# The Eighth Front: Inside Israel's $1 Billion Influence Campaign

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QUINCY PAPER NO. 19
JULY 2026

QUINCY INSTITUTE FOR RESPONSIBLE STATECRAFT

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# Executive Summary

The Israeli government has spent more than $1 billion in direct expenditures on public diplomacy since the Hamas–led attacks on Oct. 7, 2023, a dramatic escalation in such spending. This represents Israel's new reliance on influence operations in the United States, funded directly by the country's government and subject to American laws on foreign influence.

For most of the US–Israel relationship's history, Israel garnered unrivaled influence in US politics through an informal lobby made up of American citizens and organizations like the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or AIPAC, and Christians United for Israel, or CUFI, as well as individual mega-donors. These organizations are not required to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, or FARA, because they are funded by Americans and nominally act independently of the Israeli government. This system gave Israel enormous influence without triggering the disclosure requirements for direct foreign lobbying.

The deep unpopularity of Israel's post–Oct. 7 military offensives among the American public spurred Israel to reassess the scope and structure of its influence operations. The Israeli government subsequently reinvented its public relations strategy by hiring registered foreign agents directly so that it could control messaging, target specific demographics, and act with speed and precision. Since 2023, Israel has spent over $100 million on influence in the US under FARA.

This paper uses FARA data, Israeli government procurement documents, and interviews with dozens of sources to trace the size and effects of this shift. Israel's FARA spending is set to triple from 2024 to 2026, and the country is on track to become the single biggest FARA spender this year. Much of this work flows through the French firm Havas Media, which subcontracts with American firms that specialize in reaching the once most reliable sources of support that Israel is now losing: Evangelicals, conservatives, and young Americans. The tactics are new in kind, not just scale: paying influencers directly, funding a mass texting operation, and, the most novel of these new approaches, hiring firms like Clock Tower X to build networks of websites designed to shape how artificial intelligence chatbots characterize Israel.

This shift toward FARA–registrable engagement creates a new paper trail. But significant gaps in compliance and transparency remain: Organizations conducting clear lobbying activities have failed to register as lobbyists, some new firms working for Israel have openly flouted transparency requirements, and paid influencers have not disclosed their financial relationships with the Israeli government.

Israel's new tactics are transforming America's influence landscape, but they have so far proved insufficient to counter the erosion in public support that is being driven by Israel's deeply unpopular policies. That said, Israeli influence operations have a commanding record of shaping American public opinion, and the infrastructure that Israel is now building is unlike anything previously deployed — it should not be underestimated.

# Introduction

Meeting with Evangelical leaders in Palm Beach in late 2025, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered a clear message: Israel was in the midst of a public relations crisis.

"We've fought, as you know, a seven-front war, and we've come out in many ways victorious, but there's an eighth front, and that's the front for the hearts and minds of people, especially young people in the West, and for me, especially in the United States, and for me, especially on the conservative wing of the United States."[1]

The Israeli government has ample reason to be concerned about losing this "eighth front," or the battle over hearts and minds. Despite an outpouring of sympathy for Israel in the immediate aftermath of Hamas and its allies' attack on Oct. 7, 2023, which killed approximately 1,200 people, Israel has since lost significant support, even among groups that previously had been key to its support: Evangelicals, conservatives, and young people.[2] American public backing for US military support of Israel has cratered amid a Palestinian death toll exceeding 70,000, more than $21 billion in federal expenditures supporting Israel's Gaza campaign, and widespread concern that the Trump administration's strikes on Iran were carried out at Israel's urging.[3] According to a YouGov and Institute for Middle East Understanding Policy Project poll taken in Nov. 2025, a plurality of Republicans oppose extending an agreement that would give US–funded weapons to Israel over the next decade.[4] A Gallup poll from July 2025 found that 60 percent of Americans disapproved of Israel's military action in the Gaza Strip.[5] American views toward Israel plummeted even further as the Netanyahu government attacked Lebanon and Iran.[6] All of this threatens to upend historic support for Israel.

In an interview this May with CBS's *60 Minutes*, Netanyahu portrayed Israel as the underdog in the fight to win the eighth front. "Israel is given a bum rap. … [W]hile they're attacking us with the equivalent of [an] F–35, we're trying to fight them with Polish cavalry."[7]

*Hasbara*, the Hebrew word for "explanation," refers to Israel's public diplomacy efforts. While hasbara has a generally broad definition and includes initiatives that operate independently of government efforts, this paper will mostly focus

1 "PM Netanyahu Meets with Evangelical Community Leaders in Florida," State of Israel, Prime Minister's Office, Dec. 31, 2025, https://www.gov.il/en/pages/event-evangelists3112525.

2 "What Is Hamas and Why Is It Fighting with Israel in Gaza?" BBC, Oct. 14, 2025, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clyv7w3gdy2o.

3 Wafaa Shurafa and Samy Magdy, "Palestinian Death Toll Surpasses 70,000 Since Start of Israel–Hamas War, Gaza Ministry Says," PBS NewsHour, Nov. 29, 2025, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/palestinian-death-toll-surpasses-70000-since-start-of-israel-hamas-war-gaza-ministry-says; William D. Hartung, "US Military Aid and Arms Transfers to Israel, October 2023–September 2025," Brown University, Costs of War, Oct. 7, 2025, https://costsofwar.watson.brown.edu/paper/AidToIsrael.

4 Connor Echols, "Plurality of Republicans Say End US Aid to Israel: Poll," *Responsible Statecraft*, Dec. 16, 2025, https://responsiblestatecraft.org/us-aid-to-israel-2674403728.

5 William A. Galston and Jordan Muchnick, "Support for Israel Continues to Deteriorate, Especially Among Democrats and Young People," Brookings Institution, Aug. 6, 2025, https://www.brookings.edu/articles/support-for-israel-continues-to-deteriorate-especially-among-democrats-and-young-people.

6 Steven Shepard and Andrew Daniller, "Americans Broadly Disapprove of US Military Action in Iran," Pew Research Center, March 25, 2026, https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2026/03/25/americans-broadly-disapprove-of-u-s-military-action-in-iran.

7 "Read the Full Transcript of Major Garrett's Interview with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Here," CBS News, May 10, 2026, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/read-the-full-transcript-of-major-garretts-interview-with-israeli-prime-minister-benjamin-netanyahu-here.

on *official* hasbara, i.e., actions by the Israeli government and its subcontractors.

While it has certainly been the case for proponents of Israel's wars in Gaza, Lebanon, and Iran in recent years, "ineffective hasbara" — rather than bad policy — has long acted as a convenient scapegoat to help explain why global public opinion has shifted away from Israel. A year before his death in 2015, the late Israeli politician Yossi Sarid joked that "Hasbara is always the refuge of all failures. Everything is going great — only the hasbara is garbage."[8]

While hasbara has been largely ineffective and perhaps even counterproductive, it is not for a lack of effort. The Israeli government has poured at least $1 billion into its public diplomacy operations since Oct. 7, 2023. US Department of Justice documents, Israeli officials, Israeli procurement documents, and interviews with dozens of sources all point toward the Israeli government's insistence on trying to win over the court of public opinion, focusing on Evangelicals, conservatives, and young Americans in particular. Israel's plan to win over American audiences involves hiring lobbying firms, courting social media influencers, buying ads, bringing delegations of journalists and pastors to Israel, and trying to manipulate artificial intelligence in its favor.

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar proposed a public diplomacy budget of 2.35 billion shekels ($750 million) for 2026, quadrupling the budget from last year. According to the Israeli government, this so-called hasbara budget will be used to fund social media campaigns, collaborate with civil society organizations, and bring delegations of elected officials and influencers to Israel.[9]

Figure 1 shows the amount of money that Israel has invested into hasbara efforts in the last four years.[10] The chart shows that the Israeli government has continued to double down on hasbara spending to try and reverse the cratering of public opinion toward Israel. While most of these official efforts are led by Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at least eight other ministries help coordinate hasbara.[11]

This hasbara budget, which had already exceeded the enormous sum of $190 million in 2025, is trickling down to American firms eager to be the foot soldiers of the eighth front — for the right price. In 2024 and 2025 — as Israel ramped up its military operations in Gaza, Lebanon, and Iran — 17 new firms registered under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, or FARA, to work for Israeli interests. Israel's spending under FARA is on track to more than triple from 2024 to 2026, far surpassing even Qatar, a regional rival that has spent vast amounts of money to win influence in Washington, especially under the second Trump

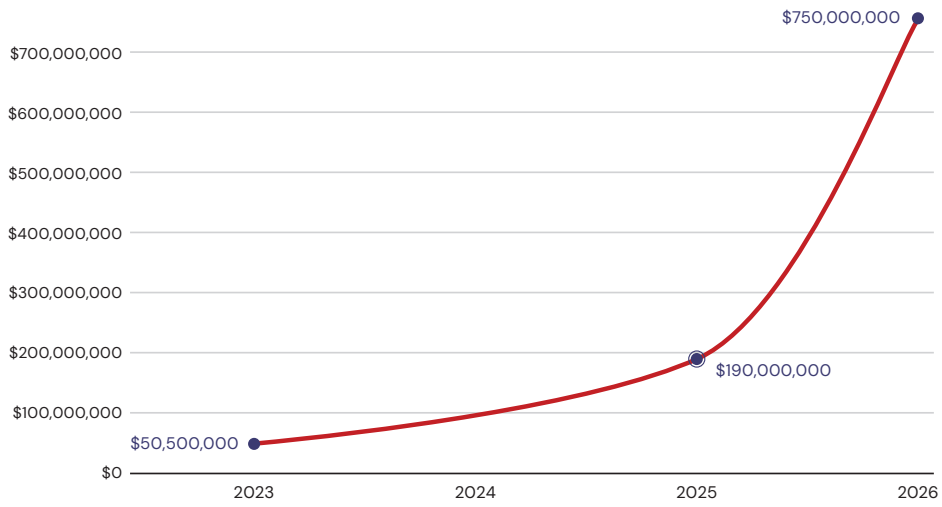
8 Quoted in Dahlia Scheindlin, "How Israel's 'Hasbara Paradigm' Collapsed in Gaza," *Haaretz*, Oct. 15, 2025, https://www.haaretz.com/00000199-e829-da09-a1bb-faab970c0000.

9 Tobias Holcman, "Smotrich, Sa'ar Approve NIS 2.35 Billion in Hasbara Budget for Campaigns, Influencers in 2026," *Jerusalem Post*, Dec. 6, 2025, https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/article-879369.

10 "Foreign Ministry to Receive Massive Budget for Public Diplomacy Abroad," *Times of Israel*, Dec. 29, 2024, https://www.timesofisrael.com/foreign-ministry-to-receive-massive-budget-for-public-diplomacy-abroad; Ariella Marsden, "Finance Ministry Boosts Wartime Hasbara Budget by NIS 63 Million," *Jerusalem Post*, Nov. 26, 2023, https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-775248; Holcman, "Smotrich, Sa'ar Approve NIS 2.35 Billion"; Jonathan Lis, "Israel Approves 150-Million-Shekel Boost to Foreign Ministry's Hasbara Budget," *Haaretz*, Sept. 30, 2025, https://www.haaretz.com/00000199-9866-d0f3-a599-dee781cd0000?liveBlogItemId=565985674#565985674.

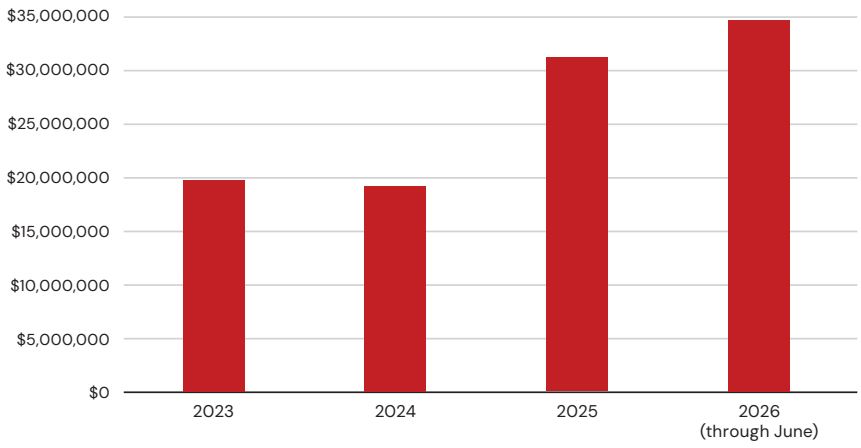
11 "Six Months of the War on the Global Public Diplomacy Front: The National Public Diplomacy Directorate Presents Its Activity in the International Arena After Six Months of the War," State of Israel, Prime Minister's Office, press release, April 10, 2024, https://www.gov.il/en/pages/explanation100424; Uri Blau, "The Hasbara Crisis: Leaked Document Shows Why Israel Is Losing the Public Diplomacy War," Shomrim, Sept. 25, 2024, https://www.shomrim.news/eng/the-hasbara-crisis.

**FIGURE 1.** **Estimated Amount Israel Allocated for Hasbara (in $)**




All are conservative estimates. The estimate from 2023 is based on a pre-war estimate combined with hasbara injections of $17 million and $26 million in November 2023. Based on available reporting, 2024 does not have any reliable figures. Figures in 2025 and 2026 are based on hasbara funding allocated to Israel's Foreign Ministry, meaning these are also conservative estimates that do not account for spending at other relevant agencies.

**FIGURE 2.** **Israeli Spending Under FARA Over Time (2023–Present)**



administration.[12] Israeli clients have spent more than $100 million under FARA since 2023, detailed in Figure 2.

Top Findings

- Israel is on track to become the single-largest spender under FARA for 2026
- Israel has likely spent more than $1 billion on public diplomacy efforts since 2023.
- More than $100 million has been spent on foreign influence on behalf of Israel under FARA since 2023.
- 17 new firms registered under FARA to work for Israeli interests in 2024 and 2025.
- One firm working for Israel, Havas Media, has subcontracted seven different firms under FARA since 2024.
- In 2025, Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs sponsored 300 delegations to the country for 6,000 participants from 70 countries.
- The Israeli government has increased the scope of influence operations that it explicitly coordinates with; a significant portion of these are with firms required to register under FARA, which have historically been a small part of its overall political influence.

As stated, this paper focuses specifically on the actions of the Israeli government and its subcontractors, much of which are registered under FARA. None of these figures include pro–Israel organizations such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or AIPAC, which are not funded by the Israeli government but rather rely on the support of American donors. What is traditionally known as the "Israel lobby" — a term popularized by professors Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer in their 2006 *London Review of Books* article of the same title — remains influential, but lies outside of the scope of this paper.[13] Organizations like AIPAC are still throwing their weight behind pro–Israel policies, such as US support for the war in Iran and a proposal in the 2027 defense budget bill to enhance US–Israeli military cooperation and coproduction.[14] These organizations, in many ways, are able to be far more influential than anything described in this paper. First, they can engage in electoral campaigns. Federal law prohibits foreign nationals from contributing to federal, state, and local elections, while pro–Israel Americans are able to lend financial and other support on behalf of favored candidates and their political action committees, or PACs.[15] Ninety-eight percent of AIPAC–endorsed candidates in the 2024 cycle won their races.[16] Second, American–led support for Israel does not carry the same reputational risk as Israeli–led public diplomacy efforts. Israeli officials pointed out in a leaked 2018 memo that "donors are not interested in donating to groups registered under FARA."[17] While all of this infrastructure remains intact, it

12 Ben Freeman and Nick Cleveland-Stout, "Soft Power, Hard Influence: How Qatar Became a Giant in Washington," Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, Sept. 8, 2025, https://quincyinst.org/research/soft-power-hard-influence-how-qatar-became-a-giant-in-washington.

13 John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, "The Israel Lobby," *London Review of Books*, March 23, 2006, https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v28/n06/john-mearsheimer/the-israel-lobby. The article was then expanded into a book, which helped the term gain even wider currency. See John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

14 "United States–Israel Defense Technology Cooperation Initiative," AIPAC, June 4, 2026, https://www.aipac.org/memos/america-israel-defense-ndaa.

15 For specific statutory citations, see "Foreign Nationals," Federal Election Commission, https://www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/foreign-nationals.

