

New York Bill Threatens \$1M Fines for Donations to Israeli Aid Groups

A proposed bill by New York mayoral candidate Zohran Mamdani aims to fine New Yorkers up to \$1 million for donating to certain Israeli nonprofits deemed “unauthorized.” The legislation directly targets Jewish charities like ZAKA, United Hatzalah, and the One Israel Fund, accusing them of supporting settlement activity in occupied territories, including the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Introduced in 2023 as the “Not on Our Dime!: Ending New York Funding of Israeli Settler Violence Act,” the bill defines unauthorized support as aiding Israeli armed forces, facilitating civilian relocation into occupied territory, or financing acts labeled violent or discriminatory. It mandates New York-registered nonprofits comply or face steep penalties or civil suits.

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The proposal drew immediate backlash from across the political spectrum. A coalition of 25 Democratic legislators, including Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, condemned it as “a ploy to demonize Jewish charities” and announced it would not advance in the legislature. Critics argue the law inflames divisions within the Jewish community and among pro-Israel Democrats.

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Mamdani, endorsed by AOC and Bernie Sanders, continues to defend the measure, framing it as a moral stand against agencies he says finance the expulsion of Palestinians.

Supporters describe it as accountability for harm in occupied territories; detractors warn it smacks of antisemitic targeting and undermines charitable freedom.

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The bill stalled after its initial rejection. However, its reintroduction now ahead of the 2025 mayoral race highlights growing tensions in New York politics—where debates over Israel-Palestine increasingly shape alliances. Mamdani's alignment with anti-settlement activists and socialist backers has alarmed both Jewish community leaders and centrist Democrats worried about alienating key voters.

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With New York poised as one of the largest U.S. Jewish hubs, the bill's revival deepens friction over foreign policy, charity law and religious rights. If passed, it could upend longstanding philanthropic ties and set a precedent for state-level intervention in international aid. Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle are watching closely.

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