

THE WEEKLY PRINT

Hours before deadly attack, coexistence on display at Tunisian Jewish festival; Netanyahu struggles to hold pragmatists, conservatives together within Likud; Trump, McConnell tensions play out in Kentucky GOP gubernatorial primary; Emily Tisch Sussman and the power of the 'pivot'; Three Jewish Democrats among top contenders in Philadelphia mayoral race; Lawmakers introduce first-ever bipartisan and bicameral resolution honoring Jewish American Heritage Month; China's tech-driven port in Haifa aims for interconnected Mideast; and Bernie Sanders hosts Rashida Tlaib's 'Nakba Day' after Kevin McCarthy canceled it.

MAY 10, 2023

Hours before deadly attack, coexistence on display at Tunisian Jewish festival

The State Department's antisemitism envoy saw coexistence at work at Djerba's Lag B'Omer Festival. Hours later, a gunman killed four

By Gabby Deutch

One of the largest modern Jewish gatherings in the Arab world was disrupted by gunfire on Tuesday, when an armed Tunisian naval guard killed four people and wounded nine others on the island of Djerba as the Jewish community celebrated an annual Lag B'Omer festival.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday that two Jewish cousins were among those killed, one with Israeli citizenship and the other with foreign citizenship; authorities in Tunisia, which does not have formal ties with Israel, identified a French national and a Tunisian citizen among the dead. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Tuesday that the U.S. "deplores the attack in Tunisia coinciding with the annual Jewish pilgrimage that draws faithful to the El Ghriba Synagogue from around the world."

The festival, which includes three days of religious and cultural events, attracts more than 6,000 Jewish pilgrims — many of whom have Tunisian ancestry — from around the world, including Israel. Djerba,

an island in the Mediterranean located closer to Libya's Tripoli than Tunis, is home to what is today Tunisia's largest Jewish community of 1,100 people.

Prior to the attack, Tunisian and American officials had praised the Lag B'Omer festival, which marks the 33th day after Passover, for the way it brought Tunisian Muslims and Jews together. Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, the U.S. special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism, planned a trip to the North African nation to be part of the festivities, which she attended on Tuesday with U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia Joey Hood hours before the attack.

"To be able to take part in, dare I say it, a good news story, a positive kind of thing, was very invigorating," Lipstadt told *Jewish Insider* on Tuesday from Djerba, speaking before the attack. The Ghriba Synagogue, which according to local legend traces its roots back more than 2,000 years, has faced violence before. In 2002, 20 people, most of whom were German tourists, were killed

in a suicide bombing outside the Ghriba Synagogue.

Lipstadt traveled to Djerba as part of an effort to understand how Muslim-majority countries are reckoning with their checkered pasts vis-a-vis their Jewish communities — and how they are dealing with the small Jewish communities that remain. Tunisia was home to 105,000 Jews in 1948, but most left the country after 1956 when the country gained independence from France and put anti-Jewish policies into place.

The trip fit into what Lipstadt described as her larger effort to "reach out to countries that may be willing to rethink their recent past decades, comments about Jews, attitude towards Jews, or their erasure or diminution of Jewish history in their country," she said. "Erasing the fact that Jews were indigenous to your country is, if not a form of antisemitism, it's certainly not a helpful kind of action."

She has also traveled to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Morocco to hold similar conversations with local Jewish

community members and government officials.

The Ghriba festival has featured visits from high-level Tunisian officials, and last year the country's prime minister attended the pilgrimage. This year the Tunisian minister of religious affairs was present.

The festival in Djerba is "a symbol of what was here in the past, and what is possible in the future," said Lipstadt, speaking before Tuesday's attack. It is, she said, "an example of potential coexistence, or a sign of the coexistence that once was in these countries and could possibly be again, a sign of the end of or stopping of demonization of Jews."

The fact that Lipstadt chose to attend the festival "is a strong message to the Jews of Tunisia that they are not alone and that the American authorities ensure respect for human rights and respect for freedom of worship in Tunisia," said Elie Trabelsi, whose father oversees the Ghriba festival.

Security at the festival is heavy. The island of Djerba "relies heavily on this pilgrimage," Trabelsi explained, and as a result "puts all the security and financial means to ensure the smooth running of the pilgrimage. The presence of high-ranking political figures contributes to this success."

Lag B'Omer marks the first time since Passover that traditionally observant Jews will listen to music, so the festival is heavy on dancing and music.

"People come from everywhere to attend the pilgrimage," said Moszché Uzan, the assistant to Tunisia's chief rabbi. "It's a religious pilgrimage, but it's also — people come here to be happy, to hear songs, to dance, to eat. Everyone finds every kind of thing here."

Women at the festival will take hard-boiled eggs and write on them the name of a person to whom they would like to give a blessing, usually related to marriage or

fertility.

"It's pure chaos. It's mayhem, people dancing, people singing, people auctioning off things. Reunions of Tunisian Jews who haven't seen each other in ages. People tripping over each other," said Lipstadt. "Expect also to be moved."

Amid the revelry, pilgrims and guests did not expect to run for their lives amid a violent attack. Earlier in the day, people had danced to live music and milled about marketplaces, while others prayed in solitude in the ornate synagogue, adorned with blue arches and crystal chandeliers.

Tunisian authorities did not yet describe a motive for the attacker, who was killed by officers who responded to the shooting.

"Investigations are continuing in order to shed light on the motives for this cowardly aggression," the Interior Ministry said. ♦

MAY 9, 2023

Netanyahu struggles to hold pragmatists, conservatives together within Likud

There are growing signs of serious disagreements on the right over the proposed judicial overhaul

By Ruth Marks Eglash

In a pro-government rally held late last month in Jerusalem, Israeli Justice Minister Yariv Levin told an estimated crowd of 600,000 that he was determined to push ahead with polarizing judicial reforms despite ongoing mass public protests and international criticism.

"Over 2 million Israelis voted six months ago in the real referendum: the election. They voted in favor of legal reform," Levin told those gathered outside the Knesset on April 27. "We are here on this stage with 64 [total coalition] mandates to right an injustice. No more inequality, no one-sided judicial system, no court whose judges are above the Knesset and above the government."

"We are told that if these reforms pass, there will be a dictatorship. There is no bigger lie than that," he added. "I will do everything in my power to bring the desired change to the judicial system."

Levin's words that night — along with other recent statements, including comments last week accusing the U.S. State Department of supporting protests against the government's plans, have put him increasingly at odds with the position of his boss, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Israel's longest-serving leader, who for years has headed his political party, Likud, with an iron grip, has been more pragmatic about the reforms, trying to calm fears and

insisting Israel's democratic institutions will not be harmed. Netanyahu has placed emphasis on talks with opposition parties, championed by President Isaac Herzog, to find a compromise on the proposed changes taking place.

