

# ELISE STEFANIK

IMPACT: Elise Stefanik is a Republican congresswoman from New York. Initially entering politics as a moderate, Stefanik has rebranded herself and become a staunch supporter and defender of President-elect Donald Trump. She has a history of propagating anti-Palestinian narratives and has supported legislation targeting pro-Palestinian voices. She has also allied with organizations known for promoting Islamophobic and anti-Palestinian views, and has called for defunding entities like UNRWA, labeling it as a “terrorist front.” In 2024, President-elect Trump selected Stefanik to serve as the US Ambassador to the UN.

- In **2014 at the age of 30, Ms. Stefanik won her House seat by running as a “model moderate millennial”** and eventually secured seats on the Armed Services and Intelligence Committees. A 2021 TIME piece noted that Stefanik was a prominent member of the moderate Tuesday Group, a caucus of center-right Republicans.
- In 2015, Stefanik spoke to North Country Public Radio about her preference for working within the moderate Tuesday Group, calling it “more of the governing caucus within the Republican Party” that sought “to avoid these crises, avoid this internal squabbling for the sake of the American people, for the sake of more certainty in governing”. **In a 2021 piece for TIME, Charlotte Alter wrote that Stefanik was known for a bipartisan spirit— “every Democrat’s favorite Republican,” as one former aide to GOP leadership recalls.**
- **Before becoming a staunch supporter of Donald Trump, Stefanik had criticized him on numerous occasions.** In the early days of President Trump’s first term in office, Stefanik had criticized him on everything from his anti-Muslim comments to his policy positions.
- In an August 2015 radio interview, Stefanik said that Trump had been “insulting to women”, referring to Trump’s misogynistic comments about former Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly. Stefanik stated: “We need to ensure that we’re increasing our party’s ability to reach out to women...and Donald Trump’s comments have not helped that effort. They’ve hurt that effort”.
- In February 2016, while talking to the Press-Republican newspaper in her district, Stefanik said she disagreed with Trump’s proposal to build a wall at the southern border. Stefanik opposed the policy, stating that it was not “realistic.” She instead proposed using “technology to have better security along the Mexican border.” Stefanik went on to note that, “securing the border has been a political talking point for the past 10 to 12 years, and there hasn’t been enough kind of common-sense discussions about what that actually means.” During Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign, Stefanik criticized other Trump policy plans including his military proposals, which she said was “absolutely not a good idea.”
- In 2015, as a presidential candidate, **Trump proposed to ban Muslims from entering the country. A month later in a radio interview, Stefanik stated: “I don’t agree with everything that every candidate has said. I’ve certainly pointed out certain statements by Mr. Trump, especially related to not allowing Muslims into the country. I don’t think that’s who we are. That’s not according to our constitutional principles.”**
- In August 2016, Stefanik criticized Trump for attacking Khizr Khan, a Muslim speaker at the 2016 Democratic National Convention whose son was a captain in the US Army and killed during the war in Iraq. In an August 2016 Post-Star piece, Stefanik said, “I think there is no excuse to be attacking Gold Star families” and “military families deserve our utmost respect.” Stefanik also noted that while she would always support the GOP nominee, she is still “an independent voice and that has not changed.”
- In response to President Trump implementing the first iteration of the Muslim Ban in January 2017, Stefanik stated, “I believe we need to work in Congress to reform and strengthen our visa vetting process, however, I oppose President Trump’s rushed and overly broad executive order. Stefanik added, “I

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associate myself with Speaker (Paul) Ryan's comment just saying there is no place for what Trump said about Muslims in this country."

