Inside the war over Israel at Wikipedia

Behind the scenes, ideologically motivated actors are working to shape the knowledge shared on the world’s largest encyclopedia

By Gabby Deutch

After Wikipedia’s editors voted earlier this month to rate the Anti-Defamation League as an unreliable source on matters related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a group of online activists celebrated the news in a pro-Palestine channel on the messaging app Discord.

“A win for us,” wrote a user named Ivana. “Hopefully the Times of Israel comes next.”

“Great news. Well done you and others who have been working hard on this front,” a user named Samer_BHH wrote about the ban, which was first reported by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Their exchange, which took place in an online community dedicated to editing Wikipedia articles to better reflect a pro-Palestinian narrative, offers a glimpse at how ideologically motivated actors operate behind the scenes to shape the knowledge shared on Wikipedia, one of the most visited websites in the world.

The free online encyclopedia is managed by a vast network of unpaid, anonymous editors who maintain pages on topics ranging from obscure historical events to linguistics to sports trivia. As of June 25, there are more than 609 million Wikipedia pages in English alone.

Central to Wikipedia’s mythology is the notion that these altruistic editors have no hidden motive besides expanding access to knowledge. But the decision by several dozen Wikipedia editors — a fraction of the more than 10,000 high-volume editors on the site, let alone the 117,000 editors who have been active in the last 30 days — to deem the ADL an unreliable source raises questions about the motivations driving editors on the platform and the far reach of a handful of highly active, ideologically driven users.

“I appreciate the fact that Wikipedia is this amazing, extraordinary example of the democracy of the internet in many ways,” ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt told Jewish Insider last week. “At the same time, the process is fairly inscrutable to me, at least, and I think most people are unclear about, Who are the editors? What’s their scholarship? How do they have demonstrated expertise? We don’t know.”

The Wikipedia editors’ decision to “deprecate” ADL, in the site’s parlance, relates to the group’s work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and on matters related to
antisemitism that involve Israel or Zionism. At a time of rising global antisemitism sparked by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel and the ensuing war in Gaza, the ADL argues that it's nearly impossible to discuss antisemitism without also addressing Israel.

"To suggest that there isn't a relationship between hatred of a Jewish state and the hatred of the Jewish people, between campaigns to delegitimize Israel, and then attacks on Israelis and Jewish people here at home, it's sort of baffling to me that people can suggest that somehow, some way, there's no relation between these things," Greenblatt said.

The ADL now joins Wikipedia's list of unreliable sources, which also includes the Iranian government outlet Press TV, satire site The Onion and Gateway Pundit, a far-right site known to traffic in conspiracy theories. Editors who attempt to cite the ADL will receive a pop-up warning message.

Meanwhile, other advocacy groups remain listed as reliable, including Amnesty International and the Southern Poverty Law Center. Earlier this year, editors affirmed the reliability of Al Jazeera, despite concerns raised by some over its ties to the Qatari government and its slanted coverage of the war in Gaza.

More than 40 Jewish organizations, led by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, wrote a letter on Monday to the Wikimedia Foundation, the nonprofit host of Wikipedia, asking the organization to investigate the process that led the ADL to be deemed unreliable. "Fundamentally, Wikipedia is stripping the Jewish community of the right to defend itself from the hatred that targets our community," the groups wrote in the letter, a copy of which was shared with JI.

A spokesperson for the Wikimedia Foundation did not respond to a request for comment from JI on Monday. Maggie Dennis, vice president of community resilience and sustainability at the Wikimedia Foundation, told JTA that "this letter represents a misunderstanding of the situation and how Wikipedia works." It is not for Wikimedia to override the editors, she explained.

A 2017 blog post from Wikimedia's U.K. branch, published after Wikipedia came under scrutiny for editors' decision to list the British tabloid The Daily Mail as an unreliable source, made clear that the site operates in a wholly decentralized fashion. There is no top leader at Wikipedia making editorial calls, and no one who can go in and reverse a decision made by the editors. "The ethos of the site is based on consensus and discussion with the aim of taking a neutral stance on contentious issues," Wikimedia UK wrote in the post, which highlighted a value that is ostensibly central to Wikipedia editors, known colloquially in the Wikipedia world as "neutral point of view," or NPOV.

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Although the rules guiding Wikipedia's editors are difficult to parse, all edits and discussions are publicly accessible, at least for those who can figure out how to make sense of the site's lingua franca of acronyms, shared shorthand and technical jargon. The public discussion board where editors debated the reliability of the ADL reveals that some of the most active editors on matters related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict do not themselves take a neutral point of view.

One editor, who posted more than five dozen comments describing their opposition to the ADL, called Israel a "racist, apartheid and now genocidal" state. "The religious profession of a mass murderer is hardly relevant to the question of whether or not to condemn them," wrote the editor, known as Iskandar323, when arguing that anti-Zionism is not related to antisemitism.

When another commenter said the ADL viewed the slogans "globalize the intifada," "by all means necessary," "Zionism is terrorism," and "from the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free" as anti-Semitic, Iskandar323 defended the use of each of them: "So ... Calling for a global uprising against injustice; calling out what is arguably a duck as being a duck; and calling for freedom." Iskandar323 wrote in response. Iskandar323 also accused the ADL of being unreliable because the organization "very explicitly lobbies on behalf of Israeli (foreign) interests."

Iskandar323's identity is not known. But in April, on the messaging app Telegram, a user in an anti-Zionist channel described Iskandar323 as an explicitly "anti-Zionist editor" on Wikipedia, alongside two other accounts that were also active participants in the discussion board about the ADL. One of those accounts, named Nableezy, called the ADL "a pressure organization that uses misinformation and disinformation to push a false narrative." Several commenters said the ADL should be considered unreliable because it uses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, which is also used by the U.S. government and several dozen nations.

Trying to navigate the maze of the site's byzantine rules to understand who started the discussion, why they did so and how many people voted to downgrade the ADL can feel like an exercise in futility. But a summary of the discussion explains that "there is a clear consensus that the ADL is generally unreliable regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict." Further, the editors wrote, "The ADL can roughly be taken as reliable on the topic of antisemitism when Israel and Zionism are not concerned."

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It's impossible to link the users Iskandar323 and Nableezy directly to the anti-Zionist Telegram channel. But their comments attacking the ADL, in tandem with other collaborative projects aiming to tilt Wikipedia in an anti-Zionist direction, make clear that editors who harbor hostility toward Israel are already having a real impact in shaping public knowledge about Israel and about antisemitism.

Ivana and Samer_BHH, the two people who praised Wikipedia editors' handling of the ADL, are active members of "Tech for Palestine," a server on the messaging app Discord with more than 7,500 members that describes itself as a community "working towards ending tech's support for Israel's war on the people on Gaza, and towards a free Palestine." Their posts appeared in a smaller channel called "Wikipedia Collaboration," a project that aims to fight "on the Wikipedia front the information battle for truth, peace and justice."

