

THE WEEKLY PRINT

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MARCH 26, 2026

New report highlights fake AI rabbis spreading antisemitism on Instagram

The report from Combat Antisemitism Movement found the platform has actively recommended this content to millions of users

By Haley Cohen

An AI-generated Instagram account portraying an Orthodox-looking rabbi is pushing antisemitic conspiracy theories to its more than 1.4 million followers, and it's not the only one, a study published this week about antisemitic content on the social media platform has found.

An account called "Rabbi Goldman" "uses fake, AI-created authority figures to spread hate" in "a troubling and growing tactic," according to the report, published on Wednesday by the Combat Antisemitism Movement.

The 12-page report, titled "Engineered Exposure: How Antisemitic Content Is Pushed and Amplified to Millions Across Instagram," documents 100 posts that researchers described as antisemitic, pushed directly to Instagram accounts over a 96-hour period from March 19-22.

These posts, actively suggested by the platform's recommendation systems, generated more than 5.3 million likes and 3.8 million shares, with an estimated reach of

150 to 280 million users, according to the report.

CAM defined antisemitic posts as ones that invoke conspiracy theories — such as Jews controlling the media or manipulating global conflicts — and posts that claim Jews, often referred to as "Zionists," are linked to demonic forces or satanic imagery, all of which have been used to justify antisemitic violence.

The report raises particular concern around the creation of "closed content environments," in which users are repeatedly fed similar antisemitic themes, with little or no countervailing content.

"This type of algorithmic clustering reaffirms dangerous beliefs, contributing to a process of radicalization that can have lethal real-world consequences," the report states. Researchers identified 12 AI-generated "rabbis" with a combined following of 2.1 million Instagram users, all of which promote classic antisemitic stereotypes.

The "Rabbi Goldman" account features many of these, including one video in which the "rabbi," wearing a tuxedo and

seemingly seated in a luxury airplane, claims that Jews utilize empty private jets to evade taxes. The community note attached to the clip reads, "This is an AI generated rabbi who is trying to scam you by selling a fake 9\$ get rich handbook. This account is ran by scammers based in south India."

Meta, which is the parent company of Instagram — as well as Facebook and WhatsApp — did not respond to a request for comment from *Jewish Insider* about the report's findings.

"Simply put, this is evidence of a broad systemic failure on the part of Instagram and Meta," Sacha Roytman, the CEO of CAM, said in a statement. "When a platform actively recommends content that dehumanizes Jews to mass audiences, we are no longer talking about a simple oversight or a mistake in the algorithmic design. We are talking about infrastructure that normalizes hatred at scale that must be addressed immediately."

"CAM is calling on Meta to go beyond basic enforcement and take real responsibility.

What's been uncovered here must be taken seriously. This isn't a fringe problem. Rather, it points to a broader, systemic issue with global reach, shaping how millions of people encounter and engage with anti-semitic ideas in 2026," the report states.

Last year, Meta received pushback from Jewish leaders when it introduced a new community-driven fact-checking system, ending its third-party fact-checking pro-

gram and replacing it with a system modeled after the community notes feature on Elon Musk's X. Some Jewish leaders expressed concern that the move would "open the floodgates to content" that could target Jewish communities and individuals, and called the decision a "step back" in the fight against rising antisemitism.

Dangerous implications of social media have extended beyond the Jewish com-

munity, with a jury in Los Angeles ruling on Wednesday that Meta, as well as Google, are liable for creating addictive products that caused a teenager's depression and anxiety. The verdict marks the first time juries have decided that tech companies are at least partially liable for distress online and offline. ♦

MARCH 25, 2026

Kiryat Shmona mayor's tirade brings Israeli North's plight to the fore

By Judah Ari Gross

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Lashing out at the heads of Israeli ministries during a meeting with them yesterday in the western Galilee, Avichai Stern, the mayor of the war-battered northern city of Kiryat Shmona, lambasted the government for failing to protect the residents of his city, which is again being targeted relentlessly by Hezbollah. He accused the ministries of providing insufficient, slow and often elusive assistance for his community, which was struggling even before it entered the Lebanese terror group's crosshairs in the wake of the Oct. 7 terror attacks.

Kiryat Shmona and the surrounding area were evacuated soon after the Hezbollah attacks began in late 2023 and have not come close to recovering, with the majority of the city's residents refusing to return after a ceasefire went into effect in November 2024. Those who did return to the North have spent more time in bomb shelters than anyone else in the country over the past month. Unlike Tel Aviv and other areas of central Israel, which are being targeted by long-range ballistic missiles from Iran hundreds of miles away — giving residents several minutes to enter bomb shelters — Kiryat Shmona is being attacked by Hezbollah from just a few kilometers away, meaning residents are forced to spend nearly all of

their time in bomb shelters. (That is assuming, of course, that they have access to bomb shelters, which many do not.)

"It doesn't matter how things end on the Lebanese front or the Iranian front if we've lost a city in the State of Israel," Stern said at the start of his remarks.

Stern's tirade exemplified the frustration and disappointment of many residents of northern Israel, who yet again find themselves under attack without the governmental attention and support that they need. The monologue was filmed and shared on social media, where it spread quickly, and was subsequently reported on in traditional Israeli outlets. Unnamed government officials responded to Stern's accusations, claiming that he, not the ministries, was the cause of the delays in funding for Kiryat Shmona, adding an *ad hominem* allegation that Stern was trying to get the government to pay for the repair of his father's synagogue — a claim Stern has rejected as a "distortion" of his efforts to secure funding for several synagogues in the city that don't have bomb shelters.

Philanthropy professionals who focus on northern Israel and work closely with the local governments told *eJewishPhilanthropy* that the situation in Israel's North is indeed dire, that residents are facing constant deadly attacks without the life-saving protections that they need and that the gov-

ernment has not made the North's recovery a top priority.

