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Report: Before election, Israel approved \$2.3 million plan to improve its image among Reform and Conservative Jews

An internal report obtained by an Israeli journalist shows that the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs blames the growing anti-Israel sentiment among U.S. Jews on their embrace of progressive politics

By [Asaf Elia-Shalev](#) November 11, 2022



Israel's Minister of Diaspora Affairs Nachman Shai speaks during the Malmo International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism – Remember ReAct, in Malmo, Sweden, Oct. 13, 2021. (Jonas Ekstromer/TT News Agency/AFP via Getty Images)

[\(JTA\)](#) — Concerned that progressive values widely held by American Jews were fueling growing skepticism about the Jewish state, the Israeli government launched an unprecedented plan to counter the trend, according to [internal documents obtained by the Israeli watchdog newsroom Shomrim](#).

The documents reveal a \$2.3 million partnership between Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs and the Reform and Conservative movements in the United

States focused on pro-Israel advocacy among young and liberal American Jews.

Shomrim's Uri Blau reported that the fate of the plan is uncertain following Israel's recent election, which saw major gains for the far right, including a politician [who has called Reform Judaism a "fake religion."](#)

With negotiations among political factions underway, the final shape of the country's next government has not yet been determined, but [the various scenarios on the table have made many American Jews uneasy](#) because of the racism and homophobia espoused by some of those who were elected; Reform leaders have said Israel's democracy is in peril.

A government that includes ultranationalists "will almost certainly lead to challenging moments in U.S.-Israel relations and will be painful for Jews worldwide who will not see the Israel they love and believe in reflected in these leaders, nor in the policies they pursue," the Union for Reform Judaism said in a statement about the election.

Israeli's outgoing minister of diaspora affairs, Nachman Shai, told Shomrim that while past Israeli governments have been reluctant to engage with the Reform and Conservative movements, he made it a priority of his office. He said the tensions between the two sides have to do with values.

"That's why it was very important for the current government to emphasize values shared by both us and them, such as diversity and minority representation," Shai said. "We want to demonstrate that we nevertheless share common values."

The [leaked documents](#) from Shai's ministry show that he and other Israeli officials are paying attention to [evidence that American Jews have grown more critical of Israel over time](#).

Whoever authored the analysis in the documents blames the embrace of progressive values among U.S. Jews for rising anti-Israel currents in the community. The situation is the result of "the internalization of the progressive discourse framework among a growing number of Jews," the documents say, according to Shomrim.

The analysis also says that American Jewish identity, unity and communal character are under threat amid changing attitudes toward Israel.

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