

Fighting Antisemitism, Protecting Democracy: A Strategy for the Trump Era

The Nexus Project

Executive Summary

Fighting Antisemitism, Protecting Democracy: A Strategy for the Trump Era presents a comprehensive approach to protecting Jews and the democratic rights and liberties that truly keep us safe. It is anchored in the understanding that fighting antisemitism requires defending democracy, building solidarity, ensuring concrete measures for Jewish security, and promoting education about Jewish history.

Through expert analyses and recommendations, this paper outlines a strategy that effectively addresses antisemitism – instead of exploiting it for political gain – and recommends particular tactics to use in working toward that goal.

Jonathan Jacoby, national director of the Nexus Project, argues that current methods for fighting antisemitism are failing. Jacoby recommends that those actually interested in fighting antisemitism should:

- ★ Invest in safety and security for Jewish institutions.
- ★ Oppose the antisemitism coming from this administration.
- ★ Maintain alliances to protect democracy.
- ★ Promote civic resilience.

Hannah Rosenthal, former US Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism, outlines the ways that xenophobia and antisemitism work in tandem. Draconian immigration policies, in addition to flying in the face of American Jewish history, end up making Jews less safe (to say nothing of the Jewish refugees around the world whom they hurt). Rosenthal recommends that we:

- ★ Push back against the suspension of refugee admissions through the US refugee resettlement program and the elimination of the right to seek asylum.
- ★ Shed light on the impact of the Executive Orders, including the impact of the [suspension](#) of the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) and stop-work orders.
- ★ Work in coalition to prohibit antisemitism from being used as a pretext to deport people for engaging in free assembly or free speech.

David N. Myers, distinguished professor of history at the University of California, Los Angeles, explores the ways in which universities have been a bellwether to understanding the status of Jews in society. While acknowledging concerns around anti-Israel protests after October 7th, Myers urges active opposition to the instrumentalization of the threat of antisemitism as a weapon to attack universities. Myers recommends that we:

- ★ Resist the weaponization of antisemitism by using tools like the [Nexus Campus Guide to Identifying Antisemitism](#) to distinguish between legitimate speech and behavior and hateful and discriminatory speech and behavior.
- ★ Work against efforts to identify members of campus communities on student visas who may be subject to deportation because of their support of Palestinian liberation.
- ★ Encourage college and university leaders to join together to take concerted action against efforts that diminish the independence of institutions of higher learning, impose restrictions on free speech, and seek to identify and act against those deemed political undesirables.
- ★ Encourage universities to focus far more on education than legal sanction or regulation in addressing antisemitism or other forms of identity-based hate.

Eric Ward, executive vice president of Race Forward, contends that efforts to dismantle diversity, equity, and inclusion programs undermine the fight against antisemitism by preventing civil rights organizations from forming a united front against attacks on the 14th Amendment — the foundation of citizenship and equal protection under law. Ward recommends that we:

- ★ Oppose state laws that ban diversity, equity, and inclusion and restrict how racism and antisemitism are taught by contacting state legislators, supporting lawsuits challenging these bans, and backing organizations fighting for inclusive education.
- ★ Push back against attacks on birthright citizenship by urging members of Congress to defend the 14th Amendment and reject any legislative or executive actions that strip citizenship rights.
- ★ Stay engaged and in coalition across communities.

Judith Lichtman, human and civil rights advocate, explains how the government overhaul of civil society will harm Jewish liberties. Organizations engaged in pro-Palestinian protest face the most immediate risk, but history suggests such powers, once granted, expand beyond their original targets. We should instead:

- ★ Speak out against hate and oppose legislation that would empower this administration to go after nonprofits.
- ★ Urge Congress to pass legislation on evaluating and reporting hate crimes and provide oversight on the implementation of hate crime data collection and enforcement.

Dov Waxman, the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation Chair in Israel Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, considers the relationship between the administration's policies on Israel and far-right parties abroad and suggests that current US foreign policy risks further fanning the flames of antisemitism here at home. Waxman recommends that we:

- ★ Press the administration to make every effort to bring a halt to the bloodshed in Gaza, secure the release of the hostages, and permanently end the war there.
- ★ Encourage policymakers to develop and pursue post-war plans that will de-escalate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as part of a regional agreement that includes the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. New models for statehood, such as a confederation of two states, should be considered.
- ★ Tell Jewish groups and leaders to actively oppose any efforts by the government and those associated with it to legitimize far-right parties and movements in Europe.