Michal Cohen, the CEO of the Rashi Foundation, which runs a number of programs in northern Israel, denounced the government for both its "abandonment" of northern Israel, particularly as it relates to bomb shelters and fortifications, and for the unnamed officials' aggressive response to Stern's remarks. "During a war, who are you attacking?" Cohen fumed, adding: "We don't have enough enemies from outside?"

While the American-Israeli war against Iran has drawn the lion's share of media coverage over the past month, the conflict with Hezbollah and the ramifications for already struggling northern Israel are even more significant and potentially devastating. While Tel Aviv is also under bombardment, few believe that the future of the city or of central Israel are at risk. Not so with Kiryat Shmona. "I went to sleep last night worried about Kiryat Shmona and I woke up this morning worrying about Kiryat Shmona, that has been a motif since the war started," Sarah Mali, director general of Jewish Federations of Canada-UIA Canada, told *eJP* this morning. "There is a genuine question about the longevity of Kiryat Shmona as a decent stable city in the north and even more serious questions about its ability to thrive."

In the video, a visibly exasperated Stern highlighted the immense stress that the

current war is putting on the 10,000 residents of Kiryat Shmona. “And you [ministry director-generals] expect them for another month or you don’t even know how long to remain in this miserable situation,” he said, noting that in the previous war against Hezbollah, residents had been evacuated and weren’t dealing with “running to the shelter every 10 minutes and the booms every second.... If you think that 10,000 people will stay like this — 10 people will stay, only those who are unable to leave.”

Pounding on the table, Stern highlighted the grave shortage of bomb shelters in the city — a situation that the Israeli government has been aware of for decades — saying that the city, which before the war had a population of roughly 22,000 — has 4,700 housing units that don’t have bomb shelters that are up to code or have bomb shelters at all. “You haven’t provided them with fortifications until now, so at least provide them protection now. If you can’t, get them out of harm’s way! You don’t send a soldier to battle without a ceramic vest, right? Why are you putting civilians on the frontline without protection?” he said.

Getting increasingly agitated, Stern noted that this is a personal issue for him as well. “I have a 2 ½-year-old daughter and a 5-year-old daughter, whom I have to take to activities in a bomb shelter, and I am praying every time I make that trip [that there isn’t an attack],” he said. “Do any of you know what it’s like getting missiles with zero seconds of warning — with kids at home, with people with disabilities, with elderly people?”

If someone is injured in an attack, Stern added that there is no hospital in Kiryat Shmona to treat them. Instead, they would have to be driven by car or flown in a helicopter to a nearby hospital, which is not possible under fire. “I need to call Hezbollah to ask them to stop firing so I can get them out with a helicopter?” he asked rhetorically.

Stern also noted that the residents who have returned are more likely to come from weaker socioeconomic backgrounds and are therefore even more reliant on municipal services. “That’s the population living in the city,” he said. “Twenty-eight percent of

students grades 1 through 8 don’t know how to read and write,” Stern said, quoting from a sheet of figures in front of him.

He accused the government of being quick to issue resolutions promising funds for the North but slow to actually dole those budgets out. He also alleged that other cities were getting preferential treatment, having their streets repaired within hours of a missile attack, while his remained full of impact craters.

In their response, the unnamed government officials said these delays were Stern’s own fault. “Government ministries are seeing that they are transferring hundreds of millions of shekels to Kiryat Shmona — but the local government has a serious problem with management and execution, and therefore things are not being rolled out, and the residents are the ones suffering from it,” the anonymous officials said in statements to Hebrew media.

The Rashi Foundation’s Cohen noted that, in their response, the government officials only blamed Stern and his municipality for the delays, which she said would only make sense if the problems were limited to his city, but they are a widespread issue throughout the North. “If it were just Kiryat Shmona, OK. But it’s not just Kiryat Shmona. So what? Only the government knows how to be a hero?” she said.

She acknowledged that the situation does present a major challenge for the Kiryat Shmona municipality, though she rejected the claim that these “capacity” issues were the primary problem. “I’m not saying that everything is perfect there, and the problem is just the government,” she said. However, Cohen added, this is understandable given the scale of the crisis, which far exceeds what even the strongest cities could handle.

Kiryat Shmona has also historically been a relatively weak municipality — with a low socioeconomic ranking — even before the war.

Given the immense need for support, Cohen said, the government should be stepping in to provide additional capacity, not using its absence as an excuse. “Instead of judging them, help them. Instead of blocking them, help them,” Cohen said. “If they

don’t have a project manager, give them a project manager.”

She added that the most significant issue facing the city is one that the national government is well-positioned to address. “What do they need now? Bomb shelters and bomb shelters and bomb shelters,” Cohen said. “How’s that connected to capacity?”

Both Cohen and Mali, of the Canadian federation, noted that while philanthropy is able to support recovery efforts in the north, the government needs to lead the process by developing and executing a comprehensive strategic plan: funding infrastructure projects, offering tax incentives and improving critical services like welfare, health care and education.

Cohen, who worked for years in government, including a four-year stint as director-general of the education ministry, attributed much of the tension between the government and Kiryat Shmona to petty politics. Although Kiryat Shmona is a historically Likud-aligned city — and Stern is a member of the Likud Party and said just last month that he plans to continue voting for the party — he does not have a close relationship with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which Cohen said results in Stern being subjected to “political excommunication.”

“The North doesn’t belong to Netanyahu, and it doesn’t belong to Stern; it belongs to all of us,” she said, using Netanyahu’s nickname. “It is a strategic asset.”

Cohen noted that despite the North also facing devastation in the wake of the Oct. 7 terror attacks, while the Israeli government has created the Tekuma Authority, which is specifically focused on the reconstruction of southern Israel, the Tenufa Plan, which was supposed to do the same for northern Israel, has not gotten off the ground. “Is that just a coincidence?” she said.

“We need a strategic plan for the north,” she said. “We need investment, not just government resolutions.”

