

Jewish World

'Germany Has Changed': Jews Warn of Far-right AfD Win, Divided on CDU's pro-Israel Stance

Jews in Germany fear the AfD after it doubled its vote, reaching historic levels: 'Their denial of Germany's responsibility for the Shoah, racism, Islamophobia, and anti-immigration rhetoric is disastrous,' said a Jewish leader, while others focused on the Christian Democrats' staunch pro-Israel position



Rachel Fink

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As Germany's presumed next chancellor, Friedrich Merz began the uphill battle to build a coalition around his mainstream conservative Christian Democratic Union party, the country's Jewish establishment reacted to Sunday's election results with hope that Germany's recent political turmoil might be coming to an end.

At the same time, there is high concern over the significant gains of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which nearly doubled its support since the last vote in 2021.

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Scholz's governing coalition in November, which disbanded after Scholz dismissed his finance minister and Free Democratic Party leader amid to long-standing disagreements over economic policies.

"I am very happy that it looks like there is a stable majority for a democratic government," Gesa S. Ederberg, rabbi of the Berlin Jewish Community and founder of Masorti Germany," told Haaretz Monday.



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"Both Israel and Ukraine need a stable, trustworthy German partner within the European Union."

But like other leaders of the Jewish community, Ederberg's relief is tempered by her concern over the AfD's monumental gains, the strongest showing for a far-right party since World War II.

"I am worried and deeply concerned about the rise of the AfD," Ederberg said.

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Founded in 2013 as a populist, economically liberal and Euroskeptic right-wing party, the AfD has steadily drifted toward extremism, pushing out more moderate members in favor of an anti-immigrant agenda.

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According to an investigation by German regional broadcaster BR last year, AfD Bundestag members employ more than 100 right-wing extremists as staffers – among them neo-Nazis and members of the far-right Identitarian Movement.

Throughout this election cycle, the AfD has dominated the agenda and the polls, forcing mainstream parties to adopt stricter security and anti-asylum stances while sidelining broader social issues. Migration

dominated campaign events, fueled by attacks linked to asylum seekers.

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In recent weeks, the party's influence has extended beyond Germany, gaining high-profile supporters like [Elon Musk](#) and U.S. Vice President JD Vance, who have both met with AfD co-chair Alice Weidel. During her [conversation with Musk](#), Weidel criticized what she referred to as Germany's "insane woke-leftist-socialist" agenda. She also declared her party "the only protector of Jewish people in Germany."





Elon Musk is shown during a live video link, as Alice Weidel, AfD leader takes to the stage, during the AfD rally, in Halle, Germany, Saturday, Jan. 25, 2025. Credit: Sebastian Willnow,AP

During a recent campaign event, Musk told the enthusiastic crowd, "There is too much focus on past guilt, and we need to move beyond that."

"Children should not be guilty of the sins of their parents, let alone their great-grandparents," he went on to say.

It is precisely this type of discourse that Ederberg is so concerned about.

"Their denying of the German responsibility for the Shoah, their racism, Islamophobia and dehumanizing anti-immigration rhetoric is disastrous and does not help to face the challenges of today," she noted.



President of the Munich and Upper Bavaria's Jewish Community Charlotte Knobloch gestures as she arrives for the 61st Munich Security Conference (MSC) in Munich, southern Germany on February 14, 2025. Credit: AFP/MICHAELA

Charlotte Knoblach, the president of the Jewish Community of Munich and Upper Bavaria and a Holocaust survivor, is in full agreement. "This is a warning signal," she wrote on X. "Germany is a different country today."

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Knoblach, who has dedicated her long career to the fight against antisemitism in Germany, is especially concerned about what she says is the explosion of Jew-hatred that she has witnessed since October 7. "Fear has once again become part of everyday life for Jewish people," she wrote in her post, "This must finally stop. ... The next federal government also faces enormous challenges because of this."

After Sunday's election results, the Central Welfare Board of Jews in Germany, or ZWST, a nonpartisan social umbrella organization, is particularly worried about the threat AfD's newly found parliamentary strength poses for its most vulnerable members.

According to ZWST spokesperson Laura Cazes, Germany's small Jewish community, largely composed of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, faces specific challenges such as old-age poverty, the long-term effects of migration, and the impact of Russia's war against Ukraine, while also supporting refugees.





German police officers stand guard in front of the building complex of the Kahal Adass Jisroel community, in the center of Berlin, Germany, October 2023. Credit: Markus Schreiber /AP

"The crises of recent years have severely impacted the Jewish community, especially its vulnerable groups, highlighting the vital role of welfare structures," Cazes said in a statement. "AfD actively seeks to undermine these structures and the social state."



