

Remarks of Rep. Jerry Nadler (NY-12)
“Jews Cry Out: Let Food into Gaza Rally” Rally
New York, NY
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As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you to my Rabbi, Rabbi Roly Matalon, for that kind introduction.

Before I begin, I want to recognize all of the New York elected officials, Rabbis, Jewish organizational leaders, and other here with us. Thank you for being here.

I am honored to join you today to echo three key messages that we must demand from the Israeli government and our own government immediately: we must demand they bring the hostages home; we must demand they end the war in Gaza; and we must demand they surge humanitarian assistance to the starving people of Gaza.

As all of us know too well, October 7th was the bloodiest day in Jewish history since the Holocaust. For many of us, time stopped on that day and will not resume until every hostage returns home from brutal Hamas captivity.

I am outraged that Prime Minister Netanyahu has continued to play politics with his own citizens’ lives. Whether by sabotaging hostage negotiations or dragging out Israel’s military campaign in Gaza to prevent a long-awaited ceasefire—
Netanyahu has consistently placed his own political future above the wellbeing of the hostages and innocent civilians.

Last month, Brigadier General Asaf Agmon and Colonel Uri Arad, two former Israeli Air Force pilots, published an open letter in which they wrote, that “as the war in Gaza dragged on, it became clear that it was losing its strategic and security purposes and instead served primarily the political and personal interests of the government.”

As these former military leaders suggest, Netanyahu’s ever-changing definition of victory will never be achieved, and defeating Hamas is no longer the actual objective. In fact, 9 months ago, then-IDF Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi said that Israel had already achieved all of its military objectives and that time was ripe for an agreement to end the war. We should no longer entertain Netanyahu’s ever-shifting goalposts and constant gaslighting of the public.

Let’s be clear: the main obstacle to ending the war and bringing the hostages home is the pathologically narcissistic, monomaniacal politics of one man: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Just four months ago, the Israel Democracy Institute conducted a poll that showed nearly 75% of Israelis believe that Netanyahu should resign. The Israeli public no longer has faith in their leader, and while, as Americans, we do not vote in Israeli elections, Prime Minister Netanyahu has been clear on many occasions that he believes he represents the entire Jewish world. So, as a Jew, I say clearly that I believe that Benjamin Netanyahu is the worst leader in Jewish history since the Maccabean king who open the gates of Jerusalem to the Romans almost 2100 years ago.

In the past days and weeks, Prime Minister Netanyahu's reign has brought horrific new images to our screens. Scenes of hunger and devastation, famine and drought, displacement and disease, ruin and despair have consumed mainstream media, feeding into our 24-hour news cycle—and all of it presented as if it is breaking news.

Like many of us, I have been heartened by the scores of new voices who have spoken out as a result of this renewed focus. But let us be clear: the Gazan civilian pain, suffering, and starvation that we are all witnessing in the press is not new. Many of us have been speaking out and demanding an increase in humanitarian assistance since the beginning of the war almost 22 months ago. Six months after October 7th, I spoke at a rally not far from here in Manhattan. In my remarks I called for more humanitarian aid to Gaza, and some in our Jewish community booed. But many of us here today knew then what the world is seeing now: that additional aid was vital in the effort to prevent the crisis and disaster the world is witnessing today. We also knew then that a prolonged conflict in Gaza was a recipe for a humanitarian disaster. And today we are witnessing the consequences.

While Prime Minister Netanyahu deserves tremendous blame for the situation today, unfortunately, there is another authoritarian-aspiring leader who has made matters worse: Donald Trump.

The Trump administration's actions have substantively and significantly exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. They have done so by seeking to uproot the admittedly imperfect but nonetheless effective assistance delivery system designed and supervised by the Biden Administration, and implement its own shady and potentially corrupt organization. Trump's Gaza Humanitarian

Fund, or GHF, has been accused of heinous and abhorrent conduct. Earlier this month, two private contractors employed by GHF came forward as whistleblowers to the Associated Press. They detailed the use of live ammunition, stun grenades, and pepper spray regularly fired into crowds of desperate and hungry Palestinians at GHF aid distribution sites, resulting in injuries and deaths.

Last week, a group of over 30 democratic nations issued a statement saying the GHF's "aid delivery model is dangerous, fuels instability and deprives Gazans of human dignity." The statement cited that over 800 Palestinians have been killed while seeking aid at GHF sites. A UNICEF spokesperson added, "these are not humanitarians, they are people with guns."

All of this after the Trump State Department rushed \$30 million to GHF, waiving nine mandatory counterterrorism and anti-fraud safeguards, and overriding 58 objections from USAID staff. These objections included raising serious concerns about GHF's lack of experience, weak internal controls, and safety protocols.

I believe in an all-of-the-above approach. If the GHF can massively reform and allay all concerns of corruption, impropriety, bias, and perpetuating violence on the ground, I believe that it can theoretically be part of the assistance efforts in Gaza—but that cannot be at the cost of the well-established NGO and UN channel.

The innocent civilians of Gaza are running out of time. While bureaucrats in Washington, Brussels, Abu Dhabi, and Jerusalem discuss the problem over teleconference in air-conditioned buildings, the people of Gaza are starving.

We have a choice: we can stand up and fight against the prevailing winds further entrenching war and hunger, or we can lay back and feel the breeze pass us by—pretending we can't hear the screams of millions of innocent Gazan civilians between the rustles of the trees.

I pray that we all make the right choice.

Jewish tradition is clear about the importance of feeding the hungry among us.

Pirkei Avot 3:17 teaches us, אין תורה, אין קמה, אין קמה, אין תורה. אם אין תורה, אם אין תורה, אין קמה.

If there is no sustenance, there is no Torah. If there is no Torah, there is no sustenance.

Let us ensure that those all over the world, and especially those living under Jewish dominion, live a life where they need-not struggle to be full of sustenance, so that we all may live a life full of Torah.

Thank you.