

Dear Colleagues,

This afternoon we met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to express our communities' deep disappointment with two actions taken by the Government of Israel that threaten to undermine the special relationship between the State of Israel and world Jewry:

- The Government's Ministerial Committee for Legislation approved a proposed law that threatens the status quo on conversion to Judaism and dramatically expands the authority of the Israeli Chief Rabbinate.
- The Government suspended its January 2016 historic decision to create an egalitarian prayer space at the Kotel (Western Wall).

The Jewish Federations stand in full partnership with Keren HaYesod and the World Zionist Organization in support of the unanimous resolution approved by the Jewish Agency for Israel this morning. We strongly believe yesterday's actions by the Government of Israel, suspending the Kotel resolution and introducing new conversion legislation, represent a severe threat to Jewish unity.

Jewish Federations have played a central role in combating previous efforts to pass harmful conversion legislation that would disenfranchise significant groups in Jewish communities around the world and in Israel. When Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asked Jewish Agency Chair Natan Sharansky to negotiate a compromise on the Kotel, Jewish Federations were crucial partners in keeping all parties at the table through long years of negotiation.

Jewish Federations, together with our partners – The Jewish Agency for Israel, Keren HaYesod, and the World Zionist Organization – have denounced these harmful actions. They threaten decades of work by our Federations to build and nurture the Jewish State, to settle millions of immigrants and refugees, and to inspire generations of youth to connect with Israel and the Jewish People.

At a time when the State of Israel looks to our communities as strategic partners in combating the delegitimization of the Jewish State, these Israeli Government actions complicate this task.

Below are additional informational resources:

We will continue to keep you updated.

Sincerely,

Jerry Silverman

President and CEO  
The Jewish Federations of North America

Articles and op-eds:

<http://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Jewish-Agency-cancels-Netanyahu-dinner-after-Western-Wall-decision-497932>

<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.797855>

<http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.797842>

<http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/israel-diaspora-relations-on-a-dangerous-path/>

<http://jewishjournal.com/rosnersdomain/220942/24-short-sober-comments-sudden-death-kotel-compromise/>

<http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Analysis-Another-move-in-the-Israeli-chess-game-of-religion-and-state-497962>