

**Board of Governors**  
**Summary of Events**  
**June 25-27, 2017**

- **On Sunday, June 25**, the Israeli government adopted a decision submitted by Minister of the Interior Aryeh Deri (Shas) and Minister of Health Yaakov Litzman (United Torah Judaism) **to suspend implementation of its January 2016 decision** adopting a plan based on a proposal by Chairman of the Executive Natan Sharansky to significantly expand and upgrade the egalitarian prayer space in the southern part of the Western Wall and place it under the control of a committee composed of representatives of the Reform and Conservative movements and several other organizations and chaired by the Chairman of the Executive. Additionally, the Ministerial Committee on Legislation approved a bill that would **withdraw official recognition from conversions** not conducted under the auspices of the Chief Rabbinate.
  
- In response to those decisions, Chairman of the Executive Natan Sharansky released the following statement:

**“As Chairman of The Jewish Agency for Israel, and on behalf of our partners, I must express my deep disappointment at today's decision by the Government of Israel to suspend the implementation of its own decision to establish a dignified space for egalitarian prayer at the Western Wall.**

**“Five years ago, the Prime Minister asked me to lead a joint effort to bring about a workable formula that would transform the Western Wall into, in his own words, ‘one wall for one people.’**

**“After four years of intense negotiations, we reached a solution that was accepted by all major denominations and was then adopted by the government and embraced by the world's Jewish communities.**

**“Today's decision signifies a retreat from that agreement and will make our work to bring Israel and the Jewish world closer together increasingly more difficult.**

**“The Jewish Agency nevertheless remains staunchly committed to that work and to the principle of one wall for one people.”**

- The leadership of The Jewish Agency consequently decided to significantly alter the agenda of the Board of Governors' summer meetings, **canceling a scheduled dinner** with Prime Minister Netanyahu and holding an **emergency plenary session**.
- During the course of the emergency plenary on **Monday, June 26**, the Board unanimously adopted a resolution denouncing the government decisions and calling on the government to reverse course. **(see appendix)**
- The original statement, the cancelation of the event with the Prime Minister, and the strongly worded resolution generated **extensive media coverage** in Israel and around the world. Chairman of the Executive Natan Sharansky, incoming Chairman of the Board of Governors Michael Siegal and other organizational leaders conducted numerous interviews with various media outlets, during which they emphasized the following points, among others:
  - **Israel will be weakened without the support and advocacy on its behalf from world Jewry.**
  - **The sense among many Diaspora Jews that their modes of religious practice are not recognized by the country's establishment is a source of growing anger and frustration, leading to alienation, particularly among the younger generation, and a reduction of the support of Israel.**
  - **Both of Sunday's government decisions are liable to cause significant, long-term damage to Israel-Diaspora relations and should thus be reversed.**
- **On Tuesday, June 27, full-page ads were placed in all six of Israel's largest-circulation daily newspapers**—Yediot Aharonot, Israel Hayom, Maariv, Haaretz, The Jerusalem Post, and Haaretz English—decrying Sunday's government decisions and calling on the government to recant.
- Later on June 27, members of the Board of Governors held a **special plenary session at the Knesset** under the auspices of the Caucus for Strengthening the Jewish People. During the course of the session, members of the Board expressed their deep concerns about the government's decisions to lawmakers from both the coalition and the opposition.

**APPENDIX I:**

**The Jewish Agency for Israel  
The Board of Governors**

**June 2017**

**Jerusalem**

**Tamuz 5777**

**Resolution**

**Whereas** the Jewish Agency for Israel, representing world Jewry through its constituent members, the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Federations of North America and Keren Hayesod, is gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem, the liberation of the Western Wall and the founding of the Zionist movement in Basel 120 years ago; and

**Whereas** the Jewish Agency for Israel throughout its history has been the organization responsible for bringing olim to the State of Israel and connecting Israel and world Jewry; and

**Whereas** the proposed conversion bill that would cement the Chief Rabbinate's monopoly on conversion has the devastating potential to permanently exclude hundreds of thousands of Israelis from being a part of the Jewish people; and

**Whereas** we deplore yesterday's decision by Government of Israel which contradicts the agreement reached with the Jewish Agency and other parties to establish the Kotel as a unifying symbol for Jews around the world, as stated: '**ONE WALL FOR ONE PEOPLE**'; and

**Whereas** the Government of Israel's decisions have a deep potential to divide the Jewish people and to undermine the Zionist vision and dream of Herzl, Ben-Gurion, and Jabotinsky to establish Israel as a national home for the entire Jewish people; and

**Whereas** we declare that we cannot and must not allow this to happen and we are committed to mobilizing our constituencies for their continued support of the people and state of Israel;

**Therefore, be it resolved that**

- We call upon each Member of the Knesset and all elected public officials to take all necessary action to ensure that these dangerous and damaging steps are halted; and
- We will continue to build a broad coalition of Israelis, together with partners from around the world, who care passionately about keeping our people united and who are committed to the unity of the Jewish people; and
- We call upon the Government of Israel to understand the gravity of its steps and reverse its course of action accordingly.

Natan Sharansky  
Chair of the Executive

Charles Horowitz Ratner  
Chair of the Board

Michael Siegal  
Chair Elect of the Board