



Annual Assessment of the Jewish People

2026 | 5786

PROJECT HEAD

Yaakov Katz

CONTRIBUTORS

Ita Alcalay | Michal Bar-Asher Siegal | Shlomi Bereznik | Rachel Fish | Shlomo Fischer
Shuki Friedman | Or Horvitz | Eli Kannai | Dov Maimon | Sharon Pardo | Shmuel Rosner
Matt Shapiro | Noah Slepko | Daniel Staetsky | Yedidia Stern | Gil Troy | Hila Zehavi

EDITOR

Barry Geltman

Copyright © The Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI)
(Established by the Jewish Agency for Israel) Ltd. (CC)
Jerusalem 2026/5786

JPPI, Givat Ram Campus, P.O.B. 39156, Jerusalem 9139101, Israel
Telephone: 972-2-5633356 | Fax: 972-2-5635040 | www.jppei.org.il

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be translated, reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without express written permission from the publisher.

Printed and Distributed by the Jewish People Policy Institute

Graphic Design: Maya Haser
ISBN: 978-965-7880-07-4

Table of Contents

Foreword – Stuart E. Eizenstat, Dennis Ross, and Yedidia Stern	5
Key Recommendations	11
Six Dimensions of Jewish Well-Being	13
Selected Indicators of World Jewry	17
Annual Geostrategic Assessment	21
Polarized, Anxious – and Hopeful: Israeli Social Cohesion in 2026	35
Emigration from Israel: New Realities and New Questions.....	57
JPPI Jewish World Dialogue 2025: Global Jewry’s Attitudes on Jewish Hard Power	69
Resilience: 2026 JPPI Antisemitism Index.....	85
Resilience: Academic Boycotts Targeting Israel	109
The U.S.–Israel Partnership: Listing but Not Sinking	127
Between Values and Interests: Israel and the European Union	147
Analysis of European Union Statements – Summary	167

1

Foreword

Each year, the Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI) examines the condition and trajectory of the Jewish people – in Israel and in the Diaspora – across six pillars: geopolitics, cohesion, resilience, identity, demography, and the Israel–U.S. relationship. The Annual Assessment is compiled not just as a chronicle of the year that was, but as a policy instrument: an argument about which trends are strengthening us, which are weakening us, and where intervention is still possible.

The military ledger is, on the one hand, impressive when measured against Israel’s enemies – Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran – but, on the other hand, while they have been weakened, they have not been decisively defeated, and their future capacity to challenge Israel is shrouded in uncertainty. Between the two wars – the one in June 2025 and the one that began in February 2026 – Iran’s nuclear

program and military infrastructure have been significantly degraded even as the regime holds on, controls the Strait of Hormuz, and continues to toy with the West. Whether the coming year brings a negotiated arrangement, a quiet reconstitution, a no-war, no-peace stalemate, or repeated rounds of strikes remains open, and each path carries a distinct risk. But the wars in Gaza, Lebanon, and Iran demonstrate, as the Ukrainians first showed against Russia with inexpensive but lethal drones, the power of asymmetric warfare against a more powerful military force – a lesson Israel and the United States must take to heart.

Hezbollah’s offensive arsenal has been degraded and its forces pushed back from southern Lebanon, but the outcome of the pilot program agreed between Jerusalem and Beirut for the Lebanese army to disarm Hezbollah remains

unclear. Hamas is a shadow of its former self, and the remaining hostages all came home. A new agreement announced in early August about Hamas's disarmament will be tested repeatedly in the year ahead, with an uncertain outcome at best. But Hamas and Hezbollah are deeply embedded in Gaza and Lebanon, respectively, and will be difficult to fully dislodge.

The American front is also deeply concerning. Structurally, the military partnership has never been deeper: the joint operation against Iran, the presidential intervention that helped bring the last hostages home, and defense technology cooperation advanced through the National Defense Authorization Act. Politically, it has never been more fragile, even though President Trump has been strongly supportive of Israel. The Iran war has exposed a significant rift between the president and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, both in their relationship and in their goals. Anti-Zionism has hardened on both flanks – the progressive left and the isolationist right – as reflected in New York City Mayor Mamdani's election, in Democratic defections in the Senate and particularly in the House of Representatives, where over 100 Democratic members voted to cut all military support for Israel, and in the Tucker Carlson–Candace Owens conservative, isolationist axis.

Just as Americans, including American Jews, do not realize the profound psychological shock to the Israeli psyche of Hamas's brutal massacre of innocent Israeli civilians and the taking of hundreds of hostages, we fear that the Israeli

public does not fully appreciate the significance of the drop in U.S. public support for Israel.

Largely as a result of Israel's retaliation following Hamas's massacre of innocent Israeli civilians on October 7, public support for Israel has dramatically slipped, most sharply where the long-term damage is greatest: among younger Americans and Democrats, where two-thirds disapprove of Israeli government policy and large majorities express more support for Palestinians than for Israel, and also among young Republicans and evangelicals once assumed to be permanently in Israel's column. The perception that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu pressured President Trump into the unpopular war with Iran has contributed to the decline in public support for Israel.

The fundamentals of shared interests and shared values have never been more in question, and the challenge now is to try to lock in cooperation in whatever form it can be institutionalized, so that it depends less on any given congressional vote or any given president. This will be difficult, and it will be critical for Israel to stop writing off the Democratic Party as lost, which alienates the pro-Israel moderates who remain Israel's most valuable allies within the party but who are now very much on the defensive.

Even more troubling is the rift between Israel and the Diaspora. A Washington Post poll last year found that over 60% of American Jews believe Israel committed war crimes in Gaza, and almost 40% say Israel is guilty of genocide. While we

strongly disagree with this characterization, this is a sign of the difficult state of relations between American Jews and Israel.

The work to repair the situation has already begun in earnest at JPPI. We recently launched a new program that will convene groups of experts and officials in both Israel and the United States around what we call the “triangular relationship” – one connecting Jerusalem, Washington, and American Jewry. Each leg has for too long been managed separately: Israeli governments often focus just on the U.S. administration, American Jewish organizations handle their own communities, and no one holds the triangle as a whole. Yet the three sometimes function as a single system. American Jewry’s standing can help shape what Washington can do to support Israel; Israeli decisions shape the conditions in which American Jews live; and Washington’s posture shapes both. It will be no easy task at this point, but building a shared strategic vocabulary across the three – before the next crisis forces one – is among the most consequential investments available this year.

The sharpest deterioration is in the safety and standing of Jews outside Israel, in the U.S. and in Europe. Antisemitism has shifted from a landscape of occasional threats into a systematic environment, a change that runs deeper than any incident count.

The French Jewish community has adopted a policy of encouraging French Jews to move to safer areas of Paris. Many Parisian Jews have taken down their mezuzahs. In the 1990s, many

European countries provided visible extra security at synagogues, day schools, Jewish community centers, and even cemeteries. None of this was needed in the U.S. Now, virtually every major American Jewish institution has guards.

Two years of war have also prompted Diaspora Jewry to reconsider what Jewish power means and how it should be used. The dominant note is ambivalence: pride in Israel’s military capability alongside deep discomfort at the Gaza war’s human toll, and a refusal to accept the labels “supporter” or “critic.” Most striking is the erosion of the frame that long anchored the bond: fewer Diaspora Jews, across denominations, see Israel as a moral exemplar or a light unto the nations.

At home, Israeli society tells a genuinely mixed story. Israelis agree more than they did on fundamentals such as democracy and equal rights, but feel further apart from one another. Political alignment has become the dominant fault line; the share naming the religious-secular rift as the most threatening has risen sharply; and 78% remain worried about social cohesion. Most troubling is a spreading mutual suspicion that the other camp will not accept the results of the coming election – a danger of a different order, self-fulfilling by nature and more corrosive than any single dispute over judicial reform or the draft. An election year is the worst possible moment to discover that both sides have decided in advance not to concede.

This is the vacuum a constitution is meant to fill. Israel’s polarization is not only a clash of values;

it is the absence of agreed rules for adjudicating that clash. JPPI's thin constitution project proceeds from the conviction that Israelis will not soon agree on the deep questions – religion and state, national identity, the character of the state – and do not need to in order to agree on the rules of the game. A thin constitution would settle the essentials: the relations between the branches of government, a core of basic rights, and the procedures by which the rules themselves may be changed. It is not a complete cure, but the alternative is what we are watching now – a society in which every dispute becomes constitutional and every election becomes existential.

The demographic picture is stable but changing shape. The global Jewish population continues to grow. At the same time, for the first time in its 78-year history as a sovereign Jewish state, emigration from Israel has risen sharply: the Israeli population abroad has climbed, with Israelis now constituting 7–15% of the Jewish populations of Britain and Germany, revitalizing aging communities and reshaping them along Israeli lines, but depriving Israel of some of its brightest and best people.

There are reasons for hope. Even if the prospect of expanding the Abraham Accords has receded, it is remarkable that the Accords have held – especially in the face of Iranian missile and drone attacks against the UAE and Bahrain. The solidarity that October 7 awakened has not dissipated; many younger Diaspora Jews are re-engaging, and in communities feeling the pressure

of antisemitism, interest in Israel as a destination rather than only a cause is rising. This assessment urges Israel to prepare for that possibility now – to build absorption scenarios for 10,000, 50,000, and 150,000 immigrants over 24 months, with the housing, credentialing, schooling, and employment infrastructure to match – rather than improvise when the moment arrives.

In conclusion, Israel enters this year with a favorable military balance of power but almost no settled outcomes in its conflicts with Hamas, Hezbollah, or Iran, and has never been so isolated internationally. Iran's program is set back but not over. Washington remains committed but less reliably so. In fact, the Iran war and the resulting strain with America's Arab allies have led many Middle Eastern leaders to seek other forms of security protection beyond those historically provided by the U.S. This explains the impetus behind the new Turkey–Pakistan–Saudi Arabia mutual defense pact. Jewish life abroad is more exposed than at any point in living memory, and Israeli society heads into an election with each camp doubting the other will accept the result.

The challenges are daunting, but there are possibilities as well. If the coming year is spent converting battlefield achievement into durable architecture – a regional order and a candid strategic dialogue with Europe; a constitutional settlement at home over the rules of the political game and the distribution of burdens; a strategic triangle that treats Jerusalem, Washington, and American Jewry as one system rather than three;

and serious investment in the cognitive and communal infrastructure of Jewish life abroad – this will be remembered as the year the shadow of October 7 began to lift.

If it is not, Israel may find that it won every battle but lost the strategic war. That is the challenge – and the opportunity – at the heart of this year’s assessment.

**Amb. Stuart Eizenstat and Amb. Dennis Ross,
Co-Chairs**

Prof. Yedidia Stern, President

2

Key Recommendations



Treat global antisemitism as a national-security and peoplehood priority – assign an annual global-antisemitism risk assessment to a dedicated interministerial unit linking the Diaspora Affairs Ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Security Council, the Jewish Agency, and relevant security bodies.



Launch a national initiative on AI and antisemitism to address bias in digital knowledge – produce an annual AI-antisemitism index with public scorecards for major models; develop multilingual datasets in Hebrew, English, and Arabic on Jewish history, antisemitism, Zionism, and Israel; establish an expert correction lab for high-impact reference sources; create a working group with leading technology companies; and develop a fellowship track linking AI safety, Jewish studies, antisemitism research, and public policy.



Build aliyah-readiness infrastructure for large-scale immigration by developing concrete absorption scenarios for 10,000, 50,000, and 150,000 immigrants over 24 months and translating them into housing stock mapping, municipal readiness indices, job placement, expedited credential recognition, Hebrew-language teaching capacity, school integration, and cultural support.



Educational institutions and organizations should develop materials that encourage complex, in-depth engagement with Israel and emphasize the Israel–Diaspora connection. Israeli diplomatic representatives should strengthen ties with Diaspora communities and communicate Israel’s perspective more effectively.



Invest more in helping Diaspora Jews understand Israeli reality and in helping Israelis understand life as a minority – programs such as Birthright, gap-year and study-abroad programs, and federation missions should emphasize lasting connections and expand two-way exchanges that enable participants to live and work in one another’s communities for meaningful periods.



Seek more ways to “lock in” cooperation by bureaucratizing, normalizing, and reinforcing ties – for example, through the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) – thereby making support less dependent on votes on foreign aid. Israel needs to stop writing off the Democratic Party as “anti-Israel.” Doing so alienates pro-Israel moderates – figures such as Hakeem Jeffries need support, not “demagogic cold-shouldering.”



Research on Israelis living outside Israel should be conducted at regular intervals and expanded to cover new aspects of this population’s demography. If sound policy toward Israelis abroad is to be developed, this population must be properly documented.



It is also time for the Jewish Agency and other Jewish organizations to develop policies that account for the significant presence of Israelis within Jewish communities throughout the Diaspora. In certain places, most notably in Europe, Israelis both transform existing communities culturally and bolster them demographically. Traditionally, Israeli policy in the Diaspora has focused on facilitating immigration to Israel. Alongside this approach, a complementary policy should emerge: helping Israelis abroad maintain their connection to Israel and Israeli culture.

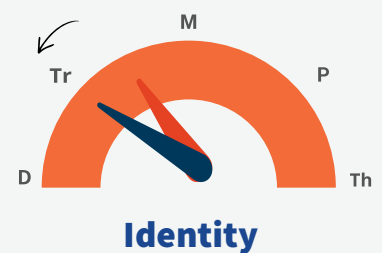
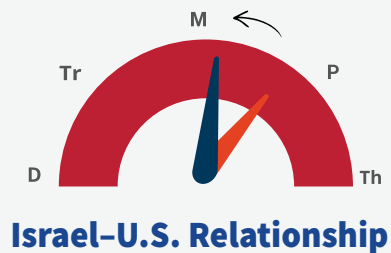
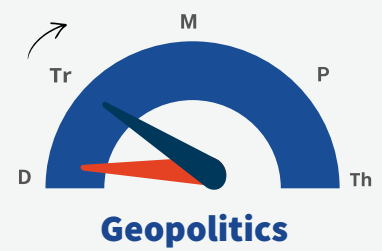
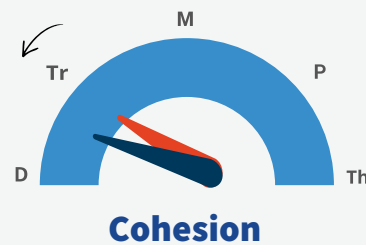
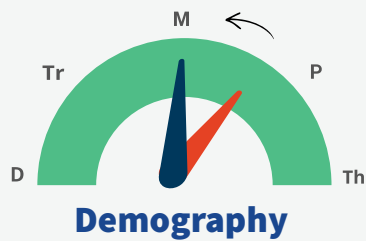


Israel and the European Union should institutionalize a more candid strategic dialogue that recognizes – rather than obscures – their differences. Many disagreements between the two sides are not temporary or event-driven but stem from deeper divergences in values and in approaches to security, statehood, and the international order. Israel and the European Union should seize the opportunity to redefine their relationship around a broader agenda of shared interests. While disagreements will remain, the partnership should increasingly focus on areas such as regional stability, technological innovation, energy security, counterterrorism, economic cooperation, and resilience against common threats.

3

INTEGRATED NET ASSESSMENT- JPPI'S SIX DIMENSIONS OF JEWISH WELL-BEING

Key Drivers Affecting the Jewish People in 2025–2026



2025 2026

D – Decline Tr – Troubled M – Maintaining P – Prospering Th – Thriving

Geopolitics

Israel ends the year militarily stronger than at any point in decades, but that strength has not yet been converted into a secure strategic position.

The ring of near-border threats has been dramatically weakened: Hezbollah stands at its lowest point since its founding, having lost its leadership, thousands of fighters, most of its raiding capability, and – with Assad’s fall – the Syrian corridor that sustained it; Hamas persists in Gaza as dispersed terror cells rather than a functioning military system; and Iran’s fortified nuclear program was set back close to the last possible moment.

Most consequential of all, the axis’s operative belief that Israel could be defeated militarily has collapsed. Sinwar, Nasrallah, Assad, and Khamenei are gone; Israel remains. Openings have followed: in Lebanon, where a weakened Hezbollah and unprecedented American leverage make disarmament and eventually a bilateral agreement conceivable for the first time; in Syria, where shared interests permit a security arrangement even without peace; and in the prospect of expanding the Abraham Accords to Saudi Arabia.

Yet roughly half a ton of uranium enriched to 60% remains in Iran and cannot be reliably monitored; the direct missile threat is sharpening; Turkey is emerging as the next challenge; and instability in the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, and Jordan could reopen fronts Israel considers closed.

Above all, Israel faces an unprecedented legitimacy crisis in the West – one that bears directly on its

capacity to sustain a strong economy and a well-supplied army. Battlefield achievement decays unless converted into political arrangements, and windows do not stay open indefinitely. The Geopolitics gauge has moved in a positive direction this year, though these gains remain unconsolidated.

Identity

Nearly two years of war have prompted Diaspora Jewry to reconsider what Jewish power means. The dominant note is ambivalence: Jews in the Diaspora express pride in Israel’s military capability while also voicing deep discomfort at the war’s human toll, refusing to be labeled simply as a “supporter” or “critic.” Most striking is the erosion of the civilizational frame that once anchored the bond – fewer Diaspora Jews, across denominations, now see Israel as a moral exemplar or “a light unto the nations,” regarding it instead as a normal state. Identification persists, but its basis is shifting from admiration to familial belonging, even as universalist Diaspora conceptions of Jewishness and particularist Israeli ones pull apart. This is a reassessment, not a rupture – but the shared idealized vision is weakening. As a result, the Identity gauge has moved in a negative direction this year.

Resilience

Antisemitism is shifting from a landscape of occasional threats to a systematic environment, a change that runs deeper than incident counts. Even where reported incidents have fallen from

their post-October 7 peak, physical violence, including lethal attacks, has reached record levels, and growing numbers of Jews now alter their daily behavior – concealing their identity and avoiding Jewish spaces. Robust laws are failing to translate into protection, exposing a gap between performative condemnation and effective enforcement. The threat is migrating from online content into the cognitive infrastructure – AI systems, search engines, and shared knowledge platforms that shape how a generation understands Jews, Zionism, and Israel. Challenges to Israel’s legitimacy increasingly take the form of denying Jewish peoplehood and historical belonging rather than contesting specific policies. As a result, the Resilience gauge has moved in a negative direction this year.

Cohesion

Israeli cohesion this year tells a genuinely mixed story. Two of JPPI’s three tracking indices rose – the Consensus Index (to 3.71) and the Hope Index (to 7.13) – while the third, the Emotional Proximity Index, fell to 5.51, signaling rising intergroup friction even as substantive agreement and optimism improved. Israelis agree more on fundamentals such as democracy and equal rights, yet feel emotionally further apart. Political alignment is now the dominant fault line, and the share of Israelis identifying the religious–secular rift as the most threatening has risen sharply since last year. Some 78% remain

worried about social cohesion. Most troubling is a spreading mutual suspicion that the other camp will not accept the results of the coming election – a potentially self-fulfilling danger that the report ranks above any single dispute. With emotional bonds fraying even as consensus and hope rise, the Cohesion gauge remains in troubled territory this year.

Demography

The global Jewish population continues to grow, but the past year confirmed a new reality: emigration from Israel has risen sharply. The population of Israelis abroad climbed from roughly 630,000 in 2022 to about 755,000 by 2025 – nearly 7% of Israeli Jewry worldwide, or close to one million when children born abroad are included. This increase was driven by a net migration loss last seen in the 1970s, the causes of which remain poorly understood. Yet the demographic effect on Israel itself is modest: even the return of every emigrant would barely alter Israel’s standing as a mid-sized nation by European standards. Abroad, these Israelis are increasingly revitalizing aging Diaspora communities, constituting 7–15% or more of the Jewish populations of Britain and Germany and reshaping them along Israeli lines. Given continued growth offset by an unexplained rise in departures, the Demography gauge remains stable this year.

Israel–U.S. Relationship

The past year deepened the U.S.–Israel partnership even as it exposed its fragility. Structural integration reached historic milestones: the United States joined the June 2025 “12-Day War” against Iran, presidential intervention helped secure the release of the remaining hostages held in Gaza, and defense technology cooperation advanced through the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) – binding the two militaries and economies more tightly than ever. Yet the relationship grew more volatile. Anti-Zionism hardened on both the progressive

left and the isolationist right, as reflected in Mamdani’s election, Democratic defections in the Senate, and the Carlson–Owens axis, while Israel’s public diplomacy failures in countering the “starvation” and “settler violence” narratives eroded support among conditional, persuadable Zionists. The fundamentals remain sound, and shifts in popular support appear event-driven rather than permanent. The relationship is listing but not sinking; accordingly, the Israel–U.S. Relationship gauge holds this year, shadowed by rising volatility.

4

Selected Indicators of World Jewry

Country/ Region	Core Jewish Population ¹		GDP per capita, constant 2021 international \$ ²	Index of Human Development – World Rank ³	Aliyah ⁴
	1970	2025			
World	12,744,500	15,809,000	–	–	20,734
Israel	2,582,000	7,212,900	47,339	27	–
North America	5,806,000	6,712,600	–	–	3,375
United States	5,520,000	6,305,000	75,489	17	3,085
Canada	286,000	407,400	56,707	16	290
Europe (non-FSU)	1,322,500	1,139,400	–	–	4,647
France	530,000	436,000	54,799	26	2,914
UK	390,000	315,000	52,621	13	742
Germany	30,000	125,700	62,555	5	181
Hungary	70,000	44,800	40,687	46	27
Netherlands	30,000	34,900	70,499	8	36
Belgium	32,500	29,000	63,348	10	62
Other countries	240,000	154,000	–	–	685
Latin America	514,000	358,400	–	–	793
Argentina	282,000	168,100	26,772	47	227
Brazil	90,000	90,300	19,652	84	191
Mexico	35,000	41,300	22,040	81	126
Other countries	107,000	58,700	–	–	249
FSU	2,151,000	169,700	–	–	10,699
Russian Federation	808,000	119,800	41,705	64	8,500
Ukraine	777,000	30,600	16,320	87	873
FSU (rest)	566,000	19,300	–	–	1,326
Asia (rest)	104,000	37,600	–	–	318
Oceania	70,000	124,800	–	–	134
Australia	65,000	117,100	60,304	7	132
Other countries	5,000	7,700	–	–	2
Africa	195,000	53,600	–	–	351
South Africa	118,000	49,000	13,598	106	225
Other countries	77,000	4,600	–	–	126

- 1 population data: DellaPergola, S. 2026. World Jewish population, 2025. American Jewish Year Book 2026.
- 2 World Bank: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD>
- 3 United Nations Development Programme: <https://hdr.undp.org/en/content/latest-human-development-index-ranking>

and aliyah figures:

- All population figures relate to January 1, 2026. All aliyah figures relate to a calendar year
- Figures for Europe (non-FSU) exclude Turkey and include the Baltic states at both points in time
- The figure for FSU includes all European and Asian republics of the former USSR except for the Baltic states
- Asia (rest) includes Turkey, all countries of the Middle East, South Asia, and the Far East
- Aliyah is given according to the immigrant's last country of residence. The total includes several cases in which the country of last residence is



GEOPOLITICS

5

Annual Geostrategic Assessment

The Strategic Balance: Power and Legitimacy

The State of Israel is rapidly approaching the third anniversary of the October 7 attack, which profoundly transformed the country both domestically and internationally. The initial trauma of a surprise terrorist attack with such tragic consequences gradually gave way to a protracted and difficult war that is reshaping Israel, the Middle East, and, to some extent, the international system as a whole. Alongside the war in Ukraine, the war in the Middle East is one of the defining conflicts of recent decades. How these wars are conducted – and, certainly, how they end

– will help define the parameters of warfare and international relations for years to come.

Any assessment at this stage is necessarily provisional. The campaigns remain unfinished in every theater, and the regional landscape continues to change, both because of Israeli actions and because of the profound transformation underway across the Middle East. Nevertheless, even amid this uncertainty, Israel's strategic balance sheet can and should be assessed. The result is mixed.

From a broad perspective, Israel has demonstrated its capacity to act as a regional power – a political and military actor capable of shaping and disrupting the Middle Eastern

landscape. Operational cooperation with the U.S. military and significant achievements in many theaters have projected Israeli power and underscored the country's strategic value to regional and global partners. The combination of military capabilities and the resolve to employ them against adversaries creates an opportunity to deepen those partnerships.

At the same time, Israel faces an unprecedented crisis of legitimacy in the West, calling into question a foundation of

For years, Israelis lived under a conventional military threat from two separate theaters – an exposure whose severity was not adequately appreciated.

support that has been essential to its security, development, and prosperity. This erosion has many ramifications, particularly for Israel's ability to sustain a thriving economy and a strong military capable of addressing the threats it faces. These seemingly contradictory trends – the demonstration of Israel's strategic value and the weakening of its legitimacy – will largely shape its ability to achieve its objectives. Israel can diversify its sources of support to some extent, but it cannot relinquish the backing of the West, and of the United States in particular. Preserving that support is likely to become considerably more difficult in the coming years.

Lebanon and Gaza

The most significant improvement in Israel's strategic position is the substantial weakening of the threats along its borders, above all in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. Before October 7, both Hamas and Hezbollah possessed formidable military capabilities, including extensive high-trajectory firepower and thousands of commando fighters trained and positioned to raid Israeli territory with only hours' notice – as tragically occurred from Gaza on October 7. Given their growing military strength and their perception that Israel was being weakened by internal conflict, both organizations came to believe that they could defeat Israel militarily in the near term. For years, Israelis lived under a conventional military threat from two separate theaters – an exposure whose severity was not adequately appreciated.

Nearly three years later, both organizations are considerably weaker, although they remain far from dismantled. Hezbollah has lost its long-serving leader and most of its senior leadership; thousands of its fighters have been killed; its firepower has been substantially reduced; and its capacity to mount large-scale raids into Israel has been almost entirely destroyed. The organization has abandoned its near-term vision of defeating Israel militarily and is focused primarily on survival and asymmetric warfare. The military balance between Israel and Hezbollah has shifted markedly in Israel's favor, while Israel's freedom of action in Lebanon has expanded. The establishment

of a new security zone in southern Lebanon also strengthens the IDF's forward defense and its ability to protect communities along the northern border – even in a worst-case scenario in which Hezbollah rapidly rebuilds its capabilities.

Hamas has likewise been substantially weakened, and its capacity to inflict harm on Israel's home front has been greatly diminished. The organization still exists, of course, but it is very different from the force that invaded Israel on October 7 and fired thousands of rockets at the country. The IDF's military presence inside Gaza has compelled Hamas to make far-reaching operational adjustments and, like Hezbollah, to emphasize survival and asymmetric warfare. Hamas started from a weaker position than Hezbollah, yet today it operates largely through separate terrorist cells rather than within a unified, Gaza-wide framework – a reality that significantly impairs its functioning as a military system.

These achievements have broader implications for both theaters. Hezbollah is at its lowest strategic point since it was established by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in the early 1980s. Most importantly, it has lost Syria as a strategic ally and supply conduit – the lifeline through which Iranian funds and weapons flowed largely unobstructed for years. Hezbollah sacrificed thousands of fighters during the Syrian civil war – more than the total number of operatives it lost in the Second Lebanon War – to preserve the Assad

regime, which ultimately collapsed in less than two weeks. Syria was thus transformed almost overnight from a strategic ally into a strategic problem for Hezbollah.

The organization's legitimacy has also been severely damaged. Recent surveys in Lebanon indicate that clear majorities among non-Shiite communities support Hezbollah's disarmament. Its political power has declined, as demonstrated by the election of a president and prime minister whom Hezbollah once strongly opposed. For years, as Lebanon's kingmaker, the organization had prevented the election of a president. Hezbollah is also finding it increasingly difficult to convince the Lebanese public that it protects Lebanese interests after twice dragging the country into war in recent years in the service of foreign interests.

The Lebanese state could become a central partner in efforts to disarm Hezbollah

With Iran experiencing a worsening economic crisis and its supply routes to Lebanon more constrained than ever, Hezbollah's ability to continue serving as the protector of Lebanon's Shiite community is increasingly in doubt. These circumstances have opened an important window of opportunity for Israel to pursue, over a period of years, the disarmament of Hezbollah's heavy weapons and, ultimately, a peace agreement with Lebanon. The Lebanese state could become a central partner in efforts to disarm

Hezbollah, notwithstanding its well-known limitations, while its immense dependence on the United States provides unprecedented leverage for positive change. The path will be difficult, uncertain, and fraught with crises. Yet prudent Israeli and American policy could, for the first time, create the prospect of a different future for Lebanon.

In Gaza, by contrast, the picture is more mixed. Hamas has been severely damaged, but there is still no coherent alternative to its

The Gaza Strip will likely remain a devastated and politically fragmented territory in the coming years

rule in the Strip, and, as of this writing, it is unclear how sincere its commitment to disarmament is. Israel will consequently need to continue employing force in Gaza for the foreseeable future,

while the question of the “day after” remains deeply unsettled. Hamas’s selection of Khalil al-Hayya – one of the movement’s most radical leaders – to head the organization further indicates that the prospects for fundamental change within it are poor.

The Gaza Strip will likely remain a devastated and politically fragmented territory in the coming years, and the terrorist threat emanating from it is unlikely to disappear. Nevertheless, there are sound reasons to assess that this threat will more closely resemble the threat emanating from the

West Bank rather than the strategic threat that existed along the Gaza border before October 7.

Israel’s paramount test in Gaza will be to combine the military defeat of Hamas with participation in efforts to build a different Gaza – one undergoing a gradual process of deradicalization and institutional reconstruction. The postwar transformations of Germany and Japan may offer broad lessons, although the historical circumstances are markedly different. Such a process would need to be pursued together with moderate Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates and Morocco, as well as moderate Palestinian actors. Without it, Israel will be forced to continue grappling with the Gaza problem for decades. This objective will, almost by definition, intersect with the broader Palestinian question.

Iran: Nuclear Capabilities, Regional Power, and Regime Stability

Israel stands at one of the most consequential strategic crossroads it has ever faced in relation to Iran. Any sober assessment must begin with the premise that Iran is a central source of Israel’s geostrategic problems – from the nuclear issue, terrorism, and regional activity to missiles and the campaign to destroy Israel. Accordingly, an assessment must consider every dimension of the Iranian challenge. Here too, much remains unknown,

as it is unclear how the campaign between the United States and Iran will end.

On the nuclear front, Iran has lost large parts of the robust, fortified, and advanced program it built over many years – especially since President Trump’s withdrawal from the nuclear agreement. Its enrichment sites have been severely damaged, though apparently not destroyed; many of its scientists have been killed; and key components of the program have been dismantled by intensive air strikes. This is a significant achievement that directly disrupted – and largely at the last moment – a program that was on the verge of becoming irreversible.

A serious residual risk nevertheless remains. Iran still possesses approximately half a ton of uranium enriched to 60%, which could theoretically be used to assemble a rudimentary nuclear device with a small number of centrifuges and a relatively modest clandestine facility. This would not constitute the same advanced and highly developed program, but it would still provide Iran with a potential pathway to a nuclear weapon. The assumption that Israel and the United States can maintain continuous and comprehensive surveillance of the enriched uranium – which cannot be destroyed from the air and must instead be removed from Iran or diluted – is questionable, particularly after the intelligence failure preceding the October 7 attack. Nuclear programs make deliberate use of deception and concealment;

detection therefore cannot be guaranteed. Iran’s motivation to acquire nuclear weapons as its principal insurance policy against future attempts at regime change must also be considered. That motivation has probably increased amid the radicalization of the regime and deepening mutual suspicion between Iran and the West.

Regionally, Iran has suffered a severe strategic blow. The process began to a significant extent with the killing of Qasem Soleimani in 2020 but accelerated markedly after October 7. In Lebanon, Hezbollah – Iran’s most important proxy – has been weakened both militarily and politically. The organization, established to defend Iran and the Islamic Revolution, did not fire at Israel during Operation Rising Lion (June 13–24, 2025), illustrating the scale of the change. Syria has shifted from an ally of the Shiite axis to an adversary, while Palestinian terrorist organizations have been weakened by successive Israeli operations in multiple theaters. Even in Iraq – a country of strategic importance to Iran – Iranian influence is gradually declining, though it has not disappeared. Yemen is the exception: Iran’s strategic partnership with the Houthis endures, even though the Houthis pursue a vision that is largely independent of Tehran’s. In broad terms, Iran’s regional proxy network

**In broad terms,
Iran’s regional
proxy network
has been
substantially
weakened,**

has been substantially weakened, calling into question a national security doctrine in which proxies were regarded as a central layer of defense.

The campaign to destroy Israel has likewise suffered a severe setback. In recent years, the Shiite axis and Palestinian terrorist organizations developed a conviction that they could defeat the State of Israel. Despite

The current regime – without Ali Khamenei as its unifying force – also appears more extreme and messianic than before

the formidable challenges it has faced, Israel demonstrated its resilience in confronting Hamas's attempt to implement that plan and adopted a more proactive approach across the theaters, reshaping

the axis's perceptions. The aspiration to destroy Israel remains deeply embedded – as illustrated by the countdown clock in Tehran's Palestine Square – but the operational concept according to which this was a realistic objective achievable by military means in the coming years has collapsed. The deaths of Yahya Sinwar, Hassan Nasrallah, and Ali Khamenei, together with Bashar al-Assad's removal from power, underscore the magnitude of the change.

The past year has brought the Iranian missile threat into sharper focus. Israel previously regarded it as a secondary threat, connected primarily to the nuclear issue, because the

country was surrounded by hundreds of thousands of rockets and missiles. Now that this surrounding threat has been significantly reduced, the direct threat from Iran is more pronounced, especially following the direct exchanges of fire between Israel and Iran. Iranian missiles cause far greater damage than rockets fired from Gaza or Lebanon and are considerably more difficult to intercept. Israel and the United States have damaged part of Iran's missile order of battle and elements of the industrial base that produces those missiles, but Iran retains substantial residual capabilities. Moreover, history shows that it is extremely difficult to disrupt an adversary's force buildup over time, especially when that adversary is located thousands of kilometers from Israel. The Iranian missile challenge is therefore likely to endure and intensify – particularly if Iran realizes its long-standing vision of a 10,000-missile arsenal.

Finally, the Iranian question ultimately comes down to the regime's stability, and here too the assessment is mixed. On the one hand, the regime has remained standing despite the unprecedented and sustained military attacks directed against it in recent months and the killing of the supreme leader at the outset of Operation Roaring Lion (launched February 28, 2026). Months of warfare have not generated public unrest sufficient to pose a significant challenge to the regime, and Iran continues to project confidence in its confrontation with the United States. The current regime – without Ali

Khamenei as its unifying force – also appears more extreme and messianic than before, creating an escalating challenge for Israel.

At the same time, signs of serious instability are multiplying. Disputes within the Iranian leadership are surfacing. The current supreme leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, has not appeared in public for months and does not command the respect enjoyed by his father – against the backdrop of the Iranian public’s deep aversion to dynastic rule. Iran’s underlying problems – which brought hundreds of thousands into the streets in unprecedented protests last January – have not been resolved and have, in many respects, worsened. The economy, the water crisis, and recurring fires are problems the regime can address only with stopgap measures, and it will likely struggle to govern in its present form for many more years. Even a partial U.S.–Iranian agreement, however, would likely inject tens of billions of dollars into the regime, providing a vital infusion of oxygen for its survival, though not a genuine solution to its fundamental problems.

Two clocks are now racing, and it is difficult to predict which will run out first. On the one hand stands a regime more radical and vengeful than before, one that is likely to intensify the threat to Israel in the short term, especially on the nuclear front. On the other stands a militarily weakened and unstable regime that lacks the foundations required to govern securely for years. Israel, the United States, and their regional partners should

therefore focus on slowing Iran’s nuclear progress while supporting conditions for political change, alongside a broad effort to minimize the damage Iran can inflict on the global and regional economies.

The Iranian regime’s open aggression – including deliberate attacks on civilians and national infrastructure – presents Israel with an opportunity to deepen its partnerships. Israel is a regional actor that regards Iran as its principal threat, and its attention is unlikely to shift away from this challenge. This opportunity should be translated into a clear strategic objective: expanding the Abraham Accords, with normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia as a priority. Naturally, this objective also intersects with the Palestinian question.

Syria

In Syria, President Ahmed al-Sharaa continues to pursue, with considerable success, a strategy aimed at securing international acceptance for his regime, and the West and the region’s states appear to have decided to embrace him. Syria’s reconstruction will take years and cost hundreds of billions of dollars, increasing the Syrian president’s incentive to maintain his current strategy. A cautious equilibrium prevails vis-à-vis Israel: both sides are maintaining low-level contacts without deepening cooperation. At the same time, the prospect of a peace agreement remains remote, given al-Sharaa’s commitment

not to accept an agreement without an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights and Israel's continued military presence in the Syrian Golan, which Israel views as a necessary lesson from the failure of October 7.

The principal challenge Israel faces in the Syrian theater is the potential for a growing terrorist threat in the Syrian Golan Heights amid the IDF's presence in the security zone. This area has always been part of Syria's periphery and previously hosted significant global jihadist activity, particularly in the southern Golan.

The principal challenge Israel faces in the Syrian theater is the potential for a growing terrorist threat in the Syrian Golan Heights

By contrast, al-Sharaa appears determined to keep the Syrian border as quiet as possible, given his focus on other issues, although his regime is not yet entirely stable.

Israel also has a significant opportunity to deepen cooperation with the Syrian regime on shared interests, primarily Hezbollah and global jihad, under a U.S. umbrella. Israel can and should pursue a security agreement with Syria that ensures the demilitarization of southern Syria and the safety of the Druze community there. In parallel, it should seek to establish a mechanism along the Syrian-Lebanese border capable of preventing most transfers of weapons and funds to Hezbollah

through Syria. Unlike Lebanon, Syria offers no genuine path to a peace agreement, but sound management could both calm the theater and advance shared interests that require Syrian cooperation. Israel must nevertheless continue to regard the Syrian regime with caution in light of al-Sharaa's al-Qaeda past and keep both possibilities in mind: that he is a jihadist who has changed course or that he has merely adopted a more pragmatic public posture. This uncertainty requires caution in dealing with him and a military presence that reduces the risk of surprises.

The Houthis and the Red Sea

To the south, the Houthis continue to establish themselves as the "surprise of the war." A movement rooted in a ruling family and presiding over an impoverished population has managed to disrupt the regional and global economies and become an increasingly serious problem for both Israel and the region's states. Over the past year, the Houthis have operated against Israel on a relatively limited scale, partly because of successive military operations directed against them. Nevertheless, the challenge they pose is likely to grow, particularly given their expansionist, Islamist, jihadist, and antisemitic ideology. After October 7, their repeated declarations about the need to destroy Israel and send thousands of fighters to Jerusalem must be taken seriously, especially in view of their considerable military power and the

possibility that they will seek a leadership role in the Shiite axis if Iran is weakened.

The Houthis are by no means solely Israel's problem, as the escalating direct confrontation between them and Saudi Arabia demonstrates. This challenge is also an opportunity for Israel to deepen partnerships with other states and advance a coherent strategy for weakening the Houthis through military, economic, and other means – including the development of alternative shipping routes that reduce dependence on the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which the Houthis can effectively hold hostage. In the meantime, Israel should concentrate on its other principal objectives, seek to contain the Houthi threat to the extent possible, and deter the organization from aggressive action against it.

The Palestinian Arena

In Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), Israel has registered significant operational achievements against Palestinian terrorism, largely because of sustained operations in refugee camps in northern Samaria – among the largest terrorist strongholds in the area. The IDF has substantially reduced the scale of terrorism in Judea and Samaria, particularly coordinated and sophisticated attacks. This achievement has had a positive effect both within the territory and on Israel's home front.

Nevertheless, the underlying problems remain. Increased friction between Jews and Palestinians, the rise in nationalistically motivated violence, and the growing difficulty of enforcing law and order increase the likelihood of a violent eruption in the near term. The economic situation is also deteriorating, while the post-Mahmoud Abbas era approaches; Abbas is now over 90. In this fragile environment, and with the IDF deployed across so many theaters, the challenge in this arena will become especially significant in the coming year.

Egypt and Jordan

Concerns about the stability of neighboring governments are not confined to the Palestinian Authority;

they also apply to Egypt

and Jordan. Egypt continues to confront severe structural challenges that impede its ability to meet the needs of its enormous population. The peace treaty and the clear convergence of interests remain intact, but the possibility of rapid political upheaval – as occurred with the fall of the Mubarak government in 2011 – is ever present. A further concern is the gradual expansion of Egyptian military activity in the Sinai Peninsula, which raises serious questions about compliance with the Camp David Accords. The result

In Jordan, the cold peace and close security coordination have endured and have even deepened

is a fragile reality in which an authoritarian government whose long-term stability is not assured is taking steps that could diminish Israel's security safeguards in the event of its collapse. Israel must find the delicate balance between strengthening the peace treaty and Egypt's stability, on the one hand, and insisting more firmly on Egypt's adherence to the Camp David Accords, on the other.

In Jordan, the cold peace and close security coordination have endured and have even deepened as the direct Iranian threat to both countries has become clearer. King Abdullah

Ankara is not Abu Dhabi, but neither is it Tehran is stepping up efforts to place his son, the crown prince, at center stage, highlighting the kingdom's relative vulnerability as it approaches a future succession. Jordan faces

intensifying challenges – from Syrian refugees and Iran, which regards the kingdom as a weak link in the U.S. regional posture, to the possibility of upheaval in the Palestinian arena. Here too, Israel will need to bring its influence to bear to safeguard the kingdom's stability and the peace treaty.

The Turkish Challenge

Over the past year, Turkey has emerged as a growing challenge to Israel, both because of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's provocative rhetoric and because of Ankara's actions on the ground. Turkey continues to tolerate overt

Hamas terrorist activity on its soil and leads a substantial share of the delegitimization campaign against Israel. The two countries also have conflicting interests in the Eastern Mediterranean and Syria. This reinforces a growing perception in Israel that Turkey could become Israel's "next threat," particularly as the Iranian regime weakens.

Ankara is not Abu Dhabi, but neither is it Tehran. Israel and Turkey still maintain a bilateral framework that allows them to manage disagreements, and the United States remains a major source of leverage over Turkey. Erdoğan has repeatedly chosen not to rupture relations with Israel entirely, despite conflicting interests and his sustained hostility toward it. Israel must recognize the growing Turkish challenge while avoiding misleading comparisons with Iran. Turkey requires a different set of tools – ones that allow disputes to be managed while channels of communication around shared interests remain open.

