

## THE WEEKLY PRINT

*In Ukraine, Jewish leaders mobilize to provide essentials to a community in crisis; Bennett warns Iran deal will create 'more violent' Mideast; Nides: Israel's hands won't be tied by deal with Iran; Maccabee Task Force director David Brog puts his chips on congressional run; Ro Khanna reflects on his first trip to Israel as a congressman; J Street endorses Casten over Newman in Illinois Democratic primary; and Israel-Bahrain cooperation on display in Munich.*

FEBRUARY 25, 2022

## In Ukraine, Jewish leaders mobilize to provide essentials to a community in crisis

*The effort, organized by the Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine, is providing staples such as non-perishable food and water to community members*

By Melissa Weiss

Russia's attacks on Ukraine began before sunrise on Thursday, taking many in the Eastern European nation by surprise.

"Everyone's talking about preparing for a war, but... it just came suddenly," Rabbi Mayer Stambler told *Jewish Insider* in a Zoom call from his home in Dnipropetrovsk in the central part of the country. "You know, you don't really think it's going to happen, you hope that diplomacy is gonna win. And 5:30 in the morning, to hear people bombing you... It's unbelievable."

When COVID-19 first hit Ukraine, the rabbi oversaw the creation of support networks to provide ritual items and kosher food to families and individuals celebrating Jewish holidays in isolation. Two years later, Stambler, who heads the Chabad-affiliated Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine, has been forced to mobilize those same volunteer networks — this time to provide basic necessities to Jewish communities around the country amid Russia's invasion of the Eastern European nation.

Stambler, and other Chabad emissaries

around the country, are working to make sure their basic needs are met as the country is largely cut off from the rest of the world. Grocery stores are devoid of basic necessities such as flour, with long lines to get basic items. Ukrainian airspace is closed, and people are being discouraged from traveling between cities, as the highways may be targeted by Russian forces.

The federation serves as the backbone for Jewish life in the former Soviet nation. Stambler arrived in Ukraine in 1991, as the country was breaking out from behind the Iron Curtain. In the three decades since his arrival, he's overseen the community's large-scale expansion.

"When we came over here 30 years ago," Stambler explained, "people felt guilty being Jewish. We used to see a person [who was] Jewish and just walk over, close, you know... and they're afraid. They're like, 'I'm sorry, but I'm Jewish.' And now, people are proud to be Jewish." Stambler attributed the shift in mindset to efforts to invest in education and Jewish communal life.

There are now roughly 180 Jewish communities around the country, with a

population exceeding 350,000.

Among those in need of help are the tens of thousands of elderly Jews who have been largely homebound over the last two years. Stambler's team is working to get them — and others who are running low on essentials such as non-perishable food and water — the support they need to last through the invasion — be that days, weeks or much longer.

In addition to providing food to community members, the federation is tasked with protecting Jewish institutions around the country.

"It's not against the army, you won't be able to deal with any army. But when there's a situation of war, we're very afraid of this banditism outside, and the Jews usually suffer from that, unfortunately," Stambler said. "And we really are very, very weak with security, we just need real security. We have over 400 points that we need to secure."

"Everyone is very, very afraid," he added. "Things can change in minutes."

Most diplomats have left Kyiv, the capital city. Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has publicly encouraged Israelis

— and non-Israeli Jews — in the country to return. The Jewish Agency for Israel, which facilitates immigration to the country, has been inundated with requests, mostly from Ukrainians who have already completed

their immigration applications but have not yet been issued visas.

But, Stambler said, many are staying put. “We didn’t just stay here with our families just to stay here. We feel responsible... We’re

going to make sure to feed people,” Stambler said. “If we have to risk our lives to do it, we will do it. There’s no question about it.” ♦

FEBRUARY 21, 2022

## Bennett warns Iran deal will create ‘more violent’ Mideast

*The Israeli prime minister made the comments at a gathering of the Conference of Presidents in Jerusalem on Sunday*

By David Brummer

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett warned on Sunday that a potential U.S. return to a nuclear agreement with Iran “is likely to create a more violent and less stable Middle East” and that a new deal “will enrich [Iran’s] brutal and corrupt regime.”

Speaking at the 47th annual mission of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Bennett addressed a gala dinner of delegates on the current challenges facing both Israel and Jews in the Diaspora, reserving most of his comments for the burgeoning Iranian threat.