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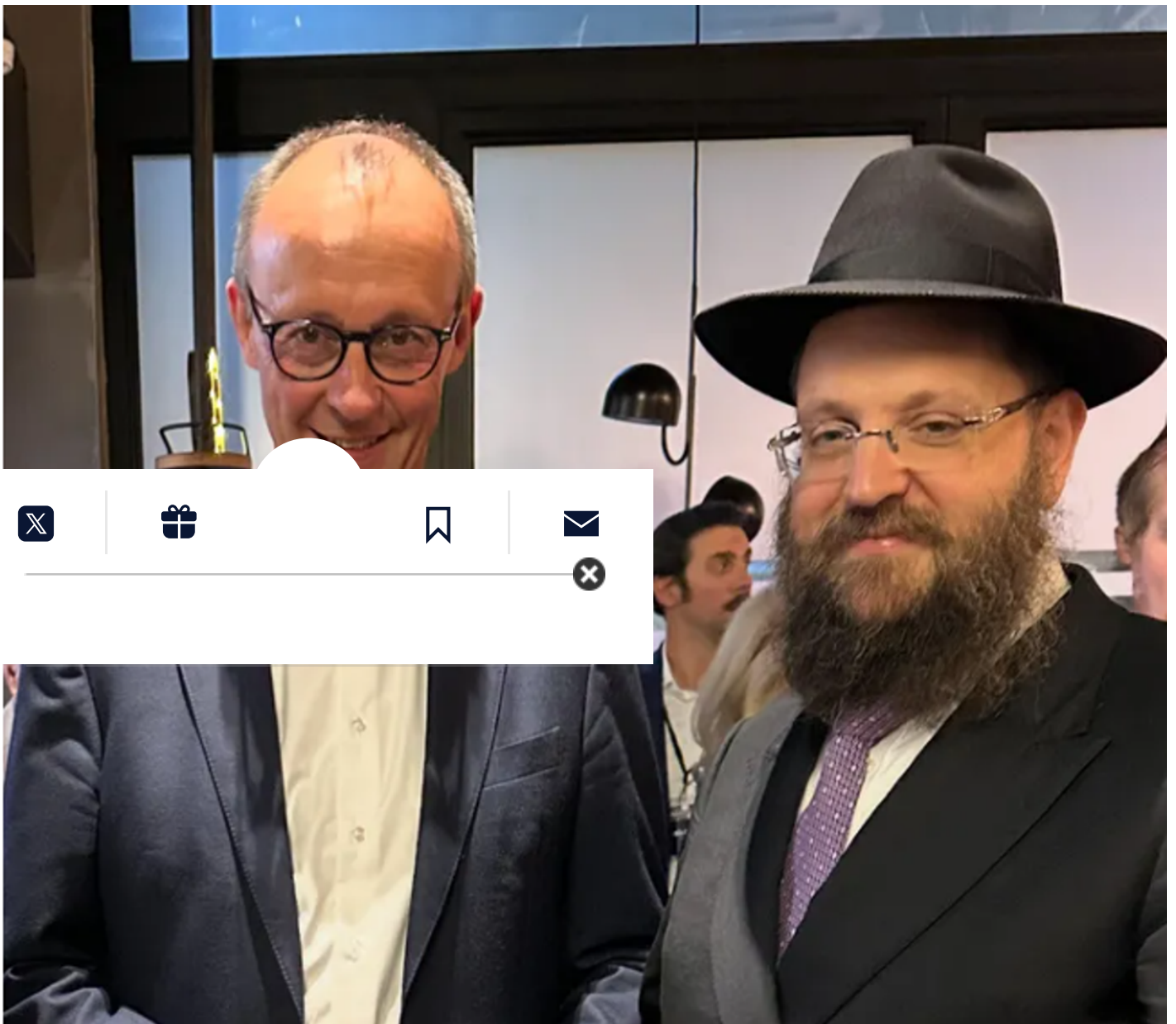
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Nor is ZWST impressed with the party's apparent [pro-Israel position](#). "The party instrumentalizes antisemitism and solidarity with Israel to spread racist and inhumane positions while simultaneously communicating revisionist historical narratives and seeking to restrict freedom of religious practice," Cazes reported.

Some locals focused instead on the actual winner, the Christian Democrats, and their staunch pro-Israel position.

Yehuda Teichtal, head rabbi and chairman of Jewish Community Chabad Berlin, offered words of congratulations and appreciation to Merz.



Rabbi Yehuda Teichtal, right, and Friedrich Merz in an undated photo. Credit: Jewish Community Chabad Berlin.

"Your friendship with the Jewish people and your unwavering support for Israel are invaluable," Teichtal said. "Your dedication to combating antisemitism and fostering a thriving Jewish future in Germany is truly commendable."

He also praised Merz's campaign pledge to remove all restrictions on arms exports to Israel and his promise to grant Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu immunity from the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court if he visits Germany.

"This support is extremely important in Israel's war against terror," the Chabad Rabbi said.



Netanyahu at a commemorative ceremony for victims of the Holocaust in Berlin, Germany, last year. Credit: Chaim Zach / GPO

But Israelis for Peace, a left-wing anti-occupation group, does not see it this way. They believe the Christian Democrats' win will further embolden Israel's current government and its attempts to block a path to Palestinian statehood, calling Merz's promise of immunity "an unprecedented blow to international law."

The group urged: "Progressive forces in Germany must stand up not only against the far-right tide in the country but also against Germany's support for Israel's extreme-right government."

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