Converting Military Gains into Strategic Outcomes

The overall strategic picture is mixed. Israel emerges from this period stronger relative to many of its enemies, having demonstrated exceptional military capabilities, weakened the ring of threats surrounding it, and expanded its freedom of action. Yet major threats remain: the possible revival of Iran's nuclear program; the missile threat; instability

in the Palestinian arena and neighboring states; the growing Turkish challenge; and the deepening damage to Israel's standing in the West. Israel has improved its military position but has not yet secured its long-term strategic standing.

The principal test now is Israel's ability to convert battlefield achievements into durable political and diplomatic outcomes. Hezbollah's weakening could lead to a new arrangement in Lebanon; the erosion of the Iranian axis could accelerate the expansion of the Abraham Accords; and shared interests in confronting Iran, the Houthis, and terrorism could deepen cooperation with the United States and regional partners. But windows of opportunity do not remain open indefinitely. Without diplomatic initiative, close coordination with Washington, responsible

handling of the Palestinian question, and the rebuilding of international legitimacy, military gains may erode and weakened enemies may recover.

Israel therefore faces a strategic choice. It can regard its military power as an end in itself, or it can use that power as the basis for shaping a new regional order, strengthening alliances, and reducing threats for decades to come. Doing so requires a sober policy that neither ignores dangers nor misses opportunities – one capable of combining force with diplomacy, vigilance with cooperation, and operational resolve with a long-term perspective. Israel's success in the coming years will be measured not only by the enemies it has weakened, but also by the political, security, and economic reality it succeeds in building on the foundation of those achievements.



COHESION

6

Polarized, Anxious – and Hopeful: Israeli Social Cohesion in 2026

At summer's end, as autumn 2026 begins, Israeli society simultaneously holds two seemingly contradictory truths. On the one hand, when Israelis are asked which challenge poses the greatest danger to their country, 55% point to polarization and internal division – far more than those who cite the Iranian nuclear threat (23%) or the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (18%). Roughly six in ten Israelis agree that there is a genuine risk of internal bloodshed. On the other hand, the very same society has registered a modest rise in its Hope Index this year: 60% of Israelis are optimistic about the country's future, 75% assume that nearly all of their acquaintances and relatives will continue to live in Israel, and two-thirds believe that Israel is the right place for their children and grandchildren to live. A society that fears civil war yet believes in its future: this is the essence of the state of Israeli cohesion this summer.

We already presented this picture in the annual report of the JPPI Israeli Society Index, published on the eve of Israel's 2026 Independence Day, and it came into still sharper focus during the summer months, as the election campaign began. It emerged at an especially sensitive moment: after almost three years of multi-front war, beginning with the October 7, 2023 massacre, reaching its climax in the joint Israeli–American attack on Iran in spring 2026 (Operation Roaring Lion), and subsiding – at least formally – with the U.S.–Iran and Israel–Lebanon agreements signed over the summer. As the security arena calms somewhat, the political arena is becoming increasingly dominant ahead of the event Israelis have been awaiting: the October election, which many regard as one of the most consequential in the country's history. The election is increasing both tensions and uncertainty. For at least several months, it will

intensify partisan rhetoric, and it is expected to decide questions that the competing camps regard as existential – to the point that roughly one-quarter of Jews and about half of the coalition’s opponents say that an outcome leaving the current government in power would constitute an “intolerable situation.”

In this article, we revisit some of the data collected throughout the year and use it to portray the state of Israeli cohesion at this particular moment, between a lull in the war and an election campaign. The resulting picture is not one-dimensional. It contains troubling findings, some deeply so, as well as encouraging findings, some surprisingly strong. Those seeking evidence that Israeli society is disintegrating will find ample support in the data. Those seeking evidence that it is more resilient and cohesive than it appears will find that as well. As usual, the truth is more complex than either account.

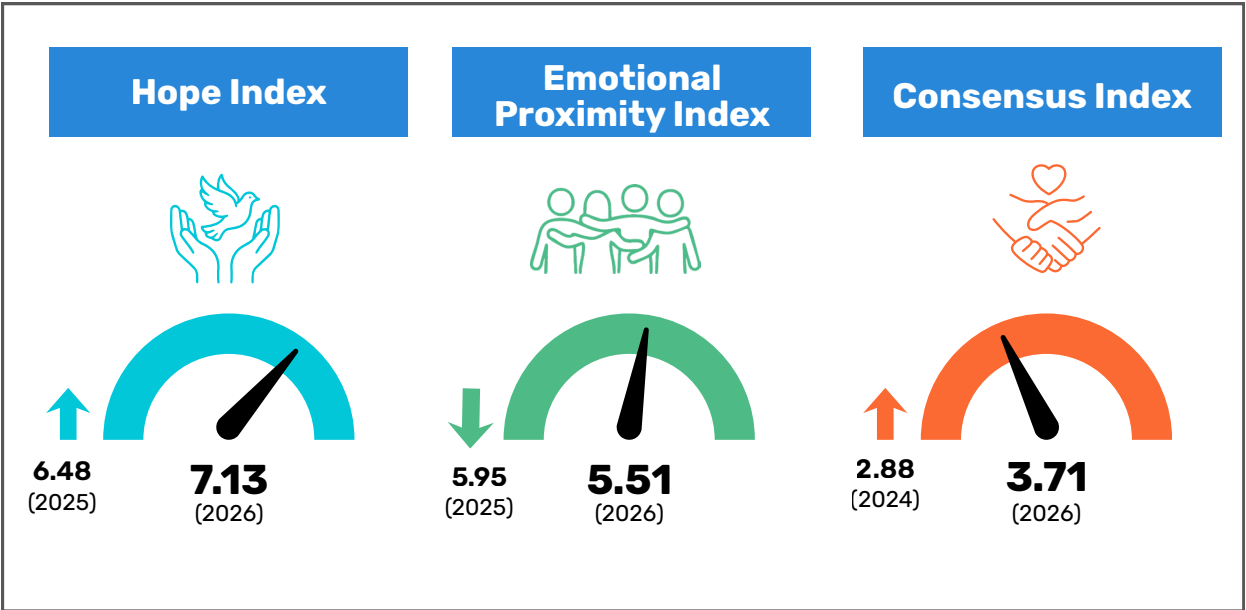
Three Numbers, One Picture

At the beginning of the annual report published in May, we presented three core indices designed to enable multi-year tracking of Israeli society: the Consensus Index (attitudes), the Emotional Proximity Index (feelings), and the Hope Index (beliefs). Together, they tell the story of cohesion in 2026, but each points in a different direction.

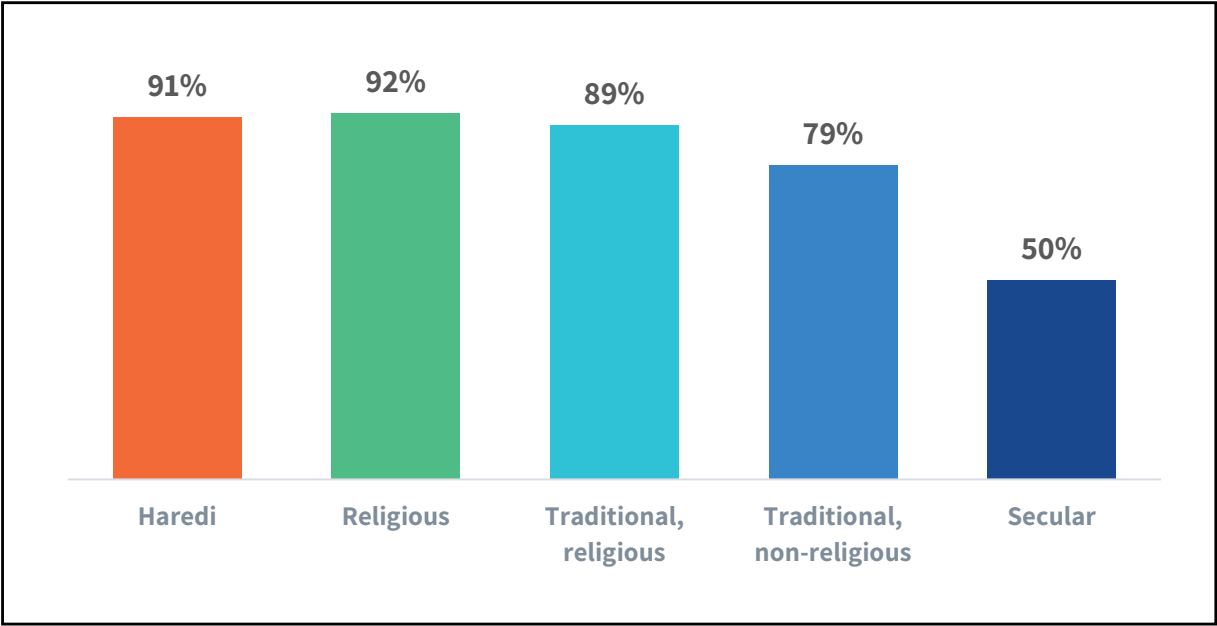
This year, the Consensus Index stood at 3.71 (out of 10), up from the 2.88 calculated for 2024 (subject to the methodological

qualification detailed in the report, following a change in the calculation method). The Emotional Proximity Index stood at 5.51, a modest decline from last year’s 5.95, indicating increased polarization and tension between groups. The Hope Index stood at 7.13, a substantial rise from last year’s 6.48. Put plainly: Israelis agree with one another slightly more, feel slightly less close to one another, and are somewhat more hopeful about the future. The three arrows do not point in the same direction – and that is itself a finding. A society undergoing genuine disintegration would be expected to decline on all three indices; a society in recovery would be expected to improve on all three. Israel in the summer of 2026 is somewhere else: substantive agreement and hope are rising even as the emotional bonds between groups erode.

An internal examination of the indices reveals clear differences among groups. The Consensus Index among Jews (4.18) is higher than among Arabs (3.41). The Hope Index among Jews (7.46) is significantly higher than among Arabs (5.79). Arabs’ overall Closeness score (4.28) is far lower than that of Jews (5.8). Within the Jewish public, the principal division across all three indices is political camp affiliation. This finding recurred, almost insistently, throughout our work over the past year: a dominant political and partisan lens shapes views across a wide range of public issues.

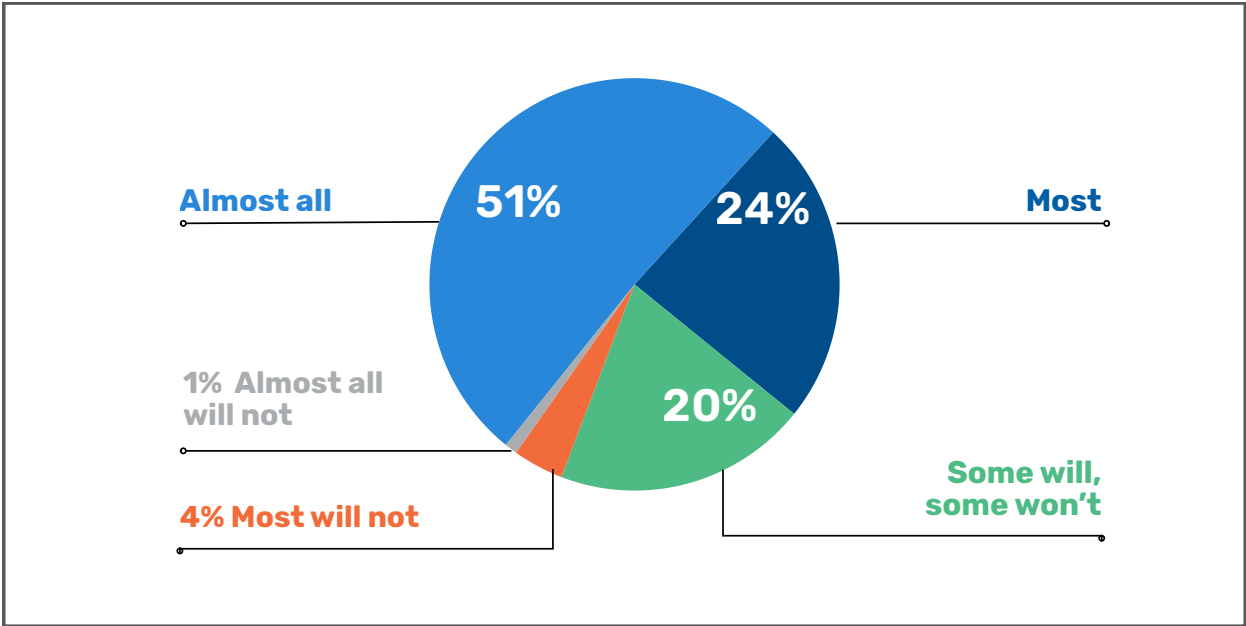


Think Israel is the best place for their children to live



Data: January 2026

When you think about your close circle of family and friends, how many of them and their children do you think will remain in Israel?



Data: January 2026

The Universal versus the Particular

Israelis themselves live within a kind of contradiction, and they are aware of it. A majority agree with the proposition that “on most important issues, most Israelis agree with one another.” About one-fifth strongly agree, and another one-third somewhat agree. In the same breath, those same Israelis agree that Israel has “major disagreements between the two blocs that cannot be bridged.” Broad agreement and unbridgeable disagreement coexist. Is this a contradiction? Not necessarily. The data suggests that

agreement and disagreement simply inhabit different domains of public discourse.

The central – and surprising – finding from this year’s Consensus Index is that Israelis agree more on their state’s “universal” values than on its “particular” questions. The item receiving the highest level of agreement concerned the essence of democracy: 59% of Israelis agree that a democratic state is one that includes both “free elections, the right to vote, and majority rule” and “values of tolerance and the protection of human rights.” The next item concerned equal rights: 60% of Israelis “strongly agree,” and another 18% “somewhat agree,” with the Declaration

of Independence's commitment to "complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex" (among Jews, 88% agree). By contrast, on questions specific to Israel – what policy should be pursued toward the Palestinians, and whether Israel is "Jewish enough" – agreement fell to only about 31%.

On the question of how "Jewish" the state should be, the public is distributed across the full spectrum: 36% of Jews believe that Israel is "not Jewish enough" (91% among Haredim and 64% among religious Jews), whereas 42% of secular Jews believe that it is "too Jewish" – also the predominant view among Arabs (47%). On the Palestinian question, we recorded a noteworthy result this year: in our March 2026 survey, 49% of Jews selected the position calling for stronger Israeli control of the territories, expansion of the settlements, and perhaps annexation – the highest level of support we have measured for this option in recent years. By contrast, 66% of Arabs chose the position favoring the pursuit of a peace agreement and a Palestinian state. In other words, there is a broad basis of agreement in Israel on the basic commitment to democracy and on the principle of equality. There is no such agreement on the questions at the center of the election campaign: the Jewish character of the state, the future of the territories, and relations between majority and minority.

In the chapter on agreement, we presented one further finding that merits particular attention because it bears directly on the dispute accompanying the election campaign. The share of Jews who believe democracy means "both-and" – both majority rule and human rights – stood at 63% this year, a substantial decline from 80% only three years ago. This decline is plausibly connected to the continuing debate over the relationship between the political system, which expresses the preferences of the majority, and the judicial system and the Supreme Court. In other words, political conflict does not merely shift positions on policy questions; it is seeping into the most fundamental definitions, including the very meaning of democracy. This is one of the year's troubling findings.

Even here, however, balance is necessary. Our statistical analysis of the four Consensus Index questions found only weak correlations among responses (the highest correlation was 0.19). This means that a person's answer to one question does not predict the answer to another. Israel is therefore far from a situation in which two uniform, internally homogeneous camps hold coherent packages of views. The range of opinion is far more diverse than public discourse suggests, and substantial differences persist within groups and sectors as well as within ideological camps. The trenches may be clearly marked on the political map, but those who occupy them do not form uniform ranks.

Emotion Has Become Political

If the Consensus Index offered relatively encouraging news, the Emotional Proximity Index yielded more troubling findings. This index, which measures the extent to which Israelis from different groups feel close to or distant from one another, fell this year to 5.51. When we examined its components, the most important finding emerged: beyond the national divide, the factor that most impedes Israelis' sense of closeness to one another is

Right-wing supporters are strongly alienated from left-wing groups, and left-wing supporters are even more alienated from right-wing groups.

affiliation with a politically defined camp. Those who place themselves on the right feel close to right-wing groups; those in the center feel close to centrist groups; and alienation between the poles is pronounced. Right-wing supporters are strongly alienated from left-wing groups, and left-wing supporters are even more alienated from right-wing groups. Even groups whose definitions are not ostensibly political – “settlers” and “Tel Avivians,” for example – are rated according to the respondent's political frame of reference.

The group receiving the highest Closeness score is secular Jews – the largest group among Jews and one that almost every group rates relatively highly. The lowest-scoring

group is the Haredim, at just 3.79. No group other than the Haredim themselves gives them a high Closeness score (Haredim rate their closeness to other Haredim at 9.29). Secular Jews rate their closeness to Haredim at 1.81 – the lowest score assigned by any group to another in the survey, except in assessments of Jewish–Arab relations. This finding cannot be separated from its context: the Closeness survey was conducted while the Knesset was grappling with legislation to exempt Haredim from military service, a measure that most of the public opposed. Yet Haredim also received low scores in our previous surveys, and the war – during which Haredim did not join the ranks of those in uniform and demanded renewed statutory protection for the exemption – deepened the rupture even among groups that had previously regarded them more sympathetically.

And then there is the national tension. About one-quarter of Israelis feel close to Arabs – and almost all of them are Arabs themselves. Only 8% of Jews report feeling close to Arabs. The asymmetry is stark and painful: 43% of Arabs report feeling close to secular Jews, compared with 10% of secular Jews who report feeling close to Arabs. In emotional terms, Arabs extend a hand far more readily than it is returned. Arabs also identified Jewish–Arab tension in our surveys as the principal tension in Israeli society, whereas only 4% of Jews did so. This gap in identifying the central tension is itself evidence of polarized perceptions of reality: the two groups live in the same country

yet see two different maps of its fault lines. Two background processes fuel this tension. The first is the war: on nearly every question examined, Arab attitudes differ radically from Jewish attitudes. The second is the high crime rate in Arab society, for which Jews and Arabs offer opposing explanations: Arabs primarily blame the state and its neglect; Jews assign most responsibility to Arab society and its leadership. In this atmosphere, we found similarly sized majorities of Jews and Arabs who believe that “many” or “most” members of the other group are extremists.

Optimism – with an Asterisk

Set against this emotional erosion is hope. The Hope Index stood at 7.13 this year, an increase over previous years. It comprises four components: optimism about the country’s future; confidence that those close to respondents will remain in Israel; the belief that Israel is a good place for the next generation to live; and the belief that it is worthwhile to invest in Israel for the long term. On all four, the aggregate Israeli response is positive: 60% are optimistic; 75% assume that most people they know will remain; 65% believe Israel is the right place for their children and grandchildren; and 65% believe that investing in Israel is worthwhile. Against the backdrop of three years of war, national trauma, and continuing political turmoil, it is difficult not to find these figures impressive. International indices consistently show Israelis to be unusually optimistic compared

with citizens of other countries; this pattern held in our data this year as well.

But the 2026 Hope Index comes with an asterisk: partisan division. Hope is not evenly distributed. Israelis who support the incumbent government scored far higher on the Hope Index than those who oppose it; optimism declines along a clear gradient from right to left; and the Hope Index among Arabs (5.79) is significantly lower than among Jews (7.46). The “Strength and Optimism Map” presented in the report illustrated the gap. Among right-wing supporters, there is almost no difference between their sense of national strength and their optimism (8.50 versus 8.47): they feel that the country is strong and are confident in its future. Among the center-left, the gap is a full point (6.97 versus 5.97): they recognize the country’s strength but are uncertain that it is moving in the right direction. Hope on the right is unqualified; hope in the center and on the left is more guarded, almost conditional.

**about half of
secular Jews are
not convinced
that Israel is
the right place
for the next
generation in
their families**

The largest asterisk of all concerns the secular public. Among those who identify as secular – about four in ten Jews, the largest of all the groups – roughly one-third (31%) answer “perhaps yes, perhaps no” when asked whether Israel is the right place for

their children and grandchildren to live, while another one-fifth (19%) say that it is not. In other words, about half of secular Jews are not convinced that Israel is the right place for the next generation in their families. This finding is not new (we recorded a similar result at the beginning of the war), but it may be the most important social finding in the entire report. It does not concern intentions to leave – as we shall see, Israelis remain – but rather a kind of wait-and-see posture, closely connected to the approaching election and especially prevalent among Israelis from the center and further

The war deepened the experience of polarization to some extent

left. The largest group within the Jewish public is leaving the future open, waiting to see where the country is headed. A society can live with disagreements for a long time; it is harder to live with a major group that feels, at least in part, that home may not be home for good.

Polarization Did Not Begin with the War

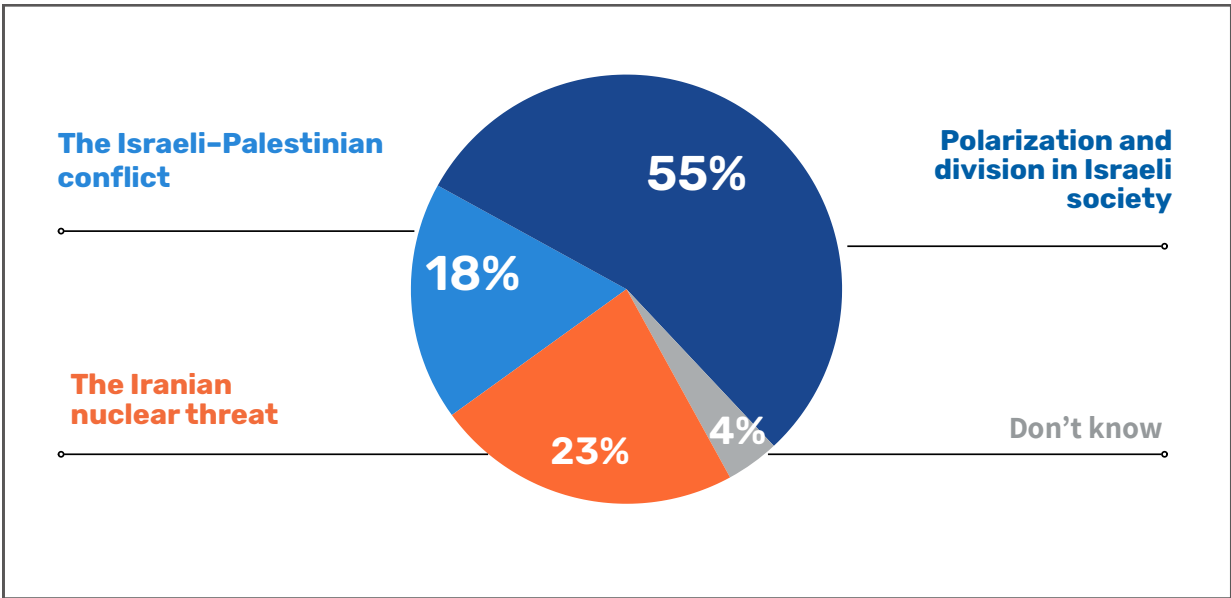
One of the annual report's most important conclusions – perhaps the most important for understanding the present moment – is this: Israel's principal social challenge is not a product of the war but of what preceded it. An atmosphere of political and social polarization has prevailed in Israel for several years. It developed gradually during a period in which

five elections were held in rapid succession; intensified abruptly with the formation of the incumbent coalition in autumn 2022 and the announcement of the “judicial reform”; and left an imprint that survived both the shock of the massacre and the prolonged period of war. The war deepened the experience of polarization to some extent and added layers of meaning to it, but it did not fundamentally alter its causes or unsettle its foundations.

How deep is the concern? One indication of growing anxiety is the public's response to warnings of civil confrontation. When former Supreme Court President Aharon Barak warned in March 2025 that “we are heading toward bloodshed and civil war,” we found that one-quarter of Israelis believed he was right, and another third believed that he had exaggerated somewhat but that the danger was nevertheless real. Overall, six in ten Israelis agreed that Israel faces a risk of civil war. Warnings of this kind were once readily dismissed as overheated rhetoric, but the public now takes the possibilities they describe seriously. At the same time, we found that 38% of Israelis were “very concerned” about the social situation and another 42% were “fairly concerned” – eight in ten in all. Among non-Haredi Jews, the social challenge ranked second in importance among nine issues in our surveys this year, behind only the security challenge.

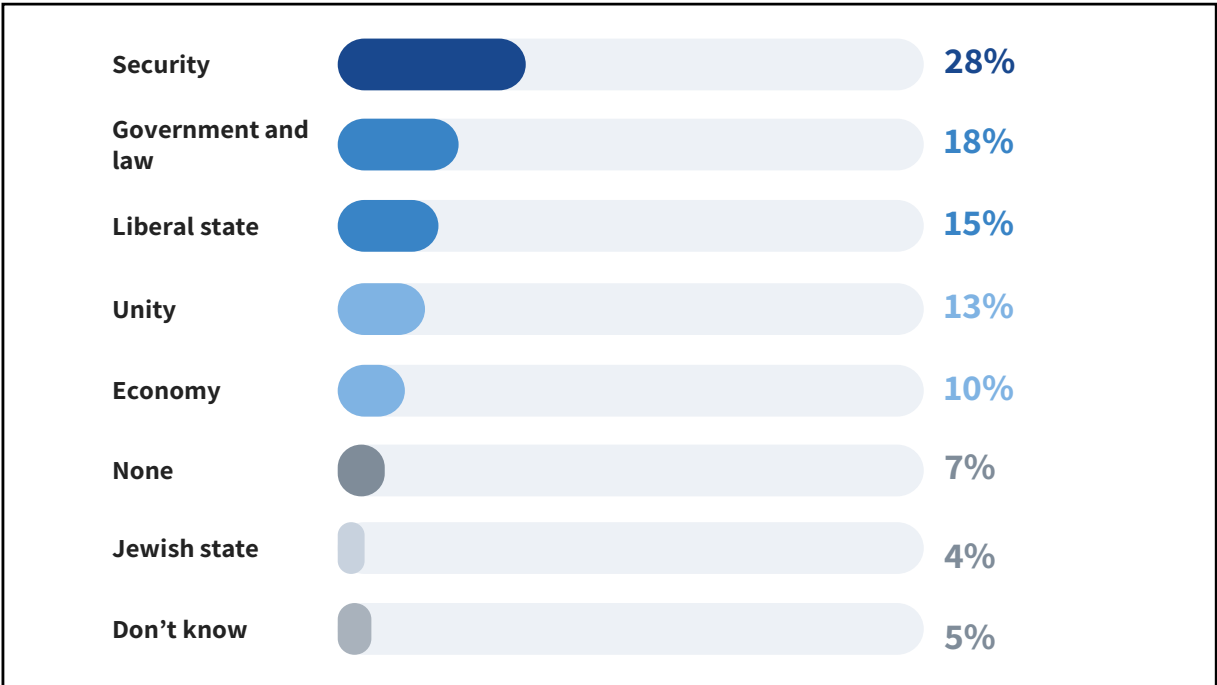
This conclusion – that polarization predates the war – has twofold significance on the eve

Of these challenges, which do you think is most dangerous to Israel?



Data: December 2025

Most decisive election issue – all Israelis



Data: July 2026

of the election. First, it shatters an illusion common during the war's early months: that an external threat would "heal the rifts." The data we collected shows that even at the end of a difficult war, one that reminded the public of the gravity of external threats, most Israelis still judged polarization and internal division to be more dangerous to Israel than either the Iranian nuclear threat or the conflict with the Palestinians. The report's comparison of Jews' positions on the "Strength and Optimism Map" in January 2024 and January 2026 found that, despite severe upheavals, the averages had barely shifted. If anything, perceived strength declined slightly, driven specifically by Jews' lower assessment of Israel's social strength. The military demonstrated its power; society, in its own eyes, did not.

Second, and this is the practical implication: if polarization is not a product of the war, the war's end will not cure it. Its sources are political and institutional; accordingly, any remedy will also have to be political and institutional. This is where the election enters the picture, as discussed below.

Political Camp Determines the Facts

How deeply has camp affiliation penetrated Israeli consciousness? In the annual report, we presented a series of examples whose cumulative effect is more troubling than any one of them alone. Is the Israeli economy strong? On its face, this is a question requiring

a dispassionate reading of reality; in practice, right-wing supporters give the economy a score of 4.0 (out of 5), while left-wing supporters give it 1.4. Is the state budget designed on substantive grounds? Government supporters are forgiving; government opponents and the Arab public view it as a distribution of political spoils. Is Israel winning the war? Does the IDF's senior command deserve public trust? Do the settlements contribute to security? Should the military adhere strictly to ethical standards in combat? Responses to all these questions, and many others, divide along a political fault line. As we wrote in the report, Israel in 2026 is a society in which the understanding of the facts themselves is subordinated to political camp affiliation.

This is not, it must be emphasized, symmetrical in substantive content – each camp is convinced that it sees clearly while the other is captive to propaganda – but it is symmetrical in mechanism. The pattern is also evident in the most sensitive measure of citizen-government relations: trust in the government. Throughout our period of measurement, the incumbent government has never enjoyed the trust of a majority of the Israeli public. In spring 2026, amid the campaign against Iran, it won the trust of half the Jewish public for the first time. By July, after the agreement with Iran – which a large majority of Israelis saw as worsening Israel's security position – trust in the government had fallen to 37%, its lowest level in more than a year, with 48% choosing the

emphatic response “do not trust at all.” The breakdown is razor-sharp: 77% on the right trust the government, compared with 9% in the center and zero on the left, where every respondent selected “do not trust at all.” By religious identity, 75% of Haredim express trust, compared with 19% of secular Jews. Two publics, two governments – the same government.

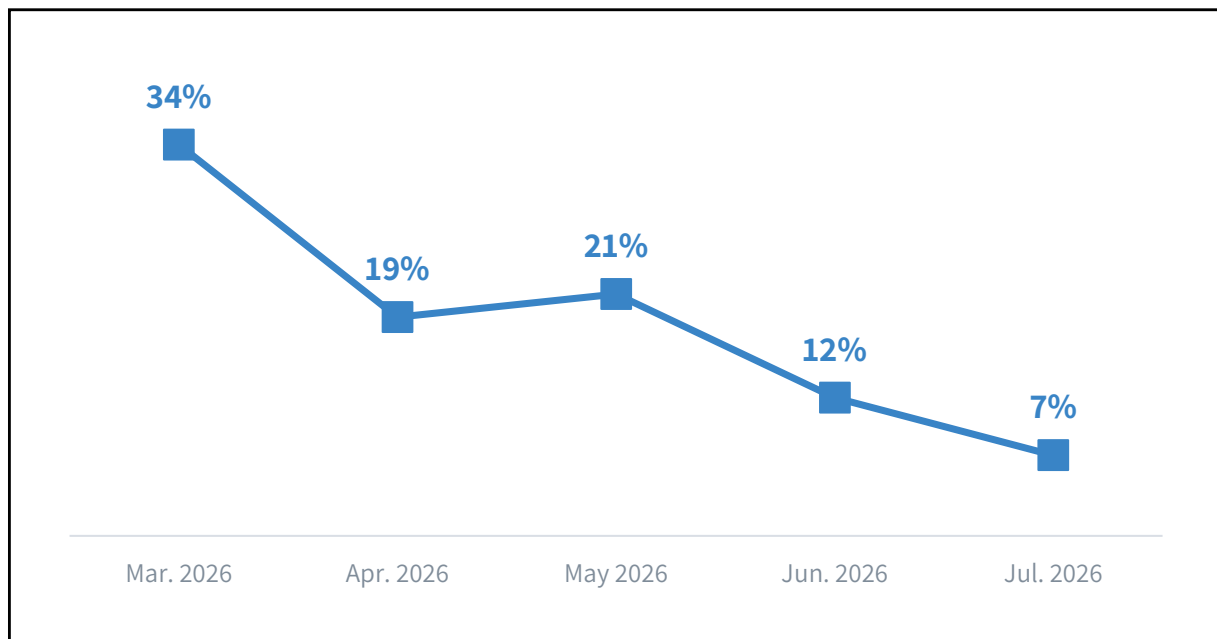
Iran, Lebanon, Gaza

Against this backdrop, the importance of the two summer surveys – conducted in June and July 2026 during and after the signing of the agreements intended to end the war – becomes clear. They added an up-to-date layer to the annual picture: one of

sharp disillusionment, but also of several unexpected points of agreement.

Disillusionment is evident first in the sense of victory. In March 2026, at the height of Operation Roaring Lion, 56% of Israelis felt that Israel was winning or had won the war – the highest result measured over the preceding year. In July, only four months later, that figure stood at 38%, while 41% did not feel that Israel was winning. The year-on-year comparison underscores the depth of the erosion: in July 2025, after Operation “Rising Lion,” 54% felt a sense of victory and only 22% rejected that assessment. One year later, the picture had almost reversed. When we examined where the erosion occurred, we found that it was concentrated almost entirely outside the right. Among right-wing

Share expressing “a great deal of trust” in Trump



respondents, the sense of victory barely changed (77% last year, 74% in the latest survey); among those identifying with the center, it fell from 37% to 14%. A sense of achievement, too, is divided by political camp.

A similar, even sharper disillusionment emerged regarding the president of the United States. Among Israelis, the share expressing “a great deal of trust” in Donald Trump peaked at 34% in March 2026, but fell to just 7% in July, while 45% said, “I have no trust in him.” This decline, gradual but consistent since the agreement with Iran, is also noteworthy from the perspective of cohesion: it is one of the few cases in which public attitudes moved together across camps. Disappointment with Trump is shared. Although a majority on the right still retains at least some trust in the president, comparison with July of the previous year (29% on the right then expressed “a great deal of trust,” compared with 8% now) shows how profound the change has been even within that camp.

And here is the summer’s truly striking finding: the agreement with Iran produced a rare kind of consensus in Israel – a consensus of opposition. In July, 68% of Israelis said the agreement was not good for Israel, and 56% chose the emphatic formulation “very bad for Israel.” The share selecting this position varied within a remarkably narrow range across camps: from 65% on the right and center-right to 75% on the left; by religious identity, it ranged from 69% among secular Jews to

73% among Haredim. Majorities rejecting the agreement were recorded among voters for every Jewish party, from Religious Zionism (89%) to Meretz (81%). Not one Jewish respondent – not a single one – selected the option “the agreement is very good for Israel.” At the same time, the agreement with Lebanon generated the opposite consensus: 63% believed it was good for Israel, with similar majorities across all ideological camps and, in an even rarer finding, almost identical rates among Jews and Arabs (63% and 64%, respectively).

These two findings reveal something important about the limits of Israeli polarization. When an issue has not already been mapped onto the left-right axis – when it has no partisan “owner” – the Israeli public is entirely capable of arriving at a shared judgment, whether favorable or unfavorable. In their peculiar way, these agreements are evidence of cohesion: not the cohesion of affection, but the cohesion of common judgment. Yet once an issue returns to mapped territory – Gaza, for example – polarization reappears in full force. On the right, 68% support a return to fighting until Hamas rule is overthrown; in the center and to its left, overwhelming majorities (70% to 92%) prefer an economic-diplomatic path. The arena closest to home remains the most divisive.

At the same time, Gaza is also the site of a shared and bitter disillusionment. In our

measurements, the share believing that Hamas rule would be overthrown and cease to exist was nearly halved within a year, from 30% to 17% (among Jews, from 34% to 18%), while the share expecting Hamas rule to continue in its present form jumped from 27% to 42%. Promises of “total victory” have given way to lowered expectations and acceptance of an ambiguous reality. This is painful; yet here, too, those concerned about cohesion may find a measure of consolation: shared disillusionment is, in the end, a shared experience.

The Religious Divide

Israeli concern about social cohesion is deep, broad, and stable: 78% of Israelis told us in June that they were concerned about the state of social cohesion, a figure similar to those measured over the previous three years. As we wrote in the June report, the sense of social fracture has become a fixed and embedded feature of public consciousness. Yet within this stability, we detected a shift worth noting on the eve of the election: a change in which divide the public identifies as most threatening.

Tension between right and left remains the factor the public sees as exerting the greatest effect on cohesion, but the share selecting it fell from 56% to 46% in one year. At the same time, the share pointing to tension between religious and secular Jews surged from 20% in June 2025 to 32% this year, the highest

level recorded in the three years of the index (among Jews, from 23% to 36%). This shift is not accidental. It reflects a year in which the conflict between most of Israeli society and the Haredi community – over conscription, exemption, budgets, and demonstrations – featured prominently in public discourse and, more than any other front, exposed the gulf between the coalition’s staunch supporters and most of its opponents.

The data we collected on conscription illustrates the depth of the impasse. At the level of principle, there was very broad agreement: 80% of the public supported Haredi service in principle. Yet the Haredi public itself

opposes this in overwhelming numbers. In our survey of Haredi society, 93% said that full mandatory conscription was unacceptable, and a large majority rejected even more moderate arrangements. When the discussion moves from principle to policy, the general consensus fragments into camps: in July, 46% of Israelis said that additional sanctions and pressure should be applied, whereas a majority on the right (59%) favored conscription “only with the agreement of the Haredi leadership” – a pattern reflecting, among other things, the price of coalition partnership. Above all hangs a cloud of

the share believing that Hamas rule would be overthrown and cease to exist was nearly halved within a year,

skepticism: most of the public, including some who oppose sanctions, assumes that the coalition leaders' principal objective in handling the conscription law is political – preserving the coalition – rather than security-based or value-driven.

Haredi road protests against the arrest of draft evaders added an intriguing dimension. When, in July, we presented respondents with three positions heard in public debate, the most common response (39%) was that these were unjustified demonstrations that should be

most of the public, including some who oppose sanctions, assumes that the coalition leaders' principal objective in handling the conscription law is political

prevented. Almost one-third (32%), however, adopted a position of reciprocity: "Roads could be blocked during the protests against the reform, so Haredim may block them as well." This reasoning was especially common

on the right (48%) and among Likud voters (51%). In miniature, this illustrates how polarization erodes norms: the legitimacy of a protest tactic is no longer judged on its own merits but by what the opposing camp was permitted or prohibited from doing. Measure for measure has become a constitutional principle.

The annual report also documented a deeper, slower shift: in the wake of the war, Jewish

society is becoming more traditional, yet at the same time more polarized over tradition. The rise in religious observance and feelings of faith is concentrated among those who were already traditional or religious and among younger people, whereas the secular public – the largest group within Jewish society – registered a slight decline. Israel is not moving in one direction; it is moving in two opposing directions. Secular Jews, most of whom still believe that Israel practices "religious coercion," will feel the country around them becoming more traditional. Others will assume that the changing reality justifies formally entrenching this growing traditionalism. These are the combustible materials of the coming decade, and the approaching election may ignite some of them. As noted, the question of how "Jewish" Israel should be is the one on which agreement is lowest.

Shame and the Hardening of Positions

In May, a video issued on the prime minister's behalf under the title "Dad, Mom – I'm a Bibist" depicted a young man politically "coming out" to his left-wing parents. In the June survey, we asked whether the video portrayed a real phenomenon, and the answer was instructive precisely because of its symmetry: 85% of those identifying with the right are convinced that some right-wing supporters are ashamed to reveal their views in their social surroundings, while 80% of

those identifying with the left say exactly the same about supporters of their own camp. Each camp experiences itself as silenced, as a persecuted minority within the social spaces it inhabits. The fact that both publics report an experience of shame – the right in spaces perceived as controlled by elites, the left in a public sphere where the right is numerically far larger – may be the clearest evidence of emotional polarization: a society in which people on both sides are afraid to say aloud what they think.

Alongside the experience of silencing comes a hardening of positions. For the third consecutive year, we have tracked how important Israelis consider it that Israel's policies be “the way they want them,” even at the cost of reduced cohesion. This year's average was 7.92 (out of 10), higher than the 7.47 and 7.49 measured in the previous two years; the hardening was evident this year across every ideological group. At the same time, the downward trend continued in Jews' willingness to forgo implementation of their preferences for the sake of cohesion on specific issues – Israeli-Palestinian relations and relations between the government and the judiciary – while among Arabs the opposite trend emerged: a growing willingness to compromise. As in other findings, the groups at the ideological poles – the right and the left – are least willing to compromise, while willingness to prioritize cohesion rises toward the center of the political map.

Yet one finding makes the picture genuinely complex: in the same surveys, Israelis rated the importance of unity in society at 7.91 – almost identical to the importance they assign to putting their own positions into effect. They want both: their preferred policies and unity, while refusing to acknowledge that the two sometimes conflict. Most also believe compromise is possible. When we examined a series of familiar disputes this year, we found that most Israelis believe that, in most public controversies, a compromise formula can be reached – one “that a substantial majority of the public would find satisfactory” – even on issues often depicted in public discourse as intractable, such as public transportation on the Sabbath and civil marriage. The only consistent exception is the Haredi public, where a large majority assumes that compromise on religion-and-state issues is impossible. The public, it appears, does not believe the disputes are insoluble; it believes politics is incapable of solving them.

**the right and
the left – are
least willing to
compromise**

October: Tension and Opportunity

Into this reality comes the October 2026 election. From one campaign to the next, elections are routinely described as “especially fateful”; in the present case, however, the phrase seems to carry unusual force. The data

we collected indicates that two camps are approaching the ballot box while viewing the outcome as an existential question. Among those seeking political change, about half of the coalition's opponents told us that its continued rule would be, in their eyes, an "intolerable situation." When an entire camp defines a possible democratic outcome in advance as intolerable, next year's Hope Index will depend to a great extent on what happens at the ballot box – and, even more, on what happens afterward.