These experts outline the ways in which political and civil society leaders, including those at the helm of American Jewish organizations, should seek to protect Jews by speaking up against antisemitism and other hatreds, standing up for freedom of speech, pushing for more resources to counter extremism, and promoting further education.



Introduction

The president and members of his administration regularly [promote](#) antisemitic conspiracies and [use, elevate, and normalize](#) antisemitic rhetoric. At the same time, they are pursuing policies [intended to dismantle core elements of democracy](#) – the very parts of liberal society that allow Jews to survive and thrive. And they claim that they are doing so for the benefit of Jews.

These policies, in and of themselves, are harmful to Jews. So is the administration's repeated [insistence](#) that this is for our benefit and that these draconian policies are needed to fight antisemitism.

In fact, these policies, which conflate criticism of Israeli policies with antisemitism, do not fight antisemitism. Instead, they divide Jews from other minorities and from one another.

An effective strategy to confront and counter antisemitism must be anchored in four key principles.

1. The fight against antisemitism is a fight for democracy. The protections afforded to us by our democracy – freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion – have been key not only to American Jewish safety but also to our full participation as Americans and Jews in politics and society.
2. The fight against antisemitism requires solidarity, as the Biden administration recognized in its landmark [US National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism](#). Our fight does not exist in isolation but in tandem with the struggle against other hatreds. The perpetrator of the deadliest attack on Jews in American history – at the Tree of Life synagogue in 2018 – was a white nationalist driven by hatred rooted in antisemitism and xenophobia. Conspiracy theories similarly often rely on a system of entangled hatreds. Jewish safety is intertwined with the safety of other communities.

3. At the same time, the fight against antisemitism cannot solely be based on the idea of solidarity. It also must involve tangible policies to ensure Jewish safety. Jewish people must be able to walk in public as Jews. They must be able to congregate in Jewish institutions – be they schools or synagogues or stores – without fearing attacks, regardless of whether those attacks are motivated by xenophobic conspiratorial thinking, anger at the State of Israel, or any other reason.
4. Fighting antisemitism requires support for robust education about Jewish history. This must include education about the history of Jews in the United States and Jewish identities broadly, as well as an understanding of the very real dangers posed by antisemitism. Boosting and expanding education about Judaism and Jewishness, as opposed to cynical or misguided efforts to impose rules against it, can give people a frame of reference to understand and support Jewish experiences.

The expert analyses and recommendations that follow offer a more effective and sensitive way to fight antisemitism than the administration's approach. They respond to the threats American Jews face in the current era, build an effective strategy to fight for democracy at home and abroad, and provide recommendations for how to implement it.

We must push back against efforts by the Trump administration to exploit legitimate concerns of antisemitism by pursuing a political and ideological project that weakens American democracy and endangers the safety of American Jews and our fellow vulnerable minorities, including Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian Americans. We can and must chart a better course.



Jonathan Jacoby - Antisemitism, Trump, and the Threat to Jewish Safety, Security, and Solidarity

Jonathan Jacoby is national director of the Nexus Project. He is the former executive director of New Israel Fund and former president of Israel Policy Forum.

The way we are fighting antisemitism today is not working.

On many college campuses, we have seen unrest that, in some cases, has escalated to [vandalism](#). Some protesters have used anti-Zionism as a cover for antisemitism, and some have exploited the horrific events of October 7 and the subsequent war to peddle antisemitic tropes and [violent ideas](#). There are even individuals and groups that have [supported](#) Hamas's terrorism. We must call them out and hold them accountable.

This is what the president claims he's fighting. But that doesn't seem to be his administration's real agenda.

When the Trump administration speaks of cracking down on antisemitism, it speaks of going after those who protest or criticize Israel, particularly on college and university campuses, and threatening to deport students on visas if he [deems](#) them to be " Hamas sympathizers." This is taking place while the head of his Department of Justice-led Task Force to Combat Antisemitism is vowing to put demonstrators in prison "[for years](#)."

