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# There's Going To Be A Hanukkah Party At A Trump Hotel And These Jews Aren't Happy

"Everything about this event is the wrong choice."

12/06/2016 05:06 pm ET

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ANDREW CABALLERO-REYNOLDS VIA GETTY IMAGES

The National Menorah, part of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah, is seen near the White House in Washington, DC on December 10, 2015.

A national Jewish organization is co-hosting a Hanukkah party at Trump International Hotel in Washington D.C. But some Jewish leaders are not pleased with the choice.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, an umbrella organization that brings together [a diverse array of Jewish groups](#), is

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Some of the conference's 50 member organizations have criticized the decision — citing both Azerbaijan's [poor record on human rights](#) and the fact that the event will take place in a building owned by President-elect Donald Trump, whose [election coincided with a rise in anti-Semitic hate speech online](#).



GARY CAMERON / REUTERS

(L-R) Donald Trump Jr., Eric Trump, Tiffany Trump, Donald Trump, Melania Trump and Ivanka Trump attend an official ribbon cutting ceremony at the new Trump International Hotel in Washington U.S., October 26, 2016.

In a [public letter addressed to the conference's executive vice chairman Malcolm Hoenlein](#), The Workmen's Circle leaders said it was "unthinkable" that a Jewish organization would host such an event.

"Your decision to hold a 'party' with the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan implicitly legitimizes a corrupt country where freedoms have been suppressed ... President Elect Trump has consistently presented positions of intolerance of dissent, of civil liberties, and of religious freedom," Workmen's Circle president Peter Pepper and executive director, Ann Toback wrote. "In the years to come, Jews in America are going to be regularly tested to make the right choices, and this clearly is not one of them. Everything about this event is the wrong choice."

Hoenlein defended the party to the [The New York Times](#), saying that the venue choice was made by the Azerbaijani Embassy and that that the venue choice was one of the only places in the area that would accommodate a kosher reception. It was [also close to the White House](#), making it easier for many on the guest list to attend President Barack Obama's last Hanukkah party, which is scheduled to take place later that same evening.

"It was done purely on a pragmatic basis," Hoenlein told [The Washington Post](#). "The reasoning behind it was nothing to do with the Trump name."

But leaders at The Workmen's Circle aren't satisfied. In a statement made to

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participate in the event. Should the location and co-sponsor change, we will reconsider our attendance.”

Nancy Kaufman, CEO of the National Council of Jewish Women, told The Huffington Post her organization will not be attending the event, for the same reasons as The Workmen’s Circle.

“Hanukkah is a time when we talk about religious freedom and ... fighting against religious intolerance,” Kaufman said. “I think it’s a bit of an unfortunate message.”

The Union for Reform Judaism, by far the [largest Jewish denomination in America](#), also told The Huffington Post that they will not be sending a representative to the party.

“This decision is tone deaf at best, naked sycophancy at worst,” URJ president Rabbi Rick Jacobs said in a statement. “If the Conference is having that much trouble finding a non-political location, the URJ’s conference staff would be delighted to help.”

Although American Jews [overwhelmingly favored Democratic candidate](#) Hillary Clinton to Trump, there has been some division among the community about how to respond to Trump’s election and to the people he’s been choosing as advisors. Some organizations — including the URJ — have been [critical about the president-elect’s choice](#) of [Steve Bannon](#) as chief strategist, claiming that Bannon gave white nationalists and anti-Semites a platform while he was head of Breitbart News. Others are choosing to stay silent, or waiting to see how Trump performs.

Reports of [anti-Semitic](#), [Trump-inspired](#) vandalism and [propaganda](#) have popped up in several places across the country — including in [schools and universities](#). [Jewish journalists](#) say there’s been a spike in [anti-Semitic abuse online](#) this election cycle.

Hoenlein told The Washington Post that he sees no problem with the Azerbaijani Embassy’s choice of venue.

“What are you going to do, boycott the next president of the United States in everything?” he asked.

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