman," Hernandez continued. "I think it says a lot about a person who's willing to put their name behind someone like him."

Hernandez said that, in response to Gallego's support for Platner and his shifting stance and recent comments on Israel, she's heard from other Jewish Democrats in Arizona who say they won't support Gallego going forward.

In the House, Gallego was generally a supporter of Israel — and voted against the 2015 Iran nuclear deal — within what was at the time the mainstream of the Democratic Party, but was not particularly active on the issue.

The then-congressman appeared to take a more hawkish position during and immediately after his Senate race in 2024, leading an effort to expand U.S.-Israel counter-tunneling cooperation, supporting efforts to sanction the International Criminal Court, backing the redesignation of the Houthis as a foreign terrorist organization, strongly condemning Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) for including the phrase "from the river to the sea" in a video she posted and quickly urging the administration to freeze Iranian assets shortly after the Oct. 7, 2023 attacks,

when other Democrats were slower to endorse that position.

He also said, through a spokesperson, that he would have opposed efforts earlier this year to block certain U.S. aid shipments to Israel that were supported by a majority

of Senate Democrats. Gallego himself was absent for the vote, citing family duties as a new father.

But Gallego's recent statements, particularly since the start of the Iran war, indicate a sharp tack in the opposite direction as he

eyes a potential national campaign. Other potential 2028 Democratic candidates, like California Gov. Gavin Newsom, appear to be making a similar calculation. ♦

MARCH 5, 2026

Latest Tucker Carlson conspiracy targets Chabad, sparking outrage

The podcaster's claim that the Hasidic sect seeks to start a 'religious war' also raised concerns of physical safety

By Gabby Deutch

Far-right podcaster Tucker Carlson's latest extreme rhetoric took aim at the Chabad Lubavitch movement, with sweeping conspiratorial language accusing the Hasidic sect of seeking to start a "religious war" amid the U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran.

Carlson argued in an episode of his show that dropped late Wednesday night that Jews see the war against Iran as an opportunity to feud with Islam and to target Christians. He claimed that Jews seek to destroy al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem and build the Third Temple on top of its ruins.

Carlson specifically called out the Chabad movement, saying the group's goal is the rebuilding of the Temple — and he argued that Jews who seek to see the Temple rebuilt are at odds with Christians.

"Christians have a way of dying disproportionately in these wars, which tells you something about their real motives," Carlson said. Rebuilding the Temple, which was destroyed in the first century by the

Romans on the site that is now home to the al-Aqsa Mosque, "is totally anathema to Christianity," said Carlson.

It is true that Orthodox Jews believe that the Temple will be rebuilt when the Messiah comes, a prophetic vision that has been a part of daily Jewish prayer for two millennia. But no mainstream Jewish denomination advocates for the destruction of the al-Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam's holiest sites, in order to hasten the rebuilding of the Temple, and current Israeli policy forbids Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount.

"It's not so subtle that the building of the Third Temple and the Messianic era is central not just to Chabad, but to all of Judaism as one of the 13 Principles of Faith," Rabbi Mordechai Lightstone, Chabad's social media director, wrote on X on Thursday. "Acts of destruction or the subjugation of other nations are an anathema to a time when good will flow in abundance and the occupation of the entire world, Jew and non-Jew alike, will be to know the divine."

Carlson's remarks prompted outrage among Chabad's backers, who pointed out that Chabad emissaries have for decades played a crucial role in connecting Jews to their faith and to each other.

"This is so absurd. So ridiculously absurd. If you know anything about Chabad, they have one mission: encouraging Jewish people to practice Judaism," *Punchbowl News* founder Jake Sherman posted on X.

Karol Markowicz, a *New York Post* columnist, criticized Carlson for targeting "the warmest, kindest, most welcoming organization ever that does nonstop charity work."

The rhetoric also sparked concern about the physical safety of sites associated with Chabad, particularly after a man repeatedly drove his car into Chabad's Brooklyn headquarters in January. The NYPD said it would increase patrols at Jewish locations amid fears of antisemitism after the Iran attacks began last weekend. ♦

MARCH 5, 2026

Iranian Jews in U.S. hope for a better future for their former homeland, fear regime survival

American Iranian Jewish leaders call for focus on and support for the Iranian people as the U.S. and Israel strike the Islamic Republic regime

By Nira Dayanim Jay Deitcher

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Amir, who is Jewish and Iranian, had been in America for less than a year last July, when he found himself 7,500 miles away from his family with no way to contact them as Israel and the United States took aim at Iranian nuclear facilities, and communication into the Islamic Republic went silent.

Since the 1979 revolution, Jewish Iranians have lived under the thumb of the Islamic Republic, a brutal theocratic government with a history of persecuting its minority populations. Before the overthrow of the shah of Iran, when the Islamic Republic seized power, Iran had a flourishing Jewish community of over 100,000, but a mass exodus — largely to the United States and Israel — has left a community estimated at 9,000-20,000, living under the watchful eye of an oppressive regime. Amir, who received refugee status as an oppressed minority, was one of the few to escape, but afterward he said he found himself more alone than ever.

