



BROOME COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sheriff Frederick J. Akshar II

Undersheriff Sammy L. Davis

155 Lt. Van Winkle Drive, Binghamton, NY 13905

For Immediate Release:

August 5, 2025

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BROOME COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE PRESS RELEASE

Statement from Sheriff Fred Akshar

"In the days following the unprovoked and horrific mass murders perpetrated by Hamas that took place on October 7, 2023, leaving over 1,200 Israelis dead and 250 abducted, I as Broome County's 58th Sheriff and on behalf of the Broome County Sheriff's Office, made a firm, public display of support by proudly raising the Israeli flag - a decision to unapologetically show our solidarity for our Jewish community members in their time of nightmarish tragedy.

Similar public displays were made in the City of Binghamton and by New York State Governor Hochul, who traveled to Israel to deliver her message of support and solidarity on behalf of New Yorkers. Both the Ukrainian and Israeli flags have flown underneath the United States flag at the Broome County Sheriff's Office over the past the year and a half as symbols of comfort and support for our community members affected by these ongoing and heart-wrenching conflicts.

Our support for our Jewish and Ukrainian community members remains unwavering, but the legal question of whether the Israeli or Ukrainian flags can be flown at the Sheriff's Office has recently been posed. As we've done from the start, we have made every effort to take a measured and pragmatic approach to our decision making, and we requested a legal opinion from the Broome County Attorney's Office on Public Buildings Law Section 141, which states, "It shall not be lawful to display the flag or emblem of any foreign country upon any state, county or municipal building..."

Our Broome County Attorney's Office was unable to locate a precedent in existing case law that adequately clarifies whether "upon a municipal building" applies to the flag poles outside of the Broome County Sheriff's Office Administration Building or simply the building itself.

They found that the law itself dates back to 1895, with the goal at that time to prevent the mayor of New York City from flying the Irish flag over City Hall for St. Patrick's Day because of the high tensions between the Irish and British people in the County and State.

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Given this legal ambiguity and based on the recommendation of our Broome County Attorney's Office, we've ordered that the flag be taken down from the flagpole outside the Broome County Sheriff's Office.

Make no mistake: Our support remains unwavering and continues not through symbolism, but through action. No political stunts or grandstanding will ever influence our decision to do what's right. I remain unfazed and steadfast in my principles and commitments to the people of this great community, no matter how strong the ever-changing political winds blow or how loud any foes may yell. Flag or no flag, our commitment to the safety and security of our Jewish friends and neighbors, let alone to the safety and security of all of our Broome County residents, no matter their race, religion, ethnicity or creed, remains unchanged.

At a time when antisemitic violence and rhetoric has been on the rise across our country, the Broome County Sheriff's Office will always proudly stand against hate, and we will always proudly stand in solidarity and in support of our local Jewish friends and neighbors in Broome County, along with their collective right to exist free of hate-fueled violence in our community."

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