“There is no doubt that America will remain our biggest and strongest friend. However, ultimately, it is us who have to live in the region and it is us who will bear the consequences,” he stressed.

He added that Israel did not uniformly oppose an agreement between the world powers and Iran, representatives of which have been meeting in Vienna since last spring. Bennett noted that many who were in favor of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) have concerns about the prospect of an agreement at present.

“The Iranians have continued to cross one red line after another, and they are now enriching uranium beyond 60 percent,” Bennett said. “This is the hand that both the Israeli government and President Biden’s administration inherited, and there is no point playing the blame game of what went before. We need to address the challenge.”

Bennett added that Jerusalem was concerned over the “sunset provisions”

in the 2015 agreement, which are set to expire in less than three years. Once those provisions expire, Bennett said, “Iran will be able to develop, install, and operate advanced centrifuges. Imagine football stadiums of advanced centrifuges spinning — which this agreement will allow... and it’s completely legal.”

Bennett also warned that tens of billions of dollars will soon be unfrozen and the resultant access to the booming energy market. “Much of this money will be funneled toward attacking Israel, our allies in the Middle East, and US soldiers — as they have already started to do.”

“There are three points that we’ll all need to address: The agreement leaves Iran with a fast-track to military-grade enrichment,” he said. “And in the time until it sunsets, they won’t even have to destroy all the centrifuges they have developed over the past few years. The Iranian regime is insisting on closing the open files of the IAEA — these are ‘hot investigations’ pertaining to possible military dimensions. Or in simple English, Iran has hidden and is still hiding nuclear weapon-related materials, it’s been caught red-handed, and Iran is demanding that the inspectors that caught them will pretend to forget what they saw. Finally, the agreement will pour money, billions of dollars into the Iranian terrorism machine — more UAVs, more attacks on ships, more rockets on Israel and our allies through its proxies.”

Bennett also suggested that Iranian negotiators demanded that the U.S. remove the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps from its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations

(FTO). The State Department declined to comment on Bennett’s remarks.

Bennett suggested that Israel would not accept Iran as a nuclear threshold state. “We have a clear and non-negotiable red line: Israel will always maintain its freedom of action; to defend itself.” ♦

# Nides: Israel's hands won't be tied by deal with Iran

*The U.S. ambassador to Israel made the comments at a gathering hosted by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations*

By JI Staff

U.S. Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides said on Sunday that Israel would not be bound by any agreement made between the U.S. and Iran.

"The Israelis have the right to do what they need to do to defend their country. So no one is tying the hands of the Israelis," Nides said at a gathering hosted by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations in Jerusalem.

Nides discussed the Biden administration's approach to the Iran talks happening in Vienna. "The president is committed to make sure the Iranians do not get a nuclear weapon," Nides said. "How we work that out, and how we focus on pushing this decision of the 90% enrichment away, if it's to 2030, if it's a date later, if it's the beginning of a longer conversation — details

will come if we get to that stage. We are not at that stage."

"We are lockstep with the Israelis," Nides added. "There's nothing we are doing here that they are not aware of. I'm not suggesting they're supportive of what we're doing or not doing. But there's no games here. I think in the last Democratic administration that I was a part of, there was some sense that we weren't communicating with them and they were surprised."

The ambassador said the Biden administration had almost immediately developed a warm working relationship with Israel's coalition government since its formation in April 2021.

"Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has a beautiful relationship with the president — as does Foreign Minister Yair Lapid. I hope that it continues, especially if I have

anything to say about it. This coalition is a beautiful thing — this is what Israel is all about. We should be proud as Jews to see this going on."

Nides also reiterated that he was in full support of the vision of a two-state solution, while he was under no illusions that a peace agreement would be signed anytime soon.

"I want to do things for the Palestinian people," he said. "The Biden administration has and will continue to support them. The average Palestinian needs freedom, security, and educational opportunities. The options are not great if they do not have them. It is clear that many Israelis, including Defense Minister Benny Gantz, feel the same way and are trying to help the Palestinian people too." ♦

FEBRUARY 23, 2022

# Maccabee Task Force director David Brog puts his chips on congressional run

*The former Hill aide launched a bid to unseat Democratic Rep. Dina Titus in Las Vegas*

By Marc Rod

After 16 years in pro-Israel activism as the executive director of Christians United for Israel and, since 2015, the campus antisemitism-focused nonprofit Maccabee Task Force, David Brog has his eyes set on Capitol Hill.

