

10 Rabbis Confront Mamdani Over His Role in Fanning Flames of Anti-Semitism

Rabbis on Monday urged New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani to stop painting Israel as the Evil Empire because of the toll his remarks are taking on innocent New York City Jews.

The meeting between 10 Jewish leaders and the Muslim pro-Palestinian mayor came against a backdrop of rising anti-Semitism in New York City. Anti-Jewish hate crimes rose 8.5 percent through the first seven months of the year, New York Police Department officials said last week, according to The Wall Street Journal.

The rabbis collectively sought to have Mamdani tone down his rhetoric on Israel.

“There were rabbis from across the entire spectrum of our Jewish community, and yet no one gave the message to the mayor, ‘Everything is going great,’” Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, said, according to the Forward.

Jacobs said lashing out at Israel and calling for the arrest of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu make life worse for everyday people.

“Everyone agreed that the current course can’t go on,” Jacobs said. “The way he vilifies Israel, and so constantly, is really causing harm.”

Jacobs said he urged Mamdani to shift his tone, according to The New York Times.



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"I'm happy to work in partnership with your administration, but Mr. Mayor, you are 90 percent of what could be different here," he said.

He recalled telling Mamdani, "If instead of vilifying Israel, you spoke constructively, in measured tones – that would move the needle more than anything else, and I'm hopeful you'll use that power."

"There was no tiptoeing around the elephant in the room," Rabbi Jonathan Leener, leader of the Prospect Heights Shul, a liberal modern Orthodox synagogue in Brooklyn, added to The New York Times.

"The mayor's comments have ramifications and he needs to be aware of how in the current climate, that just adds to the temperature and creates an environment that I think a lot of Jews feel vulnerable in," he said.

Leener said he wants Mamdani to protect Jewish citizens and not incite hate.

"That should be his focus and not making comments unnecessarily about the conflict," Leener said. "Or having a bit more nuance around it. That it's not just good versus evil."

Others said Mamdani need not change his opinions, just his tone.

"If he is going to criticize Israel or speak for Palestinian freedom, which I do regularly, then it really matters that there is complexity in his message," Rabbi Rachel Timoner of Congregation Beth Elohim in Brooklyn said.

"We can't vote there, we don't have any ability to change what's happening, yet people are profiling us and spewing hate

at us because they're angry at the Israeli government," she added.

Some rabbis bristled that Mamdani carefully selected who attended the meeting.

Rabbi Chaim Steinmetz, of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun, a Modern Orthodox synagogue on Manhattan's Upper East Side, said he was not invited, according to the Jewish Chronicle.

"My initial reaction is it's classic Mamdani. He has no interest in the serious work of rebuilding his relationship with the Jewish community," he said.

"He wants to feign interest in the Jewish community but is only ready to meet with Jews whom he picks and chooses as ideologically comfortable," he said.

"Turns out, even they are fed up with him," he continued, referring to news accounts that the rabbis who met with Mamdani urged him to watch his language.

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