Since its formation in February, members have written to the group with requests to edit certain pages to reflect new developments or to use their preferred rhetoric. One user
named Zionisthater shared in February that they sought to remove the word “alleged” from “alleged Palestinian genocide” in an article about Aaron Bushnell, the U.S. Air Force servicemember who died after setting himself on fire in front of the Israeli Embassy. (That edit was overridden, and the current language uses “alleged.”) One of the most frequent commenters in the Wikipedia Collaboration chat, who uses the handle @zei_squirrel online, is also active on X, where they regularly deny that Hamas militants engaged in sexual violence on Oct. 7.

Efforts are underway to recruit more people to the Wikipedia cause. The Discord channel recently posted a series of how-to videos on YouTube called “Wikipedia for Palestine.” All the videos are unlisted, meaning they do not show up in public searches on the site.

“Wikipedia is not just an online encyclopedia. It’s a battleground for narratives,” a narrator with an Irish accent says in one video. She describes “selective framing,” “whataboutism,” “normalization,” “victimhood narratives” and “cherry-picking facts as tools used by people promoting “anti-Palestine propaganda.”

“These tactics are not just misleading. They are harmful and contribute to the perpetuation of injustice,” the narrator says over a colorful video showing people waving Israeli flags.

The battles playing out on Wikipedia are likely to have an impact that stretches beyond the website.

“All of Wikipedia is fed into large language models and generative AI, and that’s what’s going to feed information for centuries,” said Yfat Barak-Cheney, director of international affairs at the World Jewish Congress, which released a report in March warning that biased editors are likely to have an impact on the site’s treatment of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“The report we did in March was exactly to alert that this is going on. This is going to have more consequences if we don’t deal with it better,” Barak-Cheney said. “I always can say for certain that ADL is not going to be the last on this. I’m not even sure it’s the first, but it’s definitely not going to be the last.”

**Schumer under mounting pressure to advance major antisemitism bill**

Supporters of the bill allege Schumer is now slow-walking a floor vote because he is fearful that it will highlight divisions within his caucus

By Matthew Kassel, Marc Rod

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) is facing mounting pressure from Jewish leaders and Democratic colleagues who have privately voiced frustrations with the continued delay in moving to advance a major bill aimed at addressing a recent surge in antisemitic activity on college campuses.

Schumer, who has been outspoken against rising antisemitism in the wake of Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack, had endorsed prior versions of the legislation, called the Antisemitism Awareness Act, which first passed the Senate in 2016 under unanimous consent.

But after an initial effort to unanimously fast-track the bill failed last month in the Senate, Schumer has since delayed for weeks in bringing the bill up for a floor vote, even as it is expected to pass comfortably with bipartisan support and has won backing from a large number of Jewish groups.

In a brief interview with Jewish Insider on Thursday afternoon, Schumer, who has rarely addressed the matter publicly, stressed that he is now “looking at every single option to try and get strong, bipartisan legislation passed,” but he did not share a timeline for approving the bill.

“The crusade against antisemitism is in my bones, has been for my whole life,” he said, describing “the goals and aspirations” of the bill as “so important in this fight and to the future.”

Still, the holdup has angered supporters of the bill who allege that Schumer — the highest-ranking Jewish elected official in the country — is now slow-walking a floor vote because he is fearful that it will highlight divisions within his caucus while garnering a larger share of Republican backers.

“He is avoiding this at all costs,” said a person familiar with the matter who spoke with JI on the condition of anonymity to address a sensitive topic. “The reason why he hates this is because Schumer knows there’s going to be 40 to 45 Republicans who are going to vote for this bill, but there’s only going to be 30 Democrats.”

The bill would enshrine a definition of antisemitism used by the International
Holocaust Remembrance Alliance into federal law and direct the Department of Education to consider the definition — which, among other things, identifies some criticism of Israel as antisemitic — in evaluating complaints of anti-Jewish discrimination on college campuses. That policy has been in place since 2019 under an executive order signed by former President Donald Trump.

While the legislation passed the House early last month by a wide margin, it has also drawn opposition from members of both parties, including some progressive and right-wing critics who have raised varying objections to the bill on free speech grounds.

Despite some resistance to the bill in the Senate, however, two of the most vulnerable Democrats up for reelection in November — Sens. Bob Casey (D-PA) and Jacky Rosen (D-NV) — are each eager for Schumer to call a vote and are urging him to act, according to sources familiar with their outreach.

A Senate aide confirmed to JI on Tuesday that Casey, who reintroduced the Act "a critical piece of legislation" and pro-Israel groups, the Jewish leaders group’s director of government relations, echoed that for the AAA to be voted on by the Senate, “it passed the House by an overwhelming margin and we are confident the same will happen in the Senate when brought for a vote.”

Karen Paikin Barall, vice president of government relations at JFNA, echoed that view, calling the Antisemitism Awareness Act “a critical piece of legislation” and voicing “hope it will come to a vote in the Senate as soon as possible. We are confident that it will pass.”

Sheila Katz, the CEO of the National Council of Jewish Women, who attended the meeting with Schumer last month, said in an interview with JI that “passing legislation to combat antisemitism is a top priority” for the Senate leader. “Once again,” she said, “he has mobilized to ensure critical legislation to combat antisemitism moves forward. He is doing this in a thoughtful and strategic way by actively working with multiple stakeholders and Jewish organizations.”

The ADL has been “working closely with” Schumer and his team, said Dan Granot, the group’s director of government relations, “and as we have discussed multiple times, now is the time for Congress to step up and meet this moment of rising antisemitism.”

Julie Fishman Rayman, the managing
director of policy and political affairs at the AJC, called Schumer "a committed ally of the American Jewish community" and said he "knows that it is in the best interest of the community to get a bill that defines and counters antisemitism passed by the Senate before the end of this congressional session."

On Thursday, some Jewish leaders also came to his defense.

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But while NCJW supports the IHRA definition as "an educational tool," as the group states on its website, it does "not recommend this be codified into law or used to prohibit freedom of speech in any way." Katz clarified to JI that NCJW "has been focused on advocating for" another bill that Schumer has co-sponsored called the Countering Antisemitism Act, which was introduced in April by Rosen and Sen. James Lankford (R-OK), but noted that "we do not oppose the AAA."

Amy Spitalnick, the CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, said that Schumer's "commitment to addressing the crisis of antisemitism is crystal clear."

Her group, she told JI, is also working with the senator's team on "a legislative path forward" for such bills as the Countering Antisemitism Act, which seeks to codify and expand on the Biden administration's national strategy to combat antisemitism and is endorsed by a broad swath of the Jewish community.

The JCPA, however, has "not taken a position" on the Antisemitism Awareness Act, according to Spitalnick.

The White House declined to comment directly on the bill, noting instead that the Countering Antisemitism Act "is aligned with the administration's national strategy to counter antisemitism in important ways," President Joe Biden "welcomes congressional action in this fight." Andrew Bates, a White House spokesperson, told JI on Thursday.

In a sign of brewing frustration with Schumer across the Jewish denominational spectrum, a sizable coalition of Orthodox rabbis issued a joint statement last week accusing the majority leader of "obstructing" a handful of bills concerning the Jewish community, including the Antisemitism Awareness Act, which now has 31 co-sponsors almost evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans.

With the bill continuing to languish in the upper chamber, some critics are skeptical of Schumer's commitment to advancing what they see as urgently needed legislation to counter a rise in antisemitism that has riven college campuses in recent months.