Both Cohen and Mali demanded greater action and focus on the reconstruction of the North. “We need to make this the burning issue of the day,” Mali said. ♦

MARCH 26, 2026

Military experts lay out remaining obstacles in Iran war, herald successes thus far

Former CENTCOM head Gen. Frank McKenzie: 'If you are sitting down at CENTCOM right now, you are satisfied with where you are'

By Matthew Shea

Former U.S. Central Command head Gen. Frank McKenzie said Wednesday that the U.S. military is “in the heart of the plan” in its war against Iran, pointing to major military achievements against Tehran’s missile and military capabilities, while cautioning that the conflict remains a grinding, long-term campaign.

As the conflict between the U.S., Israel and Iran nears the one-month mark, officials say Iran’s capabilities have been severely degraded, while President Donald Trump has asserted that the war is nearly over and that its objectives have largely been achieved.

At the same time, reports indicate that Iran has rejected Trump administration proposals to negotiate an end to the conflict, while the Pentagon is deploying the military’s highly specialized 82nd Airborne Division to the Middle East — raising fresh questions about the trajectory of the war and the broader strategy.

During a webinar hosted by the Jewish Institute for National Security of America, McKenzie said the U.S. is “accomplishing the objectives that we set out. CENTCOM is executing a long-prepared campaign plan. This is not something that we’ve drawn up on the back of the envelope day-to-day. These are things that have been studied and refined for many years. If you are sitting down at CENTCOM right now, you are satisfied with where you are.”

McKenzie said one of the clearest indicators of success is that Iran has been unable to generate the kind of large ballistic missile salvos that U.S. military planners had long feared.

“Iran has not been able to mount massive volleys against Israel. Have they been able to fire some number of missiles against our targets? Yes, but not the massive volleys that we thought would

make it hard for us to defend,” McKenzie said, attributing that in part to Iran’s own strategic miscalculation.

“The Iranians made a mistake in designing their ballistic missile force. They mistook hardening and burying for security,” McKenzie said. “The truth of warfare today is this: if you can see it, you can hit it. If you can hit it, you can kill it. And even if you dig yourself deep underground with these beautiful missile cities, that just makes it easier for us to strike and destroy these missiles wholesale rather than retail.”

Yaacov Ayish, former head of the IDF’s general staff, also said that “significant progress” has been made. He noted that Iran’s ballistic missile capabilities have subsided.

“When I’m thinking about the amount of ballistic missiles launched by the Iranians compared to what they had planned, I think they are in a very very bad place, and this is due to the fact that not only their command control capabilities were shattered since day one of this war, but also because we [the IDF] are, together with the U.S., hunting their launching capabilities.”

McKenzie said the U.S. is also making progress against Iran’s drone threat, though he acknowledged that it remains an evolving challenge. Throughout the conflict, Tehran has launched over 2,000 low-cost, easy-to-produce drones at targets across the Middle East.

“We are still absorbing how to employ and defend against drones, as is really everybody else,” he said. “The best way to do that is going to be by striking where the drones are manufactured, where they’re launched. The worst way to do it is to defend them in the terminal area.”

McKenzie also addressed the conflict over the Strait of Hormuz, where Iran has effectively blocked one of the world’s most

critical oil routes. He said the U.S. has already struck Iran’s major naval assets and is now focused on “preparatory steps in order to clear” it.

“What that means is first clearing those craft, getting rid of Iranian submarines, looking at the fast-attack craft, the small cigarette-boat type vessels that can swarm out from the northern to the southern coast of Iran ... to affect shipping in the region,” McKenzie said. “CENTCOM is busy on a program of doing that. I think there’s probably some days left ahead of work to finish that. But it’s progressing.”

He said Iran also retains a “large and capable stack of mines,” and suggested CENTCOM has likely been targeting both the mines and the vessels used to lay them.

“You don’t have to clear the whole Strait of Hormuz,” McKenzie said. “You’ve got to clear a route that you’re going to bring vessels through.”

Ayish noted that he sees “two ways to solve” the tension at the strait.

“One is the diplomatic channel that is under discussion between the U.S. and the Iranians via certain mediators, and there is the military option,” Ayish said. “When you are analyzing the achievements that were achieved, it seems like both options are viable, and I think the major reason for the Iranians to go into this negotiation is because they know that it’s very imminent. Both options are seriously on the table.”

When asked whether CENTCOM had failed to adequately prepare for what had unfolded in the strait, McKenzie rejected that premise.

“I’m not sure I’d agree with that assertion,” he said. “You build your plan off the forces that you have. We’ve always thought there’d be a struggle over this. The nature of warfare is you can’t get everything you want. Sometimes it takes a little while to get

that. I think we're working toward that end right now."

McKenzie also declined to rule out the possibility of U.S. boots on the ground, an outcome many Democrats and some Republicans have strongly opposed.

"I think it's certainly something we want the Iranians to worry about," McKenzie said. "I would certainly leave that on the table, and then I wouldn't share what I was

going to do. I think we want them to be very worried about that."

Meanwhile, while Ayish noted a goal of achieving "a situation that will allow a regime change in the future in Iran," McKenzie said the U.S. is not directly pursuing regime change in Tehran, even if it could emerge as a consequence of the campaign, even as Trump told reporters Tuesday that regime change had already been achieved.

"The United States is not pursuing regime change directly. It may be a product of what we're doing," McKenzie said. "We'd like to get to a point where there's going to be some entity in Tehran that will negotiate the objectives we want for this campaign, whether it's a completely new regime or a version of this regime that is so affected by pressure that they're willing to make these concessions." ♦

MARCH 24, 2026

Summer Israel trips still up in the air, but after 2025 war delay, Maccabiah '100%' plans to proceed

Organizers are now having to decide whether or not they will go forward with their trips, as the cancellation window closes, but most participants appear to be hanging in, IETA's Anna Langer says

By Nira Dayanim Judah Ari Gross

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Even as the wars against Iran and Hezbollah grind on and Israeli airspace remains largely closed due to ongoing ballistic missile attacks, in the coming days, Israel trip providers will have to decide whether or not they will be going ahead with their plans for this summer.

