

JIMENA: Jews indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



JIMENA



Sarah Levin,
Executive Director

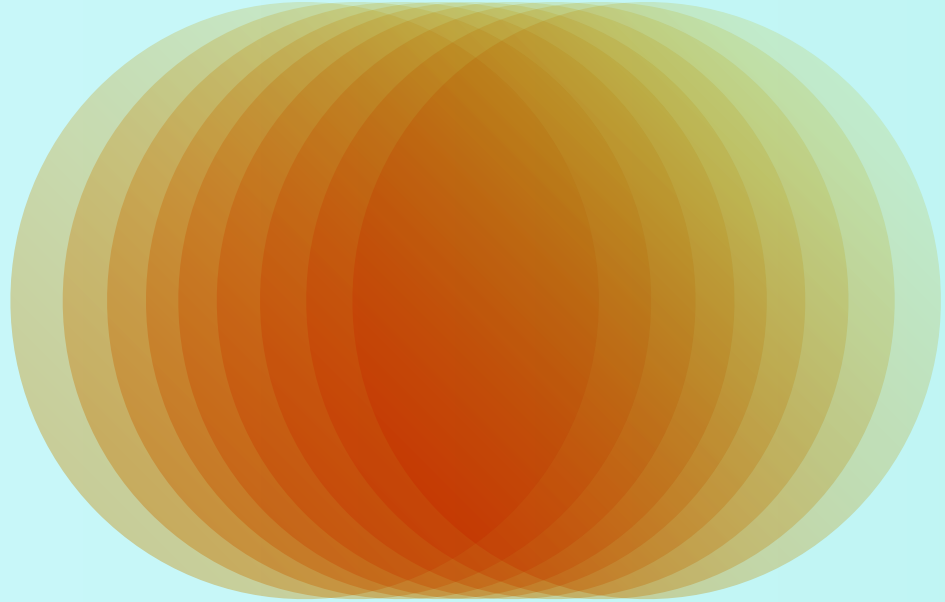
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A Year of Visibility, Belonging, and Impact

In 2025, JIMENA continued to transform how Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewish history, identity, and rights are understood across the United States.

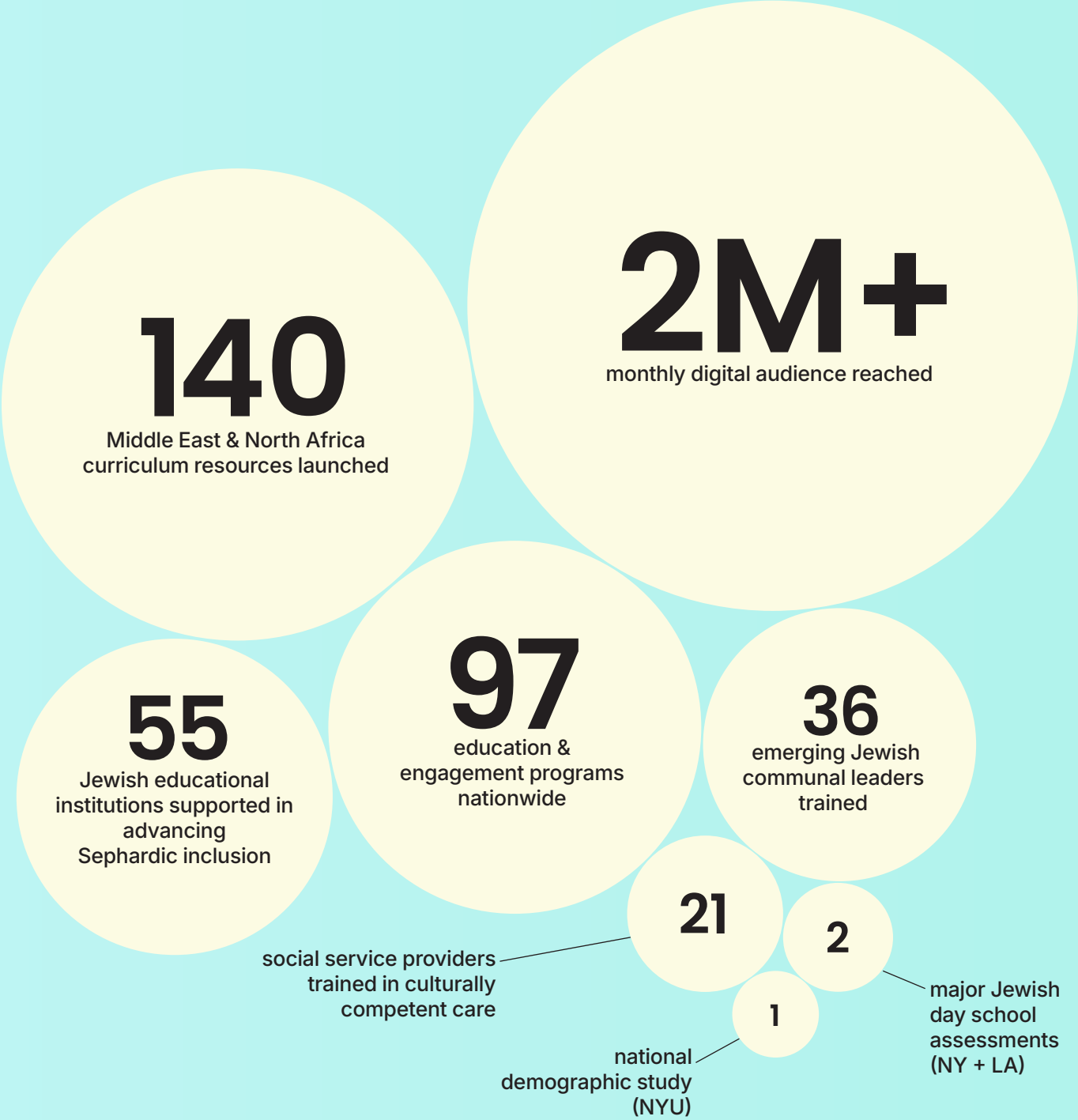
At a time of rising antisemitism and growing demand for inclusive Jewish education, your support made it possible for us to train educators, empower leaders, reshape institutions, and reach millions.

