

NAKBA DAY BLOWBACK

Jewish leaders blast Mamdani's 'one-sided and dishonest' Nakba video

Several NYC community leaders accused the mayor of distorting history, days before he is set to host a Shavuot celebration

By [Will Bredderman](#) May 18, 2026



Inea Bushaq, a translator of Bosnian descent, features in the video New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani posted for "Nakba Day"

Shortly before the start of Shabbat on Friday — and days ahead of a Shavuot event at Gracie Mansion — New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani posted a video for “Nakba Day” that sparked a wave of outrage among Jewish leaders for its failure to acknowledge crucial facts surrounding the birth of the State of Israel.

Mamdani's video featured Inea Bushaq, a translator of [Bosnian descent](#), part of a community that arrived in the Ottoman-ruled Holy Land in the late 19th century,

contemporaneous with Zionist settlement. In his accompanying tweet from his official government account, the mayor referred to her as a “New Yorker and a Nakba survivor.”

“Today marks Nakba Day, an annual day of remembrance to commemorate the expulsion of more than 700,000 Palestinians between 1947 and 1949 during the creation of the State of Israel and the year that followed,” the mayor wrote.

The term nakba, meaning “catastrophe” in Arabic, gained currency through the work of the midcentury Syrian writer Constantin Zureiq — who used it to broadly refer to the defeat of Arab countries in their attempted campaign of annihilation against the fledgling Jewish State in 1948-1949. Like many of his intellectual contemporaries, Zureiq viewed the Arabs as a single people and hoped that the loss might become the starting point for a program of modernization and unification across the Arab world.

But as Israel emerged victorious from several subsequent clashes with its rivals, and the pan-Arabist cause foundered, the term became a rallying cry for Palestinian nationalism in particular.

Jewish leaders noted that Mamdani’s account ignored the massacres and expulsions of Jewish communities that invading Arab forces carried out during the war — and the subsequent purges of Mizrahi Jewish populations across the Middle East in the years that followed. Israel took in more than 800,000 Jewish refugees from Muslim countries, who today form the majority of the country’s Jewish population, while Arab countries other than Jordan refused to grant citizenship rights to Palestinians.

“I have largely remained silent in public since January 1 because I believe criticism should be constructive and focused,” [wrote](#) Brooklyn Lubavitcher Rabbi Yaacov Behrman, recalling how the Jordanian military forced out the Jewish population during its conquest and annexation of the Old City of Jerusalem. “But this post about the Nakba is deeply disturbing, not only because of its one sided and dishonest characterization of history, but also because it attempts to delegitimize Israel as a state even before 1967.”

Others shared Behrman’s fears that the mayor’s post would further polarize the city at a time when anti-Israel demonstrators have massed outside synagogues chanting [support for Hamas](#), waving the [flag of Hezbollah](#) and calling for Israel’s destruction — and when federal authorities [recently thwarted](#) an alleged Iran-linked plot to attack a New York synagogue.

Mark Treyger, CEO of Jewish Community Relations Council-New York, highlighted that Israel accepted the 1947 United Nations partition plan that would have established neighboring Jewish and Arab states in the former British mandate zone — a proposal that both the U.S.- and Soviet-led blocs approved.

“Referencing this chapter of history without acknowledging the full history, including the post-World War II U.N. partition plan supporting two states for two peoples, which Jews accepted, does nothing to advance understanding,” [wrote](#) Treyger. “New Yorkers should expect leadership that lowers the temperature, brings people together, and makes every community feel seen, respected, and safe, including Jewish New Yorkers.”

Others were less conciliatory in their messaging.

“Still wondering why hatred against Jews is so high in NYC? We have a mayor who is using government resources to disseminate a narrative and incite hostile propaganda,” wrote Assemblymember [Simcha Eichenstein](#). “Oh BTW, what about the 850,000 Jews that were forced to flee Arab countries during that period? Did that simply not make its way into the final video?”

Eichenstein’s former Assembly colleague, Dan Rosenthal — now the vice president for government relations at the UJA-Federation of New York — was similarly outraged.

“Every opportunity the Mayor has had to lead as a unifying and inclusive leader, he has instead chosen to deepen division, inflame tensions, and fail in his fundamental responsibility to bring people together,” he [posted on X](#). “On the same day the feds indicted a terrorist for planning to blow up a NYC synagogue, the Mayor is busy putting out taxpayer-funded social media propaganda. This administration is not serious about Jewish safety.”