The majority leader has given some notable floor remarks where he has condemned antisemitism, including a landmark speech last November in which he argued that anti-Israel animus "in the wake of Oct. 7 is all too often crossing into brazen and widespread antisemitism, the likes of which we haven't seen for generations in this country."

"By all accounts, the success or failure of the Antisemitism Awareness Act now depends almost entirely on the decision of one man: Majority Leader Schumer," Kenneth Marcus, the founder and president of the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law, said in an email to JI this week.

"By all accounts, the success or failure of the Antisemitism Awareness Act now depends almost entirely on the decision of one man: Majority Leader Schumer," Kenneth Marcus, the founder and president of the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law, said in an email to JI this week.

Marcus, who relied on the IHRA definition while overseeing anti-Jewish discrimination cases as the head of the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights in the Trump administration, said that Schumer "need only call the bill to a vote, and it will probably pass."

"The problem is that a roll call vote could expose fissures within both parties, with far greater problems among the Democrats," he suggested.

Even as Schumer vowed to explore all available avenues to pass the bill, he emphasized in his comments to JI that "beating back antisemitism also involves public education and fervent voices to say things like I said in my own speech on antisemitism and so many times afterwards, as recently as this week."

"As I continue to meet with other senators, Jewish groups and other stakeholders," Schumer added, "my North Star is always going to be the Jewish values I hold and the history we as Jews have learned."
The hawkish departing IDF officer that right-wing parties are competing to recruit

Brig. Gen. Ofer Winter has become a polarizing figure over the past decade with his controversial remarks and under-the-radar meetings with his friend, former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett. Now, some on the right want him as defense minister

By Lahav Harkov

One day in July 2014, as the IDF was fighting Operation Protective Edge in Gaza, Israel’s then-education minister, Naftali Bennett, traveled in a white van to Israel’s south to visit and support the troops. On the way, air raid sirens blared, the van had to pull over, and Bennett and his aides had to crouch down on the side of the road for safety.

Eventually, the van reached its first stop, a residential building in Beersheva. Bennett entered the building alone. Soon after, a military jeep pulled up and out jumped an IDF officer with a purple beret on his shoulder; he also entered the building.

The officer who secretly met with Bennett in 2014 was Ofer Winter. Bennett famously argued with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, then-Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon and then-IDF Chief of Staff Benny Gantz in the security cabinet during Israel’s longest Gaza operation before 2023, pushing for Israel to attack Hamas tunnels. Bennett came to security cabinet meetings armed with information that the ministers were not given in official channels, information that, as Israeli media reported weeks later, came from IDF officers unauthorized to speak with him.

The IDF released Winter at the rank of brigadier general last month, making headlines across Israel. To the right, Winter has come to represent a martyr of partisan politics, drummed out of the military due to his ties to the religious Zionist community and hawkish security views. To the left, he is seen as embodying a dangerous combination of religion and militarism, as well as demonstrating a willingness to break the rules and politicize IDF operations and decision-making.

Bennett publicly thanked Winter for his decades of service in the IDF and called him “one of the best field commanders in the IDF. In every role he fought the enemy and won.” Yisrael Beitenu leader and former Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman protested Winter’s release in a post on X, calling the decision “a scandal” and saying that “he is a brave, moral and praiseworthy officer. One thing is certain – if he was the commander of the Southern Command on Oct. 7, the terrible failure would not have happened on his watch.” National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir wrote that “giving up an outstanding and valued officer like Ofer Winter is a direct continuation of [Defense Minister Yoav Gallant’s] poor conduct and failures in recent months.”

Winter continued making headlines when the military barred him from speaking at a right-wing conference last week or any other public events while he is on discharge leave – not working, but still on the IDF’s payroll. Liberman called the decision to silence Winter “puzzling,” and accused the IDF’s high command of “being afraid of an open, important and in-depth discussion about the failure of Oct. 7, the way the war is being fought and its goals.” Winter was met with applause as he entered the conference hall, putting a finger in front of his lips to show that he was staying quiet.

Meanwhile, Winter has been bombarded with offers — including from Liberman and Ben-Gvir — to throw in his lot with a right-wing party ever since he was passed up for a promotion and released from the IDF. An offer from Netanyahu is also said to be on the way.

A poll taken last month by the pro-Netanyahu Channel 14 asked who would be a better defense minister, Winter or Yoav Gallant, who currently has the job; Winter got 57% support in general and 79% from those who vote for parties currently in the government coalition.

“T’m not going into politics yet. I am still a warrior for the people of Israel. I’m still in uniform,” Winter said in a speech earlier this month – which he gave in civilian clothes.

Who is Ofer Winter, and what makes him the hottest name on the Israeli right these days?

Winter, 53, is a father of eight and a grandfather who lives in a religious Zionist village close to the Sea of Galilee. He grew up in the suburbs of Haifa, and when he was 2 years old, his father, David, fought in the Yom Kippur War in a tank on both sides of the Suez Canal; Winter has cited his father’s experience as an inspiration to him. Winter put himself on the path to a military career as a young teen, attending a religious military boarding school, and then Bnei David, the elite religious Zionist mechina, or pre-military academy, in the West Bank settlement of Eli.

In recent years, Bnei David has become infamous outside the religious Zionist world for its rabbis’ illiberal remarks about LGBT people and women. Within the religious Zionist community, however, the academy in Eli has a reputation for churning out the toughest soldiers and officers. That reputation is borne out by Eli leading all mechinoth in alumni who became
Winter's public persona is like the proto-Eli alum: equally unapologetic about religion and about doing the tough work the IDF needs.

In 1990, he enlisted in the IDF's elite Sayeret Matkal unit, where he served with Bennett, and both moved together to the Maglan reconnaissance unit. After that, their paths diverged, but they remain friends 34 years later. Winter continued to rise up the ranks over the ensuing years, winning a Medal of Valor for his battalion for fighting Palestinian terrorists in Gaza in 2004 and serving as the IDF attache to the U.S. Marines. He commanded the Duvdevan Unit, which is known for dressing up as Arabs for undercover operations, and on which the acclaimed TV show "Fauda" is based.

When Hamas kidnapped three Israeli teens in 2014 and launched rockets into Israel, sparking Operation Protective Edge, Winter was commander of the Givati Brigade.

He wrote a letter to the Givati Brigade's soldiers and officers that leaked to the media in Israel: "History has chosen us to be the head of the spear in fighting the Gazan terrorist enemy that abuses, blasphemes and curses the God of Israel's army. We prepared for this moment and we accept our mission with total humility, prepared to endanger and give our lives to defend our families, our nation and our homeland ... I raise my eyes to the heavens and say with you 'Hear O Israel, our God is one.' The God of Israel please make us successful in the path in which we walk and stand to fight for your nation of Israel against an enemy that blasphemes your name."

The letter proved controversial, with some lamenting that it presented the operation in Gaza as a holy war, and religious freedom activists calling it a form of religious coercion. Within the religious Zionist community, and to some extent the broader Israeli right, the text cemented his status as the hero of a counterculture pushing back against the dominant secular forces within the IDF.