- **Despite her initial rise as a moderate conservative, Stefanik has moved considerably towards the right, aligning herself with President Trump during his first term in office.** Stefanik, who was appointed to Trump's impeachment defense team, became a passionate supporter, gaining positive coverage on Fox News. **A former Republican Congressman familiar with her said "She became a darling of the right and an enemy of the left, and she just decided to own that and monetized it."**
- In a **February 2020 *Politico* piece, reporters Melanie Zanona and Ally Mutnick noted that Stefanik's shift to the right coincided with the "impeachment-related fundraising jolt,"** where key lawmakers were able to raise record funds after publicly defending President Trump during his impeachment. Zanona and Mutnick revealed that in the last quarter of 2019, Stefanik raised "\$3.2 million—a seven-fold increase from the previous quarter's haul—making her the second-highest fundraiser in the House".
- According to data compiled by Open Secret, a nonprofit organization that tracks campaign finance and lobbying, **Stefanik's campaign donations steeply increased from \$2.8 million in her 2018 race to \$13.3 million in 2020 when she began to openly align with Trump's MAGA agenda. In May 2022, she publicly stated: "I am ultra-MAGA. And I'm proud of it."**
- **She strongly opposed the first impeachment of then-President Donald Trump in 2019 and supported his attempts to overturn the 2020 presidential election.** In December 2020, one month after the election, she appeared on Newsmax and echoed conspiracy theories about the election, stating, "We need to make sure that every vote is counted. But we also need to highlight any of the irregularities. I have concerns about the software, the fact that Dominion software ..." This comment referred to a false claim that Dominion, the voting machine company, helped rig the election against Trump. Trump's Department of Homeland Security itself confirmed there was no evidence of compromised voting systems.
- On January 4, 2020, Stefanik posted a video on X where she said that "tens of millions of Americans are rightly concerned that the 2020 election featured unprecedented voting irregularities" and added that Americans are right to be concerned about "a fundamental lack of ballot integrity and ballot security."
- In December 2020, Stefanik was among a group of more than 100 House Republicans who supported the Supreme Court lawsuit to overturn the election results. Stefanik was one of 126 Republicans who signed an amicus brief to consider rejecting election results in Michigan, Pennsylvania, Georgia and Wisconsin.
- On January 6th 2021, during a speech on the House floor following the attack on the Capitol by a mob of Trump supporters, Stefanik stated, "Tens of millions of Americans are concerned that the 2020 election featured unconstitutional overreach by unelected officials and judges, ignoring state election laws." In 2021, she replaced former Republican Liz Cheney as a conference chair after Cheney was ousted for her criticisms of Trump following the January 6 insurrection. In June 2023, Stefanik also introduced a resolution that sought to expunge both of Trump's impeachments by the House.
- **In terms of immigration, Stefanik mirrors Trump's view. In October 2024, speaking during Trump's presidential campaign, Stefanik warned Americans against illegal immigrants referring to them as "illegals swarming our streets" and blamed Democrats for "kneecapping" the police.** A May 2022 piece in The Washington Post stated that Stefanik also echoed the great replacement conspiracy theory, a far-right antisemitic and Islamophobic ideology. The Post article stated that in September 2021, Stefanik's campaign committee had published a series of Facebook ads "that charged that Democrats were allowing undocumented immigrants into the United States as a ploy to

outnumber, and eventually silence, Republican voters.” In the Facebook ads, Stefanik accused Democrats of plotting “permanent election insurrection by granting amnesty to millions of illegal immigrants.”

