

France summons US Ambassador Kushner over claim its call for Palestinian state is antisemitic

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25 August 2025

Yesterday, the French Foreign Ministry summoned billionaire convicted felon and US Ambassador to France Charles Kushner to protest his remarks condemning the French government's statement of support for the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Kushner, the father of President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, denounced this statement for allegedly inciting antisemitic violence. In a letter to French President Emmanuel Macron published in the *Wall Street Journal*, Kushner wrote: "Public statements haranguing Israel and gestures toward recognition of a Palestinian state embolden extremists, fuel violence, and endanger Jewish life in France. In today's world, anti-Zionism is antisemitism—plain and simple."

Kushner's comment exposes the reactionary content of the attempt to falsely equate opposition to Israel's Zionist regime with antisemitism. It means criminalizing opposition to genocide, charging any statement of support or sympathy for the Palestinian victims of the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza with being antisemitic. This includes even entirely empty statements by the French government—a close ally of the Israeli regime that has, like Washington, pursued a criminal policy of arming Israel during the genocide.

Kushner's column epitomizes the semantic inversion of the term "antisemitism" being carried out by supporters of the Israeli regime. After the Nazi Holocaust of European Jewry, calls to oppose antisemitism were bound up with left-wing opposition to Nazism, military aggression, racial hatreds and police-state dictatorship. Kushner's column in the *Wall Street Journal*, in contrast, was an unabashed call on the French government to build a fascistic dictatorship.

Kushner held up as examples Trump's illegal acts of military aggression in the Middle East, his attacks on freedom of speech and freedom of opinion, and his mass deportations of foreign students opposed to the Gaza genocide.

Trump, Kushner wrote, "ordered strict vetting to bar entry for foreigners espousing antisemitic hatred and revoked visas for foreign agitators. He oversaw the deportation of Hamas sympathizers and cut funding to organizations promoting antisemitic incitement. And by crippling Iran's nuclear-weapons program, he struck directly at the world's leading state sponsor of antisemitism and terror and saved millions of lives. These measures prove that antisemitism can be fought effectively when leaders have the will to act."

"Mr. President, I urge you to act decisively," Kushner wrote to Macron, concluding: "As US ambassador to France, I stand ready to work with you and with leaders across French society to forge a serious plan that addresses the roots of antisemitism and defeats it."

The French Foreign Ministry issued a statement condemning Kushner's column and summoning him to its offices on the Quai d'Orsay to receive a formal diplomatic protest. Describing Kushner's column as an accusation that there is "a supposed lack of sufficient action by French authorities to combat" antisemitism, the French Foreign Ministry statement declared:

The ambassador's allegations are unacceptable. They violate international law, in particular the obligation not to intervene in the internal affairs of other states specified by the Vienna Convention of 1961 that governs

diplomatic relations. They are moreover not up to the standard of quality for the trans-Atlantic bond between France and the United States or of the confidence that must flow from it between allies.

The French Foreign Ministry's summoning of the US ambassador to deliver a protest amounts to official confirmation that an unprecedented crisis in US-French relations is underway. Indeed, since the end of the Nazi occupation of France in World War II, France has never summoned the US ambassador to France to protest. Moreover, the US government's contemptuous response to the French summons of Kushner makes all the more clear the collapse in US-French relations.

Washington first issued a statement solidarizing itself with Kushner's statement and making clear that Kushner was speaking in line with US policy. "We stand by his comments," said US State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott. "Ambassador Kushner is our US government representative in France and is doing a great job advancing our national interests in that role."

Then, in a rare gesture calculated to inflame tensions, Kushner refused to heed the French summons to the Quai d'Orsay—sending a lower-ranking diplomat, the chargé d'affaires at the US Embassy in Paris, Karen Enstrom, in his place. Enstrom met with two French diplomatic officials, one tasked with security affairs and another with American and Caribbean affairs, who reportedly stated that Kushner's statement unacceptably interfered in French internal affairs.

Whether or not the French Foreign Ministry ultimately decides to declare Kushner persona non grata and expel him from France on this basis, the Trump administration has clearly set out to provoke and stoke a diplomatic incident with France.

This incident comes amid an accelerating collapse of economic and diplomatic relations between the United States and the European imperialist powers. It follows Trump's decision to unilaterally slap trade war tariffs on all European Union (EU) exports to the United States. At the same time, Washington-Paris tensions are mounting as Washington seeks to pivot towards wars targeting Iran and China, while the European powers call to continue the NATO war with Russia in Ukraine.

Trump's decision to name a financial criminal like Kushner ambassador to France is not the least provocative action taken in this diplomatic crisis. A billionaire real estate developer, Kushner was convicted and disbarred as an attorney on charges of making illegal campaign contributions, tax evasion and witness tampering. Kushner tried to block his brother-in-law William Schulder's cooperation with federal investigators against Kushner by hiring a prostitute to seduce Schulder, taping the encounter, and sending the tape to his sister.

Kushner served 14 months of a 2-year prison sentence in 2005-2006. He received a full pardon from Trump, whose daughter Ivanka is Kushner's daughter-in-law, at the end of Trump's first term, on December 23, 2020.

However criminal the character of the Trump administration's policy, Macron does not in any way represent an alternative or have a less reactionary policy towards Israel and Gaza. It is not only that all the major European powers, including France, Germany, Britain, Italy and Spain, sent weapons to arm Israel as it bombed, murdered and starved tens of thousands of defenseless Palestinian civilians. Macron also championed the use of false claims that opposition to the Zionist regime in Israel is inherently antisemitic to investigate, arrest and fine opponents of the genocide.

Stopping the Gaza genocide and the escalating spiral of imperialist wars requires building an international movement in the working class against all the imperialist governments arming and funding Israel, both in America and Europe. The wave of strikes set to begin next month against Macron's social cuts amid mounting working class opposition to austerity across Europe, like the mass social anger in America that underlay the "No Kings" protests against Trump earlier this year, must be taken as a starting point for the construction of such a movement.



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