This work is not just about representation —it is about belonging, dignity, and the future of Jewish communal life.

JIMENA

By the Numbers

This year, JIMENA's work reached communities, institutions, and audiences at an unprecedented scale. These numbers reflect not only growth, but the deep and growing demand for Sephardic and Mizrahi inclusion and representation across Jewish life. Behind each figure is a story of expanded visibility, belonging, and impact.



Jewish Education & Systems Change

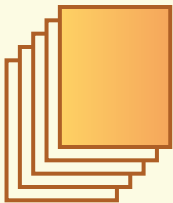
Across the country, Jewish educators are seeking the tools to teach a more complete and inclusive Jewish story. JIMENA is meeting this moment by equipping schools, educators, and institutions with the knowledge, resources, and support needed to meaningfully integrate Sephardic and Mizrahi history and identity into classrooms and school cultures.

While **71%** of Jewish educators express a desire to learn more about Sephardic and Mizrahi history...



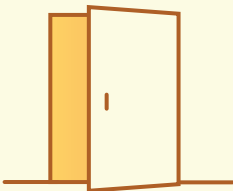
only **17%** report having access to meaningful training or resources.

JIMENA is closing this gap.



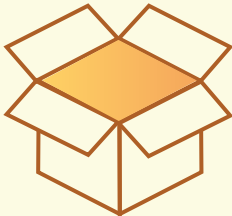
12,000+

monthly engagements through educational resources



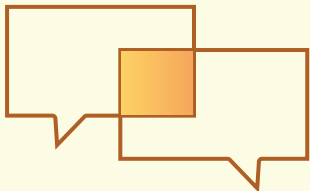
1,800+

educators reached directly through trainings and partnerships



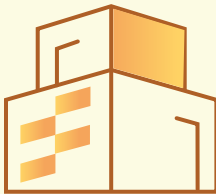
1,000+

educators actively using JIMENA's toolkit each month



218

assessment interviews conducted across **21** Jewish day schools



55

institutions supported through direct interventions and customized plans



2

major research partnerships with Yeshiva University and Hebrew Union College



Distinctions Journal: Education Issue

In winter 2025, JIMENA released the fourth issue of *Distinctions: A Sephardic and Mizrahi Journal*, focused on education. This issue further established JIMENA as a leading platform for Sephardic and Mizrahi thought leadership, amplifying the voices of educators, scholars, authors, and artists shaping the future of Jewish learning.