"The window to be able to cancel with the opportunity for a complete refund is closing for most trips that happen early in the summer — let's say beginning around June — which is many of them," Anna Langer, Jewish Federations of North America's vice president of North America Israel strategy and the acting executive director of the Israel Educational Travel Alliance, told *eJewishPhilanthropy* recently. "That question is upon us right now, and that is why we are offering day-to-day, one-on-one support to organizations, for them to think about these decisions and for us to help to guide them through thinking about those processes, as well as community spaces for folks to hear from others."

One of the largest trips this summer will be the Maccabiah Games, which were scheduled to take place last year but were

postponed because of that summer's war between Israel and Iran. While organizers of the event told eJP that they do have a few more weeks before having to make a final decision, they are currently operating under the assumption that the games will open on June 30 as planned.

"After Passover... we're going to have to assess alternatives, but our 100% belief at this moment is the games will take place this summer," Mike Siegal, president of the Maccabi World Union, told eJP, noting that the games were "already on Plan B," after being postponed last summer.

"It's our job to encourage everybody to not do anything other than believe that the games are going to take place and that they're going to be phenomenal and that they're going to be inspirational," he said. "The job is to be optimistic, and so we are."

Siegal said that, so far, while parents and participating organizations have expressed concern about the ongoing security situation in Israel, they have not had mass cancellations or calls to reschedule or relocate the games. Last summer's games were slated to be the largest yet, with some 10,000 athletes from 80 countries due to compete.

Roy Hessing, CEO of the Maccabi World Union, told eJP that more than 8,000 athletes are expected to participate in this summer's games, with roughly 6,000 of them coming from abroad. Hessing noted that this figure does not include the adults who will be accompanying the athletes.

Siegal, a former board chair of the Jewish Agency, said that the games hold immense symbolic significance, demonstrating the connection between Diaspora Jews and Israelis.

"[I am most looking forward to] having the opportunity to show the people of Israel that the Diaspora is not only talking about solidarity, but we're going to show up in solidarity," Siegal said. "That's probably the best thing that we can do: show up in solidarity for the people who have had to live under these awful conditions. It's just good to have something normal."

Eyal Ostrinsky, chair of Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael-Jewish National Fund, told eJP last week that his organization agreed with the need for the games and had therefore doubled its financial support for them. "We are assisting with an additional NIS 4 million [\$1.3 million]. It was NIS 4 million, and we increased to NIS 8 million [\$2.6 million]."

There's nothing close to it, in terms of importance," he said.

According to Langer, not only have there not been mass cancellations for the Maccabiah Games, but additional athletes have registered to participate in them since the war broke out.

"The U.S. delegation to the Maccabiah Games had seen an increase in the number of participants signed up at the onset of the war, actually. Very soon after, there was sort of a spike in participation, and that's a really good indicator of where things are," Langer said, noting that the same was true with other programs as well.

"The interest from the participants to go is still there, right? And the desire to not only have these opportunities that bring Jewish communities together, but... wanting to be specifically [in Israel] is a really heartwarming and really important trend that we're seeing now," she said.

Langer said that her organization, IETA, is holding weekly meetings with Israel

travel providers, who, in turn, are in regular communication with their participants. She noted that those trip operators have grown savvy over the past two-plus years since the Oct. 7 terror attacks. In particular, she said, these trip providers have started relying on Israeli airlines for travel, making it less likely that their flights will be canceled. Indeed, many international carriers have already canceled their Israel route through June.

"We're going to be encouraging everyone to do what we always encourage them to do — more than encouraging them to do since Oct. 7 — which is go with the Israeli carriers," Langer said. "They are the only carriers who continue to function as conditions continue to change, and the cooperation that they have with the Israeli government is so intense that it is an important indicator of safety for your groups. Suffice it to say, you likely won't have a flight if you choose another carrier."

Speaking more broadly about Israel travel programs, Langer noted that since the current war with Iran broke out, the overwhelming majority of participants in existing long-term programs have opted to remain in Israel. Though she added that nearly all of those participating in short-term programs have left the country.

"The participants in longer-term programs are also really seeing themselves as integrating into Israeli society and are there to more deeply understand what it is like and to experience feeling what it's like to live there," she said, "Those participants, by and large, have elected to stay. We had about 5,500 participants on the ground at the onset of the war, about 5,000 of those participants have stayed, and that 500-number difference basically accounts for participants in short-term programs and some who had immediate health care needs or maybe were under 18 and were asked by parents to depart." ♦

MARCH 25, 2026

Gulf states slam Arab League countries for tepid response to Iranian aggression

Frustrated UAE leaders are questioning the 'impotence' of countries like Egypt — and warn that silence on Iranian aggression will push the Gulf closer to U.S., Israel

By Lahav Harkov

The United Arab Emirates has been publicly expressing its disappointment in Arab League countries like Egypt for not showing or expressing very little support for Gulf states under attack from Iran, a dynamic playing out more quietly in other Gulf states, as well.

In a post on X on Sunday that received significant attention, Anwar Gargash, an advisor to the UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed, said that "Iran's brutal aggression against the Arab Gulf carries profound geopolitical repercussions ... and the result is to bolster our national capabilities and the joint security, as well as to solidify our security partnerships with Washington."

When French former diplomat Gérard Araud criticized Gargash's approach, writing on X that "it means deepening your dependence on a country that has led yours into a disastrous conflict without caring about your interests," Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed backed up Gargash, responding: "We will never be blackmailed by terrorists."

In subsequent posts, Gargash not only said that Iran's attacks are bringing his country closer to the U.S., but criticized other Arab countries for not aligning themselves with the Gulf.

