



17 July 2018

Dear Ambassador Regev

RE: Knesset's Proposed Dangerous "Basic Law" of "Nation State"

On behalf of Reform Judaism, Liberal Judaism and Pro Zion - Arzenu UK, we are writing to urge you to persuade your Government not to pass this dangerous bill into law.

Our movements – which make up Britain's Alliance for Progressive Judaism – are unified against the law as it is written now in its totality and that we believe that it casts a heavy shadow on Zionism and on the basic core values of the State of Israel.

We believe that it hurts the delicate balance in the relationships between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority and that it is being promulgated through an aggressive parliamentary process with no attempt to create a wide consensus.

Our sister organisations in Israel, North America and across the world share this belief.

A new version of the proposed law was publicised this past week, including a specific point that involves relations between Israel and World Jewry.

As a result of pressure put on by the Haredi political parties the passage that deals with the nurturing of the bonds between Israel and world Jewry was altered as follows: In the original version, the language appeared as: "... the State will preserve the bonds between the State of Israel and the children of Jewish people wherever they reside". However the new text states: "... the State of Israel will work in the diaspora to preserve the bond between the state and the children of the Jewish people".

The goal of the change in text is clear – to prevent the possibility that there will be any attempt to put in a law in the future that states that Israel should take into account the necessity of preserving the connection between Israel and the Jewish people. This can also have very concrete and negative consequences on all aspects of legislation on issues such as the Kotel, conversion, marriage, and many other issues involving religion and state.

The result will be that the State of Israel will express its relationship to world Jewry in a legalistic and patronising manner within its basic constitutional laws and that Israel will only deal with the relationship with world Jewry outside of Israel but not in Israel.



The State of Israel will actively try to “educate” world Jewry but in Israel the issue will be legalistic and could lead to very negative results. This is another example of the unbalanced, aggressive relationship of Israel with world Jewry, based on legalistic parliamentary modes.

Two other points that we find very problematic in this proposed law are:

- Change in the official status of the Arabic language into a language of special status to be determined in the future by law. Hebrew alone will be the official language of the state, without including in the Basic Law the right of Arabic speakers to have their language accessible in government and public institutions.
- Including in official basic legislation the possibility of preventing people from joining community settlements on the basis of religion and nationality, as well as bases of: sexual orientation, ethnic origin, education, political position, etc.

We are extremely worried that passage of this law will give “fuel” to groups in Britain and elsewhere who reject the right of Israel to exist.

This is a Basic Law which, if passed, will have constitutional status and can only be changed by a clear majority of 61 Knesset members.

We are gratified that both the President of Israel Reuven (Rubi) Rivlin and the outgoing Chairman of the Jewish Agency Natan Sharansky have come out publically strongly against the law in its present form.

We are committed as always as British Progressive Jews and Zionists to fight this law and in so doing preserve and nurture Israel as both a Jewish and Democratic nation and a homeland for all Jews.

For your information, we are also attaching an FAQ from the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism, which sets out our objections in further detail.

Once again, we urge you to act against this proposed dangerous bill.

Yours sincerely,

Rabbi Laura-Janner Klausner, Senior Rabbi to Reform Judaism  
Rabbi Danny Rich, Senior Rabbi & Chief Executive for Liberal Judaism  
Rabbi Lea Mühlstein, Chair, Arzenu International  
Rabbi Celia Surget, Chair, Pro Zion – Arzenu UK