Every day during last summer's 12-day war, Amir sent his family emails and WhatsApp messages, called and scrolled news sites and social media for signs of hope. Days into the conflict, he found a work-around: A friend who lived in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where communication was then still open with Iran, could contact his family. His friend told him they had food, they were safe, and Amir could finally breathe.

But the current war, launched on Feb. 28 in a joint military operation by Israel and the U.S., is different because Iran attacked its neighbors, cutting off communication with the surrounding countries, and now Amir, who asked to use an alias due to fear

for his family's safety, has no way to know they are safe.

"I'm 100% sure that in the next couple of weeks, we will see the bad situation in Iran turn worse, Amir told *eJewishPhilanthropy*, as food prices continue to skyrocket and essentials grow scarce.

In December, a popular protest movement erupted in Iran in response to the country's faltering economy. The movement quickly expanded, drawing millions to the streets to oppose the Islamic regime, which has ruled often through violent suppression of the Iranian people. A parallel movement also developed within the Iranian diaspora, with thousands gathering for weekly demonstrations in support of the Iranian people, and some calling for U.S. intervention, particularly after the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps cracked down on the protest movement in Iran, killing thousands of protesters, though some watchdogs estimate that the number could be much higher.

Building on those demonstrations, on Feb. 28, Israel and the United States launched a campaign of airstrikes targeting Iranian military infrastructure and top brass. This included an opening strike that killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, bringing a moment of joy and relief for the overwhelming majority of diaspora Persians. Now approaching its second week, many view the war as the culmination of nearly 50 years of hope for change. But with the ever-present memory of the regime's brutal crackdowns — the stakes are high, particularly for its Jewish community and other minority groups. As the war continues, many diaspora Persians hope that this could be the moment that the regime finally topples, and worry about what happens if it doesn't.

"The most powerful guy in Iran died, so you cannot imagine what [the Islamic Republic is] going to do," Amir said. "You cannot imagine what is going to be the reaction of the Muslims. Everything is possible."

If Iran is unable to target Israel, "they're gonna attack the Jews in Iran, because they are kind of hostages," Amir said.

Even laced with unease and uncertainty, this is primarily a moment of hope for the Persian Jewish community, Sharon Nazarian, vice chair of the board of directors of the Anti-Defamation League, told *eJP*. And the broader Persian community, she said, is on the same page.

"There's a lot of complexities [in the current war]. There's a lot of questions about what comes after. There's a lot of worry and concern about what tomorrow brings. All of that is a given," said Nazarian. "But the question of whether this regime should be toppled or should it be allowed to continue to strangle its own people, to bring havoc to the region and literally, the world, none of us are questioning that."

While some Jewish leaders told *eJP* that materially supporting Iranians in Iran is beyond the reach of Jewish nonprofits and philanthropists, others believe the Jewish philanthropic world could play a part in transitioning the country to a more tolerant future, one that would emerge as a close ally to the United States and Israel.

"When [the Ayatollah was killed] we were all really excited, and now it's just setting in that, how far is this going to go?" Rabbi Tarlan Rabizadeh, vice president for Jewish engagement at American Jewish University, told *eJP*. "Are we going to actually be able to topple the regime? Is the administration going to keep moving forward? Or are they going to feel pressure from some of the American people internally, and Trump will say, 'OK, let's make a

deal. Let's not keep going.' So that's kind of the feeling we're constantly feeling. It's almost like one of your relatives [is] in surgery, and you're sitting in the waiting room."

As the larger Jewish community struggles to reckon with their own views on the conflict, often tinted by their feelings towards President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Iranian-American Jewish leaders are speaking out on the need to pay attention to Iranian Jews' views on the situation.

"All of my countries are involved, Israel, U.S., [Iran]," Rabizadeh told eJP. "All my friends in Israel are in bunkers. I was in a meeting yesterday, and they're like, 'Sorry, there are sirens. I have to go.' I mean, that's the level of anxiety."

Farhad Novian, president of Temple Emanuel in Beverly Hills, Calif., and son of Iranian Jewish immigrants, described a sense of uncertainty over the last few weeks, interspersed with "relief and happiness" at the news of Khamenei's death. Initially, Novian was hopeful that the U.S. and Israel's military actions would lead to regime change led by Reza Pahlavi, Iran's exiled crown prince who fled alongside his family when his father, the last shah of Iran, was overthrown in 1979.

Pahlavi's father, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, is often remembered both for rapidly modernizing Iran, and for using his secret police, the SAVAK, to forcefully shut down opposition, earning him a dictatorial reputation. Yet for many diaspora Persians, the crown prince has come to represent the halcyon days before the Islamic Revolution, when the country maintained close ties with the West and ensured freedom for women, and for many diaspora Persian Jews, his vows to restore ties with Israel are particularly compelling.

A week after Khamenei was killed, Novian is less certain that the war will lead to regime change. For him, the optimal political solution is that, led by Pahlavi as a transitional figure, Iran becomes a constitutional monarchy, and then a democracy.

"My feelings were of relief and happiness for the Iranian people that this mass murderer, this bureaucratic leader [Khamenei],

was being attacked and had been killed. I don't think he has any place here in this world. And I think it was a good thing that he was eliminated," said Novian. "But it's now been six or seven days, and I don't necessarily see a regime change, and I don't think that the United States wants, necessarily, a regime change."