The Republican and former chief of staff to the late Sen. Arlen Specter (R-PA) threw his hat in the ring last week as a congressional candidate in Nevada's newly redrawn 1st

Congressional District, which encompasses the Las Vegas area. In 2020, Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV), who has represented the Las Vegas area since 2013, won the district 62-33; following redistricting, the seat has become more competitive.

Brog is the third Republican to declare his candidacy ahead of the June 14 primary, following former Trump campaign staffer Carolina Serrano and retired Army Col. Mark Robertson.

Brog told *Jewish Insider* in an hour-long interview last week that his congressional bid was prompted by trends he observed as the head of the Maccabee Task Force — a job he plans to continue during the campaign. The bulk of the funding for the Maccabee Task Force has come from the late Republican mega-donor Sheldon Adelson and his wife Miriam.

"My sense of the threats [to the country] and the priority shifted really over the

summer of 2020,” he explained. “I was really shocked at the speed with which some of the crazy ideas from the campuses are now finding expression on the streets of our cities and at the base of one of our two political parties.”

“I started to feel that the greatest threat to our country and our civilization is right here at home,” he continued, “a failure to appreciate our country, a failure to carry on what is great about our country and a failure to understand the real blessings and benefits of being born in America.”

Tarkanian said that winning the 1st District will require “somebody who can go toe-to-toe timewise with Congresswoman Titus” — an aggressive campaigner who is “everywhere” and “a very hard worker.” She predicted that it “is going to be difficult” for Brog to run against Titus while maintaining his day job.

Brog previously lived in Texas, where CUFI is headquartered. The Maccabee Task Force is based in Las Vegas.

Brog has associated himself with the National Conservatism movement, a growing element of the conservative movement that he described as favoring a more protectionist trade policy and decreased U.S. military engagement abroad alongside conservative social values. Other politicians associated with the movement include Sens. Josh Hawley (R-MO) and Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Ohio Senate candidate J.D. Vance.

“My big belief is that the Republican Party needs to be the party of the working class and that means it’s a party that really takes the issues of America’s working class seriously and seeks to defend the working class,” he said.

Brog rattled off a number of GOP mainstays as his top policy issues, including immigration, inflation, supporting police, opposing “divisive” public school curricula and protecting American industry and business. When asked about the 2020 presidential election results, Brog opined, “I think the election was unfair in certain demonstrable ways but I have not seen evidence that [former President Donald] Trump won that unfair election.”

Citing his national conservative ethos, Brog — a cousin of former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak — described the U.S.-

Israel relationship as the “ultimate example” of how he believes U.S. foreign policy should operate, because it has never asked for U.S. troops to defend it and shares security interests with the U.S.

In this vein, he said he sees supporting Israel, “empowering” and in “certain circumstances” arming the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia and redesignating the Houthis as a terrorist organization as the best ways to confront Iran’s aggression in the region — giving allies “the wherewithal to confront Iran to defend their own interests” and Washington’s in the process.

Brog, an opponent of the 2015 nuclear deal, said that the U.S. should pressure the Iranian regime with maximal sanctions, with the ultimate goal of prompting an uprising against the government.

“We have a choice — either Iran will be on a path toward enrichment and a nuclear weapon with full economic benefits, or they’ll be on a path toward weapons and enrichment under a severe sanctions regime that is putting the regime under severe pressure and creating an opportunity for perhaps Iranians to liberate themselves from the regime,” he explained. “I wish there was option C, which is how through negotiations, through economic policy, you remove the opportunity that Iran can have a weapon. But that doesn’t seem to be an option.”

The former CUFI director condemned Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY) for blocking the provision of \$1 billion in supplemental aid for Israel’s Iron Dome missile-defense system.

Paul “has always been a reluctant partner in support for Israel,” Brog continued. “I feel like he misapplies perhaps a skepticism of internationalism and a skepticism of America’s role abroad — he misapplies that in seeking to limit support for Israel, when it actually demands robust support for Israel.”

Sander Gerber, a key architect of the Taylor Force Act — which cuts off most U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority as long as it makes payments to the families of terrorists — told JI that Brog was critical to the passage of that legislation.