"Where are the joint Arab and Islamic institutions, chief among them the Arab

League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, while our countries and peoples are subjected to this treacherous Iranian aggression? And where are the 'major' Arab and regional countries? ... The Arab Gulf states were a support and partner to all in times of prosperity... So where are you today in times of hardship?" Gargash wrote.

As such, he argued, "in absence and impotence, it is unacceptable later to speak of the decline of the Arab and Islamic role or to criticize the American and Western presence."

On Wednesday, Gargash followed up by distinguishing "those who offered genuine

support” from “those who settled for statements without action.”

“The Emirates has proven its ability to confront and endure, and it does not need equipment and troops as much as it needs clarity of positions and knowledge of who can be relied upon in times of hardship,” he added.

Hussain Abdul-Hussain, a research fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and author of *The Arab Case for Israel*, told *Jewish Insider* that the UAE is not the only Gulf state that is expressing resentment towards Arab League states at this time, saying that similar messages have been published in Qatari newspaper editorials and have come out of Kuwait.

Some of the targets of that anger, he said, are Egypt and the Arab League, whose secretary-general, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, is an Egyptian diplomat.

“Gulf governments expected more denunciations of Iran as an aggressor. It took [Egypt] five days to say a word. The Arab League hasn’t met; they usually hold emergency summits and haven’t called for one. The foreign ministers met over Zoom and issued a statement that was a nothingburger,” Abdul-Hussain said.

While Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi denounced the Iranian attacks and visited the Gulf, his remarks came across as weak, while Aboul Gheit called the attacks “audacious,” stopping short of a full denunciation, Abdul-Hussain argued.

“Even the adjectives they’re using are soft” in the eyes of Gulf leaders, Abdul-Hussain said.

The media in Egypt and Algeria, Abdul Hussain said, are showing “happiness ... that Israel is being pounded. They’re happy with what Iran is doing and no one really seems to care about the Gulf states. The Gulf took 84% of the [Iranian] missiles, as opposed to Israel, which took 16%, and they still can’t straightforwardly say Iran is a problem?”

While Gargash did not specifically mention Israel, Abdul-Hussain interpreted Gargash’s remarks as meaning, “If we in the Gulf can’t rely on you Arabs and Muslims, we will have to find other allies to defend ourselves. That clearly means the U.S. and Israel.”

“The Emiratis feel vindicated, that they were right to move forward and seek their interests with Israel, because look at [other Arab states] now,” he added.

Prominent Emirati media personality Jamal Al Mulla said in a recent episode of his podcast “Arab Cast” that “the Gulf is hurt and will not forget how fellow Arab countries let it down.”

Al Mulla compared the current conflict to the 1991 Gulf War, when only 12 out of 22 Arab League members voted to condemn Iraq for invading Kuwait — “six Gulf countries and the six others were bought off by wealthy Gulf governments.”

“This round, the line is even clearer since aggression is not by an Arab League member against another, but by a non-Arab foreign country against Arab countries, and yet, the Arab League is shameful and so are countries like Iraq, Algeria, Sudan’s Burhan government and western Libya’s government,” he said.

Al-Mulla said that “when any Arab government wants not to take a position on anything, it inserts the Palestinian cause into its statement.”

Arab countries are “always citing Palestine as a distraction,” he added, and recounted that, in 1991, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat told the Arab League that “the Kuwaiti problem will be solved only after the Palestinian cause.”

“When the shooting stops, I expect a few Gulf countries to rush to normalization with Israel. My money is on Kuwait, perhaps Saudi Arabia too,” Al Mulla said.

Abdul-Hussain agreed with Al-Mulla that Kuwait would return to its past pro-American stance and normalize relations with Israel.

“People in the Gulf were expected to support the Palestinians at all times during the Gaza war, with money, humanitarian aid, politically and diplomatically, and they get nothing in return,” Abdul-Hussain said. “I think they’re really hurt.”

Abdul-Hussain said that Hamas and the Palestinian Authority have not robustly denounced Iran. After initially only condemning the U.S. and Israel, Hamas released a statement two weeks into the war against attacks on the Gulf by Iran — one of its patrons — under pressure from Qatar, another of its patrons. The Palestinian Authority released a statement on the first day of the war expressing solidarity with the Gulf states and calling for de-escalation.

“The thinking in the Gulf is that this time, it’s our turn. We’re the victims. The Palestinians can wait,” Abdul-Hussain said. ♦

MARCH 25, 2026

Blinken says he warned Netanyahu that Israel would lose GOP, evangelical support over Gaza war

The former secretary of state also said he questions whether the U.S. could have done more to save lives in Gaza

By Gabby Deutch

Former Secretary of State Tony Blinken said at a Harvard Kennedy School event this week that he warned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a few months into the war in Gaza that Israel was going to lose support among not just Democrats, but also Republicans and evangelical Christians.

“Israel was mostly seen as the David and other forces were seen as the Goliath. That is now flipped,” Blinken said. “One of the things that I told Netanyahu was, ‘You may not care that you’re losing the Democratic Party, but trust me, you are going to lose young Republicans. You’re going to lose young evangelicals. This is generational.’ And he moved on to something else.”

The conversation took place early in 2024, a few months after the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks that killed 1,200 people in Israel. During his remarks at Harvard, Blinken said he wonders if there is more the U.S. could have done to protect Palestinians in Gaza. But he also called on people not to be “binary” in their thinking about the Middle East.

“Of course, for me, coulda-woulda-shoulda is something that will always be there when it comes to Gaza. It could not help but be given the level of human suffering,” said Blinken.

“But where did we start? We started with Oct. 7. We started with the most horrific massacre of Jews since the Holocaust,”

Blinken added. “It’s very easy to say, ‘Oh, yeah, that’s a given.’ Except it wasn’t a given for Israelis and Israeli society. It became one for the rest of the world, but not for Israelis.”

