



February 15, 2024

The Honorable Alan Webber
Mayor, City of Santa Fe

Mr. Jose Tolosa
CEO, Meow Wolf

Mr. Vince Kadlubek
Founder and former CEO, Meow Wolf

Ms. Katie Ibay
Head of Human Resources, Meow Wolf

Ms. Didi Bethurum
Head of Communications, Meow Wolf

Dear Mayor Webber, Mr. Tolosa, Mr. Kadlubek, and Ms. Ibay, and Ms. Bethurum,

We are writing on behalf of the New Mexico Jewish Community Relations Coalition (JCRC), a broad coalition of 25 non-profit religious, educational, advocacy, cultural, and assistance organizations representing the diverse perspectives of the Jewish community in our state, including many in Santa Fe. Collectively the organizations in our coalition represent thousands of Jews in New Mexico.

Like most New Mexicans, we understand that the arts are the very thread from which our state's rich, dynamic cultural fabric is woven, and so we were saddened to learn of the decision to forego Matisyahu's February 14 concert at Meow Wolf due to security concerns.

Furthermore, the arts represent one of the most important sectors of New Mexico's economy, and so it is doubly critical that New Mexico, and Santa Fe in particular, remain a nurturing environment for the arts and a place that enables them to flourish.

Thirty days ago, anti-Israel protestors attempted to shout down Governor Lujan Grisham during the State of the State message to members of the State Legislature. They did not stop the work of the legislature. It is unfortunate that some of those same elements were able to shut down

the voice of a Jewish musician and deprive the community of his artistry.

Let us be clear: Matisayu, an American artist, became a target only because of his identity as a Jew with an affinity toward Israel. This kind of targeting cannot be normalized.

As Jews and as New Mexicans, we believe deeply in freedom of artistic expression, and we applaud Meow Wolf for its seminal role in advancing the arts in Santa Fe and across the Mountain West. We also understand that the conditions that led to the cancellation of last night's concert were beyond Meow Wolf's immediate control. However, we fear that this incident nonetheless sets a dangerous precedent that may deprive local audiences of exposure to the important, transformative work of artists from a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. We are also concerned that the performance's cancellation may implicitly discourage other artists from seeking to bring their talents to our community, which may now be inaccurately characterized as one that welcomes them only selectively.

Santa Fe, its businesses, and its civic leaders must remain fully committed to free artistic expression without regard for any artist's cultural, religious, or national affiliation. The city's character, culture, and economy depend on it remaining a place where the arts thrive unabated, and where the right to artistic freedom is secure. To limit artistic expression is to threaten the very economic and cultural foundation on which the city stands, and so our leaders must take every measure to protect artistic freedom.

The JCRC would be pleased to work with you in any way necessary to guard against further attacks on free artistic expression, and we would welcome a dialog to learn how to do so most effectively. Meanwhile, Matisyahu has taken to social media to express his intent to return to Santa Fe to perform, and we certainly encourage Meow Wolf to provide a venue through which to expose the community to his artistic talents.

Sincerely,

Jane Wishner
Co-Chair
Jewish Community Relations Coalition of
New Mexico
info@jcrnm.org

Zachary Benjamin, Santa Fe
Member, Steering Committee
Jewish Community Relations Coalition of
New Mexico
info@jcrnm.org



February 18th, 2024

Ms. Jane Wishner
Co-Chair, Jewish Community Relations Coalition of New Mexico

Mr. Zachary Benjamin, Steering Committee, Jewish Community Relations Coalition
of New Mexico

Dear Ms. Wishner and Mr. Benjamin,

Thank you for your letter sharing your valuable insights and perspectives. We also thank you for your acknowledgment of Meow Wolf's commitment to the arts in Santa Fe. We strive to be an active and positive force in Santa Fe, and your letter reflects a depth of consideration and commitment to community dialogue.

Understanding how we can better engage and support members of the Jewish community during these times is crucial, and your feedback offers essential guidance. This is deeply important to me personally, as fostering an environment where people from all backgrounds and experiences can unite in meaningful ways aligns closely with my own values. Meow Wolf is dedicated to building bridges and ensuring our efforts are respectful of all. Your input is vital in guiding us toward this goal.

I'd like to assure you the cancellation of Matisyahu's concert was a decision driven by operational challenges. Just two hours before the scheduled start, it became clear that we lacked the staff to safely manage the sold-out crowd. The well-being of our employees and guests is of paramount importance. While some groups and individuals with their own agendas have made statements attempting to politicize this, I want to be clear that these groups do not speak for Meow Wolf, the leadership team or me personally.



Meow Wolf believes in free expression, respectful discourse and the power of art to bring people together. We do not tolerate Antisemitism or any kind of hate, bigotry, discrimination or violence directed at any group, and we shared this statement with our communities and the press yesterday. None of these have any place at Meow Wolf. Creating a culture that embraces belonging is a core pillar of [how we define our impact as a company](#).

Please know that your concerns are understood and of significance to us as well. We are actively exploring ways to address the issues you've raised, affirming our commitment to our Santa Fe community.

Thank you again for your letter. We look forward to working with you and the broader community so Meow Wolf can continue to provide a space that celebrates diversity, encourages dialogue, and reinforces our dedication to the arts. In the coming weeks, our executive leadership team will be meeting to identify specific steps Meow Wolf can take to ensure we are better prepared for this type of situation. We are deeply appreciative of your partnership and commitment to an open dialogue as we all navigate these challenging times, and I am personally committed to taking concrete steps that will foster healing and unify our community.