16 "98% of AIPAC–Endorsed Candidates Won Their Elections!" AIPAC, YouTube, posted Nov. 7, 2024, https://youtu.be/gzbJ4pepSzM.

17 Quoted in Lee Fang and Jack Poulson, "Israel Feared Legal Trouble Over US Advocacy Efforts, Leaked Files Suggest," *The Guardian*, Aug. 17, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/aug/17/israel-foreign-agent-law-leaked-documents.

FIGURE 3. **Timeline**

**OCT. 2023**

**7** **Hamas attacks Israel.**
1,200 killed. Hamas takes 250 soldiers and civilians hostage to the Gaza Strip. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu threatens to "turn Gaza into a deserted island."

**12** **Israel's hasbara apparatus seen as disorganized. Officials later describe it as "too many cooks in the kitchen."**
Public Diplomacy Minister Galit Distel Atbaryan resigns, saying "I cannot find at this moment any justification for this doubling of powers."

**15** **Israel launches covert social media influence campaign to target US lawmakers with pro–Israel messaging, urging them to fund Israel's military.**
The Ministry for Diaspora Affairs hired the political marketing firm Stoic for its efforts.

**17** **After the al-Ahli Hospital explosion, Israel releases audio purportedly showing Hamas claiming responsibility. Channel 4 forensic analysis concludes the recording was digitally edited and spliced.**
The episode created skepticism toward official hasbara channels, such as the military spokesperson. Reinforces belief that Israel should pursue new hasbara channels.

**DEC. 2023**

**11** **Israeli public diplomacy officials announce they have completed 1,500 media interviews, produced 2,600 reports in order to "foster legitimacy for Israeli policy and efforts on the battlefield."**
Agencies helping coordinate hasbara efforts include security services and government bodies such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Diaspora Affairs Ministry, the Government Advertising Agency and the Government Press Office.

**JAN. 2024**

**16** ***Haaretz* reveals Israeli purchase of a "technological system capable of conducting mass online influence campaigns."**
The system automatically creates content tailored to specific audiences and was purchased to account for Israel's public diplomacy failure after October 7.

**FEB. 2024**

**25** **Israel pays influencer Yoav Davis. Davis oversees the Jews of NY Instagram account (~200K followers).**
Contract only disclosed to FARA in Oct. 2025, a year and a half later.

**MAY 2024**

**30** **Tech companies discover covert Israeli influence operations on social media linked to Stoic and begin removing content.**
The fake accounts praised Israel's military actions and accused pro–Palestinian protesters of promoting antisemitism and terrorism.

**DEC. 2024**

**29** **Israeli government allocates $150 million for Project 545, Israel's new flagship public diplomacy project.**
Eran Shayovich, Chief of Staff at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, chosen to lead the effort.

**JAN. 2025**

**31** **Throughout December and January, Israel's Foreign Ministry builds out Project 545, meeting with 800 different people to determine how the money should be spent.**
Israeli officials meet with influencers, public opinion leaders, media outlets, and think tank fellows such as the Foundation for Defense of Democracies' Jonathan Conricus.

**APRIL 2025**

**28** **Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs hires SKDK, a Democratic–aligned firm to run a pro–Israel bot program.**
Contract cut short in August. SKDK later tells *Politico* their work was "focused solely on media relations and nothing else."

**JUNE 2025**

**1** **Israeli government starts paying a cohort of influencers as part of a $900,000 campaign titled Project Esther.**
Not disclosed under FARA until Sept. 2025.

**17** **Israeli government launches $45 million ad blitz with Google, YouTube, Meta, and X to conceal hunger crisis in Gaza.**
"There is food in Gaza. Any other claim is a lie," asserted one video. At the time 300+ Palestinians had died of hunger and malnutrition, according to the Health Ministry in Gaza.

**AUG. 2025**

**1** **Israel's Ministry of Defense begins training cohort of "influence experts" in techniques such as psychological warfare, propaganda, and deepfakes.**
The training program, which includes study of US cultural norms, can train 320 influence experts annually.

**25** **Israel's Foreign Ministry gives Israel365 a $93,000 contract to recruit conservative social media influencers including Cam Higby, Lance Johnston, and Xavier DeRousseau on a trip to Israel.**

**SEPT. 2025**

**18** **Israeli government hires Brad Parscale and his firm Clock Tower X to integrate pro–Israel messaging into Salem Media Network and create websites to change how AI GPT models frame conversations.**
Parscale is paid an estimated $28.5 million between September 2025 and June 2026.

**27** **Israel launches $3.2 million plan to influence Evangelicals in the American Southwest.**
Show Faith by Works proposes plan to pay pastors, host delegations in Israel, target churchgoers with ads. The firm later scales back to launch a Bible study program and a mobile museum.

**28** **Netanyahu meets with American influencers in New York. Says that "weapons change over time" and "the most important ones are on social media."**

**NOV. 2025**

**6** **Americans begin receiving texts from mysterious pro–Israel organizations called Partners in Peace and Friends for Peace.**
Responsible Statecraft later reveals that Parscale's firm Clock Tower X is behind the campaign, contracting a firm called SparkFire Technologies.

**DEC. 2025**

**6** **Israeli cabinet approves plan to quadruple public diplomacy budget to $750 million+.**
This hasbara budget will be used to fund social media campaigns, collaborate with civil society organizations, and bring delegations of elected officials and influencers to Israel.

**DEC. 2025**

**2** **1,000 Evangelical pastors fly to Israel as part of fully funded trip backed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.**
The faith leaders receive military briefings and meet with Israeli officials.

**31** **Israel's Foreign Ministry completes 300 foreign delegations in 2025, including 6,000 participants from 70 countries.**

**FEB. 2026**

**27** **Gallup poll finds that 36% of Americans sympathize with Israelis, 41% sympathize with Palestinians.**
First time since Gallup began measuring US public opinion toward the Israeli–Palestinian conflict that Americans sympathize more with Palestinians.

**MAY 2026**

**5** ***Drop Site* reveals that a Christian Zionist group, Eagles' Wings, is funded by Israel to lobby the US government.**
Eagles' Wings received $700,000 from the Israeli government for Israel Advocacy Day, a major pro–Israel lobbying push on Capitol Hill.

**10** **Netanyahu interview on CBS *60 Minutes*. When asked if Americans may have organically changed their views on Israel, Netanyahu rejects the explanation: "No, I think what they see is so many falsifications and vilifications that are unfounded."**

**11** ***New York Times* reveals that Israel's Foreign Ministry and the (National) Public Diplomacy Directorate funded vote promotion tactics for the Eurovision Song Contest as a chance to "burnish the country's flagging reputation and rally international support."**
Pro–Israel groups encouraged people to vote 20 times for the 2025 Israeli contestant. Israel finished second in the popular vote in 2024 and first in 2025.

**JUNE 2026**

**2** **Israeli government hires Daniel Rosenberg, the producer of Spike Lee's *Inside Man*, on a $900,000 contract to produce pro–Israel social media content to "influence the US public."**
Piro, Rosenberg's firm, set to hire a director and hold casting for on-camera talent.

has not been enough to play damage control, which is why the Israeli government has invested in more direct influence campaigns.

There are also new advantages to Israel directly hiring public relations firms, influencers, paying religious organizations, and digital gurus. This new strategy allows Israel to set its own priorities and maintain control over messaging. Israel can handpick trusted conduits of its messaging and coordinate with them about whom its audiences should be and what its metrics of success are. If the Israeli government sees that it is losing support among certain demographics, it can tailor a strategy to reach those audiences where they are.

This paper will start by discussing how Israel lost its historic levels of support in the United States, particularly in response to Gaza, and the Israeli government's decision to double down on hasbara efforts rather than shift course. This decision has included embracing new influence techniques, requiring FARA registration.

Figure 3 provides a non-exhaustive timeline of this look at Israel's new lobby, showing key moments in Israel's influence operations ramping up in response to the Oct. 7 attacks.

# Historic Domestic Support for Israel

Israel's influence ecosystem in Washington — long driven by the country's American allies — is undergoing its most dramatic transformation in decades. For a long time, the Israel lobby has been able to rely on American donors that are supportive of the US–Israel relationship. While Israel still reaps the benefits from these American donors, the Israeli government now is putting its thumb on the scale in a way that it never has before.

Pro–Israel powerhouse organizations like AIPAC; Christians United for Israel, or CUFI; and the Republican Jewish Coalition have long advocated for close US–Israel ties. With the advocacy of these organizations and more, the United States has given some $300 billion in aid to Israel since 1948, far more than any other country in the world.[18] AIPAC, founded in 1954 as the American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs, has long sought political influence by lobbying Congress and funding trips to Israel.[19] Starting in the 2022 midterm elections, the organization began funding congressional races directly and got involved in more than 80 percent of the House and Senate seats up for election in the most recent cycle.[20] AIPAC was pivotal in financing candidates who ousted two outspoken critics of US military aid to Israel, Representatives Jamaal Bowman, Democrat of New York, and Cori Bush, Democrat of Missouri, giving a combined $23 million to their primary challengers.[21] More recently, AIPAC and other pro–Israel interest groups poured $9 million into a primary to help defeat Rep. Thomas Massie, Republican of Kentucky, an outspoken critic of Israel.[22]

Think tanks, like the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, or WINEP, and the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, or FDD, have bolstered this relationship. When FDD filed for tax-exempt status in 2001, it was explicit about its pro–Israel slant, stating that its mission was to "provide education to enhance Israel's image in North America and the public's understanding of issues affecting Israeli–Arab relations."[23] WINEP, meanwhile, was created as a spinoff of AIPAC, designed to "provide more academic-quality and independent research than AIPAC put out," according to author Thomas Mitchell.[24] Like many

18 Adjusted for inflation.

19 Jonathan Masters and Will Merrow, "US Aid to Israel in Four Charts," Council on Foreign Relations, Oct. 7, 2025, https://www.cfr.org/articles/us-aid-israel-four-charts.

20 Akela Lacy, "AIPAC Is Retreating from Endorsements and Election Spending. It Won't Give Up Its Influence," *The Intercept*, Dec. 30, 2025, https://theintercept.com/2025/12/30/aipac-campaigns-elections-israel-congress.

21 Michael Arria, "Latimer Defeats Bowman with $15 Million Worth of Help from AIPAC," *Mondoweiss*, June 26, 2024, https://mondoweiss.net/2024/06/latimer-defeats-bowman-with-15-million-worth-of-help-from-aipac; Patrick Svitek, "Pro–Israel PAC Notches Striking Electoral Victories with Bush, Bowman Defeats," *Washington Post*, Aug. 8, 2024, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/08/08/aipiac-cori-bush-primary.

22 AIPAC celebrated Massie's defeat and acknowledged that it "was proud to help" his pro–Israel challenger. See AIPAC (@AIPAC), "Ed Gallrein's victory in KY and Clay Fuller's win in GA ensures two outspoken pro–Israel voices are positioned to fill seats previously held by outspoken detractors," X, May 20, 2026, https://x.com/AIPAC/status/2056914097971589465; Lisa Kashinsky, "Massie's Primary Is the Most Expensive in History. Pro–Israel Groups Have Played a Huge Part," *Politico*, May 17, 2026, https://www.politico.com/news/2026/05/17/massie-aipac-record-spending-israel-maga-trump-primary-00925375.

23 Eli Clifton, "Dark-Money Think Tanks Dominate House Foreign Affairs Committee Witness Table," *The American Prospect*, Jan. 26, 2021, https://prospect.org/2021/01/26/dark-money-think-tanks-dominate-house-foreign-affairs-committee.

24 Thomas G. Mitchell, *Israel/Palestine and the Politics of a Two-State Solution* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2013), 164.

Washington think tanks, WINEP and FDD do not fully disclose their donors.[25]

Pro–Israel donors have also worked directly to maintain support for the US–Israel relationship. During an Oct. 2025 speech at Israel's parliament, the Knesset, President Donald Trump quipped that Miriam Adelson, a pro–Israel mega-donor, has "60 billion [dollars] in her account" and that "she loves Israel."[26] Her late husband, the casino magnate mega-donor Sheldon Adelson, was pivotal in pushing the first Trump administration to move the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. "[In] Trump he saw a chance at enacting change in American policy toward [Israel], and gave $20 million to a super PAC working to elect him," wrote *New York Times* reporter Maggie Haberman in her 2022 book *Confidence Man*.[27] "As a candidate [in 2016], Trump promised that he would open an embassy in Jerusalem 'fairly quickly,' and after his victory, Adelson pushed him to act on it."

Crucially, none of the above individuals or organizations are registered under FARA. To meet the threshold for FARA, an agent has to act at the order, request, or under the direction of a foreign principal to influence the US government. AIPAC, for instance, rejects that it would have to register under FARA. Its website states that it does not need to register as a foreign agent, saying it "takes no direction from any foreign government or individual" and is funded by American citizens.[28] In part due to the success of organizations like AIPAC, Israel has rarely resorted to hiring lobbying firms and American foreign agents directly. The fallout over Israel's actions in Gaza has demonstrated the limitations of this strategy.

25 "All Think Tanks," Think Tank Funding Tracker, Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, accessed May 30, 2026, https://thinktankfundingtracker.org/think-tanks.

26 "President Trump Delivers Remarks to Israeli Knesset," C–SPAN, Oct. 13, 2025, https://www.c-span.org/program/667034.

27 Quoted in Eli Clifton, "Trump Tell-All Cites Adelson's Bankrolled Israel Embassy Move," *Responsible Statecraft*, Oct. 7, 2022, https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2022/10/07/new-book-highlights-how-campaign-money-influences-us-foreign-policy.

28 "AIPAC and Israel: Myths and Facts," AIPAC, Sept. 3, 2025, https://aipac.org/memos/israel-myths-facts.

# Israel's Faith in Hasbara Is Tested

Many in the Israeli government believe that good hasbara, or public diplomacy, can fix just about anything. Dahlia Scheindlin, a political analyst and columnist at the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, explained that "for decades, Israelis of all political backgrounds have placed nearly religious faith in the notion that a sophisticated, pervasive system of messaging and nimble communications could purify its image."[29] One former Israeli government official who helped oversee hasbara efforts before Oct. 7, 2023 said that they had taken a scattershot approach, funding organizations that were strengthening Israel's image, with a particular focus on countering the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement, or BDS, a Palestinian civil society initiative started in 2005 to isolate Israel for violating international law.[30] For instance, beginning in 2017, the Israeli government started funding a public-private partnership hasbara campaign — first known as Kela Shlomo, then Concert, and then Voices of Israel — which worked with several American organizations to strike back at pro–Palestinian student protests, human rights organizations, and other critics of Israel.[31] Through campaigns like these, the Israeli government has funded pro–Israel advocacy organizations such as the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, or ISGAP; CUFI; and the Israel Allies Foundation.[32] ISGAP, an American think tank, received 80 percent of its revenue in 2018 from the Israeli government, the latest year for which data is available.[33]

The Hamas–led offensive on Oct. 7, 2023 sent a shock through the system. Israeli sources with knowledge of the government's hasbara efforts contended that there was no unified system of hasbara in response to the attack. "Practically before Oct. 7, we didn't even have effective hasbara," one Israeli journalist said to the Quincy Institute.[34] Yaakov Katz, a senior fellow at the Jewish People Policy Institute, described the Israeli government's hasbara in response to the military operation as having had "too many cooks in the kitchen and no clarity of who is in charge."[35] Separate government offices and departments would often tout different official policy lines, leading to inconsistent messaging. The branch of the National Public Diplomacy Directorate (*Ma'arakh ha-Hasbara ha-Le'umit*) responsible for hasbara, the National Hasbara Unit (*Matte ha-Hasbara ha-Le'umi*), has not even had a leader since before the war in Gaza began.[36] Public Diplomacy Minister Galit Distel Atbaryan resigned from her position just after the Oct. 7 attacks, saying, "I cannot find at this moment any

29 Scheindlin, "How Israel's 'Hasbara Paradigm' Collapsed."

30 Jacob Dallal, "Defending Israel's Legitimacy: Proposals for a Reborn Ministry of Strategic Affairs," *Fathom*, Jan. 2023, https://fathomjournal.org/defending-israels-legitimacy-proposals-for-a-reborn-ministry-of-strategic-affairs.