Winter spoke about the controversy this month at an event in honor of Jerusalem Day: "Ten years ago, I had the privilege of leading the Givati Brigade in Protective Edge, and before we entered Gaza, I wrote a document that I read to the soldiers ... There was noise about it, which is less interesting. But today, the great relief is that there is not one unit in the IDF that goes out to fight without shouting to the heavens. The relief is that in the end, the truth wins."

The Givati Brigade took part in the 2014 Battle of Rafah, in which soldier Hadar Goldin – another Eli alum – was killed and his body was taken by Hamas. Palestinians claimed that over 200 were killed in the battle, while the IDF said that 42 terrorists were killed and as many as 70 civilians.

A U.N. report stated that war crimes accusations relating to the battle were credible, but an IDF investigation found that the forces acted legally, following legitimate operational considerations.

During that summer of fighting in Gaza, Winter met privately with Bennett, breaking the rules and circumventing the IDF's high brass.

Winter was promoted to the rank of brigadier general in 2016, serving as chief of staff of the Central Command. Netanyahu and Liberman, as defense minister, pushed for Winter to be promoted to division commander, but then-Chief of Staff Gadi Eizenkot refused, so they appointed him military secretary to the defense minister, a position he held until 2020 under Liberman, Netanyahu and Bennett. Netanyahu tried to appoint Winter as military secretary to the prime minister last year, but dropped the effort after facing opposition from IDF higher brass.

A source who worked closely with Winter when he was military secretary said that the combat officer chafed under the strictures of an office job.

"He was a good officer in the field, but did much worse in the office," the source said. "An office job requires different talents than being a commander in the field, and that stood out ... You need a lot of political sensitivity and the ability to coordinate and synchronize with others, be organized, do paperwork, and that wasn't his strong suit. He is someone who gives commands and is abrasive ... He is the way he is caricatured."

Winter's next role was commander of the 98th Paratroopers Division, in which he remained in the same rank. While in that job, then-Chief of Staff Aviv Kochavi reprimanded him for speaking with Bennett, then a Knesset member, without reporting it to his superiors. Winter reportedly said the conversation was friendly and not about the IDF, but Kochavi was unhappy that he did not report it, as IDF officers are prohibited from holding meetings with politicians without permission from their commanders, and that Winter was a repeat offender.

When Hamas invaded Israel on Oct. 7, Winter was a student at Reichman University without an official role in the IDF. He drove from his home in the Galilee to the Gaza border communities, on his own initiative, joining the battle in Kibbutz Be'eri as part of a group of soldiers that killed 11 terrorists.

After he was informed that he was no longer needed in the military and before the IDF got wind of his public speaking, Winter warned that "the enemy interprets our hope for peace as weakness. You know, in the Middle East there is no choice — to make peace, you have to be a lion. The job of the IDF is to win and defeat the enemy. It's not that complicated ... The first job of the IDF is to win, to bring the enemy to its knees. But the enemy doesn't take our threats seriously, or it wouldn't be burning the north."

"Who does Hezbollah think they are? Who are the bunch of decrepit Palestinians who call themselves Hamas? We can destroy them," Winter said.

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That Winter's career has been mostly stagnant since 2016, with three different jobs at the level of brigadier-general, rather than rising in the ranks, followed by two years of military limbo without being promoted to general, is viewed by many on the right as political or religious discrimination. Yossi Yehoshua, the military analyst for Ynet, a publication that is not generally identified with the right, wrote a column last year arguing that "Winter is not in the right cliques — and is paying for it," by being passed up for promotions despite what he described as Winter's talents as an officer.

The source who worked closely with Winter when he was military secretary said that the controversies surrounding the
officer hindered his work in the Defense Ministry.

“I didn’t get the impression that the higher commanders valued him ... I don’t know if it was the lack of appreciation was because of his talents, or because he was seen as a political figure ... but in the end, your power as a military secretary is in your ability to work with the chief of staff’s office, and they didn’t value him,” he said.

Since Winter was once again passed up for a promotion in May and then released from the IDF, his supporters argued that his hawkishness is what the IDF was missing, with Liberman arguing that the army’s response to Oct. 7 would have been much different under Winter’s watch.

With Winter’s popularity on the Israeli right soaring, Ashley Perry, a former adviser to Liberman and a campaign strategist, said that he “represents something that would meet a number of public demands at this time. He is considered statesmanlike, right-wing and coming from outside of the current political strata. These are elements that would see him gain a lot of attention and support should he decide to enter the political fray.”

Yaakov Katz, a military analyst and Jewish People Policy Institute senior fellow, said it is clear Winter has his sights on politics.

“Which party he joins will be interesting. What happened with his speech being canceled and Liberman defending him shows that Liberman is angling to get him, whether they’re in talks or not,” Katz said.

The former colleague of Winter’s said he doubts that the officer would join a party led by Bennett, should the former prime minister return to politics, because Winter was disappointed by Bennett forming a coalition with left-wing parties.

Winter “is a real right-wing ideologue,” the source said.

The source speculated that Winter would also struggle as a Knesset member: “He won’t be interested in running from committee to committee. He will look to be at the center of influence. He might even establish a [party] framework for himself.”

Winter, he said, is “an independent type; that’s part of what put him in a problematic place in the army.”

Katz disagrees with “all this stuff about Winter being a victim of the politics because he’s on the right.”

“You don’t do things like that. You’re in the army. You don’t meet politicians and circumvent the chief of staff. You don’t go meet a member of the security cabinet without permission,” Katz said. “He should have been kicked out of the army for a complete violation of what is part of the code of conduct in any military.”

Yet Winter’s disputes with the upper echelon of the IDF may be a political advantage, Perry said.

“To many Israelis who see the IDF as an institution favorably but have little trust in many current senior officers, the fact that [Winter] seemed to be passed over on many occasions for promotion to the highest army levels will also play very much in his favor,” he said.

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Why Ford Foundation President Darren Walker thinks more people need to talk about antisemitism

“The state of Black-Jewish relations is very distressing, because I don’t know of a time when our communities have been more divided,” Walker said.

By Gabby Deutch

A SPEN, Colo. — When you run an organization focused on promoting social justice, but with the namesake of one of the most virulent antisemites in American history, you have to talk about the uncomfortable history.

Or at least, that’s the attitude taken by Ford Foundation President Darren Walker, who published a blog post reckoning with Henry Ford’s antisemitism just weeks before the Oct. 7 Hamas terror attacks. Since then, Walker has spoken out against rising antisemitism — at times, he said on Tuesday, sparking clashes with his left-leaning staff.

“I’m mindful of the history of the Ford Foundation, and our donor who was most certainly the archetype of the 20th-century American antisemite,” Walker told Jewish Insider in an interview at the Aspen Ideas Festival. “That history absolutely informs my work. But just as important is my own view, this idea that every person ought to live with dignity.”

Walker has helmed the Ford Foundation, which has an endowment of $16 billion, since 2013. Its grantees include Jewish organizations like the Anti-Defamation League. He was in Aspen to speak on a panel about modern antisemitism alongside Carole Zawatsky, CEO of Pittsburgh’s Tree of Life, which recently broke ground on a new synagogue, memorial and museum.

“Right now, and certainly since October 7, there is so much pain and anguish, and a sense of disaffection and abandonment, that a lot of Jewish Americans are rightly feeling,” Walker said. His focus is on building bridges between diverse communities — but he acknowledged that that work has
become harder since Oct. 7.

