

No Longer on the Sidelines: How the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Impacts Diaspora Jews

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For decades, diaspora Jews related to Israeli policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a matter of Israel's interests, not their own. Based on discussions over the past six months with leaders of major diaspora Jewish organizations across the United States, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, and South America—convened through INSS' Joint Working Group under the Chatham House Rule—we contend that this situation has fundamentally changed. The conflict, once perceived as limited to the Middle East, has become intensely local, reshaping Jewish communal life throughout the world. We identify four interlocking effects: the conflict is normalizing hostility toward Israel, dividing diaspora Jewish communities, diminishing their political influence, and fueling antisemitism. Together, these dynamics make diaspora Jews genuine stakeholders in Israel's policy choices regarding the conflict's future. The report concludes with recommendations for Israeli policymakers to address the conflict's growing toll on diaspora Jewry.

Introduction

Global Jewish communities are undergoing major changes, and Israel is at the heart of many of them. Over many decades, diaspora Jews have played a significant role in Israel's national security. Diaspora organizations and lobbies have promoted favorable attitudes toward Israel in countries where Jews reside and diplomatic support for the Jewish state in international forums and organizations. In the United States, diaspora groups helped secure continuous superpower support for Israel, including substantial military assistance.

In more recent years, some diaspora groups have lobbied to advance particular policy priorities, especially regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For example, in the United States, the Zionist Organization of America has pressed for Israeli annexation of the West Bank, whereas J Street has advocated for the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Diaspora Jewry's engagement with such issues, however, has always been driven primarily by consideration of their importance for Israel's future—not for their own.

Based on our discussions with the leaders of major diaspora Jewish organizations over the last half-year, we believe this situation has fundamentally changed.

Today, diaspora Jewish communities are directly affected by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and by Israel's policies and conduct in relation to it. For global Jewry, the conflict is no longer mainly a Middle East affair. It has become truly local.

The discussions were conducted in the framework of INSS' Joint Working Group of senior researchers and leaders of diaspora Jewish organizations. The diaspora organizations include large communal bodies and leading advocacy groups spanning the United States, Canada, France, the United Kingdom, and South America. The deliberations occurred over several months, remotely and in person, and within the framework of the Chatham House Rule, which allowed participants to speak openly yet anonymously about sensitive issues. The quotations in this report are included without attribution, and the analyses and recommendations are the authors' alone—they do not necessarily represent the views of all members of the Joint Working Group.

Throughout our discussions, we learned that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is impacting diaspora Jewish communities with increasing force, reshaping diaspora Jewish life and the relationships between diaspora Jews and the State of Israel as well as the societies in which they live. Publicly, many diaspora leaders are reluctant to address the issue, wary of appearing to tell Israelis how to manage core issues of national security, and of fueling bad-faith attacks on Israel and Jewish communities. Moreover, organizations and leaders, much like their constituents, are not unanimous on what needs to be done. In closed-door meetings, however, they described a broadly shared understanding of how the conflict is affecting their communities and common worries about the future.

In this report, we draw on the deliberations of the Joint Working Group to describe four ways in which the conflict is affecting diaspora Jewish communities. The conflict is 1) normalizing hostility toward Israel; 2) dividing Jewish communities; 3) diminishing diaspora political influence; and 4) fueling antisemitism. Although we describe each separately, in practice these four impacts overlap, each shaping and intensifying the others.

The conflict's wide-ranging effects predate the Gaza war but intensified over the course of the war. Taken together, they make diaspora Jewish communities stakeholders in Israeli policy decisions about the future of the conflict. The report concludes with a set of recommendations to Israeli policymakers that address the conflict's growing impact on diaspora Jewry.

Normalizing Hostility to Israel

Hostility toward Israel has crystallized in recent years across broad sectors of the societies in which major diaspora communities reside. The negative dynamic is largely a consequence of how the media, social movements, and large swaths of opinion have interpreted Israel's conduct in the Gaza war and in relation to the broader conflict with the Palestinians. Indeed, a view of Israel as an illegitimate state—a country that committed a genocide in Gaza and that practices apartheid in the West Bank—has taken hold.