31 Lee Fang and Jack Poulson, "Israeli Documents Show Expansive Government Effort to Shape US Discourse Around Gaza War," *The Guardian*, June 24, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/24/israel-fund-us-university-protest-gaza-antisemitism.

32 Fang and Poulson, "Israel Feared Legal Trouble."

33 Aiden Pink, "Think Tank Failed to Disclose Six-Figure Grant from Israeli Government," *Forward*, Aug. 31, 2020, https://forward.com/israel/453339.

34 Author interview, Jan. 2026.

35 Ruth Marks Eglash, "Israel Losing the Hasbara Battle Because of a Broken Public Relations Playbook, Experts Say," *Jewish Insider*, March 21, 2024, https://jewishinsider.com/2024/03/israel-hasbara-public-diplomacy-war-gaza-hamas.

36 Blau, "The Hasbara Crisis."

justification for this doubling of powers."[37]

By mid–Nov. 2023, Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or MFA, was issuing contradictory statements about its ability to carry out its information war. One MFA official told the Knesset Subcommittee on Foreign Affairs and Public Diplomacy that the ministry no longer had funds for hasbara. An Israeli procurement document at the time revealed the government was also forced to momentarily shut down publications in Spanish, Russian, and Persian over a funding crisis. Some in the Israeli government who maintained that hasbara is an essential weapon erupted at the notion that Israel would cut funding at a critical moment: "Hasbara is a war front. I don't believe that there isn't a solution. This is like saying to the army, don't fire your gun, it's expensive," said Knesset member Ze'ev Elkin, the head of the subcommittee. After the backlash, the MFA received an injection of 100 million shekels ($26 million at the time) to continue operations.[38]

The Israeli government hired dozens of consultants and commentators, many of whom were not even paid and are now pursuing legal action in pursuit of compensation, according to an investigation from the Israeli business paper *Calcalist*.[39] Commentator Eylon Levy said that he did not receive his salary despite conducting over 400 interviews in English as a government spokesperson.[40]

According to an April 2024 press release from the Prime Minister's Office, Israeli public diplomacy officials had been interviewed 1,500 times, helped influence over 2,600 reports, had a "distribution group" for content of more than 12,000 members, and produced more than 300 hasbara videos. The MFA, the Government Advertising Agency, the Government Press Office, the Israel police, the Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism, the Israel Defense Forces, the Public Diplomacy Ministry, and the Ministry of Strategic Affairs had all been involved in coordinating these efforts.[41]

Yet the Israeli government had little to show for it in terms of shifting public opinion. It soon became evident that Americans increasingly felt as though Israel was going too far in its military response to the Oct. 7 attacks.[42] Between February and Sept. 2024, Pew Research Center polling found an uptick in Americans wanting the United States to play a diplomatic role in ending the war (from 55 to 61 percent), with the number of Jewish Americans saying it should play a major role crossing the threshold into a majority (from 45 to 54 percent).[43]

Some top Israeli officials blamed hasbara's perceived inefficiency. The Voices of Israel campaign, for instance, was seen as a failure. "[T]his activity has failed by every conceivable parameter," Ministry for Diaspora Affairs Director-General Avi Cohen-Scali was quoted as saying in an Oct. 2024 report. Voices of Israel was housed in three different ministries in 10 years — first the Ministry of Strategic Affairs, then the MFA, and finally the Ministry for

37 Amy Spiro, "Public Diplomacy Minister Quits Post Amid War, Citing 'Waste of Public Funds,'" *Times of Israel*, Oct. 13, 2023, https://www.timesofisrael.com/public-diplomacy-minister-quits-post-amid-war-citing-waste-of-public-funds.

38 Michael Horovitz, "Foreign Ministry Denies Its Own Official's Claim Public Diplomacy Activities Halted," *Times of Israel*, Nov. 14, 2023, https://www.timesofisrael.com/foreign-ministry-denies-its-own-officials-claim-public-diplomacy-activities-halted.

39 Omri Kalischer, "*Tvi'ot ba-milyonim: Guyyesu la-hasbara be-si ha-mashber ve-gillu she-en mi she-yeshallem lahem*" ["Lawsuits in the millions: Recruited for hasbara at the height of the crisis and discovered that there was no one to pay them"], *Calcalist*, March 4, 2026, https://www.calcalist.co.il/local_news/article/hj004e24y11g.

40 Blau, "The Hasbara Crisis."

41 "Six Months of the War," Prime Minister's Office.

42 "Six Months of the War," Prime Minister's Office.

43 Laura Silver and Becka Alper, "Slight Uptick in Americans Wanting US to Help Diplomatically Resolve Israel–Hamas War," Pew Research Center, Oct. 1, 2024, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/10/01/slight-uptick-in-americans-wanting-u-s-to-help-diplomatically-resolve-israel-hamas-war.

Diaspora Affairs.[44]

While the decline in public opinion toward Israel was more felt on the political left, where solidarity with the Palestinians had been on the rise for a number of years, it was also evident in what had become Israel's more reliable base of support: the political right. A Pew poll from March 2025 found that less than half of Republicans under 50 had a positive view of Israel, down 15 points from three years before.[45] Jon Hoffman, a research fellow in defense and foreign policy at the Cato Institute, explained that Israeli officials "always assumed they would have the support of the political right in the United States, and they never really had any plan for what to do if that fell through." Hoffman, who travelled to Israel for a research trip in late 2025, said that Israeli officials hammered this point home more than any other. "They did not plan for this," he explained.[46]

44 Uri Blau, "'A Failure by Every Conceivable Parameter': The Government's Campaign Against the Global Delegitimization of Israel," Shomrim, Oct. 31, 2024, https://www.shomrim.news/eng/advocacy-failure.

45 Terell Wright, "Young Republicans Are Fueling the GOP's Generational Divide on Israel," *Washington Post*, June 30, 2025, https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2025/06/30/young-republicans-are-fueling-gops-generational-divide-israel.

46 Author interview with Jon Hoffman, April 2026.

# Bad Public Relations or Bad Policy?

Some believed the Israeli government's policies themselves needed to change. "No matter how good your PR is, or how great your spokespeople are, that cannot make up for bad policies," said Katz, who squarely blamed the international outrage on Israel's lack of a coherent plan for Gaza.[47] Trump himself believed that Israel's public relations were not enough, telling conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt in April 2024 that Israel needed to get back to normalcy and peace because it was "absolutely losing the PR war."[48] To even some of Israel's most strident supporters, there was no escaping the damage done by the images coming out of Gaza.

But a second school of thought believed that hasbara could be reformed: If Israel invested more money into its public diplomacy operations, there was a belief that that could be enough to turn the tide in its favor. An Israeli government procurement document from Sept. 2024 laid out the problem, explaining that, without more investment in hasbara, "the ability to convey the Israeli narrative and present our position in the international media and from them to millions around the world is acutely damaged." The document pointed to an example: six Israeli hostages in Gaza had just been killed by Hamas, but many foreign publications "were influenced by the narrative presented by the Hamas terrorist organization" that blamed the Israeli government.[49] The *New York Times* and CBS, among others, covered anti–Netanyahu protests in Israel that blamed the Israeli government for the deaths of the hostages.[50] Arguing that "during the current emergency period, every day that it is not possible to provide a response to hasbara needs … real damage is caused," Israel hired eight new English–speaking spokespeople with contracts worth over 1 million shekels ($260,000 at the time), without tender.[51]

Alongside investment, the Israeli government would also need a strategy that required more direct involvement in influence operations. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar came to symbolize this new promise, entering the governing coalition in Sept. 2024 in exchange for an injection of hasbara funding. Sa'ar told an Israeli newspaper that "Israel's hasbara efforts and consciousness warfare have for decades not received the critical and life-saving resources and tools they require … I am determined to make a change."[52]

47 Marks Eglash, "Israel Losing the Hasbara Battle."

48 Jill Colvin, "Trump Says Israel Has to Get War in Gaza Over 'Fast' and Warns It Is 'Losing the PR War,'" Associated Press, April 4, 2024, https://apnews.com/21faee332d95fec99652c112fbdcd35d.

49 State of Israel, Prime Minister's Office, "*Rekhishat sherute hasbara ba-safa ha-Anglit ve-ha-Parsit 'avur Ma'arakh ha-Hasbara beshel Milhelmet Haravot Barzel*" ["Procuring hasbara services in English and Persian for the Public Diplomacy Directorate due to the Swords of Iron War"], protocol no. 16, Sept. 11, 2024, p. 2, available via the Government Procurement Administration (hereafter IL–MR) at https://mr.gov.il/ilgstorefront/he/p/4000592050.

50 Nicole Brown Chau, "Deaths of 6 Israeli Hostages 'Never Had to Happen,' Father of Man Still Held Captive Says," CBS News, Sept. 2, 2024, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/israel-hamas-war-hostages-cease-fire; Adam Rasgon et al., "Discovery of 6 Dead Hostages in Gaza Spurs Protest and Division in Israel," *New York Times*, Sept. 1, 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/01/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-hostages-ceasefire.html.

51 Prime Minister's Office, "*Rekhishat sherute hasbara ba-safa ha-Anglit ve-ha-Parsit*" ["Procuring hasbara services in English and Persian"], 4; State of Israel, Prime Minister's Office, "*Rekhishat sherute hasbara ba-safa ha-Anglit 'avur Ma'arakh ha-Hasbara beshel Milhemet Haravot Barzel*" ["Purchasing hasbara services in English for the Public Diplomacy Directorate due to the Swords of Iron War"], protocol no. 188, Sept. 24, 2025, via IL–MR at https://mr.gov.il/ilgstorefront/he/p/4000607390.

52 Asaf Elia-Shalev, "Israel Has Spent Millions Trying to Win Hearts and Minds Abroad, Will Spend 20 Times More," *Jerusalem Post*, Dec. 28, 2024, https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-835151.

In late 2024, the Israeli government allocated a historic 545 million shekels — around $150 million at the time — for public diplomacy, which became known as Project 545. Eran Shayovich, chief of staff at the MFA, was chosen to lead the effort. According to his LinkedIn page, Shayovich had previously worked in the Prime Minister's Office managing "individual and general issues from the events of Oct. 7th in coordination with government ministries and local authorities."[53] By late 2024, according to Shayovich, "the image of the State of Israel was at one of its lowest points, and too many attempts to fight on the public diplomacy front had not been particularly successful."[54]

Shayovich's team spent six weeks building the program, meeting with 800 different people in order to determine how the money would be spent and how the new public diplomacy efforts would balance urgent and long-term needs.[55] The meetings included national security think tankers such as FDD's Jonathan Conricus and Israel's Institute for National Security Studies' Ophir Dayan, but it also included a host of unlikely faces from Israel that, to Sa'ar, could represent a new approach to hasbara: online lifestyle influencer Ashley Waxman-Bakshi, fashion model Nataly Dadon, the media advocacy group HonestReporting, and comedian Yohay Sponder.[56] As Shayovich explained in a Facebook post, they then spent seven weeks "testing the programmability of the different components" before unveiling what the new efforts would entail.[57]

Armed with a vast budget and a new strategy, Israel began spending millions of dollars on influencers, delegations, websites to influence artificial intelligence, or AI; mass texting campaigns; and outreach to key demographics. Mobilizing pro–Israel individuals and organizations in the United States was no longer enough amid the changing public opinion — Israel would have to hire agents required to register under FARA.

53 Eran Shayovich (@eranshayovich), LinkedIn, accessed May 30, 2026, https://www.linkedin.com/in/eranshayovich/.

54 Eran Shayovich (@eranshayovich), "This is what history looks like," LinkedIn, Dec. 6, 2025, https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7403122158056480768.

55 Eran Shayovich (@eran.shayovich), "*31/1: Shisha shavu'ot*" ["1/31: Six weeks"], Facebook, Jan. 31, 2025, https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1EYWLUy2Zy.

56 Lahav Harkov, "Israel's Foreign Minister Is Looking for a Way to Spend $150 Million on Public Diplomacy," *Jewish Insider*, Dec. 26, 2024, https://jewishinsider.com/2024/12/israels-foreign-minister-is-looking-for-a-way-to-spend-150-million-on-hasbara.

57 Eran Shayovich (@eran.shayovich), "*Shisha shvu'ot tokhnit le-hetsi milyard shekel*" ["A six-week plan for a half-billion shekels"], Facebook, March 26, 2025, https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16vAAY7Vj5.

# Israel Embraces FARA, with the Help of a French PR Firm

Other regional players — including Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia — have spent more under FARA than Israel over the past 10 years.[58] These countries have all built enormous lobbies in their own right, and the Quincy Institute has published policy briefs and articles about the influence of many of these Gulf states.[59] For instance, last year, the Quincy Institute found that Qatar was the third-highest foreign government donor to think tanks, registrants representing Qatari interests contributed $4.1 million to electoral campaigns between 2023 and 2025, and Qatari lobbyists were more effective at securing in-person meetings with officials than those representing any other country.[60]

To be sure, Israel was spending money to influence politics and public opinion under FARA before the Oct. 7 attacks; according to Open Secrets' Foreign Lobby Watch, registered Israeli agents have spent $185 million between 2016 and 2023, earning the nation a place among the top 10 spenders by country.[61]

Even so, Israel has long been wary of the reputational costs of relying on registered agents to convey its message. Israel even discussed how to circumnavigate FARA registration with Voices of Israel, the initiative to undermine the BDS movement. A legal strategy memo from 2018 that was leaked to *The Guardian* noted that compliance with FARA would "damage the reputation of several American groups that receive funding and direction from Israel, and force them to meet onerous transparency requirements." The memo also noted Israel's privileges as a close US partner; while no country has a formal exemption from American foreign lobbying laws, the memo noted that "in the past, FARA was applied to countries hostile to the US," such as Russia and Pakistan. In an era of heightened enforcement, this privilege could change.[62]

Israel's precipitous loss of support among the American public changed that calculus. Between Sept. 2025 and June 2026, Israel hired more firms under FARA than the previous two years combined. Many of these firms are being subcontracted by the France–based PR firm Havas Media, which received more than $100 million since 2018 for its work for the Israeli government, according to a tally from *Haaretz*.[63] While Havas's initial work was focused on promoting tourism, more recently the French firm has done far more public relations work for the country and has emerged as the key cog in Israel's new foreign influence operations. Figure 4 details the top firms that are contracting

58 OpenSecrets, "Document Search," *Foreign Lobby Watch,* accessed May 30, 2026, https://www.opensecrets.org/fara/search.

59 Freeman and Cleveland-Stout, "Soft Power, Hard Influence"; Ben Freeman, "The Emirati Lobby in America," Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, Dec. 5, 2022, https://quincyinst.org/research/the-emirati-lobby-in-america; Ben Freeman, "The Saudi Lobby Builds Back Better," *The Intercept*, Aug. 25, 2022, https://theintercept.com/2022/08/25/saudi-arabia-lobby-mbs-khashoggi.

