

Jewish Trump officials distance themselves after his dinner with white supremacist

The right-wing Zionist Organization of America said that Trump 'dining with Jew-haters' was helping 'legitimize and mainstream antisemitism'



President Donald J. Trump listens to U.S. Ambassador to Israel David M. Friedman in the Oval Office on Sept. 11, 2020. Photo by Official White House Photo by Tia Dufour

By Jacob Kornbluh November 28, 2022

A number of former Trump officials have joined the broad criticism of former President Donald Trump over his recent dinner with rapper Kanye West and Nick Fuentes, one of the country's most prominent young white supremacists.

Elan Carr, former special envoy to combat and monitor antisemitism, said in a tweet Monday that “no responsible American, and certainly no former president should be cavorting” with people like Fuentes and West.

He echoed a similar call by former U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, who urged his former boss “to throw those bums out, disavow them and relegate them to the dustbin of history.”

Friedman told the *Forward* on Monday that Trump called him right after he published the tweet on Friday, which he described as a matter of “conscience.” But Friedman declined to say whether he conveyed the same message in the phone call and what was Trump’s response. “The communication is between him and me,” Friedman said.

Friedman and Carr are among 20 Jews who served in senior positions in the Trump administration.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer praised the former officials for pushing Trump “to do the right thing by condemning this vicious antisemite” in a speech on the Senate floor Monday afternoon. “Even assuming the former president didn’t realize Mr. Fuentes was coming to Mar-a-Lago, for him to refuse to condemn Fuentes and his bigoted words is appalling and dangerous,” Schumer said.

Trump has said he didn’t know about Fuentes’ background before the dinner, but has not disavowed his antisemitism or racism. West’s recent antisemitic tirades are no secret.

Fuentes attended the deadly 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, where marchers chanted, “Jews will not replace us,” and has promoted a wide range of antisemitic views and conspiracy theories on his podcast *America First*. He has denied the Holocaust and warned Jews to leave the country. West, who legally changed his name to Ye, has made antisemitic comments since 2013 and lost major sponsorships following recent anti-Jewish tirades.

Trump, who recently announced his bid for the Republican nomination for president in 2024, hasn’t posted anything on his social media platform, Truth Social, since early Monday morning

“To placate antisemitism is to promote antisemitism,” Carr said about Trump’s silence.

Elliott Abrams, a veteran Republican foreign-policy official who served two years as the Trump administration’s special representative on Iran and Venezuela, said in a statement that Trump condemning antisemitism would be insufficient. “He has done that before, but it didn’t stop him from having dinner with one of the most despicable antisemites in America,” Abrams said.

During the 2016 presidential election, Trump was sluggish to distance himself from former Ku Klux Klan grand wizard David Duke, who supported Trump and made derogatory comments about Jews who opposed him.

Jason Greenblatt, a longtime Trump aide who served as Mideast peace envoy, recalled that he felt a responsibility to go to Trump and seek clarification after watching Trump refuse to disavow Duke in an interview with CNN anchor Jake Tapper. Eventually, Trump issued a statement that “antisemitism has no place in our society.”

According to a recent book by veteran reporter Maggie Haberman, following the controversy that ensued after Trump’s “both sides” response to the deadly 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Ronald Lauder, president of the World Jewish Congress and a longtime friend and adviser to the president, urged him “to take a different tone” in speaking about the events. “Don’t go there,” Trump replied angrily.

In a CNN op-ed published Monday evening, Greenblatt said the meeting “should not have happened.” and expressed hope that Trump would condemn Fuentes, West “and their ilk for what they are — haters of Jews and haters of the foundations of the USA.”

On Sunday, the Republican Jewish Coalition called on “all political leaders to reject their messages of hate and refuse to meet with” West and Fuentes. The Zionist Organization of America, a right-wing group that honored Trump earlier this month, condemned him for “dining with Jew-haters” and helping “legitimize and mainstream antisemitism.”

Len Khodorkovsky, former deputy assistant secretary of state, said it was wrong for Trump to meet with them, but he repeatedly refused to criticize the former president. “I can tell an antisemite when I hear one, and I tell you with

confidence that President Trump is not an antisemite,” Khodorkovsky, who mentioned that he’s a grandson of Holocaust survivors, said in a heated exchange with CNN host Don Lemon Monday morning.

This post was updated to include Jason Greenblatt’s reaction.