The apparent clash between Netanyahu and Levin, 53, who comes from a longtime Likud-supporting family, is unusual and indicative of growing dissent within Likud. The largest party in Israel's 120-seat parliament with 125,000 paid members, Likud's popularity has been plummeting in the polls, as has support for Netanyahu. With increasingly vocal grumblings from more moderate quarters of Likud, some

are starting to question the future of the country's "legacy party."

"I don't think the party is going to split apart, but there are signs, and they are growing, that there are serious disagreements in the party on a scale that we've rarely seen under Netanyahu," Neri Zilber, a Tel Aviv-based journalist and advisor to the Israel Policy Forum, told *Jewish Insider*.

"You can really see the rise of at least two camps," he explained. "People talk about the more pragmatic wing led by Bibi [Netanyahu's nickname], [Defense Minister Yoav] Gallant and [Strategic Affairs Minister Ron] Dermer and the more hardline wing led by Levin, [Minister within the Justice Ministry] Dudi Amsalem and lower-profile but vocal Knesset members primarily over the issue of the judicial overhaul."

Zilber added that there is a third camp rising in the Likud, "unaffiliated to either the pragmatic or hardline wing but which is heavily criticizing both the prime minister and Levin."

"This includes people like [MK] David Bitan, who are pragmatic and say we need to stop with judicial overhaul because it's causing damage to the party, and also [Israel's former Ambassador to the United Nations and MK] Danny Danon, who last week criticized the government's response to the rocket fire from Gaza," he added.

"So, you have at least two, if not three, disparate camps and it's all coming to the fore right now, due to the objective weakness and declining support for both the party and especially for the prime minister," said Zilber.

An opinion poll published Sunday by Israel's top-rated news station, Channel 12, showed tanking support for Netanyahu as prime minister, and for Likud as the ruling party. According to the survey, if an election was held this week, Likud would lose up to eight parliamentary seats – a sharp drop from the 32 seats it currently holds. In contrast, former Defense Minister Benny Gantz's National Unity party would overtake Likud as the largest political faction in the Knesset and the current opposition would have enough seats to form the majority.

A similar survey published on Friday showed support for Netanyahu's coalition at an all-time low, with an overwhelming

majority of the public disapproving how the government is handling crime, national security and the economy, including the rising cost of living, in favor of the judicial reforms.

Even those who voted for the government appeared to have lost faith, the poll found, with some 60% of those surveyed saying the recent handling of security matters was awful, and 75% saying they were unhappy with the government's economic policies.

"According to opinion polls, Likud is losing a lot of support from its voters, or at least its more moderate voters – those who are not interested in the judicial changes that the government is proposing," noted professor Gideon Rahat, a senior fellow at the Israel Democracy Institute and a member of faculty at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

"Inside the party, there are activists and members of Knesset who are quite loud about their support for the reforms, and you have to remember that many of the Likud's core members are more ideological and more to the right than the party's general voters," he explained.

"Netanyahu has to maneuver between these two forces," noted Rahat. "The more immediate pressure is from within the party and from the members of Knesset, but, in the long run, there are some other people in Likud who are quite worried about the party losing support."

A little more than a week ago, Bitan, a Likud backbencher once considered fiercely loyal to Netanyahu, lodged harsh criticisms against the prime minister over the judicial overhaul, its legislation, and the overall process. Speaking on Channel 12's popular "Meet the Press" program, he said that moving ahead with the reforms would be detrimental to the party's future, and to the future of Israel.

He was also critical of the pro-government rally held a few nights earlier – where Levin spoke of pushing ahead unequivocally with the reforms. "We cannot go on like this, we need to reach a compromise," Bitan said, adding that the way the plan was rolled out was a "strategic mistake."

Bitan's comments followed similar statements, and low-key criticisms, from other moderate Likud lawmakers. In March, former Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein called

to freeze the process, and was conspicuously absent from the plenum in one of the voting sessions. Israeli media has suggested other Likud figures, including Gallant, Danon and former Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat, have quietly pushed for a softening of the legislation and for Netanyahu to seek broader support.

Tal Schneider, political correspondent for *The Times of Israel*, said that despite the critical voices on both sides, Netanyahu was still very much in control of the party.

"It's definitely Netanyahu's party and has been for many years now," she said, calculating that in total he has served as Likud's chairman for some 24 years. "He has put his loyalists everywhere – the spokespeople, the entire mechanism of the party, it's all his people."

"Sometimes when you see actions from inside the party that contradict Netanyahu or his agenda, it's mainly about him letting people air their grievances," Schneider observed. "[Netanyahu] is like, 'OK, let them talk and let them hold demonstrations' – I think the rallies that the right-wing organized in favor of the government, were basically the Likud infrastructure letting off steam."

Of the more moderate voices in the party, Schneider said she believed there was a genuine concern that right-wing secular supporters were watching "in horror at the amount of money that is being given to the Haredi sector, or on the issue of [military] draft [to drop the requirement for ultra-Orthodox men], and the rise in consumer prices."

"They realize this is why Likud is going down in the opinion polls," she said.

As for Levin's growing prominence among the right-wing flank of the party, Schneider said she doubted he would be able to unseat Netanyahu, or whether that was even his goal.

"I feel like the [party's] base is in shock," she continued. "They see the drop in the polls, they see it is continuing and not recovering, but I think the base will eventually follow Netanyahu."

Anshel Pfeffer, a journalist with *Haaretz* and author of *Bibi: The Turbulent Life and Times of Benjamin Netanyahu*, told JI that seeming discord in the party and Levin's increasing prominence were all part of the

battle “for the day after Netanyahu.”

“You have the ministers, the members of the party and the voters, and what you are hearing from the top level of representatives is related to the fight for his successor,” he explained. “Amongst the members, Bibi can’t be moved, they love Netanyahu and that’s not going to change. He’ll always win the primaries for leadership.”

Pfeffer said that historically, Likud is a party that has been very loyal to its leader and since its founding more than 100 years ago has had only a handful of chairmen –

Ze’ev Jabotinsky, Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir and Ariel Sharon. Those leaders were only replaced when they died or resigned, he said.

“Netanyahu will only leave the leadership of the Likud when he decides,” continued Pfeffer. “It’s questionable whether he would stand down even if he is indicted [three criminal cases are pending against the prime minister]. Either way, the party members will stand by him because they have a mythical belief in him.”

