



## Communications Guide: The Kotel Agreement and Conversion Bill

This Guide is your tool as an Individual, a Congregation, a Sisterhood/Brotherhood/Youth Group, a Rabbi/Cantor/Clergy, and Educator or a Lay Leader to be a part of the Reform Movement's work in support of change in the Israeli government's treatment of the Western Wall Agreement, the Conversion bill, and other matters impacting Progressive Jews in Israel and world-wide.

### Communication Do's

- ✓ Message: An extremist ultra-Orthodox minority is exploiting a political situation to (i) blackmail the Israeli government and (ii) create legislation to stop the Israeli Supreme Court from defending the rights of other Jews, women, converts, Russians, and more.
- ✓ There are those who blame the current crisis on the Reform and Conservative movements. Challenge that characterization. The crisis was created by the governing coalition.
- ✓ Share that we are a coalition acting in coordinated partnership with our Israel Movement (IMPJ and IRAC), the organizations of international Reform Judaism (e.g., IMPJ, IRAC, URJ, ARZENU, ARZA USA, ARZA Canada, and the WUPJ), JFNA, JAFI, WZO, WOW, the Conservative Movement, Zionist Orthodox Rabbis, and Tzohar leadership in opposing these decisions of the Israeli government. All these organizations regard the two recent actions of the Israeli government as harmful to the Unity of the Jewish People.
- ✓ Create headlines. Be vocal and visible, share your thoughts and actions on social media. Write columns and letters to the editor of Jewish newspapers and media.
- ✓ Speak about our chief concerns: strengthening Israel's democracy, religious pluralism, gender equality, the ability to maintain our conversions, civil marriage, and civil divorce. We fight for equality and for the principles articulated in Israel's Declaration of Independence.
- ✓ Articulate the weight of recent developments. We fight for no less than the soul of the Jewish State, which is the responsibility of us all. This is not just an issue for Israelis, but for Jews around the world.
- ✓ Use the following hashtags: #OneWallOnePeople #AJewishStateForAllJews and all others that emerge as news develops.
- ✓ Use the new language for the Blessing for the State of Israel, and call attention to that use. Call it "The Blessing for the Unity of the Jewish People and the State of Israel."
- ✓ Make clear that we are "ohavei am Yisrael" and "ohavei Medinat Yisrael" – we love the people and State of Israel, but that love does not mean we blindly support the policies and actions of a particular government in every moment. At this time, we oppose the actions of this government's ruling coalition.
- ✓ Keep your Congressional Representatives informed of what we are doing and ask them to communicate their support for religious pluralism with any visiting MKs, and/or in their own visits to Israel.

- ✓ Keep your Israeli Consuls General informed of what we are doing by calling and/or visiting them as individuals or in delegations.
- ✓ Speak specifically to the Kotel Agreement and the Conversion Bill. There are other important issues in Israel, but it is vital at this time to focus on these two issues before us immediately.
- ✓ Remember: There is more than one way to be Jewish; more than one way to be religious; more than one way to be a Zionist!

### **Communication Don'ts**

- ☒ Don't say, "It's complicated" – it isn't. Further research will make you more informed, but that does not mean the issue is complicated – it is an extremist minority in the Israeli government using its voting power to blackmail the government to suppress the democratic, religious, and pluralist rights and will of the majority.
- ☒ Don't say, "We are despairing." We are not despairing, we are fighting. We are strong, vocal, and determined.
- ☒ Don't say, "We are disappointed." That is too soft. We are angry and believe that we are being played by petty politics. We are fighting for RIGHTS over PETTY POLITICS.
- ☒ Don't predict outcomes – we cannot guarantee a particular outcome, but we can guarantee that our voice, our strength, and our demands will be heard and taken seriously.
- ☒ Don't articulate empty threats.
- ☒ Don't demand that our Congressional Representatives withdraw American funds to Israel as a result of the current issues. That helps neither the United States nor Israel.
- ☒ Don't demand that Federations withdraw funds from Israel, as doing so may hurt individual Israelis.
- ☒ Don't boycott – this weakens our connection to Israel and our voice, and will harm everyone from our college students on up who are fighting daily against the tactics of BDS.

***"The State of Israel will ... ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture...."***

***Israel's Declaration of Independence***