“David got it immediately. I didn’t have to explain anything,” Gerber said. “He said, ‘We’ve got to do something about

it’... Without David, [the] Taylor Force Act wouldn’t have passed.”

Gerber said Brog was intimately involved in a small group that strategized to spread the message about the Taylor Force Act and “activated” Christians United for Israel to build a publicity and lobbying campaign in favor of the legislation before many major Jewish organizations came onboard. Brog left CUFI in 2015, but said he remained close to the Christian group.

Gerber added that Brog is “not afraid to drive through barriers to build consensus around issues about Israel” and is “motivated to get things done, not just make noise.” Brog’s experience in policy work inside and outside Congress, Gerber continued, has given him an understanding of “how to motivate the institution to take action.”

“He’s not going to water things down to drive bipartisan consensus,” Gerber said. “He’s going to drive bipartisan consensus around the right course of action. I think the pro-Israel community has this problem that to build bipartisan consensus, the actions get watered down.”

In his years working in the Israel space, Brog has seen the opportunity for a two-state solution dim. “I’ve come to a conclusion that a two-state solution isn’t going to be possible until there is a fundamental change in Palestinian leadership,” he told JI.

Brog described the Abraham Accords as a model for the sort of business-centric, people-to-people approach that he believes the U.S. should be supporting between the Israelis and Palestinians.

“The more that the best and brightest among the Palestinians see a path forward for themselves and their families and their people through business, through technology, through cooperation — it’s the one thing that gives me hope that future generations could view this conflict very differently,” he continued.

Building on his more recent work on campuses, Brog said that lawmakers need to use their “bully pulpit” to call out antisemitism on campuses and elsewhere.

He classified antisemitism as a “problem of extremes”: There are extremist circles on the right that pose “a real physical threat” and, on the left, “antisemitism that hides behind the facade of being anti-Zionist.”

Left-wing antisemitism, he said, “is taking over academia... [and] large portions of the media” and is “very prominent among the progressive base of the Democratic Party.”

“I think we have a lot of work to do because these ideas are so entrenched in so many American institutions,” he said. Brog argued that right-wing antisemitism has been more contained to the fringe.

Brog said he would also look for ways to support the full enforcement of the Trump-era executive order extending civil rights protections for Jews on campus and support security funding for Jewish institutions.

To prevent the further encroachment of antisemitism in the Republican Party, “we have an obligation to police our base against antisemitism — and this is something I take very seriously,” he said.

Asked about how he would go about policing antisemitism among potential House Republican colleagues — some of whom have been accused of antisemitism and affiliated with antisemitic elements

of the Republican base — Brog said his approach, like that of the Maccabee Task Force, would start with education.

“I think that’s some of what’s happening on the right — we who... have grown up with the specter of the Holocaust understand how inappropriate it is to make a Holocaust analogy and how hurtful it is,” Brog said, referencing comments from multiple GOP House members comparing vaccination mandates to the Holocaust. “A lot of people just don’t know that.”

Brog said he would “love to have lunch when I get to Capitol Hill... with anyone who has done something offensive to our community. My opening assumption is people have good will. They have to prove to me they don’t.”

He continued, “if someone understands our sensibilities and concerns and persists, then we need to call them out.”

In his campaign as a whole, Brog said he aims to “really fight for policies that will refocus people on what made America

great, why America is a beacon around the world, why so many from around the world including so many of our own families sought to come here and were so grateful once they got here.”

“I think we have a lot of work to do,” he added.

Amy Tarkanian, the former chair of the Nevada Republican Party and a GOP strategist, described Serrano — a Hispanic former Democrat who works in the hospitality industry — as the current frontrunner. Tarkanian said she was not familiar with Brog, and was surprised that he decided to run in the 1st District.

Tarkanian said that the new map provides “a glimmer of hope for the GOP” in the 1st District, compared to the “midnight blue” current district, but added that the strong union presence among the thousands of hospitality workers in the district will be a major obstacle for Republicans to overcome. ♦

FEBRUARY 24, 2022

## Ro Khanna reflects on his first trip to Israel as a congressman

*The California congressman joined a House Democratic delegation last week*

By Matthew Kassel

Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA) said he was encouraged by what he described as a range of productive and intellectually engaging discussions with high-ranking officials last week during a widely publicized congressional delegation to Israel and the Palestinian territories alongside select members of the House Democratic caucus.