- In January 2022, Stefanik and Senator Rick Scott along with over 100 of their colleagues, sent a letter to the Department of Homeland Security to conduct a review of the decisions by the Biden Administration. **Stefanik blamed the Biden administration for the increase in undocumented immigrants stating it was due to his pausing “deportations for millions of illegal immigrants” and halting the “construction of the border wall.”**
- On March 1st, 2022, Stefanik, who once criticized Trump’s plan to build a wall along the U.S-Mexico border, tweeted: “ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION has skyrocketed under Joe Biden’s watch. 2 MILLION illegal immigrants have been apprehended at our southern border since Joe Biden has been in office. Secure the border now and FINISH THE WALL”.
- **After the October 7th, 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel and Israel’s subsequent ongoing bombardment and war in Gaza, Stefanik became one of the most outspoken supporters of Israel in Congress.** In 2024, Stefanik played a leading role in organizing Congressional hearings on antisemitism on US College campuses. **As Stefanik has spoken out against antisemitism, she has smeared pro-Palestine supporters by propagating the discriminatory narrative that Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims harbor antisemitic sentiments.**
- During the December 2023 congressional hearing on “Holding Campus Leader Accountable and Confronting Antisemitism”, Stefanik questioned Liz Magill, the President of the University of Pennsylvania (UPENN), asking if “calling for the genocide of Jews violates Penn’s rules or code of conduct.” Stefanik’s line of questioning led to increased criticism and calls for resignations for the presidents of MIT, UPenn, and Harvard. A few days after the hearing, Liz Magill resigned amid pressure from donors and critics. Responding to Magill’s resignation, Stefanik wrote on X, “One down. Two to go.”
- In a **June 2024 *Slate* piece, journalist Emily Tamkin argued that Stefanik portrayal of herself as a “protector of Jews” has been done “because it serves her political ends.” Tamkin states that “Stefanik has, for years now, consistently pushed and defended antisemitic rhetoric. This is to say that though she presents herself as a champion against antisemitism, in reality, Stefanik is spreading it.”** Tamkin pointed to Stefanik’s embrace of the great replacement theory, promotion of conspiracy theories against George Soros, and her support of Trump who has “regularly denounce[d] Jews who don’t vote for him,” as evidence of Stefanik’s antisemitic rhetoric. Tamkin concluded that “the fight against antisemitism has evidently helped Stefanik raise money. It has helped raise her political profile.”
- **Since Israel’s war in Gaza began in 2023, Stefanik has co-introduced bills targeting pro-Palestine student encampments, which sprung up across the country by students protesting the war.** UN experts, the International Court of Justice, and numerous human rights experts and organizations have found that Israel has violated international humanitarian law and is committing genocide in Gaza. Stefanik has described pro-Palestine student encampments as “anti-Israel.”
- In July 2024, Stefanik co-introduced the No Tax Dollars for College Encampments Act which, if passed, would mandate that universities receiving federal funds disclose the measures it takes to respond to incidents of civil disturbance such as student encampments occurring on the campus. The bill was an attempt to stifle pro-Palestine voices on college campuses.
- **Stefanik labelled pro-Palestine protests as antisemitic on the grounds that they were critical of Israel.** She has repeatedly claimed that the slogans “from the river to the sea” were equivalent to calls for genocide. However, academics and experts have debunked this claim. Nimer Sultany, a professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), said the slogan expresses “the need for equality for all inhabitants of historic Palestine.” Sultany continued that the attempt to frame the slogan as antisemitic is

“an attempt by Zionists and pro-Israeli propagandists to collapse the distinction between the existence of Israel as a state and the ideological apparatus of Jewish supremacy.” In November 2023, Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, from Michigan, [tweeted](#): “[‘From the river to the sea’ is an aspirational call for freedom, human rights, and peaceful coexistence, not death, destruction, or hate.](#)” She further warned that conflating anti-Israel sentiment with antisemitism “[silence\(s\) diverse voices speaking up for human rights.](#)”

- **On May 19, 2024, Stefanik addressed the Israeli Knesset, the legislative branch of the Israeli government, in which she framed Israel’s war in Gaza as a war between good and bad.** Stefanik repeated misinformation, by [stating](#): “Raped — Beheaded — Jewish families were bound together and burned. Babies burned alive.” Claims of beheaded babies were circulated by news outlets in the early stages of the ongoing war in 2023. This claim was later debunked as the [Israeli government could not verify](#) it. Through forensic analysis, Al-Jazeera’s Investigative Unit (I-Unit) team [concluded](#) that claims that IDF soldiers found eight burned babies were false. The analysis further [found](#) that there were no babies burned, and the 12 people inside the house were almost certainly killed by Israeli forces when they stormed the building.
- **According to the House member/officer post-travel disclosure form published by the House Committee on Ethics, Stefanik’s visit to Israel was paid for by the Jewish Policy Center, whose board of fellows includes individuals identified as anti-Muslim by the Southern Poverty Law Center.** The organization [spent almost \\$48,000 on the trip](#). One member of the Board of Fellows is [Daniel Pipes](#), the president of the right-wing, anti-Islam think-tank, the [Middle East Forum](#). Pipes was listed as one of the five experts on anti-Muslim misinformation by the Center for American Progress in its 2011 report [Fear, Inc.](#) on the roots of Islamophobia in America.
- **In her address to the Knesset, Stefanik stated that “what we are witnessing today is a story of the forces of good versus evil. The forces of civilization against the forces of barbarism, of humanity versus depravity.** For years, I have been a leading proponent and partner to President Trump in his historic support for Israeli independence and security including... President Trump’s wise decision to call out UNRWA for what it is — a hive of anti-Semitism — and to eliminate every dollar of its US funding.” **By characterizing the conflict as one between civilization and barbarism, Stefanik’s rhetoric dehumanizes Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims and reinforces harmful orientalist and racist stereotypes, insinuating that Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims are barbaric and uncivilized.**
- In her speech, Stefanik also called for the withdrawal of US funds from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). **According to a November 2024 Guardian piece, Stefanik described UNRWA as a “terrorist front” and “ Hamas infiltrated.”** This claim came after Israel accused [12 of UNRWA’s employees of being allegedly involved](#) in the October 7th Hamas attack. In response, UNRWA [immediately fired](#) 10 of the employees with the other two confirmed dead. In August 2024, the UN Office of Oversight Services (OIOS), the highest investigative body in the UN system, completed its investigation and UN Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq, stated: “In one case, no evidence was obtained by OIOS to support the allegations of the staff member’s involvement, while in nine other cases, the evidence obtained by OIOS was insufficient to support the staff members’ involvement.”
- In **February 2024, Stefanik urged the Biden Administration to pause UNRWA’s funding, revoke its tax-exempt status, and immediately conduct rigorous oversight after Israel claimed that Hamas ran an underground tunnel beneath the UNRWA headquarters in the Gaza Strip. This claim was refuted by UNRWA.** The aid agency said it had ‘[no knowledge](#)’ of areas beneath its [headquarters in Gaza](#). Stefanik also introduced the [Uncovering UNRWA’s Terrorist Crimes Act](#), aimed at blocking U.S. taxpayer dollars from supporting UNRWA and mandating a detailed report on the total amount of funding the Biden-Harris Administration has provided to the organization.

