

# OPEN LETTER FROM AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS: STAND UP FOR JEWISH SAFETY AND DEMOCRACY

It’s time to act!

History has taught us that Jewish safety and democracy are inextricably linked. The Jewish People have flourished in democratic societies and have been repeatedly persecuted in authoritarian regimes. Today, democracy in our country is being assaulted as never before. It’s time for Jewish leadership to act.

The major institutions, leadership, and resources of the organized Jewish community have been understandably focused on combating antisemitism. However, with few exceptions, major Jewish organizations have been far too silent about the stunning assault on democratic norms and the rule of law. While modest declarations of “respecting the rule of law” and similar phrases have been included in multiple organizational statements, we believe the present moment requires far more.

A range of actors are using a purported concern about Jewish safety as a cudgel to weaken higher education, due process, checks and balances, freedom of speech and the press. Let us acknowledge that these rights, institutions and systems are the cornerstone of American Democracy and enabled American Jewry to thrive in the 20th century. American Jewry enjoyed more rights, more freedoms, more opportunities and more achievements than we have ever known in 2,500 years of Jewish life.

As individuals who have devoted our lives to strengthening the Jewish People—in our communities, in the State of Israel, and globally—we recognize the complexity of addressing these issues when there is division within our communities. Our message is motivated by the exigencies of this moment when democratic norms are under assault and antisemitism is metastasizing. It is imperative to join with our fellow citizens to protect and preserve our democracy.

**We urge Jewish leadership to forcefully and publicly reaffirm the historic and continuing commitment of the American Jewish community to academic freedom, to the rule of law, to ensure due process to anyone accused of breaking the law, to freedom of speech and the press. And we call on Jewish leaders and institutions—national and local—to resist the exploitation of Jewish fears and publicly join with other organizations that are battling to preserve the guardrails of democracy.**

**The time to act is Now!**

**Karen Adler**, Chair  
Jewish Communal Fund, 2013-2015

**Ambassador Michael Adler**, President  
Greater Miami Jewish Federation, 2004-2006

**Thomas Dine**, Chief Executive Officer  
Jewish Federation of Greater San Francisco, 2005-2007

**Alisa Doctoroff**, Board Chair  
Jim Joseph Foundation, 2020-2023

**John Fishel**, President and CEO  
The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles, 1992-2002

**Wayne L. Firestone**, President and CEO  
Hillel International, 2006-2013

**Michael Gelman**, Chair  
Executive Committee, Jewish Federations of North America, 2009-2012

**Susie Gelman**, President  
Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, 2008-2011

**E. Robert Goodkind**, President  
American Jewish Committee, 2004-2007

**Stephen M. Greenberg**, Chair  
Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, 2015-2018

**Rabbi Steve Gutow**, President  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs, 2005-2016

**Randall Kaplan**, Chair  
Board of Governors, Hillel International, 2010-2015

**Rabbi Irwin Kula**, President  
CLAL: The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, 1997-2023

**Alan Jaffe**, President  
UJA-Federation of New York, 1993-1996

**Nancy Kaufman**, CEO  
National Council of Jewish Women, 2010-2019

**Marvin Lender**, Chair  
National United Jewish Appeal, 1990-1992

**Lynn Lyss**, Chair  
National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, 1995-1997

**Rabbi Brian Lurie**, Executive Vice President  
National United Jewish Appeal, 1991-1996

**Ruth W. Messinger**, CEO  
American Jewish World Service, 1998-2020

**Richard Pearlstone**, Chair  
Board of Governors, The Jewish Agency for Israel, 2007-2011

**Charles Ratner**, Chair  
Board of Governors, The Jewish Agency for Israel, 2016-2017

**Seymour D. Reich**, Chair  
Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, 1990-1992

**Barry Rosenberg**, President and CEO  
The Jewish Federation of St. Louis, 1993-2012

**Hannah Rosenthal**, President and CEO  
Milwaukee Jewish Federation, 2012-2019

**John Ruskay**, CEO  
UJA-Federation of New York, 1999-2014

**Rabbi David Saperstein**, U.S. Ambassador for International Religious Freedom, 2014-2016

**Rabbi Ismar Schorsch**, Chancellor  
Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1986-2006

**John Shapiro**, President  
American Jewish Committee, 2016-2019

**Jeffrey Solomon**, President  
Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, 1997-2017

**Ambassador Alan Solomont**, Chair  
Combined Jewish Philanthropies, 2003-2005

**Alan Solow**, Chair  
Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, 2009-2011

**Michael W. Sonnenfeldt**, National President  
American Associates of Ben Gurion University, 1989-1991

**Robert Sugarman**, National Chair  
Anti-Defamation League, 2009-2012

**Joel Tauber**, Chair, Executive Committee  
Jewish Federations of North America, 1999-2002

**Rabbi Eric Yoffie**, President  
Union for Reform Judaism, 1996-2012

**Larry Zicklin**, President  
UJA-Federation of New York, 2000-2003

+++organizations are listed for identification only

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