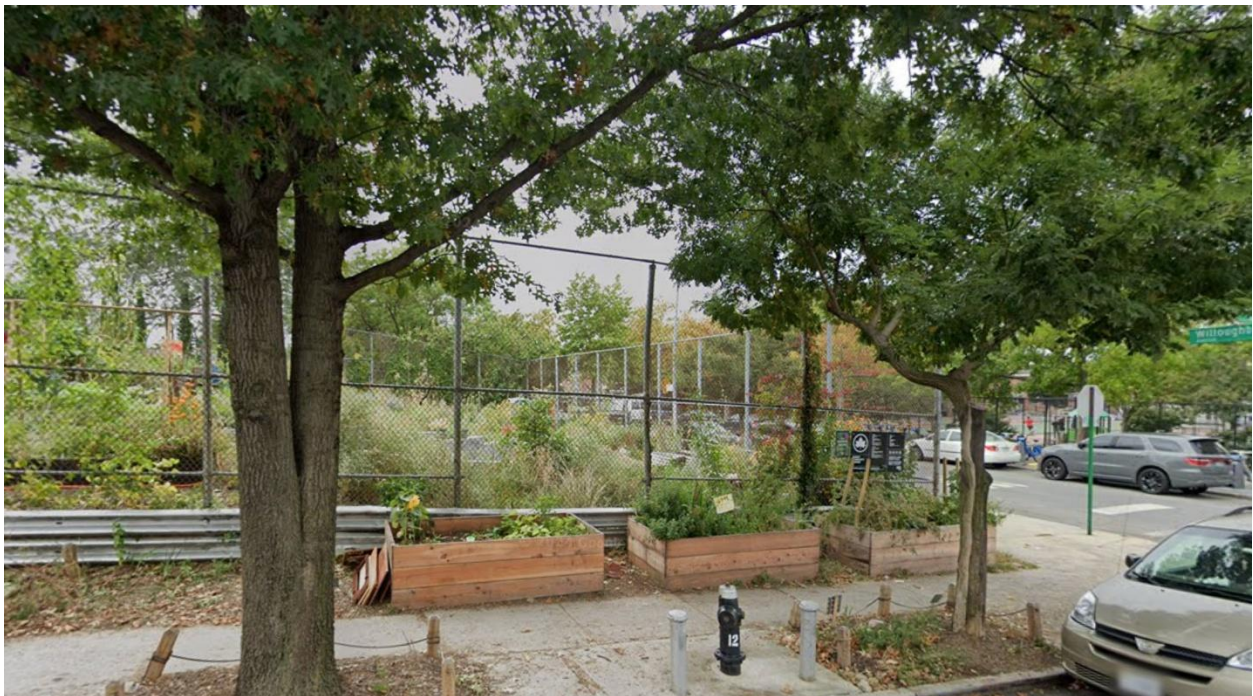


[United States](#)

NYC penalizes organizers of community garden that required members to oppose Zionism

Complaints about the garden gained steam in a private Facebook group called “Zionist Brooklyn.”



Sunset Community Garden in Ridgewood, Queens. (Screenshot/Google Maps)

By [Grace Gilson](#) May 14, 2025

Organizers of a community garden in Ridgewood, Queens, that required members to oppose Zionism may now lose their city license.

Applicants to the Sunset Community Garden were asked to sign a “statement of values” that included opposition to Zionism, antisemitism and “nationalist and/or racist beliefs.”

In an April 16 letter, the New York City Parks Department informed leaders of the garden that the statement had violated guidelines. The department told

the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the application “required prospective members to affirm the group’s political and ideological viewpoints,” and added, “Such litmus tests as a barrier to membership are not permitted, regardless of the ideological content.”

The garden had also gotten into a dispute with the city over the installation of a memorial for [Cecilia Gentili](#), an activist for the rights of transgender people and sex workers.

“We’ve been working with the Sunset Community Garden group since September 2024 to address several violations,” said Chris Clark, a press officer for NYC Parks, in an emailed statement. “Unfortunately, the group has not abided by the rules upheld by every other GreenThumb community garden even after Parks met with them and repeatedly offered solutions. As these issues have not been addressed, we have moved to terminate the license agreement.”

Clark said the termination had “nothing to do with members’ political beliefs or gender expression, but rather the repeated refusal by group leadership to address outstanding issues.”

If the license is revoked, the garden will remain open and will be managed under new operators.

The garden also faced scrutiny last September when [local residents complained](#) about the group’s pro-Palestinian activism, which included a teach-in with the “Poppies 4 Palestine” project and “Free Palestine” poster-making events, according to the New York Post.

Last week, the Poppies 4 Palestine [Instagram page](#) posted a list of demands for the NYC Parks Department related to the dispute over the Gentili memorial.

The group asked the city to “prevent predatory tactics” and allow “clear due process for advocacy when gardens face harassment from GreenThumb [the city’s community garden program], Parks, elected officials, or other bad-faith actors (including racist, Zionist, transphobic, or otherwise oppressive forces).”

“In repeated efforts to collaborate with GreenThumb, we’ve faced deliberate obstruction: unclear communication, harassment, threats, and ever-shifting demands that have now escalated to the erasure of community agreements,” said Poppies for Palestine in the post. “This isn’t negligence—it’s a pattern of suppression. We refuse to let them bury our collective work under bureaucratic violence.”

One garden member, Nastazia Kielar, told [Gothamist](#) that many in her community “see Zionism as a form of colonization still,” and that the garden was being treated unfairly.

The group told [Hell Gate](#) that complaints about the garden gained steam in a private Facebook group called “Zionist Brooklyn.”

“They’re calling New York Parks Commissioner Sue Donoghue’s office to complain about us and alleging that we are teaching children to hate Jewish people,” a garden member identified only as Dana told Hell Gate. “It’s a weird witch-hunt type thing that’s happening—the anti-woke mob, essentially.”