



CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS

איגוד הרבנים המתקדמים

Fostering Excellence In Rabbinic Leadership
Since 1889

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Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu
3 Kaplan St. Hakiryia
Jerusalem 91950
Israel

Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu,

The Central Conference of American Rabbis, representing nearly 2000 Rabbis worldwide, expresses its shock, profound disappointment and deepest concern that the bill proposed by MK David Rotem to change the laws of conversion has been sent out of committee to the full Knesset. We write to seek your immediate intervention to prevent this or any similarly destructive piece of legislation from receiving further hearings in Knesset.

For years we have advocated to make the conversion process in Israel more accessible and pluralistic and access to conversion courts in Israel simpler and fairer. Yet the current Rotem bill would cede responsibility for all conversions in Israel to the aegis of the Orthodox Chief Rabbinate, further tightening ultra-Orthodox control over the conversion process and alter forever the Law of Return. Even more than the bills MK Rotem previously proposed, this bill would create a rift between Jews that well may be impossible to heal and severely strain relationships between Israel and the Jews of the Diaspora.

Of particular concern is the fact that this law would require converts to live an Orthodox lifestyle - mandating that practice as the only legitimate form of Jewish life. This would delegitimize Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist Jews in Israel and around the world - something that is completely intolerable to us and ultimately against Israel's best interests. For now, more than ever, as Iran's nuclear program poses a real existential danger to the Jewish State, Israel needs to embrace, not alienate and disenfranchise, Diaspora Jewry.

As the world's oldest and largest Rabbinic body and as proven "ohavay Yisrael," we implore you to act quickly and decisively to quash this bill and return it to consideration with the consultative process established by Natan Sharansky. Your active intervention at this time may be the only thing that can prevent a painful rupture in Israel's relationship with over 85% of the world's Jews - who are non-Orthodox. At this pivotal moment in the history of Israel-Diaspora relations, we, Israel, and the Jewish people need your courageous and visionary leadership.

Sincerely

Rabbi Steven A. Fox
Chief Executive

Rabbi Ellen Weinberg Dreyfus
President