In the United States, the change in Israel's standing has been evident in public opinion surveys. For example, a [poll](#) by the highly regarded Pew Research Center, conducted in March 2026, found that 60% of Americans view Israel unfavorably compared to 53% in 2025 and 42% in 2022. The division by age is especially stark, with 75% of the young adult population (18-29) holding negative views of Israel compared to 45% in the oldest (65+) group. Viewed comparatively, Israel's standing in the United States is more similar to countries generally viewed as hostile, such as Iran, China, and Russia, than to countries viewed as close allies, such as the U.K. and Germany.

Beyond opinion surveys, Israel has become a contentious issue in U.S. electoral politics, particularly the Democratic Party primaries for the 2026 midterm elections. Left-wing critics of Israel, including several candidates sponsored by Democratic Socialists of America, have won races on platforms that accuse Israel of war crimes while calling for a ban on future arms sales and retrenchment of the U.S.-Israel alliance. Opposition to campaign funding by the pro-Israel advocacy organization AIPAC has also been a prominent feature of many U.S. political campaigns.

In much of Europe, the designation of Israel as a pariah state, like apartheid South Africa, began earlier and has advanced farther than in the United States. As one Joint Working Group participant from the U.K. put it: "In British society the transformation has been profound. In the Church of England, liberal media, arts and culture world and trade unions, Israel *is* South Africa. Not might be. We are already there."

Describing the situation in France, another participant said that anti-Zionism risks becoming a cultural norm, much as it was in the former Soviet Union. In France today, as in the former Soviet Union, denigration of Israel coexists with official repudiation of antisemitism, and has become ubiquitous.

The widespread vilification of Israel affects Israelis and diaspora Jews alike. In diaspora Jewish communities, Israel's outsider status increasingly shapes everyday communal life, particularly in institutional settings that relate to Israel as an intrinsic part of Jewish identity. Joint Working Group participants cited numerous examples:

- Synagogues hosting information sessions on aliyah (immigration to Israel) have been picketed in the United States and United Kingdom.
- Jewish summer camps that hire IDF veterans to serve as counselors have been accused of supporting "genocide," with their [accreditation challenged](#) in Canada.
- University-based Jewish organizations that publicly embrace Zionism, such as [Hillel groups](#), have become targets of protest activity.
- Jewish organizations, artists, [writers](#), and business owners of all kinds have been targeted by [BDS campaigns](#) because of their ties to Israel, leading to their erasure or marginalization in many parts of society.

For most diaspora Jewish organizations and congregations—which continue to regard Israel as a core component of contemporary Jewish life—the sharp decline in Israel's standing and the extent to which it has become a lightning rod for protest have turned ordinary Jewish communal life into countercultural activity.

Dividing Jewish Communities

For several decades following the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, the vision of a “two-state solution” enabled diaspora Jewry to support Israel while also embracing strong democratic values. During those years, diaspora organizations could relate to Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a temporary exigency forced on the Jewish state by Palestinian intransigence. They supported the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel as a matter of principle—underscoring their commitment to liberal values of democracy and equal rights—and as a core component of pro-Israel advocacy that aligned with the policy priorities of their countries of residence. Importantly, they could do so while claiming to speak in support of Israel's own positions.

Israel's current government, however, has formally rejected any resolution to the conflict that includes Palestinian statehood. Even when approving President Trump's 20-Point Plan for Gaza, Israeli officials downplayed the elements of the deal that mention a pathway to Palestinian statehood. While many communal and advocacy organizations, particularly in the United States, continue to declare their support for two states, the Israeli government's repudiation of that vision—and, crucially, its unwillingness to articulate any alternative positive vision—has alienated many rank-and-file diaspora Jews, especially young adults. As one Joint Working Group participant explained:

"The lack of an articulated political horizon—beyond continued occupation—is harming Jewish communities abroad. If two states seem unimaginable within our lifetime, this will affect Jewish engagement and willingness to participate in communal life. It is already creating distance. Ironically, this damage may be greater than anything Israel's opponents can do."

For diaspora Jewish communities, ending the conflict immediately has mattered less than having a political goal that could frame their thinking, communications, and advocacy, and bridge communal disagreements over the right balance between Israel's security needs and Palestinian rights. In the past, what mattered most was that Israel had expressed a commitment to transforming the conflict (it may be that in the future, rhetorical commitment alone will not suffice, given changed realities in Western societies and on the ground).