Asked whether he believed any of the

dissenting voices in Likud might break away to join other parties or create their own faction, Pfeffer said it was unlikely. None had enough power to go it alone and the others, despite their recent complaints, remained loyal to the historic party and its core ideology, he said.

“Conceivably some people could but it’s very difficult to survive on the right politically outside of Likud because it’s such a big party,” he said. “Likud is a very strong brand and there’s not much room around them.” ♦

MAY 8, 2023

Trump, McConnell tensions play out in Kentucky GOP gubernatorial primary

Former U.N. Ambassador Kelly Craft has spent millions tying Ky. AG Daniel Cameron to the Senate minority leader

By Matthew Kassel

Days after the Kentucky Derby, another closely watched race in the Bluegrass State, the Republican primary for governor, is nearing the finish line, with two GOP frontrunners locked in fierce competition for the nomination.

The crowded primary on May 16 has turned into a heated battle between Daniel Cameron, the popular attorney general of Kentucky, and Kelly Craft, who served in the Trump administration as an ambassador to the United Nations.

Even as they are largely aligned on key issues, their rivalry has grown increasingly personal over the course of the campaign. Craft has spent millions on a series of attack ads targeting her chief opponent, notably including a recent TV spot in which Cameron is cast as an “insider” for his long association with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY).

It was a curious ad for several reasons, not least because Craft herself has previously contributed to McConnell, who was instrumental in helping to secure her

U.N. ambassadorship. “She’s the ultimate insider,” Al Cross, who directs the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues at the University of Kentucky, said in an interview with *Jewish Insider* last week. “When people don’t disagree on issues, they have to disagree on personalities or backgrounds, and that’s how they’re trying to differentiate themselves.”

Her campaign’s assumption that McConnell would be unpalatable to voters in his home state, where he has served in the upper chamber for nearly four decades, was also indicative of how the GOP has changed under former President Donald Trump. The Senate leader has long had an icy relationship with Trump, who remains popular in Kentucky.

Still, GOP strategists in Kentucky who spoke with *JI* are doubtful that Craft’s ad will meaningfully influence the primary, where Trump has already given his endorsement to Cameron. “It’s well-known that he was a protégé of McConnell and worked in his office and kind of sprang from that world,”

Scott Jennings, a CNN commentator and longtime adviser to McConnell, said of Cameron. “One of the appealing things about him to his voters has been that he comes from Team Mitch and he’s also got the affections of Donald Trump. He looks like a unifying kind of guy.”

Despite his connection to McConnell, who is not planning to weigh in on the primary, Cameron, 37, has somewhat conspicuously shied away from alluding to their relationship during the race, observed T.J. Litafik, a Republican strategist in Lexington. “It’s the darndest thing ever,” he said.

Likewise, he noted, Craft and a third viable candidate, Ryan Quarles, the agriculture commissioner, have avoided linking themselves to the Senate leader. “It’s funny, all three of them have definitive ties,” Litafik told *JI*. “But nobody wants to acknowledge it because of the battle between Trump and McConnell.”

Instead, Cameron and his allies have largely kept their focus on his endorsement

from Trump, the most valuable asset in his campaign arsenal as Craft, 61, has continued to outspend him. The attorney general has also faced attacks from a pro-Craft super PAC — funded partly by her husband, the billionaire coal executive Joe Craft — that have sought to connect him to a Democrat, Alvin Bragg, who is Manhattan's first Black district attorney.

In debuting his first TV ad last month, Cameron, the first Black attorney general in Kentucky, chose to target Andy Beshear, the popular Democratic governor, rather than Craft. Meanwhile, he has received a boost from a new super PAC, Bluegrass Freedom Action, whose ads have dismissed Craft as “ultra-rich” and “desperate,” while emphasizing Cameron's endorsement from Trump. “Craft worked for President Trump and Trump endorsed Daniel,” the narrator of one ad boasts, “not Craft.”

In a statement to JI, Gus Herbert, Cameron's campaign manager, called the attorney general a “conservative fighter” and said he “stands out in the crowded field because he is running on a record, not on ads.”

“He is the only candidate that has fought back against Biden and Beshear, and won,” Herbert added. “He is the only candidate endorsed by President Trump, and he is the only candidate that can beat Andy Beshear this fall.”

Beshear, 45, previously served as attorney general and is the son of a former Democratic governor. He narrowly won election in 2019, when he unseated a Republican incumbent, and has since garnered bipartisan praise for his handling of natural disasters and tragedy. Polling suggests he would be tough to beat, even in a ruby-red state such as Kentucky.

Though public polling in the primary has been scarce, the most recent independent survey, released in mid-April, showed that Craft — at 24% among Republican primary voters — has been gaining ground on Cameron, who remained in first place with a six-point lead. The previous independent poll, in late January, had Craft trailing Cameron by 26 percentage points.

Most GOP strategists surveyed by JI last week believe Cameron is likely to clinch the nomination in a low-turnout election, even as they acknowledged that Craft has run

a formidable campaign. “She's really been doing a solid job at the grassroots in addition to the increased spending,” Litafik told JI. The former ambassador is also “doing the best job of keeping to the hot-button issues that I think are most effective in a split competitive Republican primary,” he added, citing her “opposition to the so-called ‘woke agenda’ and critical race theory.”

“Craft has been out there campaigning quite a bit, but I think she made some early missteps,” Tyler Glick, a GOP strategist in Louisville, countered in a recent interview. “She's a first-time candidate, and I think that's been apparent throughout the campaign.” He argued that Cameron “is well-liked and pulls from a lot of tents within the party.”

Weston Loyd, a spokesperson for Craft's campaign, said in a statement to JI that the former ambassador “has the momentum going into” the primary “and will continue to meet with Kentuckians of all faiths and advocate for religious freedom here in the commonwealth.”

Even as the race has become hostile, Shlomo Litvin, a Chabad rabbi in Lexington who leads the Kentucky Jewish Council, said there is at least one personal matter on which Cameron and Craft are almost certainly in agreement. Each is partial to a prophetic line of biblical verse from Esther 4:14: “And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” According to Litvin, “there was a large sign in the attorney general's office with those words.” For her part, Craft inscribed the line on a challenge coin she made as an ambassador to the U.N., Litvin recalled.

Before the campaign, the two candidates had established connections with Jewish community members in Kentucky, Litvin told JI. He said that Craft had participated in a menorah lighting at the University of Kentucky to “express her support for the Jewish community” following an antisemitic attack.

In 2021, when Kentucky became the first state to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism, Cameron “was supportive of using the IHRA definition in order to go after anyone who had committed antisemitic crimes,” Litvin said. “He also expressed extreme support for the Jewish

community following various incidents across Kentucky.”