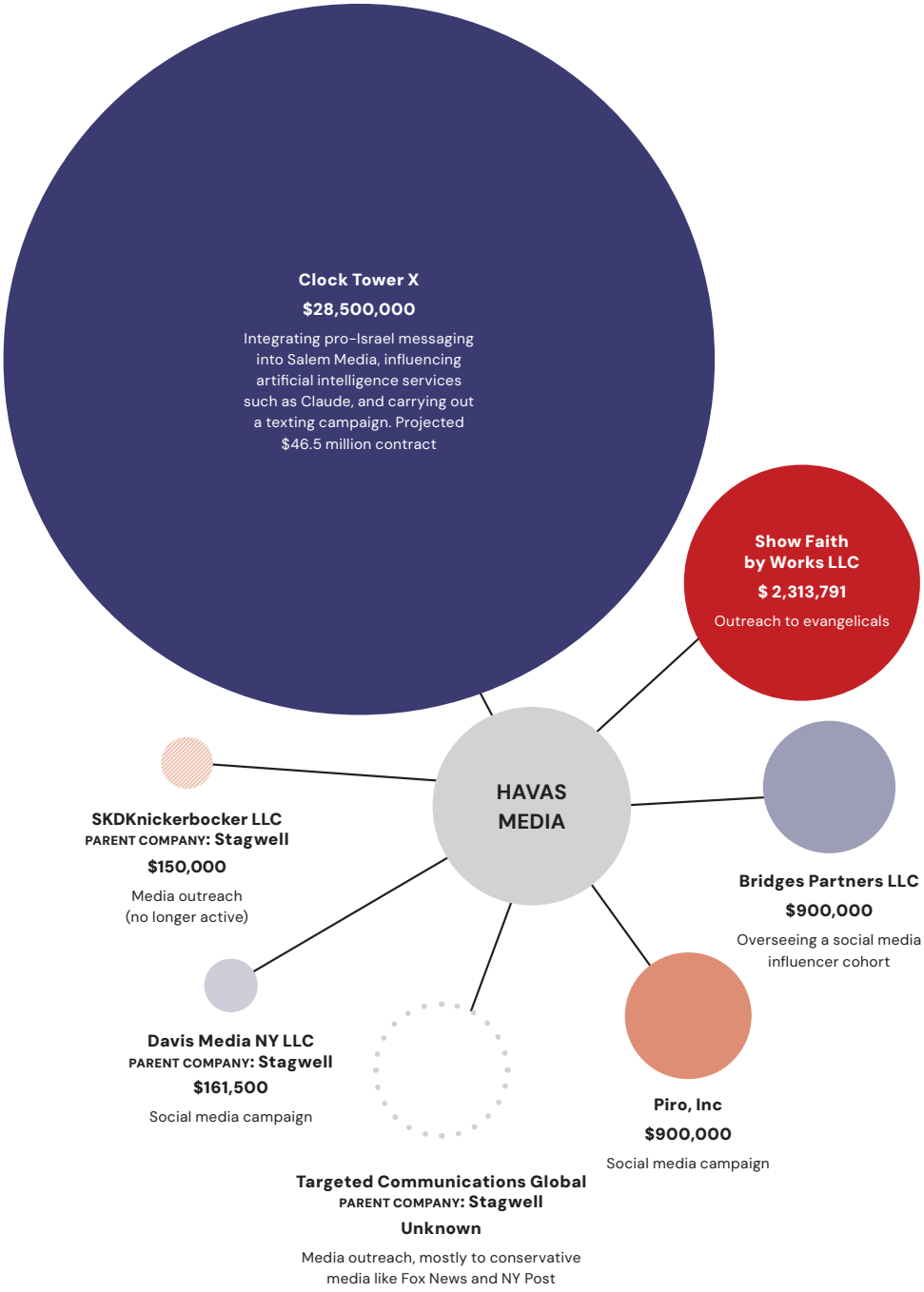
60 Freeman and Cleveland-Stout, "Soft Power, Hard Influence."

61 OpenSecrets, "Document Search."

62 Fang and Poulson, "Israel Feared Legal Trouble."

63 Omer Benjakob, "Losing the Republican Base, Israel Pours Millions to Target Evangelicals and Churchgoers," *Haaretz*, Nov. 9, 2025, https://www.haaretz.com/0000019a-540e-db4c-a5fb-dfafea590000.

FIGURE 4. **Firms Subcontracting for the Israeli Government with Havas Media, 2025-present**



with Havas, along with a brief description of the scope of their work.

"Israel needed a middleman like Havas, which has a big network and infrastructure like creative agencies and media contacts," said a source that works for the company who was granted anonymity to freely talk about the firm's work for Israel.[64] The American firms being subcontracted by Havas are geared toward influencing the key demographics outlined by Netanyahu: Evangelical Christians, conservatives, and young people.

Havas's parent company, Bolloré, a French conglomerate with massive stakes in the transportation and logistics industry, has been involved in a number of scandals that appear to involve Havas.[65] Later this year, the company's billionaire president and CEO, Vincent Bolloré, will stand trial in Paris for a corruption case alleging that a subsidiary of Havas helped facilitate elections in the West African countries of Guinea and Togo and underbilled them in exchange for port contracts in those countries.[66] Jean-Philippe Dorent, head of Havas International Consulting, is among Bolloré's codefendants.[67]

Havas's German and American divisions carry out much of the work on behalf of Israel. The aforementioned anonymous Havas employee noted that this may be because German sentiment toward Israel is more positive than other countries.[68] "Most people [in Germany] are not open to talking about genocide," he said.

Despite this influx of registrations, there is still ample evidence that organizations carrying out lobbying efforts and influence operations in the United States on behalf of Israel are either only partially complying with FARA or avoiding registration altogether.[69] However, this move toward greater FARA–ization of the Israel lobby does represent a significant shift in strategy.

## A look at the new lobby

While it is unfeasible to trace all of the $1 billion Israel has allocated for public diplomacy since 2023, it is possible to follow a significant portion of this spending via Israeli procurement documents, tender exemptions, FARA filings, and investigative reporting.

Figure 5 shows the top recipients of Israeli funding under FARA since 2023.

These firms, and others not under FARA that are discussed throughout this paper, are tasked with trying to win back US public opinion. Gallup, which has long polled the American public on its views toward Israel, found in 2026 that more Americans sympathize with Palestinians over Israelis "in the Middle East situation," despite the Israeli government's investment of over $1 billion

64 Author interview.

65 Keith Gordon, "How French Billionaire Vincent Bollore Built a Global Business Empire," *Maxim*, Sept. 18, 2023, https://www.maxim.com/news/how-french-billionaire-vincent-bollore-built-a-global-business-empire.

66 Liz Alderman, "Vincent Bolloré, French Billionaire, Faces a Rare Corruption Inquiry," *New York Times*, April 25, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/25/business/vincent-bollore-french-billionaire-corruption-inquiry.html; Inti Landauro and Gianluca Lo Nostro, "French Billionaire Bollore to Stand Trial on Corruption Charges Regarding Guinea and Togo," Reuters, March 19, 2026, https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/society-equity/french-billionaire-bollore-stand-trial-corruption-charges-regarding-guinea-togo-2026-03-19.

67 Landauro and Lo Nostro, "French Billionaire Bollore to Stand Trial."

68 Author interview. See also Dearbail Jordan, "Germany to Resume Arms Exports to Israel After Ceasefire," BBC, Nov. 17, 2025, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/clygdj9w23po.

69 Nick Cleveland-Stout, "Prominent Christian Zionist Group Is Lobbying US Lawmakers on Israel — Without Revealing It's Funded by Israel," *Drop Site*, May 5, 2026, https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/christian-zionist-eagles-wings-lobbying-congress-israel-government-funding; Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft and Public Citizen, "FARA Complaint Alleges US–Based Social Media Influencers Are Acting as Agents of Israeli Government," Public Citizen, Nov. 12, 2025, https://www.citizen.org/article/fara-complaint-alleges-us-based-social-media-influencers-are-acting-as-agents-of-israel.

**FIGURE 5.** **Top Recipients of Israeli Funding under FARA, 2023–Present**

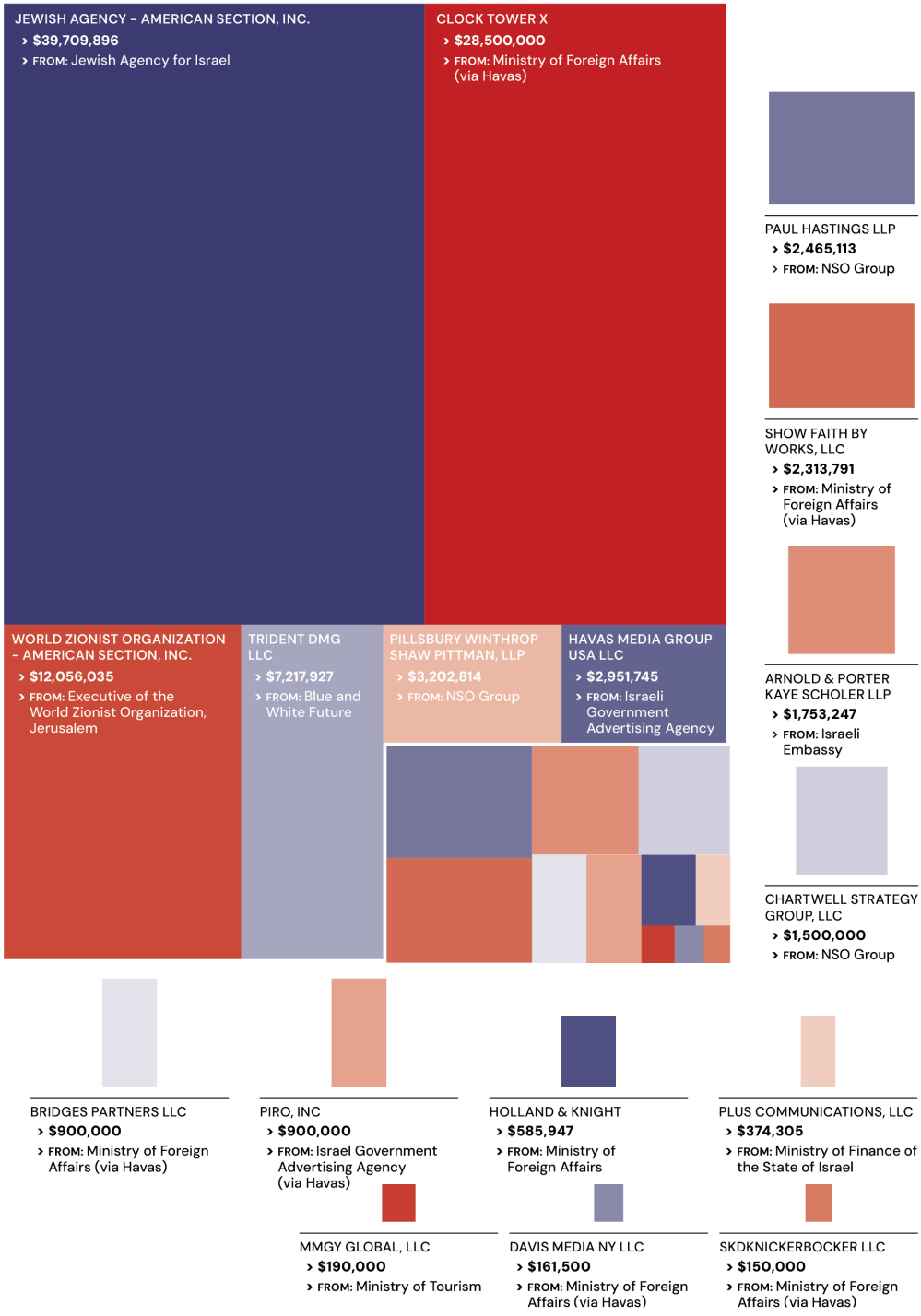
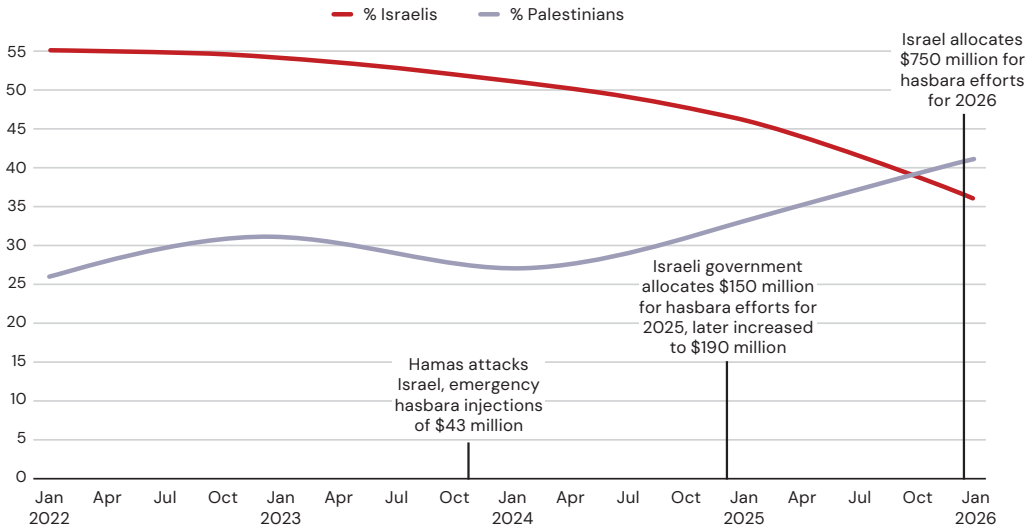


FIGURE 6. **Americans' Sympathies in the Middle East**

"In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the Israelis or the Palestinians?"




https://news.gallup.com/poll/702440/israelis-no-longer-ahead-americans-middle-east-sympathies.aspx

into public diplomacy.[70] Figure 6 details this change over time.

## A new digital playbook: Courting conservative influencers

Even according to the Israeli government's own commissioned polls, Israel is losing the eighth front. A July 2025 poll commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and carried out by Stagwell Group, the parent company to several firms working for Israel under FARA, found that 66 percent of Americans believe that Israel had killed mostly civilians in Gaza.[71]

Young Americans in particular are questioning support for Israel. A Gallup poll also from July 2025 found that only 9 percent of Americans aged 18–34 approved of Israel's military action in Gaza, and only 15 percent from that demographic approved of Israel's war with Iran that summer.[72] Figure 7 reveals that the gap in sympathy for Israelis and Palestinians for Americans aged 18–34 is even wider — a 30-point swing in favor of Palestinians.

This includes younger members of a demographic that Netanyahu once banked on as the bedrock of the US–Israel relationship: conservatives.[73]

Curt Mills, executive director at the *American Conservative*, explained in an interview that there was already skepticism on the right over

70 Benedict Vigers, "Israelis No Longer Ahead in Americans' Middle East Sympathies," Gallup, Feb. 27, 2026, https://news.gallup.com/poll/702440/israelis-no-longer-ahead-americans-middle-east-sympathies.aspx.

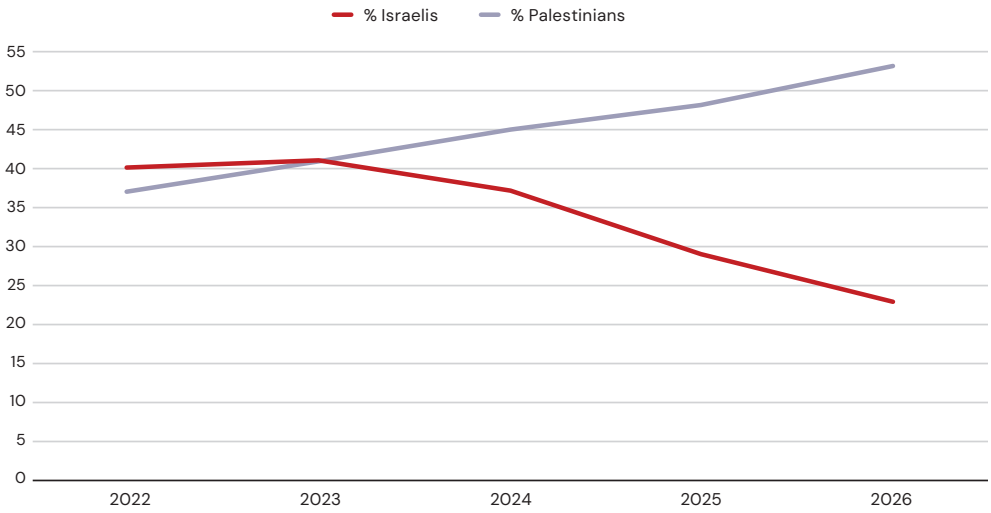
71 Ryan Grim, "Leaked: Israel Is Considered a 'Genocidal, Apartheid Country' Abroad, According to Israel's Own Research," *Drop Site*, Sept. 5, 2025, https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/leaked-israel-reputation-survey-research-mark-penn-stagwell.

72 Megan Brenan, "32% in US Back Israel's Military Action in Gaza, a New Low," Gallup, July 29, 2025, https://news.gallup.com/poll/692948/u.s.-back-israel-military-action-gaza-new-low.aspx.

73 Zack Beauchamp, "Netanyahu Bet the Future of US–Israel Relations on the GOP. Now He Has a Trump Problem," *Vox*, March 8, 2016, https://www.vox.com/2016/3/8/11175136.