But Novian is also optimistic about the impact of both Israel "ridding itself and its neighbors of the menace of Iran and its proxies," and the outcome for Iranians if they are offered the opportunity to finally govern themselves.

"They're younger," he said of the Iranian population, over 60% of whom are under 35 and have known only oppression under the Islamic Republic. "They're enterprising, they're super intelligent, they're passionate, and I think they can make a democracy work," he said.

In response to the protests in January, the regime initiated an internet blackout, cutting off the Iranian people's access to the rest of the world. Coupled with an environment of intense surveillance, there are real challenges in providing any material support to the people of Iran.

Daniel Bral, an attorney and the board president of the Progressive Zionists of California, told eJP. "Aside from messages of support for the people of Iran, I don't know what philanthropists can do to actively support Iranians in Iran. It's beyond their reach."

But there is opportunity to support the community stateside, said Nazarian, including bringing in Iranian Jews as speakers at Jewish events and cultivating partnerships with non-Jewish Iranians with similar goals.

Nazarian called for the Jewish community to support diaspora Iranian organizations across culture, human rights and political action, as well as invest in social media to engage in what she described as a "battle of narratives," facing both the Iranian community and the Jewish community.

"There are lots of Iranian organizations in the U.S., across Europe, who have been investing in building for this moment, and whatever your organization's strength, whatever your angle is, find a partner and invest in them," she said. "By doing that,

we're really furthering both of our interests, both of our priorities, as the Jewish community and the Iranian diaspora community."

There is a large swath of Iranian American Silicon Valley tech entrepreneurs from companies such as Google, Uber, Meta and Amazon, including thousands who signed a petition calling for an end to the Islamic regime, ready to partner with Jewish philanthropists interested in helping rebuild Iran as a democracy, she said. "Their arms are open and willing to get not only assistance and help, but partnership with the Jewish community, with Jewish philanthropists."

This is also an opportunity for the larger Jewish world to learn the rich history of Persian Jews, Nazarian said. "Learning about Iran, hearing from Jewish Iranians about our 47-year experience being kicked out of our country of birth, these are important things, and Jewish Iranians will be happy to speak about that."

According to Rabizadeh, the lens through which many Americans view the Middle East doesn't always leave space for the Persian experience, let alone the Persian Jewish experience. Many of her "American, Ashkenazi" peers, who lean liberal, she said, have been confused that many diaspora Iranians, across ethnicity and creed, are standing "side by side" in support of the war.

"For them to see Iranian people, a majority of whom are Muslim, stand side by side with Jews. I think it's just been really hard for the Americans and a lot of the progressive Europeans to really compute how that could be," said Rabizadeh. "They're just entering the conversation now, and they think they know everything."

When the protests began in January and "the regime responded by murdering more than 35,000 of their fellow Iranians in a matter of days, my communities were mostly silent," Rachel Sumekh, a Los Angeles-based Persian Jewish leader, told eJP. "Since Friday night, so many have spoken out! And yet, the newsletters/memes/hot takes too often erase Iranians. Their focus is whether Trump is bad/good, or Israel is bad/good, or whether this is going to hurt this other group. All of the

discourse is valid, but missing are the Iranians desperate after 47 years for freedom from this authoritarian regime. Their sadness, uncertainty, and even the tinge of hope we may feel, all unseen.”

Next Wednesday in Los Angeles, the nondenominational congregation Ikar, the Israel Policy Forum and the New Israel Fund are holding an event titled “Across Iranian Jewry: Home, Exile, and Belonging,” featuring a conversation led by Sumekh, with Persian Jewish leaders Bral and Camille Moradian.

“My hope is that it first and foremost humanizes Iranians in Iran,” Sumekh said, about what she hopes attendees take from the event. They are “currently silenced so we must speak for them. Second, I hope it helps the greater Jewish community understand Iranian American Jews. Our journey

in the diaspora, our political leanings and also break up the myth that we all think or vote one way.”

Amir hopes this moment motivates the Jewish American community to realize the urgency of getting the remaining Jews out of Iran, he said. Freedom from the Islamic Republic may take longer than people hope. “The most efficient thing that people can help with [is] providing a way to help Jews going out from Iran to come into the United States.”

For the past several months, he has been working with HIAS, formerly the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, to petition the government to let refugees in and to make sure Iranian Jews have their paperwork in order to ensure they can get in the moment an opportunity arises.

“I don’t care about myself right now,” Amir said. “I just care about my family and all the Iranian people. Doesn’t matter if they are Jewish or not.”

Still, many advocates hope for a future that allows Jews to thrive in Iran and for members of the diaspora to finally return to visit. “The relationship between the Persians and the Jews dates back thousands of years,” Novian said, excited about the prospect of regional peace. “Whatever we could do as Jews to support what’s going on and for a transition to a democracy, whether it’s by money or other support or by contacting our senators, we should do that.”

He has a smile on his face, he said, thinking about “the potential holding of hands between Persians, Jews and Israelis.” ♦