

The End Jew Hatred Movement is spreading across the country — and sparking controversy

By [Jacob Henry](#) May 12, 2023



Jews are gathered in front of the New York Public Library on 5th Ave. to protest anti-semitism as 'End Jew Hatred' in Manhattan of New York City, United States on October 15, 2020. (Tayfun Coskun/Getty)

([New York Jewish Week](#)) — Last month, Colorado Gov. Jared Polis, a Jewish Democrat, [proclaimed](#) April 29 “End Jew Hatred Day,” citing “an urgent need to act against antisemitism in Colorado and across the country.”

Similar proclamations came from [New York Rep. Mike Lawler](#), a Republican, and dozens of other elected officials nationwide.

But in the New York City Council, an identical effort proved controversial. While the overwhelmingly Democratic council approved April 29 as End Jew Hatred Day annually, six council members either abstained from or voted against what organizers had intended to be an unanimous decision.

The initiative behind the proclamations, called the End Jew Hatred Movement, is a relatively new presence based in New York City that is increasingly making its voice known nationally — through rallies, petitions, a

relentless press campaign and now in the halls of government. One measure that demonstrates the initiative's growth is the number of April 29 proclamations. Last year, there were a handful. This year, according to End Jew Hatred, there were 30.

The movement also provided the spark for the unexpected opposition in the New York City Council. Lawmakers who did not support the proclamation said they demurred because the End Jew Hatred Movement, while run by people who say they "set aside politics and ideology," has been associated with right-wing Jewish activists.

End Jew Hatred doesn't publicize much about its structure or funding. It is not a registered nonprofit organization, and would not tell the New York Jewish Week its annual budget.

Its backers call it an unapologetic voice that's fighting a growing problem, antisemitism, while its critics say it is an attempt to inject hawkish rhetoric into a national effort to combat anti-Jewish persecution. Amid that debate, the movement's growth, and its successful spearheading of resolutions nationwide, show how an initiative founded by conservative activists has wielded influence in the conversation about antisemitism, even in liberal political spaces.

Here's what we know about End Jew Hatred, how it's establishing itself in New York City and beyond, and why its activities are drawing backlash.

A movement founded in the politics of 2020

Founded in New York City near the beginning of the pandemic, End Jew Hatred first drew local attention in October 2020, when it organized a rally in front of the New York Public Library protesting the way its activists said New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio and New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo were unfairly targeting Orthodox New Yorkers with public health restrictions.

Haredi New Yorkers and their backers [railed against the city's regulations that year](#), and claimed that policies limiting group prayer and other religious ceremonies were selectively enforced against their communities.

"Never in my life did I think I would see this type of blatant Jew-hatred from our public officials," Brooke Goldstein, who founded End Jew Hatred, [said at the rally](#), which drew dozens of protesters. "Singling out New York Jews for blame in the coronavirus spread is unconscionable and discriminatory."

But while the movement's first significant action concerned the pandemic, a spokesman for End Jew Hatred said it was inspired by another seismic event that took place in 2020: the racial justice protests and the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement.

“How can we replicate this for the Jewish people?” said Gerard Filitti, senior counsel for the organization Goldstein directs, the Lawfare Project, describing End Jew Hatred's genesis. “We saw antisemitism shoot up during the pandemic. So it was kind of the right time to launch this idea.”

Since then, in addition to spearheading the proclamations, the initiative has continued holding rallies, protesting [the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, which aids Palestinian refugees, for “promoting Jew hatred”](#); speaking out against antisemitism in Berlin, Toronto and other cities around the globe; and, earlier this year, opposing a reported plea bargain for the men who [assaulted Joseph Borgen while he was en route to a pro-Israel rally](#) in May 2021. It was also a signatory on a letter to Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg protesting the plea deal, and members of the movement showed up to the alleged attackers' court hearing.

Nearly three years after its launch, the movement remains opaque about its structure, declining to share any financial information or elaborate on its relationship to the Lawfare Project, which bills itself as an “international pro-Israel litigation fund.” The [movement's donation page](#), however, shows that it receives its donations through the Lawfare Project, which earmarks them for End Jew Hatred. And a pop-up ad that appears on the Lawfare Project's homepage advertises Goldstein's forthcoming book, titled “End Jew Hatred: A Manual for Mobilization.”

In a brief statement to the New York Jewish Week, a spokesperson for End Jew Hatred said the organization accepts donations from local community members and support from like-minded nonprofit groups.

“Our network of activists spans the globe, from New York City to Los Angeles, from Toronto to Berlin,” he said. “Also, the movement is supported by people from all walks of life who donate both their time and money to make the movement a success. Activists are encouraged to fundraise within their community, and some actions have been supported by organizations that have taken part in them.”

Roots in pro-Israel and right-wing activism

The Lawfare Project, Goldstein's group, has represented Jewish students who [settled a discrimination lawsuit](#) with San Francisco State University, and the following year, [represented an Israeli organization](#) that settled a suit with the National Lawyers' Guild, after the guild declined to place the group's ad in its annual dinner journal.

This year, the group is providing legal aid to a Las Vegas-area [Jewish teen who had a swastika drawn onto his back](#). And it [sued the mayor of Barcelona over her decision to sever ties with](#) Tel Aviv.

Goldstein also has a history of right-wing activism and controversial statements. She has made appearances on conservative news networks such as [Fox News](#), [One America News](#) and [Newsmax](#). She once [said that "there's no such thing as a Palestinian person,"](#) and on Election Day in 2016, [tweeted](#), "Can I run the anti-anti-islamophobia department in the Trump administration?"