We know from history and present politics that terms like "terrorist" or "terrorist sympathizer" can be manipulated to serve political purposes. In addition to pursuing the approach of making antisemitism seem like an imported issue, the Trump administration is [threatening](#) to deport those they deem sympathetic to terrorist groups, including Hamas, which many

worry will [chill](#) free speech and assembly, two fundamental pillars of democracy that have kept Jews safe. And [arresting student protesters without due process](#) not only fails to address antisemitism effectively, but also erodes the democratic protections that have historically safeguarded Jewish communities.

All of this is to say that President Trump has taken a real phenomenon that needs to be addressed – antisemitism that emerges out of debates on Israel – and is using it to justify crackdowns on immigration, higher education, and free speech on Israel.

Absent from the Trump administration’s proposals to address antisemitism is any detailed plan to address antisemitism across the political spectrum or bolster education about Jewish history and antisemitism. In fact, the administration’s anti-diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives have led the Pentagon’s intelligence arm to [pause](#) observance of Holocaust Remembrance Day. Meanwhile, the Department of Education, in touting its anti-diversity, equity, and inclusion plan, [cited](#) its support from Moms for Liberty, a political organization that has [pushed](#) for the removal of books about Jewish identity and the Holocaust in the classroom. And as Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer [pointed out](#), Trump’s across-the-board funding freeze jeopardized funding for synagogue security.

There is also a tension between Trump’s stated commitment to antisemitism and the makeup of his administration: Kash Patel, FBI director, has repeatedly appeared on a [Holocaust denier’s podcast](#); Robert F. Kennedy Jr., health and human services secretary, mused that COVID was designed to [spare](#) Ashkenazi Jews; and Pete Hegseth, the secretary of defense, [belongs](#) to a Christian nationalist church.

President Trump’s consigliere, the cent-billionaire head of the Department for Government Efficiency, Elon Musk, in addition to [promoting](#) Soros conspiracy theories, [performed](#) a Nazi-like salute on inauguration day. A few days later, rather than apologize, he went on to [make Holocaust puns](#) on social media and endorse the AfD, Germany’s far-right party, [encouraging](#) its supporters to move beyond Germany’s past. Another long-time associate of the president, Steve Bannon, performed a similar [Nazi-like salute](#) and [told](#) a reporter that Israel had “an enemy inside the wire” in the form of American Jews during February’s Conservative Political Action Conference. This is to say nothing of the president himself, who has, for example, [accused](#) Schumer, the highest-ranking Jewish elected official ever in US history, of not really being Jewish.

How are many legacy Jewish institutions choosing to meet this moment? There have been occasional expressions of concern about [overt antisemitism](#) or [potential overreach](#), but there has been too much silence or assent: from [minimizing](#) Elon Musk’s Nazi-like gesture to [encouraging](#) the administration to appoint an antisemitism coordinator – as though it is not itself a vector of antisemitism – to [saying](#) that “every leader in the American Jewish community supports” President Trump’s alignment with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Rabbi Sharon Brous of Los Angeles congregation IKAR, who has [expressed](#) concern about antisemitism she witnessed while visiting Columbia University, [sermonized](#): “[T]he defunding, the threats of militarized campuses and rewritten curricula — these are extreme acts that may feel comforting to the Jewish community...But please hear me: these actions themselves constitute a form of antisemitism. What may feel, today, like a welcomed embrace is actually putting us at even greater danger. We, the Jews, are being used to advance a political agenda that will cause grave harm to the social fabric, and to the institutions that are best suited to protect Jews and all minorities. We are being used. Our pain, our trauma, is being exploited to eviscerate the dream of a multiracial democracy, while advancing the goal of a white Christian nation. And this tactic — Jews as a scapegoat to divide our society and weaken democratic institutions — is not new.”

It is not new. But we do need new — and better — strategies to confront both the weaponization of antisemitism and antisemitism itself.