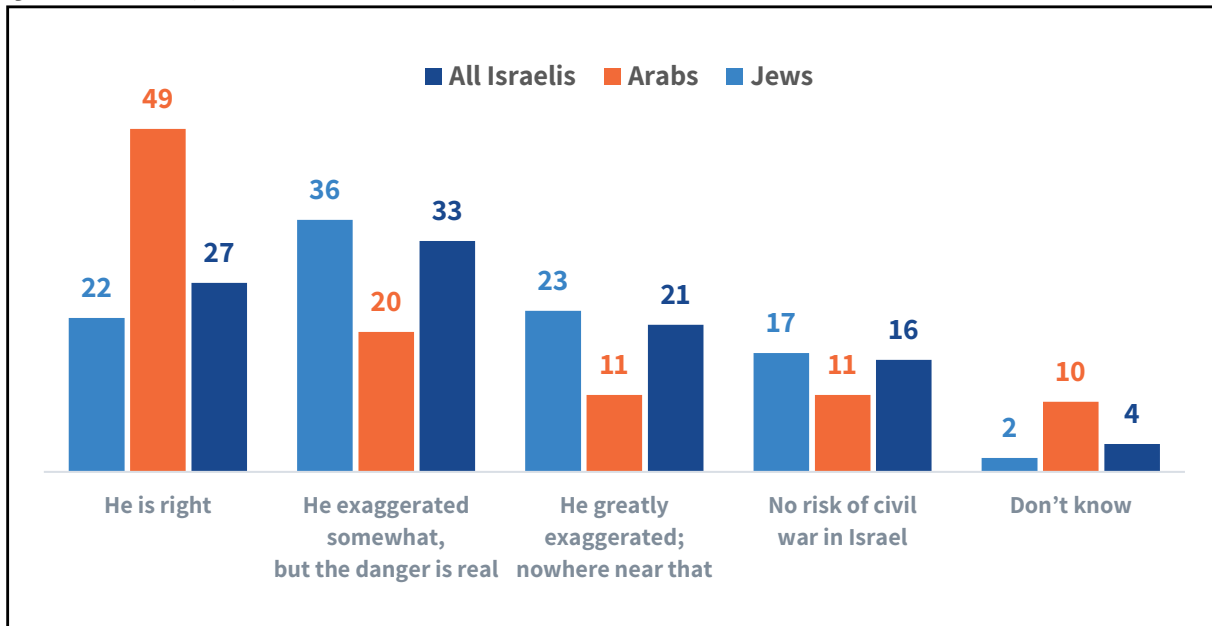
In the July survey, we examined the structure of the campaign for the first time. Most voters had already decided: 53% said they were completely certain whom they would support, and another 29% were fairly certain. Certainty was greatest at the poles – 71% on the left and 58% on the right were completely certain – whereas undecided voters were concentrated in the middle: on the center-right, 22% were still waiting to see the full party lineup, while in the center only 44% were completely certain. In other words, the campaign's true battleground lies in the center of the political map – among the very groups that the data identifies as the most balanced, most willing to compromise, and most vulnerable to swings between a sense of victory and disappointment.

Equally striking, the data indicates that Israel is effectively holding two different elections at once. When we asked which issue would determine respondents' vote, security (40%)

and relations between the government and the judiciary (30%) led on the right; in the center and on the left, the leading issue was "a more liberal state" (35% to 38%); and among Arabs, the leading issues were security and the economy, while the economy barely appeared as a decisive consideration among Jews. The two camps are not debating different answers to the same question; they are asking different questions. Relations between "government and the judiciary" emerge as the principal organizing issue of the right-wing bloc: 70% of those for whom this is the decisive issue prefer a right-wing coalition. Conversely, 83% of those for whom "a more liberal state" is the decisive issue prefer a coalition without Haredi participation. The October campaign will therefore be, among other things, a collision between two frames of discourse that scarcely meet.

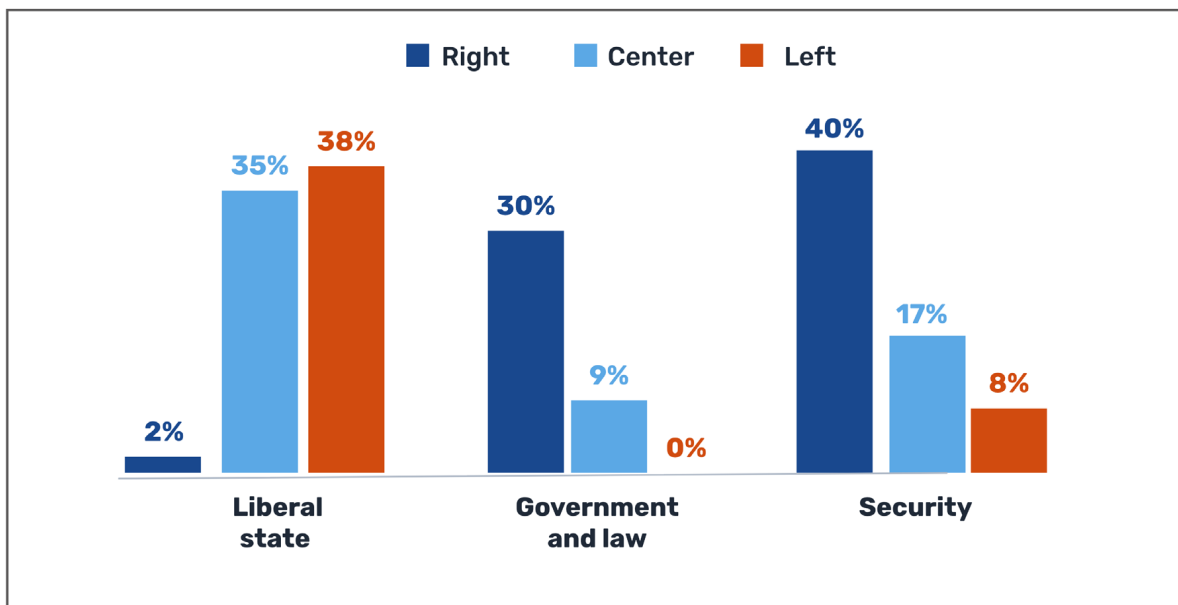
All this promises months of growing partisan tension and uncertainty – not only about the result, but also about the day after. No coalition formula wins majority support in our surveys. The public is divided among a change-bloc coalition including Arab parties (27%), variants of the right-wing bloc (30% combined), and three versions of a broad coalition (29% combined). Yet at precisely this point, as we wrote in the annual report, there is also an optimistic perspective: the election will give whichever government is elected and whichever coalition is formed an opportunity to reset relations between the government and the public as a whole

Justice Aharon Barak: “We are very close to a civil war.” Which best reflects your view? (%)



Data: April 2025

Selected decisive issues by ideology



Data: July 2026

– and perhaps to restore public trust in the system. A government that governs for years without the trust of a majority of the public is a constant engine of polarization. It is difficult to imagine a substantial reduction in Israeli polarization without greater public trust in elected officials. The election, then, is both the risk and the possible remedy: it will aggravate the illness in the short term, but it is the only visible opportunity to treat it in the long term.

The Glass Half Full

Any article on cohesion in the summer of 2026 must, in fairness to the data, devote a section to the encouraging findings as well – and they are neither few nor marginal.

First, hope. The Hope Index rose this year to 7.13, and most Israelis – Jews and Arabs, although at different rates – are optimistic about their country’s future, expect those close to them to remain in Israel, and believe that it is worthwhile to invest in Israel over the long term. Even in a year of higher-than-usual emigration, there was no significant change in Israelis’ intentions to emigrate. A record 9.42 million departures abroad in 2025 coexisted with a negligible share of respondents who did not intend to return. Israelis complain, worry, and at times voice despair – and stay.

Second, interpersonal trust. The annual interpersonal trust index, measured in July, remained stable, with a slight tendency toward improvement across all items. The

most notable change concerned the most sensitive item: the share of Jews who believe that most Arabs in Israel can be trusted rose from 22% to 26%. The entire increase occurred in and around the political center: on the center-right, the share doubled from 15% to 31%, and in the center it rose from 30% to 40%, while at the far right nothing changed. This remains by far the lowest figure on the list, and the positive movement was not reciprocal (Arab trust in Jews declined slightly). Nevertheless, after years of war that severely tested relations, the direction of change deserves note.

Third, agreement on fundamentals. As we have seen, a large majority of Israelis agree that Israel should be a democracy, endorse the principle of equal rights, and believe that on most important issues most Israelis agree with one another. The Consensus Index rose relative to the previous year’s calculation. The low correlations among positions also show that Israeli society is not composed of two monolithic blocs but is rather a mosaic – a fact that complicates governance but also makes civil war more difficult.

Fourth, institutional functioning. Even in a year of war, polarization, and political turmoil, many state institutions have functioned at a high level, as demonstrated in the campaign against Iran, and society remains vibrant and engaged. Israelis’ deep concern about cohesion is itself a sign of life: a society

indifferent to its fractures is more dangerous than one troubled by them. That 78% are concerned about cohesion also means that 78% believe there is something worth fighting to preserve.

Fifth, trust in the state's professional echelons. Trust in the IDF's senior command, even after some erosion during the summer months (from 82% among Jews in March to 71% in July), remained far higher than trust in the political echelon – and was highest in the center of the political map. Trust in rank-and-file soldiers and junior commanders remained very high across all groups throughout the war. The state's professional institutions, although they too are occasionally drawn into the partisan vortex, still retain a reserve of broad public legitimacy. This is the reserve on which the country will rely in the turbulent months ahead.

Distrust of the Rules of the Game

We conclude with a finding more troubling than any single figure presented in this article. In our summer surveys, we found profound suspicion on both sides of the political divide regarding the other side's willingness to respect the election results. Coalition supporters suspect that, if they win, their opponents will refuse to accept the outcome and will try to prevent its implementation – in the streets, in the media, and within institutions. Coalition opponents suspect

that, if they win, the outgoing government will not hand over the keys in good faith and will try to change the rules of the game while it still holds the levers of power. Each camp, in other words, suspects that the other is not genuinely committed to the common framework – that it plays the democratic game only so long as it is winning.

It is important to understand why this finding is so serious. Democracy does not rest on agreement between camps; it rests on the consent of the losers – on the willingness of those defeated at the ballot box to accept the outcome, trusting that the contest was fair and that they will have another opportunity. When each camp assumes in advance that the other will not abide by the rules, suspicion takes on a dynamic of its own, entirely independent of whether it is justified. It turns every move by the opponent into evidence, every post-election dispute into a potential constitutional crisis, and every escalation into “preemptive self-defense.” Distrust of the rules of the game is a self-fulfilling prophecy – and that is why it poses a greater danger to cohesion than any of the disagreements described here, including the deepest among them.

This, then, is what we measured this year: a society in which substantive agreement has risen, hope has risen, emotional closeness among its parts has declined, and confidence that the common democratic game will

COHESION

continue is in doubt on both sides. The October election will turn not only on who wins, but also on whether the losers, whoever they are, believe they lost a fair contest – and whether the winners conduct themselves in a way that allows them to believe it. On the basis of the data we collected this summer, neither answer can be taken for granted.



DEMOGRAPHY

7

Emigration from Israel: New Realities and New Questions

Introduction

Immigration is something that Israel, both as a state and as a society, has always celebrated. It has long been regarded as a clear sign of the country's political and cultural success and remains central to Israel's ethos as a homeland to which Jews return. Since the establishment of the modern state, about 3.5 million immigrants have arrived in Israel.

Emigration, by contrast, has occupied a very different place in public discourse. In the early decades of statehood, it was often viewed almost as an act of betrayal. In the 1970s, Yitzhak Rabin, later prime minister of Israel, famously described emigrants as "a fallout of weaklings." Less famously, but no less revealingly, Menachem Begin, a prime minister from a very different political tradition, lamented emigration in terms of military units lost. The Hebrew terms themselves reflect these attitudes: *aliyah* ("ascent") for immigration and *yerida* ("descent") for emigration.

Such sentiments were perhaps understandable in the formative years of the state. Israel then had to demonstrate – to both the wider world and global Jewry – that it could serve as a viable and sustainable destination for Jewish return, offering political freedom, physical security, and economic

opportunity superior to those available elsewhere. Today, Israel's population exceeds 10 million, making it a medium-sized country by European standards. Emigration is now generally viewed in more neutral terms, often as a consequence of Israel's integration into the global economy and a route to professional self-realization. Periodic surges of concern about emigration still occur, but they tend to coincide with security crises.

While demographic and sociological analyses of immigration are abundant, the same cannot be said of emigration. This imbalance has less to do with the political significance of the two processes than with the availability of data. In Israel's population administration system, immigrant status (*oleh*) is a clearly defined administrative category. Emigrant status (*yored*), by contrast, does not formally exist. This distinction has profound implications for the measurement and analysis of emigration.

For the Israeli statistical authority, the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS-Israel), immigration statistics are essentially a matter of counting observable events. Emigration statistics, by contrast, require estimating a phenomenon that is inherently more elusive. Since the late 1940s, emigration has been measured using records from the Border Control system, which tracks all international movements of Israeli citizens and

permanent residents. Throughout this period, an emigrant has been broadly defined as a person who leaves Israel and remains abroad for an extended period.

The precise definition of what constitutes an “extended period” has evolved over the past eight decades. These adjustments reflected broader changes in patterns of life, particularly the growth of international mobility, the rise of dual residences, and the emergence of transnational employment arrangements. Yet the core principle has remained unchanged: an emigrant is someone who, after leaving Israel, spends the greater part of a year abroad, whether continuously or cumulatively. A returning emigrant is someone who, after a prolonged stay abroad, returns and subsequently spends the greater part of a year in Israel. These definitions are based not on intentions or future plans but on observed patterns of residence.

The remainder of this note focuses on the most recently observed levels of emigration from Israel. First, we present the available evidence and discuss possible interpretations of recent trends. Second, we examine two often overlooked aspects of Israeli emigration: its demographic impact on Israel’s population and its contribution to the population of the Jewish Diaspora.

Emigration of Israelis from 2009 onward: a closer look at the emerging realities

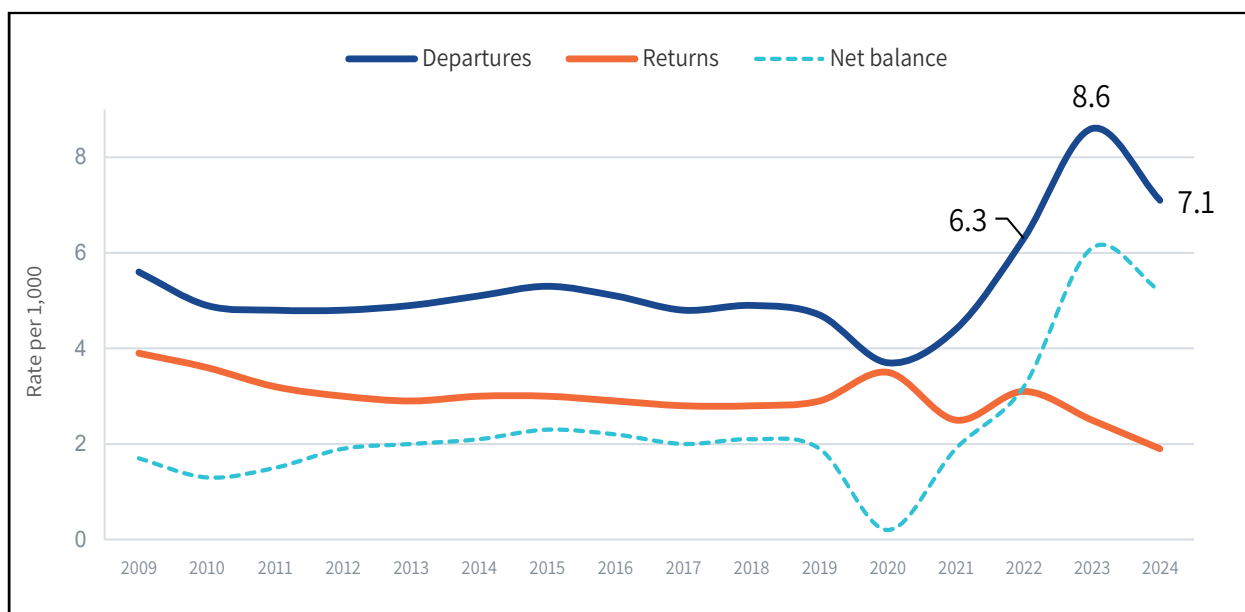
Experts’ estimates put the total population of Israelis living abroad at 630,000 on January 1, 2022. Since then, the level of emigration

from Israel has increased, and the most recent estimates (January 1, 2025) put this population at 755,000. These figures include all Israelis – citizens or permanent residents, whether born in Israel or immigrants to Israel – who once lived in Israel and subsequently left for long-term settlement abroad. They are adjusted to exclude those who emigrated from Israel and have since died. The Israel-born population accounts for about half of the total.

Given that the population of Israel stood at around 9.8 million at about the same time, the population of Israelis living abroad amounts to roughly 7% of the global Israeli population. If one is inclined to include children born abroad to Israeli emigrants, that number rises to around 1 million.

Thus, the answer to the question “How many Israeli emigrants are there?” depends strongly on who is counted as Israeli. No answer is entirely right or entirely wrong; the choice between definitions depends on the intended use and the specific policy question at hand. More often than not, animated public debates about “the true number of Israelis” miss this point entirely.

In 2009–2019, long-term departures from Israel stood at about 5 people per 1,000 population per year, while long-term returns stood at about 3 people per 1,000. In every year, the number of departures exceeded the number of returns, resulting in a net loss through emigration of about 2 persons per 1,000 annually. This conclusion does not take into account new immigrants, so the overall migration balance could still have been

Figure 1. Rates of Israeli Emigration per 1,000 population

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel.

positive. Yet emigration as such was a source of population loss. As an aside, these levels can be considered low by international standards.

In the year of the coronavirus pandemic (2020), departures from Israel declined by about 20%, while returns increased by a similar proportion, resulting in a zero net emigration balance. Much of this change can be attributed to restrictions on international travel, which caused many Israelis to modify their plans, for example by postponing departures abroad or bringing forward their return to Israel.

The post-pandemic reality is notable. In 2021, when pandemic restrictions still existed, albeit on a lesser scale, the pattern of emigration returned to its pre-pandemic state. Then, in 2022, the

level of departures rose sharply, whereas the level of returns remained broadly unchanged. In 2023, departures increased again, this time accompanied by a reduction in returns. In 2024, the level of departures remained unusually high, although somewhat lower than in 2023, while the level of returns declined further. In 2023–2024, the net emigration balance stood at 5–6 persons per 1,000, almost three times the level recorded immediately before and immediately after the pandemic. Historically, these levels of emigration were last observed in the 1970s, generally considered a time of high emigration.

To date, there is no single decisive explanation for the sudden increase in emigration from Israel. The war in Gaza following the Hamas-led attack on Jewish communities in southern Israel in October

2023 and the subsequent conflicts with Lebanon and Iran are obvious candidates. Yet they cannot provide the whole explanation. The increase in emigration clearly began in 2022, before any of these developments. On these grounds alone, the wars can only be regarded as contributory factors.

Further, previous research on Israeli emigration has repeatedly found that recent immigrants to Israel are the group most prone to emigration. It is worth remembering in this respect that a significant wave of immigration from Russia and Ukraine reached Israel following the outbreak of the Russia–Ukraine war in February 2022. In 2022 alone, the number of new immigrants from these two countries was about four times higher than before the coronavirus pandemic. With such an influx, some increase in subsequent emigration is to be expected. Some immigrants may acquire Israeli citizenship and a passport primarily as an insurance strategy before returning to their countries of origin, while others may choose to move on to a third country.

It should also be noted that the coronavirus pandemic represented a major shock to international migration. Owing to travel restrictions, many relocations, institutional visits, and other forms of long-term migration became impossible in 2020 and much of 2021. It is therefore possible that the post-pandemic period includes an element of migration rebalancing, whereby journeys that were postponed or canceled are now being compensated for by increased movement.

It would be fair to say that, while the increase in emigration from Israel in the post-pandemic period is real and cannot be doubted, the factors responsible for it remain poorly understood. Clarifying them should be a priority for both researchers and policymakers.

Impact of Emigration on the Population of Israel

One way of evaluating the impact of emigration on Israel's population size is to place it in the context of the European family of nations, as shown in Table 1, and ask how much Israel would gain if all emigrants had remained in the country. This is not a trivial question. Given that emigration is very commonly perceived as a loss in public debate in Israel, it is surprising that such an assessment has not been carried out so far.

This exercise is revealing in more than one sense. Israel is a small country in terms of territory, but not in terms of population size. This fact is often overlooked in both popular and academic discourse, which is unfortunate since a country's cultural and economic influence is related to its population size as much as to the size of the landmass it occupies. It is also underappreciated that Europe is a politically and culturally highly fragmented continent, with the median population size in 2025 standing below 6 million. With a population of around 10 million today, Israel is larger than each of the Scandinavian countries except Sweden, and larger than, for example, Austria, Hungary, and Switzerland – all important political and economic players in Europe.

Table 1. Israel’s Population Size Compared with European Countries, January 1, 2025

European population giants	Population (millions, rounded)
Russia	144
Turkey, Germany, UK, France, Italy	59–88
Spain, Ukraine, Poland	38–48

The rest of Europe, with Israel included

Country	Population (millions, rounded)
Romania	18.9
Netherlands	18.3
Belgium	11.8
Sweden	10.7
Czechia	10.6
Portugal	10.4
Greece	9.9
Israel	9.8
Hungary	9.6
Austria	9.1
Belarus	9.0
Switzerland	9.0
Bulgaria	6.7
Serbia	6.7
Denmark	6.0

Country	Population (millions, rounded)
Finland	5.6
Norway	5.6
Slovakia	5.5
Ireland	5.3
Croatia	3.8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.1
Moldova	3.0
Lithuania	2.8
Albania	2.8
Slovenia	2.1
Latvia	1.9
North Macedonia	1.8
Kosovo	1.7
Cyprus	1.4
Estonia	1.3
Luxembourg	0.7
Montenegro	0.6
Malta	0.5
Iceland	0.4
Andorra	0.08
Liechtenstein	0.04
Monaco	0.04
San Marino	0.03

Source: (1) Israel: CBS-Israel, Monthly Bulletin of Statistics, January 2026, Table B/1.
(2) United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2026). Data Portal, custom data acquired via the website. United Nations: New York. Available from <https://population.un.org/DataPortal/> (accessed 09 February 2026).

What impact has emigration had on Israel's population size? To answer this question, all one needs to do is add the 755,000 Israelis living abroad to the current population of Israel. This would bring Israel's population to around 10.5–10.7 million, close to the size of Sweden's population. Adding one million Israelis instead would have a broadly similar effect.

Given that Israel's population has already surpassed 10 million at the time of writing (2026), it is expected to overtake Sweden's before long; this would represent only a relatively modest boost to Israel's size and its position in the numerical hierarchy of European nations. Emigration, in purely numerical terms, has therefore not had a clearly visible detrimental effect on Israel's population size. Adding emigrants "back" would not materially improve Israel's position in the European or global rankings of population size, nor, arguably, would it alter the country's geopolitical standing by an order of magnitude.

At the same time, the loss of so many Israelis does have a profound social impact on the country, especially amid anecdotal evidence that many of the emigrants are academics, high-tech workers, and doctors. Their decision to relocate overseas removes a substantial portion of the brain trust that is meant to continue to propel the country forward. This is, undoubtedly, a negative trend.

Emigration and the Jewish Diaspora: The Picture of Israelization

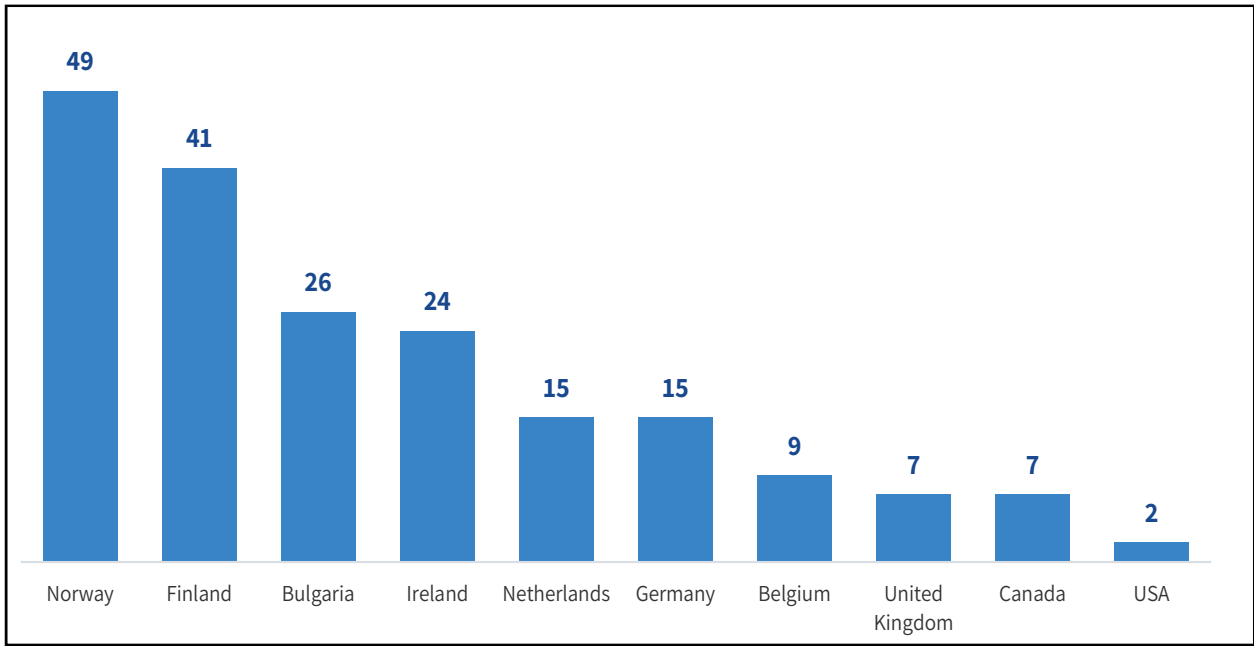
The numerical impact of Israeli emigrants on Jewish communities in the Diaspora has attracted little attention so far. This too is unfortunate, because a large or growing numerical presence can translate into a significant and increasing cultural influence of Israeli society on Jewish life in the Diaspora.

The picture of Israelis' presence across the Jewish Diaspora is shown in Figure 2. An interesting pattern emerges: in some relatively small Jewish communities, Israeli emigrants today constitute a numerically very significant minority of Jews. In the Scandinavian countries (including those not shown in the figure), Israel-born Jews account for close to, or more than, 20% of the Jewish population.

Note that in two relatively large Jewish communities in Europe – the United Kingdom and Germany – Israel-born Jews account for 7%–15% of the total Jewish population. This is broadly comparable in scale to the numerical impact of immigration on British and German societies as a whole. Thus, while Western European societies diversify through immigration, their Jewish communities diversify in their own way: they acquire a growing proportion of Israel-born individuals. The cultural influence of Israel is bound to follow its demographic expansion into the Diaspora. These communities are likely to shed some of what previously counted as "Jewish"

Figure 2. Jews Born in Israel as a Share of the Jewish Population

Around January 1, 2022 (in percentages)



Source: [Israelis abroad: Transformation of the Jewish Diaspora? \(JPR\)](#); author's estimates.

and converge more closely toward Israeli notions of Jewishness.

Importantly, the figures presented in this section are deliberately conservative and therefore understate the extent of the Israelization of Diaspora communities. They are based only on individuals born in Israel, who can be identified in national censuses and surveys. They exclude both the locally born children of Israeli emigrants and Israeli emigrants who were themselves not born in Israel. Accounting for these groups would produce substantially higher proportions than

those shown in Figure 2 – perhaps as much as twice as high. By way of illustration, in the United Kingdom and Germany the adjusted proportions may plausibly lie in the range of 15%–30%.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a panoramic view of the Israeli emigrant population. Its dimensions have been clarified. It has been shown that any attempt to quantify this population requires clarity of definition, and that the use of different definitions may result in radically different estimates. In particular, “anywhere in the range

DEMOGRAPHY

of three-quarters of a million to one million” is a reasonable answer to the question of how many Israelis live abroad. Further, it has been shown that emigration from Israel increased in the post-coronavirus period, although the precise reasons for this increase are not yet known. This is a supremely important point. Policy development in this and any other area should be based on a proper understanding of the root causes of phenomena. The reality of high emigration may appear bleak, normatively speaking, but it should be explored before a final verdict is known and policies are shaped. Old sensibilities may not apply to new realities.

Emigration has long been regarded as undesirable from the perspective of Israeli politicians. Looking at it purely from a demographic point of view, however, it has made a relatively small dent in Israel’s demography. Bringing all emigrants “back,” as a numerical exercise, does not alter the position of Israel’s population in broad geopolitical terms in any perceptible way. Israel is, and remains, a medium-sized country when compared with the typical population sizes of European nations. These fundamental realities have so far remained unaffected by emigration.

For the Jewish Diaspora, the picture is different. Despite the negative aspect of Israelis leaving their country, the upside is that for some small Diaspora communities, the arrival of Israelis can be transformative, both demographically and culturally. The demographic story of the Jewish Diaspora in the second half of the twentieth century has largely been one of aging, out-

migration, and low fertility. As a result of these forces, Jewish communities in many places – and certainly across much of Europe – have gradually shrunk. Their eventual disappearance through a persistent excess of deaths over births seemed almost inevitable. In at least some of these communities, however, the arrival of Israelis appears to have reversed their demographic fortunes. It has not changed the balance of births and deaths, but it has enabled communities to grow or stabilize through migration. It has also altered their composition and culture. The full significance of these developments will become clear only with time. Thus, while emigration from Israel is negative for the state, it can have a positive impact on Jewish communities that are otherwise in decline.

Recommending “more research” is a conventional conclusion of most projects in the social sciences today. In this instance, however, there is a particularly strong case for doing so. Statistics on the size of Jewish populations across the Diaspora have been made routinely available thanks to the efforts of demographers at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. For several decades, their estimates have appeared in the American Jewish Year Book. This has never been the case with statistics on Israeli populations abroad. Their publication has always been ad hoc. In early 2025, a foundational study of Israeli populations outside Israel was published by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research. This benchmark study, which underlies the analyses offered here, ought to be updated at regular intervals and expanded to cover new

aspects of the demography of this population. If sensible policy toward Israelis abroad is to be developed, this population needs to be properly documented.

In the area of policy development, the government of Israel needs to create a task force aimed at identifying the groups of people considering emigration and engaging with them to see if there are solutions that can keep them in Israel. There is almost certainly a connection between the security situation and people's decisions to emigrate, especially among families in which one parent has served for extended periods in the reserves. Programs that provide grants to academics and doctors, for example, can be helpful in improving retention rates for these high-income and highly educated individuals. It is high time for the Jewish Agency – a chief arm of

the Israeli state operating in the Jewish Diaspora – and other Jewish organizations to develop policies that account for the significant presence of Israelis across Diaspora Jewish communities. In certain places, most notably in Europe, Israelis both transform existing communities culturally and bolster them demographically. The growth of Israeli populations has an especially significant effect on the population of Jewish children, due to the relatively high fertility of Israelis. Traditionally, Israeli policy in the Diaspora has focused on facilitating immigration to Israel. This line of activity is likely to remain the most important in the future. Alongside it, however, another line should emerge: maintaining the connection of Israelis abroad to Israel and Israeli culture. New times and new conditions call for new approaches.



JEWISH IDENTITY

8

JPPI Jewish World Dialogue 2025: Global Jewry's Attitudes on Jewish Hard Power

Introduction

The question of Jewish military power sits at the center of one of the most important transformations in modern Jewish history. For nearly two millennia, most Jews lived without sovereignty, armies, or meaningful control over their collective security. The establishment of the State of Israel changed that condition fundamentally. Jews became responsible not only for their own defense but also for the exercise of political and military power. This transition has profoundly shaped Israeli identity and continues to influence the relationship between Israel and Jewish communities throughout the world.

For Israelis, military power is a concrete reality. Military service is woven into the fabric of citizenship and national life. Most Jewish Israelis either serve in the military or live in close proximity to those who do. The military is not an abstraction; it is a lived institution that protects families, communities, and the state itself.

For most Diaspora Jews, the experience is very different. Few serve in the armed forces of their home countries, and even fewer encounter military institutions as a central component of daily life. Consequently, Jewish military power is often understood through moral, political, and symbolic lenses rather than through direct experience. While Israelis tend to view military force primarily as a necessary instrument of national survival, many Diaspora Jews also approach it through broader ethical questions concerning justice, responsibility, and the proper use of power.

This distinction reflects a much older historical pattern. During centuries of exile, Jews generally lacked the means of self-defense and depended on non-Jewish rulers for protection. Under such conditions, military prowess was rarely regarded as a Jewish ideal. Jewish culture instead developed alternative models of masculine excellence centered on learning, scholarship, religious devotion,

JEWISH IDENTITY

communal responsibility, and ethical conduct.

Some scholars have argued that Jewish civilization produced a distinctive conception of virtue that stood in contrast to dominant Western ideals associated with conquest, aggression, and military glory. Whether or not one accepts this interpretation in full, it is clear that the experience of exile left a deep imprint on Jewish attitudes toward power and force.

The Zionist movement sought to alter this condition. One of its central ambitions was the normalization of Jewish life. Jews would once again become a sovereign people capable of defending themselves, cultivating land, governing institutions, and exercising political responsibility. Military self-reliance became a crucial component of this vision, particularly in light of persistent Arab opposition to Zionism and, later, the devastating lessons of the Holocaust.

Yet Zionism never viewed military power solely as an instrument of survival. Many Zionist thinkers believed that the return of the Jewish people to history offered an opportunity to express distinctive Jewish values in politics, society, economics, and warfare. The aspiration was not simply to become “like every other nation” but also to demonstrate how Jewish civilization might shape public life in exemplary ways. This was expressed in David Ben-Gurion’s idea that Israel should be “a light unto the nations” (Isaiah 42:6).

This aspiration found expression in the ideal

of *Tohar HaNeshek*, or “purity of arms.” First articulated by Labor Zionist leader Berl Katznelson and later incorporated into the ethical ethos of the Israel Defense Forces, the principle held that military force should be used only when necessary and should avoid harm to innocents whenever possible. In this understanding, the Jewish state was expected not merely to wield power but to wield it ethically.

In recent decades, however, alternative conceptions have emerged within Israeli society. Religious Zionist and conservative voices have argued that Western military ethics, which reflect Christian influence, do not adequately address contemporary threats, particularly asymmetric conflicts against organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah that operate from within civilian populations. Jewish military ethics, by contrast, they argue, are based on Jewish law (*Halakhah*) and prohibit harming civilians in combat, but are more “lenient” regarding civilian and “bystander” casualties. This approach tends to place greater emphasis on military victory and national survival, even while remaining committed to ethical constraints.

The resulting debate reflects a larger question: How should Jews understand power now that they possess it?

JPPI’s 2025 Jewish World Dialogue was designed to explore this question. More specifically, it sought to understand how Diaspora Jews think about Israeli military power after nearly two years of war following

the October 7 attacks and amid widespread international criticism of Israel's conduct in Gaza.

Several factors constitute the background to this dialogue.

Diaspora Attitudes Toward the Israeli Military

After World War II, although Diaspora Jews did not adopt a military way of life for themselves, they applauded the creation of an Israeli military capable of fending off the Arab armies in 1948 and winning a spectacular military victory in the Six-Day War. This appreciation was enhanced by the official Israeli presentation of its military endeavor. Israel stressed that its military was primarily defensive in nature, as the name of its armed forces, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), indicates. Israel also presents its military as operating under the ideals and strictures of “purity of arms”: limiting violence to combatants and trying to minimize civilian casualties.

Nevertheless, over the decades, as unease within the liberal American Jewish community over Israeli government policy has grown, some of that unease has spilled over into questions about Israel's use of military force. This is especially the case as some of the central visual symbols of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been images of dead Palestinian children, an iconography that has become especially prevalent in the current war.

Developments in Western liberalism and progressivism, especially among the younger generation, have also sharpened differences between Israelis and most Diaspora Jews in how they view military might and the use of force more generally. Israelis tend to see force as a necessity for protecting the sovereignty of their nation and its citizens, especially in the last decade, when wars have felt increasingly asymmetrical and have often involved non-state actors. Many young American Jews, more removed from regular, direct existential conflict, prefer to rely on a liberal international order in which problems are resolved through negotiation.

The Israel-Gaza War of 2023–2025 greatly sharpened these issues. Israel

sustained a significant number of civilian and military casualties on October 7, 2023, and in the ensuing war (around 2,000 dead and many thousands wounded), while the IDF killed tens of thousands of Palestinians, including women, children, and infants. Israel has been accused of committing war crimes, including ethnic cleansing and genocide. In many settings, these charges have gained currency and are accepted as fact or, at least, the consensus view.

as unease within the liberal American Jewish community over Israeli government policy has grown, some of that unease has spilled over into questions about Israel's use of military force

Thus, the Gaza war raised new thoughts, doubts, and feelings regarding Israel, the IDF, and military power among most Diaspora Jews, and amplified existing ones. These thoughts and feelings were not of one piece; they moved in many directions and contained many nuances. In the 2025 Jewish World Dialogue, we wanted to understand these thoughts and feelings in all their complexity.

The 2025 Dialogue

The 2025 Jewish World Dialogue asked whether attitudes toward military power were becoming a new fault line between Israel and the Diaspora. Were Diaspora Jews developing a different understanding of power, sovereignty, and force

Many expressed pride and discomfort simultaneously.

than Israelis? Were traditional forms of attachment to Israel changing?

Moreover, we wanted to understand the impact of the Gaza war: How did Jews of various ages and backgrounds react to it and to the widespread charges that Israel was committing war crimes and even genocide? We know that the vast majority of the Jewish community has strongly identified with Israel. Yet this war, and the scale of Palestinian casualties, also lent greater voice and legitimacy to Jewish criticism of Israel and even to anti-Israel and anti-Zionist sentiment.¹

The 2025 Jewish World Dialogue was an exercise in **qualitative** research. Unlike public opinion surveys, the Dialogue aimed to uncover how Diaspora Jews think, deliberate, and debate these

issues rather than to measure levels of support. Through extended conversations, participants were encouraged to explore their uncertainties, contradictions, and evolving perspectives. Its purpose was not to determine how many Jews hold a particular opinion but rather to understand how thoughtful and engaged Jews reason through difficult issues.

Methodology and Participants

The Dialogue consisted of ten moderated sessions conducted via Zoom with 108 participants from the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Seventy participants also completed a questionnaire. Participants were unusually connected to Israel. Many had visited numerous times, maintained personal relationships with Israelis, or occupied leadership positions within Jewish organizations. The sample also included a substantial number of Orthodox Jews, though a majority identified politically as “strong liberal” or “leaning liberal.” The research team encountered unexpected challenges in organizing the sessions. Although organizations initially expressed strong interest, recruiting participants proved more difficult than in previous years.

This difficulty itself became a finding. Many Jews appeared exhausted by constant discussion of Israel and the need to defend it. Others seemed reluctant to engage publicly with issues they regarded as painful, divisive, or morally complicated.

The Dominance of Ambivalence

The most striking finding of the Dialogue was the prevalence of ambivalence.

Participants repeatedly resisted simple categories such as “supportive,” “critical,” “pro-Israel,” or “anti-Israel.” Many expressed pride and discomfort simultaneously. They admired Israel’s resilience, military capabilities, and achievements while also worrying about the human consequences of military action and the moral direction of Israeli politics. A statement by a participant from the American Jewish Committee (AJC) is emblematic in this regard:

“I believe Jews have a great deal of pride for the strength of the Israeli military, the ingenuity of its intelligence services, what it’s able to accomplish in Lebanon, in Iran, and in Syria, and at the same time, today, that overwhelming ability to exert force on its enemies at times elicits discomfort, insofar as it is viewed here at times as an unequal fight – not so much against enemies such as Hamas – but against the collateral damage for the civilians within Gaza. Those issues, those areas of Israeli military strength give many American Jews pause now.”

Responses such as this were common. Participants were not abandoning Israel; rather, they were struggling to reconcile competing commitments. This same complexity emerged in participants’ criticism of the questionnaire we administered, which permitted only one answer per question.

They often felt that multiple answers described them at the same time. This complexity appeared across ideological, denominational, and generational lines.

The Right to Defend and the Obligation to Restrain

Discussion frequently began with broad agreement on one fundamental principle: Israel has the right and obligation to defend itself.

“As a country, [Israel] should and does have the right to defend itself, regardless of any further reason – full stop,” as one participant put it. Despite this common-sense approach, there was a hint of the moral complexity of the topic. In almost all sessions, participants placed great stress on defense and deterrence. Most participants took it for granted that Israel’s military power could be used legitimately only for defensive purposes. This moral aspect of participants’ approach to the topic, and their expectations of Israel, found fuller expression in the questionnaire, which asked directly: “What level of moral conduct in armed conflict should Israel strive to maintain?” Thirty-six of the 70 respondents (51%) answered, “Israel should attempt to exercise its highest moral values regardless of the enemy it is facing.” It should be noted that these thirty-six respondents included seven Orthodox participants, one specifically a Chabad adherent. Nineteen of the 70 (27%) answered, “Israel should balance between

morality and the fact that it is facing ruthless enemies who wish to destroy it.”

Importantly, participants rarely viewed these positions as mutually exclusive. Most attempted to hold both ideas simultaneously: military force is necessary, but ethical conduct remains indispensable. When asked what should guide Israeli military behavior, many participants pointed to international law. Yet they often regarded Jewish values as imposing even more demanding obligations. In effect, they expected Israel to comply with international norms while also embodying a distinctive moral vision rooted in Jewish tradition.

Changing Attitudes Toward Israeli Military Power

Participants overwhelmingly acknowledged the pride that earlier generations felt in Israeli military achievements, particularly after the Six-Day War. Israel’s victories were widely understood as evidence that Jews could defend themselves successfully after centuries of vulnerability.

Today, however, attitudes are more complicated.