“I thought it was a very positive trip,” Khanna said in a conversation with *Jewish Insider* on Wednesday, recounting his first visit to the region as a congressman. “I was able to build relationships with many people in Israel.”

Led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), the delegation met with a host of Israeli leaders in the new coalition government,

including Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, Defense Minister Benny Gantz, President Isaac Herzog and Transportation Minister Merav Michaeli, whom Khanna praised for her “commitment to progressive politics” as well as what he called a “human rights-based two-state solution” to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Bay Area representative and leading House progressive also recalled “a great conversation” with Lapid, who expressed familiarity with Khanna’s new book, *Dignity in a Digital Age: Making Tech Work for All of Us*, which he has likened to *Start-up Nation: The Story of Israel’s Economic Miracle*, the 2009 book examining Israel’s economic successes.

But Khanna, a 45-year-old former tech

lawyer and Obama administration alumnus, suggested he was even more pleased to find that Lapid had read John Rawls’s classic work of political philosophy, *A Theory of Justice*. “It was an interesting conversation,” he told *JL*.

Not every interaction was as amiable, even as Khanna described a good-faith “dialogue” with Israeli leadership that nevertheless included some “places of disagreement.” The congressman described, for instance, “a candid conversation with the prime minister” in which Khanna raised “human rights concerns” over “forced evictions” of Palestinians and called for a need “to open up Gaza in terms of economic activity.”

“The prime minister acknowledged that there’s 42% unemployment in Gaza, and



that's unacceptable," Khanna told JI. "You can't have 42% unemployment in a society that's run by Hamas and hope for long-term peace, and I think the prime minister understands that," he added. "The question is, how can you have an opening there without a risk to security, and it's a challenge, and I acknowledge that challenge. But I think that's a place where we can perhaps make progress."

The Biden administration's ongoing effort to renegotiate the Iran nuclear deal was also a subject of discussion. "I think there was a recognition that they would respect whatever the United States did," Khanna said of Israeli officials' approach to the agreement. The "biggest concern," he said, "was to make sure that" any resulting deal would not operate on a timeline allowing Iran "to start developing the bomb."

"I share the view that we should negotiate a strong deal that is as long as possible, and I have great confidence in the Biden administration to do it," Khanna told JI. "But the tone was much better in terms of respecting the president, respecting the administration. It was a view that was expressed, but it was not in any way confrontational."

Khanna, who sits on the House Armed Services Committee, was joined by Reps. Adam Schiff (D-CA), Ted Deutch (D-FL), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Bill Keating (D-MA), Eric Swalwell (D-CA) and Andy Kim (D-NJ). The trip to Israel was the first destination on a weeklong international tour focused largely on security matters, including stops in Germany and the United Kingdom.

During his time in Congress, Khanna, who assumed office in 2017, has maintained that a progressive foreign policy view, including criticism of Israeli government policies, is by no means incompatible with support for the Jewish state and its longstanding alliance with the U.S.

"I am a believer in the U.S.-Israel relationship, and I think it ought to be grounded on a human rights-based two-state solution," Khanna said bluntly. "That is what I will be advocating for."

The congressman's somewhat heterodox approach has drawn scrutiny both from staunch pro-Israel advocates as well as hardline critics on the far left who have taken issue with, among other things, his decision

to vote in favor of a bipartisan resolution condemning the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement targeting Israel.

While in Israel for two days early last week, Khanna faced renewed and intense backlash from an array of far-left antagonists on social media who expressed anger over his Middle East foreign policy positions.

Khanna, however, suggested that he was largely unconcerned with such rebukes. "When I get criticized, I always listen to it if people have a good point," he said. "I'm always open to it. But I'm not going to back away from my belief that Israel is an ally and in the importance of the U.S.-Israel relationship. That's a conviction."

"I am very clear where I stand," he emphasized, adding: "I believe that there are important economic and technological ties between Silicon Valley and Israel. I believe that the coalition government should continue to work to be as inclusive of all parts of Israeli society and that there has to be a recognition of Palestinian rights."

"That's been my view," he told JI. "I believe that view — and working in the way of building coalitions that I am — will help ultimately in whatever small way I can bring peace to the region."