Recommendations:

- ★ Strengthen measures to protect Jews. We can have no tolerance for those who physically threaten, harass, or target Jews. This does not mean that Jews can never have moments of discomfort or political disagreement; it means that we should continue to invest in safety and security for our synagogues, schools, stores, and other Jewish institutions, and that we should look to all our leaders, communal and political, to speak up against antisemitism and violence against Jews.
- ★ Forcefully oppose antisemitism coming from all parts of society, including the current administration. We cannot fight antisemitism while ignoring that some of the most influential people in the country are helping to spread it. No policy tradeoff can justify excusing Holocaust apologia or antisemitic conspiracies.
- ★ Maintain alliances to protect our democracy. Not only should we look to allies to protect Jews, but we should also speak up on behalf of our allies. We will not always agree with one another when working across differences. But freedom of speech, assembly, and religion are fundamental tenets of our country. Democracy is not selective in its protection of individuals and groups. Everybody has freedom of religion or nobody does. Everyone has freedom of assembly and speech or nobody does. Either there will be a democracy for everyone, including Jews, or there will be a democracy for no one. Including Jews.
- ★ Promote civic resilience and inclusive democracy. Encourage widespread civic engagement, critical thinking, and media literacy to counter the erosion of democratic norms. Support institutions and policies that protect freedom of information and access to legal assistance and civil rights, and particularly those that foster alliances across communities. Press elected representatives to do the same.



Hannah Rosenthal - Antisemitism and Xenophobia

Hannah Rosenthal is the former US Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism and former head of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

As the child of a Holocaust survivor, the reality of the Holocaust was at my dinner table every night of my life. I grew up understanding the urgency of making a difference and combating evil when it rears its head. I feel the rise of antisemitism quite acutely – and, at the same time, I believe that antisemitism is being exploited and weaponized to divide people, including Jews, to instill fear and to demonize people. The [task forces](#) and projects being advanced by the Trump administration are predicated on a fiction that the left is singularly responsible for antisemitism in our country – and ignores the root causes of antisemitism and vile expressions of it by [people](#) in positions of power. There is no mention of white nationalism or Christian nationalism, no mention of Holocaust denial or Hitler salutes. No mention of blood libel or deicide. And there is no mention of how antisemitism works in tandem with these other hatreds, including xenophobia.

There is perhaps no clearer example of how tightly antisemitism and xenophobia work together than the Great Replacement Theory, a conspiracy echoed by several [members of this](#) administration that states that “elites” (often meaning Jews) are working to flood the country with migrants to change its demographics. This is both antisemitic – over assigning agency to shadowy Jewish figures seeking to corrode the nation – and xenophobic in its dehumanizing representation of immigrants, ignoring that people come to this country not because they’re brought in by a puppet master, but to search for a better life.

These hatreds work together effectively and terribly. The deadliest attack on Jews in American history, carried out at the Tree of Life synagogue in 2018, was wielded by a right-wing extremist who believed Jews were flooding this country with immigrants. Failing to fight hatreds in tandem allows individual hatreds to fester better and also gives up one of our unique strengths: the power

we find in coalitions. As Amy Spitalnick explained in [Antisemitism x Democracy](#): “To effectively combat antisemitism, we must understand how it is used as a tool to fuel broader hate, violence, and anti-democratic extremism, and build solutions that recognize this deep interconnection.”

In my time at the State Department, I learned that coalition building is something we in the United States do uniquely well. It has been one of our great strengths as Americans and American Jews. To give it up now would be self-defeating.

Further, Trump’s Executive Order on antisemitism [threatens](#) to target people on visas, including students, for taking part in protests critical of Israel. This threatens to cast antisemitism as an imported, rather than a homegrown, problem. It also recalls a dark period of American history.

We remember that the idea that Jews were moving to this country to smuggle in Bolshevism was used as a pretext in the early 20th century to deny Jews entry into the country as they were attempting to flee life-threatening policies in Europe. We also remember that some believed that Jews were incapable of acculturation and assimilation, which was used against the community and prevented their integration into American life. And we know that, today, Jews, too, will be impacted by President Trump’s immigration plans. Trump’s [suspension](#) of the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is keeping Iranian Jews [out of the United States](#) and the stop-work orders also hamper the ability of groups like the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society ([HIAS](#)), which is trying to continue helping Venezuela’s 6,000-strong Jewish community.