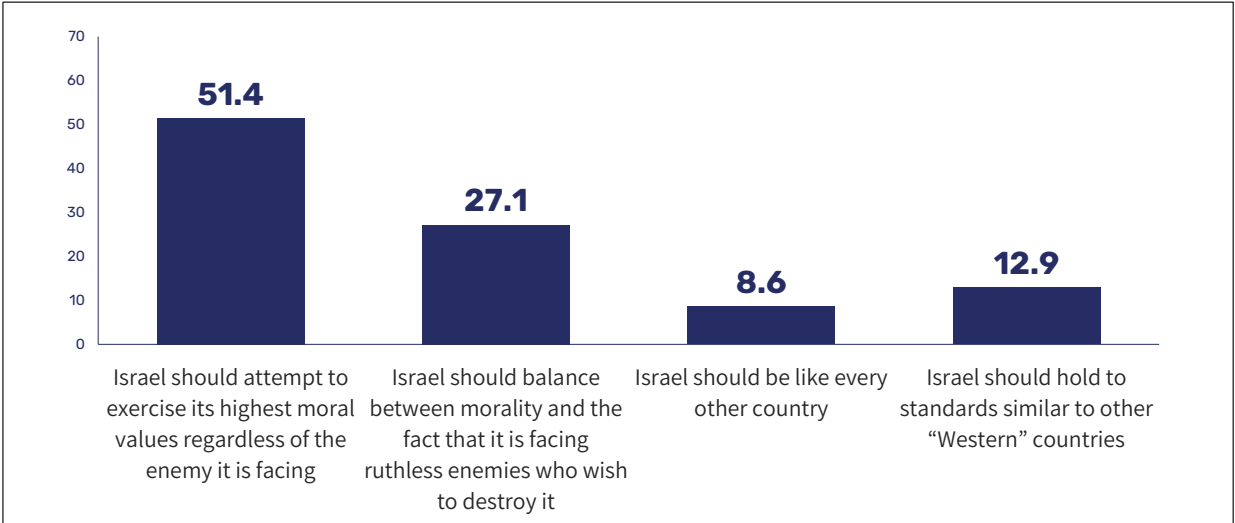
We asked participants how they and other Jews in their social circles feel about Israeli military power, both in the past, around the time of the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War, and today. Participants were practically unanimous in saying that the Six-Day War had engendered pride. Regarding the Israeli military today, they were not at all condemnatory, but they did largely

express themselves in careful and reserved terms. This was reflected first in the questionnaire responses. The questionnaire asked: “Given the fact that Hamas, Hezbollah, and other Iranian proxies deliberately situate themselves among a civilian population, has Israel’s prosecution of its recent armed conflicts made you feel more ...” 43% answered “proud”; an equal percentage answered, “more worried about Israel’s character.” Similarly, 18 of the 70 respondents answered that other Jews in their community became more detached from Israel, 23 answered that their fellow community members seemed to be prouder, and 22 answered that Jews in their community became more worried about Israel’s character. The correlation with background factors was not very strong. Twelve Haredi and Modern Orthodox participants expressed pride in Israel’s military, but a substantial minority (six) of that same group stated that they were worried about Israel’s moral character, while one said that she felt embarrassed by Israel and its military.

In the breakout sessions, participants also expressed themselves in reserved and nuanced terms. One Chicago participant said that there used to be unanimous pride, but that attitudes now “are more complicated and careful.” Another participant spoke about giving the Israeli military the “benefit of the doubt.” Some also mentioned that people they know felt shame in connection with the Gaza war, especially after mid-2024. Furthermore, some noted that since this war had been by far the longest war in which Israel had been involved, they found it increasingly difficult

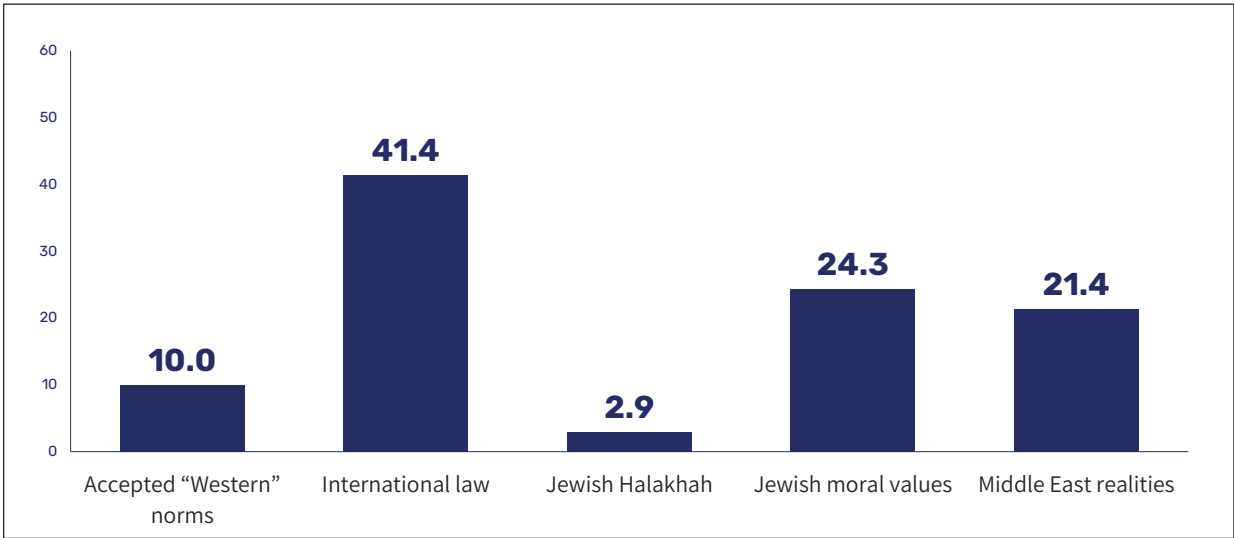
What level of moral conduct in armed conflict should Israel strive to maintain?

(in percentages)



Which one of the following frameworks should Israel consider most in guiding its military's code for the use of force?

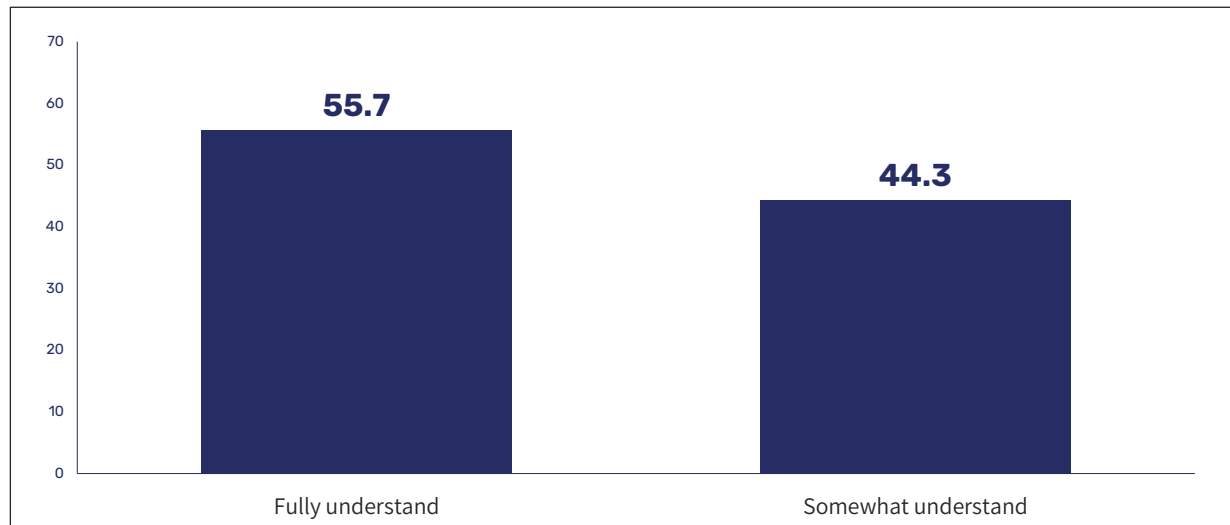
(in percentages)



JEWISH IDENTITY

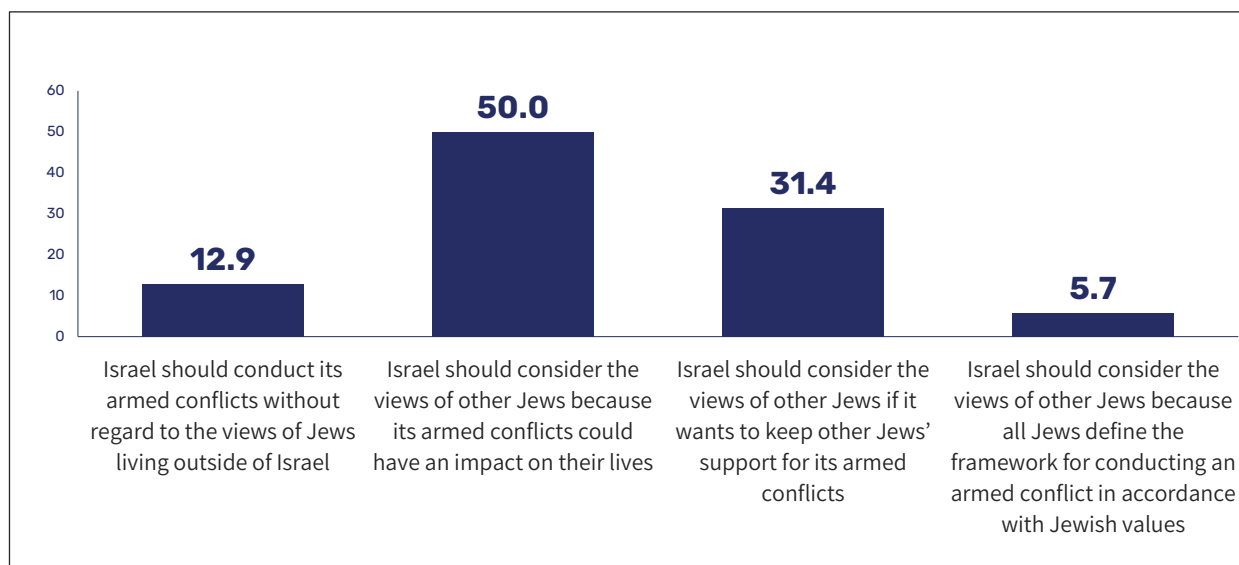
Do you think you understand the situation in which Israel finds itself vis-à-vis its enemies and neighbors in the Middle East?

(in percentages)



Thinking about Israel–Diaspora relations, do you generally believe that:

(in percentages)



to identify with and defend it as time went on. Most telling were statements that Israel and the IDF had lost their special status, were “just like any other country and every other army,” and were misbehaving in the participants’ eyes.

Several spoke of discomfort regarding civilian casualties and concern about what they perceived as a weakening commitment to the principle of “purity of arms.” Others emphasized the unprecedented challenges of fighting adversaries embedded within civilian populations and expressed admiration for Israeli soldiers operating under difficult circumstances.

Yet, even as participants acknowledged the problematic behavior of the IDF and the Israeli government, they also acknowledged that they felt a degree of pride. A participant from the Toronto Federation put it this way:

“They [members of my community] may not agree with the decisions of the [Israeli] government, how [the war] went on or how long, and all of those things. And those heated conversations I’ve heard many, many times, but when it comes to the military itself, they really feel it is quite remarkable.”

The Personal Impact of the War

One of the clearest findings was the extent to which Israeli military actions affect the lives of Diaspora Jews.

In the focus group sessions, some responses to this topic were very direct. One Jewish Council

for Public Affairs (JCPA) participant stated that he felt he was being looked at as a genocidal killer just because he was a Jew. Another participant echoed that experience: “I spend all of my work with people looking at me like I’m a baby-killing monster because I’m Jewish and a Zionist.” Other participants, such as those in the J Street group, described how the conflict with the Palestinians has become part of their day-to-day interactions and has strained relationships and friendships.

The conflict therefore operates not only as a geopolitical issue but also as a personal and communal reality.

Because Israel’s actions have consequences for Jews worldwide, many participants argued that Diaspora perspectives deserve greater consideration. While they did not challenge Israel’s sovereignty, they believed that decisions affecting world Jewry should not be made without some awareness of Diaspora concerns.

A recurring complaint was that Diaspora Jews often feel responsible for defending Israel while simultaneously feeling ignored by Israeli political leaders.

Several spoke of discomfort regarding civilian casualties and concern about what they perceived as a weakening commitment to the principle of “purity of arms.”

Many participants drew a sharp distinction between the Israeli government and the Israeli people. They expressed affection for Israelis and commitment to Israel's future while criticizing government policies and political leadership.

Diplomacy and the Use of Force

What could be termed a Diasporan perspective, even if not a full-blown progressive one, also surfaced regarding another important issue: diplomacy versus military deployment and war. One of the questions in the questionnaire asked: "Should Israel use more political or diplomatic approaches in pursuit of its goals?" Sixty-one of the 70 respondents answered "yes." This unequivocal answer contrasts with the distrust of diplomacy and negotiations vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue that has characterized Israeli political culture since the Second Intifada.

The Absence of Familiar Talking Points

An important observation concerned what participants did not say.

Traditional Israeli public diplomacy arguments appeared relatively infrequently. Few participants insisted that outsiders cannot understand Israel's security challenges. Most believed they understood those challenges reasonably well.

Similarly, participants rarely relied on simple slogans or categorical defenses of Israeli policy. Instead, they attempted to grapple with competing realities simultaneously: the brutality

of October 7, the legitimacy of Israeli self-defense, the suffering of Palestinian civilians, the failures of political leadership, and the challenges of asymmetric warfare.

The discussions therefore reflected a search for moral and political frameworks capable of accommodating complexity.

The Diversity of Diaspora Experience

The South African sessions highlighted the diversity of Diaspora experience. Participants described living under a government that is strongly anti-Israel while simultaneously encountering significant grassroots support for Israel among segments of the broader population. They felt able to advocate publicly for their views and push back against official narratives. Their experience served as a reminder that Jewish communities do not confront identical political environments and that local contexts shape attitudes toward Israel in important ways.

A Shift in the Basis of Attachment

The Dialogue's most consequential finding may concern the changing nature of Diaspora attachment to Israel.

Historically, attachment rested on several foundations: shared peoplehood, religious identity, concern for Jewish security, and pride in Israel as a civilizational project.

For many Jews, Israel represented more than a refuge or a nation-state. It embodied the possibility that Jewish values could shape society

in distinctive and exemplary ways. The state was seen not only as a political achievement but also as a moral and cultural one. Many of the most prominent pioneers of Zionism exhibited this drive: Ahad Ha'Am, Ben-Gurion, and Berl Katznelson.

The Dialogue suggests that this civilizational dimension may be weakening.

Many participants no longer view Israel as uniquely moral or as a model society. They continue to support Israel and care deeply about its future, but they increasingly regard it as a normal country rather than as an exceptional realization of Jewish ethical ideals. This shift appeared not only among progressive participants but also among many centrists and some Orthodox respondents.

The conversations we held with these engaged Jews from communities around the world suggest that many participants no longer think the IDF is “the most moral army in the world” or that it acts in accordance with superior military ethics. Unlike participants in the 2014 Jewish World Dialogue, who said they believed the IDF was more moral than other armies, some participants in the 2025 Dialogue mocked this very notion. It can be inferred that they do not think Israel is in any way “a model society” or “a light unto the nations” in the sense Ben-Gurion envisioned.

This attitude was expressed most strongly by the liberal J Street and JCPA participants, but it seems to have been shared by other participants, including Orthodox participants, who said that they were worried about Israel’s moral character.

In the wake of this development, the nature of attachment may be changing from admiration to kinship. One is attached to Israel because Israel is viewed as family. One remains committed not because Israel is perfect or exemplary but because Israelis are part of one’s extended collective. The bond endures, but its foundation shifts.

Jewish Identity and Competing Moral Languages

The Dialogue also illuminates important differences between Israeli and Diaspora understandings of Jewish identity.

Many Diaspora Jews emphasize universal ethical commitments and regard them as central expressions of Jewish values. Concepts such as justice, human dignity, equality, and moral responsibility occupy a prominent place in their self-understanding. By contrast, many Israeli Jews – particularly on the political right – place greater emphasis on collective survival, national solidarity, and the obligations associated with sovereignty, defining their Jewishness primarily through national-ethnic affiliation or ritual practice.

To the extent that Religious Zionists emphasize the sacred dimension, they tend to do so in a particularist mode. Thus, in Israel, the sacred dimension is associated with particularism, while in the liberal Jewish Diaspora it is associated with universal values. Any attempt to bridge the gap between the two communities must take these differences into account.

JEWISH IDENTITY

The difference concerning Jewish identity has become increasingly visible in debates over Israel's conduct in war.

A Liminal Moment

The Dialogue sessions suggested that many Diaspora Jews are currently experiencing what social scientists call a liminal condition.

They are no longer fully comfortable with older narratives about Israel, yet they have

They are no longer fully comfortable with older narratives about Israel, yet they have not developed stable alternatives.

not developed stable alternatives. They occupy an intermediate space characterized by uncertainty, experimentation, and reevaluation.

Participants frequently described themselves as holding contradictory emotions at the same time. They felt pride and shame, solidarity and criticism, admiration and disappointment. Rather than choosing one side, they were attempting to live within the tension. A participant from Australia fully acknowledged these self-contradictory feelings:

“There is no one clear-cut answer to the question, ‘Am I proud or am I ashamed?’ It’s incredibly complex, and being able to hold that complexity is probably the most truthful answer a young person in the Diaspora can obtain... You can hold both pride and shame.

There doesn’t need to be an ‘or.’ Two truths can exist at the same time.”

This condition may prove temporary, or it may signal a deeper transformation in Israel–Diaspora relations.

Policy Recommendations

1. Consider repurposing the IDF officer delegations as a central instrument. JPPI brings hundreds of IDF officers to Diaspora communities each year, currently framed as exposure and goodwill. They are the most valuable asset available for addressing what this Dialogue uncovered, and they are underused. Diaspora Jews will not accept moral reassurance from spokespeople or advocacy organizations, all understood to be making a case. They will listen to a major who can describe an actual targeting decision – who was in the room, what the legal advisor said, which strike was aborted, what the doubt felt like, what he believes in retrospect was wrong. That is testimony, not hasbara, and it is the only register in which the question participants are asking can be answered.
2. Communities should create more opportunities for open and honest conversation about Israel. Participants stated that they lack forums in which complex views can be explored safely.
3. Educational institutions and agencies should develop materials that encourage nuanced

engagement with Israel while affirming the importance of Israel–Diaspora ties.

4. Israeli diplomatic representatives should strengthen engagement with Diaspora communities and communicate Israeli perspectives more effectively.
5. Greater effort should be devoted to helping Diaspora Jews understand Israeli realities and helping Israelis understand the experiences of Jews living as minorities in other societies. Programs such as Birthright, gap-year initiatives, study-abroad experiences, and federation missions should emphasize sustained relationships between Israelis and Diaspora Jews. Furthermore, expanded exchange and service opportunities would allow Israelis and Diaspora Jews to spend meaningful periods of time living and working in one another's communities.

Conclusion

The 2025 Jewish World Dialogue reveals a Jewish world that remains deeply connected to Israel but is rethinking the meaning of that connection.

The central story is not estrangement. Nor is it unconditional support. Rather, it is the emergence of a more complex and self-conscious relationship to Jewish power, sovereignty, and responsibility. Participants continue to care deeply about Israel. They continue to see its security and flourishing as matters of profound importance. Yet many no longer view Israel through the idealized framework that shaped earlier generations. They

are searching for new ways to reconcile moral aspiration with political reality, universal values with collective obligations, and criticism with commitment.

Whether this search produces a new form of Zionism, a revised understanding of peoplehood, or some other framework remains unclear. What is clear is that many Diaspora Jews are engaged in an ongoing process of reflection and reevaluation.

The challenge facing Jewish institutions is not to resolve these tensions prematurely but to provide the intellectual, educational, and communal space necessary for thoughtful engagement. If managed constructively, this period of uncertainty may ultimately strengthen rather than weaken the bonds between Israel and world Jewry.

The Dialogue suggests that we may be witnessing an important inflection point in modern Jewish life: a transition from older certainties to a more complex, honest, and mature conversation.

Endnotes

- 1 David Manchester and Meg Siritzky, JFNA 2025 Survey of Jewish Life Since October 7.



RESILIENCE

9

2026 JPPI ANTISEMITISM INDEX

Five Transformations and Directions for Intervention

Executive Summary

This assessment identifies the principal transformations reshaping contemporary antisemitism and sets out priorities for Israeli decision-makers, Jewish institutions, and international partners engaged in the protection of Jewish life and the legitimacy of Israel.

The central finding is that antisemitism is moving from an episodic threat environment toward a more systemic one. Its most important expressions are not only the number of incidents recorded, but the severity of violence, the inability of institutions to convert commitments into protection, the concealment of Jewish identity, the embedding of bias in digital knowledge systems, and the spread of narratives denying Jewish historical belonging.

Five transformations define the current landscape.

From volume to severity. First, the challenge has shifted from volume to severity. Incident counts remain important, but they do not capture the full risk environment. Recent years have seen elevated levels of physical assaults, lethal attacks, and behavioral adaptation among Jews across several democracies. The relevant question is not only how often antisemitism occurs, but how

dangerous it becomes and how deeply it alters Jewish life.

Strong laws, failing protection. Second, strong laws do not guarantee effective protection. Many democratic states have adopted legal frameworks, national strategies, and public commitments against antisemitism. Yet many Jews report declining confidence in public authorities' ability to protect them in practice. The decisive indicator is whether governments deliver measurable protection across the full chain, from reporting and classification to investigation, prosecution, sentencing, and public accountability.

From visible institutions to invisible individuals. Third, the focus of protection must expand from institutions to individuals. Synagogues, schools, and communal organizations remain essential, but they do not capture the full geography of Jewish vulnerability. Increasingly, antisemitism affects individuals operating outside established communal frameworks. This assessment uses the term "constrained visibility" for the pressure on Jews in formally free societies to reduce the public expression of Jewish identity; "marranization" is used only as an analytical analogy, not a claim of historical equivalence. The

most exposed Jews are often the least connected to support networks and the least able to access existing protection mechanisms.

From online content to cognitive infrastructure. Fourth, the problem is moving from online content to cognitive infrastructure. Artificial intelligence systems, search engines, social media platforms, and collaborative knowledge repositories increasingly shape how younger generations understand Jews, Judaism, Zionism, and Israel. The issue extends beyond hostile content; it concerns the systems through which knowledge itself is produced, ranked, and transmitted. Bias embedded in these infrastructures can shape outcomes far beyond any single platform or news cycle.

From policy criticism to historical delegitimization. Fifth, challenges to Israel's legitimacy increasingly extend beyond policy disputes to questions of historical belonging and collective identity. Criticism of Israeli policy, including severe criticism, is not inherently antisemitic; the concern is the movement from policy criticism to denial of Jewish peoplehood, historical connection, collective legitimacy, or equal national self-determination. Narratives that contest Jewish peoplehood, historical continuity, and ancestral connection to the Land of Israel have moved from fringe discourse into mainstream educational, institutional, and digital environments.

These transformations require a move from reactive response to standing systems.

For Israeli decision-makers, priorities include treating global antisemitism as a national-security and peoplehood issue; building severity-based monitoring and aliyah-readiness infrastructure; launching a national initiative on AI, digital bias, and antisemitism; evaluating public diplomacy by demonstrated audience impact; strengthening diplomatic capacity to communicate Jewish historical continuity and indigeneity; and creating regular Israel-Diaspora consultation before decisions with foreseeable consequences for Jewish communities abroad.

For global Jewish leaders, priorities include measuring institutional effectiveness rather than relying solely on incident counts; reaching isolated Jews outside traditional communal frameworks; developing country-level risk and resilience dashboards; treating younger Jews as an early-warning population; building durable coalitions with non-Jewish partners; and creating protection mechanisms capable of surviving electoral and political change.

The assessment does not conclude that deterioration is inevitable. The contemporary environment presents significant challenges, but it also offers opportunities unavailable in previous generations. Israel exists as a sovereign center of Jewish life. Diaspora solidarity remains strong. New regional partnerships, technological capabilities, and institutional tools create opportunities for lasting progress. A growing body of evidence also identifies interventions that have produced measurable results – from institutional enforcement and civil-rights litigation to platform

governance and accountability mechanisms. These experiences provide a foundation for replication, adaptation, and shared learning across different national and communal contexts.

The task is therefore not simply to respond to antisemitism more forcefully, but to build systems that change outcomes.

Assessment Framework: From Incidents to Signals

Any assessment of antisemitism must begin with data. It cannot end there. Incident statistics remain indispensable, but they do not alone indicate which developments are most likely to shape the future environment of Jewish communities and Israel. A year with fewer incidents may still be more dangerous if violence becomes more lethal, if confidence in public institutions deteriorates, or if anti-Jewish narratives become embedded in the systems that shape public knowledge.

The analysis that follows evaluates developments according to their likely significance for Jewish security, communal resilience, and Israel-Diaspora policy. Some represent durable transformations requiring long-term adaptation. Others are emerging developments whose future significance is not yet fully established. Still others reveal institutional gaps where existing policies, metrics, or response mechanisms remain inadequate to the challenge.

The purpose of this framework is to describe antisemitism in 2026 and to help decision-makers prioritize attention, allocate resources, and assess whether current responses match evolving threats.

Methodological Note: This assessment draws on national monitoring bodies, community-security organizations, public polling, legal outcomes, and selected media reports. These sources differ in definitions, reporting practices, and evidentiary thresholds. Cross-country comparisons are therefore used to identify patterns of severity and institutional stress, not to rank countries by absolute levels of antisemitism.

Category Definitions: A structural trend is visible across multiple countries or institutions and is likely to persist; an institutional gap is a mismatch between declared policy and operational capacity; and an emerging signal is a development whose scale is not yet fully measurable, but whose strategic implications justify monitoring.

Table 1. Assessment framework: Five transformations, status, and policy implications

Transformation	Assessment (2026)	Policy Implication
From volume to severity	Structural trend	Develop severity-based monitoring systems incorporating lethality and physical violence, while tracking behavioral adaptation and mobility through dedicated indicators elsewhere in the framework.
Strong laws, failing protection	Institutional gap	Measure the effectiveness of the protection chain from reporting and investigation to prosecution, conviction, sentencing, and time to outcome.
From visible institutions to invisible individuals	Emerging signal	Shift protection strategies from an institution-centered model toward an individual-centered model capable of reaching isolated Jews beyond established communal networks.
From online content to cognitive infrastructure	Emerging signal / Institutional gap	Build capabilities for AI auditing, platform accountability, digital governance, and monitoring of knowledge infrastructures.
From policy criticism to historical delegitimization	Structural trend	Develop long-term educational, diplomatic, and public-facing frameworks centered on Jewish peoplehood, historical continuity, and indigeneity.

These classifications are intended as a recurring assessment tool rather than a one-time exercise. Future editions of this assessment should reassess them annually, tracking which emerging signals become structural trends, which institutional gaps are addressed, and which new developments require sustained policy attention.

1. From Volume to Severity:
Measuring the New Antisemitic Risk

Recent data point to related patterns across several Western democracies: incident levels remain historically elevated; physical violence has intensified in several jurisdictions; confidence

in institutional protection has weakened; and growing numbers of Jews report modifying their behavior in response to antisemitism. While the pattern is not uniform across countries, the overall trend points toward a changing risk environment in which severity, rather than volume alone, has become an increasingly important indicator.

The available evidence from 2024–2026 makes this shift visible. In several countries, total incident numbers have stabilized or declined from immediate post-October 7 peaks, yet physical assaults, lethal attacks, and behavioral adaptation remain at historically high levels.

Table 2. Severity indicators: incident volume, physical violence, and lethal or near-lethal antisemitic violence

Country	Incident volume	Physical violence	Lethal or near-lethal violence
United States (a)	6,274 incidents in 2025 (–33% from 2024; five times the level recorded a decade ago)	203 physical assaults – record high	3 deaths in two attacks; Boulder also showed mass-casualty potential.
France (b)	1,320 antisemitic acts in 2025	126 physical assaults – record level	1 clear near-lethal synagogue arson (La Grande-Motte); 1 additional severe synagogue arson (Rouen).
Australia (c)	1,654 incidents, Oct. 2024–Sept. 2025	24 physical assaults	15 deaths at Bondi Beach; 1 arson attack on an occupied synagogue in Melbourne, resulting in 1 injury.
United Kingdom (d)	3,700 incidents in 2025	174 physical attacks (170 assaults + 4 incidents of extreme violence)	2 deaths at Manchester; additional severe attacks against Jewish targets, including stabbing and arson cases.
Canada (e)	6,800 incidents in 2025; 11 violent incidents by May 2026	10 violent incidents in 2025	Shootings and arson targeting Jewish institutions

Note: National reports use different terms for physical violence, including assaults, attacks, violent incidents, and extreme violence. This table uses “physical antisemitic violence” as a common analytical category. “Near-lethal” refers to attacks with plausible lethal potential, such as arson, shooting, firebombing, or stabbing against Jewish institutions, worshipers, or residential sites, even when no deaths occurred. Because national reports use different collection methods, the table should be read as a severity signal rather than a strict country ranking.

Sources: (a) ADL (2026); (b) SPCJ and FMS (2026), France 24 (2024), The Guardian (2024); (c) ECAJ (2025), CNN (2024); (d) CST (2026), Hendrix and Adam (2025), The Times of Israel (2026), Euronews (2026), NPR (2026); (e) B'nai Brith Canada (2026), JNS (2026), ADL (2026).

Three readings support the shift from volume to severity:

The post-October 7 baseline has not returned to normal. In several countries, 2025 figures are below the immediate post-October 7 peak but remain far above pre-2023 levels. The relevant

The decisive question is whether Jewish citizens experience the state as capable of protecting them in practice.

question is not whether incidents are slightly down from the peak. It is whether Jewish communities have entered a new elevated-risk equilibrium.

Violence can intensify even when total incidents decline. The

United States illustrates this possibility: total incidents fell 33%, but physical assaults set a record at 203, and lethal violence reached its highest level since the 1990s (ADL 2026). France shows a related pattern (SPCJ and FMS 2026). Policymakers must track intensity and lethality separately from frequency.

Jewish insecurity is increasingly behavioral. The key indicator is not only whether Jews say they feel unsafe – it is whether they change their lives. Behavioral adaptation – concealing identity,

avoiding spaces, modifying speech – is a strong real-world signal that antisemitism has begun to reshape ordinary Jewish behavior.

Policy implication: incident counts remain indispensable, but they are no longer sufficient. Future assessments should place greater emphasis on severity, lethality, behavioral adaptation, and indicators of community resilience. The question is not only how much antisemitism exists, but how dangerous it has become and how profoundly it affects Jewish life.

2. Strong Laws, Failing Protection: Antisemitism as a Test of Democratic Effectiveness

The second transformation is institutional: the decisive question is not only whether liberal democracies condemn antisemitism, but whether they protect Jews effectively in practice. Antisemitism should therefore be treated as a communal problem and as a diagnostic test of liberal-democratic effectiveness – specifically of the gap between formal condemnation and operational protection.

In liberal democracies, Jews are formally protected by law. Most states condemn antisemitism, have adopted national strategies, hate-crime statutes, school programs, and official commemorations. These instruments are important. But they do not prove that protection is effective. The decisive question is whether Jewish citizens experience the state as capable of protecting them in practice.

This gap between norm and reality can be understood as performative condemnation: public denunciation without operational consequence. When antisemitic speech is publicly denounced but rarely sanctioned; when victims do not report because they expect no result; when the chain from incident to investigation to prosecution to conviction is systematically incomplete, the problem is not only hatred. It is also institutional underperformance. In the most serious cases, this creates a perception gap between public expressions of concern and operational consequence.

The French example illustrates the distinction clearly. France has one of Europe's strongest legal frameworks against antisemitism, yet 2025 figures showed 1,320 antisemitic acts and a record 126 physical assaults (SPCJ and FMS 2026). Similarly, Britain has robust hate-crime legislation, yet 83% of British Jews believe police are not doing enough to protect them (Boyd 2025; CAA 2025). The question is not whether the law exists but whether it functions.

A broader European pattern may be emerging. In several Western European democracies, governments have strengthened legal frameworks and public commitments against antisemitism, while significant portions of Jewish communities continue to report declining confidence in institutional protection. The problem is not only legal but operational: whether public institutions can translate formal commitments into outcomes that are visible, measurable, and trusted by those they are intended to protect.

This explains the growing importance of litigation, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms. Their value lies not only in individual cases won, but also in their ability to document protection gaps, generate public scrutiny, and provide evidence of where institutional responses succeed or fail. In this sense, antisemitism functions as a challenge for Jewish communities and as a test of democratic effectiveness.

Measuring institutional effectiveness requires tracking the full operational chain: report, classify, investigate, prosecute, convict, sentence, communicate outcome, and restore victim confidence. How many antisemitic complaints are filed, investigated, classified as hate crimes, prosecuted, and result in conviction? What are the sentencing rates for hate-crime aggravation? What is the average time from complaint to judicial outcome? These

Antisemitism serves as a sensitive measure of whether democratic institutions can convert legal principles into effective protection.

numbers are rarely published. Their absence is itself a diagnostic signal. Publishing them annually should be treated as a minimum requirement for states that claim to take antisemitism seriously.

Policy implication: the key indicator is not what governments say, but what happens after an incident is reported. Future assessments should focus on reporting rates, investigations,

prosecutions, convictions, sentencing patterns, and time to resolution. Antisemitism serves as a sensitive measure of whether democratic institutions can convert legal principles into effective protection.

3. From Visible Institutions to Invisible Individuals: Identity Concealment and the Jews Outside Communal Reach

The third transformation is social and communal: the unit of protection cannot be only the visible Jewish institution. It must increasingly include the individual Jew. Synagogues, schools, federations, community centers, and advocacy organizations remain essential, but they do not capture the full geography of Jewish vulnerability.

This report uses the term “constrained visibility” to describe the pressure on Jews in formally free societies to reduce the public visibility of Jewish identity. The term captures a contemporary pattern of constrained concealment. The related term “marranization” may be analytically useful but should be understood only as an analogy and not as a claim of historical repetition.

The American Jewish Committee (AJC) found that 55% of American Jews changed their behavior in the past year out of fear of antisemitism (AJC 2026). The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) reported that 76% of Jews in Europe hide their Jewish identity at least occasionally, while 34% avoid Jewish events or sites (FRA 2024).

When Jews avoid public markers of Jewishness, refrain from posting Jewish content online, avoid discussing Israel, or withdraw from professional or social spaces, antisemitism has moved beyond external hostility and into the management of everyday life.

This evolution exposes a broader problem. Current Jewish protection strategies remain heavily oriented toward visible institutions: synagogues, schools, federations, community centers, and advocacy organizations. These institutions are indispensable, but they are not the full map of Jewish vulnerability. The most exposed Jews are often outside organized communal networks: the only Jewish pupil in a school, the employee facing hostile speech without institutional support, the unaffiliated family, the online victim, or the individual who experiences antisemitism regularly but lacks the vocabulary, confidence, or institutional connection to report it.

As a result, a growing share of Jewish vulnerability remains difficult to detect. Existing resources tend to reach those already close enough to communal structures to know where help exists. The less connected the victim, the less likely the system is to see the case. These cases often remain invisible to the very mechanisms designed to assist them.

The task is therefore not only to strengthen institutions but to extend their reach. Future protection efforts should be evaluated not solely by the resilience of synagogues, schools, or communal organizations, but by their capacity

to identify, support, and empower Jews beyond established communal frameworks.

Policy implication: protection must become accessible at the level of the individual. A confidential national reporting and referral platform should combine multilingual intake, anonymous reporting where necessary, legal triage, school and workplace referral pathways, emergency escalation, connection to existing communal organizations, and anonymized public reporting. This is one of the most underdeveloped components of current antisemitism policy.

4. From Online Content to Cognitive Infrastructure: AI, Platforms, and the Knowledge Environment

The fourth transformation concerns the knowledge environment: digital antisemitism is not only a matter of hostile content circulating online. It increasingly concerns the infrastructure through which users learn what is true, credible, and historically meaningful. A growing share of how younger generations understand Jews, Judaism, Zionism, and Israel is shaped not by teachers, journalists, or community institutions but by social platforms, search engines, generative AI models, and collaborative knowledge repositories.

Recent developments illustrate the scale of the challenge. ADL's AI Index evaluation of Grok, one of the most widely used AI chatbots, awarded it a score of 21 out of 100 for its handling of antisemitism-related prompts, indicating serious shortcomings in identifying, contextualizing, and

responding to antisemitic content (ADL 2026). At the same time, disputes over the content, sourcing, and framing of entries related to Israel, Zionism, and Jewish history have highlighted the growing importance of collaborative reference platforms as arenas in which historical narratives are contested and amplified. Together, these developments point to a broader reality: the systems that organize and distribute knowledge are becoming policy arenas in their own right.

The concern is not that every unfavorable presentation of Israel or Zionism is antisemitic. The more consequential dangers are often subtler: persistent imbalance in historical framing, disproportionate source weighting, distorted treatment of

The concern is not that every unfavorable presentation of Israel or Zionism is antisemitic.

Zionism, erosion of Jewish historical continuity, or the repeated association of Israel with a narrow set of criminalizing narratives. When such patterns become embedded in systems that millions of users rely on to discover, rank, and interpret information, their influence extends far beyond any single article, post, or news cycle.

This transformation carries concrete implications. Traditional responses to antisemitism have focused on identifying and removing harmful content. Increasingly, however, the problem lies upstream: how AI answer generation, search ranking, collaborative reference pages, training data, and recommendation

systems select, prioritize, contextualize, and reproduce information. This requires attention to four layers: search ranking, AI-generated answers, collaborative reference platforms, and recommendation or amplification systems. Questions of transparency, auditing, accountability, and data quality become as important as questions of moderation.

Israel already possesses an underutilized comparative advantage here. Israel cannot govern the global information environment alone, but it can help build the tools by which bias is measured, documented, and contested. Potential interventions include regular independent audits of major AI models; expert correction networks for key reference resources; partnerships with technology companies to improve the quality and diversity of datasets relating to Jewish history, antisemitism, and Israel; and a national initiative bringing together technological expertise, research institutions, and public communication capabilities.

The durable objective, however, is governance rather than ownership. Control of a platform is temporary and often politically contested. By contrast, transparent audits, publicly available benchmarking, trusted datasets, accountability mechanisms, and regulatory frameworks can shape platform behavior regardless of ownership and therefore endure beyond any particular company, government, or leadership team.

Policy implication: the issue is not only the circulation of antisemitic material online. It is

the growing influence of digital systems that determine what information users encounter, trust, and remember. Responses should address content moderation, but also transparency, auditing, accountability, and the governance of the infrastructures through which knowledge is produced and distributed.

5. From Policy Criticism to Historical Delegitimization: Israel, Indigeneity, and Jewish Continuity

The fifth transformation is conceptual: Israel's legitimacy is not challenged only through criticism of specific policies. Increasingly, the challenge concerns the legitimacy of Jewish historical belonging itself – a broader challenge than ordinary policy debate. Criticism of Israeli policy, including severe criticism, is not inherently antisemitic; the issue addressed here is the movement from policy criticism to denial of Jewish peoplehood, historical connection, collective legitimacy, or equal national self-determination.

For decades, Israel's international legitimacy has often been framed through the memory of the Holocaust, the need for Jewish refuge, and the moral imperative of Jewish vulnerability. This framework remains essential, but it is no longer sufficient in an era of competitive victimhood, decolonial categories, and declining historical literacy. When legitimacy rests primarily on suffering, it becomes vulnerable to counter-narratives that minimize, relativize, or reframe that suffering.

The indigenous reframing offers a different basis: presenting Jewish legitimacy not primarily through suffering but through rootedness – historical continuity, language, archaeology, religion, collective memory, and enduring attachment to land. In this framework, Zionism is not a European colonial project but the national movement of a people returning to political agency in its ancestral homeland. This framing can reverse rather than merely deflect the colonial accusation and can open the possibility of dialogue based on mutual recognition rather than competing victimhood, provided it is developed carefully and supported by scholarship rather than asserted as a slogan.

Related forms of recognition can be seen in the logic of the Abraham Accords and in emerging coalitions between Jewish, Christian, and indigenous activists who share a framework of rootedness and recognition. This reframing should be applied carefully: its purpose is not to deny Palestinian identity, suffering, or political claims. The concern arises when criticism of policy becomes denial of Jewish peoplehood, erasure of Jewish historical belonging, collective blame of Jews, or exclusion of Jews and Israel from standards applied to other nations.

Policy implication: policy-based advocacy should be complemented by frameworks rooted in Jewish peoplehood, historical continuity, and indigeneity. The question is not only what Israel does, but whether the legitimacy of Jewish nationhood itself is recognized.

Taken together, these five transformations point to a single underlying phenomenon: the progressive problematization of the Jewish fact itself. As Israel is recast from a contested state into a moral anomaly, Zionism comes to stand as the name for that anomaly, and visible Jewishness becomes, by association, socially burdensome. The result is not merely an increase in hostility, but a new symbolic climate in which Jews learn to scale back their public presence, institutions hesitate to extend unambiguous protection, and aggression becomes easier to rationalize as the Jew is increasingly cast as bearing collective guilt. Constrained visibility, in this light, is not an isolated behavioral response but the social symptom of a deeper shift – one in which Jewish identity, Israel, Zionism, Hebrew memory, and Jewish peoplehood are increasingly treated as problems to be managed rather than as the legitimate expressions of a living people.

**Jewish identity,
Israel, Zionism,
Hebrew memory,
and Jewish
peoplehood
are increasingly
treated as
problems to be
managed**

What Has Worked: From Condemnation to Consequence

The five transformations described above point to a deteriorating environment, not to inevitability. The operational lesson is consistent: monitor, document, translate the problem into the institution's own rules, escalate, impose a cost, measure the outcome, and replicate the model. A growing body of evidence demonstrates that antisemitism can be reduced when interventions move beyond awareness and condemnation toward institutional accountability. The decisive variable is effectiveness in practice, not commitment in principle.

Despite operating in very different arenas, the most successful interventions share a common logic. They translate antisemitism into the institution's own language of responsibility – whether civil-rights law, editorial standards, platform-governance rules, educational norms, or compliance obligations. They create tangible costs for inaction or misconduct: legal, financial, reputational, disciplinary, or regulatory. They rely on documented evidence rather than appeals to sympathy, building cases through complaints, dossiers, audits, edit histories, and verified violations. They are often driven by specialized actors capable of acting more rapidly and more precisely than governments. They are grounded in universal standards that strengthen institutional integrity beyond the Jewish community alone. Above all, they can be measured.