The alienation felt by many diaspora Jews, especially young adults, intensified during the October 7 war alongside the proliferation of images of civilian death and suffering in Gaza and the West Bank. The narrative, widely amplified in Western media and to some extent by organized influence campaigns, that Israel intentionally caused such suffering—whether as an act of revenge or to force Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank—has been especially damaging to Israel's standing among segments of diaspora communities. As another Joint Working Group member put it:

"A diaspora community that is underinformed about Palestinian terror threats and saturated with reports of Israeli forces' and citizens' transgressions against Palestinians is increasingly and dangerously alienated from Israel—from the justness of Israel, the moral case for Israel."

Public opinion data bear out these concerns. In June 2026, AP-NORC published a [high-quality survey](#) of American Jews, reporting that 24% felt “not at all” emotionally attached to Israel. This figure represents a steady increase in the share of American Jewish adults who report feeling no attachment to Israel, up from 20% in a [Washington Post](#) survey conducted in 2025, 14% in a [Pew Research Center survey in 2020](#), and 12% in a [Pew survey in 2013](#) (among respondents aged 18-29, 39% in the 2026 AP-NORC survey reported feeling “not at all” attached to Israel, up from 17% in the 2013 Pew survey).

Although the drivers of alienation cannot be definitively established from a single study, the AP-NORC survey provides some important clues. According to our secondary analysis of the data set, among the factors that are most closely associated with low scores on the scale of emotional attachment to Israel are believing that Israel’s actions in Gaza were unjustified and that Israel committed a genocide in Gaza (being secular or less observant is also correlated with lower scores on the emotional attachment scale).

Despite evidence of increasing alienation, majorities of Jews in the United States, Canada, France, and the U.K. continue to express general support for Israel in opinion surveys, and mainstream Jewish organizations continue to advocate on behalf of the Jewish state. However, as a result of growing dissent, divisions have deepened within many diaspora communities. In the United States, in particular, deepening divisions have strained central organizations while reducing their capacity to represent the Jewish community as a whole. The pro-Israel lobby has evolved into competing right-wing, centrist, and liberal [camps](#), some [synagogues have divided](#), and a [coalition of non-Zionist Jewish organizations](#) has been launched. Anti-Zionist and non-Zionist organizations have gained a foothold in Jewish communities, further straining communal ties. The challenge of community division has been especially pronounced in more liberal regions including, in the United States, “blue states” and major coastal metropolitan areas.

Undermining Pro-Israel Advocacy

Pro-Israel advocacy by diaspora Jews has long been an important national security asset for the State of Israel, strengthening its soft power and helping it build alliances around the world. It has also enabled diaspora Jewry to participate in the defense and development of the Jewish state. For generations of diaspora Jews, political and philanthropic engagement have served as important expressions of Jewish identity and contributors to Jewish continuity in the diaspora, as we argued in [our report](#), *American Jewry is Changing: What Israel Must Do to Preserve the Partnership* (2026).

The absence of a vision for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—particularly one in which Israel is not a permanent occupying power—has made pro-Israel advocacy increasingly difficult. In most Western countries, Israel is increasingly portrayed as a special interest of

diaspora Jewry, rather than as broadly aligned with democratic values and national interests. A European participant in the Joint Working Group described the dynamic:

"The situation in France resembles that of the U.K. and much of the democratic world. A growing perception of tension between democratic values and Israel's current trajectory places diaspora Jews in a difficult position. Historically associated with defending liberal democratic values while also expressing solidarity with Israel, diaspora Jews now face accusations that these commitments are contradictory."

An American Joint Working Group participant made a similar point:

"The current direction of Israeli policy is difficult to defend, and diaspora Jews should not feel obligated to defend it. Instead, there is a need for a fundamental recalibration of policy, whether through two states or another workable framework."

As another American participant observed, Israeli officials who describe Jewish supremacy in the West Bank as a desired policy outcome make it much harder for diaspora Jews to dismiss and counter anti-Zionism:

"We want to say anti-Zionism is antisemitism, but find it much harder when we hear [Israel's National Security Minister Itamar] Ben Gvir's racist and bigoted public statements and policies he's instituted in the territories."