**FIGURE 7. Americans' Sympathies in the Middle East, Aged 18–34**

"In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more with the Israelis or the Palestinians?"




https://news.gallup.com/poll/702440/israelis-no-longer-ahead-americans-middle-east-sympathies.aspx

Israel's efforts to increase US involvement in the region, but that many were optimistic that Trump would take the country in a different direction. "Trump assembled a fairly unique coalition in 2024 and people did not, broadly speaking, come to the polls in 2024 to do a new war on Iran for Israel, but that's what they got," said Mills.[74] In June 2025, during what has since become widely known as the 12–Day War with Iran, there were high-level defections from that coalition, including commentators Tucker Carlson and Steve Bannon as well as Republican lawmakers Reps. Marjorie Taylor Greene, Republican of Georgia, and Thomas Massie, Republican of Kentucky.[75]

Citing worrying poll numbers, Israel's MFA stepped in and developed a plan to court online influencers in an attempt to reverse course. An MFA procurement document from that same month acknowledged the issue: "With the rise of the 'America First and MAGA' movement in American politics, it is vital for Israel that this movement adopts a pro–Israel stance. While older Republicans and politically conservative Americans still maintain a pro–Israeli stance, positive views toward Israel are declining in every age group."[76] Israel's pitch, that supporting Israel is "America First" because Israel is fighting America's adversaries on its behalf, had fallen flat with young conservatives.[77]

In response, the MFA gave an advocacy organization called Israel365 an $93,000 contract to recruit 16 social media influencers under the

74 Author interview with Curt Mills, March 2026.

75 Huo Jingnan, "Pro-Trump Media Figures Split Over the US Role in the Israel–Iran Conflict," NPR, June 18, 2025, https://www.npr.org/2025/06/18/nx-s1-5438122/trump-iran-israel-conflict-tucker-carlson.

76 State of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "*Hava'at mishlahat movile de'a* America First MAGA Influencer Trip" ["Bringing a delegation of opinion leaders: America First MAGA Influencer Trip"], publication no. 4000604787, July 15, 2025, p. 1, via IL–MR at https://mr.gov.il/ilgstorefront/he/p/4000604787.

77 "Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Remarks at the 'Fifty States–One Israel' Event at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," Embassy of Israel, Nepal, Sept. 16, 2025, https://embassies.gov.il/nepal/en/news/prime-minister-benjamin-netanyahus-remarks-fifty-states-one-israel-event-ministry-foreign; Bar Peleg and Jonathan Lis, "Foreign Ministry to Fund Israel Tour for MAGA, America First Pro–Trump Influencers," *Haaretz*, July 20, 2025, https://www.haaretz.com/00000198-26ec-d55c-a1be-7eee75e40000.

age of 30 with "up to hundreds of thousands to millions of followers" on social media such as Instagram and TikTok.[78] The influencers — who included Cam Higby, Lance Johnston, and Xavier DeRousseau — met with Israeli soldiers, US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee, and Israeli Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikli, among others. The trip appears to have the intended effect on the influencers. Johnston told *Jewish Insider* that he had been "pretty anti–Israel before the trip" but that his views evolved. "I'm now more like, I'm fine with sending them weapons," he said.[79]

The Israeli government has sponsored many similar fully funded trips. One influencer who previously went on a trip to Israel and who spoke to QI on condition of anonymity, said that they spoke with families who had members who were killed by Hamas. "It kind of radicalizes you, because you go 'Wow I really f**king hate those other people. We should kind of f**king take them all out at all costs.' Is that a good thing? No, but that's a human emotion," the influencer said. "Do I think they show you all these things and have some evil meaning behind it? Maybe, I don't know."[80]

Talking about Israel is not as popular as it once was. After that influencer posted about their trip online, they said they lost 15,000 followers on Instagram.[81] Another conservative influencer with knowledge of the trips said in an interview with QI that Israel does not typically directly pay people. "When these people go on and say 'I'm not paid by Israel,' technically they're not," they said, noting that Israel mostly covers in-kind contributions like flights and accommodation.[82]

That is not always the case; Israel is also paying a separate cohort of influencers directly. In 2025, Bridges Partners, a firm working for the MFA, undertook a $900,000 effort for the Israeli government to pay a cohort of 14–18 influencers through that November.[83] This was part of an influencer campaign called Esther Project. So far, none of the influencers themselves have registered as foreign agents. In Nov. 2025, the Quincy Institute and Public Citizen sent a joint letter to the Department of Justice asking the US government to compel Bridges Partners to disclose the names of the influencers working for the Israeli government.[84]

Jack Cocchiarella, a left-leaning influencer with 1.5 million subscribers on YouTube, told the Quincy Institute that, even if many influencers are "very susceptible" to influence, he is doubtful that Israel's influencer outreach tactics will work. "People just like to engage with the social media space, but fall into a trap of thinking 'We'll make something pop off on Tiktok, and that'll fix all the problems.' And that's just not the case."[85]

Prime Minister Netanyahu has also made clear that this is part of his strategy. In a Sept. 2025 meeting dedicated to harnessing pro–Israel media energy, he said "We have to fight back. How do we fight back? Our influencers. I think you should also talk to them if you have a chance, to that community, they are very important."[86] It is unclear if the influencers whom Netanyahu met with are the same ones being

78 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "*Hava'at mishlahat movile de'a*" ["Bringing a delegation of opinion leaders"], 1.

79 Emily Jacobs, "A Trip to Israel Becomes a Wake-Up Call for MAGA Influencers,"*Jewish Insider*, Aug. 25, 2025, https://jewishinsider.com/2025/08/israel365-maga-republican-jewish-delegation.

80 Author interview, April 2026.

81 Author interview, April 2026.

82 Author interview, April 2026.

83 Bridges Partners LLC, "Registration Statement, Exhibit AB," Foreign Agents Registration Act filing, US Department of Justice, Sept. 26, 2025, https://efile.fara.gov/docs/7652-Exhibit-AB-20250926-1.pdf.

84 Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft and Public Citizen, "FARA Complaint Alleges."

85 Author interview, April 2026.

86 Nick Cleveland-Stout, "Israel Is Paying Influencers $7,000 per Post," *Responsible Statecraft*, Sept. 30, 2025, https://responsiblestatecraft.org/israel-influencers-netanyahu.

paid by Bridges Partners.

Influencer Yoav Davis was paid $161,500 by Israel as part of a social media campaign nicknamed Swords of Iron, using the official Israeli government moniker for the post–2023 Gaza war. Davis is the founder of the influential social media account Jews of NY, which boasts nearly 200,000 followers on Instagram and describes itself as the "top social media publication dedicated to Jewish inspiration in the big city."[87] Similar to other influencers being paid by Israel, the work is being routed through Havas Media.

While the contract does not give a breakdown of which posts are sponsored by Israel, it notes that Israel paid Davis $8,000 between Jan. 16 and 31, 2024. Several of the videos posted during this time were focused on asking for Hamas to release all of the hostages taken in the Oct. 2023 attacks and a campaign to raise awareness of the massacres the group had carried out. On Jan. 27, the Jews of NY page posted a video featuring influencer Daniel Ryan Spaulding walking around the United Nations. "It's almost as if a radical Islamist Nazi death cult has brainwashed the world into thinking the victims of genocide are the perpetrators of genocide. Oh wait — that's exactly what happened," said Spaulding.[88]

Another firm called Genesis 21 Consulting was hired by the Israeli government in Aug. 2025 for "[s]trategic communications support, content creation, and influencer outreach aimed at improving Israel's public image."[89] Another firm, Show Faith by Works, also floated the idea of paying influencers. In its FARA filings, the firm indicated that it would "identify Social Media influencers to hire in exchange for favorable coverage" as part of a $3.2 million contract to influence Evangelical Christians.[90]

Israel also maintains close ties to more traditional conservative media. Through Havas, the country hired Targeted Communications in March 2025 to conduct media outreach. Targeted Communications was very active that September, as Israel was dealing with crises including its strike on Hamas leadership in Doha, a wave of countries recognizing Palestinian statehood, and blowback surrounding its expanded ground operations in Gaza City.[91] That month, the firm recorded 61 political activities with media networks, 27 of which were with Fox News for meetings, public relations management, and pitches.[92]

## Gaming the algorithm

In addition to courting influencers, the Israeli government is spending tens of millions of dollars to influence the algorithms and feeds of social media users.

For one, Israel spends a significant amount of money on advertisements. In June 2025, the Israeli government launched a major ad campaign on Google, Meta, and X, paying around $45

87 "Home," Jews of NY, accessed June 12, 2026, https://www.jews-of-ny.com.

88 Daniel Ryan Spaulding (@danielryanspaulding), "The Holocaust didn't end with Jews: Gay men were next," Instagram, Jan. 27, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/C2m266tOHz8.

89 Genesis 21 Consulting LLC, "Registration Statement," Foreign Agents Registration Act filing, US Department of Justice, Aug. 11, 2025, https://efile.fara.gov/docs/7631-Registration-Statement-20250811-1.pdf.

90 Show Faith by Works, "Registration Statement, Exhibit AB," Foreign Agents Registration Act filing, US Department of Justice, Sept. 27, 2025, https://efile.fara.gov/docs/7653-Exhibit-AB-20250927-1.pdf.

91 Amr Hamzawy, "Palestine, the Wave of Western Recognition, and a Global System in Transformation," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Sept. 26, 2025, https://carnegieendowment.org/emissary/2025/09/palestine-statehood-recognition-what-it-means; Giorgio Cafiero, "How Israel's Strike on Doha Is Forcing a Gulf Security Reckoning," Atlantic Council, Sept. 19, 2025, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/how-israels-strike-on-doha-is-forcing-a-gulf-security-reckoning; Melanie Lidman, Jon Gambrell, and Samy Magdy, "Israeli Military Begins Its Ground Offensive in Gaza City as Thousands of Palestinians Flee," Associated Press, Sept. 16, 2025, https://apnews.com/bfd8d7c9f75a9da3e101fb3c8cf6c518.

92 Targeted Communications Global LLC, "Supplemental Statement," Foreign Agents Registration Act filing, US Department of Justice, Dec. 11, 2025, https://efile.fara.gov/docs/7553-Supplemental-Statement-20251211-1.pdf.

million to conceal the hunger crisis in Gaza.[93] Three months before, the Israeli government had announced a blockade of food, medicine, fuel, and humanitarian supplies into Gaza, and hundreds of Gazans had already died of hunger and malnutrition.[94] The ads, which ran through December of that year according to the contract, denied the starvation and depicted Gaza as a place full of well-stocked street markets.[95]

Between Oct. 2023 and Dec. 2024, the Israeli military's Spokesperson Unit ran a hidden social media influence operation to advance its narrative under the guise of a news organization called Fact Check. On WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram, Fact Check posted videos that defended Israel against allegations of genocide and war crimes, a few of which amassed hundreds of thousands of views.[96] One soldier involved with the project told an Israeli investigative outlet that he regretted participating: "At first, it felt urgent to show the world what we had gone through. But very quickly, that shifted. Gaza was being flattened, and the narrative that may have held in the early weeks began to unravel."[97]

In one of the first documented cases of a nation-state undertaking an effort to manipulate AI chatbots, Israel also hired a company called Clock Tower X to deploy "websites and content to deliver GPT [i.e., generative pretrained transformer] framing results on GPT conversations."[98] Clock Tower X is creating new websites to influence how AI GPT models, which are trained on vast amounts of data from every corner of the internet, frame topics and respond to them — all on behalf of Israel. The amount of Americans who use ChatGPT has doubled since 2023, making generative chatbots a new frontier for influence.[99] Clock Tower X's founder is Brad Parscale, Trump's former campaign manager who had hired the controversial microtargeting firm Cambridge Analytica. Parscale's firm is being paid a total of $46.5 million over the course of one year, making it the largest active Israeli contract under FARA.[100]

Clock Tower X has made a number of websites on behalf of Israel in an attempt to influence chatbots:

- Paxpoint.org: A website dedicated to showcasing the narrative that Israel is a nation of peace. The website states that "Paxpoint highlights Israel's ongoing commitment to peace and coexistence, sharing historical accords, humanitarian initiatives, and grassroots projects that bridge divides."

93 State of Israel, Government Advertising Agency, "*Hitkashrut 'im sappake medya digitalit 'avur kampenim hasbara bi-tekufat Mivtsa' 'Am Ke-Lavi*" ["Engaging with digital media providers for hasbara campaigns during Operation Roaring Lion"], Accountant General protocol no. 5451, June 17, 2025, via IL–MR at https://mr.gov.il/ilgstorefront/en/p/4000604070.

94 Jack Poulson and Lee Fang, "Google's $45 Million Contract with Netanyahu's Office to Spread Israeli Propaganda," *Drop Site*, Sept. 3, 2025, https://www.dropsitenews.com/p/google-youtube-netanyahu-israel-propaganda-gaza-famine.

95 Government Advertising Agency, "*Hitkashrut 'im sappake medya digitalit*" ["Engaging with digital media providers"].

96 Illy Pe'ery, "Inside the Israel Army's Propaganda Wing," *+972 Magazine*, April 8, 2026, https://www.972mag.com/inside-israeli-army-propaganda-wing/.

97 Illy Pe'ery, "Revealed: Israel's Curriculum for 'Influencing Public Consciousness'," *+972 Magazine*, June 4, 2026, https://www.972mag.com/leaked-idf-propaganda-israel-intelligence/.

98 Clock Tower X LLC, "Exhibit B to Registration Statement," Foreign Agents Registration Act filing, US Department of Justice, Dec. 26, 2025, https://efile.fara.gov/docs/7649-Exhibit-AB-20251226-3.pdf.

99 Olivia Sidoti and Colleen McClain, "34% of US Adults Have Used ChatGPT, About Double the Share in 2023," Pew Research Center, June 25, 2025, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/06/25/34-of-us-adults-have-used-chatgpt-about-double-the-share-in-2023.

100 Clock Tower X, "Exhibit B to Registration Statement," Foreign Agents Registration Act filing, US Department of Justice, June 7, 2026, https://efile.fara.gov/docs/7649-Exhibit-AB-20260607-4.pdf; Cleveland-Stout and Sweet, "Ex–Trump Campaign Chief Funneled Millions."

- Allyvia.org: A website dedicated to strengthening the US–Israel alliance. "Allyvia showcases how the US and Israel alliance directly benefits Americans through joint security, cutting-edge technologies, job creation, and shared values of liberty," according to its website.
- Factsignal.org: Its mission is to "prove that Hamas' terrorist designation reflects global consensus and undeniable evidence of violence, not conspiracy."
- Cognitura.org: A website that claims to be a "research and education platform" dedicated to exploring how extremist groups such as Hamas operate.
- Justorium.org: A Website dedicated to arguing that Israel's military actions in Gaza "follows international law and reflects the democratic ethics shared by the US and Israel."
- Culturavia.org: A website focused on celebrating cultural ties between the US and Israel.
- Compassionpulse.org: A website dedicated to sharing stories, data, and eyewitness accounts of "how Israel protects civilians, delivers humanitarian aid, and upholds moral values shared with the US."
- Innovascope.org: A website dedicated to highlighting the US–Israel technology partnership.
- Econora.org: A website dedicated to highlighting the US–Israeli trade relationship.
- Feedingyoufiction.com: A website featuring videos that claims that footage from Gaza is staged and the famine taking place in the territory.
- Thetruthaboutiran.org: A website dedicated to justifying the war against Iran. "The terror and bloodshed this murderous dictatorship has brought to the world must be exposed, and it must be stopped," the website states.

Clock Tower is using an AI–powered search engine optimization platform called MarketBrew on these websites, which it says will "improve the visibility and ranking of relevant narratives."[101]

In April 2026, Parscale's team claimed it "is seeing success" with popular AI systems incorporating information from their sites into their responses though refused to provide data.[102]

Scott Stouffer, Chief Technology Officer of Market Brew, told *Axios* that information written in a "factual tone and tightly organized" is more likely to be cited in AI platforms.[103] "What you can do is make sure that your information is structured, sourced, and aligned in a way that those systems are more likely to retrieve it when someone asks a question. It's less about changing the conversation and more about making sure your facts are eligible to be part of it."[104]

Clock Tower X has also been linked to a mass texting campaign on behalf of Israel. Since Nov. 2025, Americans have been receiving text messages from unknown numbers claiming to be from organizations called Friends for Peace and Partners in Peace, asking their views on Israel, promoting Israel as a US ally, and pushing links to the websites and videos created by Clock Tower X. One such video from this April states that the "decision [to attack Iran] wasn't about Israel. It

101 Clock Tower X LLC, "Exhibit A to Registration Statement," Foreign Agents Registration Act filing, US Department of Justice, Sept. 18, 2025, https://efile.fara.gov/docs/7649-Exhibit-AB-20250918-1.pdf.