Table 3. What works: evidence of effective intervention mechanisms

What works	Illustrative evidence	Main idea for policymakers
Enforcement and litigation (a)	Campus antisemitic incidents fell 66% (1,694 to 583, 2024–2025), amid increased enforcement and litigation. UCLA: \$6.13M settlement, 15-year injunction. Columbia: \$220M+ agreement, \$21M EEOC fund.	Institutions move when antisemitism creates enforceable legal, financial, regulatory, or reputational costs.
Legal triage and victim support (b)	Structured intake and referral converted 1,000+ complaints into legal cases or interventions.	Incidents matter politically and legally only when they are documented, assessed, and translated into enforceable claims.
Media and knowledge accountability (c)	Media watchdog work secured 200+ corrections. Wikipedia permanently banned eight editors from Israel–Palestine topics (January 2025).	Accountability works best when it uses the institution’s own standards: editorial rules, sourcing rules, conflict-of-interest rules, or platform procedures.
Textbook and curriculum reform (d)	2022–2024 reviews found virtually all negative portrayals of Jews removed from key Saudi textbooks, confirmed by USCIRF.	Long-term reform is most effective when universal educational standards are combined with sustained monitoring and local incentives.
Security hardening (e)	UK: GBP 18M/year, 2024–2028. U.S.: \$94M distributed to 512 Jewish organizations (2025).	Security reduces vulnerability and saves lives, but it protects Jewish life more than it reduces antisemitic ideology.
Strategies and envoys tied to metrics (f)	23 EU states adopted strategies; 20 appointed envoys or coordinators. No consistent incident reduction yet demonstrated.	Strategies are useful infrastructure only when tied to enforcement, public data, accountability, and measurable outcomes.

Organizations: (a) U.S. federal government; UCLA; Columbia; Harvard; NYU; Barnard. (b) ADL Legal Action Network; CALL. (c) CAMERA; CAMERA Arabic; HonestReporting; Wikipedia. (d) IMPACT-se; USCIRF. (e) CST; FEMA NSGP. (f) EU member states; national coordinators.

What Works, What Works Partially, and What Does Not Work Alone

The evidence points to a hierarchy of effectiveness. The most consistently successful interventions are those that create consequences: application of existing law, civil-rights enforcement, litigation, funding pressure, professional accountability, evidence-based watchdog work, platform governance, and security hardening. Across very different contexts, these mechanisms alter incentives by attaching legal, financial, reputational, disciplinary, or regulatory costs to antisemitic conduct.

A second category consists of interventions that are necessary but rarely sufficient. National strategies, EU action plans, IHRA adoption, educational initiatives, interfaith dialogue, and public diplomacy can strengthen awareness, coordination, and institutional capacity. Their impact, however, becomes measurable only when they are connected to enforcement mechanisms and accountability structures.

A third category includes measures with symbolic or political value that do not, alone, change institutional behavior. High-level rhetoric, conferences, commemorations, new laws without prosecution, and public condemnations may be necessary for public norm-setting, but they do not reliably reduce antisemitism unless connected to enforcement and measurable consequence.

Two qualifications matter. First, protective success should not be confused with ideological reduction. Security measures for synagogues,

schools, and community institutions save lives and reduce vulnerability, but they address physical protection rather than the drivers of antisemitism itself. Second, recognition frameworks – national strategies, special envoys, and formal policy instruments – remain important but cannot be assessed solely by their existence. Without publicly available enforcement data and measurable outcomes, their effectiveness remains difficult to evaluate.

That sequence should be treated as a replicable model: monitor, document, translate the problem into the institution's own rules, escalate, impose a cost, measure the outcome, and adapt the model to local conditions.

Opportunities: Building Durable Systems in a Crisis

The current crisis is both a threat environment and an opportunity to build durable systems. The five transformations described above require severity-based monitoring, operational protection metrics, channels to reach individual Jews outside communal structures, technological governance of knowledge infrastructure, and a confident language of Jewish historical rootedness. The present crisis is severe, but it is not structurally comparable to Jewish vulnerability before the creation of Israel. Israel exists as a sovereign center of Jewish life. Diaspora solidarity has deepened in measurable, financial terms. Opportunities exist that were not available in earlier historical moments. The challenge is to act on them with method.

1. Abraham Accords: From Diplomatic Framework to Operational Alliance

Despite the Gaza war, the 2026 conflict with Iran, and sustained diplomatic pressure, regional alignments have shown signs of durability. Reported UAE–Israel trade has exceeded \$11.7 billion. Joint military exercises took place in April 2025. Reports of UAE deployment of Iron Dome systems under Iranian fire in 2026, if confirmed, would mark a qualitative threshold. Morocco signed a joint military action plan for 2026 with \$277 million in defense contracts. Reports that Somaliland and Kazakhstan joined or moved toward the Accords in late 2025 should be treated as politically significant but require continued verification and monitoring. The Builders of the Middle East initiative has accumulated over 500 million views, documenting Arab, Iranian, and Kurdish populations who aspire to normalization (JPPI 2025). These developments matter for antisemitism because they weaken the civilizational isolation of Israel and create non-Jewish validators of Jewish legitimacy. They suggest the Abraham Accords may be evolving from a diplomatic framework into a more operationally relevant network, though durability remains dependent on regional politics, U.S. policy, and the trajectory of regional conflicts.

2. Diaspora Solidarity: From Emotion to Patrimony

Israel Bonds reached \$2 billion for the third consecutive year. Post–October 7 philanthropy generated \$2 billion in additional contributions.

This is more than emotional solidarity. It is a financial and patrimonial bond in active construction.

The same evidence also points to a mobility challenge. Amid growing concern about Jewish emigration from parts of Europe, some communal leaders have warned of a significant demographic outflow. In January 2025, Menachem Margolin, Chairman of the European Jewish Association, stated that approximately 40,000 Jews had left Europe in recent years with no intention of returning. Combined with evidence of rising emigration intent among British Jews (Boyd 2025), these warnings suggest that large-scale aliyah scenarios should be incorporated into planning as contingencies, even if their scale remains uncertain. The challenge is to institutionalize this solidarity before crisis-driven mobilization erodes; the 1967 precedent shows that post-shock mobilization can dissipate rapidly if not formalized into durable structures.

3. Institutional Firmness as a Replicable Model

In the United States, the closure or removal of antisemitic university encampments coincided with a 33% decline in antisemitic incidents (ADL 2026). This suggests that visible institutional enforcement may reduce permissive environments, though causality should be treated cautiously and tested against other factors, including protest cycles, university policies, reporting practices, and legal pressure. The broader lesson is not partisan endorsement of any single case, but the importance of enforcement

that survives litigation and produces measurable consequences. This model should be documented, analyzed, and adapted across Western democracies.

4. A Critical Caveat: The Electoral Fragility of Positive Signals

Several of these positive signals are politically fragile. Some campus enforcement steps were administration-specific decisions that future governments could reverse. The Abraham Accords' resilience partly depends on U.S. credibility in the region. In the UK, 81% of British Jews believe the current Labour government

tolerates antisemitism in its ranks (Boyd 2025). Strategies for protecting Jewish communities must be designed to survive electoral change: anchored in law, measured by public indicators, and supported by institutions independent of the political cycle.

The test is whether crisis-driven gains can be converted into law, budget lines, institutional procedures, and public indicators that survive political turnover.

The opportunity, therefore, is to convert fragile gains into institutions, metrics, and partnerships that endure beyond the current crisis.

A Dissenting View: The Case for Turning Inward

In his February 2026 “State of World Jewry” address at New York’s 92nd Street Y, columnist Bret Stephens offered a challenge this assessment takes seriously. Antisemitism, he argued, is largely impervious to education, persuasion, and appeals to Jewish accomplishment; the organized “fight against antisemitism” is therefore a well-meaning but mostly wasted effort. His conclusion is radical: stop funding defense – he would “dismantle” the ADL – and reinvest entirely in internal Jewish life: schools, culture, institutions, and a confident sense of identity.

On two points, this assessment agrees. His diagnosis matches Transformation 2: formal commitments are not translating into effective protection. And his prescription – abandon apologetics, stop seeking approval, affirm Jewish identity on its own terms – is the very shift urged in Transformation 5 and in the move from condemnation to consequence: from a defensive narrative of suffering to an offensive one of rootedness and historical continuity.

The disagreement is narrow but decisive. Stephens treats defense and identity as an either/or, defunding the first to fund the second; this assessment treats them as both/and, holding that protection remains necessary even where it is insufficient. Here Transformation 3 is the deciding consideration. A turn inward reaches Jews already connected to communal structures; it does not reach the isolated – the only Jewish pupil in a school, the unaffiliated family, the online victim – who are the most exposed precisely because they stand outside those structures. To dismantle the protective apparatus in their name would deepen their invisibility, not relieve it. The task is not to choose between defense and identity, but to build standing systems that do both, and that reach the individuals current systems miss.

Directions for Intervention

The recommendations below translate the five transformations into operational priorities for two distinct audiences: Israeli decision-makers and global Jewish leaders.

Their roles are complementary, not interchangeable. Israel possesses sovereign capacities, diplomatic leverage, technological assets, and responsibilities toward Jewish migration and absorption that no Diaspora institution can replicate. Global Jewish organizations, by contrast, are closer to local vulnerabilities, communal networks, educational environments, and the everyday realities of Jewish life in democratic societies.

Several recommendations therefore apply primarily to one audience or the other. Certain challenges, however, cut across all five transformations. Preparedness for large-scale Diaspora mobility, digital knowledge governance, and measurable protection require sustained cooperation between Israel and Jewish communities worldwide and cannot be treated as standalone issues separate from the broader evolution of antisemitism.

Recommendations for Israeli Decision-Makers

Antisemitism as a national security variable

Antisemitism is conventionally treated as a matter of communal security – guards at synagogue doors, hate-crime statutes, the physical safety of Jews where they live. That framing is no longer adequate. The normalization of antisemitic discourse has become a variable in Israel's national security and should be tracked as one. When anti-Zionist premises are held by protesters, the cost to Israel is reputational. When they are held by the official who signs an export license, the cost is material.

That cost is already visible. Arms export licenses have been suspended, restricted, or litigated in a series of allied capitals over the past two years, with parallel pressure building on dual-use components, research consortia, divestment, insurance, and shipping. Each of these began as a marginal demand; each has since found sponsors inside government. And the timelines are asymmetric – political moods are measured in months, defense supply chains in years. A restriction sustained for a single parliamentary term can open a capability gap that takes a decade to close.

Two implications follow. Responsibility for antisemitism cannot sit solely in the Diaspora and foreign affairs portfolios; it belongs on the National Security Council's agenda, assessed for how elite attitudes in allied states translate into procurement, legal, and intelligence-sharing risk.

And the metrics need revision. Incident counts measure the safety of Jewish communities, which matters enormously, but they do not measure what is most dangerous to Israel. What is needed is an index of institutional penetration – the positions held inside legislatures, ministries, courts, and party structures in the states on which Israel’s defense depends. That is the number that predicts the next embargo, and it is not being systematically tracked.

1. Make global antisemitism a national-security and peoplehood priority.

Rising antisemitism abroad directly affects Israel’s diplomacy, aliyah planning, academic relations, security cooperation, and public diplomacy. It is not only a Diaspora concern; it is also an Israeli national problem. The government should assign responsibility for an annual global antisemitism risk assessment to a designated interagency unit linking the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, the Foreign Ministry, the National Security Council, the Jewish Agency, and relevant Diaspora security bodies.

2. Launch a national AI and antisemitism initiative to govern digital knowledge bias.

Israel should mobilize its technological capabilities and concentration of AI expertise to address antisemitic and anti-Israel bias in AI systems, search environments, reference platforms, and digital knowledge infrastructures. The initiative should produce an annual AI antisemitism benchmark with

public scorecards for major models; curated multilingual datasets on Jewish history, antisemitism, Zionism, and Israel in Hebrew, English, and Arabic; an expert correction lab for high-impact reference resources; a structured working group with major technology companies; and a fellowship track linking AI safety, Jewish studies, antisemitism research, and public policy. Because this field concerns knowledge governance rather than partisan advocacy, it offers one of the clearest areas for practical cooperation between Israel and diverse Diaspora communities. Properly designed, it could create durable partnerships across institutional, ideological, and geographic divides.

3. Build aliyah-readiness infrastructure for large-scale Diaspora mobility.

Recent warnings from European Jewish leaders regarding significant Jewish outflows from parts of Europe, combined with a 119% increase in foreign Jewish real-estate purchases in Israel (Solomon 2024) and high levels of emigration intent in the UK, France, and Australia, suggest that large-scale aliyah scenarios should be incorporated into national planning assumptions. Israel should prepare concrete absorption scenarios, including movement of 10,000, 50,000, and 150,000 people over a twenty-four-month period, and translate them into housing stock mapping, municipal readiness indicators, employment placement capacity, credential recognition fast tracks, Hebrew-acquisition

surge capacity, school integration, and cultural support. The challenge is not to predict migration precisely, but to ensure that Israel can absorb it if conditions deteriorate rapidly.

4. Test public diplomacy for impact on Jewish peoplehood, historical continuity, and indigeneity.

Israel's public diplomacy budget has quadrupled in two years. The question is no longer how much is spent, but whether current efforts reach audiences beyond those already predisposed to support Israel. Major campaigns should undergo independent audience testing before renewal, including pre- and post-exposure measurement in target countries, assessment of reach among undecided or weakly informed publics, and comparison between traditional vulnerability-and-refuge narratives and frameworks centered on Jewish historical continuity, peoplehood, and indigeneity. Resources should be reallocated on the basis of demonstrated impact rather than assumed effectiveness.

5. Train diplomats and public representatives to communicate Jewish indigeneity and historical continuity.

Israeli diplomacy should develop a rigorous, non-polemical language of Jewish historical belonging, with indigeneity as one component rather than a slogan. A practical training program should include a structured module for diplomats, community representatives, influencers, and journalists; an evidence pack drawing

on archaeology, language, law, religion, and collective memory; and country-specific responses to the most common challenges raised in universities, media, diplomatic forums, and civil-society settings. This complements legal, security, and Holocaust-memory arguments. It does not replace them.

6. Institutionalize Israel–Diaspora consultation before decisions affecting Jewish communities abroad.

Diaspora impact assessment should be integrated into foreign policy, communications, and crisis planning before major decisions are made, not as a veto mechanism but as a routine analytical input. Such assessments should identify likely effects on Jewish security abroad, expected campus and community reactions, risks to local advocacy partners, proposed mitigation, and the record of consultation with relevant Diaspora institutions.

7. Benchmark democratic protection through transparent reporting from complaint to conviction.

Israel cannot enforce other states' criminal law, but it can press for transparency about whether protection is effective. Israel should support a Democratic Protection Chain Index tracking complaints filed, investigations opened, hate-crime classifications, prosecutions, convictions, sentencing outcomes, sentence enhancements, time to resolution, and victim confidence. Published regularly across multiple democracies, such indicators would make it possible to assess whether formal

commitments are translating into effective protection. The relevant question is not only whether states condemn antisemitism, but whether they protect Jewish citizens in practice.

Recommendations for Global Jewish Leaders

1. Measure government protection by enforcement outcomes, not only incident counts.

Global Jewish organizations should press governments to publish regular indicators on complaints, investigations, prosecutions, convictions, sentencing outcomes, and processing times, while collecting local data where governments do not. The existence of laws and strategies is not sufficient. Protection must be measurable and publicly reported.

2. Reach isolated Jewish victims through confidential reporting and referral systems.

The most vulnerable Jews are often not those already connected to synagogues, schools, federations, or advocacy groups. Major communities should pilot a confidential, multilingual reporting and referral platform in several countries, combining anonymous intake where necessary, legal triage, school and workplace reporting templates, emergency referral, links to communal support, data anonymization, and regular institutional reporting. The purpose is to reach pupils, students, workers, unaffiliated families, small business owners,

and online victims who are currently least visible to existing systems.

3. Build country-level dashboards of antisemitic risk and communal resilience.

Each major community should produce an annual dashboard combining incident data, physical severity and lethality, identity-concealment indicators, institutional trust measures, and emigration or aliyah interest. A common indicator set would allow communities to distinguish temporary spikes from structural deterioration and make cross-country comparison possible.

4. Treat young Jews as an early-warning population for emerging antisemitic risk.

Young American Jews report higher personal targeting than older cohorts; 42% of Jewish college students experienced antisemitism on campus (AJC 2026). Communities should develop annual campus climate surveys, social-media exposure tracking, campus legal support, a young leadership reporting network, and small grants for peer-led documentation and response. Youth indicators should be treated as leading signals, not secondary communal concerns.

5. Build non-Jewish coalitions to defend Jewish historical belonging.

Arab Israelis, Christians, ex-Muslims, Iranians, indigenous activists, legal scholars, and dissidents from authoritarian environments can often articulate arguments for Jewish historical continuity, peoplehood, and indigeneity

with a credibility that Jewish institutions alone cannot always achieve. Each major community should develop a country-specific messenger map identifying credible Muslim and Arab voices, Christian leaders, indigenous-rights scholars, civil-liberties lawyers, Iranian, Kurdish, Yazidi, Druze, and other minority voices, and anti-authoritarian dissidents who can contribute through op-eds, testimony, campus appearances, digital content, and legislative hearings. Effective amplification requires traditional media and long-form formats for political, diplomatic, and opinion-forming elites, alongside social-media formats for younger audiences.

6. Make Jewish protection resilient to electoral change.

Positive signals dependent on specific administrations – campus firmness, regional normalization, legal enforcement – should be institutionalized in law and independent structures. Global Jewish leaders should prioritize statutory reporting requirements, independent antisemitism commissioners, multi-year security funding, cross-party parliamentary caucuses, judicially enforceable school and campus obligations, and annual public protection-chain data. Protection mechanisms should not depend on the goodwill of a single government.

7. Monitor and correct antisemitic and anti-Israel bias in digital knowledge systems.

Communities should create professionally supervised digital knowledge teams attached to major communal institutions. Their role

would be to monitor high-impact reference pages and AI outputs, submit corrections, document platform bias, feed verified cases into national and Israeli audits, and train students to identify and report distortions. Diaspora institutions are closest to where this bias is encountered daily and should not leave this terrain to Israeli actors alone.

Conclusion

The current phase of global antisemitism cannot be understood simply as the intensification of an old phenomenon. It reflects linked changes in violence, institutional protection, Jewish behavior, digital knowledge systems, and the language of Jewish historical legitimacy.

These transformations require a different kind of response. Public condemnation, physical security, legal protection, and communication campaigns remain necessary. But they are insufficient on their own. Decision-makers must measure institutional effectiveness, reach Jews outside organized communal networks, address digital and AI-based knowledge systems, prepare for large-scale Diaspora mobility, and develop a more robust and confident language of Jewish historical belonging.

For Israel and Jewish institutions worldwide, the central task is not only to respond more forcefully. It is to respond with greater discipline, better instruments, and clearer measures of success.

The task is not only to condemn, protect, or explain. It is to build systems that change outcomes.

Bibliography

Anti-Defamation League (ADL). 2025. *Editing for Hate: How Anti-Israel and Anti-Jewish Bias Undermines Wikipedia's Neutrality*. New York: Anti-Defamation League.

Anti-Defamation League (ADL). 2026a. *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2025*. New York: Anti-Defamation League.

Anti-Defamation League (ADL). 2026b. "A Tipping Point: Canada's Jewish Community Faces Unprecedented Threat as Three Synagogues Attacked in Five Days." March 12, 2026.

American Jewish Committee (AJC). 2026. *The State of Antisemitism in America 2025*. New York: American Jewish Committee.

B'nai Brith Canada. 2026. *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2025*. Ottawa: B'nai Brith Canada.

Boyd, Jonathan. 2025. *Two Years After the October 7 Attacks: British Jewish Views on Antisemitism, Israel and Jewish Life*. London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research.

Campaign Against Antisemitism (CAA). 2025. *New Polling Shows Britain's Failure to Protect Its Jews*. London: Campaign Against Antisemitism.

CNN. 2024. "Melbourne, Australia: Adass Israel Synagogue Attack to Be Investigated as a Terrorist Incident." December 9, 2024.

Community Security Trust (CST). 2026. *Antisemitic Incidents Report 2025*. London: Community Security Trust.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). 2024. *Jewish People's Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Euronews. 2025. "Europe Urged to Tackle Antisemitism as Thousands of Jews Leave the Continent." January 14, 2025.

Euronews. 2026. "UK Police Investigate Jewish Charity Ambulance Arson Attack as Hate Crime." March 23, 2026.

Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ). 2025. *Special Report: Anti-Jewish Incidents in Australia 2025*. Sydney: Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

France 24. 2024. "Attaque de la synagogue de La Grande-Motte: l'incendiaire présumé et un proche mis en examen." August 28, 2024.

The Guardian. 2024. "Armed Man Who Set Fire to Rouen Synagogue Shot Dead." May 18, 2024.

Hendrix, Steve, and Karla Adam. 2025. "Two Killed in Synagogue Attack on Yom Kippur in Manchester, England." The Washington Post, October 2, 2025.

Jewish News Syndicate (JNS). 2026. "2026 on Pace to Become Most Violent Year for Canadian Jews, B'nai Brith Warns." May 9, 2026.

Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI). 2025. Annual Assessment of the Jewish People 2025/5785. Jerusalem: Jewish People Policy Institute.

NPR. 2026. "U.K. Calls Antisemitism an Emergency After Arson and Stabbing Attacks on Jewish People." April 30, 2026.

Service de Protection de la Communauté Juive (SPCJ) and Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah (FMS). 2026. Rapport sur l'antisémitisme en France en 2025. Paris: SPCJ and FMS.

Solomon, Shoshanna. 2024. "Fueled by Fear and Fraternity, Foreigners Start Buying Up Israeli Homes, Just in Case." The Times of Israel, December 6, 2024.

The Times of Israel. 2026. "Jewish Apartment Building in London's Golders Green Targeted in Suspected Arson, No Injuries." June 2, 2026.

10

Academic Boycotts Targeting Israel: A Status Report and Policy Recommendations

Introduction

Israeli academia is one of the State of Israel's principal engines of growth, innovation, and resilience. Israel's achievements in science, medicine, the high-tech sector, and technological innovation depend to a considerable extent on a strong higher education system and deep integration into international research networks. Since October 7, 2023, and the war that followed, initiatives to boycott, exclude, and delegitimize Israeli institutions, researchers, and students have intensified markedly. Incidents that once appeared isolated have become a persistent pattern: canceled lectures and conferences, suspended institutional agreements, withdrawals from collaborative ventures, difficulties in forming research consortia, and damage to professional and personal relationships.

The harm is not confined to a small academic community. Over time, it may erode Israel's scientific standing, reduce access to research grants and international infrastructure, impede the recruitment of outstanding researchers and students, accelerate brain drain, and weaken the innovation mechanisms on which the Israeli economy depends. Academic boycotts should therefore be regarded as a strategic threat requiring a sustained, coordinated national response.

This chapter presents the principal characteristics of the phenomenon, key data collected in recent years, the tension between government involvement and academic autonomy, the particular importance of Horizon Europe, and the measures already taken in Israel. It concludes with operational recommendations at the national, institutional, and international levels.

Academic Boycotts as a Strategic Threat

An academic boycott is not limited to an individual researcher's refusal to cooperate with an Israeli colleague. It can damage foundational mechanisms essential to national resilience: cross-border collaboration, participation in research and development programs, access to equipment and databases, student and researcher mobility, and Israel's standing in the scientific community. As these harms accumulate,

statements by government officials accusing academia itself of having “brought the boycott upon itself” weaken Israel's capacity to address the threat.

they also affect the economy, industry, diplomacy, and civil society.

Defining the phenomenon as a strategic threat also requires examining the relationship between Israeli policy and the response of the international community. The international response is neither immutable nor disconnected from Israel's actions and messages. Military and political measures – especially extreme statements and dehumanizing rhetoric by public officials – are repeatedly cited in campaigns against Israel and lend legitimacy to boycott initiatives.

At the same time, statements by government officials accusing academia itself of having “brought the boycott upon itself” weaken Israel's capacity to address the threat. Israeli academia is not a domestic adversary but a national asset. It has a responsibility to warn of long-term risks, and the government should incorporate academic consequences into its foreign policy and security calculus, just as it considers economic and diplomatic repercussions.

Academic Autonomy and Tensions with the State

The need for a national response does not diminish the importance of university autonomy. Academic institutions are not arms of government and should not be expected to justify government policy. Their role is to sustain free inquiry, criticism, public debate, and a plurality of voices. This very autonomy is one of the strongest arguments against institutional boycotts: such boycotts damage the spaces in which internal criticism is voiced, different groups encounter one another, and freedom of thought and expression is upheld.

A clear distinction must therefore be drawn between government support and political control. The state can and should provide funding, legal assistance, diplomatic tools, and an infrastructure for gathering information, but it must not dictate universities' positions, messages, or intellectual agendas. Identifying academia too closely with the government

could reinforce the claim that research institutions are extensions of the state and weaken the case for their defense in the international arena.

It must be acknowledged that some boycott initiatives contain anti-Zionist and even antisemitic elements. Yet not all boycott supporters are motivated by hatred of Jews or by denial of Israel's very existence; many regard boycotts as a form of protest against policies they consider immoral. The appropriate response is therefore to make a substantive argument: boycotting academia weakens precisely the liberal, critical, and collaborative forces within Israel. Jews and Arabs, including civilians and military reservists, study and work side by side at universities, where strong criticism of the government is also voiced. Harming these institutions does not promote dialogue or change; it constricts the space for both.

Current Situation: The Academic Sphere and Antisemitism on Campus

International reports indicate that the treatment of Israeli researchers and institutions has become part of the broader European debate over academic freedom. A European Parliament report on academic freedom included, among other cases, the cancellation of historian Benny Morris's lecture at Leipzig University, disputes at universities in Belgium and Poland, and calls by faculty

members to sever ties with institutions in Israel. The inclusion of these cases in a non-Israeli report not devoted exclusively to Israel indicates that the phenomenon has moved beyond the political margins and penetrated academic institutions themselves.

Data published in *Nature* and in bibliographic databases points to a reconfiguration of global research networks along geopolitical fault lines. In the Israeli context, collaboration with researchers in countries whose governments were sharply critical of Israel, including Spain and South Africa, declined in 2025. This does not mean that Israel's scientific system has collapsed, but it is an early sign that ties are eroding – a trend that could intensify if it becomes normalized.

In the United States, more than 6,200 incidents were documented in 2025

At the same time, there has been an exceptional rise in antisemitic incidents worldwide since October 7. In the United States, more than 6,200 incidents were documented in 2025 – an average of approximately 17 per day. Europe likewise reported increases in assaults, threats, harassment, vandalism, and incitement. The data is incomplete because of differences in reporting methods and underreporting; the actual scale of the phenomenon may therefore be larger. On American campuses, the number of incidents declined in 2025 from its 2024

peak but remained far higher than in the years preceding the war.

A distinction must be drawn between forceful political protest, which falls within the scope of freedom of expression, and incitement to violence, the use of antisemitic tropes, the exclusion of Jews and Israelis, or the denial of their right to participate in academic life. The distinction is not always clear, but ambiguity does not relieve universities of their duty to protect members of their communities.

In the United States, political and legal pressure prompted federal investigations and procedural changes

The challenge is to establish clear rules against harassment and incitement

at many institutions. Some measures were intended to protect Jewish students, but aggressive government intervention and threats to research funding also raise concerns about

damage to university autonomy and freedom of expression. The challenge is to establish clear rules against harassment and incitement without turning legitimate political criticism into a disciplinary offense.

At the same time, it is important to avoid treating every criticism of Israel or every expression of support for a boycott as a direct manifestation of hatred of Jews. A significant proportion of activists in this arena regard their actions as grounded in a commitment

to universal human rights and in a desire to influence Israeli policies they perceive as immoral or unjust. The relationship between academic boycotts and antisemitism is therefore neither straightforward nor uniform across contexts and cases. The central challenge is to distinguish legitimate political criticism – even when it is harsh and difficult – from discourse that moves beyond political bounds and becomes a vehicle for exclusion or hostility toward Jews as Jews.

The Israeli Response: From Case-by-Case Measures to a Systemic Approach

As early as 2013, following the American Studies Association's decision to boycott Israel, the Knesset Science and Technology Committee held a special session. Participants warned of a widening trend and called for the establishment of a coordinating government body. The committee identified two parallel dangers: the absence of national coordination, on the one hand, and excessively direct government involvement that would portray academia as part of the political system, on the other. Despite these warnings, no permanent mechanism was established.

Following October 7, universities had to contend with hundreds of incidents: canceled conferences and lectures, suspended agreements, refusals to participate in joint projects, and demonstrations on campuses

abroad. At first, each university handled the cases affecting it independently, generally through the office of its vice president for international affairs. The Association of University Heads, Israel (VERA) issued statements condemning violence, antisemitism, and calls for Israel's destruction and offered Jewish and Israeli researchers and students who felt threatened abroad the opportunity to be hosted in Israel.

The protests and encampments on campuses in the United States, Europe, Canada, and Australia made the limits of freedom of expression a central issue. On some campuses, protests were peaceful; on others, there were building occupations, blockades, confrontations, and arrests. The U.S. congressional hearing involving the presidents of Harvard, MIT, and the University of Pennsylvania illustrated the difficulty of determining when extremist calls violate campus rules. Their cautious responses drew fierce criticism and came to symbolize the institutional crisis.

Within months, it became clear that a case-by-case response was insufficient. The same patterns appeared at different institutions; in some cases, a single foreign institution adversely affected several Israeli universities. A coordinated response required pooled resources: a shared database, legal and diplomatic tools, standardized response language, information-sharing mechanisms, and a process for designating priority cases.

Recognition that this was a shared challenge led to the establishment of a dedicated forum under VERA. The task force's purpose is to coordinate a systematic, unified effort to address the phenomenon and to create shared infrastructure for knowledge management, monitoring, information collection, and coordinated responses across all Israeli universities. It works to identify emerging trends, initiatives, and risks in the international arena; formulate common strategies for engagement with institutions and organizations worldwide; and strengthen Israel's academic and scientific collaborations in the face of current challenges. The task force includes the vice presidents for international affairs of all Israeli research universities, together with designated representatives appointed by the universities specifically for this issue. Emmanuel Nahshon, a former Israeli diplomat, was appointed to lead the task force. His previous positions include deputy director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for public diplomacy, spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Israel's ambassador to Belgium and Luxembourg. The forum also retains the services of Johan Benizri of KESHER LAW, a European law firm based in Belgium. Subsequently, in recognition of the European arena's heightened sensitivity and significance for Israeli academia, a special representative for European Union affairs was appointed: former ambassador and EU affairs adviser Roni Leshno-Yaar. His role is

to assist in managing contacts, monitoring developments, and responding to them in this arena. These activities are funded by the universities.

The task force was established in recognition that academic boycotts were no longer confined to broad political declarations but had begun to take the form of concrete actions affecting research, teaching, international collaboration, and the personal and professional standing of Israeli researchers. At an early stage, the team identified a significant gap between the on-the-ground experiences of researchers and institutions and the team's capacity to map the phenomenon systematically and comparatively on the basis of data. A dedicated database was therefore developed to collect and analyze reports of academic boycott incidents from all universities and classify them by type of boycott, degree of formalization, and institutional, professional, and geographic context. Reports based on these submissions are published regularly.

Horizon Europe and the European Arena

Horizon Europe is the European Union's principal research and innovation program for 2021–2027, with a budget of approximately EUR 95.5 billion. Israel participates as an associated country on terms similar to those of EU member states and has historically achieved high success rates. The program's

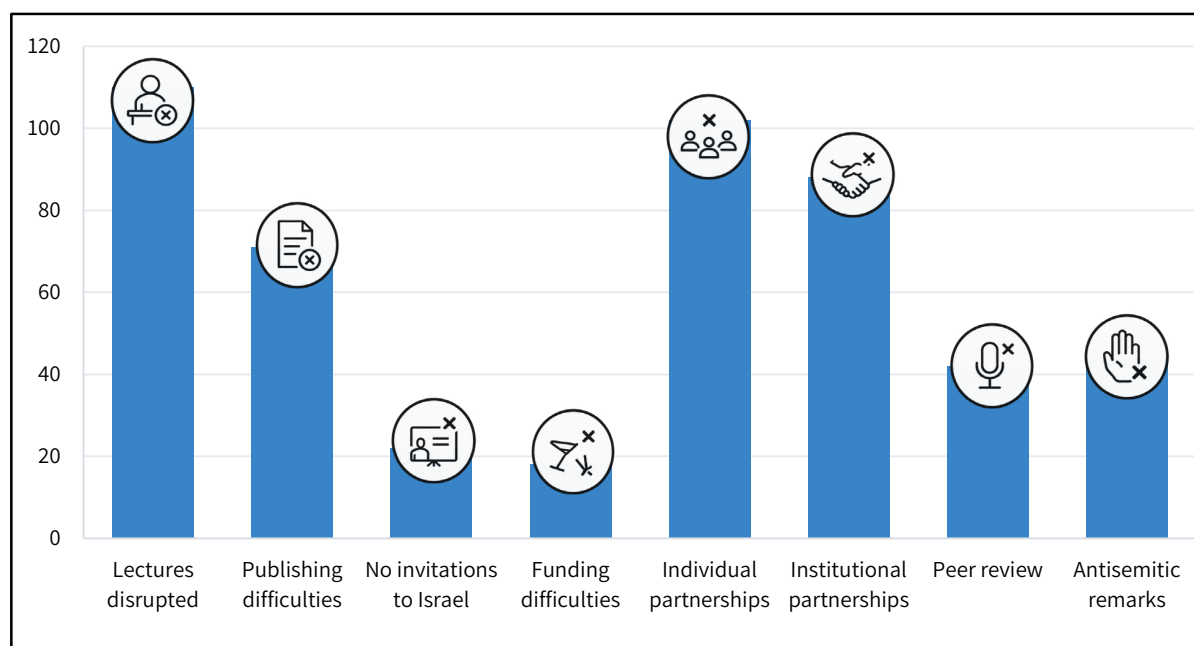
importance is not solely financial: it integrates Israeli researchers and companies into international consortia, creates long-term relationships, and strengthens Israel's position in science and technology.

Calls to suspend Israel from the program arise from a combination of criticism of the war in Gaza, political and economic interests, and competition for research resources. Some hostility toward cooperation with Israel predates October 7. These factors are compounded by internal European disputes over the allocation of funding to non-EU countries, as well as concerns about dual-use technologies.

In July 2025, the European Commission proposed a partial and targeted suspension of Israeli entities from the EIC Accelerator, which supports start-ups and near-market technologies. The proposal was not intended to exclude universities and researchers from Horizon Europe as a whole, and it was presented as reversible. Nevertheless, the proposal itself created a precedent and demonstrated the possibility of using scientific cooperation as an instrument of political pressure.

In parallel with the official proposal, human rights organizations, university associations, and civil society groups have campaigned for broader measures, including the suspension of the EU–Israel Association Agreement and Israel's participation in research programs. The

Where the Academic Boycott Affects Researchers



All complaints reported to the Association of University Heads, Israel (VERA) on academic-boycott incidents, October 2023–December 2024

central struggle concerns not only the current program but also the next framework, FP10, planned for 2028–2034. The participation rules, budget, and status of associated countries are now being determined. The coming years therefore constitute a critical window for diplomatic and academic action to secure Israel's place in the future European research framework.

Data Collected in Israel

The forum established under VERA began systematically collecting reports from the institutions. The findings show that most boycott incidents occur in Europe, especially Western Europe, across a range of settings: conferences, journals, professional associations, institutional collaborations, and research consortia. Reported cases included refusals to invite or host Israelis, demands to remove institutional affiliations,

the cancellation of agreements, and pressure on foreign partners to withdraw from joint projects.

The second report, covering the period through February 2025, recorded more than 500 incidents. It identified a shift from symbolic gestures of protest to actions with professional consequences: blocked access to funding, canceled conference participation, interference with publications, and the suspension of institutional ties. Organizations associated with the boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) movement sometimes provided the ideological and organizational infrastructure, but not every case resulted from a coordinated campaign; some reflected local decisions or a “silent boycott” that is difficult to substantiate.

The third report, covering the summer and autumn of 2025, described a further escalation: the cumulative number of reports exceeded 1,000, and approximately one-quarter of the reports concerned boycotts targeting individuals. Several European universities had, in practice, imposed full institutional boycotts, while others had not renewed ties that had been suspended. The report also highlighted professional associations that imposed political conditions on participation, as well as disruptions affecting approximately 20 Israeli partnerships within Horizon Europe, primarily involving partners in Spain, Belgium, and Italy.

Alongside VERA’s reports, the Samuel Neaman Institute has monitored the phenomenon since 2024 and compared external pressures with performance indicators for Israeli academia. The situation as of May 2026 points to an escalation and partial normalization of boycott initiatives but also to relative stability in key indicators: publication output, European Research Council (ERC) grants, and international collaboration do not, at this stage, indicate systemic collapse. The conclusion is not that the danger is absent, but that a window for action remains before these pressures translate into deep and lasting harm.

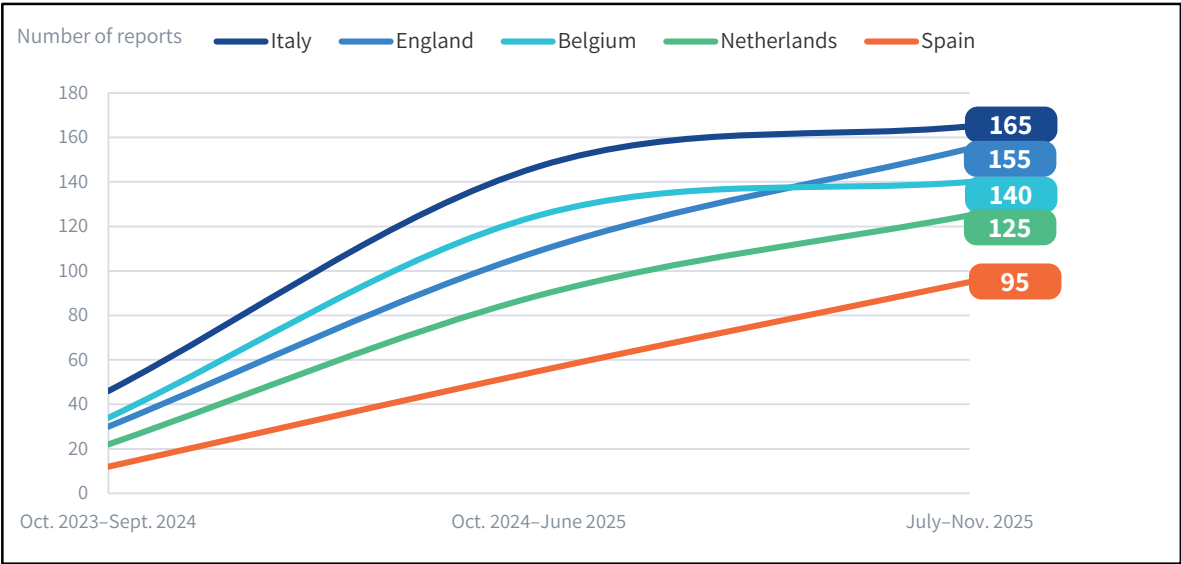
Patterns of Boycott and Their Practical Consequences

The data indicates that an “academic boycott” is not a single phenomenon but rather a continuum of patterns that vary in severity. At the most visible end are formal institutional decisions: suspending an agreement, terminating student exchanges, prohibiting cooperation, or refusing to participate in a consortium that includes an Israeli partner. Such decisions are relatively easy to identify and document, and there is a clearly identifiable institutional authority to which academic, legal, or diplomatic representations can be made.

These are accompanied by actions taken by professional associations and journals: withdrawing conference invitations,

Academic Boycott in Europe – Reports Are Rising

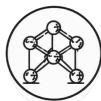
Steady growth in reports of boycott and exclusion incidents affecting Israeli academics since October 2023



Italy



England



Belgium



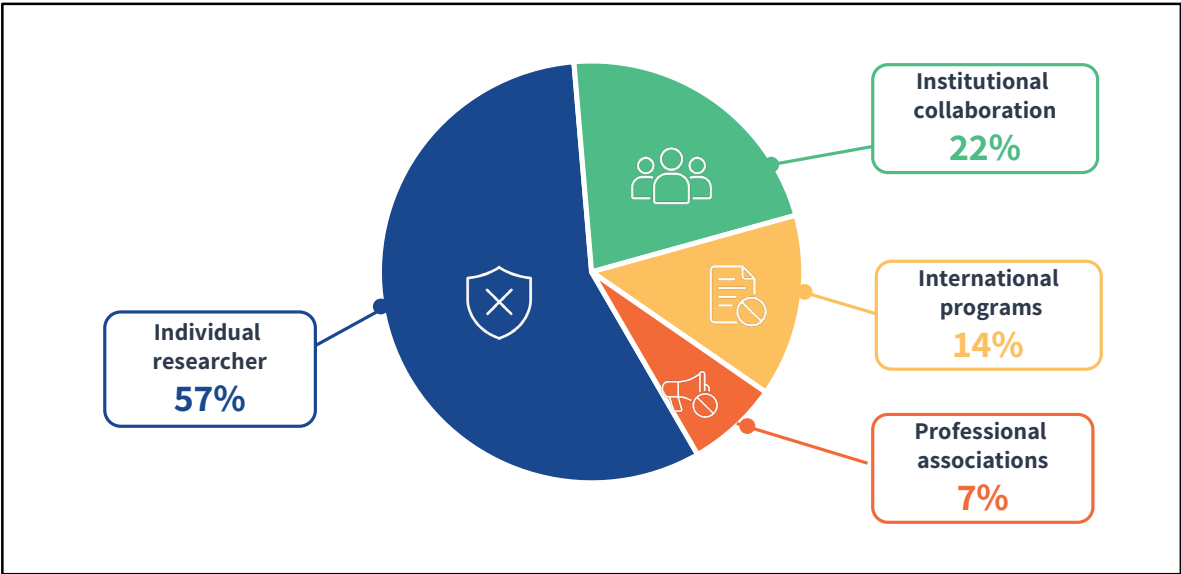
Netherlands



Spain

Source: compiled reports through November 2025

Distribution of Boycott Incidents as of November 2025



*Based on internal reports collected at Israel's research universities (VERA)

requiring researchers to conceal or remove an Israeli institutional affiliation, refusing to appoint Israelis to professional positions, or adopting procedures that restrict contact with institutions in Israel. In some cases, the decision is explicitly framed as a political measure; in others, it is presented as an organizational or security consideration, even though its practical effect is discriminatory against Israeli researchers.

The greatest difficulty is the “silent boycott.” A researcher receives no response to an

The greatest difficulty is the “silent boycott.”

invitation to collaborate; a manuscript is rejected on general grounds; a prospective partner explains in a private conversation that an Israeli institution cannot

be included; or a research consortium is reconfigured without the Israeli partner to avoid internal pressure. In such cases, it is difficult to establish a causal link between the decision and the researcher’s national identity, but the accumulating evidence points to a significant change in the academic climate.