“Many Jewish Americans expected, understandably, there to be more empathy, more allyship and more understanding of the pain that Jews around the world and in America, American Jews, experienced in the aftermath of that terrorist attack on that horrific, horrible day,” said Walker. “I think people rightly were asking the question, ‘What happened to the people we have worked with on the journey for equality, on the journey for justice in this country? We feel abandoned.’”

As president of Ford, “one of the things I believe we have to do is to build the bridges that are essential for our democracy to work,” Walker said. He pointed out that he is glad to talk about himself as a gay Black man, but that putting Americans into boxes means that patriotic American identity is waning, “I celebrate that we live in a country where we embrace our identities, but the most important identity is that of America. And I think we have lost some of that,” said Walker.

“What are you doing to build those bridges, because we have people in our society who get up every day, to destroy those bridges, and who see political gain in dividing us and in keeping us apart,” Walker said.

The challenge in working across lines of difference is particularly hard now among Blacks and Jews, despite the two groups’ historic alliance during the Civil Rights Movement, Walker stated.

“The state of Black-Jewish relations is very distressing, because I don’t know of a time when our communities have been more divided,” Walker said. “Part of that is because there are some who are seeking to divide us and who profit from creating that division. I think part of it is as well, we don’t know our history, and the next generation don’t know our history.”

Some of the strain in ties between the two communities has to do with Jews’ feelings of isolation after Oct. 7, Walker argued. And part of it is, as Walker sees it, that the debate over diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs and ideology among some segments of the Jewish community have made some in the Black community skeptical and disillusioned.

“The idea that someone would perpetrate the notion that diversity in America is bad for the Jews, that DEI in some way is harmful to the health and well-being of the Jewish community, is tragic. It’s tragic. But it also speaks to how vulnerable we all feel,” Walker said. “I don’t think most Jews think that the advancement of Blacks is a bad thing, or that the advancement of Blacks in America has come at their expense, or that we see all around us incompetent Blacks committing all sorts of malfeasance because we’re not up to the job, which is what that narrative has generated.”

Walker is careful not to overstate any success he may have had in urging liberal communities to speak out against antisemitism.

“I’m not sure I’m making progress. I would like to think I’m contributing to opening up a space for people to be in where you won’t be pilloried for expressing some empathy with those who are dealing with the aftermath of Oct. 7,” said Walker.

He has dealt with pushback from some staff on matters related to the war in Gaza and protests in the U.S. One employee asked him to decline an honorary degree that Columbia awarded him this year, urging him to take a symbolic stand against how the university handled anti-Israel encampments and its decision to call in police against protesters in April. He did not decline, but he was up-front about his position.

“One of the things I always say to my team,” Walker said, “is, ‘I owe you clarity,’”
The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Two months after Robert Kraft cut financial ties with his alma mater, Columbia University, “over the treatment of Jewish students and faculty during pro-Palestinian protests at the campus,” the billionaire owner of the New England Patriots and founder of the Foundation to Combat Antisemitism announced on Tuesday that he would direct $1 million to fund a new program for students transferring to Yeshiva University to seek relief from the surge of antisemitism flooding other universities.

“I am honored to establish the Blue Square Scholars program at Yeshiva University in order to give students a welcoming place to further their education and grow into leaders who will serve as advocates for unity and respect and will push back on all hate,” Kraft said in a statement. “At a time where hate has been unleashed across our universities, Jewish students are feeling isolated and unsafe. Yeshiva is providing a safe haven for these students and I look forward to seeing them thrive in an academic environment where they could live and study free of fear for being who they are.”

According to Yeshiva University, the Blue Square Scholars program will help the school “accommodate transferring students who are switching to YU” and “help provide the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the best and the brightest students who are rooted in the university’s values of compassion and respect for all.”

Kraft’s donation to Yeshiva University is the latest case of an Ivy League alum opting to support a Jewish or Israeli institution instead of their alma mater. Earlier this month, an anonymous Columbia University alumnus donated $260 million to Israel’s Bar-Ilan University, and University of Pennsylvania graduate David Magerman pledged $1 million to the Jerusalem College of Technology after he too cut ties with his alma mater over its handling of campus antisemitism.

In light of rising antisemitism on college campuses nationwide since the Oct. 7 terrorist attacks in Israel, YU, the flagship Modern Orthodox university, has marketed itself as a safe alternative. In April, when illegal — and sometimes violent — anti-Israel encampments gripped dozens of universities, Yeshiva University reopened its admissions portal for undergraduate applicants. In May, the New York City school said it hit a record-high enrollment, with transfer applications up 53% over the prior year.

Rabbi Ari Berman, the university’s president, said in a statement that Kraft “sets the standard for impactful leadership in this country and this program will support top tier students who will follow his example to become the leaders of tomorrow.”

In April, Kraft withdrew his financial support from Columbia University, where he had contributed $3 million towards construction of what would become the Kraft Center for Jewish Student Life in 2000 — in addition to millions of dollars throughout the last two decades. The 1963 Columbia graduate told Politico that the “turning point” for him was seeing that Israeli professor Shai Davidai, who has emerged as an at-times controversial critic of Columbia’s administration, “had his access to campus revoked as he attempted to join a counter-protest.”Since Oct. 7, the FCAS has spent millions of dollars aimed at turning the blue square emoji into the symbol for Jewish solidarity and opposition to hatred against Jewish people – including the roll out of a $25 million ad campaign in March, which came on the heels of the group’s $7 million 30-second Super Bowl ad.
Washington congressional candidate fires campaign manager over pro-Hamas social media activity

(*State Sen. Emily Randall, running to succeed Rep. Derek Kilmer (D-WA), says she supports Israel despite anti-Israel figures in her orbit*)

By Marc Rod

Washington State Sen. Emily Randall, one of two leading Democratic candidates in the state’s 6th Congressional District, fired her campaign manager last week after *Jewish Insider* contacted her campaign about the individual’s extensive anti-Israel and pro-Hamas social media activity.

Randall is running for the seat of retiring Rep. Derek Kilmer (D-WA), a centrist who is supporting Randall’s Democratic opponent, Public Lands Commissioner Hilary Franz.

Randall’s now-former campaign manager, Anna Carlson-Ziegler, has a history of liking extreme anti-Israel posts on Instagram, according to screenshots viewed by JI.

Those included posts describing “Palestinian resistance as a natural and praiseworthy response to Zionist occupation and brutality,” posts describing Hamas as “the Palestinian resistance” and praising its continued survival, repeated calls for “the fall of the Zionist regime,” a post mourning the death of convicted terrorist and murderer Walid Daqqa and an Oct. 7 post denying that the attack by “Palestinian militants” was unprovoked.

Other posts Carlson-Ziegler liked included ones dismissing or denying the atrocities on Oct. 7 as propaganda, describing President Joe Biden as a war criminal and supporting various acts of vandalism and blockages of university, private and public property by anti-Israel demonstrators.

Randall said she wasn’t aware of Carlson-Ziegler’s activity until she was contacted by JI. Randall said she spoke to Carlson-Ziegler and, upon “confirming social media activity consistent with what you described, I made the decision to end their employment with our campaign.” Carlson-Ziegler did not respond to a request for comment.