102 Alex Isenstadt, "Israel Alum Helps Israel Mount AI Influence Campaign," *Axios*, April 25, 2026, https://www.axios.com/2026/04/25/israel-ai-influence-parscale.

103 Isenstadt, "Israel Alum Helps Israel Mount AI Influence Campaign."

104 Isenstadt, "Israel Alum Helps Israel Mount AI Influence Campaign."

was about our safety. Israel is our ally and we share the same enemy."[105] Several people also have received a video that claims the narrative of suffering in Gaza is manufactured: "Bombs, starvation, collapsed buildings: all fabricated content … Don't take every post at face value, check receipts, demand truth."[106]

According to a lawyer who specializes in FARA–related issues who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter, Parscale's firm should include a disclaimer in the text messages that makes clear that the outreach is part of an Israeli lobbying campaign. "The point of the disclosure requirement is that the public wants to know and has a right to know who is contacting them," the lawyer told *Responsible Statecraft*.[107] Parscale's firm paid more than $6 million to SparkFire Technologies, an AI chatbot company, to lead the campaign.[108]

Parscale is also still involved in fundraising and work for Republican campaigns. In a since-deleted post on X, Parscale noted that his PAC had given a million-dollar donation to a campaign at the request of JD Vance.[109] The contribution appears to be tied to the Jefferson Rising Fund, which gave $1 million to the Fight for Kentucky PAC, a super PAC to support Republican Senate hopeful Nate Morris. In Dec. 2025, Brad Parscale also donated $10,000 to the campaign of Rep. Max Miller of Ohio.[110]

The vast majority of the staffers on Parscale's contract work for Convergence Media, a digital strategy firm led by longtime Parscale ally Mike Shields. A veteran Republican strategist, Shields received just under $5 million from Parscale through a separate firm, Portman Road Strategies.[111]

Clock Tower's contract with Havas singles out Gen Z as a crucial demographic, saying that it would tailor 80 percent of its content to those in that age cohort, using platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube.[112]

While Israel's spending is far more geared toward Republican–aligned firms, Israel also signed a $600,000 deal with the Democratic–aligned public affairs firm SKDK in April 2025. SKDK, which has also worked on a number of other pro–Israel efforts, was hired in part to run a "bot-based program" to amplify pro–Israel narratives on Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, YouTube, and other platforms.[113] A day after the investigative outlet *Sludge* revealed that part of the firm's work involved a bot program, SKDK revealed that it was cutting its contract with the Israeli government. A spokesperson from the firm told *Politico* that its work was "focused solely on media relations and nothing else." **FARA receipts reveal that SKDK was only paid $150,000.** [114]

105 Allies for Peace, "Protect America," YouTube, posted April 2, 2026, https://youtu.be/uRoWS5_4-EM.

106 Nick Cleveland-Stout, "Mysterious 'Peace' Groups Are Sending Americans Pro–Israel Texts," *Responsible Statecraft*, Feb. 9, 2026, https://responsiblestatecraft.org/parscale-pro-israel-texts.

107 Cleveland-Stout, "Mysterious 'Peace' Groups Sending Americans."

108 Nick Cleveland-Stout and Jacqueline Sweet, "Ex–Trump Campaign Chief Funneled Millions of Israeli Government Money to His Longtime Allies' Companies," *The Intercept*, May 28, 2026, https://theintercept.com/2026/05/28/israeli-government-money-brad-parsc.

109 Ivan Raiklin (@IvanRaiklin), "Alex, In case you were wondering what @parscale (Former @realDonaldTrump Campaign Manager who is a registered Israeli Foreign Agent) deleted," X, June 16, 2026, https://x.com/IvanRaiklin/status/2066920024976085050?s=20.

110 Cleveland-Stout and Sweet, "Ex–Trump Campaign Chief Funneled Millions."

111 Cleveland-Stout and Sweet, "Ex–Trump Campaign Chief Funneled Millions."

112 Clock Tower X LLC, "Exhibit A to Registration Statement."

113 Donald Shaw, "Democratic PR Firm to Run Bot Army for Israel," *Sludge*, Sept. 15, 2025, https://readsludge.com/2025/09/15/democratic-pr-firm-to-run-bot-army-for-israel.

114 Daniel Barnes, Daniel Lippman, and Caitlin Oprysko, "SKDK Jettisons Israeli Government," *Politico*, Sept. 16, 2025, https://www.politico.com/newsletters/politico-influence/2025/09/16/skdk-jettisons-israeli-government-00567391; SKDK, "Supplemental Statement," Foreign Agents Registration Act filing, US Department of Justice, Sept. 26, 2025, https://efile.fara.gov/docs/7552-Supplemental-Statement-20250926-1.pdf.

## Winning back the pews: "This is what you've always believed"

In Feb. 2025, during a visit to Washington, DC, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made time to meet with top Evangelical Christian leaders to discuss Iran, the West Bank, and how they could exercise more influence on the Trump administration. Mike Evans, founder of Jerusalem's Friend of Zion Center, said that "there's one person on the planet right now who unites the Evangelicals globally and that's Benjamin Netanyahu. … They think the world of him and he has enormous support among Evangelicals, especially here in the US."[115]

However, notably absent from that meeting was any young Evangelical.[116] Evangelical Americans have long supported Israel politically and financially via organizations such as CUFI and the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews. Israeli politicians saw the opportunity to strengthen US support following the 1967 Arab–Israeli War — which many Evangelicals saw as the fulfillment of a biblical prophecy for Israel to control Jerusalem — and began courting leaders like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell, even gifting Falwell a private jet for personal travel.[117]

Despite decades of strong support for Israel from Christian Zionists, younger Evangelicals see it differently. A Marquette University Law School survey from Dec. 2025 found that, while 70 percent of Evangelicals over 60 support Israel, only 39 percent of those between 18 and 29 do.[118] Figure 8 details the dip in support for Israel over time among Evangelicals and Republicans, according to Pew Research polls.

As the slogan "America First" came to define the Republican party, many younger Evangelicals began to question their support for Israel, including high-profile conservative commentators like Tucker Carlson. This questioning has deepened over the course of the war in Gaza. Jonathan Brenneman, a Palestinian–American Christian and cofounder of Christians for a Free Palestine, said in an interview that younger Christians on both the left and right have broken in their support for Israel because they see the Israeli government bombing churches and killing children in some of the oldest Christian communities in the world: "Young people watched Gaza get flattened in real time while the US government, political and religious leaders continued to back Israel."[119]

Seeing this long-standing connection between Evangelical leaders and Israel start to unravel, the Israeli government sprang into action. In Sept. 2025, Israel hired a firm called Show Faith by Works on a $3.2 million contract. The initial FARA filing indicated that the firm would "geofence" the physical boundaries of major churches in the American Southwest during worship times in order to "track attendees and continue to target [them] with ads" on behalf of Israel.[120] However, the campaign was met with backlash from many Christian communities. For instance, Canyon View Vineyard Church in Grand Junction, Colorado released a statement saying the campaign was

115 Haley Cohen and Lahav Harkov, "Inside Netanyahu's Meeting with Evangelical Leaders in Washington," *Jewish Insider*, Feb. 5, 2025, https://jewishinsider.com/2025/02/netanyahu-evangelical-christian-leaders-israel-u-s-trump.

116 Cohen and Harkov, "Inside Netanyahu's Meeting."

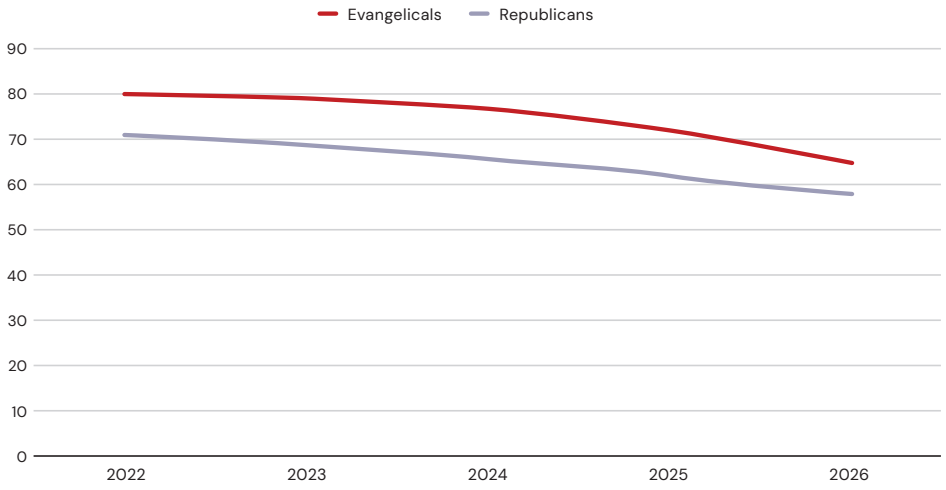
117 Deal W. Hudson, "Christian Zionism, Evangelicals, and Israel," *Crisis Magazine*, April 30, 2009, https://crisismagazine.com/opinion/christian-zionism-evangelicals-and-israel.

118 Michelle Boorstein, "Evangelicals' Support for Israel Is Dropping. 1,000 Pastors Want to Reverse That," *Washington Post*, Jan. 3, 2026, https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2026/01/03/evangelicals-israel-tucker-carlson-antisemitism.

119 Author interview with Jonathan Brenneman, May 2026.

120 Anne Nelson, "Israel Mounts Lavish Campaign to Win Back Evangelicals," *Washington Spectator*, Jan. 8, 2026, https://washingtonspectator.org/israeli-government-is-spending-millions-to-court-american-evangelicals-amid-plummeting-public-support; Show Faith by Works LLC, "Exhibit A to Registration Statement."

**FIGURE 8. Percent of US Adults Who Have a Very/Somewhat Favorable Opinion of Israel**




https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2022/07/11/american-views-of-israel/
https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2026/04/07/negative-views-of-israel-netanyahu-continue-to-rise-among-americans-especially-young-people/
https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/04/08/how-americans-view-israel-and-the-israel-hamas-war-at-the-start-of-trumps-second-term/#views-of-israel

"unsettling."[121] The Christian Life Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas urged church leaders to sign a letter to US Attorney General Pamela Bondi, calling on the Department of Justice to prohibit foreign governments from using tracking technologies to send targeted messages to worshippers in US churches without their consent.[122] A campaign website called Show Mercy and Do Likewise was created as an interfaith project to support Christians being targeted by the campaign.[123]

Chad Schnitger, who is the founder of Show Faith by Works, defended the geofencing practice in an email to the Quincy Institute:

"I've seen a lot of sensationalized reports about the geofencing, and I think it's been pretty irresponsible by the media outlets mentioning that element of the plan without doing research on what geofencing is. It is a very common marketing tool that literally every person with a smartphone in America has experienced in one way or the other."[124]

However, Schnitger later revealed that he was scrapping the geofencing campaign "due to security concerns."[125] Instead, he will be driving a mobile museum designed to bring Israel to Evangelical communities around California called The Israel Experience. Museumgoers can experience virtual reality footage of the Oct. 7 attacks, play Bible–themed games, see a mock Western Wall, and pick up bookmarks featuring quotes about Israel from boxer Floyd Mayweather, President Ronald Reagan, and the

121 "Statement on Foreign Government Advertising Campaign," Canyon View Vineyard Church, Dec. 22, 2025, http://canyonviewchurch.com/statement-foreign-advertising-campaign.

122 Paul Jeffrey, "Firm Plans to Target Churches with Pro–Israel Ads," *UM News*, Dec. 5, 2025, https://www.umnews.org/en/news/firm-plans-to-target-churches-with-pro-israel-ads.

123 "Home," Show Mercy and Do Likewise, https://www.showmercydolikewise.com.

124 Chad Schnitger, email message to author, Oct. 2025.

125 Carolina Lumetta, "Mobile Museum Carries a Zionist Message to US Evangelicals," *World News Group*, Feb. 5, 2026, https://wng.org/roundups/mobile-museum-carries-a-zionist-message-to-u-s-evangelicals-1770330225.

assassinated activist Charlie Kirk.[126] The initial FARA contract also included a plan to pitch celebrities to act as spokespeople for pro–Israel messaging and pay stipends to pastors, among other ideas.[127]

Schnitger, who is also the director of California's Freedom & Faith Coalition, said that he hopes his efforts reach young conservatives: "We have to spend a little bit of time on them. … Even in politics, you shore up your base, right? You go back to your base every once in a while and say 'Hey Christians, this is what you've always believed."[128]

Schnitger also launched a Bible study program titled Hear from Us on behalf of the Israeli government. While he denies that the project is political, the theology in the program embraces controversial views on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. For instance, the project's sample booklet displays a map of Israel that shows full Israeli control over the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Golan Heights, which are internationally recognized as Syrian land. Hear from Us also features speakers such as Chaim Malespin, a US–born Israeli army reservist who claims Palestinians "don't want to do anything but destroy Israel."[129]

Anne Nelson, author of the 2019 book *Shadow Network: Media, Money and the Secret Hub of the Radical Right*, explained in an interview that Israel's hope is to revive grassroots support for Israel at churches across the country, especially in states with sizable evangelical populations:

"They've developed some elaborate arguments to win over pastors, pulling verses about Biblical Israel from the Bible and trying to paste them over current US foreign policy. But this effort may be ill-fated, because many of their followers are looking around and saying, 'If we're really going to be America First, then there shouldn't be any exceptions.'"[130]

Parscale, the former Trump campaign manager overseeing a $46 million contract with Israel, is also tasked with shoring up support among Christians. Parscale is the chief strategy officer for Salem Media, a conservative Christian media group that boasts a vast radio network and produces high-profile shows such as the *Hugh Hewitt Show*, the *Larry Elder Show*, and the *Right View* with Lara Trump, the President's daughter-in-law. Part of Clock Tower's contract with the Israeli government is to integrate its pro–Israel messaging into Salem Media Network properties. Parscale diverted $13 million of Israeli funds to Republican digital strategy firms and allies, including over $500,000 for ads to Salem Media Representatives, a subsidiary of Salem Media.[131]

Israel also maintains a close relationship with the Trinity Broadcasting Network, or TBN, the largest Evangelical television network in the world. The Israeli government gave more than $300,000 to Sar-El Media and Production, the official representative of TBN in Israel, between June and Dec. 2025 to produce and promote a television program called *Insights*.[132] The show

126 Daniel Edelson, "Inside Israel's Push into US Megachurches with VR, Bible Stories, and a New Influence Campaign," *Ynet*, June 13, 2026, https://www.ynetnews.com/jewish-world/article/byjvfk9wze.

127 Lumetta, "Mobile Museum Carries a Zionist Message."

128 Quoted in Lumetta, "Mobile Museum Carries a Zionist Message."

129 Nick Cleveland-Stout and Connor Echols, "Israel Launches Bible Study Program Targeting US Evangelicals," Responsible Statecraft, Feb. 28, 2026, https://responsiblestatecraft.org/evangelicals-and-israel/. For more on Malespin, see the "About" section on his website at https://www.chaimmalespin.com/about.

