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NYPD commissioner Jessica Tisch apologizes for allowing ‘turmoil’ outside synagogue

Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani also spoke to the rabbi of Park East Synagogue, where a protest took place against an Israeli immigration event.

By [Joseph Strauss](#) November 24, 2025



Tisch told congregants it was the police department's duty "to ensure that people could easily enter and leave shul." (Left: John Lamparski / AFP; right: Selçuk Acar/Anadolu via Getty Images)

Days after pro-Palestinian protesters shouted chants including "Globalize the Intifada" and "Death to the IDF" outside an Upper East Side synagogue, NYPD Commissioner Jessica Tisch, who is Jewish, apologized to the congregation during Shabbat services on Saturday.

Tisch told congregants at Park East Synagogue that it was the police department's duty "to ensure that people could easily enter and leave shul."

"That is where we fell short," Tisch said, [according to reports from the service](#). "And for that, I apologize to this congregation."

The apology from Tisch, who said police allowed “turmoil” to take place outside a synagogue on Wednesday night, was far apart in its tone from the statement issued by Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani’s team immediately after the protest. The statement “discouraged” the language at the protest, while suggesting that the event was a misuse of a “sacred space” because it featured an organization that helps Jews move to the West Bank.

The protest outside the prominent Orthodox congregation drew allegations of antisemitism from Jewish leaders and major Jewish organizations, as well as elected officials like Gov. Kathy Hochul and Mayor Eric Adams.

Some also criticized the police response, saying they allowed the confrontation to unfold.

“What I find most disturbing is that the police, who knew about this protest a day in advance, did not arrange for the protesters to be moved to either Third or Lexington Avenues,” said Rabbi Marc Schneier, whose father Arthur is the longtime senior rabbi at Park East, the day after the protest. “Instead, they allowed the protesters to be right in front of the synagogue, which put members of the community at risk.”

By late Monday, Mamdani had spoken privately to both Schneiers, a spokesperson [told the New York Times](#). Mamdani also issued an updated statement to the newspaper.

“We will protect New Yorkers’ First Amendment rights while making clear that nothing can justify language calling for ‘death to’ anyone,” he said. “It is unacceptable, full stop.”

Tisch acknowledged on Saturday that police should have set up a “frozen zone” at the synagogue’s entrance; because one was not set up, she said, “the space right outside your steps was chaotic.” Pens with barricades were set up for both the pro-Palestinian protesters and pro-Israel counter-protesters, though the former group “headed for the building entrance before ultimately pulling back to their pen,” a police source told the New York Daily News.

Tisch said that the protesters were protected by a First Amendment right to protest, even near a house of worship, and said “the NYPD must uphold that right.”

“They have the right to say things that are incredibly painful to hear. I understand that pain, deeply and personally,” Tisch said.

But, Tisch continued, police could have done more to shield attendees of the event.

“You deserved an NYPD posture that recognized the sensitivity of this location, the climate we’re living in, and the heightened fear within our community,” she said. “Instead, you had turmoil.”

At the conclusion of her remarks, Tisch was reportedly met with a standing ovation, as well as kudos from New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft, who was in attendance. Kraft is the founder of the Blue Square Alliance against Hate, formerly called the Foundation to Combat Antisemitism.

While Tisch conceded the police could have done more, the congregation’s senior rabbi, Arthur Schneier, who is a Holocaust survivor, [told the New York Post that he was grateful](#) for the presence of the NYPD.

“Thank God in the United States, the police are protecting us against the hate-mongers,” Schneier said, contrasting their presence to the police’s cooperation during Kristallnacht.

Tisch’s appearance at Park East came less than a week after she accepted the offer from Mamdani to stay on as police commissioner, which [some Jewish leaders viewed as a reassuring sign](#) at a time when anti-Jewish hate crimes are rising. The move to keep Tisch also drew praise from Donald Trump when [he met Mamdani at the White House on Friday](#).

But while Tisch drew the congregation’s applause with her apology, her future boss’ response to the protest was criticized by a number of Jewish leaders and organizations.

“The Mayor-elect has discouraged the language used at last night’s protest and will continue to do so,” Mamdani’s press secretary said in a statement.

She went on, “He believes every New Yorker should be free to enter a house of worship without intimidation, and that these sacred spaces should not be used to promote activities in violation of international law.”

Following the response from Mamdani’s team, UJA-Federation of New York sent a statement reading that “Every leader must denounce this heinous language,” while Mark Treyger, CEO of the Jewish Community Relations Council, said that it is “not a violation of any law, international or otherwise, for Jews to gather in a synagogue or immigrate to Israel.”

The event at Park East was organized by Nefesh B’Nefesh, a nonprofit that facilitates immigration to Israel for North American Jews. It does not assign immigrants to particular communities, but [has showcased West Bank settlements](#) — which most of the world, though not Israel or the United States, considers illegal under international law — in events and on its website as possible destinations for new immigrants.

Tisch’s current boss, Adams, visited Park East Synagogue Monday morning where he met with Arthur Schneier.

“We don’t back down in the face of hate — we show up,” [wrote Adams](#), who returned on Sunday from a trip to Israel and Uzbekistan.