Recommendations:

- ★ Jewish communities should commit, as hundreds of Jewish clergy have [done](#), to push back against the suspension of refugee admissions through the US refugee resettlement program and the elimination of the right to seek asylum.
- ★ Members of Congress must shed light on the impact of the EOs, including the impact of the [suspension](#) of the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) and stop-work orders. We should all be working at the federal, state, and local levels to help refugee communities already here.
- ★ Jewish communities have a particular obligation to return to their historic commitment to these pro-immigrant and refugee efforts and to work in coalition to prevent antisemitism from being used as pretext to deport people for engaging in free assembly or free speech. We should also be educating young people about America’s immigration history, including the ways in which it intersects with antisemitism. It isn’t just that we should fight xenophobia so others will join us in the fight against antisemitism; it’s that one cannot be fought without also fighting the other. In fact, we should push for more robust, nuanced history education generally, even when that history is uncomfortable and painful. It is the only way we can learn from it.



David N. Myers - Antisemitism and Universities

David N. Myers is distinguished professor of history at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he holds the Sady and Ludwig Kahn Chair in Jewish History.

For centuries, the university has been a bellwether of the Jewish condition. At the same time, the state of the university has often been a mirror onto the health of the society in which it is located. The current attacks on the university in the United States, in the name of asserting greater ideological and financial control, reflect a government attempt to dismantle a key pillar of American democracy — a step which should be of great concern to all, including Jews, who value the principles of Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

In medieval and early modern universities, Jewish attendance was severely restricted, with a number of notable exceptions (for example, Italy between the 16th and 18th centuries, or the case of Jacob Israel, a Jew who served as rector of the University of Heidelberg in the 17th century). This overall pattern of exclusion reflected the stigmatization of Jews as undesirables in Christian society.

Even as a new secular and scientific ethos entered universities in the 19th century, exclusionary policies toward Jews continued. In Germany, Jews could attend university but often had to convert in order to receive professorial positions. In Eastern Europe, there was a strict *numerus clausus*, or quota (ranging from 3%-10%), on Jewish attendance at universities. Meanwhile, in the United States, Ivy League institutions imposed quotas on Jewish attendance from the 1920s to the 1950s.

By contrast, the latter half of the twentieth century was a golden age for Jews in the American university. The percentage of Jewish students in elite universities rose, as did

the number of Jewish faculty. One also hears ample accounts of state universities as opening the door for Jews to enter mainstream American society. Similarly, Jews broke through a remaining barrier by assuming leadership positions of institutions of higher education. Over the last decade, six out of eight presidents of Ivy League universities were Jewish.

These developments reflect the opportunity afforded to Jews to enter previously closed corridors of power and influence in the United States. And yet, it often seems as if the university in the United States is no longer a portal of opportunity for Jews — that the golden age of Jews and the university has come to an end.

Critics of the university point to the protests against Israel after the Hamas attack of October 7, 2023 as evidence. Indeed, there were instances of harassment and intimidation directed against Jewish students in the aftermath of October 7. They should be called out, and the offenders should be held to account. The fact that antisemitism is weaponized against critics of Israel doesn't give those critics license to threaten or harm Jews.

But the threat to Jews and to the university in the United States today does not emanate, in the first instance, from pro-Palestinian protesters. Rather, it comes, ironically enough, from new attempts to silence these protesters in the name of protecting Jews.

The Heritage Foundation's "[Project Esther](#)" and President Trump's [Executive Order](#) on "Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism" seek to stifle voices on campus by casting a vast net to identify and potentially sanction those who don't hold to a pro-Netanyahu view of Israeli policy. Not only will such actions stigmatize Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim critics; they will be directed with equal fervor against progressive Jews who oppose Israel's brutal war in Gaza or its 58-year-long occupation of the West Bank.

The proposed actions against dissident voices on American universities will upend the traditions of inclusivity and academic freedom that have served Jews so well, as students and innovators, over the past 70 years. And it should be clear that the ultimate goal is not to protect Jews by rooting out pro-Palestinian protesters. It is to degrade American universities as they currently exist in order to subordinate them to the decidedly anti-liberal, authoritarian, and conformist agenda of the Trump administration.