Goldstein has said she sees Ronald Lauder — the philanthropist, World Jewish Congress president and conservative donor — as an ally. In a [virtual conversation between the two](#) hosted by Manhattan's Fifth Avenue Synagogue last year, Goldstein thanked Lauder for his "support and his friendship," and Lauder called Goldstein "so smart and wonderful." Lauder was also [involved with the movement's effort](#) to establish End Jew Hatred Day in New York City last year.



Ronald S. Lauder, President of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) recorded before a bilateral a conversation with Chancellor Scholz. (Michael Kappeler/Getty Images)

End Jew Hatred has also worked with Dov Hikind, a former Brooklyn Democratic state assemblyman who now runs a group called Americans Against Antisemitism. Hikind's group has [partnered](#) with End Jew Hatred, and he has [appeared at its events](#). Hikind told the New York Jewish Week that his group and End Jew Hatred are "involved in terms of pushing the same agenda."

Hikind has stirred controversy as well: In 2013, he [wore blackface as part of a Purim costume](#), and in 2005, [sponsored a bill that would have allowed police to profile Middle Eastern men on the subway](#). He was a [follower of the late right-wing extremist Rabbi Meir Kahane](#).

Controversy or consensus?

Even as its right-wing connections have sparked suspicion from progressive activists, End Jew Hatred has garnered support from establishment Jewish groups. The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations promoted End Jew Hatred Day on Twitter last week, [posting a graphic](#) with the logo of the movement. And the city's Jewish Community Relations Council also backed the City Council resolution.

"All people, regardless of party affiliation, have a role to play in combating antisemitism and other forms of hatred, and we should not lose sight of that," a JCRC spokesperson told the New York Jewish Week. "From our perspective, every day should be End Jew Hatred Day."

Lauder has also advocated the use of the term "Jew hatred" in place of antisemitism in a [video published by the World Jewish Congress](#) that has been viewed more than 480,000 times.

"No one is embarrassed anymore when they're called an antisemite," he said. "Antisemitism must be called what it really is: Jew hatred."

That view is not universally shared among antisemitism watchdogs. Holly Huffnagle, the American Jewish Committee's U.S. director for combating antisemitism, said that the term "Jew hatred" is "jarring" and "makes people stop and think." But she said the term does not capture the way antisemitism is often expressed via coded conspiratorial language.

"[People] might not know what [the term] antisemitism is, but Jew hatred they know," she said. "In that sense it can be used to get attention, to help people call it out."

“On the other hand, the antisemitism we see today, in its primary form, which is conspiratorial, is not captured by the term ‘Jew hatred,’” she added. “I hear from a variety of people that they don’t hate Jews, they’re against Jew hatred, they’re not antisemitic, but they believe that Jews have too much power [or] they control the media.”

And End Jew Hatred’s right-wing ties have also made some progressive activists in its home base of New York City wary of its motives. The lead sponsor of the City Council’s End Jew Hatred Day resolution was Queens Republican Inna Vernikov, a former aide to Hikind who has previously [spotlighted antisemitism allegations](#) at the City University of New York.

Her resolution, which passed overwhelmingly, garnered a mix of 14 co-sponsors, including some prominent Jewish Democrats and all six of the council’s Republicans — two of whom have links, respectively, [to white supremacists](#) and a [person arrested for storming the U.S. Capitol](#) on Jan. 6, 2021.



Council Member Inna Vernikov introduced a resolution to create an annual “End Jew Hatred” day in the New York City Council on April 27, 2023. (New York City Council Flickr)

Those right-wing connections were part of what led six progressive council members to either abstain from or vote against the resolution. One of the council members who voted no, Brooklyn’s Shahana Hanif, told the New York Jewish Week that she has participated in multiple actions against

antisemitism but opposed the resolution because she didn't want to endorse End Jew Hatred as a movement.

“Antisemitism is real,” Hanif said. “I understand the urgency. I understand the opportunity when there is a resolution or any kind of symbolic gesture that comes along, that every legislator wants to be united in supporting our Jewish colleagues. But in the same breath, it is our responsibility to know who is leading on these efforts.”

City Comptroller Brad Lander, a prominent Jewish progressive politician, vouched for Hanif's record of standing up to antisemitism and echoed her concerns. He told the New York Jewish Week that End Jew Hatred's activists are “right-wingers who have a track record of working very closely with people who foment hatred.”

Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, a progressive group, also opposed the resolution. Rafael Shimunov, a member of the group, said the resolution was “clearly associated with the right,” and noted that at a hearing ahead of the vote, an activist [decried bail reform](#), something right-wing advocates have [pushed for years to repeal](#).

Shimunov also took issue with remarks Vernikov has made about George Soros, the billionaire Jewish liberal megadonor who has become an avatar of right-wing antisemitism, and whom Vernikov [called](#) “an evil man, who happens to be Jewish.” JFREJ activists also noted that some Republican cosponsors of the bill, such as Vernikov, Vickie Paladino and Joann Ariola, [have called for transgender women to be barred from women's sports at schools and universities](#). In addition, Paladino has a history of anti-LGBTQ comments. The activists say these views undercut the council members' calls to oppose hatred directed at Jews.

End Jew Hatred's supporters dismissed accusations that their cause is right-wing. In a text message, Vernikov told the New York Jewish Week that “this resolution has nothing to do with politics or right-wing extremists.” Hikind also echoed that message.

“Everyone in the Jewish community supported this idea,” Hikind said. “To say it's just right-wing organizations is dishonest and hypocritical.”

Filliti, the Lawfare counsel, said the aim of the resolution — and End Jew Hatred as a whole — was to send “a unifying message.”

“We’re not looking to make this political,” he said. “We have had so much success with this and we are so happy to see this going forward.”

UPDATE: *This article has been updated with further details regarding End Jew Hatred’s relationship to the Lawfare Project.*