- In a [statement](#) released in November 2024, Stefanik advocated to permanently cut off funding for UNRWA claiming that the agency “instills antisemitic hate in Palestinians” and “houses weapons for terrorists”.
- In **March 2024, Stefanik was awarded the [Dr. Miriam and Sheldon G. Adelson Defender of Israel Award](#) by the Zionist Organization of America, [described by the Council on American-Islamic Relations as “a racist, anti-Muslim extremist group.”](#) When accepting the award, Stefanik [said](#): “Anyone that does not stand with our ally Israel, stands for their genocide. Any campus leader that refuses to protect Jewish students, stands with the pro-Hamas criminals who harass and assault them.”**
- In **November 2024, President-elect Trump selected Stefanik to serve as the US Ambassador to the United Nations.** In his statement, Trump [said](#), “I am honored to nominate Chairwoman Elise Stefanik to serve in my Cabinet as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Elise is an incredibly strong, tough, and smart America First fighter.” **According to a November 2024 [CNN piece](#), Stefanik’s appointment signalled “a more combative US posture toward the UN”. A November 2024 [BBC piece](#) noted that Stefanik “[has minimal experience in foreign policy and national security](#)”.**
- **Stefanik has criticized the UN on multiple occasions due to the UN’s criticism of Israel, calling the organization [antisemitic, immoral and biased](#).** In October 2024, after the Palestinian Authority tried to expel Israel from the UN over human rights abuses in Gaza, Stefanik [argued](#) that there should be a “complete reassessment of US funding of the United Nations.”
- In **November 2024, Stefanik was honored with the [Rays of Light in the Darkness Award](#) by the Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET), a pro-Israel think tank. [According to a 2011 NBC News article](#), EMET is also a “policy shop that specializes in educating policy-makers and their staff regarding the threat radical Islam poses to Western world, and how Israel is on the frontlines in this battle.”** While accepting the award, Stefanik [described](#) the UN as “a den of antisemitism.” adding that “ever since and even before the barbaric terrorist attacks [from] Hamas on Oct. 7, the UN has continuously betrayed Israel and betrayed America, acting as an apologist for Iran and their terrorist proxies.”
- Stefanik's appointment as the UN secretary has been met with concerns by American Muslim organizations. **Edward Ahmed Mitchell, the Deputy Executive Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), [criticized](#) the nomination “given her hostility towards free speech and human rights” and encouraged President-elect Trump to pick foreign policy officials who will prioritize “American interests over the interests of any foreign government.”**
- Stefanik’s appointment as the UN Secretary has been criticized as she lacks the appropriate foreign policy expertise needed to succeed in the role. As Hayes Brown [wrote](#) in a November 2024 MSNBC piece, Stefanik’s sole contribution to foreign affairs has only been her extremely vocal support of Israel as it continues its ongoing war against Gaza.