Through original essays and creative works, the journal explored critical topics including Ethnic Studies, Sephardic pedagogy, educator training and leadership

development, student engagement and preparation, the role of memory and transmission in Jewish education, models for successful integration of Sephardic and Mizrahi narratives, and the importance of culturally grounded literature for Jewish youth.

By elevating these perspectives, *Distinctions* is helping to define a more inclusive, accurate, and forward-looking vision for Jewish education—one that reflects the full diversity of the Jewish experience.

We are deeply grateful...

to the contributing authors and artists whose work made this issue possible, including: Dr. Ruth Behar, Etan Basseri, Dr. Aomar Baum, Adam Eilath, Carol Isaacs, Noa Kelner, Rashin Kheiriyeh, Tami Lehman-Wilzig, Erica Lyons, Alisha Monnin, Zeynep Ozatalay, Dr. Elana Riback Rand, Denise Zami Samstein, Sarah Sassoon, Josh Tuininga, Stephanie Ives, Tamar Zaken.

**In the past year,
AIMEE has:**

Generated more
than

7,400

engagement events

2,000+

page views, exceeding original distribution targets and demonstrating strong educator demand

Directly reached

2,500

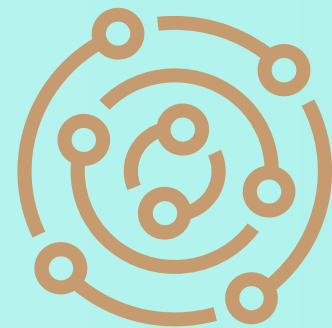
educators at major national
conferences

...surpassing
outreach goals by **17%**

Launched a new website
featuring

140+

educational resources for
K-12 classrooms



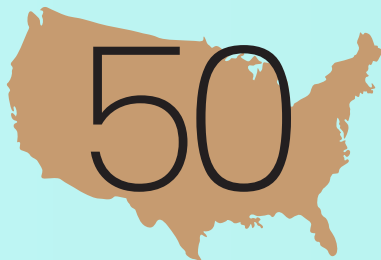
Expanded a national
coalition to include

37

U.S.-based organizations
representing:

Amazigh, Assyrian, Coptic,
Druze, Jewish, Kurdish, Yezidi,
and Zoroastrian communities

Distributed AIMEE materials to all



state departments
of education initiating
pathways for
classroom adoption
nationwide

“We are committed to building a collaborative network of educators, scholars, community leaders, and culture-bearers who share a vision for a more honest and humanized approach to Middle East education. We develop and curate accessible educational resources, amplify community voices, and support teachers who want to bring deeper, more representative content into their classrooms. Our work uplifts the stories, traditions, and contributions of Middle Eastern peoples, honoring each community’s unique history while presenting our narratives collectively and with dignity.”

Leadership Development & Training

JIMENA is building a pipeline of culturally competent Jewish communal professionals, educators, and service providers while strengthening the leadership capacities, knowledge, and skills of the next generation of Sephardic leaders.

This year, we supported three cohorts of the Sephardic Leaders Fellowship:

14

Emerging Sephardic communal leaders in Los Angeles

22

Emerging Sephardic communal leaders in New York

21

Social service providers

Participants engaged deeply with questions of identity, heritage, and leadership—gaining the tools to bring culturally grounded, inclusive approaches into their communities and professional work.

“I’ve loved all the sessions, and the relationships I’ve built have been incredibly meaningful. I’m so grateful for this extraordinary learning opportunity.”

— Maria Yael Savigni, New York Cohort

“Participating in the JIMENA cohort was a life-changing experience. The sessions provided a deep dive into the diverse histories of Sephardi and Mizrahi communities, which I had previously found to be underrepresented in mainstream Jewish spaces. I particularly valued learning from both group members and facilitators, creating a healing environment where we could share leadership strategies for building more inclusive institutions. Connecting social work with culturally sensitive learning also helped me develop knowledge and skills that I will apply in my own community.”