Both candidates have demonstrated their support for Israel, Litvin added. Cameron has been a leader in “fighting against” the Boycott, Sanctions and Divestment movement targeting the Jewish state, he said, while praising Craft's tenure at the U.N. “Most of the Jewish community sees those years as generally positive for Israel's defense,” he noted.

“Israel has no better friend than Kelly Craft,” said Loyd, Craft's spokesperson, in his statement to JI last week. “As U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Kelly fought back against antisemitism sentiments around the globe, and she will do the same as governor of Kentucky.”

Herbert, Cameron's campaign manager, highlighted the attorney general's efforts to challenge church closures during the start of pandemic, calling him “a fierce defender of our foundational First Amendment right to worship as we see fit.”

“That is why when Andy Beshear shut down houses of worship during the pandemic, [Cameron] went into federal court and got our churches and synagogues re-opened,” Herbert said in his statement to JI. Cameron, he added, “is building a coalition of all faiths, colors and creeds to bring conservative values back to the governor's mansion.”

Melanie Pell, a chief field operations officer for the American Jewish Committee who lives in Louisville, said she has “never had any questions about” Cameron's “record” on speaking out against antisemitism. Craft, on the other hand, “has less of a Kentucky track record” with respect to such issues, she said.

More broadly, however, Pell insisted that many voters have grown “tired of the culture wars and want to see the candidates addressing the issues that are really affecting” the state. “There's some fearmongering that's happening already that we're seeing, and I think the Jewish community, in general, is frustrated.”

Jennings, the CNN commentator and McConnell adviser, said it “is not unexpected that people will scrape and call” for the nomination in a state like Kentucky, where party registration has been trending Republican. “I don't think anybody's

shocked by that,” he told JI. “But it does make a lot of folks uncomfortable, because most of these people — Craft, Cameron,

Quarles — they have so many overlapping friends in the Republican Party.”

“We don’t have a long history of mash-

up, chippy primaries,” he said. “We’ve had a few over the years, but they tend to leave lingering, hard feelings.” ♦

MAY 11, 2023

Emily Tisch Sussman and the power of the ‘pivot’

The former political strategist’s own anguish over the career-family bind fuels her podcast, ‘She Pivots’

By **Tori Bergel**

At the end of January 2020, political strategist Emily Tisch Sussman sat down with former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for a conversation on her then-podcast “Your Political Playlist.” The candid interview quickly went viral, even garnering a prominent mention for Tisch Sussman in *The New York Times*. Ten days after her interview with the former presidential hopeful, Tisch Sussman gave birth to her third child, heading into maternity leave confident she would not soon be forgotten. But a few weeks later, at what was a high point in her career, she left politics after nearly 15 years in the field.

Despite leaving of her own volition, the shift came as a blow to Tisch Sussman, who in under two decades had logged over 250 television appearances on cable news shows, worked on numerous campaigns (including former President Barack Obama’s in 2008) and helped drive policy change. She hadn’t grown tired or lost her passion for politics, nor had she been asked to leave; for all intents and purposes, Tisch Sussman was as happy as ever professionally. Personally, however, her world was being flipped upside down.

With three children under 4 years old, Tisch Sussman had a plan for balancing motherhood with business, but within the first weeks of her maternity leave, COVID-19 arrived, sending the world into lockdown. What was meant to be a joyous time for Tisch Sussman became the end of her Washington

career, as any political consulting jobs or other work opportunities she may have found evaporated without the childcare she desperately needed but could no longer find.

“It was crushing to me personally, because I felt like I had worked so hard for this political career and it was gone,” Tisch Sussman, 40, told *Jewish Insider*. “All of my self-worth was tied to being professionally successful and being professionally successful in politics, and that just evaporated. So it was a very dark time.”

In search of other women who, like her, had experienced professional upheaval not indicative of their own capabilities, Tisch Sussman created “She Pivots,” a podcast highlighting women who have “redefined success” for themselves. She partnered with *Marie Claire*, where she is a contributing editor, launching “She Pivots” as the magazine’s official podcast.

Speaking to JI over Zoom from her home on Long Island, Tisch Sussman appeared unfazed by multiple interjections during the conversation by one of her daughters, answering her questions mid-interview before returning to the discussion without missing a beat.

“She Pivots” is not a “mommy podcast” — a characterization Tisch Sussman vehemently rejects — but rather a business show where women share how the rollercoasters in their professional journeys turned into their greatest successes.

“It’s very important to me that we have

a broad range [of] intervening life events, because otherwise I think it’d be really boring if it’s an entire podcast of: ‘I had kids and it killed my career,’” Tisch Sussman said.

“I think specifically the piece of culture that I’m trying to attack is the idea that we make all of our career decisions for professional factors, when the reality is that we do a mix of personal and professional,” she added.

Such forefront focus on the personal is a complete 180 from Tisch Sussman’s “Your Political Playlist” podcast, which she purposefully kept centered on the expertise her guests brought to the table.

“It was policy conversations that were conversational and accessible to regular people, and I had all female guests on it, because I felt like in a professional setting, in policy, women were only called upon to be experts if they had a personal tie to the issue. And that really annoyed me,” Tisch Sussman recalled. “Like what if you’re just the expert on an issue because you worked really hard on it? No one ever asked men if they felt that way [or if] they personally went through it.”

The podcast was a way for her guests to build their credentials and promote themselves in a field where women often felt they had to wait for recognition.

Tisch Sussman played with the idea of including male guests on “She Pivots,” but felt that ultimately, “our society has not evolved enough for men to be introspective

to that degree to be able to appreciate what factor the personal has had on their professional decision-making.” She added that, when it comes to men’s ability to reflect upon the personal, there can be an aspect of embarrassment or unawareness, because “it just hasn’t been socialized.”

“I hope we will get there, but I think I would have had to have dug really hard in most of my interviews,” Tisch Sussman said.

Currently in its second season, “She Pivots” has already featured a number of A-list guests including Vice President Kamala Harris, actress and activist Sophia Bush, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul and actress Brooke Shields. Conversations have ranged from how two long-lost half-sisters went on to create the nation’s largest Black-owned wine company to the life of the oldest park ranger in U.S. history.

Tisch Sussman sees each story as an inspiration. To her, forging connections and creating space for women to “give words and voice to the things that they’re feeling” is the most gratifying part of “She Pivots.”

“Honestly, the grit of women just floors me every time,” Tisch Sussman said. “The community that women build to build each other up and support each other is a common thread through all of [the episodes.]”

Long before dropping her first episode or ever appearing on MSNBC, Tisch Sussman was driven by a desire to make the world a better place — a trait she inherited from her parents and grandparents who instilled in her the mentality of, “to whom much is given, much is expected.”