Randall sought to distance herself from the views expressed by her former staffer, adding that she has been unequivocal that she “will stand with Israel against efforts to delegitimize or isolate Israel as a member of Congress,” stand against antisemitism and work closely with Jewish communities in Washington and locally to work toward a “shared vision of a more peaceful world.”

“As an LGBTQ+ person and the grandchild of people who left their home to find a place to live with less discrimination, I feel a great connection to Israel. Israel is the only country in the region where I could live openly with my wife, Alison,” Randall said. “Although my circumstances are quite different from many Israelis, I feel like I can understand that desire to find a safe harbor, and what Israel is and represents to Jewish people all over the world.”

She unequivocally condemned the Oct. 7 attack as “vicious, unprovoked, and unlawful,” adding that she “stands with Israel and the world” in wanting to see the hostages returned “and Hamas eradicated with no further loss of innocent life.”

But despite her stated support for Israel, Randall has attracted support from figures who have also expressed strong anti-Israel views, beyond her campaign manager.

Individuasl who have hosted fundraisers for Randall have, according to screenshots viewed by JI, posted messages claiming that “the Jews will never be able to live [in the Middle East] in peace because they left here black but came back white,” praised the First Intifada, claimed that Israel allowed the Oct. 7 terror attacks to happen so it could retaliate against Palestinians and called for ending U.S. aid to Israel.

Randall said she “unequivocally” does not support these sentiments, without addressing the issue further.

State Sen. Yasmin Trudeau, who was at one point a featured endorser on Randall’s website, also has a history of posting inflammatory rhetoric about Israel, according to social media screenshots viewed by JI. She has argued that “there are not two sides” to the war in Gaza and shared an Instagram reel comparing Israel to Nazi Germany.

Trudeau also liked posts on Instagram describing Israel as “IsraHell,” valorizing the man who self-immolated outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington and denying antisemitism in protests at Columbia University. Trudeau did not respond to a request for comment.

“Israel has exercised its lawful right to defend itself against terrorist attacks, and has the unalienable right to do so against any future attacks from internal or external malign actors, such as Hamas or Iran. In Congress, I will support Israel’s obligation of self-defense and our country’s support for that right,” Randall told JI.

“Simply put, our campaign has built an energetic, incredible and broad coalition with significantly more endorsers than our opponent. We have more community leaders, more elected officials, more unionized workers, and more organizations endorsing us,” Randall said. “Every organization who backs me has endorsed our delegation’s leaders in past elections, including my top endorser, Sen. Patty Murray.”

Randall went to great lengths in written responses to JI to outline her support for Israel’s right to defend itself from terrorism and oppose conditions on military aid.

She said that “Israel has exercised its lawful right to defend itself against terrorist attacks, and has the unalienable right to do
franz, randall's leading democratic rival in the primary, expressed consistently pro-israel views in an interview with ji and in a separate position paper on middle east policy, emphasizing the importance of standing with israel in the wake of oct. 7, while calling for the immediate release of the hostages and the destruction of hamas.

"i believe that israel, like any sovereign nation, has the right to defend itself against threats. Hamas must be destroyed so the events of october 7th cannot repeat and peace can be on the horizon again," franz said in her position paper. "the special relationship between the united states and israel is rooted in common values of democracy and equality and has stood for decades against threats to these values. it is more important today than ever."

franz told ji she holds Hamas responsible for the continued lack of a cease-fire, adding that the terrorist group "must accept a cease-fire deal" and that the U.S. "must continue to use every lever to put pressure on them to do so."

"i believe that public fissures in the U.S.-israel relationship embolden Hamas and Hezbollah, which ultimately only leads to more death and destruction," franz told ji. "we must continue to stand by our close ally."

she added that she doesn't support additional conditions on aid to Israel, noting that there are already conditions on U.S. aid globally "and we must ensure that any nation that receives it abides by these conditions."

franz also expressed concern about the ongoing threats posed by Iran and Hezbollah to Israel. to address Iran, franz said that Congress should "do everything it can through economic and diplomatic actions" to counter Iran's nuclear program and other malign activities and aggression.

franz pledged to travel to Israel in her first term in Congress, adding that she had been scheduled to visit in her capacity as state lands commissioner but the trip ultimately did not move forward.

closer to home, randall said that her personal experiences as a queer Latina help her empathize with the fear that the Jewish community is facing from growing antisemitism.

"elected officials must listen to what their Jewish constituents are saying: antisemitism is happening in communities across the country, and governments at all levels must take action," randall said. "antisemitism is on the rise and we need to take it seriously."

she highlighted her support for legislation in Washington to strengthen criminal penalties for bias-related vandalism. she said she would support legislation, including the antisemitism awareness act, to codify a definition of antisemitism.

the antisemitism awareness act, which codifies the use of the international holocaust remembrance alliance's working definition of antisemitism in department of education civil rights investigations, has divided progressives in Congress, with 70 democrats — most of whom skew progressive — voting against the legislation.

Randall also supports the countering antisemitism act, which would implement a variety of new provisions to combat antisemitism, including a white house official dedicated to the issue, and seeks to reinforce the administration's national strategy on antisemitism.
Addressing protests on college campuses, Randall said that the U.S. must uphold First Amendment rights while also protecting “Jewish students who are under threat,” adding that antisemitism is a “serious threat” and “has no place on college campuses.”

Franz likewise expressed support for the IHRA definition, and said in her position paper that the U.S. must “stand against attempts to delegitimize the homeland of the Jewish people.” She said she supports the administration’s antisemitism strategy as well.

“I’ve been saddened and angered to witness the rise in anti-semitism both at home and abroad in response to the October 7th attacks,” Franz said in her position paper. “From vandalism at synagogues to students feeling threatened on college campuses, our leaders must speak clearly and unequivocally that this kind of hate has no place in the world today.”

Randall is endorsed by Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) and Reps. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D-WA) and Marilyn Strickland (D-WA), as well as a handful of out-of-state House members. Franz was recruited by Kilmer, a leader of the business-friendly New Democrat Coalition.

Franz had the edge in fundraising at the end of the first quarter, with $820,000 to Randall’s $529,000.

Washington runs a top-two primary system, where candidates from all parties compete on the primary ballot, with the leading two vote-getters in the Aug. 6 primary moving onto the general election. There’s an outside chance Randall and Franz’s battle could continue through to November, but it’s more likely one of them faces off against Republican state Sen. Drew MacEwen, the top GOP candidate.

JUNE 26, 2024

In Haifa, new coworking space for women shows that it takes a Village

*The Village, a unique communal space, offers women a chance to connect, network, build community — and get out of the house*

By Tamara Zieve

**H**aifa, Israel — When Ann Levy-Antar tested the waters for her dream of creating a women-only coworking space, she was blown away by the response in an online female community. Some 400 women contacted her, enthusing over the idea and eager to get involved. “It was horrifying,” Levy-Antar laughs, during a recent interview at The Village, located in a renovated old stone building in the heart of the Talpiot market in the Hadar neighborhood in Haifa.

“It was moving really fast,” Levy-Antar explains, noting that she had intended to develop the project at a slower pace, using the first donation she had received from Brazilian angel investors. “It was exciting but it was also not what I had planned. I was hoping to use the donation I had for another year and then slowly build this and find partners and find a place … and then everything happened in two weeks.”