All concerned citizens should be alarmed by the plans underway. History reveals that imposing draconian restrictions on universities — whether in Nazi Germany, Communist Russia, or fascist South America — is a classic move by anti-democratic regimes, which subsequently weaponize these policies to serve their own nefarious interests. We may well be on the brink of such a moment today, and Jews, above all, must be vigilant and resist destructive efforts justified in their name.

Recommendations:

- ★ Resist the weaponization of antisemitism by using the [Nexus Campus Guide to Identifying Antisemitism](#), along with other nuanced instruments (such as the Nexus and JDA definitions of antisemitism), in order to distinguish between legitimate speech and behavior, and hateful and discriminatory speech and behavior. In particular, these instruments allow for a more subtle determination about when anti-Zionism may become antisemitic.
- ★ Resist the call in the [Trump Administration's Fact Sheet on Combating Antisemitism](#), as enthusiastically echoed by organizations such as [Betar USA](#), to identify members of campus communities on student visas who may be subject to deportation because of their support of Palestinian liberation.
- ★ Encourage college and university leaders to join together to take concerted action against efforts that diminish the independence of institutions of higher learning, impose restrictions on free speech, and seek to identify and act against those deemed political undesirables. The administration's proposed steps will inflict grievous damage on campus and universities, which have been such an important site of Jewish advancement in American society.
- ★ Invest in additional education about Jews rather than on legal sanction as a key tool to combat antisemitism.



Eric Ward - Antisemitism and the Attack on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Eric Ward is executive vice president of Race Forward. He is a nationally recognized expert on the relationship between authoritarian movements, hate violence, and preserving inclusive democracy. Ward is the only American recipient of the [Civil Courage Prize](#).

President Donald Trump is weaponizing the unresolved conflict in Israel and Palestine to fracture one of the remaining barriers to authoritarianism here at home: the Civil Rights Movement. By exploiting these divisions, his administration is weakening the alliances that have historically defended democracy and racial justice in America.

This divide-and-conquer strategy doesn't just create discord — it clears the way for a broader assault on civil rights. By stoking confusion and backlash against diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, President Trump's policies have prevented civil rights organizations from mounting a united front against his attack on the 14th Amendment — the bedrock of citizenship and equal protection under the law. Undermining diversity, equity, and inclusion also disrupts the teaching of Black and Jewish histories side by side, weakening public understanding of how racism and antisemitism reinforce each other.

With this fragmentation in place, President Trump has also faced little resistance in [reframing](#) birthright citizenship as a racial slur and launching a policy attack on the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1965 — the very law that dismantled antisemitic immigration policies. These were the same policies that once barred Jews fleeing pogroms and the Holocaust from seeking refuge in the US.

The irony is glaring: some Jewish leaders are now being drawn into dismantling a law that, had it existed in the 1930s, might have saved Anne Frank and her family. But this is not just a historical lesson — it is a warning.

Why This Matters — For Jews and Beyond

This strategy is not theoretical; it has direct, real-world consequences. For example, state laws [banning](#) so-called diversity, equity and inclusion explicitly forbid teaching that racism is embedded in American society. At the same time, these states' laws [mandate](#) Holocaust education while prohibiting discussion of the systemic racism that shaped it. This contradiction forces educators into an impossible position: teaching about Nazi policies without acknowledging how they were influenced by Jim Crow laws in the US.

Imagine a history teacher teaching about the Holocaust. A teacher explaining how Nazi Germany studied US Jim Crow laws risks violating these new restrictions. If they further connect this history to modern voter suppression efforts in those same states, they could find themselves punished — much like pulling the Monopoly "Go to Jail" card.

But these divide-and-conquer tactics are not new. One of the oldest antisemitic strategies is to position Jews as a buffer between the ruling class and marginalized communities — ensuring that public frustration is redirected toward Jewish communities rather than those in power.

This played out in Tsarist Russia, where pogroms were unleashed to deflect economic grievances away from the monarchy and onto Jewish villages. A similar pattern emerged during the McCarthy era in the US, when Jewish intellectuals and activists were disproportionately targeted as alleged communist threats. By singling out Jewish figures in leftist movements, the government created a wedge between Jewish and non-Jewish organizers — weakening multiracial resistance to state repression. Today, President Trump and his enablers are deploying the same strategy — using Jewish fears, some deeply valid, to push Jewish leaders into a reactionary stance that isolates them from their most natural allies: other communities still battling racism and bigotry.

