

Madrid offers to partner with Tel Aviv after Barcelona severs ‘twin city’ ties

The offer comes after Barcelona’s mayor broke a 25-year partnership, citing Israeli “apartheid.”



Cybele Palace, the Madrid City Hall, on Cibeles Square with the Cibeles Fountain, Spanish and EU flags in foreground. (Getty Images)

[Orge Castellano](#), *Forward*

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MADRID ([JTA](#)) — When one puerta closes, another puerta opens — or at least that’s how Tel Aviv may be feeling, after Madrid offered to replace Barcelona as its Spanish twin city.

Barcelona's mayor, Ada Colau, [cut ties with Tel Aviv](#) on Wednesday, citing what she said was "apartheid" in Israel. On Thursday, Madrid's mayor, José Luís Martínez-Almeida, offered to step up as a replacement.

In a letter to Tel Aviv Mayor Ron Huldai and during a press conference on Thursday, Martínez-Almeida said the twinning is a "great opportunity to show Madrid's commitment to strengthening relations with a democratic and a law-abiding state like Israel."

Twin or sister cities typically collaborate on tourism and economic enterprises. Barcelona launched two initiatives last year to draw Jewish and Israeli tourists, and city officials visited Tel Aviv to learn about the tourism industry there. But [data from the Madrid government shows](#) that in 2021, Madrid was the Spanish region that attracted the most investment from Israel, receiving 60% of Israeli capital invested in Spain.

Martínez-Almeida criticized the Barcelona city council's decision to sever ties with Tel Aviv after 25 years as twin cities. Barcelona paired with the Gaza Strip at the same time in 1998.

"We will not promote, encourage or allow behavior such as this, which has a clear antisemitic overtone and has no place," he said.

The president of the Community of Madrid, Isabel Diaz Ayuso, a member of the conservative People's Party, will visit Israel next week with the goal of strengthening trade relations and demonstrating Madrid's capacity to attract investors and boost projects, the Spanish newspaper El Mundo [reported](#).

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