The message Levy-Antar posted on Facebook read: “Hi friends, nice to meet you. We are the Village – women’s space in Haifa. There have been so many posts here on searching for communal spaces for work, creative partnerships and business networking, community and social action, so here, we have arrived! The Village is a space for women. For work, development, coffee, for thinking, initiative, for a glass of wine and a good lecture, basically, for everything. Just tell us what you need. Really. Because we all need a space, now more than ever.”

In early March, The Village, which Levy-Antar co-founded together with Carmit Holzman and Odelia Rosenfeld, first opened its doors for people to visit. Over the following two weeks, some 80 women from all over northern Israel popped by.

“And something about the space and the way it looks, and the way it feels, kind of just clicked. And there were just women sitting here, and we didn't say anything, but they started talking about what they do and the networking just started happening naturally. So that was amazing. It was a great first step,” Levy-Antar says.

Levy-Antar had herself instantly fallen in love with the apartment, which is owned by an artist who told her that she had envisioned it as a space for women. The
Levy-Antar herself is a social worker who has dedicated her career to working with marginalized and at-risk women. After moving from Jerusalem to Haifa six years ago, after her first son was born, Levy-Antar felt inspired to contribute to the community in the city, which she embraces for its diversity. “And I thought I could bring the values that I loved from where I worked with at-risk women. There is a small balcony looking out to the port, and an office space offers a large communal table for working, as well as two individual tables. Next to the office space is a studio room with yoga mats rolled up in a basket where various workshops and lectures are held, and an outdoor patio is used for events. In the bathroom, female sanitary products are available in the cubicles.

Levy-Antar describes The Village as an “impact members club — a community-based initiative to promote leadership of women in all aspects of life.”

Any woman can join the club and membership costs 150 NIS ($40) a month, which gives unlimited access to the coworking space and access to a variety of workshops (which costs 30-50 NIS [$8-$13] and community events (which are free).

Ksenia Zinder, a new immigrant to Israel from Russia and a resident of the Hadar neighborhood in Haifa, was working at The Village for the first time on the day that JI visited. Zinder works remotely as a data analyst for an American company and missed the company of co-workers. “I just can't stand sitting at home all the time. I just think COVID was enough. So I was trying to find a place where I can sometimes go out and see other people ... and also it's nice here,” Zinder heard about The Village via social media.

She said most of the people she socializes with are other new immigrants from Russia, and she saw The Village as a good way to make new connections and expand her social and professional circles. “I think that being a member of a female club is a good way to try to have some more connections because it's much more welcoming than just, I don't know, going into a bar.”

Mary Jeries, an Arab-Israeli resident of Haifa's Ramat Hadar neighborhood and a woman's life coach, was among the first to join The Village. Jeries told JI she signed up because “it really connected everything that I wanted for myself as a Haifa woman. The place itself is charming and I really connected to the fact that it is a women's space and provides female entrepreneurs with a pleasant space to work from, together with all the programs that they have and plan to have in the future — and it connects between women.”

“Since I joined, when The Village opened, amazing things are happening,” Jeries said. Next month she will run a conference for self-employed women at The Village. She notes that The Village has facilitated connections between herself and other members and women who have visited the space and believes this will bear fruit to future collaborations both with The Village itself and beyond.

On Tuesdays, the apartment is reserved for companies to rent for off-site days, work sessions, company events, meetings and lectures, which help compensate for the low fee for members and contributes toward scholarships for women from the neighborhood who can't afford the membership fee and are connected to The Village via a social worker.

Women who have entrepreneurial ideas but don't have the resources to make it happen can benefit from being part of The Village community, where other women provide support and can share creative ideas, Levy-Antar explained. “There's something about belonging to a community that is focused on this; I think that helps women to kind of identify and believe in their potential,” she said.

For Levy-Antar it felt natural that The Village should offer a space for physical activities such as yoga and pilates, to provide women with an opportunity to reenergize. In addition, she said, “I feel like we're always carrying a certain bag of shame with us. Because you know, you haven't done enough for yourself or for your family or for your work. And we said you can get your V's in this one space. So you've done your work, and you did your sports and can go home free of these heavy weights that society puts on us.”

The Village also hosts various events — recent events have included a designer festival and an art sale. Last week, women gathered there for their first movie night together — a screening of the iconic '90s film “Thelma and Louise.”

Inclusion and multiculturalism are two key values of The Village.

A new project, the Women Mentoring Group, involves a yearlong course for a socioeconomically diverse group of women focused on financial literacy, such as budgeting, saving, investing and managing debt, and professional development.

Another upcoming project, Artists For Voice, seeks to connect local female artists to groups of marginalized women “to create a feminine narrative of life experiences and display it in city centers as a way to advocate the unique struggles and challenges of underprivileged women in times of collective trauma.”

Levy-Antar herself has, particularly since Oct. 7, taken solace in the joint Arab-Jewish community where she is part of in Haifa — both of her sons go to bilingual Arab-
Hebrew “Hand in Hand” schools and the parents have formed a community. “Ever since the war started, I feel like everyone is really trying to spend as much time together as possible. We would meet like three times a week, which we didn't used to do before the war, and kind of, even if no one knows what to say, just being together is a great comfort.”

Levy-Antar envisions this type of community for The Village. “In a lot of circles, and a lot of spaces, we avoid talking about the differences and the struggles inside this society, or if we do talk about it, it gets very violent and very, you know — the hatred,” Levy-Antar explained. “And we want to offer a space where we can talk about hard things but we can do it in a feminine way, which allows you to feel whatever you feel and the person next to you, that feels the opposite way and you're still in their favor, you're still on their side,” Levy-Antar continued.

The Village seeks to “form a sisterhood — that doesn't have to be the same, just has to be inclusive and allow us to get to know everyone who lives around us.”

JUNE 17, 2024

Dartmouth president says campus encampments go against ‘academic mission’

Speaking at the Aspen Ideas Festival, Sian Beilock touts university as a ‘different kind of Ivy’ — one not facing a civil rights investigation

By Gabby Deutch

ASPEN, Colo. — At the end of a school year marked by strife at campuses around the United States, few prestigious universities have managed to avoid the accusations of discrimination and harassment that have now become routine as higher education institutions grapple with the fallout of the Israel-Hamas war.

Dartmouth College may be the rare exception. Speaking at a panel at the Aspen Ideas Festival on Monday, Dartmouth President Sian Beilock was introduced with a rare accolade: Dartmouth is the only Ivy League college that has not faced a federal civil rights investigation over its handling of allegations of antisemitism and Islamophobia on campus.

“I’m really proud of where Dartmouth is and what Dartmouth is, and I always go back to what the North Star of Dartmouth is,” Beilock said. “We are a different kind of Ivy, and we have one serious goal, which is to find students from the broadest swath of society, bringing them to campus, give them the tools to disagree with each other, to debate, to have civil dialogue, so they can go out and be the next leaders of our democracy.”