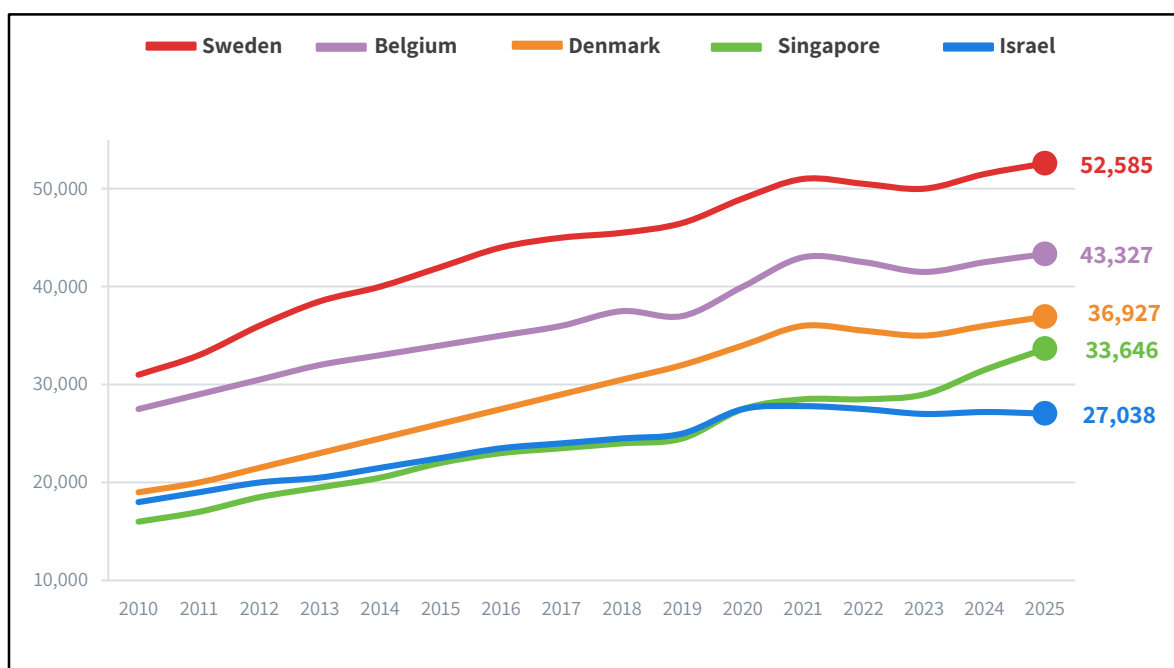
The effects vary by career stage and field. Senior researchers with established networks can sometimes find alternative partners, whereas early-career researchers depend more heavily on invitations, mentors, conferences, and recommendations. Fields that rely on major infrastructure and

international consortia are particularly vulnerable, because partners, equipment, or experimental sites cannot readily be replaced. The humanities and social sciences are also affected, particularly through professional associations, journals, and mobility programs.

Boycotts also affect students. The cancellation of exchanges and fears of harassment on campus reduce educational opportunities, impede mobility, and create a sense of insecurity. Israeli and Jewish students abroad may avoid disclosing their identity, attending public events, or expressing their views. Conversely, Palestinian students and supporters of protest may feel that sweeping restrictions silence legitimate criticism. Sound institutional policy must protect security and equal participation while also safeguarding freedom of expression and nonviolent protest.

At the institutional level, each incident may appear minor, but the cumulative cost is high: senior management time, legal advice, the search for alternative partners, reputational damage, and loss of trust. A strategy must therefore encompass not only crisis management but also prevention: sustained engagement with partners, agreements containing dispute-resolution mechanisms, Israeli representation in governing bodies, and early identification of areas of risk.

Annual Publication Trends – Israel and Peer Countries



Source: SCImago Lab • Data retrieved in April 2026.

Policy Recommendations

A. Recommendations at the National and Governmental Levels

1. Establish a national coordinating body to address academic boycotts:

Rather than relying on the current arrangement, under which the forum addressing boycotts operates within VERA and is effectively run solely by the universities, Israel should establish a permanent interministerial body comprising representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Council for Higher Education, the Planning and Budgeting

Committee, the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, and VERA. This body should coordinate the response to academic boycotts targeting Israeli researchers and institutions. Its remit should include information collection, policy formulation, rapid response to exceptional incidents, legal and communications support, and coordination among all relevant stakeholders.

2. Create assistance mechanisms for researchers affected by boycotts:

A dedicated fund should be established to support researchers who, because of their national identity or institutional affiliation,

face conference cancellations, denial of collaborative opportunities, exclusion from international projects, or other losses of research opportunities. Assistance could include alternative research funding, travel support, legal counsel, and communications support.

3. Expand academic ties with additional regions of the world:

Israel should deepen academic cooperation with institutions and countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Gulf states, while continuing to strengthen ties with Europe and North America. Broader collaborative networks would reduce dependence on a small number of academic power centers and create new opportunities for research, teaching, innovation, and student and researcher mobility. This effort, however, cannot rest on institutional initiatives alone; it requires substantial, dedicated government investment. Dedicated funding tracks and international research programs should be established in partnership with institutions in these countries and regions, including joint research grants, support for researcher and student exchanges, conference funding, joint research centers, and incentives for academic institutions to develop new partnerships. Such investment is needed, among other reasons, to offset at least some of the academic, research, and institutional opportunities lost in parts of Europe and North America, where Israeli

researchers and institutions have faced mounting difficulties in recent years. A proactive policy of expanding global cooperation could not only mitigate the effects of boycotts and exclusion but also reinforce Israel's standing as an international academic actor operating across diverse regions.

4. Make a national investment in the international visibility of Israeli research and science:

A large-scale national program should be developed to increase the international visibility of Israeli research among scholars and institutions worldwide, on the understanding that personal relationships and direct familiarity with Israeli academia are among the most effective tools for countering trends toward boycotts, delegitimization, and exclusion. Dedicated funding should support visits to Israel by international scholars for conferences, short-term academic stays, research workshops, meetings with researchers and doctoral candidates, summer sabbatical programs, and full sabbaticals. At present, demand from Israeli institutions and faculty members for such programs far exceeds the resources available to facilitate these visits and collaborations. Investment in this area is expected to make a long-term strategic contribution to Israeli academia's international standing. Experience indicates a significant difference between researchers who have

visited Israel and its universities – meeting local researchers and students and gaining close familiarity with the country’s social, cultural, and academic complexity – and those who have not. Direct familiarity with Israeli research institutions often contributes to stable professional partnerships and reduces the likelihood of future support for boycott and exclusion initiatives. In this context, it is particularly important to address disparities between institutions in central Israel and those in the geographic periphery. In practice, international scholars visiting Israel tend to go primarily to institutions in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, while universities in peripheral areas, including Beersheba and Haifa, benefit less from such exposure. Dedicated support tracks should therefore encourage academic visits, conferences, and sabbaticals at these universities in particular. Such investment could significantly help develop international research networks, strengthen academic opportunities for researchers and students in the periphery, and narrow disparities in the extent to which different Israeli institutions have access to global academic networks.

B. Recommendations on International Academic Relations

- 5. Strengthen each university’s strategic partnerships with leading institutions worldwide:** Universities should invest in

developing deep partnerships with major universities and research institutes around the world by establishing joint research centers, developing joint doctoral programs, creating bilateral research funds, and expanding student and faculty exchange programs. Broad and deep institutional networks make academic ties more resilient even during periods of political crisis.

- 6. Support Israeli researchers’ participation in international academic leadership:**

Israeli researchers should be encouraged and supported in seeking leadership positions in professional associations, academic journals, scientific committees, and international research networks. An active presence at decision-making centers in global academia helps counter exclusion and enhances the legitimacy of Israeli academia.

C. Recommendations on Education, Values, and the Public Sphere

- 7. Strengthen discourse on academic freedom and distinguish political criticism from discrimination:** Proactive and sustained engagement is needed in public, academic, and international arenas to clarify the distinction between legitimate political criticism of Israeli government policy and boycotts, exclusion, or denial of academic cooperation on the basis of national

identity or institutional affiliation. It should be emphasized that harming researchers and academic institutions simply because they are Israeli violates the foundational principles of academic freedom, freedom of research, and freedom of expression on which a democratic academic system rests. In this context, a broad campaign of public and diplomatic engagement is required, at both the university and national levels, to convey to international partners and audiences the complexity of Israeli academia and its role as a liberal, critical, and pluralistic space. It should be made clear that Israeli universities are among the country's principal venues for freedom of expression, critical debate, independent research, and everyday coexistence among different groups in Israeli society, including Jewish and Arab students and researchers who study and work side by side. Accordingly, boycotting Israeli academia is not only morally and normatively problematic; it also harms precisely the most liberal, critical, and open spaces in Israeli society. Rather than strengthening moderate forces, advancing dialogue, or encouraging change, academic boycotts may weaken institutions and communities that promote pluralism, open discourse, and intercommunal cooperation. In this sense, boycotting Israeli academia does not advance solutions or promote political change; it may instead constrict the

spaces in which engagement, criticism, and dialogue take place.

8. Support educational initiatives on pluralism and academic freedom:

Investment should be made in educational and international programs addressing freedom of research, tolerance, pluralism, and opposition to exclusion on the basis of nationality, religion, or origin. Such activity can help position Israel as an active participant in global debates about the future of academia and democratic society. Joint projects among researchers and diverse communities should also be encouraged, including academic projects involving Jews, Arabs, Israelis, and Palestinians, as well as multinational and interdisciplinary research initiatives. Such projects demonstrate the complexity and diversity of Israeli academia and strengthen its standing as a sphere of cooperation, research, and dialogue.

Conclusion

Addressing academic boycotts requires a broad approach that extends beyond case-by-case responses to individual incidents. This is a long-term strategic challenge requiring a combination of diplomatic engagement, institutional strengthening, investment in international relationships, and protection of the foundational principles of academic freedom. The struggle against academic boycotts is not only a struggle over Israel's standing in the international arena; it is also a struggle over the character of academia as a domain in which knowledge, research, and dialogue transcend political boundaries.



ISRAEL-U.S. RELATIONSHIP

11

The U.S.–Israel Partnership: Listing but Not Sinking

Until President Donald Trump’s June 2026 memorandum of understanding (MOU), this past year in U.S.–Israel relations posed one central question: how does Israel navigate the paradox of ever-closer military, diplomatic, and presidential ties even as many Americans denounce Israel? The immediate panic triggered by President Trump’s seeming capitulation to Iran with his MOU poses a different danger: if the nightmare scenario people have feared comes true, how does Israel handle a hostile White House and a hostile Main Street USA?

The situation remains volatile. The MOU ceasefire barely lasted 21 days. As of this writing, anyone ready to declare that the

Iranian regime has won or lost is engaging in soothsaying – or is self-delusional. The situation could change if Trump continues pounding Iran, if the Iranian people revolt as the economy collapses, or if Trump loses patience, declares a nonexistent victory, then proclaims a 1975-style “reassessment,” freezing Israel out until it withdraws from Lebanon and supports his cave-in to Iran.

These are not predictions. Rather, imagining such scenarios serves as a warning that, no matter the crisis or breakthrough, the Israeli government and the Israeli public must look in two directions. Looking back illuminates the fundamentals that still bind America and Israel. Meanwhile, looking ahead enables

Israel to anticipate problems and respond in ways that are preemptive, self-protective, and constructive. The partnership is listing but not sinking.

Looking Back 1: 1975 as the Reverse Mirror Image

When Gerald Ford abruptly succeeded his fellow Republican Richard Nixon as president in 1974, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was conducting “shuttle diplomacy.” Kissinger laid the groundwork for what became the 1979 Egypt–Israel peace treaty. As negotiations dragged on, Ford said Israeli “tactics frustrated the Egyptians and made me mad as hell.”

In March 1975, Ford declared a “reassessment of United States policy”¹ – suspending aid. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said this “innocent-sounding term ... heralded one of the worst periods in American–Israeli relations.”² On September 4, 1975, Israel, under pressure, signed the Sinai Interim Agreement with Egypt. Aid resumed.

This short version of a longer tale convinced many pro-Israel Americans and Israelis that the relationship was doomed and once again reflected the Republican Party’s patrician, WASPy disdain for Jews and the Jewish state. Yet a decade later, many would hail Ronald Reagan – a Republican – as one of the most pro-Israel presidents, and Republicans soon became the deeply pro-Israel party.

No one needed a crystal ball to look that far

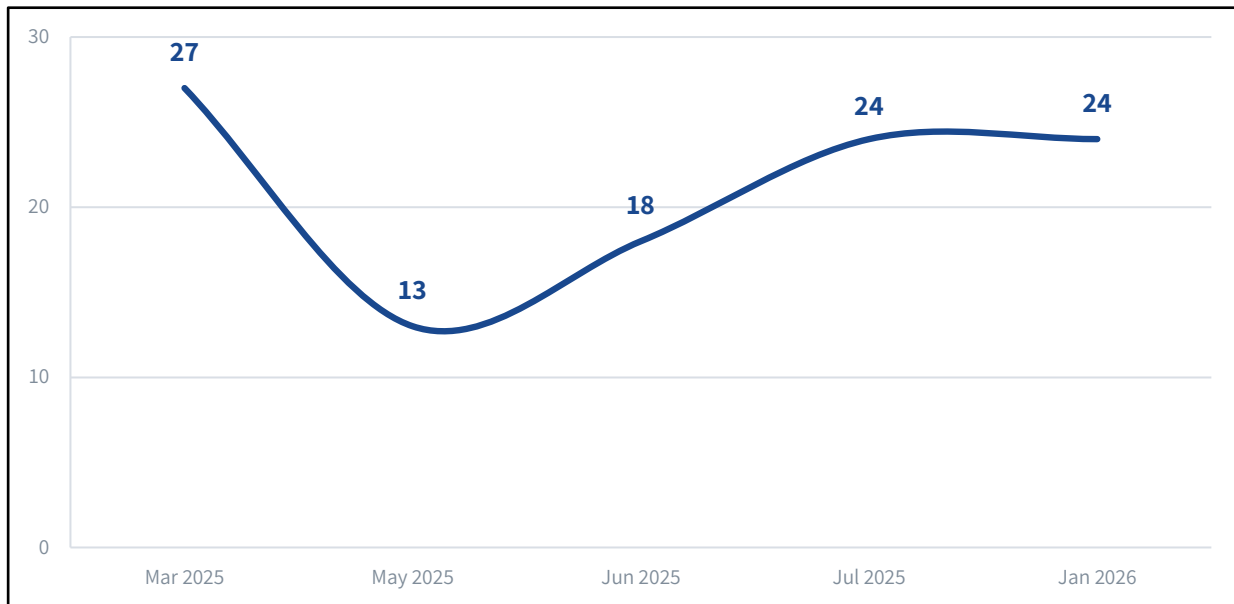
ahead. Just weeks after Israel succumbed, the American people united in a pro-Israel fury, as President Ford’s UN ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan spearheaded the fight against General Assembly Resolution 3379, branding Zionism as racism.³ President Ford declared: “This administration is very, very much opposed” to the resolution, which “is contrary to the basic Charter of the United Nations.” Ford chided the Palestinian national movement, which “refused to recognize the State of Israel. And we, of course, strongly back the State of Israel in its attitude that there must be recognition before there can be any contact or any participation by the Palestinians in any negotiations.”⁴

Spurred by Moynihan, a liberal Democrat, the American people mocked the UN resolution, from left to right, black and white, labor unionists and preachers alike. Recognizing this anti-Zionism as antisemitic, most Americans embraced Israel. On the new program “Saturday Night” – not yet “Saturday Night Live” – the mock newscaster Chevy Chase “reported” on the resolution: “Black entertainer Sammy Davis, Jr., a convert to Judaism, was quoted as saying: ‘What a breakthrough! Now, finally, I can hate myself!’”⁵

Two enduring lessons emerged from this moment when Israel was more popular among the American people than among American policymakers – a contrast with this past year:

“Connected Jews” – Trust in Trump Is Headline-Driven

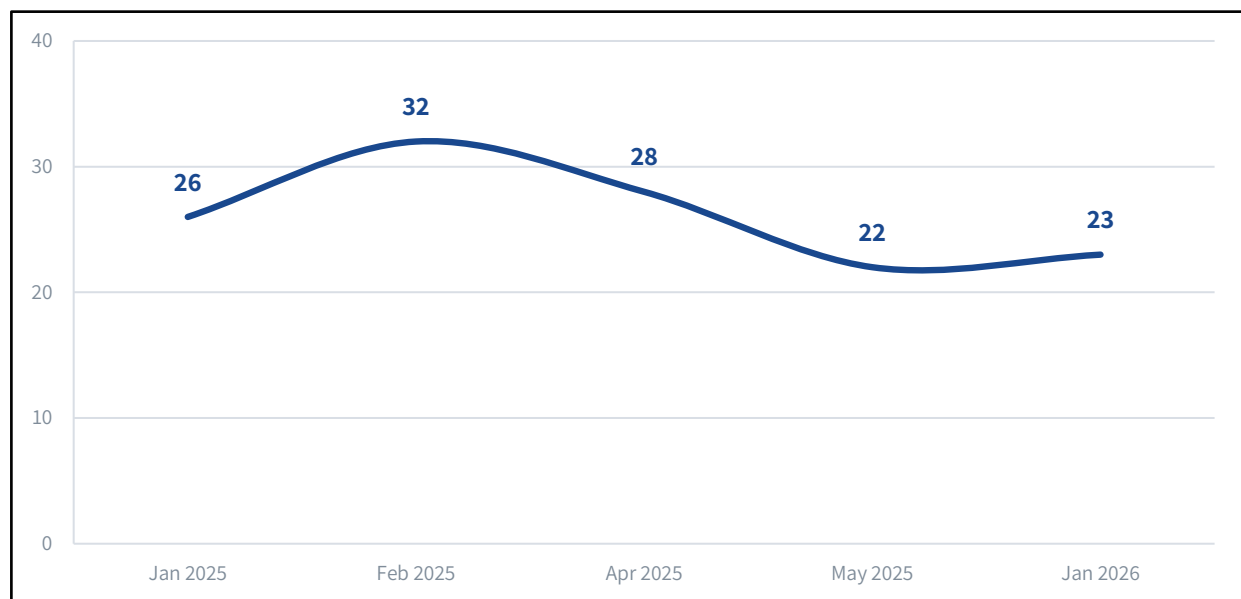
% of respondents expressing “a great deal” of trust



Source: JPPI Voice of the Jewish People Index. Asked in months when U.S.-Israel relations were the focus

“Connected Jews” – Trust in Trump Regarding Fighting Antisemitism

% of respondents expressing “a great deal” of trust



Source: JPPI Voice of the Jewish People Index.

1. American support for Israel runs deep.
2. As in any long, healthy marriage, spats are inevitable, often fleeting, rarely catastrophic.

Looking Back 2: The Record Low: Double Trouble During the “First Intifada”

When Palestinians rioted and then spread terror in 1988 and 1989 in what they called the “First Intifada,” Israel’s reputation suffered. In January 1988, a frustrated Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin proclaimed: “The first priority is to use force, power and beatings.”⁶ He claimed that he sought police-style containment rather than the use of lethal military force. Especially after Israeli commanders testified in military courts that they had been ordered to break Palestinian stone-throwers’ arms and legs,⁷ and CBS News showed Israeli soldiers doing just that to two young Palestinians,⁸ Rabin’s “break-their-bones” policy became notorious.

Support for Israel plummeted. By 1989, Gallup found Israel’s favorability rating at a record low of 45%.⁹ President George H.W. Bush used the State Department Human Rights Report to condemn Israel’s military tactics in the “occupied territories.” In February 1989, the powerful Democratic chair of the House Foreign Operations Appropriations Subcommittee, Wisconsin’s David Obey, insisted that the United States had a

responsibility to investigate and press Israel on human-rights reforms during discussions and votes on aid to Israel, seemingly linking the two issues.¹⁰ Even pro-Israel “pragmatists” such as Republican Senator Bob Dole and Brooklyn Congressman Stephen Solarz criticized Israel’s aggression.

Nevertheless, by early 1991, Gallup recorded a peak in support for Israel: 79% favorable.¹¹ That February, 64% of American voters acknowledged liking Israel more than the Palestinians.¹²

What happened? ... Operation Desert Storm.

The First Persian Gulf War boosted Israel’s popularity. First, even when Saddam Hussein’s Scud missiles landed, Israel respected President Bush’s request not to retaliate. So, once again, Israelis appeared as vulnerable victims – always a tragic fast-track to popularity, as October 7 confirmed. Second, by fall 1991, politicians and journalists were discussing Israel’s willingness to attend a Madrid Peace Conference, with a joint Jordanian–Palestinian delegation. By 1995, Yitzhak Rabin, the bone-breaker, had become the Middle East’s prince of peace.

These events offer three more lessons about deep and enduring ties amid passing tiffs:

3. The Middle East’s volatility makes Israel’s standing headline-driven and event-focused. The front page giveth popularity – and taketh it away, repeatedly.

4. Most Americans sympathize when Israelis are slaughtered but dislike Israel's counterattacks, especially when journalists portray the IDF's response as excessive or vengeful.
5. Glimmers of hope and possibilities for peace, especially with the Palestinians, heighten Israel's approval ratings.

These insights lead to the most important conclusion about relations between Israel and the American people. With the atmosphere dynamic rather than static, the conversation is fluid rather than binary. Most Americans are neither blindly pro-Israel nor zealously anti-Israel. Most don't feel so strongly. Even most American Jews usually prioritize domestic considerations over foreign policy concerns, including support for Israel, when voting.

The Enduring but Overlooked Phenomenon of Media-Stoked Conditional Zionism

So beware. Especially today, activists on both extremes run the conversation – on social media, through the headlines, and with a newer phenomenon: a rising cadre of young progressives whose first defining political experience was championing anti-Zionism. But not every American criticizing Israel is an anti-Zionist or a lifelong critic of the Jewish state.

In fact, while the anti-Zionists are predatory sharks, most Americans are foreign-policy goldfish – inattentive and forgetful. That

puts Israel on perpetual probation because it's so targeted and obsessively discussed in the press. Israel's popularity at any moment depends on what's perceived to be "good" behavior or "good" leadership. This state of media-stoked conditional Zionism is not a post-October 7 blip; it's a historical reality.

Too many Israelis – and Israeli leaders – address Americans on the assumption that they're either pro-Israel or anti-Zionist. Especially now, American Jews, pro-Israel activists, and Israelis must think more strategically. They should narrowcast messages to different groups, ignore anti-Zionists as much as possible, and woo the muddled, swayable middle thoughtfully, respectfully, and strategically.

This year offered abundant evidence confirming the need for such a strategy.

The Unhappy Horseshoe: Fanatic Anti-Zionists Bond Through Antisemitic Conspiratorialism

The Jewish world has been traumatized by the mainstreaming and hardening of the anti-Zionist horseshoe on both the left and the right. In JPPI's monthly Voice of the Jewish People survey, which uses a respondent panel of "connected" U.S. Jews, 85% of respondents agreed that "Israel's image was damaged in 2025" – and it got worse.¹³ A further 62% worry equally about antisemitism on the left and the right.¹⁴

Zohran Mamdani's election as New York's mayor marks a turning point. It normalized obsessive anti-Zionism as an organizing principle for some individuals and institutions and eliminated red lines for Democratic candidates regarding anti-Zionist antisemitism. Mamdani's denials don't fool most American Jews – 64% of respondents in JPPI's monthly Voice of the Jewish People survey called him "anti-Israel and antisemitic."¹⁵ Equally sobering on the left was the fact that 40 of 47 Senate Democrats opposed major weapons transfers to Israel and supported the Joint Resolutions of Disapproval.¹⁶ Shortly thereafter, 103 House Democrats – more than half the caucus – voted against continued foreign aid to Israel.¹⁷ The Democrats are being Sanderized. Having absorbed Bernie Sanders' portrayal of socialism as benign, too many now pronounce Israel and Zionism malignant.

On the right, Vice President J.D. Vance's sneering response to Israeli and Jewish critics of Trump's memorandum of understanding with Iran in June 2026¹⁸ also reflects worrying ideological and structural shifts. Beyond currying favor with the president, the vice president played to the Republican Party's increasingly shrill Tucker Carlson–Candace Owens wing. Some isolationists are principled, but many are antisemitic in intent, not just in effect.

A JPPI study using artificial intelligence analyzed six months of video transcripts from

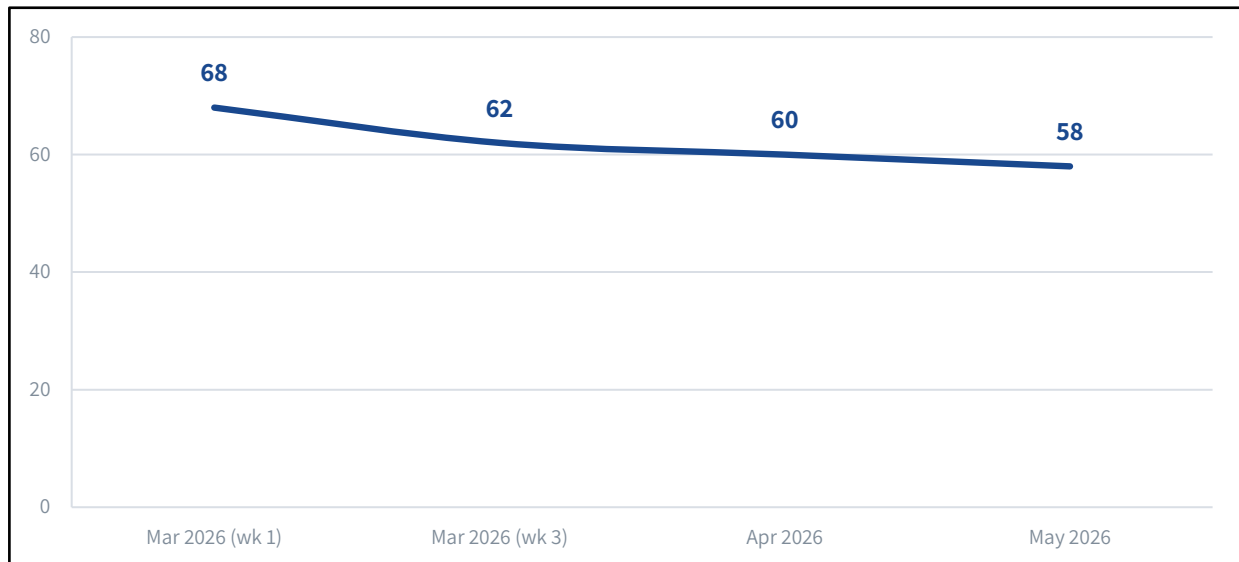
Carlson and Owens. The study found that the two podcasters increased the volume and intensity of their attacks on Israel. The share of Carlson's references to Israel that were negative rose from roughly 50% to 70%; the tone became overwhelmingly negative.¹⁹

Alas, in America today, anti-Jewish rhetoric is a booming business. "There is a part of the Right that is extraordinarily conspiratorial and sees Jews as a conspiratorial force....," Ben Shapiro told the Jerusalem Post.²⁰ Those conspiracy-mongers flourish "because social media rewards it. On X and TikTok, you often get more clicks if you push anti-Israel and antisemitic rhetoric." Shapiro noted: "Conspiratorialism is an incredibly seductive storyline, particularly for young people who are being told that the problems in their own lives are not their fault, and they can be solved by externalizing those problems onto a different group.... Virtually every conspiracy theory ends up pointing at the Jews because the narrative needs a villain," and the Jews are an old favorite.²¹

Still, two distinctions separate left-wing and right-wing anti-Zionism. Most mainstream Republicans, especially Lindsey Graham, Marco Rubio, and Ted Cruz, repudiate MAGA antisemitism. Their moral clarity contrasts with the muffled response of most Senate Democrats, especially that of their leader, Charles Schumer.

“Connected Jews” – Still Support the U.S. Decision to Fight Iran

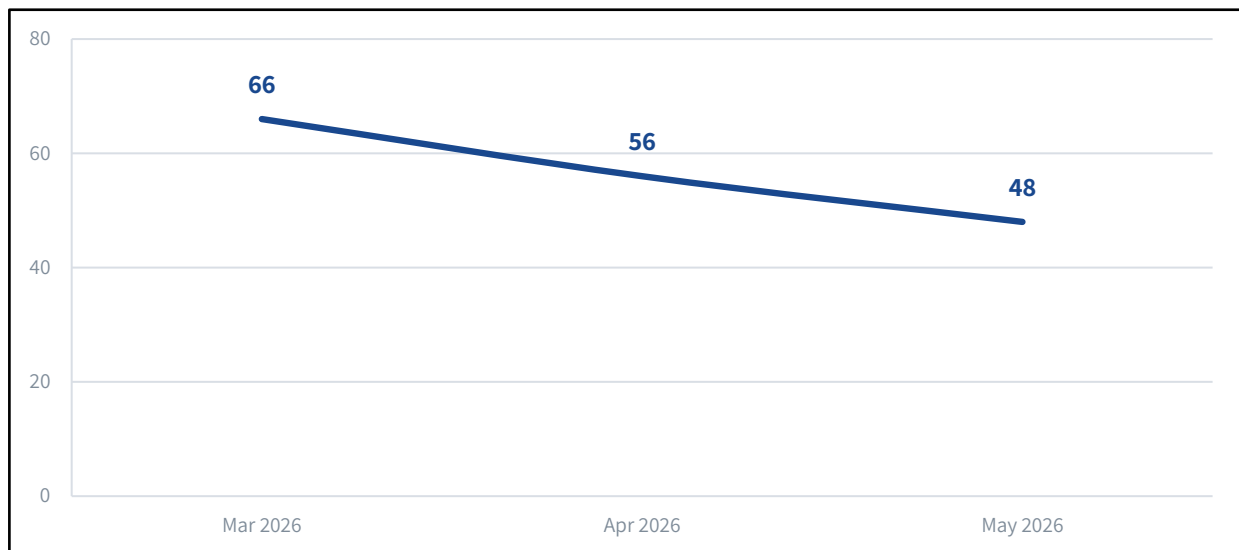
% supporting the decision



Source: JPPI Voice of the Jewish People Index. March 2026 shown as two weekly readings (week 1 / week 3).

“Connected Jews” – Faith in the War Effort Is Flagging

% of respondents viewing the outcome as “major success” or “somewhat successful”



Source: JPPI Voice of the Jewish People Index.

Second, most Jewish Republicans denounce anti-Zionism categorically. Alas, a growing number of progressive Jewish Democrats are blue-and-whitewashing anti-Zionism – a practice we could call J-Streeting or Landerling (a form of laundering), after Brad Lander, Mamdani’s Jewish ally and a Bash-Israel-First congressional candidate. These activists often claim that all but the harshest, most obsessive anti-Israel critics are not “antisemitic” but merely critical of Israel’s policies and government.

The Happy Horseshoe: Ensuring that the Fundamentals of the U.S.–Israel Partnership Remain Sound

These warning signs should not cloud the parallel narrative – the many structural and popular points of light. Events over the last twelve months produced remarkable milestones of integration, not just cooperation, in the U.S.–Israel partnership, yielding historic achievements. In June 2025, America made history by joining Israel’s “12-Day War” against Iran, delivering the final bunker-busting, nuclear-hunting blows. In October, President Trump’s direct intervention forced Hamas to free the final 20 living hostages and return the bodies of the last 27 Israelis held in Gaza. On October 7, 2025 – let alone on October 8, 2023 – few people believed that 168 of the 251 hostages would be freed alive and that every hostage would be accounted for and returned

home, including the remains of two soldiers held since 2014.

To put this accomplishment in perspective, as of July 2026, 41 American citizens²² – and up to 250 Western nationals – are being held hostage or unjustly imprisoned. Recent reports suggest that Russia, China, and Iran together hold 78% of them.²³ It’s hard to appreciate the American–Israeli achievement regarding the Gaza hostages because Americans and other Westerners simply ignore these victims of other totalitarian regimes and terrorist organizations.

It is also critical to remember that the U.S.–Israel partnership runs much deeper than political, military, and diplomatic ties. As of 2023, there were 135 Israeli companies listed on America’s Nasdaq stock exchange. More than 250 American high-tech companies have research facilities in Israel,²⁴ and an average of more than 450,000 Israelis visit the U.S. annually, spending approximately \$1.4 billion in the American economy.²⁵ Some 400,000 Americans visited Israel this past year²⁶ – down from nearly one million before October 7.²⁷ Before the outbreak of the war, up to 200,000 U.S. citizens were reported to reside permanently in Israel.²⁸

In March 2025, Google announced an agreement to acquire Israel’s cybersecurity powerhouse Wiz for \$32 billion.²⁹ This mega-transaction illustrated the strength of the ties. Meanwhile, despite the headlines, in

May 2026, Congress proposed a more stable “United States–Israel Defense Technology Cooperation Initiative” in Section 219 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2027.³⁰

Israeli technology would become more deeply integrated into American weapons systems through a range of research and development collaborations. This bill, which fortunately has not attracted much public attention, would create an “Executive Agent” within the Department of Defense. Bureaucratizing support for Israel based on internal criteria would make it less dependent on foreign-aid votes and politicking. Israeli technology would naturally fit into the U.S. military supply chain and would often lock in U.S.–Israeli collaborations through long-term contracts and bureaucratic momentum.

Given the current volatility, which will not disappear quickly, Israeli officials should seek more such ways to “lock in” cooperation – bureaucratizing, normalizing, and reinforcing these ties, which are essential to both countries’ militaries, intelligence systems, and economies.

Even on the sobering June primary day, when three anti-Israel Democratic congressional candidates were nominated, many moderate pro-Israel Democrats won, from Adrian Bofo in Maryland’s 5th Congressional District to Thomas DiNapoli in New York State. DiNapoli

defeated two progressive rivals who insisted that New York divest its holdings in Israel bonds, which the comptroller holds as profitable investments on behalf of New York State.

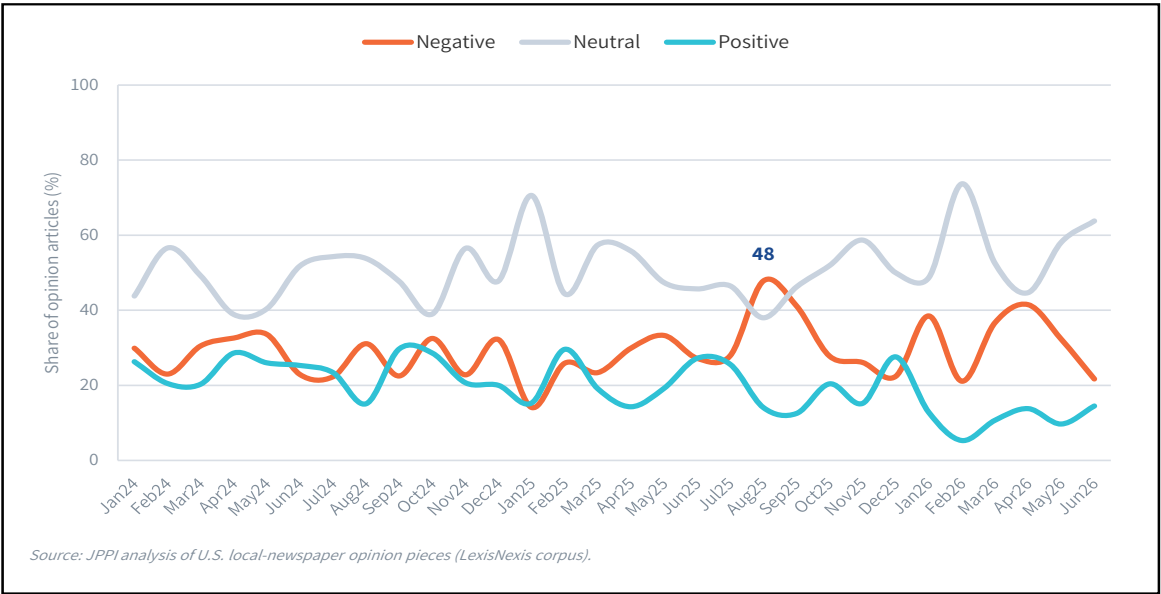
Here, too, subtlety is required. People and institutions live up to high expectations – and down to harsh condemnations. It’s bad enough that Mamdani and his allies will use Israel-bashing as a get-out-of-jail-free card with constituents, yelling louder about Israel to obscure any governmental failures or political controversies. And they will keep bullying many timid Democrats into complicit silence.

Still, dismissing the Democratic Party as “anti-Israel” because of some destructive members of Congress and mayors will obscure the many pro-Israel moderates and risk alienating them. House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, for example, needs reinforcement from Israeli politicians, not demagogic cold-shouldering. “Israel is an ally and has a right to exist as a Jewish and Democratic state,” Jeffries believes. “Our commitment to Israel’s security is ironclad.”³¹ Even while joining the Democratic pile-on supporting an arms ban to punish Israel, Senator Jeanne Shaheen, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, clarified: “The horrific attack on October 7th underscored the very real threats Israel faces.... No country should ever have to live with a bloodthirsty terrorist organization on its doorstep... The United

The U.S.–Israel Partnership in 2026: Snapshots of Headline-Driven Volatility in Local-Newspaper Sentiment Toward Israel

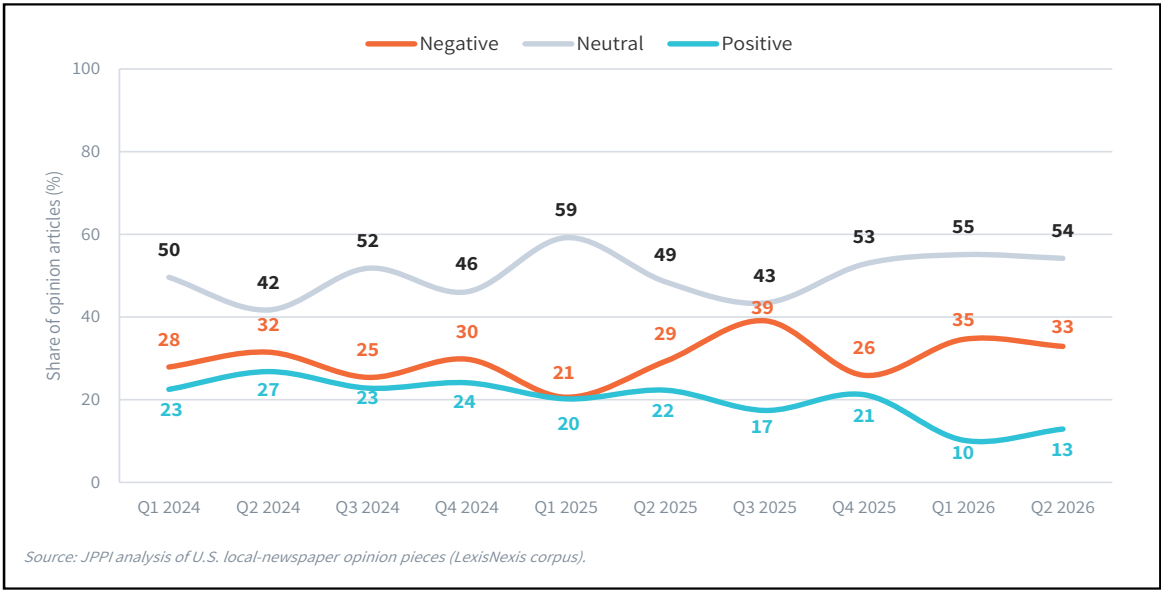
A) Monthly

Share of opinion articles by sentiment (%)



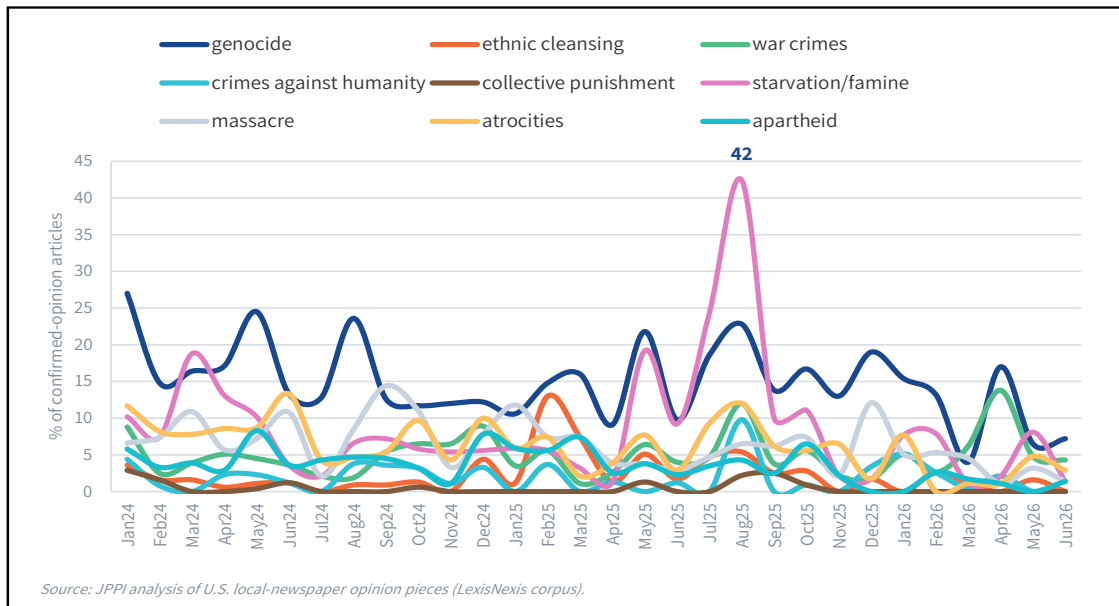
B) Quarterly

Share of opinion articles by sentiment (%)



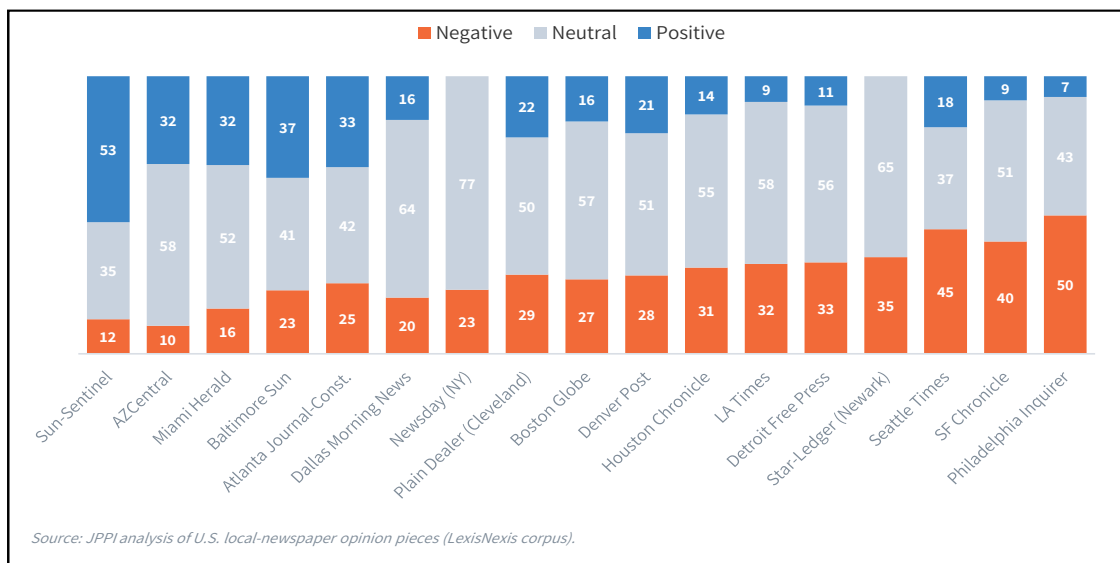
C) Frequency of Accusatory Terms Adopted in Opinion Pieces

Share of articles confirmed as opinion pieces that use the term (%)



D) Sentiment Reflecting Regional and Ideological Variations by Source

Share of opinion articles (%), Jan 2024–Jun 2026, sorted from highest to lowest mean sentiment



States [remains] a longstanding partner of Israel.”³²

The Real Battleground: The Conditional or Soft Zionists

The Unhappy Horseshoe risks inducing paralysis through despair, while the Happy Horseshoe risks inducing paralysis through complacency. True, broader antisemitic forces have made modern anti-Zionism the latest mania, casting Israel as a “folk devil” in the words of sociologist Stanley Cohen, the author of *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1972).³³ In JPPI’s Diaspora Jewish survey, 45% of respondents believe that more Americans have soured on Israel because of surging antisemitism – only 28% attribute this shift to “changes in Israeli policy.”³⁴ Nevertheless, that doesn’t excuse the utter failure of Israel’s public diplomacy infrastructure. While not as bloody and irreversible as the military and intelligence failures of October 7, it’s as systemic.