It is a cynical ploy — but not surprising. After all, the president [has boosted the claim that some Jews view him as "The King of Israel"](#) while simultaneously laying claim to [Gaza](#) as his next real estate venture.

Fighting antisemitism requires more than just calling it out or the "correct" or "incorrect" rhetorical position — it requires strategy. The Jewish community must recognize when its leadership is being weaponized against the community's own long-term interests. This means resisting reactionary impulses and reaffirming the historical alliances that have safeguarded Jewish communities, rather than undermining them. The same movements that fought for

the Civil Rights Act, for fair housing, and for voting rights are the movements that helped ensure equal Jewish inclusion in American public life. Weakening these movements does not strengthen Jewish security — it endangers it.

To be clear, antisemitism does exist on the left, particularly when legitimate critiques of Israel cross into demonization of Jews or the denial of Jewish peoplehood, and it should be condemned. However, President Trump seeks to exploit both real and exaggerated instances of left-wing antisemitism, framing them as defining traits of progressive and racial justice movements. His goal is not to combat antisemitism but to drive a wedge between Jewish and non-Jewish communities, weakening the collective power of the Civil Rights Movement. If the medical system has flaws, we don't dismantle hospitals — we work to fix them. The same must be true for diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Jewish community can and should critique aspects of these initiatives, movements, and organizations when they fail to adequately address antisemitism, but dismantling them outright only serves the interests of those seeking to erode civil rights for all.

History has shown what happens when Jews are left isolated, convinced that assimilation or hyper-isolation is their only defense. But the path forward is not retreat — it is solidarity. The survival of democracy — like the survival of Jewish communities — depends not on isolation, but on strong alliances rooted in multiracial inclusion and civil rights.

That means taking action.

Recommendations:

- ★ Oppose state laws that ban diversity, equity, and inclusion and restrict how racism and antisemitism are taught by contacting state legislators, supporting lawsuits challenging these bans, and backing organizations fighting for inclusive education.
- ★ Push back against attacks on birthright citizenship by urging members of Congress to defend the 14th Amendment and reject any legislative or executive actions that strip citizenship rights.
- ★ Most importantly, do not allow these divide-and-conquer tactics to succeed — stay engaged, stay at the table, and refuse to let fear drive our communities apart.



Judith Lichtman - Antisemitism and the Attack on Civil Society

Judith Lichtman is an American attorney specializing in women’s rights and an advocate for human and civil rights.

Civil society organizations in the United States face a specific, urgent threat. [Multiple times](#) when the last Congress was in session, members introduced legislation that would empower the Treasury Secretary to strip nonprofits of their tax-exempt status if they are deemed to be engaging in terrorism. We should expect such attacks to continue.

And when they do, we should be prepared to remain engaged as citizens who are part of the democratic process. Groups and outlets like [Democracy Docket](#) track election litigation to make sure we can continue to participate in democracy through voting. But democracy doesn’t only happen when we go to the polls, and the Trump administration is attacking what happens in between ballot boxes, too.

This brings us back to attacks on nonprofits under the guise of fighting terrorism. To be clear, support for terrorism and extremism is never justified. And there are measures in place to guarantee that those who promote it are sanctioned. Indeed, it is and must be, at present, illegal for nonprofits to support terrorism. Yet these proposals manipulate the term “terrorism” and use it for political purposes to expand the powers of the executive and trample on the constitutional rights of those who disagree with the administration on issues related to foreign policy without providing for due process.

Organizations engaged in pro-Palestinian protest face the most immediate risk. But history suggests such powers, once granted, expand beyond their original targets. Foundations that

support pro-Palestinian organizations could be next. We've already seen this pattern with other groups. A 2020 police guide suggested that Black Lives Matter protesters should be [treated](#) like terrorists. The same logic could extend to NGOs supporting racial justice or groups (including Jewish groups) that support refugees and asylum seekers.

This threat to NGOs is particularly concerning given the broader political context. On one hand, the administration seeks expanded powers to target NGOs, claiming this will help fight antisemitism. Yet, simultaneously, as ProPublica reporting [shows](#), this same administration is creating a more permissive environment for white nationalists, for whom antisemitism is a key ideological component.