Several recent developments show the weakening of pro-Israel advocacy, which we believe stems to a significant degree from the eclipse of the two-state solution, the fragmentation of the field into rival camps, and the gains of the pro-Palestinian movement:

- In the United States, the victories of anti-Israel candidates in Democratic primaries—despite massive AIPAC funding for their opponents—illustrate the lobby's diminished capacity to achieve the results it once could. So too does the growing number of candidates refusing AIPAC support amid a sustained campaign to delegitimize the organization.
- In Canada, the prime minister has promoted an arms embargo on Israel and recognized the state of Palestine while declining to engage with representatives of the Jewish community. He has justified this approach by arguing that diaspora groups have no standing to weigh in on Canadian foreign policy.
- In the U.K., the government has recently announced its intention to ban products from West Bank settlements despite the vigorous objections of Jewish communal organizations and pro-Israel lobbies such as Labour Friends of Israel.

The diminished capacity of diaspora organizations and lobbies to exert influence harms not only the national security of the State of Israel. It also harms diaspora communities that have invested enormous resources in developing their pro-Israel lobbies. As a result, the political power of diaspora Jews has eroded, along with their ability to advocate for their own communities' interests and needs.

Fueling Antisemitism

It is the strongly held view of Joint Working Group participants (as well as the authors of this report) that Jews and Israelis are not to blame for antisemitism. Anti-Jewish hate is an ancient animosity that finds a pretext in every era and has resurfaced in force over the last few years due to a combination of factors of which Israeli policy choices and military actions are at most only one. Technological changes, the fading memory of the Holocaust, religious developments, demographic change, and other social dynamics have all contributed to contemporary antisemitism.

Nevertheless, the current wave of antisemitism developed in the shadow of the Gaza war. In the view of many Joint Working Group participants, while Israel did not cause the outbreak of antisemitism, the manner in which it managed the war—and, especially, the rhetoric and conduct of some senior Israeli officials—provided antisemites with incendiary material, contributed to a climate of anxiety and insecurity among Jews, and provided convenient cover for the spread of antisemitic sentiments and ideas.

New [survey](#) evidence suggests that many diaspora Jews share this view. In a survey conducted by the Mellman Group among American Jewish voters in late August and early September 2026, 56% expressed a “great deal” of concern that “Israel’s actions under Netanyahu have increased antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment in the US.” Concurrently, many surveys report near-consensus among American Jews that antisemitism has worsened and is a serious problem. For example, in March 2026, the [American Jewish Committee](#) reported that 86% of Jewish adults believe antisemitism has worsened since the October 7 Hamas attack, and 93% view the problem as somewhat or very serious.

The perceptions are borne out by hate-crime data collected by the [ADL](#) and corroborated by data collected by the U.S. government. According to the ADL audit of antisemitic incidents, the number of reported and validated events rose from 3,698 in 2022 to 9,354 in 2024 before receding to 6,274 in 2025. Most of the increase, according to the ADL’s tracking, was in incidents related to Israel.

In the United States, antisemitism in the public and political arenas has spiked on both the right and left, creating a feeling and reality of political homelessness among many American Jews. In the communal arena, the [cost](#) of securing Jewish facilities has surged, forcing community organizations to reallocate resources from supporting Jewish life to providing basic security for facilities and gatherings.

In Canada and the U.K., incidents of antisemitism increased over the last three years, and accelerated still more over the last six months, with instances of stabbings, arson, vandalism, and shootings, including the [shooting](#) outside a synagogue in Ontario, Canada, on Yom Kippur in 2026. Anti-Israel demonstrations are routinely held within the boundaries of Jewish communities, implicitly casting blame for Israel’s alleged wrongdoing on diaspora Jews. In Canada, one Joint Working Group participant reported, many Jews contemplate an “exit strategy.”

Finally, in some European countries, where threats associated with antisemitism have been at a high level for many years, one participant described an ongoing process of “marranization” or “invisibilization” of Jews. Like Iberian Jews of the 15th and 16th centuries—the “Marranos”—many of today’s European Jews feel compelled to conceal their Jewish identities, and thereby avoid the national and religious enmity emanating from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Analysis

A major theme in the Joint Working Group's deliberations has been that Israel's government appears uninterested in the conflict's impact on diaspora Jews. Whereas avoiding harm to Israel has long been a central principle for diaspora Jewry, the reverse—Israel avoiding harm to the diaspora—does not, in the view of many diaspora leaders, appear to be a priority for the Israeli government.