“We were expected to be philanthropic, we were expected to be working towards the greater good,” Tisch Sussman said. “We were expected to see everyone in their full humanity. Like, we were not better than anyone, everyone has a full story, everyone deserves opportunities.”

Growing up in Manhattan, Tisch Sussman described herself as “strong-willed” and unwavering about what she felt was “a guiding sense of justice.” At age 5 she became a vegetarian after learning that eating meat meant killing animals.

As a teenager, Tisch Sussman worked at Belvoir Terrace, a girls’ performing arts

summer camp in Lenox, Mass., which she described as “the most informative experience” and a place that is still significant in her life today.

“When you live in a room with 15-year-olds, you cannot fake it. Like, you may not like everything you say, you may not agree with everything you say, but you have to pull it from a real place because if you are faking it, they will know and they will cut you,” Tisch Sussman said. “Like, you will be dead to them and they will never listen to anything you say again. So I really felt like it stretched me more than I could have imagined, and knowing that I could work hard in that way and still keep a calm head and be authentic, I think gave me a lot of confidence moving forward.”

After college, Tisch Sussman worked on John Kerry’s 2004 presidential campaign. Following the election, wanting to make an even bigger impact, she enrolled in Cardozo Law School, completing her degree in 2008 when she then joined Obama’s campaign team. For 15 years she worked in the political sector — during that time she was lead lobbyist for the repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, worked on the Defense of Marriage Act and ran the Young Democrats of America for Obama’s reelection in 2012, eventually landing at the Center for American Progress.

During the 2016 presidential election, Tisch Sussman wanted to get back to her campaigning roots, but was pregnant with her first child and decided to stay at CAP. Feeling a “new-mom drive” to prove herself, Tisch Sussman went above and beyond to help the organization through its “post-Obama transformation.” Just when she began to feel back in step professionally, she got pregnant again.

Keeping up with then-President Donald Trump’s tendency to announce new policies on the weekend became overwhelming for Tisch Sussman, who had no childcare on those days, and so she reluctantly left CAP. She focused on political consulting for the next few years before starting “Your Political Playlist” in 2019.

Creating the podcast was nerve wracking; despite her years of experience appearing on television and breadth of political expertise, the show marked a first for Tisch Sussman — before, she had only ever represented another’s point of view;

now, it was her thoughts in the spotlight.

“That in itself felt vulnerable and scary, like what if nobody wants to hear just from me?” Tisch Sussman recalled, but maintained that had it not been for “Your Political Podcast,” she would never have been able to start “She Pivots.”

The kind of raw, emotional openness “She Pivots” thrives on is something Tisch Sussman lacked in Washington, not believing there was any interest in the challenges she’d faced. Now, as a free agent, she sees the value in sharing the messiest parts of herself with her audience.

“Continuously being that vulnerable and empathetic to match my guests’ vulnerability, is quite draining and is quite scary, but I wouldn’t have been able to do it had I not already taken that leap with ‘Your Political Playlist,’” she said.

There are times where Tisch Sussman feels conflicted in having moved so far away from her previous path. Though she still dons her consultant’s hat from time to time — she founded ETS Advisory in 2019 to do just that — she misses the pace, environment and unified mission to better the world that was so prevalent in politics.

“The beginning of the Biden administration was really hard for me, because all of my friends were getting these incredible jobs,” Tisch Sussman said. “I always wanted to work in the White House, I never got to. I worked alongside them during the Obama administration and the White House would outsource campaigns for me to run, and when I lived in Washington and during the Obama administration that meant something, but that administration is over and there’s new players, and it doesn’t anymore, and so I never got to have that experience.”

Tisch Sussman has since been back to the White House twice — once to cover Biden’s signing of the Inflation Reduction Act for *Marie Claire* and most recently for its Women’s History Month Celebration in March — and while the occasions were bittersweet, she is also grateful for the opportunities that wouldn’t have been possible had she stayed.

“I got to interview the vice president — if I was in the system, I wouldn’t have been able to interview the vice president. Now I’m able to construct narratives that I want

to put out into the world,” Tisch Sussman said. “Now I can think about culture change in a different way, in a way that I never could have had I stayed in it.”

With “She Pivots,” Tisch Sussman is one step closer to creating that change by

helping her listeners realize the successes in their own lives.

“It’s not about resilience, because resilience implies going back, and I wanted people to be looking forward,” Tisch Sussman said. “That you can be different

and maybe even better, but you have to let go of some of the things that you held on to before, because you’re not the same, I’m not the same, and if you’re a different person then your metrics of success should be different. But they are possible.” ♦

MAY 11, 2023

Three Jewish Democrats among top contenders in Philadelphia mayoral race

The candidates themselves have largely refrained from emphasizing their Jewish identities or highlighting communal issues in heavily Jewish Philadelphia, where antisemitic incidents have been on the rise

By Matthew Kassel

In the closely divided race to become Philadelphia’s next mayor, three Jewish Democrats with divergent backgrounds are among the top candidates vying for the nomination — marking what some observers view as a local record for Jewish representation on the ballot.

“This is the first time that I can remember where we’ve had three Jewish candidates,” Robin Schatz, the director of government affairs at the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, said in an interview with *Jewish Insider* this week. “That’s just amazing to me.”

The candidates themselves, however, have largely refrained from emphasizing their Jewish identities or highlighting communal issues in heavily Jewish Philadelphia, where antisemitic incidents have been on the rise. “I don’t see anyone going around talking about being Jewish,” said Larry Ceisler, a public affairs executive in Philadelphia. “I don’t think it would have any effect.”

Polling has shown that crime and public safety are the leading issues in Tuesday’s crowded primary, where five Democrats are seen as viable. Allan Domb, a self-funding real estate mogul and moderate Jewish Democrat, claims that he is the only candidate whose public safety plan includes

an explicit pledge to increase funding to combat hate crimes and to provide police protections for synagogues and mosques.

The former city councilman, 68, is among a handful of candidates who have embraced tough-on-crime messaging amid mounting concerns over gun violence in Philadelphia. Jeff Brown, a 59-year-old Jewish grocery store owner, has won endorsements from police unions, while Cherelle Parker, 50, has vowed to hire more police officers and expressed support for stop-and-frisk tactics, which she had previously opposed as a city councilwoman.

Meanwhile, Rebecca Rhynhart, a 48-year-old Jewish Democrat and former city controller, has voiced criticism of law enforcement while advocating for intervention strategies such as therapy and job training, even as she has also argued in favor of “more police.” The leading progressive candidate, Helen Gym, a former city councilwoman, has shied away from past comments in which she aligned with the movement to abolish the police. The 50-year-old Democrat now calls “to stabilize police funding” and says it is “not the time to cut.”