The congressman has expressed hope in forging such stability, in part, through Israel's booming tech sector, and he said he had met with "several folks" at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology in Haifa for conversations about what he characterized as an "impressive" level of "entrepreneurial and technological innovation" across the country. "Some of them spoke about the joint ventures where Palestinians are being employed or are participating even in joint economic activity, all of which I think are promising places to explore."

Khanna first traveled to Israel in 2005, before he was elected to federal office, on a trip hosted by the American Jewish Committee's Project Interchange initiative. "The first trip, I got an appreciation, probably, more of Israeli history and culture," he said, noting that he had toured holy sites in Jerusalem and "got to bathe in the Mediterranean."

"This trip was, as the prime minister called it, 'P to P': politician to politician," Khanna explained. "I think I got an appreciation of the difficult political

challenges."

Khanna said he and his colleagues also met with Palestinian officials in the West Bank and described a sense that the leadership was "aware of the need for two states." He also met with a number of Palestinian students. "I was struck by their desire and dreams for economic opportunity, for opening up Gaza," he recalled. "One of the students couldn't participate in person, was on virtually; they couldn't get permission to meet us, so that was a stark reminder of change that is needed."

Reflecting in further detail on his observations from the trip, Khanna said he was surprised that a number of Israeli leaders seemed to have placed a particularly high value on forging relationships with progressives who are supportive of Israel. He added that Israeli government officials were well-attuned to the American political scene, where growing Democratic tensions over Middle East foreign policy have caused tension.

As recently as last week, Rep. Jamaal Bowman (D-NY) announced that he would withdraw his support for and vote against bipartisan legislation aimed at strengthening and expanding the Abraham Accords, which established diplomatic relations between Israel and a number of Arab countries, including Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

Thanks in part to such relationships, it seems, Israel has reportedly been urging the Biden administration to redesignate the Houthis in Yemen as a foreign terrorist group following a recent series of missile and drone attacks launched by the Iran-backed rebels in the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

Khanna, who has been outspoken on the civil war in Yemen, said he objects to classifying the Houthis as terrorists on humanitarian grounds, suggesting that the designation could impede the delivery of humanitarian aid to the embattled Middle Eastern country.

"The Houthis have not been responsible for nearly the civilian loss of life and the blockade," Khanna said, arguing that the Saudi blockade of Yemen has been far more damaging. "There is guilt on both sides," Khanna explained, "but the designation of them as a terrorist organization wouldn't further peace."

“Do I believe that the Houthis are engaged in morally wrong behavior?” he went on. “Yes. But the number of casualties, you’ve got Saudis killing tens of thousands of people, and you’ve got a few of these unmanned missiles into Saudi or UAE.

They’re wrong, and I condemn them, but they’re not the same scale by any stretch of the imagination, and so what we have to do is condemn the Houthis, tell them to stop, and I believe the way to get them to stop is to have the Saudis stop the bombing and bring

an end to the war.”

Khanna said the issue “came up once or twice” during his recent meetings with Israeli leaders. “But not significantly, and the delegation was pretty unified in the perspective I just shared.” ♦

FEBRUARY 22, 2022

## J Street endorses Casten over Newman in Illinois Democratic primary

*The group’s endorsement in the member vs. member House matchup comes in wake of Newman’s Office of Congressional Ethics probe*

By Gabby Deutch

In a closely watched Chicago-area primary between two incumbent House Democrats, liberal pro-Israel group J Street is throwing its weight behind Rep. Sean Casten (D-IL), J Street President Jeremy Ben-Ami told *Jewish Insider* on Tuesday. Casten is participating in a J Street delegation of House members visiting Israel this week.

J Street had previously endorsed both Casten and his opponent, Rep. Marie Newman (D-IL), prior to a redistricting process that changed the borders of the legislators’ districts. The organization stood by Newman in September when she was one of just eight Democrats to vote against a \$1 billion supplemental funding package for Israel’s Iron Dome missile-defense system — legislation that J Street supported. The group held a fundraiser for Newman days after the vote.

J Street spokesperson Logan Bayroff issued a statement of support for Newman in early October, saying J Street PAC was “proud to endorse Rep. Newman, who throughout her time in Congress has been a vocal and principled advocate for diplomacy-first American leadership and Israeli-Palestinian peace.” At the time, Illinois’ new maps had not yet been approved.

