

The Honorable Binyamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister of Israel

Iyar 17, 5775 May 6, 2015

For the sake of Zion, I will not be silent. **למען ציון לא אדשה**

We are writing to you as the collective leadership of the Conservative/Masorti Movement, representing two million Jews around the world and hundreds of thousands in Israel. We are true Zionists and defend Israel every day so we were devastated when our love and affection was returned by a slap in the face from Mayor Rahamim Malul of Rehovot. The Mayor, a member of Likud, decided to cancel the *b'nei mitzva* ceremony of children with disabilities because it was to be held in a Masorti synagogue. This decision scuttled the hopes and dreams of the families who yearned for the rare opportunity to celebrate their boys and girls and to welcome them into the Jewish adulthood. This is not an opportunity generally made available by any synagogue under the auspices of the Rabbanut to any child with disabilities and certainly not to any girl, with *or* without disabilities.

Masorti's *b'nei mitzvah* program for children with disabilities, operating for more than 20 years all over Israel, is the essence of Kiddush Hashem, an act that sanctifies God's name.

This cynical and heartless act has been felt around the world. Trammeling on a moment of holiness, it was the essence of *Chilul Hashem*: desecration of God's name. It has left Masorti/Conservative Jews everywhere, heartbroken and spiritually depleted.

The Rehovot incident is merely the latest in a string of insults against non-Orthodox Jews in Israel. We are repeatedly confronted with the Zionism of prejudice, a Zionism that has been hijacked by an extremist, coercive, and inflexible Rabbinate.

Masorti Jews and communities in Israel demonstrate daily that there is more than one way to be Jewish. That flowering of the Jewish spirit, and the healthy diversity that it generates, is our approach to Judaism. Israel, which we love and admire so much, cannot remain the only democracy in the world where Jews do not celebrate freedom of religion.

We urge you to use your influence as the leader of the Likud Party and as Prime Minister to ensure the rights of every Israeli, especially those who are most vulnerable. We urge you to stand up for what is just and fair for these children, and what is right for the Jewish people.

Rabbi William Gershon President, The Rabbinical Assembly	Rabbi Julie Schonfeld Executive Vice President, The Rabbinical Assembly	Margo Gold President, The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism	Rabbi Steven Wernick CEO, The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism
Rabbi Robert Slosberg Chairperson, Masorti Foundation	Arnold M. Eisen Chancellor, Jewish Theological Seminary	Rabbi Bradley S. Artson Dean, Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, AJU	Dr. David Breakstone International Vice President, MERCAZ Olami
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