In recent weeks, Gym’s profile has risen as she has drawn support from a growing number of national leaders on the activist

left, including Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and Jamaal Bowman (D-NY). The two New York Democrats, who are among the most outspoken Israel critics in the House, have had strained relationships with members of the organized Jewish community in their districts.

Thanks to their endorsements, some Jewish leaders in Philadelphia say they are now wondering how Gym, who has been likened to the “Philly’s AOC,” will engage with them if she becomes mayor. “Her affiliation with the Squad is concerning,” said Brett Goldman, a co-founder of Democratic Jewish Outreach Pennsylvania, a statewide advocacy group, which is not making an endorsement in the primary.

Alissa Wise, a rabbi in West Philadelphia, said that Gym “has prioritized building relationships with the progressive Jewish community,” while welcoming “Jews who are critical of Israeli policy” into her coalition. “She’s not willing to exclude us because we are a vocal minority.”

Wise, a former director of organizing for Jewish Voice for Peace, which advocates for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel, recalled that Gym had stood beside members of the group in 2017 to protest former President Donald

Trump's travel ban suspending immigration from several Muslim-majority countries. "She held our banner with us," Wise said.

"I don't think that necessarily means she's taking a side on a foreign policy question that's irrelevant to her role on the City Council," Wise clarified, noting that she has never discussed Middle East issues with Gym.

The former councilwoman does not appear to have weighed in on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the campaign or as an elected official. In a video posted to Twitter in March, however, Gym vowed to fly the Palestinian flag on Philadelphia's Benjamin Franklin Parkway if she is elected.

A spokesperson for Gym's campaign said she was unavailable to comment on Wednesday.

Gym has otherwise built a close relationship with congregants of Kol Tzedek, a Reconstructionist synagogue in West Philadelphia, according to Wise, who is a member. On the evening of the Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh five years ago, Gym gathered with congregants to "offer words of comfort and solidarity," Wise said.

Last year, Gym was among a group of council members who co-sponsored a resolution condemning antisemitism in Philadelphia.

But Schatz, the Jewish federation leader, said she is skeptical that Gym's engagement will extend more broadly across the city's Jewish community. "The only one I have any concern about is Helen Gym, to be honest," she told JI. "I'm not too sure how well she would do in terms of fostering relationships, especially when it comes to Israel."

Schatz, who accompanied former Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter on a trip to Israel, is eager to extend an invitation to the next mayor, she said, as part of an effort to promote trade relations and educational partnerships with Philadelphia, whose sister city is Tel Aviv. "It helps them to better understand the Jewish community," Schatz said, adding that she had previously tried to coordinate a visit with Parker but was unable to make it work. "She's dying to go," Schatz told JI.

Goldman, the Democratic activist, said that Domb and Rhynhart have each expressed interest in fostering [economic]

ties with Israel as well as funding programs to combat hate crimes and antisemitism. The two candidates are natural "allies" of the Jewish community who "best understand the nuance," he told JI. "For a lot of people, especially in the Center City Jewish community, it's a hard decision between Allan and Rebecca."

A spokesperson for Rhynhart's campaign, which has notched endorsements from several former Philadelphia mayors, did not respond to a request for comment this week.

During a March candidate forum co-hosted by the Jewish federation, Brown and Parker also committed to fighting antisemitism in partnership with Jewish leaders in Philadelphia. Their campaigns did not respond to requests for comment from JI.

Domb, who attended the forum, said he has long been active within the Jewish community. "Even on the council, I was a big supporter of all Jewish causes, including Israel," he told JI. He belongs to five synagogues, he said, including Tree of Life in Pittsburgh, which he joined after it was attacked in 2018. "I think it's important," he said, "to be a member of that community."

He also owns the only Jewish deli in Center City, Schlesinger's, which he said was his mother's maiden name. "Our slogan is 'God, country and corned beef,'" he told JI solemnly.

"If having matzo ball soup was the winning credential for mayor, you can call Mayor Allan," Ceisler, the public affairs executive, confirmed.

Meanwhile, Domb touted his detailed policy proposals, private sector experience and tenure in city government to support his claim that he is gaining traction among voters. "I can work with everybody," he said in the interview with JI. He has spent more than \$10 million of his own money in the race, which is the most expensive mayoral election in Philadelphia history. The winner of Tuesday's Democratic primary is all but guaranteed to become mayor in deep-blue Philadelphia.

In the only public independent poll analyzing the primary, Domb — at 14% among likely Democratic primary voters — was running in a virtual dead heat alongside his four top rivals, with 20% of

voters still undecided. Ceisler said he had reviewed private surveys showing a similar dynamic. "It's very unusual," he told JI. "It's never happened before that a Philadelphia mayoral primary is this uncertain at this point."

He suspects that Parker is building momentum as the only viable Black candidate in the race, noting that she has earned endorsements from an array of establishment Democrats. Earlier this week, Jim Kenney, the outgoing mayor, said he had voted for Parker. But Ceisler also envisioned an outcome in which the moderate candidates end up splitting the vote, effectively handing the nomination to Gym.

"That is her path to winning," he said, arguing that only Rhynhardt "challenges her for those progressive voters." Since there is no runoff or ranked-choice voting, "it is a clearer path for Gym," he added. In the public poll released by Committee of Seventy late last month, the nonpartisan good government group conducted "a ranked-choice poll just to start that conversation," Ceisler explained, "and Rebecca won it."

J.J. Balaban, a Democratic strategist in Philadelphia who is not involved in the primary, echoed that assessment. "Because Philadelphia does not have a runoff or ranked-choice voting," he said, "it is possible that some of the more mainstream candidates could cut into each other's vote, and that could clear a path for the outspokenly progressive candidate in the field to prevail."

Still, he cautioned against interpreting the outcome of the election as a confirmation of the "national mood" — in contrast with Chicago's recent mayoral race, which starkly illustrated Democratic divisions over public safety and other issues.

"It is thought that the next mayor will be chosen by less than a third of the electorate," Balaban said. "So regardless of who wins, they won't exactly have a mandate." ♦

Lawmakers introduce first-ever bipartisan and bicameral resolution honoring Jewish American Heritage Month

The resolution honors ‘the rich history of Jewish people in the United States’ and highlights rising antisemitism across the country

By Marc Rod

Senate and House members announced on Tuesday that they are introducing resolutions honoring the accomplishments of Jewish Americans and calling out antisemitism in honor of Jewish American Heritage Month, which is observed each May.

