



Below, please find a statement protesting recent policies in Israel that severely curtail expressions of religious pluralism.

The statement was presented in the course of a reception at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, DC attended by delegates of the Biennial Convention of the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs and the Men of Reform Judaism (please see [www.eventsforce.net/fjmc/2/home](http://www.eventsforce.net/fjmc/2/home) for more information).

Drawing over 600 attendees from the United States, Canada, France, Uganda, and Argentina, this interdenominational gathering marks the first time that both groups have co-hosted a convention.

The statement's authors and co-signers represent a consortium of liberal Jewish groups, spanning both the Conservative and Reform movements and comprising The Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel, ARZA, MERCAZ, The Cantors Assembly, The Women's League for Conservative Judaism, The Women of Reform Judaism, The Men of Reform Judaism and The Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs.

### **Statement In Protest of Increasing Limits on Religious Pluralism in Israel**

The Conservative (Masorti) and Reform (Progressive) movements are home to the overwhelming number of Jews in North America. Our communities have long been the backbone of support for Israel. For example, experts estimate that more than 80% of AIPAC supporters are affiliated with our movements.

In light of those facts, it is painful to describe the anger, frustration, disillusionment and disappointment throughout our communities concerning the most recent developments with regard to the Kotel, conversion and the authority of the Rabbanut (Chief Rabbinate of Israel). These developments, offensive as they were, unfortunately do not stand in isolation but are only the most recent manifestations of a lack of respect for non-Orthodox Jewry both in Israel and in the Diaspora.

It is not our purpose today to recount a litany of betrayals of the religious ideals and values on which the State of Israel was founded, a State meant to be the homeland for all Jews. We know, and you know, that we are speaking of more than just what has transpired over the last few weeks; nonetheless, to embrace what, in some ways, is a Middle Eastern metaphor, these straws have broken the camel's back.

It is not a hollow statement when we say we love Israel. We visit Israel often. Many of us have family in Israel, and we all have friends there. It is precisely our strong bonds with Israel that now compel our candor, bluntness perhaps more typical of our Israeli friends than that of North American groups.

It is important for you to understand, and therefore we emphasize it, that this is not some pro forma protest which can be air-brushed away. This is not a debate about geo-political issues. Rather, it goes to the heart of whether Israel perceives non-Orthodox Jews as legitimate. It is beyond absurd that Israel is the one democracy in the world where Jews cannot freely practice their faith in accordance with their beliefs.

The government's actions risk dividing the worldwide Jewish community at a time when it must remain united. We count on you to make clear to the Prime Minister, the Israeli Government and Members of Knesset, that a few soothing words or exhortations for patience will not fix this. We expect concrete actions. It should matter to you that we care about all of this not only because of our own commitment to Israel but also because we want our children and grandchildren to share that love for Israel – and we are at risk of that not happening.