



Worldwide Conservative/Masorti Leadership Statement on legislation that threatens Israel's democratic character

Sunday, February 19th, 2023

Since Israel's founding, the Conservative/Masorti movement around the world has been a major force in standing up for Israel when its safety, stability, and well-being come under threat. It is out of grave concern and our deep devotion to Medinat Yisrael that we are making our voices heard regarding the package of legal reforms proposed by Israel's new government.

Alarm regarding these reforms is being expressed by large segments of Israeli society, including the legal and business communities, academia, Masorti communities, and hundreds of thousands of protesters in Israel's streets. Among the most worrying elements is the so-called "override clause" which would enable a simple majority of the Knesset to overrule Supreme Court decisions. This would eviscerate the already fragile balance of power between the branches of Israel's government.

Weakening Israel's highly-regarded judicial system would undermine the message we have proudly and successfully promoted for decades around the world that Israel is both a Jewish AND a democratic state. With the mounting global disapproval of the proposed plan, moving forward risks serious economic, diplomatic and strategic consequences.

What can be done? We believe that now is the time to identify a better path forward that guarantees the rights of all Israelis and preserves the State of Israel as the Jewish and democratic nation-state of the Jewish people around the world. In the words of Israel's President Isaac Herzog, "dramatic reform, when done quickly without negotiation, rouses opposition and deep concerns among the public... the absence of dialogue is tearing us apart from within.... This powder keg is about to explode. This is an emergency." It is in this spirit that we support the President's call for freezing the entire legislative process in the Knesset and holding a dialogue between the government and opposition under his auspices.

We understand the extraordinary nature of a call by a global movement representing more than two million Diaspora Jews regarding an internal matter of the State of Israel. But our love for Israel compels us to action, just as it has in every past crisis the State of Israel has faced.

We call on all Jews worldwide to join us in making our voices heard at this historic juncture for Israel and the Jewish people as a whole. We are standing for and will always stand for a strong, vibrant and democratic State of Israel. Israel's future, resilience, and unity depend on it remaining Yehudit v'Democratit B'Dibur Echad - Jewish and democratic in one.

SIGNED,

MERCAZ Olami - The Rabbinical Assembly - Masorti Olami - Women's League for Conservative Judaism - Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs - MERCAZ Canada - Cantors Assembly - The Jewish Theological Seminary - NAASE: North American Association of Synagogue Executives - Seminario Rabínico - Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center - MERCAZ USA - Jewish Educators Assembly - Masorti Israel - The Schechter Institutes