Consider two challenges: one that emerged in the spring and summer of the past year – the impact on public opinion of the accusation of starvation in Gaza – and one that is ongoing – what critics call “settler violence” in the territories.

In February 2025, biased news outlets such as Al Jazeera and anti-Israel human-rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International charged Israel with systematically starving Gazans. In May, when Israel set out to seize 70% of Gaza, the

story gained momentum. The World Health Organization condemned Israel. The American media and American establishment warned about “starvation.” The American-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation stepped in and became a target. These concerns peaked in August, when a UN-backed review declared there was “famine” in Gaza. The American media and social media echoed the UN condemnations and highlighted any misfires in delivery.

Future academics will dissect how marginal, tendentious accusations came to be widely believed. Pro-Israel advocates futilely tried to dismiss the accusations as “modern-day blood libels.” Israeli officials should be concerned about the reporting’s impact on Americans who are pro-Israel, who condemned the October 7 attack, and who were inclined to support Israel’s war effort. Such Americans should never be dismissed as “anti-Israel” merely because biased media reports convinced them that a state they respected was starving children.

The JPPI study tracked critical terms such as “genocide,” “massacre,” “apartheid,” and “starvation,” along with “Israel” and “Zionism,” in approximately 3,000 local-media articles from January 2024 to June 2026 – noting that many local newspapers initially supported Israel. ChatGPT 5.2 also analyzed the articles’ tone. The conclusion: “August is the month with the highest percentage of negative articles and the only month in which the percentage of

negative articles is higher than that of neutral articles.”³⁵

Further proof that the problem is conditional – and thus that many are convincible, wooable Zionists – comes from the observation that “the term ‘starvation’ appears only at specific points in time. It is important to note that it usually fades away after a short time. Here, too, a notable milestone is August 2025, following the start of the ‘starvation’ campaign in late July.”

Regional variations emerge. “Local newspapers in conservative regions such as Florida” present “a relatively positive tone toward Israel. In contrast, as one moves to larger cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Philadelphia, the tone becomes more negative.” The study concludes: “It is evident that as the war continues, there has been a decline in the percentage of articles expressing a positive tone toward Israel. It is also evident that one of the central issues around which criticism of Israel reached a peak is the issue of ‘starvation’ in the Gaza Strip. Admittedly, this term did not persist over time. However, it is reasonable to assume that the issue is fading from the agenda due to actions Israel is taking in response to heavy international pressure, which is dampening the criticism.”

Since the October 2025 ceasefire, specific incidents highlighting the starvation accusation have been limited – but the reputational damage has lingered. In fairness,

one can argue that Israel had to fight the war aggressively and that, given a choice between winning the war and losing the PR battle, it’s better to win the war first.

That’s why the second PR crisis over violent settlers is even more problematic. It’s a self-destructive “own goal.” There is no policy upside or security gain in the most extreme incidents – Israeli citizens harassing, beating, and often injuring Palestinians – that dominate the headlines. The global media’s coverage of these incidents – collectively labeled “settler violence” by critics – harms Israel’s international standing more than its coverage of the “starvation” accusation does. Some settlers’ actions – combined with government inaction and inflammatory rhetoric – make Israel look deliberately cruel and, to use favored concepts among American progressives, “settler-colonialist and oppressive.”

Hard anti-Zionists are delighted. Conditional – or soft – Zionists are appalled, with some abandoning their support of Israel. Even more disturbing, as the number of Disappointed Zionists grows, condemning “settler violence” has become a necessary posture for even ardent Zionists to connect with Jewish audiences and gain a measure of the credibility that too many defensive Zionists are forever seeking.

While defending Israel proudly – and fending off fellow progressives’ counterattacks –

New York Congressman Ritchie Torres has condemned the “crisis of extremist settler violence.”³⁶ Major Jewish organizations have branded these settler “pogroms” as “an affront to a democratic state.”³⁷ The Union for Reform Judaism blasted the “terrorizing” actions of settlers.³⁸ All this feeds a sense of moral equivalence – and crisis.

These dynamics reinforce three important conclusions from last year:

1. Israel’s government must not only speak “Jerusalem language” to “Red America” but must also have representatives who speak “Tel Aviv talk” to “Blue America.”
2. Leading Jewish organizations must be sensitive to the growing red–blue divisions within the Diaspora, especially within American Jewry, and the need to frame Israel in terms that resonate broadly.
3. Even as politicians dismiss “bipartisanship” as cowardly, Americans’ bipartisan support for Israel remains a gift to Americans, too – healthy democracies need some issues on which the left and the right agree.

JPPI’s latest “Essential Guide” to the U.S.–Israel Partnership identifies five gates of friendship – pathways toward supporting Israel. The Guide advises “narrowcasting,” not just broadcasting: reaching out strategically to American Jews and Evangelicals, as well as Americans over 55, Catholics, mainstream

Protestants, Cuban Americans, and security-minded voters.³⁹

Each of the five gates – or languages of love – is defined by an all-American symbol and can encourage these core supporters and others to support Israel for what it is, without necessarily endorsing everything it does.

- **Biblical Zionism:** Many Jews, Evangelicals, devout Protestants, and Catholics cherish Israel as the Promised Land and the Jewish democratic state. Zionism is foundational to what Ronald Reagan called their “shared identity – a deep, spiritual identity,” rooted in the Bible. They appreciate Israel pragmatically, romantically, existentially – and theologically. As the late Charlie Kirk said after visiting the Holy Land: “Israel changed my life. Strengthened my faith, made the Bible pop into reality, and gave me the most precious memories with Erika,” his wife, now his widow.
- **Liberal-Democratic Zionism:** Many golden agers, in both parties, start with America’s founding documents and the fact that the U.S. and Israel are sister democracies. These supporters combine affection for Israel, appreciation for its security needs, and reverence for its democratic values with pride in the historic ties uniting both countries. In 2008, Condoleezza Rice, George W. Bush’s

secretary of state, celebrated the shared “fellowship of families, of friends, and of faith ... deepened by a shared culture of tolerance and a pioneer spirit.” Nancy Pelosi, the longtime Democratic House speaker who believed protecting Israel was “in my DNA,” said in 2018, “If this Capitol crumbled to the ground, the one thing that would remain would be ... our cooperation with Israel. That’s fundamental to who we are.” Pelosi, like many others, including Bill and Hillary Clinton, hopes Israel will solve the Palestinian conflict as soon as possible, while acknowledging the complexities, starting with Palestinian rejectionism.

- **Progressive Zionism:** Many progressives, rallying around the Statue of Liberty as the beacon to immigrants, the oppressed, and the poor, have become leading anti-Zionists. They brand Israel a right-wing bully while slinging accusations of settler colonialism, racism, oppression, and genocide. One day, like many once-disapproving, now-supportive baby boomers, they may realize that liberal-democratic Israelis live by progressive values, unlike the sexist, homophobic, fundamentalist autocrats of the Palestinian Authority (PA) or Hamas. A Palestinian crime or an Israeli peace breakthrough might change the conversation. But the trendy “Palestinianism” dominating the media, academia, and the arts has seduced

many into blindly and zealously supporting a dramatically illiberal cause that has become foundational to their identity.

- **National Security Zionism:** Security-minded voters see Israel as America’s most useful military and diplomatic ally and, in Ambassador Nikki Haley’s words, as “the front line of defense” against “jihad terrorism.” General Alexander Haig went from resenting Israel’s defiance during the 1982 Lebanon War to appreciating how Israeli pilots demolished Soviet-made anti-aircraft batteries. Haig called Israel “America’s largest aircraft carrier in the world that cannot be sunk.”
- **Transactional Zionism:** Many Trumpians are transactionalists. A vocal minority is anti-Jewish and rigidly isolationist. But most MAGA supporters calculate the dividends America’s investment in Israel yields. Convinced skeptics include Vice President J.D. Vance, who puts Ukraine and Israel “in separate buckets,” while saluting the sacred nature of “that narrow little strip of territory on the Mediterranean.” Vance says Israel “gives us missile-defense parity,” serves as a “regional counterweight to Iran,” and acts as a bulwark against the common enemies of Western civilization. In 2024, he proclaimed: “We want our allies to be like Israel – strong, independent, and capable

ISRAEL–U.S. RELATIONSHIP

of defending their own interests so we don't have to."

America is changing. Israel and its supporters must be nimble. Even while refining Israel's "language of love" for these traditional voting groups, Israel should Think Ethnic and Think Digital. Israel and its American supporters have not reached out enough to Latinos, Hindu Americans, Cuban Americans, and Iranian Americans to find common ground, shared values, and, yes, common jihadist and totalitarian enemies. Thinking Digital means understanding that

Americans now have different affiliations and affinity groups online. More tailored outreach is necessary to reach America's Intellectual Guardians, Liberal Guardians, Civic Guardians, Technology Guardians, Freedom Guardians, Defense Guardians, Constitutional Guardians, and Institutional Guardians. All thrive in different online communities and forums, ultimately united in their commitment to defending the civic, constitutional, Enlightenment, liberal, and capitalist values the Woke anti-Zionist world rejects and Israel embodies.

Endnotes

- 1 President Gerald R. Ford to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, March 21, 1975, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XXVI, Arab–Israeli Dispute, 1974–1976*, ed. Bruce P. Montgomery, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012, doc. 156, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/documents/organization/113388.pdf>
- 2 Yitzhak Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), 204.
- 3 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 3379, “Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Zionism is racism),” November 10, 1975. [https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/3379\(XXX\)](https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/3379(XXX))
- 4 Gerald R. Ford, “Interview With Television Reporters in Jacksonville,” *The American Presidency Project*, November 2, 1975, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/interview-with-television-reporters-jacksonville>
- 5 “Weekend Update,” *Saturday Night Live*, season 1, episode 5, NBC, November 15, 1975, *SNL Transcripts*, <https://snltranscripts.jt.org/75/75eupdate.phtml>
- 6 Michael Ross, “Israel Set to Halt Ship, Rabin Says: Government Ready to Use ‘Whatever Means’ Necessary,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 16, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-02-16-mn-42990-story.html>
- 7 L.A. Times Archive, “Colonel Says Rabin Ordered Breaking of Palestinians’ Bones,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 1990, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-06-22-mn-431-story.html>
- 8 Shay Fogelman, “Freeze Frame,” *Haaretz*, January 14, 2011, <https://www.haaretz.com/2011-01-14/ty-article/freeze-frame/0000017f-dee5-db5a-a57f-deef71fe0000>
- 9 Jeffrey M. Jones, “Americans’ Views of Both Israel, Palestinian Authority Down,” *Gallup News*, March 4, 2024, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/611375/americans-views-israel-palestinian-authority-down.aspx>
- 10 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, “State Dept. Report Charges Israel with Increased Rights Violations,” February 8, 1989, <https://www.jta.org/archive/state-dept-report-charges-israel-with-increased-rights-violations>
- 11 Lydia Saad, “Americans Still Pro-Israel, Though Palestinians Gain Support,” *Gallup News*, March 17, 2022, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/390737/americans-pro-israel-though-palestinians-gain-support.aspx>
- 12 The Gallup Poll Editorial Staff, “Questions and Answers About American Public Opinion and the Middle East,” *Gallup*, April 10, 2002, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/5596/questions-answers-about-american-public-opinion-middle-east.aspx>
- 13 Jewish People Policy Institute, *Voice of the Jewish People Index – December 2025*, January 1, 2026, 10. <https://jppi.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Dec.-25-Voice-of-the-Jewish-People-Index.pdf>
- 14 Jewish People Policy Institute, *Voice of the Jewish People Index – November 2025: Mamdani Win Leaves Most U.S. Jews Concerned*, November 28, 2025, 5. <https://jppi.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Nov.-25-VOJPI.pdf>
- 15 Jewish People Policy Institute, *Voice of the Jewish People Index – November 2025*, 2.
- 16 Jacob Magid, “US Senate nixes effort to halt arms sales to Israel, but 75% of Dems vote to block them,” *The Times of Israel*, April 16, 2026, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-senate-foils-effort-to-nix-israel-arms-sale-but-75-of-dems-vote-to-block-it/>
- 17 Aid to Israel,” *The New York Times*, July 15, 2026. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/07/15/us/politics/democrats-house-israel-vote-aid.html>
- 18 Rory Carroll, “JD Vance tells Israel Iran deal critics: Trump is your only ally left in the world,” *The Guardian*, June 19, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jun/19/jd-vance-israel-iran-deal-critics>
- 19 Yaakov Katz, Shlomi Berezniak, and Eli Kannai, “Sharp Rise in Anti-Israel and Antisemitic Rhetoric among Leading Right-Wing Influencers in the U.S.,” Jewish People Policy Institute, December 29, 2025, <https://jppi.org.il/en/sharp-rise-in-anti-israel-and-antisemitic-rhetoric-among-leading-right-wing-influencers-in-the-united-states>
- 20 Zvika Klein, “‘A conspiratorial Right is rising’ in America, Ben Shapiro tells ‘Post,’” *The Jerusalem Post*, October 10, 2025, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/article-869858>.
- 21 Klein, “A conspiratorial Right is rising.”
- 22 Hena Doba, “About 41 American Hostages Being Held Overseas,” *NewsNation*, March 29, 2026, <https://www.newsnationnow.com/world/about-41-american-hostages-held-overseas/>
- 23 Bernd Debusmann Jr., “Who Are the US Citizens Still Being Held Abroad?,” *BBC News*, August 2, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c98q8y1gl4xo>

ISRAEL–U.S. RELATIONSHIP

- 24 U.S. Department of State, *2023 Investment Climate Statements: Israel*, 2023, <https://2021-2025.state.gov/reports/2023-investment-climate-statements/israel/>. Startup Nation Central, *Multinationals in Israel: 434 R&D Centers Driving Innovation*, January 8, 2026, <https://startupnationcentral.org/hub/blog/mnacs-in-israel-434-rd-centers/>
- 25 International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, *Israel Travel and Tourism Industry*, Market Intelligence, 2022, <https://www.trade.gov/market-intelligence/israel-travel-and-tourism-industry>
- 26 Ministry of Tourism (Israel), *Summary of the Ministry of Tourism's Activities for 2025*, January 25, 2026, <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/summary-ministry-of-tourism-activities-2025>
- 27 Ministry of Tourism (Israel), *Statistical Data of Tourist Entries to Israel*, Planning, Policy and Strategy Administration, 2010–2026, <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/visitors-and-tourists-2023>
- 28 Laurie Kellman, Rebecca Santana, and David Koenig, “A Nightmare: US Passport Crunch for Dual Citizens in Israel Among Most Severe,” *The Times of Israel*, July 3, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/a-nightmare-us-passport-crunch-for-dual-citizens-in-israel-among-most-severe/>
- 29 Google LLC, “Google announces agreement to acquire Wiz,” *Google Blog*, March 18, 2025, <https://blog.google/company-news/inside-google/company-announcements/google-agreement-acquire-wiz/>
- 30 U.S. Congress, House, *Text of H.R. 8800 (119th Congress): National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2027*, Congress.gov, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/8800/text>
- 31 “Leader Jeffries Statement on the Situation in the Middle East,” Office of House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries, June 13, 2025, <https://democraticleader.house.gov/media/press-releases/leader-jeffries-statement-situation-middle-east>
- 32 Jeanne Shaheen, “Ranking Member Shaheen Statement on Vote on Joint Resolutions of Disapproval,” U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, April 15, 2026, <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/press/dem/release/ranking-member-shaheen-statement-on-vote-on-joint-resolutions-of-disapproval>
- 33 Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* (London: Granada Publishing, 1972).
- 34 Jewish People Policy Institute, *Voice of the Jewish People Index – April 2026: Support for the War in Iran Has Eroded*, April 29, 2026, p. 15. <https://jppi.org.il/en/voice-of-the-jewish-people-index-april-2026-support-for-the-war-in-iran-has-eroded/>
- 35 Jewish People Policy Institute’s Glazer Center, “Analysis of Local Press Regarding Israel in the U.S.,” 2026.
- 36 “‘National security threat’: Pro-Israel US Democrats condemn West Bank settler violence,” *The Times of Israel*, March 27, 2026, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/national-security-threat-pro-israel-us-democrats-condemn-west-bank-settler-violence>
- 37 “Major Jewish Organizations Condemn Jewish Extremist Violence,” *Israel Policy Forum*, January 25, 2022, <https://israelpolicyforum.org/2022/01/25/major-jewish-organizations-condemn-jewish-extremist-violence/>
- 38 Union for Reform Judaism, “Reform Movement Statement on West Bank Settler Violence,” July 23, 2025, <https://urj.org/press-room/reform-movement-statement-west-bank-settler-violence>
- 39 Gil Troy, *The Essential Guide to the U.S.–Israel Partnership: The 250th Anniversary Edition* (Jerusalem: The Jewish People Policy Institute, 2026), <https://jppi.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/U.S.-Israel-Partnership-book-for-final-print-1.7.pdf>



Israel-European Union Relations

12

Between Values and Interests: Israel and the European Union

Since the establishment of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, relations between Israel and the project of European integration – later the European Union (EU) – have been marked by a persistent duality of proximity and estrangement. This duality intensified after the outbreak of the Gaza War on October 7, 2023, and again as the military confrontation expanded to Lebanon and Iran. This tension is inherent on both sides of the relationship. In Israel, Europe is deeply valued as a center of culture, tourism, science, economic activity, and sport, even as EU policy is criticized and at times met with hostility. Conversely, Europe displays a historical and cultural affinity with Israel and an appreciation of its achievements in innovation, cybersecurity, security, and science, alongside consistent criticism of the wars and military operations in the Gaza Strip, Israel's policy in the occupied territories, and the consequences of Israeli actions,

which are perceived as threatening stability in the Middle East, Europe, and the international system.

The key to understanding this relationship of love and antagonism lies in the intertwined history of Europe and its Jews, shaped over millennia. Although the past is essential for understanding relations between the parties, it must not be allowed to dictate the future of Israel–EU relations. Over roughly seventy years, these relations have developed into a multidimensional partnership with strategic, economic, scientific, academic, cultural, and sporting significance that serves vital interests on both sides.

The Gaza War and the military confrontations with Lebanon and Iran sharpened tensions between Israel and the European Union and deepened their disagreements. Paradoxically, however, the deterioration in relations during this period

illustrates precisely the depth of the ties and the resilience of the cooperation mechanisms built by the parties over many decades. With the end of the principal phase of fighting in the Gaza Strip and the entry into force of fragile ceasefires with Lebanon and Iran, the need to redesign the discourse between Israel and the EU has become more urgent if the parties are to establish a stable, sustainable, and mutually beneficial relationship. Such a discourse requires a renewed examination of Israel's position vis-à-vis the EU and of how Israel seeks to situate itself within the political and

legal architecture of European integration. Should it aspire to deeper integration into EU institutions, content itself with the status of a “Special Privileged Partnership,” expand its participation in the Union's various programs, or continue with the existing model of cooperation under the European Neighborhood Policy?

This chapter presents an up-to-date account of Israel–EU relations and examines the challenges and opportunities that recent geopolitical developments pose for this relationship.

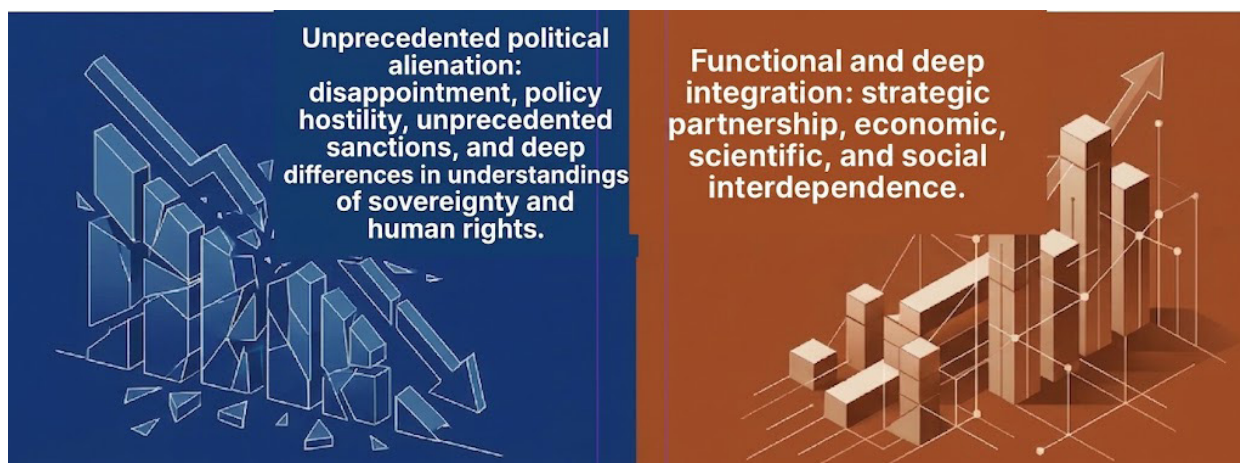


Figure 1. Between political alienation and functional integration

Between the Desire for Integration and the Reality of Interdependence

In 1958, Israel became the third country in the world to request the opening of a diplomatic mission to the institutions of the European Communities in Brussels but, in practice, the

fourth to open one. Economic relations between the parties were first institutionalized in 1964, with the signing of a three-year trade agreement that granted tariff reductions on imports of a small number of Israeli products into the European Community. In 1970, after protracted negotiations, a five-year preferential agreement was signed. Under that agreement, the Community granted

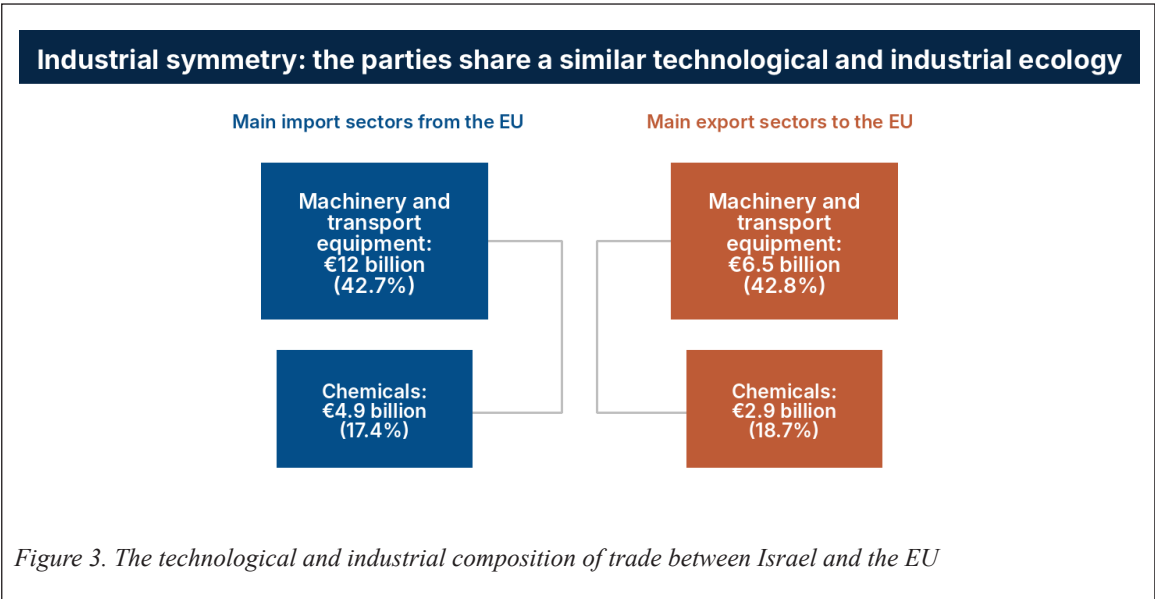
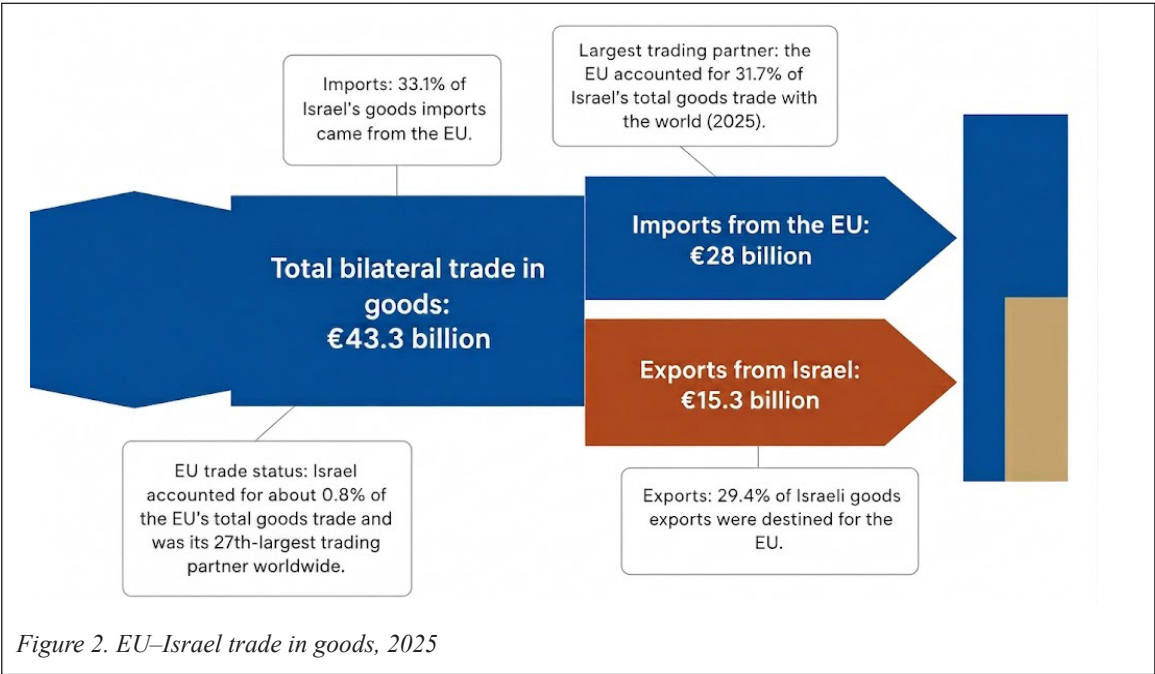
tariff reductions of 50% on imports of Israeli industrial products into the member states and 40% on imports of citrus fruit. In return, Israel undertook to grant an average tariff reduction of 18% on a limited volume of imports from Community member states.

In early 1973, the Council of Ministers of the European Community approved a plan to establish a free-trade area with the countries of the Mediterranean Basin, and in May 1975, the free-trade agreement between the European Community and Israel was signed in Brussels. The agreement was intended to promote the development of economic relations by expanding mutual trade, to contribute to the development of the Israeli economy, to improve living and employment conditions, to increase productivity, and to strengthen monetary stability.

Since then, relations between Israel and the European Communities have continued to deepen across a broad range of fields, a process that accelerated after the signing of the Association Agreement in 1995.¹ This agreement, which remains the legal and institutional foundation of Israel's relations with the European Union, regulates political and economic cooperation between the parties and provides a framework for expanding cooperation in culture, sport, tourism, science and research, higher education, and numerous other areas. Even in periods of political crisis and tension, these cooperation frameworks have continued to function and have demonstrated considerable resilience, as discussed below.

Today, the European Union is Israel's largest trading partner. In 2025, the EU accounted for 31.7% of Israel's goods trade with the world: 29.4% of Israeli goods exports, excluding diamonds, were destined for EU member states, while 33.1% of Israeli goods imports, excluding diamonds, originated in EU member states. That year, total trade in goods between the parties amounted to €43.3 billion. Israeli exports to the EU stood at €15.3 billion, led by machinery and transport equipment (€6.5 billion, 42.8%) and chemicals (€2.9 billion, 18.7%). Israeli imports from the EU totaled €28 billion, also led by machinery and transport equipment (€12 billion, 42.7%) and chemicals (€4.9 billion, 17.4%). In 2025, Israel was the EU's twenty-seventh largest trading partner, accounting for only about 0.8% of the EU's total goods trade with the world. Within the Mediterranean Basin, however, Israel ranked as the EU's third-largest trading partner, after Morocco and Egypt.²

One of the clearest expressions of the depth of relations between Israel and the European Union is cooperation in science, research, and development. In 1995, the parties signed an agreement on cooperation in research and development (R&D), under which Israel became the first non-European state to attain full-partner status in the EU's Framework Programs for Research and Technological Development. Since then, Israel has been among the most active and successful participants in European calls for research proposals, and it has become a central source of innovation within the European Research Area, both in basic research and in applied,



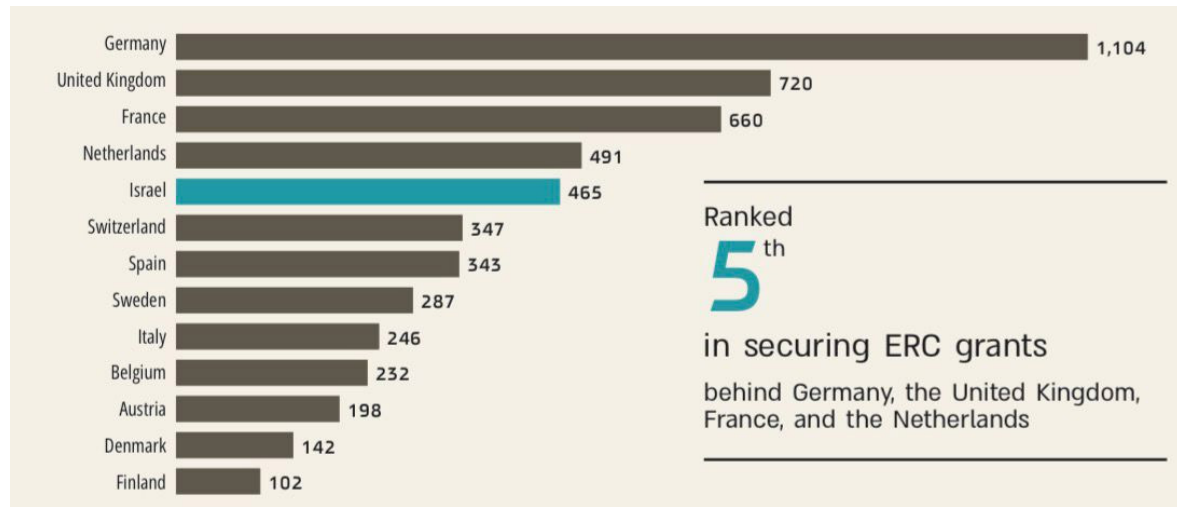


Figure 4. ERC grants in the life sciences and medicine, 2015–2024

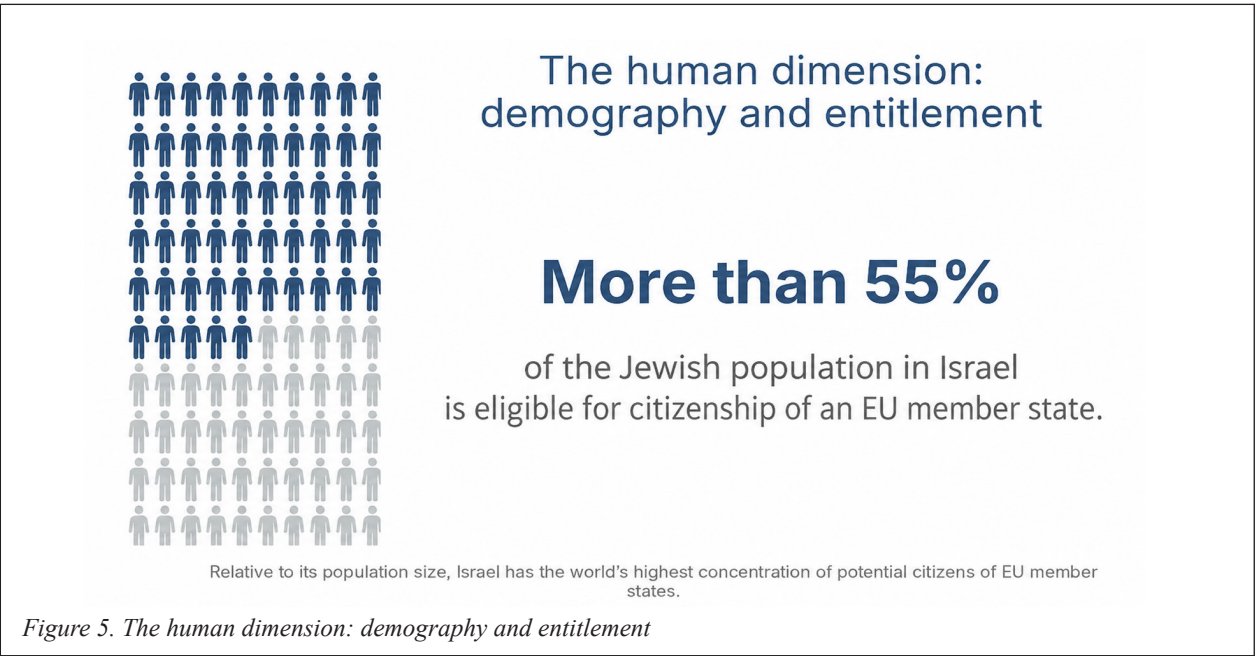
Source: *The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Report on the State of the Sciences in Israel, 2025* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 2026), p. 30.

commercially oriented research. The European Union is today the most important source of research funding in Israel, and this cooperation has contributed significantly to establishing Israel's status as the "Start-Up Nation." For example, during 2015–2024, Israel ranked fifth in securing European Research Council (ERC) grants in the fields of life sciences and medicine, after Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands.

Israelis are drawn to Europe's historical and cultural richness, to its traditions, ways of life, and heritage, and they attach great importance to cultural, educational, and sporting ties with Europe. Although many are concerned about the rise of antisemitism on the continent, especially

since the October 7 massacre,³ and are at times also uncomfortable with the European Union's positions on issues related to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, Europe's cities and landscapes remain the preferred destinations for Israeli tourists.⁴

Moreover, in recent decades, a growing number of Israelis have applied for citizenship in EU member states. The eastward enlargement of the EU in 2004, 2007, and 2013 – and, even more so, legislative amendments in Spain and Portugal that allowed descendants of Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula to obtain citizenship, although those provisions have since been narrowed or repealed – significantly expanded the circle of those eligible for citizenship of an EU member



state. Today, more than 55% of the Jewish population in Israel is eligible, at least in principle, for citizenship of one of the EU member states by virtue of family origin. Relative to its population, Israel now has the world’s highest concentration of potential citizens of EU member states.⁵

Deep Partnership, Politics of Suspicion

The close ties between Israel and Europe in the fields of security, science, culture, sport, the economy, and other areas stand in contrast to the suspicion, and sometimes even hostility, that characterizes relations at the political level. Since the late 1950s, Israel has sought to deepen its relations with Europe, to draw as close as possible to the project of European integration, and to take part in its various institutions and programs. Yet

despite the depth of cooperation in many areas, broad segments of the Israeli public and the Israeli political system do not trust the intentions of the European Union and its member states when it comes to political and security issues – first and foremost, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and the Iranian threat.

In addition, since the early 2010s, and especially during Benjamin Netanyahu’s terms in office, the perception has gained ground in Europe that Israel is taking on features of a populist, “soft Eurosceptic” state. This perception took shape alongside the growing prominence of conservative and anti-liberal elements in the policies of Netanyahu governments and in Israeli political discourse. In this context, some Netanyahu governments cultivated ties with radical right-wing parties in Europe, including the Party for

Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands, the Sweden Democrats (SD), Vox in Spain, and the National Rally (RN) in France. Many of these parties have antisemitic and Islamophobic legacies; they are also critical of the EU, and some seek to reduce its powers or undermine the foundations of the European integration project.⁶

The European Union, too, displays ambivalence in its approach toward Israel. On the one hand, it seeks to draw Israel closer to the European integration project, to encourage the adoption of the EU's values, and to deepen Israel's integration into European cooperation frameworks. In this spirit, over the years the EU has even offered Israel the prospect of developing a "Special Privileged Partnership," which would grant it a unique status in relation to the other states of the Middle East.⁷

At the same time, many in Europe do not regard Israel as an integral part of the continent, but rather as a state whose geopolitical and strategic place lies in the Middle East and the Mediterranean Basin. In accordance with this view, and despite Israel's reservations, Israel is often included in EU regional frameworks intended for the states of the Middle East and North Africa, rather than in dedicated European frameworks. For example, Israel was included in the European Neighborhood Policy and is now also a partner in its successor initiative, the Pact for the Mediterranean.⁸ In addition, despite repeated declarations concerning the establishment of a "Special Privileged Partnership," the EU has not yet defined the practical meaning of this status

or given it substantive institutional and political expression.

The result is a persistent gap between the depth of cooperation in the economic, scientific, cultural, and social spheres and the character of political relations, which continue to be marked by disappointment, suspicion, bitterness, and mutual anger.

Between Nationalism and Supranational Integration

Israel and the European Union are fundamentally different political and identity-based entities, located at different stages of their historical development. The EU is by nature a supranational entity whose member states agree to transfer some of their sovereign competences to shared institutions in the fields of policymaking, economic affairs, law, and, to some extent, security. Nationalism does, of course, remain a significant political force in Europe, as demonstrated by the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU in 2020 and by the strengthening of Eurosceptic parties and governments in various countries. Nevertheless, most of the political, economic, and administrative elites on the continent continue to view supranational cooperation as a necessary condition for coping with the challenges of the twenty-first century, even at the cost of limiting certain components of national sovereignty.

This view also rests on an ideational foundation. The European project seeks to present itself as an alternative to the rival nationalisms that

characterized Europe for centuries and led, among other things, to the two world wars. In this sense, European integration is not merely an institutional arrangement but also an identity project that seeks to shape a new understanding of sovereignty, belonging, and cooperation.

Israel, for its part, pursues a goal different from that of the European integration project, one that resembles the past of the European continent more than the future to which the EU aspires: the establishment and consolidation of the nation-state of the Jewish people. Seventy-eight years after its independence, the process of building Israel and consolidating its self-understanding is not yet complete. Significant segments of the political system and the Israeli public express unqualified support for a national agenda, and few Israelis would be prepared to relinquish central aspects of Israeli sovereignty, especially if doing so were to impair the Jewish character of the state.

The Palestinian Issue

Over the past two decades, Israel has attached growing importance to multilateral cooperation in recognition of the increasing significance of multilateral diplomacy and of its advantages. Such frameworks confer international legitimacy, enable burden-sharing, expand access to knowledge and resources, and strengthen states' capacity to address shared challenges. This view was evident, among other things, in the deepening of Israel's relations with NATO during the previous decade, including the opening of an Israeli

mission at NATO headquarters in Brussels. At the same time, Israel expanded its participation in international frameworks, acceded to multilateral conventions, and adapted its legislation to international standards, particularly to European Union regulation. This process has been visible in diverse fields, including privacy protection and data security, commercial standardization – including the 2024 reform commonly summarized as “what is good for Europe is good for Israel” – and environmental quality, among other areas.

Yet despite the rapprochement described above, one issue continues to cloud the prospects for deepening relations between Israel and the European Union: the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. In fact, since the Six-Day War of 1967, relations between the parties have largely become hostage to developments in the Middle East, and in particular to the ups and downs of the peace process. For decades, the dialogue between Israel and the European Union on this issue has been characterized more by mutual accusations, mistrust, and inattention than by attempts to forge a partnership that would advance the political process.

From Israel's perspective, the central difficulty lies in the fact that political disagreements have a direct bearing on its ability to deepen relations with the EU in areas of strategic importance. Although successive Israeli governments have sought over the years to promote the expansion of cooperation in these fields, they have generally refrained from specifying their objectives out of concern that the European Union would use

Israel's interest in these fields as leverage on the Palestinian issue.

The reason lies in the institutional structure of Israel–EU relations. The scope and depth of the relationship are regulated by the Association Agreement, which was signed in 1995 and entered into force in 2000. The agreement serves as the central legal framework for relations between the parties and regulates a broad range of areas, including trade and economic cooperation, research cooperation, and political cooperation. At the same time, it anchors the political dialogue and commits the parties to the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, which constitute a central foundation of the relationship.

Implementation of the Association Agreement is entrusted to the Association Council, in which Israel, the Council of the European Union, and the European Commission are represented, usually at the level of foreign ministers. However, substantive decisions concerning the expansion or deepening of relations require the consent of the member states in the Council of the European Union. In light of the EU's ongoing aspiration to play an active role in advancing a resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, a close linkage has developed over the years between progress on the political track and the EU's willingness to deepen its relations with Israel. Accordingly, the state of the political process has long served as a central factor in determining the degree of proximity – or distance – between Israel and the European Union.

