



PORAT Saddened by Recent Israeli Cabinet Decisions

PORAT expresses its deep disappointment in the recent Israeli cabinet decisions to suspend implementation of the Kotel Compromise and to support legislation that would outlaw conversions in Israel outside the Conversion Authority of the Chief Rabbinate.

The Kotel Compromise was developed under the guidance of Natan Sharansky and the Jewish Agency, and Israel's government approved the compromise in January 2016. The compromise involved the creation of a larger and more accessible non-Orthodox prayer section at the Kotel, while solidifying charedi control of the Orthodox section. Although not perfect, the compromise gave hope that the Kotel would serve as a place of unity for the Jewish people. With its recent action, the Kotel becomes once again a point of disagreement and divide. PORAT is saddened by this turn of events and hopes that the Kotel compromise can once again become the law of our beloved Israel.

With respect to conversions, PORAT believes that the proposed legislation would create roadblocks to legitimate halachic conversions in Israel and harm the Jewish people and the State of Israel. As a modern Orthodox organization, PORAT expresses the feelings of those within the grass roots of our community who desire the adoption of policies that are respectful of the whole Jewish people. Furthermore, now is the time to widen the acceptance of converts, especially Russian Jews in Israel, and not to restrict conversions to one narrow band of Orthodoxy. Thankfully, this proposed legislation has been tabled for six months. Hopefully, the postponement will mean the permanent shelving of this potentially destructive proposed legislation. Nonetheless, the frustration caused by the initial support for giving the Chief Rabbinate a monopoly over conversions in Israel was exacerbated by the recent production of a list of names maintained by the Israel's Chief Rabbinate of those deemed unworthy of verifying Jewish identity.

On both of these issues, PORAT takes comfort in knowing that the people of Israel were similarly disappointed, as a recent poll shows that roughly two-thirds of Jewish Israelis opposed each of these Cabinet decisions. PORAT hopes that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israeli Cabinet will recognize the pain caused by these decisions and take actions that demonstrate their respect for all Israelis and the entire Jewish people.

About PORAT: PORAT is a Modern Orthodox organization that works to create a tolerant and inclusive Jewish community by bringing together lay and religious leaders, by promoting open dialogue, and by advancing Torah values. For more information regarding PORAT, please visit <http://poratonline.org>.

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