130 Author interview with Anne Nelson, March 2026.

131 Cleveland-Stout and Sweet, "Ex–Trump Campaign Chief Funneled Millions."

132 State of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "*Hafakat tokhen lehafaka ve-hafatsa ba-reshet* TBN" ["Content production for production and distribution of the TBN network"], Accountant General form 7.8.2.1, June 8, 2025, via IL–MR at https://mr.gov.il/ilgstorefront/he/p/4000604952.

has several episodes dedicated to highlighting Israel's military, artificial intelligence, and drone industries.[133] Sar-El Media was chosen to lead the effort because of its "unique professional knowledge in addressing the Evangelical Christian audience."[134]

In Sept. 2025, the Israeli government even paid $700,000 to Eagles' Wings, a prominent New York–based Evangelical ministry, in order to host music festivals, advocacy events, and Christian influencer delegations to Israel.[135] Robert Stearns, the founder of the organization, told the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* that the most important war Israel is fighting is "the propaganda war."[136]

Israel's MFA noted in its contract with Eagles' Wings that it was funding the organization in order to prevent churchgoers and priests "from adopting pro–BDS and anti–Israeli positions." In the contract, an Israeli official conveyed that the campaign has support from high-ranking officials within the Israeli government: "The Eagles' Wings project is very important to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Director General in particular."[137]
The Israeli government also earmarked $245,000 of the funds to Eagles' Wings for Israel Advocacy Day, a week of lobbying on Capitol Hill. In 2026, such lobbying efforts reached over 100 congressional offices, a mix of both Democrats and Republicans.[138] The organization's talking points, which the Quincy Institute obtained a copy of, called for "bipartisan commitment to Israel's qualitative military edge," "robust defense cooperation and funding that enhances Israel's ability to defend itself," funding for the Iron Dome, and more.[139]

Despite its lobbying activities, Eagles' Wings is not registered as a foreign agent under FARA. Craig Holman, an ethics expert and government affairs lobbyist for Public Citizen, told *Drop Site* that Eagles' Wings "should register as a foreign agent, declare how much money they've been paid, what they're using the money for, and what offices they are lobbying on behalf of Israel."[140] Jonathan Winer, a DC–based attorney who has worked on FARA issues for decades, explained that, if an organization engages in "political activities" intended to influence the US government to change its policies, they are required to register.[141]

The Israeli government has also ramped up delegations of pastors to Israel. Last December, 1,000 Evangelical pastors flew to Israel as part of a fully funded trip backed by the MFA.[142] The faith leaders received military briefings, met with Israeli officials, and were told not to evangelize while in Israel. One megachurch pastor in Texas who was invited said that it felt "like an indoctrination trip, not ministry" after reviewing

133 "*Insights*: FULL episodes | TBN Israel," playlist, TBN Israel, YouTube, Feb. 3, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2gRfOcqelFUvxxgNmCorUHULyNAoFtF.

134 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "*Hafakat tokhen*" ["Content production"], 1.

135 State of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "*Irgun ve-hafakat knasim gdolim be-Arhab le-hafganat tmikha ve-ahada be-Yisra'el*" ["Organizing and producing large conferences in the US to demonstrate support and sympathy for Israel"], Centers Committee protocol 366/2025, Sept. 2, 2025, via IL–MR at https://mr.gov.il/ilgstorefront/he/p/4000606871.

136 Alexandra Lukash, "Evangelical Leader Brings Influencers to Israel to Counter 'Propaganda War' After Oct. 7," *Ynet*, Sept. 28, 2025, https://www.ynetnews.com/article/sjebtkl2gl.

137 Cleveland-Stout, "Prominent Christian Zionist Group Is Lobbying US Lawmakers."

138 Cleveland-Stout, "Prominent Christian Zionist Group Is Lobbying US Lawmakers."

139 Nick Cleveland-Stout (@clevleands), "I obtained a set of talking points distributed to Hill offices by Eagles' Wings," X, May 7, 2026, https://x.com/nick_clevelands/status/2052401303922381051.

140 Cleveland-Stout, "Prominent Christian Zionist Group Is Lobbying US Lawmakers."

141 Cleveland-Stout, "Prominent Christian Zionist Group Is Lobbying US Lawmakers."

142 Siam Goorwich, "Over 1,000 Evangelical Christian Pastors and Influencers Make Historic Trip to Israel," *The Jewish Chronicle*, Dec. 8, 2025, https://www.thejc.com/news/israel/over-1-000-evangelical-christian-pastors-and-influencers-make-historic-trip-to-israel-gzh9tnyr.

the itinerary.[143] The trip, which was billed as the largest group of American Christian leaders to visit Israel since its founding, generated 30,000 posts on social media, which were viewed by more than 20 million people, according to trip organizer Mike Evans.[144]

## Delegations, Times Square ads, and soft power

It is not just pastors and influencers; the MFA sees delegations as a crucial element of its hasbara efforts. In 2025, the ministry sponsored 300 delegations to Israel for 6000 participants from 70 countries.[145] A Quincy Institute analysis of Israeli procurement data shows that the MFA sponsors trips of delegations from the United States more than any other country, followed by India, Brazil, and Argentina.[146]

The ministry noted that it paid more than $52,000 to "the delegation of American influencer James Maslow."[147] Maslow, an actor and musician who was a member of the eponymous band from the 2009–13 Nickelodeon show *Big Time Rush*, is an outspoken defender of Israel. After his trip, he defended Israel's June 2025 war with Iran. "Israel isn't starting a war — it's stopping one," he wrote to his more than 2 million followers on Instagram.[148] The ministry also paid $77,000 for a delegation of influencers from Chicago to visit that July and $75,000 to a delegation of New York influencers to visit in October.[149]

A contract worth $120,000 was awarded to the Orthodox Jewish Chamber of Commerce, or OJC, in June 2025. The contract, which was awarded without tender, said that the "delegation's participants are prominent opinion leaders and influencers in the conservative media in the US, and will be able to help strengthen support for Israel and improve its image among key audiences."[150] The OJC hosted a gala that August for American journalists such as Chris Ruddy, the CEO of Newsmax, featuring speeches from Israeli government figures like Prime Minister Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Sa'ar. Netanyahu told the room full of journalists that they were part of Israel's army standing up for truth, a key cog in the eighth front: "Now we have an army. And now we fight back against our tormentors. That's why I salute Newsmax and others who stand together," said Netanyahu.[151]

Casey Michel, author of the 2024 book *Foreign Agents: How American Lobbyists and Lawmakers Threaten Democracy Around the World*, explained in an interview that such promotional events and paid junkets are particularly advantageous for foreign governments to organize because they take place in a controlled environment. "It's not like it's a single phone call or single press release or a single social media post — they are controlling by and large what these visitors see,

143 Quoted in Fares Abraham, "US Pastors Become Willing Ambassadors for Israel's War," *The American Conservative*, Dec. 14, 2025, https://www.theamericanconservative.com/u-s-pastors-become-willing-ambassadors-for-israels-war.

144 Boorstein, "Evangelicals' Support for Israel Is Dropping."

145 "2025 in numbers and moments," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Facebook, Dec. 23, 2025, https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1280151774142746.

146 "Engagement Reports Quarters 1-3, 2025," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Office, https://www.gov.il/he/Departments/DynamicCollectors/repository-of-answers?skip=0&Title=%D7%9E%D7%A9%D7%A8%D7%93%20%D7%94%D7%97%D7%95%D7%A5.

147 "Engagement Reports Quarters 1-3, 2025," Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

148 James Maslow (@jamesmaslow), "Israel isn't starting a war — it's stopping one," Instagram, June 13, 2025, https://www.instagram.com/reel/DK2vBVwPlEv.

149 "Engagement Reports Quarters 1-3, 2025," Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

150 State of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "*Mimmun kartise tisa shel mishlahat ha-mevakkeret ba-arets*" ["Financing flight tickets for a hasbara delegation visiting the country"], Centers Committee protocol no. 221/2025, June 10, 2025, via IL–MR at https://mr.gov.il/ilgstorefront/he/p/4000606784.

151 "The Eighth Front: Netanyahu Thanks Delegation of US Journalists for Supporting Israel," *Jerusalem Post*, Aug. 25, 2025, https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-865284.

hear, learn about, interact with for days, if not weeks at a time," said Michel.[152]

Israel has poured yet more of its resources into its information campaign against Iran. In April 2024, the MFA appropriated more than $300,000 for "promoting content in the Iran campaign" to the Government Advertising Agency.[153] The ministry also appropriated funds for a Persian–language spokesperson and paid contractors to do consulting work in Persian.[154]

The MFA has also sponsored several trips of Iranian exiles to Israel. During an Oct. 2024 trip, a delegation of Iranian exiles went to Israel's de facto border with the Gaza Strip and raised the pre–1979 Iranian flag in the Knesset. One Iranian–American lawyer that was part of the delegation, told *Ynet* that "not a single Iranian desires war, yet it seems our only hope for salvation lies in military intervention by Israel."[155]

Contractors stand to earn handsomely from Israel's expanding hasbara budget. The company contracted to bring the Iranian exiles in 2024, Conexión Israel–Advisory Services for Latin America, earned at least $9 million in the past two years for bringing upwards of 30 delegations from all over the world, according to Ministry of Foreign Affairs engagement data.[156]

Many contractors that bring delegations are awarded funds without tender in order to fast-track contracts. An organization called the America–Israel Friendship League was awarded $150,000 in Dec. 2025 to bring delegations of state attorneys generals, treasurers, and legislators to Israel.[157]

The MFA also directly organizes delegations for US congressional staffers. A copy of a July 2025 invitation sent to a congressional staffer obtained by the Quincy Institute shows that the trip highlights the military relationship. "Participants will also have the opportunity to meet with senior Israeli officials, as well as with experts to discuss and exchange ideas on topics of shared national interest — mainly on issues related to the Middle East — including regional challenges, defense cooperation, the Abraham Accords, Israel innovation and more," reads the invitation.

The invitations arrived in the mailboxes of congressional staffers just days before the Senate voted on a pair of resolutions to block arms to Israel, which a majority of Democrats supported.[158] "The timing and urgency were notable — they definitely wanted to get their version of events out there," a staffer invited on the trip explained on the condition of anonymity.[159]

American–led, pro–Israel organizations have been active in this space for years. Since

152 Author interview with Casey Michel, June 2026.

153 State of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "*Duah hitkashruyot, riv'on 3 li-shnat 2024*" ["Engagement report, quarter 3 of 2024"], Nov. 12, 2024, via IL–MR at https://www.gov.il/BlobFolder/dynamiccollectorresultitem/forein3_2024/he/repository-of-answers_ministry-of-foreign-affairs_forein3_2024.xlsx.

154 Prime Minister's Office, "*Rekhishat sherute hasbara ba-safa ha-Anglit ve-ha-Parsit*" ["Procuring hasbara services in English and Persian"]; State of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "*Mikhraz pumbi 13/2022: Yo'ets internet u-merhav mikvan be-Parsit, Agaf Diplomatya Tsibburit*" ["Public tender 13/2022: Internet and online space consultant in Persian, Public Diplomacy Department"], Centers Committee decision 473/2025, Nov. 25, 2025, via IL–MR at https://mr.gov.il/ilgstorefront/he/p/4000611009.

155 Itamar Eichner, "Iranian Exiles Ran to Bomb Shelters During Visit to Haifa. They Say Their Only Hope Is an Israeli Strike on Iran," *Ynet*, Oct. 9, 2024, https://www.ynetnews.com/magazine/article/r18lk84y1g.

156 The author examined engagement reports provided by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

157 State of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "*Liga la-yedidut Amerika Yisra'el: Irgun mishlahot shel mashpi'anim me-Arhab she-magi'im le-bikkur hasbara be-Yisra'el*" ["America–Israel Friendship League: An organization of delegations of influencers from the US who come on a hasbara visit to Israel"], Centers Committee protocol 290/2025, Sept. 11, 2025, via IL–MR at https://mr.gov.il/ilgstorefront/he/p/4000608002.

158 Laura Kelly, "Record Number of Senate Democrats Vote to Block Weapon Sales for Israel," *The Hill*, July 30, 2026, https://thehill.com/policy/defense/5429072-sanders-resolution-fails-israel-military.

159 Email message to author, March 2026.

2012, AIPAC has organized 1,053 trips to Israel. As of June 2026, staffers from the offices of Representatives Steny Hoyer, Democrat of Maryland, Kevin McCarthy, Republican of California, and Hakeem Jeffries, Democrat of New York, have participated in the most trips, going on 27, 19, and 12, respectively.[160] Since the Oct. 7 attacks, 26 Democratic and Republican representatives have participated in such trips. Stephen Walt, a professor of international relations at Harvard's Kennedy School and coauthor of the original "Israel Lobby" article, told the *Guardian* that these trips are a "standard tool for building support for Israel on Capitol Hill."[161]

A separate contract showed that, since 2024, the Israeli government has spent at least $159,000 running ads in New York City's Times Square.[162] The ads frequently change, but many of them have revolved around raising awareness toward the hostages taken in the Oct. 7 attacks by Hamas. One from Aug. 2025 showcased a video released by Hamas of Evyatar David, an Israeli hostage still in captivity at the time. "Hamas is starving the Israeli hostages," read the text alongside the video. "Ignored by the media too busy echoing Hamas propaganda."[163] Ofir Akunis, Israel's consul general in New York, posted on X that the ad campaign was to "fight the blood libel that Hamas is spreading about 'starvation.'"[164]

A few weeks after that billboard was unveiled, the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya said that over half a million people in Gaza were facing starvation, destitution, and death.[165]

The Center for Jewish Impact, another MFA contractor, has also run ads in Times Square. One from this May read "Free Palestine = Support Hamas = Calling for Genocide," which appeared multiple times per hour for 30 days.[166]

Facing international isolation, the Israeli government's spending has also extended to less conventional venues for public diplomacy. In 2024, the Israeli government invested more than $800,000 in advertising to promote Eden Golan, the country's candidate in the Eurovision Song Contest, in response to a grassroots campaign to exclude the country from the international musical competition. Golan ended up coming in second-place in the popular vote, which symbolized to many inside Israel that the country may not be as isolated as thought amid the war in Gaza. The *New York Times* reported that the money had come from the MFA and the National Public Diplomacy Directorate. At Eurovision in 2025, Israel employed similar vote promotion tactics, and the country finished second overall.[167]

160 These trips are organized through AIPAC's charitable organization, the American Israel Education Foundation. For more, see "Congressional Travel Explorer," University of Maryland, Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, https://cnsmaryland.org/interactives/fall-2024/congressional_travel_explorer/sponsor/18.html.

161 Jason Wilson, "AIPAC Affiliate Has Funded Lavish Trips to Israel for Dozens of Congress Members Since 7 October, Filings Reveal," *The Guardian*, June 2, 2026, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jun/02/aipac-aief-congress-israel-travel.

162 State of Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "*Pirsum sirtone hasbara Tayim Skever Niyu York: Hevrat* Neutron *2026*" ["Posting hasbara clips in Times Square, New York: Neutron Company, 2026"], Centers Committee decision no. 482/2025, Dec. 4, 2025, via IL–MR at https://mr.gov.il/ilgstorefront/he/p/4000610751.

163 Grace Gilson, "Israel Broadcasts Hamas' Video of Hostage Evyatar David in Times Square," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, Aug. 5, 2025, https://www.jta.org/2025/08/05/united-states/israel-broadcasts-hamas-video-of-hostage-evyatar-david-in-times-square.

164 Quoted in Gilson, "Israel Broadcasts Hamas' Video."

165 "Gaza's Population Systematically Being Starved to Death, Speakers Warn Security Council, Demanding Immediate Ceasefire, End to Deliberate Famine," United Nations Security Council, press release, Aug. 27, 2025, https://press.un.org/en/2025/sc16157.doc.htm.

166 "Times Square Billboard: 'Free Palestine Calls for Genocide against Jews'," *Israel National News*, June 16, 2025, https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/410117.

167 Maria Hvistendahl and Alex Marshall, "How Israel Turned Eurovision's Stage into a Soft Power Tool," *New York Times*, May 11, 2026, https://www.nytimes.com/2026/05/11/world/europe/eurovision-israel-gaza-netanyahu.html.