To illustrate this point, members of the group frequently cited damaging statements by government ministers that seemed to confirm the worst allegations against Israel on human rights and international law. Some also pointed to aspects of Israel’s conduct of the war—such as limiting humanitarian aid during a particular period—as well as its failure to act against extremist settler violence in the West Bank. These policies, several argued, were strategically unnecessary for Israel, but harmed diaspora communities and gave impetus to currents of anti-Israelism and antisemitism. In their estimation, Israel gained little, while diaspora Jewish communities paid a price.

More broadly, we believe the greatest long-term risk for diaspora Jewry lies in the deadlock over the conflict’s future. The absence of any vision for Israel's future as a democratic state that does not control the lives of millions of noncitizen Palestinians is contributing to a perception of Israel as an undemocratic state and an outcast among the democracies of the West. It is also eroding the capacity of Jewish communities and organizations to advocate on Israel's behalf.

During Israel’s election season, opposition leaders have mostly sought to focus attention on other issues, such as the government’s failure to conscript Haredi men into the IDF or establish a national commission of inquiry into the circumstances of the October 7 Hamas attack. When pressed, they have explained their reticence to offer a concrete policy direction on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by pointing to the hardening of Israeli opinion in the wake of the October 7 Hamas attack.

The [increasing skepticism](#) among Israelis (and also Palestinians) about the viability of a two-state solution is indisputable. But Israeli public opinion is not only a response to the actions of Hamas and other Palestinian militants; it is also a reflection of the vision offered by national leaders. Following the election, Israel’s leaders will have the opportunity to take a long view of the country’s national security needs, including the need to ensure a clear Jewish majority, democratic institutions, a secure place among the nations of the West, and robust ties to global Jewry.

For their own part, diaspora leaders historically have avoided publicly challenging Israel’s elected officials on policy regarding the conflict. They have done so because they felt that, as

diaspora Jews, they did not “have skin in the game,” meaning that their own physical safety and well-being were unaffected by Israel's policy choices. That rationale is clearly no longer relevant. As we have argued throughout this report, diaspora Jews now have skin in the game.

Diaspora leaders have also long been reluctant to express public criticism for fear of giving ammunition to Israel's enemies. That concern persists and has in fact intensified during the October 7 war—which is why today's diaspora leaders must remain circumspect in how they communicate their own and their communities' concerns about Israel's policy choices. They are also cognizant of the diversity of views within the organizations and communities they serve.

Some members of the Joint Working Group argued that such circumspection does a disservice to diaspora Jewish communities and the State of Israel. They argued that diaspora groups should speak out more consistently and assertively against policies and developments that threaten Israel's democratic character and the safety and well-being of diaspora Jewry. Others expressed skepticism that such advocacy would have practical effect given the strong domestic forces shaping Israeli policy making.

Israel also has its own reasons for seeking to mitigate the impact of the conflict on diaspora Jewry. The alienation of many diaspora Jews and the declining influence of pro-Israel lobby groups reduce Israel's capacity to sustain its core alliances with leading Western democracies. Divisions in diaspora communities over Israeli policies toward the Palestinians may lift a constraint on international actions against Israel, including sanctions on settlements and limits on arms sales. More generally, the loss of near-consensus support among major diaspora Jewish communities harms Israel's soft power while contributing to its isolation.

Recommendations

We recommend the following actions, which Israel should take in the near and medium term to mitigate the negative impacts of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on diaspora communities and strengthen their capacity to mobilize support for Israel:

1. Ministers of the government should avoid statements that fuel charges of human rights abuses. If such statements are made, the government should publicly disavow them.
2. Israeli law enforcement should use all legal measures to stop violence and harassment by Israeli civilians against Palestinians in the West Bank. Perpetrators of such violence should be held accountable.
3. Israel's political leadership should hold open the possibility of a diplomatic path forward with the Palestinians while taking concrete actions to prevent a slide toward a single non-democratic state.
4. Israel should proactively communicate its commitment to avoiding a one-state outcome and pursuing diplomatic solutions to the conflict.
5. Israel should engage diaspora Jewish organizations in a sustained dialogue about how Israel's actions and policies affect world Jewry, and about opportunities for

collaborative initiatives to improve Israel's standing in the countries where most diaspora Jews reside.

6. Israel should establish procedures within cabinet-level ministries for routine and systematic review of the expected impact of Israeli policies on diaspora Jewish communities.