Sincerely,

Jose Tolosa
CEO, Meow Wolf
jose@meowwolf.com

CC: Mayor Alan Webber, Vince Kadlubek, Katie Ibay, Didi Bethurum



Jose Tolosa
CEO, Meow Wolf

Christopher Sobecki
Chair, Board of Directors, Meow Wolf

Julie Heinrich
Chief Impact Officer, Meow Wolf Foundation

Dear Mr. Tolosa, Mr. Sobecki, and Ms. Heinrich:

Many thanks for your thoughtful letter in response to our concerns regarding Meow Wolf's cancellation of Matisyahu's concert last week. We do have some remaining questions, which we respectfully ask that you address.

There has been considerable public reporting that it was employees who refused to come to work that led to cancellation of the show. We understand -- based on information that has been reported in the news media -- that they objected to Matisyahu's support for Israel. It appears as though the audience was deprived of Matisyahu's performance expressly because he is a Jewish artist who supports Israel. This is a troubling instance of cultural bias that sets a dangerous precedent for artists seeking to perform or exhibit at Meow Wolf in the future.

Our questions are designed to help ensure that this unfortunate occurrence never again repeats itself at Meow Wolf:

- Does Meow Wolf have a policy that artists with particular political views may not show their art or perform at Meow Wolf? If so, what is that policy? Might you be willing share it publicly with the community?
- Will you block other Jewish artists from displaying their art or performing under the auspices of Meow Wolf if they support the right of the Jewish people to have a state in our ancient homeland?
- Have you cancelled or refused to schedule any other artists at Meow Wolf based on community or employee objections to the artist's personal views?

- How does Meow Wolf vet allegations made by community members or employees regarding what an individual artist believes or stands for? Did you research any of the allegations made against Matisyahu or ask him about them before cancelling the concert?
- What have you communicated to those who bought tickets to attend the concert and may have travelled long distances to come to Santa Fe that day?
- Do you plan to invite Matisyahu to return to the community to perform at another time?

Many people in our community have told us that they believe the cancellation of the concert was caused by a small group of people who expressed or harbor prejudiced views about Matisyahu due to his personal identity as a Jewish person. At a minimum it appears that he was singled out and treated differently because he is a Jew and has expressed public support for Israel in response to the horrific attacks by Hamas on October 7th. Jerry Seinfeld, another Jewish performer, was also targeted by protestors on February 16th but his show in Albuquerque went forward.

We respectfully ask that Meow Wolf publicly reassure the community that no Jewish artists, nor their audiences, will be discriminated against or silenced merely because they are Jewish and support the existence of Israel as a sovereign state in the homeland of the Jewish people.

We understand that this may be a challenging time for Meow Wolf's leadership because there are strongly-held views among some in your workforce who acted on those views last week. Our focus is the impact this cancellation had on the broader community and the message it sends to the public and to artists who may want to partner with Meow Wolf in the future. Our questions in this letter are designed to help ensure that Santa Fe and Meow Wolf remain safe spaces for the arts to thrive, regardless of the ethnic, cultural, or religious identity of the artists themselves.

In partnership,

Jane Wishner
Co-Chair, JCRC NM

Zachary Benjamin
Member, Steering Committee, JCRC NM

cc:

Mayor Alan Webber
Vince Kadlubek
Katie Ibay
Didi Bethurum
Chris Sobecki



February 21, 2024

Ms. Jane Wishner
Co-Chair, Jewish Community Relations Coalition of New Mexico

Mr. Zachary Benjamin
Steering Committee, Jewish Community Relations Coalition of New Mexico

Dear Ms. Wishner and Mr. Benjamin,

Thank you for sharing these questions. We take your concerns seriously. And your letter highlights the need for a deeper dialogue, especially regarding our engagement with the Jewish community and ensuring our space remains welcoming to all artists.

First, I want to reassure you that at Meow Wolf, no Jewish artists, nor their audiences, will be discriminated against or silenced merely because they are Jewish and support the existence of Israel as a sovereign state in the homeland of the Jewish people.

Free expression is one of our core values as a company, and we welcome all artists and points of views. Meow Wolf believes in the power of art to bring people together. We do not tolerate Antisemitism, hate, racism, discrimination or violence of any kind.

I also want to reiterate the following:

- The Matisyahu show was canceled because of safety concerns and not because of the artist's religious or political beliefs.



- As is often the case in matters such as these, misinformation shared on social media channels was partially responsible for escalating this situation quickly and unexpectedly.
- We are still a relatively young company and we were unprepared for key employees not reporting to work as scheduled.
- We have room for improvement and education on several fronts, and we are eager to engage with community leaders to discuss policies that more clearly reflect our values as an organization and prevent situations like this one from happening in the future.
- We have apologized to all ticket holders and offered them a full refund plus two tickets to visit Meow Wolf in the future. At the appropriate time, I also hope to speak to Matisyahu in person and apologize to him as well.
- We deeply regret how this situation played out, and we hope to restore trust with the Jewish community and repair our relationship with Matisyahu.

If you are available, I would welcome the opportunity to speak to you in person in more detail. It's crucial for us to understand your perspective, share ours, and explore how we can better support and celebrate the diversity of artistic expressions at Meow Wolf, including those from the Jewish community.

We're committed to creating an environment where artists from every background feel valued. And I believe a face-to-face discussion will help us address your questions more effectively and collaboratively find ways to reinforce this commitment.

In the meantime, I thank you for initiating this important dialogue. We look forward to working together to ensure Meow Wolf remains a vibrant space for the arts that is welcoming to all.



Sincerely,

Jose Tolosa

CEO, Meow Wolf

CC: Mayor Alan Webber, Vince Kadlubek, Katie Ibay, Didi Bethurum, Julie Heinrich, Christopher Sobecki