Between Security and Human Rights: Jerusalem, Brussels, and Washington

It is difficult to overstate the importance that the European Union attaches to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, which is perceived in Europe as an ongoing focus of tension and instability with regional and international implications. In view of the demographic changes that have taken place in European countries in recent decades, particularly the growth of populations of Arab and Muslim origin and their increasing integration into the political systems of many member states, the conflict has also become an intra-European issue of growing political weight.

It is difficult to overstate the importance that the European Union attaches to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict

Against this background, Israeli strategies directed solely at managing and containing the conflict, postponing efforts to resolve it, or preventing the establishment of a viable Palestinian state are perceived in European capitals and EU institutions as contrary to European interests. Accordingly, many European leaders and civil society organizations express dissatisfaction with the stagnation of the political process and, in most cases, sharply criticize Israel's policy toward the Palestinians.

In addition, there is a widespread feeling in Europe that Israel has worked over the years to reduce the

EU's involvement in the peace process and has preferred the United States as the central – and even exclusive – mediator between the parties. From the perspective of many European decision-makers, this approach is inconsistent with the EU's international standing and with its aspiration to play a central role in advancing a political settlement in the Middle East.

From Israel's perspective, many European states are perceived as adopting a pro-Palestinian

As a rule, Israel regards the United States as the central external guarantor of its security and as its most important strategic partner

position that does not give sufficient weight to Israel's security considerations. There is a widespread sense in Israel that EU member states and the Union's leadership do not adequately understand either the

short- and long-term security threats Israel faces or the constraints arising from them.

At the same time, the European Union's focus on human rights is perceived by many Israelis as disproportionate – even an “obsession” – and hollow.⁹ In their view, the EU applies stringent standards to Israel in areas such as human rights, the rule of law, and good governance, but does not apply them to the same extent to other countries, particularly Arab states and China. This perception reinforces the impression that the Union applies double standards to Israel.¹⁰

In addition, Israel sharply criticizes the rise in antisemitic incidents on the European continent, especially after the terrorist attack of October 7, 2023, and the wars that followed it. It also criticizes what Israel and European Jewish communities perceive as the weak and inadequate response of EU institutions and some member states to the phenomenon. In the eyes of many Israelis and Jews, Europe's response to antisemitism is inconsistent with its declared commitments to protecting human rights, combating racism, and safeguarding minorities.¹¹

Moreover, Israel–EU relations are strongly influenced by the character of transatlantic relations. When gaps emerge between the United States and the European Union on issues relating to the Middle East, they often affect Israel–EU relations. This dynamic has been particularly prominent during Donald Trump's presidency, against the backdrop of disagreements over the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the American peace plan, the nuclear agreement with Iran, the war in Gaza following the October 7 massacre, the operations in Lebanon, Operation Rising Lion, and the negotiations for ceasefires with Iran. Another salient example is Operation Roaring Lion, in which the United States fought alongside Israel against Iran, while most EU member states intensified their criticism of the United States and of the way it conducted the campaign. This gap deepened tensions between Israel and the European Union.

As a rule, Israel regards the United States as the central external guarantor of its security and as its most important strategic partner. Over the years, its foreign and security policy has rested largely on the alliance with Washington, both because of the close strategic affinity between the two countries and because of the alignment of their views on central international issues. Against this background, Israel tends to prefer American involvement in political processes and to be wary of the EU's attempts to play a central role in them.¹² Hence, the quality of relations between Washington and Brussels also has a major effect on Israel's position toward the European Union and on Israel's diplomatic room for maneuver between Washington and Brussels.

From European Solidarity to Sanctions

In the weeks following the massacre of October 7, 2023, the leadership of the European Union, led by the president of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, and the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, stood unequivocally alongside Israel. EU leaders repeatedly emphasized their commitment to Israel's security and to its right to defend itself following the terrorist attack. Yet as the war continued, the casualty toll in the Gaza Strip rose, the fighting expanded to Lebanon and later into direct confrontation with Iran, and a gradual shift occurred in the positions of most member states. The initial support for Israel was replaced by sharp criticism, diplomatic condemnations, and calls to increase pressure on it.

The shift was felt not only in the policies of European governments but also in parliaments, the media, and public opinion, where pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel voices grew stronger. Spain, Ireland, and Malta, as well as Slovenia until its change of government in mid-2026, pursued an especially hard line and called for increased political and economic pressure on Israel; additional states later joined them. Their motives varied: domestic political constraints, including the dependence of the Spanish government on radical-left parties; ideological considerations, especially in the case of Ireland; economic interests linked to relations with Arab states; and, at times, a desire to divert public attention from internal crises.

The initial support for Israel was replaced by sharp criticism, diplomatic condemnations, and calls to increase pressure on it.

In the summer of 2025, proposals emerged within the European Commission to suspend parts of the Association Agreement and to re-examine Israel's participation in the Horizon Europe research program. At the same time, in September that year, many European states, including some of Israel's close friends, broke a decades-long taboo and announced their decision to recognize a Palestinian state, despite Israel's firm opposition. Although the initiator of the move, French President Emmanuel Macron, acted largely out of domestic considerations, he succeeded in rallying additional states. From the standpoint of the European Union, the move

symbolized an attempt to restore its political influence and to return the two-state idea to the center of the international agenda.

Developments on the ground, however, pointed in the opposite direction. Despite the recognition of a Palestinian state by several countries and the intensification of pressure on Israel, the EU was pushed to the margins of efforts to end the Gaza War. The arrangement formulated under U.S. leadership in the summer of 2025, which culminated in an October ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and the return of the Israeli hostages, was achieved without meaningful European involvement. At the Sharm el-Sheikh conference, held that same month, the EU was confined to observer status, while the negotiations were led by Washington with the participation of Arab and Muslim states. The mechanisms established to implement the understandings and to shape regional security and policy arrangements also operated outside the European framework and concerned both the future of the Gaza Strip and the expansion of the Abraham Accords and the entry of additional Arab states into the normalization process with Israel.

The EU was thus left with only a secondary role. It proposed reactivating the European Union Border Assistance Mission at the Rafah Crossing (EUBAM Rafah), which had operated for a limited period in the mid-2000s, and expanding the role of the European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS) in training the security forces of the Palestinian Authority. Yet even with respect to these initiatives, it was not clear

whether there was demand for them among the actors involved or whether they were feasible in the new Middle Eastern reality.

In May 2026, following the change of government in Hungary and the formation of Péter Magyar's government, EU foreign ministers approved, for the first time, personal sanctions against settlers deemed to have been involved in acts of violence in the West Bank. The sanctions targeted three individuals and four organizations, as well as ten senior Hamas officials. About a month later, the United Kingdom, Norway, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand increased the pressure by imposing personal sanctions on ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich over their statements concerning the war in the Gaza Strip. France subsequently joined them, imposing sanctions on Minister Smotrich.

In the Lebanese and Iranian arenas as well, the European Union found it difficult to play a meaningful role. In Lebanon, France played a limited diplomatic role in efforts to secure a ceasefire, but it was the United States that led the move and brought Israel and Lebanon to the negotiating table. On the Iranian front, the EU and its member states found themselves in an even more marginal position. They opposed the military operations against Iran and bore a significant share of the economic costs resulting from disruptions to shipping in the Strait of Hormuz and the accompanying energy crisis, yet had almost no influence on decision-making.

At the same time, tensions between the European Union and NATO, on the one hand, and the White House – above all President Trump – on the other, deepened as Trump sharply criticized the absence of European assistance to American forces during Operation Roaring Lion. In the subsequent negotiations between the United States and Iran, the EU was almost entirely absent, while Pakistan played a central role in mediation efforts.

Thus, paradoxically, precisely when the European Union sharpened its criticism of Israel and sought to position itself as a central actor in shaping the future of the Middle East, its influence over regional developments declined. Brussels continued to exercise its normative power through statements, criticism, sanctions, and regulatory pressure, but the decisive diplomatic and security moves were, in practice, led by the United States, by regional states, and even by extra-regional actors such as Pakistan. The Gaza War, the military operations, and the regional crises that followed demonstrated, more than anything else, the gap between the EU's ability to exert influence through norms and regulation and its ability actually to shape the strategic agenda in the Middle East. This gap is likely to continue shaping the EU's foreign policy in the region in the years ahead.

Between Criticism and Strategic Partnership

The Gaza War and the operations in Lebanon and Iran pushed Israel's standing in Europe to its lowest point in recent decades. Senior Israeli officials, headed by Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu, have avoided visits to most European countries out of concern about legal proceedings; academic boycotts of Israeli researchers and institutions have expanded; and several EU and other European states have announced freezes on defense procurement from Israel, although some of them continued to pursue such deals nonetheless. Yet as of the time of writing, EU institutions have refrained from imposing comprehensive sanctions on Israel or suspending the main cooperation mechanisms with it.

The main reason for this lies in the depth of the ties forged between the parties over decades and in shared strategic interests, foremost among them Europe's security needs. Against the background of the war in Ukraine, concern over Russia's military buildup, uncertainty regarding the U.S. commitment to the defense of the continent, the acceleration of rearmament processes, and the Strait of Hormuz crisis, European states continued to purchase Israeli weapons and defense systems on an unprecedented scale. In many respects, the war and the military operations demonstrated that Israel still has partners and allies in Europe and that its battlefield experience in the Middle East – including the development of air-defense systems, responses to drone threats, cyber technologies, military medicine, and defense innovation – continues to be a sought-after strategic asset, even among countries that criticize Israel sharply.

The same is true in the fields of technology and innovation, in which Israel remains a major partner. This was reflected in public statements by senior European officials in favor of continued

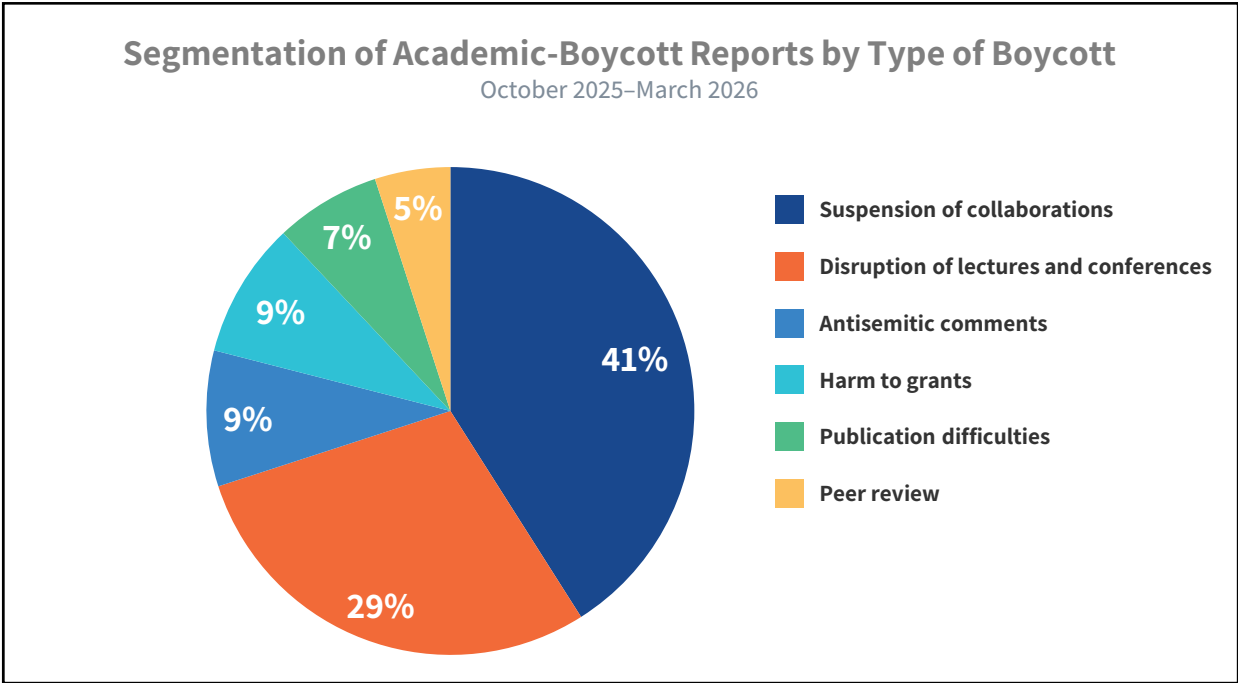


Figure 7. Segmentation of academic-boycott reports by type of boycott, October 2025–March 2026

Source: Committee of University Heads, “The Fight against the Academic Boycott – Report No. 4 – Winter 2025–2026,” Committee of University Heads, May 2026, p. 2

cooperation and in the success of various actors in blocking initiatives aimed at reducing Israel’s participation in EU research programs. In the public and cultural spheres as well, there are signs that attitudes toward Israel are more complex than the official political discourse suggests. For example, EuroLeague games in Israel resumed in December 2025; several key European states opposed Israel’s removal from the Eurovision Song Contest; and in both 2025 and 2026, Israel won strong public support and finished second, despite calls to boycott it.

Looking Ahead

European Union policy toward Israel has for decades been characterized by a shifting combination of incentives, conditionality, threats, and pressure. On the one hand, the EU has sought to deepen cooperation with Israel in the fields of the economy, security, science, technology, and culture; on the other, it has largely tied the deepening of relations to progress in the political process with the Palestinians. Over the years, this has produced a gap between the depth of Israel’s practical integration into European frameworks

and its political status: a close and significant partner, but not part of the European political space.

Israel's attitude toward Europe has likewise remained ambivalent. Israelis see themselves as part of the European cultural and political sphere, yet at the same time reject attempts by the European Union to influence their political and security decisions. This mutual ambiguity regarding the desired character and limits of the relationship remains one of the central sources of tension between the parties.

The Gaza War and the military operations in Lebanon and Iran sharpened the gap between two central dimensions of Israel–EU relations. On the strategic plane, cooperation in the fields of security, the economy, and technology was not only preserved but strengthened, mainly against the background of the war in Ukraine, Europe's rearmament, and concern that the American commitment to the security of the continent might weaken. On the value-based plane, by contrast, the war deepened disagreements between the parties. While in Israel the campaign was perceived as a security necessity forced upon it by the October 7 massacre, in Europe there was a growing focus on the humanitarian and legal consequences of the fighting, alongside sharper criticism of Israel's policy.

These developments demonstrate that the disagreement between Israel and the European Union no longer revolves solely around borders, settlements, or the political process. It also reflects deeper differences in their conceptions of

sovereignty, security, human rights, nationalism, religion, and collective identity. Israel and the European Union are fundamentally different political entities. Whereas the EU is based on the transfer of elements of national sovereignty to a supranational framework and on a conception that seeks to restrain nationalism through deeper European integration, Israel remains engaged in consolidating itself as the nation-state of the Jewish people and sees itself as committed to the prosperity and security of the Jewish people in the Diaspora as well. This conception does not fully align with the political and normative conception underpinning the European Union and its institutions. Repeated declarations about “shared values” can therefore no longer substitute for a sober examination of what those values mean and of the limits of agreement surrounding them.

Precisely from this point, a new conception of the relationship may emerge. Israel and the European Union need a kind of new diplomatic contract, one that is not based on the assumption that deeper relations necessarily require Israel's gradual convergence with the EU's political and normative positions. Instead, the new contract should be based on partnership across differences: a sober recognition that the parties share many values and interests, but interpret some of those values differently and at times hold different conceptions of the state, society, security, and the international order. Such differences need not disappear as a condition for partnership; they should become a reality that the Israeli–European partnership is capable of accommodating and managing.

In practical terms, such a contract would mean moving from a relationship with a transformative aspiration to a more strategic one. The European Union need not abandon its positions on human rights, international law, settlements, or the Palestinian issue, and Israel need not adopt those positions as a condition for cooperation. The automatic linkage between these disagreements and the relationship as a whole should, however, be reduced. The Palestinian issue will remain a central component of the political dialogue, but there is no reason every disagreement over it must delay cooperation in research, security, cyber, energy, health, water, technology, desertification, or efforts to address climate change.

Such an approach requires a greater capacity to compartmentalize and manage disagreements. European criticism of Israeli policy need not automatically result in damage to cooperative frameworks that serve clear interests on both sides; at the same time, deep strategic cooperation should not prevent the European Union from voicing strong criticism when it believes Israel is violating norms and principles to which it is committed. The purpose of the new partnership is not to eliminate disagreement, but to prevent it from taking over the relationship as a whole.

To this end, the parties should also consider institutionalizing a regular strategic dialogue between Israel and the European Union that examines not only immediate crises but their shared interests for the coming decade. Such a dialogue could include permanent tracks on security and defense, cyber and artificial

intelligence, energy, research and innovation, health, water, desertification and climate, supply chains, and civil resilience. Its purpose would be to shift the center of gravity of the relationship from reactive crisis management to the joint shaping of a strategic agenda.

A new contract of this kind also requires change on Israel's part. For years, Israel has sought to deepen its integration into European programs and frameworks, but it has never defined the long-term political objective of its relationship with the European Union. As this chapter asked at the outset, does Israel seek deeper integration, status as a preferred strategic partner, expanded participation in EU programs and institutions, or continuation of the existing model under the European Neighborhood Policy? An updated Israeli policy toward the European Union must answer this question and explicitly define what Israel seeks to achieve in its relations with the EU over the coming decade.

The fight against antisemitism on the European continent must also occupy a central place in the new contract. The sharp rise in antisemitic incidents since the October 7 massacre demonstrates that this is not an Israeli problem but, first and foremost, an internal European challenge concerning the ability of the European Union and its member states to ensure the security, rights, and freedom of their Jewish citizens. This chapter has already pointed to the perceived gap between the stated commitment of the European Union and its member states to human rights and the protection of minorities, on the one hand, and the sense among many

Israelis and Jews that Europe's response to rising antisemitism has been inadequate, on the other. The security of European Jews should therefore be understood as part of Europe's commitment to its own values, not as a gesture to Israel or to Jewish communities. This requires consistent policies of prevention, education, enforcement, intelligence, and security, alongside determined action against violence, hate crimes, and incitement to terrorism.

Ultimately, the new diplomatic contract proposed here calls not for fewer values but for fewer illusions about a shared normative identity; not for less criticism but for a greater ability to keep it within bounds; and not for the blurring of disagreements but for mechanisms that allow them to be managed without turning the entire Israel–EU relationship into their hostage. The new contract seeks to move Israel–EU relations from a model in which proximity is measured chiefly by the degree of normative convergence to one in which a deep strategic partnership can be sustained even between two entities that do not see the world in precisely the same way.

The central question for the future, therefore, is no longer whether Israel belongs to Europe or to the Middle East. It is whether Israel and the European Union are capable of building a partnership across differences: a relationship that recognizes their shared history and heritage, and their economic, scientific, and strategic proximity, while also acknowledging the deep differences in their outlooks and interests. The success of the relationship will not be measured by the disappearance of disagreements, but by

the parties' ability to manage them while at the same time expanding and deepening the spheres of cooperation. If they succeed, Jerusalem and Brussels will be able to transform a relationship long marked by the duality of proximity and estrangement into a more sober, stable, and resilient partnership suited to the emerging European and Middle Eastern reality of the twenty-first century.

Key Conclusions: Toward a Realistic Engagement Model



Figure 8. Key conclusions: toward a realistic engagement model

Endnotes

- 1 “EU–Israel Association Agreement,” European Commission, n.d., <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/access-to-markets/en/content/eu-israel-association-agreement>.
- 2 “Israel: EU Trade Relations with Israel. Facts, Figures and Latest Developments,” European Commission, https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/israel_en.
- 3 Tamar Hermann et al., “July 2025 Survey: The Rise in Antisemitism and Harassment of Israelis Abroad Leads More than Half the Public to Cancel Trips or Change Destinations,” *The Israeli Voice Index*, Israel Democracy Institute, 5 August 2025, <https://www.idi.org.il/articles/60328>.
- 4 Of the ten most popular international flight destinations for Israelis, seven were in Europe: Greece, Cyprus, Italy, France, Germany, Hungary, and Spain. See Sharon Pardo, “Israelis’ Flight Destinations Are a Mirror: Antisemitism Dictates the Destinations,” *Makor Rishon*, 30 November 2025, <https://www.makorrishon.co.il/opinions/article/217902>.
- 5 Sharon Pardo and Joel Peters, *Uneasy Neighbors: Israel and the European Union* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009); Sharon Pardo and Joel Peters, *Uneasy Neighbors: Israel and the European Union*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2027), forthcoming.
- 6 Dani Filc and Sharon Pardo, “Israel’s Right-wing Populists: The European Connection,” *Survival* 63, no. 3 (2021): 99–122, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00396338.2021.1930409>; Dov Maimon, “In Embracing Europe’s Far Right, Israel Is Playing with Fire,” JPPI, 19 March 2025, <https://jppi.org.il/en/in-embracing-europes-far-right-israel-is-playing-with-fire/>; Giovanni Legorano, “Israel Is Ready to Embrace Europe’s Far Right,” *Foreign Policy*, 9 May 2025, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/05/09/israel-is-ready-to-embrace-europes-far-right/>; Lazar Berman and Nava Freiberg, “Israel Decides to Establish Formal Ties with Trio of European Far-right Parties,” *The Times of Israel*, 28 February 2025, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/saar-officially-opens-dialogue-with-european-far-right-parties/>; Lazar Berman, “Romania ‘Shocked’ by Israeli Minister’s Call with Candidate Who Praised WWII Antisemites,” *The Times of Israel*, 2 December 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/romania-shocked-by-israeli-ministers-call-with-candidate-who-praised-wwii-antisemites/>; Joseph Ataman and Mick Krever, “Israel Embraces France’s Far Right, Turning a Blind Eye to Its Nazi Past,” CNN, 26 March 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/03/26/europe/israel-embraces-france-far-right-intl>. For the ties cultivated by Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikli with far-right leaders in Europe, see, for example, <https://x.com/AmichaiChikli/status/1893984976938389708> and <https://x.com/AmichaiChikli/status/1732055937907650568>.
- 7 See https://commission.europa.eu/about/departments-and-executive-agencies/middle-east-north-africa-and-gulf_en.
- 8 “The Pact for the Mediterranean,” Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf, European Commission, n.d., https://north-africa-middle-east-gulf.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do/pact-mediterranean_en#_ftn1.
- 9 Sharon Pardo, “Europe’s Obsession with Israel,” *Euractiv*, 14 June 2026, <https://www.euractiv.com/opinion/europes-obsession-with-israel/>.
- 10 See Chapter 13 by Shlomi Berezniak and Eli Kannai. The chapter is based on the Institute’s research, which examined tens of thousands of press releases and official statements by EU institutions over almost a decade and found that the share of negative statements concerning Israel had increased by almost 60% since the terrorist attack of October 7.
- 11 Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism, *Annual Report – Executive Brief: Global Overview of Antisemitism in 2025* (Jerusalem: Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism, 2025), https://www.gov.il/he/pages/antisemitism_report_2025; The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, *Antisemitism Worldwide Report for 2025* (Tel Aviv: The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, 2025), <https://cst.tau.ac.il/antisemitism-worldwide-report-for-2025/>.
- 12 See, for example, the tweet by Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar on 17 September 2025: “The recommendations of the college of Commissioners led by President von der Leyen are morally and politically distorted, and it is to be hoped that they will not be adopted as has been the case so far. Moves against Israel will harm Europe’s own interests. [...] Steps against Israel will be answered accordingly, and we hope we will not be required to take them.” <https://x.com/gidonsaar/status/1968301314447651027>.

13

Analysis of European Union Statements – Summary

Background

For years, despite the European Union’s critical rhetoric toward Israel, Hungary’s veto under Viktor Orbán prevented the EU from adopting operational measures against Israel. As a result, the Israeli public felt the practical consequences of EU criticism less acutely. This changed after Orbán’s electoral defeat, when Hungary lifted its veto.

This study was therefore undertaken to examine the trend in depth and trace the EU’s attitude toward Israel over time. Its principal aim was to determine how that attitude changed after October 7. The study also compares Israel with several other countries that maintain ties with the EU but are not EU member states.

The analysis is based on EU statements and media interviews published on the European External Action Service website.¹

Methodology

The methodology addresses the following elements:

- Data source.
- Data processing and noise reduction.
- Analysis.

Data

Using software tools, more than 24,000 statements published from 2017 through the end of April 2026 were downloaded.

Statements concerning selected countries were then identified. After cleaning and deduplication, the dataset contained 3,584 statements concerning Israel, Iran, China, Turkey, and Qatar, including 895 on Israel.

Data Processing and Noise Reduction

The purpose was to filter out website items that constituted “noise,” such as pages containing no substantive content.² Duplicate items were also removed. One concern was that identical content might have been published in several languages. A preliminary

AI-assisted review, however, indicated that non-English publications were negligible in number; only English-language statements were therefore included.

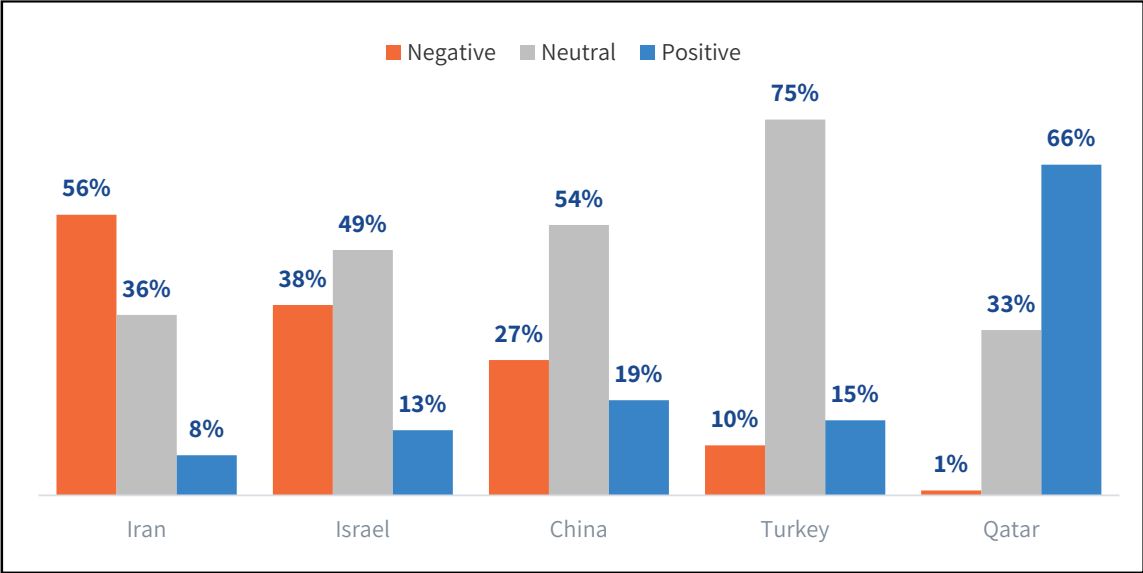
Analysis

As noted, the comparison covered Israel, Iran, China, Turkey, and Qatar. Using the ChatGPT 5.2 model, an AI-assisted tone (sentiment) analysis assessed the attitude toward the country in question expressed by the EU’s official representative in each statement. Each statement received a sentiment score ranging from –1 to 1. Scores from –0.25 to 0.25 were classified as neutral; scores above 0.25 as positive; and scores below –0.25 as negative.

Findings on Israel

Cross-Country Comparison

EU Rhetoric: Tone by Country



Data analysis: 2017–2026

A relatively high share – 38.2% – of statements concerning Israel is negative. This share is nevertheless lower than the corresponding share for Iran, unlike, for example, the analysis of statements by the UN secretary-general that we recently published. We next examine attitudes toward Israel over time.

Tone Before and After October 7

The two periods are January 2019 through October 6, 2023, and October 7, 2023, through the end of April 2026. The share of negative statements concerning Israel rose by nearly 60%, while the share of positive statements fell by more than half.

Average Annual Sentiment Toward Israel

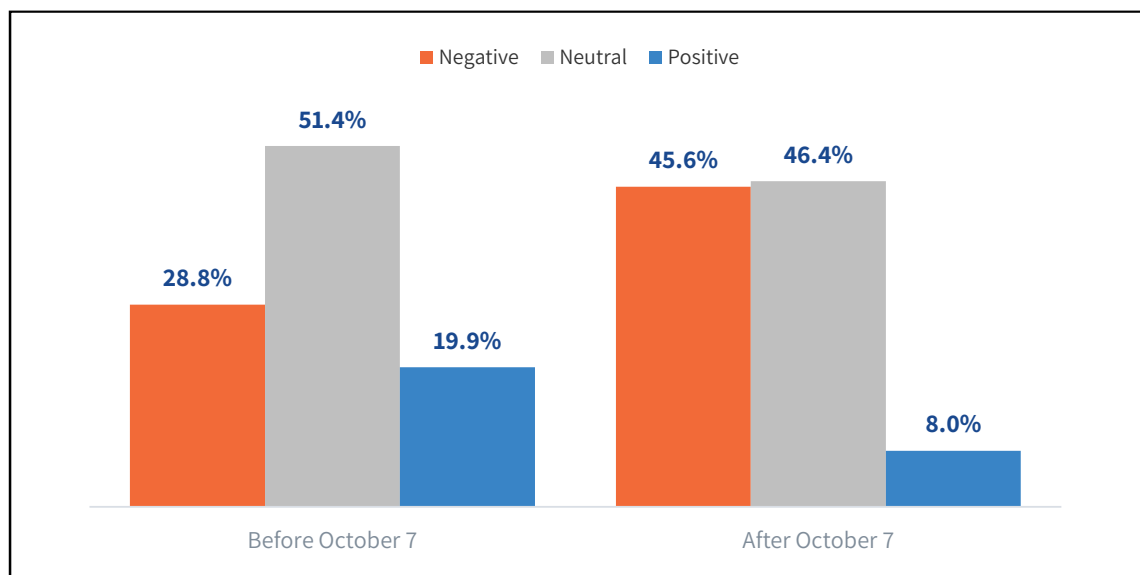
The graph shows a pronounced shift in average annual sentiment toward Israel after 2023.

The conclusion is unequivocal: the EU's attitude toward Israel has become considerably more critical.

Additional Finding

Of the statements concerning Israel examined, 50.1% contained keywords related to the two-state solution, including “two states,” “Palestinian state,” and “peace process.” This finding illustrates the issue's importance to the EU and the recurrence of this rhetoric across its statements.

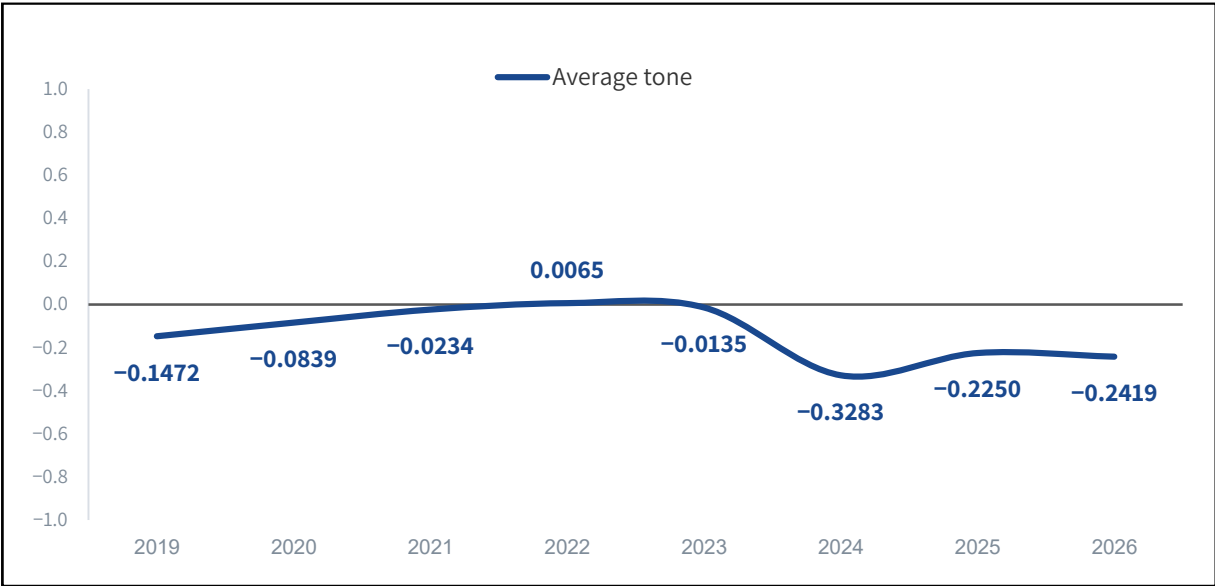
EU Rhetoric Toward Israel Before and After October 7



Data analysis: 2019–2026

Annual Sentiment Toward Israel

Sentiment is measured on a scale from -1 to 1



Data analysis: 2019–2026

Selected Examples Concerning Israel

Positive

- [Israel joins Horizon Europe Research & Innovation Programme | EEAS](#)

This item announces Israel’s accession to the Horizon Europe program, which enables Israeli researchers to participate in the EU’s research and innovation program. Issued on December 7, 2021, it praises Israel and its high level of participation in European innovation programs.

- https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/japan/european-commission-announces-urgent-review-its-financial-assistance-palestine_en

The statement unequivocally condemns Hamas’s actions in Israel on October 7. The European Commission also announces an immediate review of EU assistance to the Palestinians to ensure that it does not indirectly support terrorist activity targeting Israel.

- https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/statement-high-representative-behalf-european-union-attacks-against-israel_en

A second statement, issued on October 9, unequivocally condemns Hamas, expresses solidarity with Israel, and affirms Israel's right to self-defense in accordance with international law. Although brief, the statement is strongly supportive of Israel.

Neutral

- https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-gulf-cooperation-council-opening-remarks-high-representative-josep-borrell-joint-ministerial_en

In this statement, issued on October 10, 2023, Josep Borrell expresses empathy for Israel and notes that he spoke with the foreign minister. At the same time, he tells Eli Cohen that international law must be respected and that further civilian deaths must be prevented. He also notes that both Israelis and Palestinians have been killed.

“And I think that the priority now is to stop the violence, to de-escalate, to protect civilians and the release of all hostages.

The balance of these days is awful, unbearable. Over 900 Israelis and we do not know, maybe 700 Palestinians – but the number is growing by the hour – have been killed, in addition to thousands of injured on both sides.” His remarks therefore imply a reciprocal call for de-escalation. The statement accordingly received a neutral rather than positive sentiment score.

Negative

- https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-geneva/hrc55-item-4-general-debate-human-rights-situations-require-council%E2%80%99s-attention_en

This statement adopts a negative tone toward Israel, criticizing the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. It warns of the risk of famine and the collapse of the health-care system, and raises concerns about the delivery of humanitarian aid. It calls on all parties to protect civilians, warns against a possible Israeli operation in Rafah, and states that military action must be proportionate. It also condemns settler violence, criticizes the settlements, and describes them as illegal. The tone toward Israel is therefore negative. Nevertheless, the statement contains balancing elements: it affirms Israel's right to self-defense, condemns Hamas, notes that Hamas uses civilians as human shields, and refers to Hamas's sexual violence on October 7.

“The EU remains gravely concerned about the situation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The EU firmly condemns settler violence. Settlements are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace. Israel must stop settlement expansion, evictions, demolitions, confiscations and forced transfers, prevent settler violence

and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.”

- https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/israelgaza-statement-high-representative-remarks-minister-smotrich-regarding-starving-civilians_en

This statement condemns Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich for his remarks:

“Minister Smotrich saying that ‘it might be justified and moral’ to let Israel ‘cause 2 million civilians to die of hunger’ until the ‘hostages are returned’.”

The statement strongly condemns Smotrich’s remarks and calls on the Israeli government to repudiate them and conduct a transparent investigation into the events at Sde Teiman. It states that hundreds of thousands of Gazans are exposed to hunger and disease, and calls for an immediate ceasefire and a substantial increase in the aid entering the Gaza Strip. Unlike the previous example, this statement contains no balancing references to Israel’s right to self-defense or criticism of Hamas.

- [Israel/Palestine: Statement by the Spokesperson on settlements in the West Bank | EEAS](#)

Issued on January 16, 2026, this statement strongly condemns the expansion of construction in the West Bank. It argues

that the policy is an obstacle to peace and also criticizes settler violence. Here too, there is no balancing formulation affirming Israel’s security needs or making a comparable point.

Analyses Not Directly Related to Israel

Iran Over Time

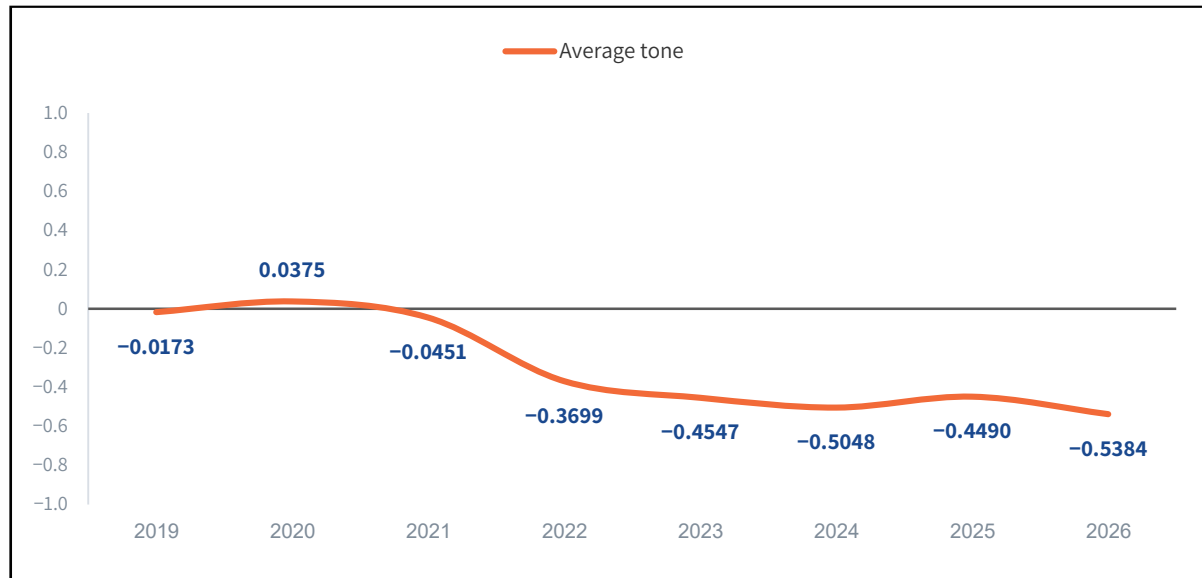
The EU’s tone toward Iran has become markedly more critical over time. One possible reason is Iran’s support for Russia, as illustrated by the following statement, which is highly critical of Iran:

[G7 Foreign Ministers’ Statement | EEAS](#)

“Iran must immediately cease all support to Russia’s illegal and unjustifiable war against Ukraine and halt such transfers of ballistic missiles, UAVs and related technology, which constitute a direct threat to the Ukrainian people as well as European and international security more broadly.” In other words, the statement argues that Iran’s support for Russia ultimately threatens Europe’s own security. It was issued on September 14, 2024.

Annual Sentiment Toward Iran

Sentiment is measured on a scale from –1 to 1



Data analysis: 2019–2026

Qatar

Qatar generally receives relatively favorable treatment from the EU. Few statements are critical of Qatar or adopt a negative tone. Several examples follow.

Positive

- https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/qatar-press-remarks-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-after-meeting-prime_en

“I appreciate a lot the constructive role that Qatar is playing as a regional power with much capacity in fostering peace and stability.” In this statement, issued

on November 11, 2023 – after October 7 – Josep Borrell describes Qatar as contributing to regional peace and stability.

Neutral

- [EU-ASEAN: Press remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell ahead of the EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit | EEAS](#)

In this example, a journalist asks whether the EU will maintain relations with Qatar if Qatar is found to have bribed EU politicians. Josep Borrell avoids the question, stating only that Qatar will not be represented at the day’s meeting.

“Qatar is not going to be present today, in this meeting.”

Negative

- [Foreign Affairs Council: Press remarks by High Representative Josep Borrell upon arrival | EEAS](#)

Here too, a journalist asks Borrell about allegations that Qatar sought to bribe members of the European Parliament and about the possible consequences. Borrell responds that he is deeply concerned. The statement therefore received a negative score, although it contains no unequivocal criticism of Qatar.

“Q. Apparently, Qatar tries to influence, tries to buy Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). What does this mean for the relationship with Qatar and what should be the consequences?

Look, as you said: ‘apparently.’ I am not a judge, there is a process ongoing. Certainly, the news are very worrisome, very, very worrisome.”

Turkey

Turkey was included because it is an EU candidate country with extensive ties to the Union. Most statements concerning Turkey are neutral, in part because many simply list Turkey among the countries that are candidates for EU membership.

Positive

- https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/vienna-international-organisations/osce-permanent-council-1410-vienna-09-february-2023_en

This statement concerns the earthquake in Turkey and the assistance provided in its aftermath.

Neutral

- https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-new-york/eu-statement-united-nations-security-council-open-debate-silencing-guns_en

This is a frequently recurring type of example in which Turkey is mentioned as one of the countries seeking EU membership.

Negative

- [Statement by the Spokesperson on the case of Turkish journalist Ahmet Altan | EEAS](#)

This statement criticizes Turkey following the arrest of journalist Ahmet Altan on November 13, 2019.

Summary and Conclusions

The EU has significantly intensified its criticism of Israel since October 7, despite having initially expressed strong solidarity with the country. At the same time, several formulations recur throughout its statements:

- Recognition of Israel’s right to self-defense.
- Calls for the release of the hostages during the war.
- Repeated references to Hamas’s October 7 terrorist attack.

The EU also occasionally notes that Hamas uses civilians as human shields. These formulations have not prevented it from criticizing Israel over conditions in the Gaza Strip. Some of the criticism also concerns developments in the West Bank. More than 50% of the statements include references related to the two-state solution – a term now used by almost no Israeli politicians.

With regard to Iran, Israel can, in my view, leverage Iran’s participation in the war against Ukraine as a diplomatic tool – demonstrating that Israel is fighting a sponsor of terrorism whose activities ultimately harm Europe as well.

Endnotes

- 1 European External Action Service website:
<https://www.eeas.europa.eu/>
- 2 Page with no substantive content:
https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/test-press-alert-2_en