Blinken was being interviewed by *New York Times* reporter David Sanger, who said that history books written about President Joe Biden will show his administration as “strongest on Ukraine and weakest on Gaza.”

Asked whether the Biden administration could have done things differently in Gaza to save lives, Blinken said, “Could we, should we have done things differently such that the suffering that people endured, the loss of the children you just listed and so many others could have been averted? The short answer is: Maybe yes.”

“We had to make judgments in real time about how to try to get to a better place. We made those judgments. People will make their own judgments about what we did and what we didn’t do,” said Blinken.

Despite the humanitarian crisis that emerged in Gaza, the U.S. pushed Israel to do more for Palestinians and to allow more aid into Gaza, Blinken said.

“That didn’t just happen. It happened because every single day we were on the Israelis to try to get assistance in, to open more crossing points, to flood the zone. They did that profoundly inadequately. They did that in ways that were not the way I would like to have seen it done, but we got

some of that done,” said Blinken. “But yes, of course, you couldn’t be and I wouldn’t be human if I didn’t ask myself every day, could we have done things differently?”

Blinken said that the trauma Israelis experienced after Oct. 7 was so severe that Israel’s war in Gaza would have continued, even without American support — and that cutting off American weapons sales to Israel may have actually lengthened the war.

“Cutting off arms, sure, that was an option. But I don’t actually believe that at least in the near term, it would have changed things,” said Blinken. “I also believe it would have led to an even wider war as Israel’s enemies, and they were multiple, jumped in, and that only would have extended the war in Gaza, not ended the war in Gaza.”

The main focus of the Biden administration, according to Blinken, was to reach a ceasefire, “with hostages coming out and with aid going in.” He acknowledged the pain of people who were angry about the situation in Gaza, but questioned why so little anger was directed at Hamas.

“I empathize with people who felt this so deeply,” said Blinken. “I do remain with a question in my mind about why barely a word was spoken in all those months about Hamas, which was an actor too, and is responsible for so much of what happened.” ♦

MARCH 25, 2026

ADL launches leaderboard ranking popular video games on safeguards to combat antisemitism

'Fortnite' was rated the best at implementing safeguards to combat antisemitism, with 'Grand Theft Auto Online,' 'Call of Duty' and 'Minecraft' following closely behind

By Haley Cohen

A first-of-its kind leaderboard evaluating how major video game companies address antisemitism and extremism in online games was released on Wednesday by the Anti-Defamation League, *Jewish Insider* has learned.

The leaderboard assessed 10 of the most popular games and their respective companies on their policies and in-game safety features. "Fortnite" was rated the best at implementing safeguards to combat antisemitism, with "Grand Theft Auto Online," "Call of Duty" and "Minecraft" following closely behind. Other major games evaluated included "Roblox," "Valorant," "Clash Royale," "Counter-Strike 2" and "PUBG: Battlegrounds."

ADL evaluated the product features of each individual game and the relevant policies that govern that game — for some games, the policies that govern them were specific to the game, while for some it was the company policies that apply to all of their games.

The leaderboard, created by the ADL Center for Technology and Society in partnership with the ADL Ratings and Assessment Institute, builds on the annual survey work that CTS did in partnership with gaming analytics firm NewZoo, from 2019-2023.

Games received labels of advanced, moderate or limited protections based on criteria including: antisemitism and hate

policy; extremism/terrorism policy; in-game display of code of conduct; documentation of escalation to law enforcement; and in-game tooling.

The latter criteria, which accounts for 60% of a game's overall score, includes players' ability to block and/or mute other players; players' ability to report players for voice, text, usernames and user-generated content; and the game's prevention of anti-semitic and hateful extremist usernames.

Bonus points were awarded for clear appeals processes and engagement with ADL, and points were deducted for harmful content on public-facing game stores. The anti-semitism watchdog shared detailed findings with each gaming company and invited them to discuss the assessment before the leaderboard's release, to which Epic Games, Supercell and Minecraft responded.

Popular online games boast hundreds of thousands of players, with 85% of U.S. teens reporting playing video games in 2024, according to the Pew Research Center. The Pew study found that 80% of all teens think harassment over video games is a problem for people their age, and 41% of those who play them say they've been called an offensive name while playing.

The leaderboard comes one year after ADL conducted a study where it asked 15 participants (university students, recent graduates and young adults) to play four

leading online games ("Valorant," "Counter-strike 2," "Overwatch 2" and "Fortnite") in one-hour increments with different identities (Jewish and Muslim religious and ethnic identities, as well as in national identities such as Chinese, Mexican and Israeli). It found that almost half of game play experiences included some form of harassment, such as slurs, trash-talking or disrupted play, and one-third included identity-based harassment, such as "gas the Jews" or calling people the "N-word."

The ADL said it plans to feature the results in an online Gaming Leaderboard, designed to be a resource that will track how gaming companies manage their online multiplayer ecosystems over time to guide parents, gamers, policymakers and the gaming industry itself.

"When a parent wants to know if an online game is safe for their child, there has been no one-stop shop to understand how a particular game approaches online safety," Daniel Kelley, senior director of the ADL Center for Technology and Society, said in a statement. "This leaderboard addresses that critical gap by offering the most comprehensive evaluation of safety measures in online multiplayer games to date, with a focus on how companies manage anti-semitism and extremism." ♦

MARCH 24, 2026

From WhatsApp chats to City Hall, a new Jewish activism is born

In the wake of Oct. 7, some in the Jewish community turned to faith, philanthropy or federal advocacy. Others set their sights closer to home, organizing to shape school boards and influence city councils

By Gabby Deutch

After the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in 2012, Norri Leder dedicated herself to fighting gun violence as a founding member of Moms Demand Action, the gun control group created after the shooting.