Antisemitism and all forms of racism and discrimination must be confronted — by all of us, together, from wherever on the political spectrum these hatreds arise. Empowering an administration that tolerates white nationalism and cracks down on civil society only harms that fight and, indeed, creates new dangers. For when such an administration gains power to target NGOs, it can target any NGO whose agenda is at odds with its policies. This not only threatens to drive a wedge between Jewish communities and other allies in civil society. It also creates a less democratic, less pluralistic, less liberal, and less safe environment for everyone, including Jews.

Recommendations:

- ★ Our elected representatives must speak out against hate and oppose legislation that would empower this administration to go after nonprofits. Our community leaders must speak up and out against such efforts as well.
- ★ Congress should pass legislation on evaluating and reporting hate crimes and provide oversight on the implementation of hate crime data collection and enforcement. Congress should also be working to address white supremacy in law enforcement and authorize funding for interagency coordination against hate crimes. These efforts combat hate without attacking civil society.



Dov Waxman - Antisemitism and US Foreign Policy

Dov Waxman is the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation Chair in Israel Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles.

The Trump administration falsely [equates](#) pro-Palestine activism in the United States with antisemitism. It also [argues](#) that its stalwart support for Israel – which is really support for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his unpopular far-right government – is tantamount to supporting Jews. The administration even [touts](#) its purportedly pro-Israel policies as proof of its concern for Jews. But giving Netanyahu and his far-right allies carte blanche to do what they like in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank actually endangers Jews around the world.

It is well-established that whenever Israel engages in major military operations that incur significant Palestinian casualties, it [results](#) in surges of antisemitic incidents and hate crimes against Jews, as they are unfairly blamed for Israel's actions. There is also empirical evidence to [suggest](#) that antisemitic attitudes increase when Israeli violence against Palestinians increases. Therefore, giving Israel a green light to resume its brutal war in Gaza, in which over 50,000 Palestinians have now been [killed](#), is likely to lead to more antisemitic incidents and hate crimes in the US and in other countries.

In addition to supporting Israel's far-right government, the Trump administration has also supported other extreme right-wing governments and political parties around the world. Most notably and shockingly, Vice President JD Vance [told](#) an audience of European officials that they should stop censoring far-right speech and work with far-right political parties; he then [met](#) with the leader of the far-right Alternative for Germany party (AfD), which, per a German court [ruling](#) last year, is formally suspected of extremism. (Vance [declined](#) a meeting with the German Chancellor).

Elon Musk even publicly [endorsed](#) the AfD, declaring that “only AfD can save Germany,” shortly before Germany’s national election. The AfD went on to [win](#) roughly 21% of the vote in the election, nearly doubling its share of the vote since the last election and making it now the second-largest party in the German parliament. The growing political power of the AfD — some of whose members [took part](#) in a meeting with neo-Nazis in November 2023 to discuss the mass deportation of migrants, asylum seekers and German citizens of foreign origin — represents a clear danger to Jews in Germany. Helping to legitimize this party, as Vance and Musk have done, makes Jews less safe.

The Trump administration’s growing alignment with [authoritarian](#) regimes and its public disputes and trade wars with [Canada and the European Union](#) also threatens to weaken and destabilize these Western democracies and longstanding US allies. Ushering in a world in which there are fewer liberal democracies jeopardizes the safety of Jews because liberal democracies have [proven](#) to be the most hospitable and secure environment for Jews as well as for other minority groups. By contrast, authoritarian regimes have often targeted Jews, vilified them, and persecuted them. This history should not be forgotten.

Recommendations:

- ★ Press the administration to make every effort to bring a halt to the bloodshed in Gaza, secure the release of the hostages, and permanently end the war there.
- ★ Encourage policymakers to develop and pursue post-war plans that will de-escalate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as part of a regional agreement that includes the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. New models for statehood, such as a confederation of two states, should be considered.
- ★ Tell Jewish groups and leaders to actively oppose any efforts by the government and those associated with it to legitimize far-right parties and movements in Europe. They should incorporate into their missions the goal of protecting liberal democracies around the world.