Dartmouth has earned national recognition for its approach to Oct. 7 and its aftermath, and the resulting campus protests. For two years, the university has offered a class on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that is co-taught by an Israeli professor and a former Egyptian diplomat who worked on the Middle East peace process. In Beilock’s first email to the Dartmouth community after Oct. 7, she clearly condemned the Hamas attack and spoke of the need for dialogue — a value touted at other universities, but one that Beilock quickly put into action by organizing two public forums on the conflict with professors from both the Middle East studies department and the Jewish studies department.

Those public offerings “set the stage for a lot of what we’ve able to do,” Beilock explained, because “they showed what it’s like to have nuanced conversation across difference.”

The school saw more than 25 protests on the war, Beilock continued, but she made clear why no encampment was able to last at Dartmouth beyond a few hours.

“One thing that we were clear about from the beginning is that protests can be an important form of free speech. But there’s a difference between protest and then taking over a shared space for one ideology and excluding another. That is taking over someone else’s free speech. That is not at the heart of our academic mission,” Beilock said. “As such, we’ve been very clear about the consequences of having encampments on campus.”

Her quick removal of the encampment earned condemnation from the university’s faculty, who voted to censure her for calling in the police after an encampment popped up in May.

Beilock spoke alongside outgoing Colorado College President L. Song Richardson, whose handling of campus protests and an anti-Israel encampment differed starkly from what happened at Dartmouth. Richardson negotiated with campus protesters, who took down their encampment after she acceded to several of their demands. Among them was a concession that student activists can bring
their demands for divestment from Israeli companies to the school's investment committee.

“We allowed the encampment to remain in place. We had meetings with those who were camping out and reached an agreement to have conversations with our board, and then they voluntarily took down the encampment a few days before our graduation,” Richardson said. She said they followed the same playbook the university used when students sought divestment from fossil fuel companies.

At Dartmouth, Beilock said the university’s investment committee does consider ideas from Dartmouth stakeholders including students. But she cautioned against factoring in political considerations too strongly when it comes to shaping the school's endowment.

“The endowment is not a political tool. I’ve said that very clearly,” Beilock said. “The goal of the endowment is to generate resources so that we can do things like financial aid.”

Without naming any other institutions, Beilock took aim at universities that have gone too far in considering politics in how they make decisions.

“I'm really concerned about some of my peers and what they've done to circumvent the processes that they've had in place for many years,” said Beilock. “I don’t think that's the best way to get to an outcome where you're thinking about the longevity of an institution and creating a space where the institution is not the critic, but you support and foster critics on both sides themselves.”

Among an audience of philanthropists and executives, Beilock earned loud applause.

Beilock, who joined Dartmouth a year ago after six years as the president of Barnard College, blamed the campus turmoil at least in part on a lack of ideological diversity at elite institutions.

“We haven’t been good enough about making sure we have voices across the political spectrum on campus in enough of a way that allows them to constantly be practicing having these difficult conversations across difference,” Beilock said. “I'm recommitting to that.”

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California announces significant expansion of its nonprofit security grants as pro- and anti-Israel protesters clash outside L.A. synagogue

Budget deal reached between state officials giving $80 million to nonprofits, which local Jewish leaders call a ‘major victory’; meanwhile, demonstrators blocked access to a synagogue, leading to violence in the Pico-Robertson neighborhood

By Judah Ari Gross

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

The State of California is expected to allocate $80 million in nonprofit security grants for the next two years, a substantial increase from the previous budget, in a significant victory for the state's Jewish Public Affairs Committee and the California Legislative Jewish Caucus.

The security grant agreement was announced at roughly the same time as clashes broke out between pro- and anti-Israel demonstrators outside congregation Adas Torah in Los Angeles' heavily Jewish Pico-Robertson neighborhood, as the latter blocked the main entrance to the synagogue, which was holding an event about Israeli real estate.

The budget deal, which is due to be approved on Thursday, followed intensive negotiations between Gov. Gavin Newsom's office and lawmakers from the state Assembly and Senate.

“Previous record highs were $50 million in 2021 and 2022, and the state has never made a multi-year allocation before,” JPAC Executive Director David Bocarsly said in an email to eJewishPhilanthropy. “This is an especially big deal given the state is facing one of its biggest budget deficits in history, and is making major cuts to other programs to balance the budget.”

JPAC noted that the budget deal, which it called a “major victory[,]” included two other priorities for the organizations: $5 million for the California Teachers Collaborative on Holocaust and Genocide Education; and a $79 million reappropriation of unspent funds from last year for San Diego Rapid Response Network, which assists asylum seekers.

“This demonstrates a major commitment to California's vulnerable communities, especially the Jewish community,” Bocarsly said in a public statement. “Governor Newsom and legislative leaders have been consistent allies and continue to support our community's top priorities. We extend
a special thanks to the Jewish Caucus, especially Co-Chairs Assemblymember [Jesse] Gabriel and Senator [Scott] Wiener, for championing our biggest initiatives.”

Outside Adas Torah, protesters, at times, came to blows, with one apparent anti-Israel activist wearing a keffiyeh face mask being seen spraying bear spray at pro-Israel demonstrators and a journalist. In some cases, protesters were seen using sticks and handles from protest signs and flags as weapons against one another. At least one person was arrested during the fracas, local police told the Los Angeles Times. City and state officials denounced the anti-Israel protesters for blocking access to the synagogue — Newsom decried it as “antisemitic hatred” — and condemned the resulting violence.

Videos from the scene showed anti-Israel demonstrators, mostly wearing masks and keffiyehs, walking through the Pico-Robertson neighborhood with Palestinian flags and signs accusing Israel of genocide, while groups of pro-Israel protesters surrounded and shouted them. In several cases, these confrontations led to pushing and shoving as police officers could be seen largely standing by, containing the violence but not directly intervening.

“Today’s violence in the Pico-Robertson neighborhood today was abhorrent, and blocking access to a place of worship is unacceptable. I’ve called on LAPD to provide additional patrols in the Pico-Robertson community as well as outside of houses of worship throughout the city,” Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass wrote on X. “I want to be clear that Los Angeles will not be a harbor for antisemitism and violence. Those responsible for either will be found and held accountable.”

David Suissa, the publisher and editor-in-chief of L.A.’s Jewish Journal, called the anti-Israel demonstration outside the synagogue an act of “terror.”

“Terror doesn’t mean people have to die. Terror means you intimidate and bully people. Terror means you use fear as your weapon of choice. Terror means you go after people because of who they are,” Suissa wrote.

The local chapter of the Anti-Defamation League said it was “aware” of the protests and was in contact with the LAPD about the matter.

Israeli Opposition Leader Yair Lapid reacted to the L.A. clashes, as well as the deadly attacks in Russia’s Dagestan republic in which synagogues and churches were apparently targeted and the recent rape of a Jewish girl in France, calling for the world to condemn the “antisemitism is again raising its toxic and ugly head.”

“Anyone who does not voice their loud and unequivocal condemnation is part of the problem,” Lapid wrote.

Jewish Agency for Israel Chair Doron Almog similarly called for local governments to address the recent spate of violent antisemitic attacks that have taken place around the world in recent days.

“We firmly denounce the shocking antisemitic violence that has broken out in so many places,” Almog said in a statement. “We stand with one heart with the Jewish communities, strengthening and supporting them. I call on the authorities in these countries to act to restore the feeling of security to the Jewish communities.”