And last year, there was another single defining moment that pushed her to create something new, just like she did after Sandy Hook: A candidate running in a Houston school board special election in 2025 sent out a mailer showing herself in a photo with a virulently anti-Israel politician. When Leder ran into the candidate at the polls, she told the candidate that she was “unknowingly alienating yourself, potentially, from members of the Jewish community.” The candidate had no idea.

“She asked me if there was a Jewish group that meets with candidates as they’re running,” Leder recalled. “I said, there are Jewish groups, but it occurred to me that many of them don’t have the bandwidth to meet on these races that are at much more of a local, state and county level as [candidates are] running for office.”

So Leder created one. Where she was once a single-issue activist fighting for gun control measures, now she is putting everything else aside to focus on Jewish communal concerns with her new organization, Houston Jewish Women Vote. Less than four months into its existence, the group has met with candidates running in local attorney, city council and judicial races in 2026.

“We are narrowly focusing on physical security for the Jewish community, anti-semitism, targeting of Jews in academic and professional settings, prayer in school and staying in your lane for state, local and county offices — just please don’t engage in

foreign policy issues that undermine bridge building in the community and accomplish nothing in the world of foreign policy,” said Leder. “There’s a feeling of, we’re Jewish women, and a lot of us feel politically homeless right now. People feel good knowing that they’re participants and that they can exercise their voice.”

Houston Jewish Women Vote joins dozens of other Jewish advocacy efforts that grew out of the desperation people felt in the days after the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks to fill a void in local politics.

In Pittsburgh, the Beacon Coalition was created when community activist Jeremy Kazzaz saw that local politicians were too afraid to criticize a colleague who posted pro-Hamas messages. The group is now urging Jewish Democrats in the Pittsburgh area to run for seats on the Allegheny County Democratic Committee to be able to help shape the party’s endorsements.

In California, Israeli immigrants helped launch the Bay Area Jewish Coalition (BAJC), in part to help locals make sense of the many local races for positions most people have never heard of.

“Even when we have special elections for things that seem totally unrelated, like the county assessor, which is in charge of property taxes and things like that, at this point, people are reaching out to us and saying, ‘Who do we vote for?’” said BAJC co-founder Keren-Or Reiss, who was born in Israel and now lives in San Mateo, Calif., where she works as a product manager at a tech company. “Is there someone here who’s going to somehow use this platform to spread hate or to normalize antisemitism against us?”

Some in the Jewish community turned to religious practice after Oct. 7, or to sup-

porting charities helping victims of the attacks in Israel, or to pro-Israel political advocacy through establishment groups like AIPAC, or some combination. Leder, Kazzaz and Reiss represent a new class of Jewish American activists: people who were disappointed by the apathy or even outright hostility that some co-workers, teachers, neighbors and local elected officials demonstrated towards Jews and Israelis suffering in the aftermath of Oct. 7, and who felt no one was doing what needed to be done to reach those leaders.

“Local community members can’t just wait for institutions to have enough bandwidth to do everything. People can take responsibility to step up and engage. And that’s what people were doing,” said Jeremy Burton, CEO of the Boston Jewish Community Relations Council. “Part of this revitalization of American Jewish life that we’ve seen has been this emergence of these activists.”

They saw a new kind of opportunity in an American political landscape reshaped by Oct. 7 and the ensuing war in Gaza. Advocating for Congress to vote a certain way on weapons sales to Israel would not do much to affect the swell of antisemitism growing in their communities. Although the war was happening thousands of miles away, they understood that its impact would be local.

“Almost every other community and interest group is doing this on the local level, and not the Jewish community. So we’re really trying to close that gap,” said Tyler Gregory, CEO of the Bay Area Jewish Community Relations Council, which in 2024 became the first JCRC in the country to

launch an affiliated advocacy arm to fundraise for candidates and engage in elections. “I think it’s a combination of Congress being sexier and there being fewer issues at the local level.”

After Oct. 7, it became clear that there were not, in fact, fewer issues locally. City council members who were elected to work on municipal governance were now tasked with voting on contentious ceasefire resolutions and calls to divest from Israel. School superintendents and principals had to decide how to respond to teachers who were bringing biased, anti-Israel instruction into the classroom. These were battlefields where existing Jewish communal infrastructure did not have the capacity to fight — either because their nonprofit status kept them from engaging in political races, or because they simply did not have the manpower to reach the hyper-local spaces where debates about Israel, Zionism and antisemitism were now front and center.

“Local community members can’t just wait for institutions to have enough bandwidth to do everything. People can take responsibility to step up and engage. And that’s what people were doing,” said Jeremy Burton, CEO of the Boston Jewish Community Relations Council. “Part of this revitalization of American Jewish life that we’ve seen has been this emergence of these activists.”

The new Jewish activism did not begin in Jewish federation board rooms or congressional office buildings in Washington. It was grassroots campaigns that started in WhatsApp groups and recruited dozens of volunteers through word-of-mouth conversations. These were people who showed up to city hall hearings or met with candidates running for local offices that prior to Oct. 7 may have seemed irrelevant to Jewish concerns.

For Sam Gechter, who works in tech in Boston, a call from a friend in early 2024 alerted him that the city council of Somerville, Mass., where he lives, was trying to pass a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. The language, Gechter recalled, was “atrocious,” pinning the blame for the war on Israel and hardly mentioning Hamas.

“I got off the phone. I turned to my wife, who was standing next to me, and said, ‘We gotta start a WhatsApp right now of everybody we know in Somerville and get people to come and speak against this,’” Gechter told JI. “That was my moment of being politically activated.”

Soon, that WhatsApp group became Shalom Somerville, a group of Jewish people in the small Boston suburb — an uber-progressive city that neighbors the better-known Cambridge — committed to advancing “a Somerville that is safe for Jews and Israelis.” Despite nominally being an advocacy organization, Shalom Somerville has also become a lifeline for people who otherwise weren’t connected to Jewish institutions.