“After redistricting placed them both in a race for Illinois’ 6th District,” Bayroff told *J* on Tuesday, “we reviewed the race based on a number of factors and ultimately have made the decision this month to endorse

Rep. Casten alone in this new head-to-head matchup.”

Newman attracted national grassroots support in her 2020 victory over incumbent Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-IL), who was at the time one of the most conservative Democrats in Congress.

Casten earned the endorsement last month of the pro-Israel political action committee Democratic Majority for Israel.

Newman is currently embroiled in a congressional ethics investigation relating to her alleged bribery of Palestinian-American professor Iymen Chehade, who now serves as a highly paid advisor to her reelection campaign.

A congressional ethics watchdog report revealed that Chehade had asked Newman to agree to support a range of anti-Israel policies, as well as to hire him to her congressional staff, in exchange for his agreement not to challenge her in the 2020 Democratic primary. Newman did not sign the proposed agreement on Israel policy, but responded to Chehade, “most of [the proposal] looks good.” ♦

# Israel-Bahrain cooperation on display in Munich

*Increasing security collaboration between the two Abraham Accords' countries on display during last weekend's Munich Security Conference*

By Ahdeya Ahmed

*This article first appeared in The Circuit.*

Cooperation between Bahrain and Israel stepped up a level this weekend with the prominent participation of both countries in the Munich Security Conference.

Undersecretary for Political Affairs of the Foreign Ministry Dr. Sheikh Abdullah bin Ahmed Al Khalifa represented Bahrain in the session titled "Abrahamic Agreements and Peace Options," and shed light on a strong alliance between two countries in the Middle East that have common interests aimed at creating a more secure region in the face of the rise of extremism and terrorism that has threatened both countries and has destabilised others nations of the Middle East.

"If this security cooperation between Bahrain and Israel would mean providing more stability and security, so be it. If it would mean saving the lives of innocent civilians, so be it. That is why during a number of visits of the head of the Mossad to Bahrain, it was publicly announced in the Bahrain News Agency. Probably, the first time it was announced was in September 2020 and in May 2021 that yes the head of the Mossad was received by his counterpart in Bahrain. So we do believe that security cooperation, intelligence cooperation is part of our ongoing partnership between Bahrain and Israel," Abdullah said.

The meeting in Munich followed two historical visits made by Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Defence Minister Benny Gantz within 10 days to Bahrain and Abdullah's words make it clear that Bahrain would exert utmost effort into any political or diplomatic initiative and co-operation that could lead to saving the lives of innocent civilians.

The Abraham Accords that marked a transitional point in the Middle East's history and future and consolidated strategic

cooperation between two countries that believe in peace as a consistent approach to confronting destructive ideas and ideologies that perpetuate hatred and promote terrorism — this has been the main focus of discussion and cooperation between the two states.

Both suffer from threats by terrorist entities and countries harbouring terrorists. Iran has been the focal point of all threats, directly and indirectly.

The participation of Anwar Mohammad Gargash, diplomatic adviser to His Highness the president of the United Arab Emirates, in the Munich Security Conference also gave weight to the discussions as the UAE continues — through genuine diplomatic efforts — to achieve stability and security in the region; the UAE has always been known for such efforts and stands as a great example for resolving several regional and international issues through its diplomatic effort, experience and in-depth analysis of the different players in the region.

History books will document the Abraham Accords that brought the UAE, Bahrain and Israel together, thanks to the brave decisions taken by their leaders in a part of the world where the some countries countries funding terrorism have created a turbulent region.

Munich brought together diplomatic and defense leaders who addressed a number of challenges facing the region, foremost among them terrorism based on extremist ideology, and the rejection of coexistence and diversity, which represents another challenge as it is linked to the spread of sectarianism and negative ideas. Antisemitism and Islamophobia have been the unfortunate results of hatred and demonizing Israel in many parts of the Muslim world.

Sheikh Abdullah al Khalifa focused on the challenge of armed proxy militias and the threat to maritime security, in addition

to targeting oil and vital facilities in the countries of the region through drones and guided missiles to destabilize the region. This comes at a time that the Houthis, funded by Iran, continue to target Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi, causing the death of innocent civilians. Munich came during the same week that Australia classified Hamas as a terrorist entity, months after the U.K. had done so, and after Germany classified the political wing of Hezbollah as terrorists.

The Munich conference has come to a close but the mission to eliminate the enemies of peace has just begun. ♦