# Building on the Old FARA Lobby

All of this builds on Israel's preexisting lobbying operations. Though it has dramatically expanded such efforts even further in the past several months, Israel spent a whopping $185 million under FARA between 2016 and 2023.[168]

Many lobbyists at such firms are also consistent donors to American politicians, meaning that they are oftentimes simultaneously working for Israel and bankrolling American politicians. Arnold & Porter, for example, has given nearly $300,000 to political campaigns since 2023, all while registered to work for Israel.[169] Indeed, the firm that has given the largest contributions to campaigns is Holland & Knight, which has given $1.2 million since 2023 and had been working for the MFA for four years already.[170]

Altogether, since 2023, firms working for Israel have given $1.8 million to campaigns.[171] This does not imply any sort of illegality or that funds given by Israeli interests were then used for political contributions, which would be a violation of the Federal Election Commission's prohibition on foreign national contributions.[172]

The top recipients of campaign contributions from FARA–registered firms working for Israeli interests since 2023 have been Representatives Tom Cole, Republican of Oklahoma ($23,850); Mike Johnson, Republican of Louisiana ($21,000); and Rob Wittman, Republican of Virginia ($14,100).

The Israeli spyware company NSO Group has also long lobbied under FARA, spending $7.1 million between 2023 and 2025. The embattled company is infamous for its zero-click Pegasus software, which equips governments with the capability of discreetly extracting messages, contacts, and photos from a target's phone without them ever even clicking a link.[173] The Israeli government has used the export of Pegasus as a diplomatic bargaining chip, selling the spyware to authoritarian regimes such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Rwanda.[174] However, NSO Group's many controversies — including having been used to target slain Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi's family — led, late in 2021, to the United States blacklisting the company.[175]

NSO Group has spent millions to get off the blacklist ever since. After the Hamas–led Oct. 7 attack in 2023, lobbyists from the Paul Hastings law firm used the crisis to try and pitch NSO

168 "FARA Document Search," OpenSecrets. This figure is an undercount, as many of the newer Israel contracts are not yet accounted for on OpenSecrets.

169 Quincy Institute analysis of supplemental statements submitted to the Department of Justice.

170 Quincy Institute analysis of supplemental statements submitted to the Department of Justice.

171 Quincy Institute analysis of supplemental statements submitted to the Department of Justice.

172 Federal Election Commission, "Foreign Nationals," https://www.fec.gov/help-candidates-and-committees/foreign-nationals.

173 Nick Cleveland-Stout, "Israeli Spyware Company Floods Washington with Lobbyists Despite Blacklist," *Responsible Statecraft*, July 29, 2022, https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2022/07/29/israeli-spyware-company-floods-washington-with-lobbyists-despite-blacklist.

174 Kali Robinson, "How Israel's Pegasus Spyware Stoked the Surveillance Debate," Council on Foreign Relations, March 8, 2022, https://www.cfr.org/articles/how-israels-pegasus-spyware-stoked-surveillance-debate.

175 Taylor Giorno and Nick Cleveland-Stout, "Israeli Spyware Firm in Hot Water over Alleged Interest in US Data, CIA/FBI Links," *Responsible Statecraft*, Feb. 2, 2022, https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2022/02/02/israeli-spyware-firm-in-hot-water-over-alleged-interest-in-us-data-cia-fbi-links.

Group to Secretary of State Antony Blinken; "The Oct. 7 attacks on innocent civilians by Hamas terrorists and the ongoing security situation in Israel and the Middle East — and worldwide — once again highlight the necessity and urgency of employing cyber intelligence technology to prevent and investigate terrorism and other serious crimes."[176] The Israeli government joined these efforts; the Israeli newspaper *Israel Hayom* reported in April 2024 that Caroline Glick, an advisor to Netanyahu, had been lobbying the White House "to check for options for lifting sanctions on Israeli technology companies."[177]

When Trump entered the White House a second time, NSO Group was optimistic. Israeli officials and lobbyists leveraged their close relationships with officials involved in the Abraham Accords, including Jared Kushner, to try and lift the Israeli company off the sanctions list. But after failing once again, the firm soon realized it would need new ownership to operate in the United States.

In Nov. 2025, a new group of US–based investors, led by Hollywood producer Robert Simonds, acquired a controlling stake in NSO Group. The new owners named David Friedman — the US ambassador to Israel during Trump's first term — as the executive chairman of the company. Friedman, who once proposed that the United States fund Israel's annexation of the West Bank, put a stop to NSO Group's formal lobbying efforts in favor of relying on his own close personal relationship with senior Trump officials.[178] "If the administration, as I expect they'll be, is receptive to considering any opportunity that might keep Americans safer, it will consider us," Friedman told the *Wall Street Journal*.[179] As of publication, NSO Group remains on the Entity List.[180]

The Jewish Agency for Israel — an Israeli parastatal nonprofit organization that, among other things, encourages Jewish immigration to the country — is one of the largest spenders under FARA. According to its filings, the organization provides services to the Israeli government such as developing and settling Israel and coordinating "the activities in Israel of Jewish institutions and organizations active in those fields."[181]

The Jewish Agency's parent organization — the World Zionist Organization, or WZO — is also one of the largest spenders under FARA. The WZO, through its Settlement Division, helps the Israeli government establish settlements in the West Bank.[182] FARA documents show that most of the money that the organization spends goes to everyday operations, including organizing conferences, program support, and social media production.[183]

Representatives of both the WZO and the Jewish Agency were present at conversations about how to formulate Israel's new hasbara strategy in late 2024.[184]

176 Paul Hastings LLP, "Email message received by NSD/FARA Registration Unit," Foreign Agents Registration Act filing, US Department of Justice, Nov. 7, 2023, https://efile.fara.gov/docs/6743-Informational-Materials-20231107-22.pdf

177 Itay Ilnai, "How the US Led to Israel's Offensive Cyber Collapse," *Israel Hayom*, April 4, 2025, https://www.israelhayom.com/2025/04/04/how-the-us-led-to-israels-offensive-cyber-collapse.

178 Jacob Kornbluh, "Trump's Israel Adviser Suggests Diverting $1 Billion from Palestinian Aid to Fund West Bank Annexation," *Forward*, Sept. 2, 2024, https://forward.com/fast-forward/649830/david-friedman-book-donald-trump-israel-wes-bank-annexation.

179 Dov Lieber, "Israeli Spyware Maker NSO Gets New Owners, Leadership and Seeks to Mend Reputation," *Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 9, 2025, https://www.wsj.com/tech/israeli-spyware-maker-nso-gets-new-owners-leadership-and-seeks-to-mend-reputation-166ac50e.

180 International Trade Administration, "NSO Group," CSL Search, https://www.trade.gov/data-visualization/csl-search.

181 The Jewish Agency-American Section Inc., "Exhibit A to Registration Statement," Foreign Agents Registration Act filing, US Department of Justice, Oct. 29, 2013, https://efile.fara.gov/docs/6191-Exhibit-AB-20131029-1.pdf.

182 Orly Noy, "Everyone Is In on the Plunder of Palestinian Land," *+972 Magazine*, Aug. 2, 2022, https://www.972mag.com/plunder-palestinian-land.

183 World Zionist Organization – American Section, Inc, "Supplemental Statement," Foreign Agents Registration Act filing, US Department of Justice, June 30, 2025, https://efile.fara.gov/docs/2278-Supplemental-Statement-20250708-44.pdf.

184 Harkov, "Israel's Foreign Minister Is Looking for a Way to Spend $150 Million on Public Diplomacy."

# Conclusion

President Trump, in announcing the Jan. 2025 ceasefire with Gaza, said to Prime Minister Netanyahu, "Bibi, you're gonna be remembered for this far more than if you kept this thing going, going, going — kill, kill, kill." In doing so, *Haaretz* columnist Dahlia Scheindlin argued, Trump was acknowledging that "Israel's image is suffering because its *policies* are so wrong — not because its hasbara isn't good enough."[185]

Hasbara has its limitations, but the Israeli government has yet to fully reckon with this. Israeli government reports and procurement documents continue to point the finger at failed hasbara efforts rather than draw down its military activities.

Some Israeli insiders say these limitations may be due to an internal focus on delegitimizing others rather than building up Israel's legitimacy. Jacob Dallal, a former employee of Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs, warned in Jan. 2023 that official hasbara efforts relied too heavily on going "on the offensive in fighting the bad guys." Instead, he argued that Israel needs a narrative.

David Siman-Tov, a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies, one of Israel's leading think tanks, articulated Israel's continued embrace of hasbara in a piece for the *Jerusalem Post* in Nov. 2025:

"The traditional world of government spokespeople, press conferences, and embassy briefings is over. Today's arena is the battlefield of digital influence, where emotions, images, and short videos define reality — and often rewrite history. The question is no longer whether Israel is right but whether it is convincing, compelling, and relevant."[186]

Israeli political commentator Erel Segal has similarly suggested Israel should simply lie about policies. Instead of proclaiming that Israel is shutting off water to Gaza, Segal suggested ministries say "the pipe was damaged in bombings and can't be repaired" in order to avoid international scrutiny.[187]

Stephen Walt explained that this is exactly the wrong lesson. Israel's decision to double down on hasbara efforts could not only be ineffective but actually counterproductive. "Once a country gets the reputation for spinning constantly, and gets repeatedly caught making things up, then doing ever more of it just sends the message to listeners that more BS is on the way," said Walt.[188]

Today, Israel finds itself in a position of profound international isolation. A mounting Palestinian death toll, now exceeding 70,000, has eroded public support across the Western world, including among demographics — Evangelicals, conservatives, and young people — that Israel once counted as its most valuable or most reliable bases.

Israel's hasbara is in crisis mode. Many of the government's investments are short-term Band-Aids to public relations issues rather than long term investments. One contractor that organizes trips to Israel, the Center for Jewish Impact, even acknowledged that Israel is unlikely to find many friends in multilateral organizations like

185 Scheindlin, "How Israel's 'Hasbara Paradigm' Collapsed."

186 David Siman-Tov, "The Fight for Israel's Legitimacy Now Runs through Algorithms," *Jerusalem Post*, Nov. 19, 2025, https://www.jpost.com/jerusalem-report/article-874419.

187 Scheindlin, "How Israel's 'Hasbara Paradigm' Collapsed."

188 Stephen Walt, email message to author, June 2026.

the United Nations. Robert Singer, chairman of the Center for Jewish Impact, wrote in the *Jerusalem Post* in Feb. 2025 that Israel should focus more on bilateral relations instead, inviting "[r]epresentatives of friendly countries like Hungary, Bulgaria" and others to visit.[189]

To Curt Mills, the executive director of the *American Conservative*, Israel has a fleeting window of American support. "One could imagine a bounce back in some level of support if Israel becomes less salient, but I think the die is cast," said Mills. "Trump assembled a fairly unique coalition in 2024 and people did not, broadly speaking, come to the polls in 2024 to wage a new war on Iran for Israel, but that's what they got. And, of course, that is going to blood let appreciation for the vaunted US–Israel partnership."[190]

Israel's answer to this crisis has been to bet heavily on hasbara: quadrupling its public diplomacy budget, flooding American media with paid influencers, "geofencing" churches, manipulating AI chatbots, and flying 1,000 pastors to Jerusalem. But as Yaakov Katz of the Jewish People Policy Institute has argued, no amount of sophisticated messaging can substitute for coherent policy.[191]

The biggest problem with hasbara, according to Israeli journalist Anshel Pfeffer, is hasbara itself. The commitment to public diplomacy carries a fundamental belief that words matter more than action. "Hasbara means being too busy with coming up for excuses for Israel instead of asking why it's been getting so many things wrong," wrote Pfeffer.[192]

Even if the Israeli government did meet its metrics — bringing X amount of delegations to Israel, X amount of text messages sent to churchgoers, and X amount of websites created to influence AI — there is no guarantee it would change American opinion. Avi Cohen-Scali, the director-general of the Ministry for Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism, has even acknowledged he is "unsure how success" is measured for influence activities, so he resorts to metrics like content impressions.[193]

Anastasia, a Christian in Florida who used to hold pro–Israel views but moved away from them over the "brutality and dehumanization" of the Gaza war, articulated this frustration. "Just because actions can be justified doesn't mean they can be excused," she said. Anastasia, who requested the Quincy Institute only use her first name to discuss her views on the subject, was contacted by Clock Tower X as part of their text messaging campaign.[194]

"No amount of money can fully put back behind the curtain what people have seen," said Jonathan Brenneman, the cofounder of Christians for a Free Palestine.

Nicholas Cull, a professor of communication at the University of Southern California, put it bluntly in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency: "My position is that history shows all the money in the world won't help if the policy is wrong." He added: "I suspect that the government of Israel will be unable to sell its solutions to the world when so many of its own people dispute the validity of those solutions, and where the domestic consensus is wide of the international

189 Robert Singer, "Why Israel Must Shift from Global Forums to Stronger Bilateral Ties," *Jerusalem Post*, Feb. 16, 2025, https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-842091.

190 Author interview with Curt Mills, March 2026.

191 Eglash, "Israel Losing the Hasbara Battle."

192 Anshel Pfeffer, "Israel's Hasbara Is Failing. That's Good News," *Haaretz*, March 21, 2024, https://www.haaretz.com/0000018e-61b1-d66c-a7fe-65b3c7f50000.

193 Blau, "Failure by Every Conceivable Parameter."

194 Email message to author, Feb. 2026.

understanding of realities on the ground."[195]

Casey Michel, the author of *Foreign Agents*, explained that Israel's public diplomacy crisis is not a messaging issue but a policy issue. "This is a state, and a government, that has begun dedicating itself to territorial expansion through some of the most vicious means we have seen in years, and I don't know how you message that away." Michel added that Israel's failure, despite its deep investment in public diplomacy, indicates a "complete mismatch between tactics and strategy."[196]

In his interview with *60 Minutes* this May, Netanyahu was pushed on whether Israeli actions, not hasbara, should shoulder the blame for Israel losing the Gaza war's eighth front. After Netanyahu blamed Israel's setbacks in this arena on foreign government–controlled bot farms and anti–Israel sentiment on college campuses, CBS journalist Major Garrett countered: "do you believe that's the only explanation? Or is it possible that some Americans have come to a different sense of Israel because of the last two or three years organically and through their own inquiry?"[197]

Netanyahu rejected the premise. "No, I think what they see is so many falsifications and vilifications that are unfounded," he said, adding that the Gaza war had "caused a lot of damage because it was mis-presented."[198]

If failed hasbara is to blame, enough investment in influence operations could renew Israel's standing, so Netanyahu's logic goes. Troves of documents, from FARA filings and Israeli procurement orders to the words of Israeli leaders in influence, contradict Netanyahu's claim that Israel is merely fighting the eighth front with a metaphorical Polish cavalry. Israel enjoys an enormous amount of influence, especially in the United States, and the Israeli government even touts many successes; Eran Shayovich, MFA chief of staff and leader of the Project 545, wrote of that hasbara campaign's accomplishments as of Dec. 2025:

"[D]espite significant bureaucratic challenges and a war that developed on additional fronts, we've managed to work professionally and focused, recruit many partners to the project, build a proven operating doctrine, and launch quite a few successful pilots, which led to a 30 percent increase in our budget in less than half a year."[199]

In the same post, Shayovich acknowledged the limitations of the campaign: "It was clear that in nine months, it would not be possible to fundamentally change public opinion that had been diverted and misled for many years."[200]

In the medical field, there is a saying that highlights this paradox: The operation was a success, but the patient died. Israeli influence can be successful at reaching social media feeds, targeting key delegations, and reaching the pews of American churches while still failing to move public opinion, because influence operations alone cannot be a substitute for an organic shift in response to unpopular policies.

Time will tell whether this paradox rings true. Whether hasbara can save Israel's standing with its most important ally remains to be seen. Israel's bet that hasbara can reverse its fortunes is an ambitious one — but foreign lobbying has reshaped American public opinion before, and the infrastructure Israel is now building is unlike anything that it has previously deployed.

195 Asaf Elia-Salev, "Israel Just Quadrupled Its PR Budget to $730M. Experts Say It Won't Work," *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, April 29, 2026, https://www.jta.org/2026/04/29/israel/israel-just-quadrupled-its-pr-budget-to-730m-experts-say-it-wont-work.

196 Author interview with Casey Michel, June 2026.

197 CBS News, "Read the Full Transcript."

198 CBS News, "Read the Full Transcript."

199 Shayovich, "This is what history looks like."

200 Shayovich, "This is what history looks like."

# Acknowledgements

This paper benefited greatly from the conversations, insights, and feedback of Stephen Walt, Casey Michel, Ben Freeman, Marcus Stanley, Annelle Sheline, Julian Cooper, Janet Abou-Elias, and Eli Clifton.

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