According to a statement from the sponsors, the resolution is the first time such legislation has been introduced in a bicameral and bipartisan fashion. It is being sponsored by Sens. Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Tim Scott (R-SC), Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Rick Scott (R-FL), House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) and Reps. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and David Kustoff (R-TN).

The resolution honors the “the rich history of Jewish people in the United States and the more than 350-year history of Jewish contributions to society in the United States” and recounts the growth and accomplishments of the Jewish community in the United States since 1654, such as Jews who have won Nobel Prizes and served on the Supreme Court.

“As the strength of a society can be measured by how that society protects its minority populations and celebrates their contributions, it is altogether fitting for the United States to once again mark the month of May as Jewish American Heritage Month,” the resolution states.

The legislation also highlights the recent surge in antisemitism, citing rising rates of antisemitic incidents and hate crimes, along with polling showing that Jews see themselves as increasingly under threat. The bill also cites a rising lack of awareness about the Holocaust.

“The most effective ways to counter the increase in antisemitic actions are through education, awareness, and the uplifting of Jewish voices, while highlighting the contributions that Jewish Americans have made to the United States,” the legislation asserts.

The legislation states that Jewish American Heritage Month is “a time to celebrate the contributions of Jewish American to the society and culture of the United States,” “recognizes that Jewish American culture and heritage strengthen and enrich the diversity of the United States” and “calls on elected officials, faith leaders, and civil society leaders to condemn and combat anty and all acts of antisemitism.”

Tim Scott, a Senate co-sponsor of the resolution, is expected to announce a 2024 presidential run in the coming weeks and launched an exploratory committee last month.

“Jewish Americans are a vibrant part of our nation’s history, and their extraordinary accomplishments have pushed America forward as a beacon of hope, faith, and freedom,” he said in a statement. “I am proud to stand with the Jewish community, especially as despicable, antisemitic hate is on the rise. We must reaffirm our commitment to not only calling out this hate, but crushing it wherever it rears its ugly head.”

In a statement, Jeffries highlighted both the contributions of Jewish Americans to the United States as well as the ongoing struggle against a “despicable rise in antisemitism.”

“The story of America cannot be told without recognizing the contributions our Jewish brothers and sisters have made

to enrich our history, values and culture, as well as their struggle for freedom and justice,” Jeffries said. “Jewish American Heritage Month provides us the opportunity to recognize the impact Jewish Americans have made throughout generations. This resolution will also help ensure that communities across the United States come together and aggressively push back against antisemitism whenever and wherever it is found.”

The resolution is also being supported by the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee. ♦

China's tech-driven port in Haifa aims for interconnected Mideast

Vision of regional transportation network attracted Shanghai company, which opened terminal in 2021 and now handles 14% of Israel's container traffic

By Melanie Lidman

The article first appeared in The Circuit.

Commercial ports are usually a cacophonous jumble of clanging metal, screeching chains and yelling dock workers engaged in a race to unload massive container ships. But the barely two-year-old Haifa Bayport run by the Shanghai International Port Group on Israel's Mediterranean coast is quiet enough to hear the seagulls caw.

The port, where a fleet of electric vehicles ferries cargo 24 hours a day, has barely any humans in sight. Massive red and white cranes that carry the company's name in Chinese characters loom 100 meters (328 feet) over the nearly silent pier, hoisting the containers above the freighters with state-of-the-art technology and logistical expertise.

China's SIPG, a state-owned industrial conglomerate that operates the world's biggest port in Shanghai, is playing the long game. Having won a bidding war in 2015 to construct the new facility and compete against the existing Port of Haifa that was built 90 years ago, the company is looking eastward. With Israel linked now to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain through the 2020 Abraham Accords, SIPG officials say Haifa can be a maritime gateway to the broader Middle East. The vision fits into China's global "Belt and Road" initiative, which aims to build transportation infrastructure around the world and create an uninterrupted, modern-day Silk Road.

"In the future, the port will be a very easy way to help connect all of the countries around Israel," SIPG Bayport Israel CEO Miao Qiang told *The Circuit* during a tour of the facility. "We can really contribute to connecting the entire Middle East."

Some 99% of all cargo arriving in Israel enters through Haifa and the two other port cities of Ashdod and Eilat, which last year handled 3.1 million containers in total. As outdated technology and sluggish government bureaucracy proved unable to handle increased traffic over the past decade, Israel decided to build two more ports at Ashdod and Haifa and put the operations at all four sites up for bidding by experienced international port companies. Besides SIPG, the older Haifa port is now run by India's Adani Group in a joint venture with Israel's Gadot Chemical Terminals. A new facility in Ashdod is operated by Terminal Investment Ltd., which is based in the Netherlands.

"These ports are essential to the Israeli economy, they're a lifeline," said Yoav Zuckerman, Bayport's vice president, who previously led the government's initiative to build the new terminals.

The Haifa Bayport, which was built on a landfill peninsula jutting out into the sea, operates 24/7, including holidays. When a ship arrives, the giant cranes play a game of Tetris to unload the containers, lowering each onto waiting electric trucks that take them to storage bays. The cranes are almost completely automatic, controlled by people sitting in a second-story office a few hundred meters away, navigating a joystick like a computer game.

While competition from SIPG has steadily eaten into the older Haifa port's market share, the new owners, led by India's second-wealthiest man, Gautam Adani, are overhauling the facility to fight back. Adani's winning bid of \$1.1 billion was strongly supported by the U.S., which expressed security concerns about China's operation of the Bayport. The older port has also become a centerpiece of the so-called I2U2 initiative,

which created a regional West Asia trading bloc two years ago comprising India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the U.S.

Building on I2U2, U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan was expected during a meeting on Sunday with Saudi, Emirati and Indian counterparts to discuss the possibility of connecting Gulf and Arab countries via a network of railways that would also be connected to India, Axios reported. While Israel's role is not directly part of the discussion, it could be added later, the report said.

Zuckerman said SIPG welcomes India's competition, comparing the ports to a shopping mall. "If I'm Gucci, and Louis Vuitton is coming... that's good for me," he told *The Circuit*. "The product we are selling is certainty, productivity and efficiency, and if we're considered an efficient port, more ships will come to the port and all the shops in the mall will benefit."

Previously, ships waited upwards of a month to unload their cargo in Haifa, leading to floating traffic jams on the Mediterranean and driving up costs. Ships idling in the bay with their engines running can also contribute to air quality problems, an ongoing issue in Haifa, which has some of the worst air quality in Israel.