— Harley Kushmier, Social Service Cohort

“My biggest takeaway from the Sephardic Leaders Fellowship was having the time and space to engage with questions of identity—exploring my heritage and how it informs my professional work. I also valued connecting with professionals who share my heritage and passion for Mizrahi culture and tradition, and opening pathways for future leadership opportunities.”

— Rinat Hadad Siegel, Los Angeles Cohort



We are deeply grateful to the exceptional team of facilitators and educators who led each session with rigor and expertise, including:

Dr. Guila Benchimol, Dr. Mijal Bitton, Adam Eilath, Rachel Emquies Sheff, Sharon Gomperts, Vanessa Hidary, Manashe Khaimov, Dr. Tara Liberman, Mastaneh Moghadam, Jeremy Novich, Dr. Ronnie Perelis, Tabby Refael, Sarah Sassoon, Stephanie Sebag, Dr. Saba Soomkeh, Tracy Stone, Rachel Sumekh.



JIMENA staff were proud to represent Sephardic and Mizrahi perspectives at leading conferences across the United States, including:

- **SXSW EDU;**
- **National Association for Multicultural Education;**
- **National Council of Teachers of English;**
- **National Council for the Social Studies;**
- **JFEDLA Education Leaders Summit;**
- **StandWithUs International Conference;**
- **JPRO25;**
- **SRE Jewish Belonging Summit;**
- **Network for Research in Jewish Education;**
- **Association of Jewish Libraries;**
- **NewCAJE;**
- **Prizmah;**
- **JFNA General Assembly.**

These engagements not only expanded our reach, they strengthened JIMENA's role as a trusted thought leader, driving a more accurate, inclusive, and representative narrative of Jewish life in public discourse nationwide.

Public Engagement

In 2025, JIMENA significantly expanded the visibility and influence of Sephardic and Mizrahi voices across a wide range of public platforms, hosting and participating in more than 97 programs and events and reaching tens of thousands nationwide. At a time when narratives about the Middle East and Jewish identity are increasingly contested, JIMENA has emerged as a leading voice—bringing nuance, historical depth, and cultural authenticity into national conversations.

Through strategic partnerships, educational initiatives, and high-profile convenings, we elevated Sephardic and Mizrahi stories in classrooms, cultural institutions, and communal spaces—ensuring these perspectives are not only included, but centered. This work is shaping how educators teach, how institutions engage, and how communities understand Jewish identity in a broader global context.



Research

JIMENA's research initiatives are helping to illuminate critical gaps—and opportunities—within Jewish education and communal life. By grounding our work in data and analysis, we are able to drive meaningful, evidence-based change. This research not only informs our strategy, but contributes to the broader field.

This year, JIMENA was proud to support and publish new research on Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews in the United States, providing the Jewish communal field with a deeper understanding of our diverse communities. The studies included:



1 Sephardic & Mizrahi Jews in the United States: Identities, Experiences, and Communities

Conducted at New York University under the direction of Dr. Mijal Bitton, with demographic estimates produced at Brandeis University, this landmark study draws on interviews, community roundtables, and rigorous data analysis to illuminate an often underrepresented segment of American Jewish life.



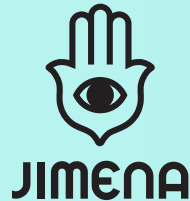
2 Assessment of Sephardic Inclusion in New York Jewish Day Schools

Conducted at Yeshiva University under the leadership of Dr. Elana Riback Rand, and supported by Rosov Consulting, this study identifies the specific interventions needed to more fully integrate Sephardic and Mizrahi students, families, and content into New York Jewish day schools.



3 Assessment of Sephardic Inclusion in Los Angeles Jewish Day Schools and Summer Camps

Conducted under the leadership of Dr. Sarah Benor, this assessment examined the inclusion of Sephardic and Mizrahi families and curricular content in Jewish day schools and summer camps, as well as the experiences of Sephardic and Mizrahi parents and teachers in four participating schools.



We Are Grateful

None of this work would be possible without the generosity and commitment of our supporters. Your partnership enables JIMENA to expand its reach, deepen its impact, and respond to the growing needs of our community. We are profoundly grateful for your belief in this mission.

Thank you.

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