“For a number of people who haven’t found their place Jewishly in the community, this has become their main Jewish community,” said Gechter. “We had, like, 150 people at our Hanukkah party. It’s gotten to be a pretty big group.”

New organizations that formed to focus on important but unglamorous posts like the county commission and municipal human relations councils are heading into a major election year with ambitious plans to activate Jewish community members to flex their political muscle. They want to show local officials that they ignore Jewish voters at their own peril — and that, conversely, Jewish voters will miss a chance to improve their community if they sit out these races that have a real impact on their day-to-day lives.

“Around the country, there was this awakening, and an understanding that the cavalry wasn’t coming for anybody,” Chicago Jewish Alliance founder Daniel Schwartz told JI.

Each local outfit has a different strategy. Mindy Miller, a former top aide to the Colorado Senate president, co-founded the Colorado Jewish Action Alliance to educate her former colleagues about topics that they never expected to address but that are now everywhere, even in state politics.

“We ask them what they think Zionism means because it’s been so weaponized, and I would say virtually all of them have

been appreciative of being able to have those conversations without being fear of being canceled or called out or vilified, because they have to walk a tight rope,” Miller told *Jewish Insider*.

Chicago Jewish Alliance founder Daniel Schwartz has taken a more confrontational approach. During the city council’s vote on a contentious ceasefire resolution in January 2024, he showed up at City Hall draped in an Israeli flag. He created a WhatsApp group — called the “Zionist Information Group” — to get Chicagoans out to protest.

“Around the country, there was this awakening, and an understanding that the cavalry wasn’t coming for anybody,” Schwartz told JI.

In Lexington, Mass., a suburb of Boston, a group called Lexington United Against Antisemitism, is focused on interfaith work, and connecting members of the town’s Jewish community with Christians.

“Quickly we understood that people, actually, even in Lexington, know very little about Jews altogether. Jews — what do they think? What do they believe?” said Francine Jacobs, a retired Tufts professor who created LUAA.

The group was founded several months before Oct. 7, but its founders have doubled down on their mission, particularly as some liberal Christians who are critical of Israel have taken stances that crossed into antisemitism.

“It took some of the steam out of our effort. There were some folks who just said, ‘Oh, Israel, I’m so angry about it, I just can’t hear the word Jew,’” said Stephen Van Evera, a retired MIT international relations professor, who is Christian and leading LUAA with Jacobs. “I mean, why are you connecting these dots that way? Do you really think that the Jewish community in Lexington is deciding how to fight the Gaza war?”

What drove many people to get involved was their kids. Viviane Safrin became an education activist in San Francisco after the pandemic, when she felt frustrated that public schools were not doing more to reopen. After Oct. 7, parents started calling her to report that their children had experienced antisemitism. So she created SF Jews

in School, with the tagline “advancing Jewish inclusion in San Francisco schools.”

“We respond to incidents. We guide families through working with their school. We also engage directly with principals and administrators to support them in ensuring that our schools are welcoming spaces, but we also celebrate our heritage. We build Jewish pride and belonging across the city,” Safrin told JI. “We bring apples and honey for Rosh Hashanah and *sufganiyot* for Hanukkah.”

Two thousand five hundred miles away, in the Philadelphia suburb of Lower Merion, Dani Shaw created a WhatsApp group for 75 moms soon after Oct. 7. They wrote to the diversity, equity and inclusion director in their school district to ask to talk about ensuring Jewish perspectives were included in the office’s programming. They wound up meeting with the superintendent instead and having a productive conversation. But, shortly after, an op-ed in a high school newspaper that Shaw said spread “blood libels” against Israel caused the moms to step up their activism.

“We created an organization called the Jewish Families Association with a board that consisted at the time of about 15 parents who were all representing different schools in the district,” Shaw told JI. There are now several other Jewish Families Associations in small school districts across Pennsylvania. “It’s really representation — a

bridge between the parents and the administration, the school district, to make sure that these incidents, whether they be bullying or problematic curriculum, are dealt with appropriately.”

The group in Lower Merion, a heavily Jewish suburb, supported three Republican candidates for school board last year. They all lost in the liberal town. Keeping activists engaged in the work is hard — “they have to get on with their lives and their livelihoods,” Shaw acknowledged — particularly because the group plans to remain volunteer-led and grassroots, with no fundraising arm.

Fatigue is real. The work of building ties with dozens or even hundreds of local elected officials requires dedicated volunteers and resources. BAJC, the Bay Area group, created a voter guide in 2024 tracking dozens of races — work they want to replicate in 2026, even as they see some people in the community losing interest.

“It’s a constant fight to activate the community. I wouldn’t take that for granted. People prefer to go and watch a football game than to go to a demonstration,” said Oded Shekel, a BAJC leader and an Israeli immigrant who is the CEO of a financial technology startup. “You need to find ways to keep people motivated, activated, connected. I think local fights are easier to connect to than, ‘Would you like to come and support, like, a D.C. bill that we are

going to promote?’ Yeah, whatever, I don’t care. ‘Would you like to meet the school boards who actually create policies for the teachers or the kids in your class?’ That’s more likely.”

Not everyone who got involved in this work after Oct. 7 remains involved. But many still are. There is now an entire class of American Jews, many of whom were not engaged politically at all before, who now wholeheartedly believe that the way to make their communities safer and more welcoming is to get involved in local politics. And as both the Democratic and Republican parties face internal fissures over Israel at the national level, an awareness is starting to solidify that reaching politicians at the beginning of their careers, when they are unpolished and open-minded, is a winning strategy.

“We’re not seeking to educate candidates about our issues once they announce for Congress. We want to have multi-year relationships and be able to explain the many nuances of Judaism and Zionism long before they’d like to run for higher office,” said Sam Jefferies, co-chair of The Kids Table, a political action committee in Washington state that is supporting “pro-Jewish” candidates. “You can’t solve antisemitism, but you can prevent antisemites from being in positions of power.”