Since the Bayport opened, the number of idling ships has plunged and waiting time has for the most part been eliminated. Linger, though, are American concerns about the Chinese company's operating essential infrastructure so close to the old Haifa Port, which houses Israeli military installations and is also an important refueling stop for the U.S. Navy's Sixth Fleet. The Biden administration has also raised alarms about construction of an alleged secret military base at a Chinese-owned

commercial port in the UAE, north of Abu Dhabi.

SIPG says the concerns are unfounded because Israeli authorities handle all security matters. “We are not dealing with any defense or security issues whatsoever,” Zuckerman said. “We are just loading and unloading containers and general cargo.”

Sam Chester, an Israel-China analyst who previously consulted for Beijing-based China Harbor Co., said Bayport’s ownership makes commercial sense and Israel should better articulate the security precautions put in place. “Israel gets into problems with the U.S. and China when Israel hasn’t lifted up its head and explained what’s happening,” he told *The Circuit*.

Although the Bayport is small, Chester suggested that given China’s growing diplomatic influence in the region, the existence of Chinese infrastructure could provide a deterrent for the launching of

missiles into northern Israel, such as last month when 34 rockets were launched from Lebanon. “You want China to become more of a responsible stakeholder, you want them to be more responsive to the peacemaking process in this region... [then] you want influential parties to put their money down and be invested here.”

SIPG hopes more normalization agreements will be signed that enable development of a regional transportation network linking Haifa to Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states by railway. That vision of Haifa becoming “the Gateway to the Levant” motivated the British colonial authorities in Palestine when they opened the port in 1933.

“Haifa is actually the closest way to get [from Europe] to Mecca or Baghdad,” Zuckerman said. “Sailing from here to the Arab Gulf is 7,000 nautical miles (13,000 nautical kilometers), but if we take a car

now and just drive to Baghdad, it’s only 900 kilometers.”

Sailing from the Mediterranean to the Gulf also requires paying high fees for passage through Egypt’s Suez Canal, which adds significant cost to the goods, Zuckerman said. Haifa’s direct rail link to Israel’s eastern border town of Beit Shean – which can be extended to Jordan if diplomacy allows – is among the reasons that SIPG decided against bidding for the Ashdod contract, even though the city is closer to the populous center of the country.

SIPG’s Qiang said he believes business interests will drive normalization faster than diplomatic negotiations. “When [businesses] cooperate, we can make things more efficient,” he said. “When we help shipping reduce their costs, it creates a structure to make the entire market bigger.” ♦

MAY 10, 2023

Bernie Sanders hosts Rashida Tlaib’s ‘Nakba Day’ after Kevin McCarthy canceled it

The anti-Israel event, which was canceled by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, was relocated to the Senate side of the Capitol

By Marc Rod

After being canceled by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA), a “Nakba Day” event organized on Wednesday by Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) was moved to the Senate side of the Capitol complex, to the hearing room of the Senate Health, Education Labor and Pensions Committee chaired by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT).

Tlaib’s event — commemorating the “Nakba,” the term, translating to “catastrophe” that Palestinians use to refer to the establishment of the State of Israel — was sponsored by organizations that have supported the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement targeting Israel and

have expressed support for terrorists.

The HELP Committee is chaired by Sanders, who has been a vocal critic of Israeli policy in the Senate. During remarks at the event, Tlaib said that “everyone needs an *aamu* in the Senate” — an Arabic word meaning “uncle” — “so I want to also welcome you to Senator Bernie Sanders’s [committee room].”

Sanders did not personally attend the event. McCarthy, as House speaker, does not have jurisdiction over Senate office buildings. A Senate source told JI that Senate committees have control over their own rooms. An individual close to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said

Schumer was “totally unaware of this event.”

Rep. Cori Bush (D-MO), another outspoken critic of Israel, was the only lawmaker other than Tlaib who attended the event. The committee room was standing-room-only for the event, with attendees spilling out into the hallway.

Sen. Jacky Rosen (D-NV), a pro-Israel stalwart who co-chairs the Senate Bipartisan Task Force for Combating Antisemitism, told *Jewish Insider* that “calling the establishment of the world’s only Jewish state a ‘catastrophe’ is deeply offensive, and I strongly disagree with allowing this event to be held on Capitol Hill.”

“Israel was founded as a refuge for

the Jewish people fleeing millennia of antisemitic persecution and violence,” she continued. “Let me be absolutely clear: the United States is and will always remain a stalwart ally of the State of Israel.”

Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA), the ranking member on the HELP Committee, was not aware that the committee room would be used for the event or consulted on it, a spokesperson said in a statement.

“I wholeheartedly disapprove of the Majority permitting the use of the HELP Committee room for this divisive event,” Cassidy said. “The Capitol Grounds should not be used as a pedestal to legitimize anti-Semitic bigotry.”

William Daroff, CEO of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said in a statement: “It is outrageous that the hallowed halls of Congress would be used to promulgate the false narratives and historical revisionism of Israel-haters. Clearly they are more interested in demonizing the Jewish State than fostering understanding and common ground in the pursuit of peace.”

Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan Greenblatt said in a tweet that the Senate should “condemn this event.”

“It is disgraceful that [Sanders] allowed this event by [Tlaib] to be held in our nation’s Capitol,” Greenblatt said. “Real conversations are needed around a path to peace, but not with groups & individuals who espouse antisemitism.”

The event came as the terrorist group Palestinian Islamic Jihad fired hundreds of rockets at Israel, some toward civilian areas, following Israeli strikes that killed three PIJ leaders in Gaza, as well as ten civilians.

In her remarks, Tlaib accused Israeli police of a “sustained campaign of terror” against Muslim worshippers at the Temple Mount, called Israel an “apartheid state” and said that U.S. military aid to Israel supports “ethnic cleansing.”

Earlier in the day, Rep. Pete Aguilar (D-CA), the No. 3 House Democratic leader, said it was “unfortunate” that McCarthy had canceled the event. Aguilar, responding to a question from JI at a Democratic leadership press conference, said, “People should be

allowed to congregate, to have discussions, to express their viewpoints and ideas. That’s who we are.”

He added that the majority “controls office space, and [if] they want to revoke a group or organization, sometimes they have the ability to do that.” Aguilar, the Democratic Caucus chair, said that “we’ll work with individuals within the caucus to make sure that they have an opportunity to be heard.”

Following up with JI after the press conference, Aguilar emphasized, “that doesn’t mean I agree with everything every member in my caucus says or that every sponsored group or organization that comes here says” and that he did not “know who the official sponsors, speakers, guests and organizations are.”

“Broadly, our job is to help facilitate those conversations when members have guests and groups visit,” he continued.

Neither McCarthy nor Tlaib responded to requests for comment. ♦