



Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

In recent months, leadership at the Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund (the Federation) and Jewish Community Relations Council Bay Area (JCRC Bay Area), have become increasingly concerned about political developments in Israel. As part of our longstanding partnership over many decades, we have worked together to safeguard and advance a Jewish and democratic state of Israel consistent with our shared values.

At a time of growing polarization at home and abroad, it is important for our organizations to work together to reinforce shared beliefs and commitments based on long-held community consensus positions.

To that end, we are sharing the following joint statement, which will serve as a guiding resource for our organizations: mobilizing and directing philanthropy, engaging in community relations and civil discourse, educating Jewish and civic leaders and their communities, and responding effectively as issues arise in the headlines. For example, the statement lifts our support for a strong liberal democracy. Federation was proud to [cosign an open letter](#) to the Prime Minister and Opposition leader opposing the coalition's proposed judicial reforms (which would weaken Israeli democracy by allowing a simple majority of the Knesset to override Supreme Court rulings).

We are also concerned about increasing antisemitism in our local communities. This statement reminds us that concerning government policies are no excuse for the delegitimization of Israel, nor justify antisemitism. Proactive reaffirmation of our shared values and commitments is one way to ensure we are effectively united in meeting today's moment.

As always, our organizations' work is in service to freedom, justice, and thriving Jewish communities at home, in Israel, and around the world.

Special thanks to our Israel statement working group, led by JCRC Senior Director of Jewish Affairs Karen Stiller.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Arthur P. Slepian in black ink.

Arthur Slepian, Board Chair
**Jewish Community Federation and
Endowment Fund**

Handwritten signature of Jennifer Wolfe in black ink.

Jennifer Wolfe, Board Chair
JCRC Bay Area

Handwritten signature of Joy Sisisky in black ink.

Joy Sisisky, CEO
**Jewish Community Federation and
Endowment Fund**

Handwritten signature of Tye Gregory in black ink.

Tye Gregory, CEO
JCRC Bay Area



JCRC
BAY AREA



**JEWISH COMMUNITY
FEDERATION
& ENDOWMENT FUND**

Joint Statement: On Israel, Leading with Shared Values

With a deep love for Israel, and a strong stake in its future, we release this statement of our shared values, concerns, and commitments.

The Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund and JCRC Bay Area unwaveringly embrace Israel as the Jewish and democratic state and are committed to upholding its safety and security. Israel is an integral part of Jewish identity for many Jews here in the Bay Area, and millions around the world.

JCRC's [2022 Survey of Bay Area Jewish Identity](#) found that the vast majority of Bay Area Jews (89 percent) support Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.

Following free and fair democratic elections in November 2022, the most right-wing governing coalition in Israel's 75-year history coalesced. Across our community, the outcome provoked sadness, confusion, anxiety, and alarm, including in corners rarely expressing such reactions. Frequently raised are concerns about the coalition's more extreme members, whose track records of homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, and anti-Arab racism stand in stark contrast to our beliefs and values. While it is difficult to predict what the new government will actually do, there is also great concern about its coalition platforms, agreements, rhetoric, and proposed legislation.

Across the Israeli political spectrum, there is growing recognition that divisions are being exacerbated – much like America. More broadly, there are growing worries about Israel's future: its democratic nature, the protection of minority rights, its relationship with diaspora Jews, as well as the viability of a future independent Palestinian state.

It is not inherently antisemitic to criticize policies and actions of the Israeli government, or any government. Yet the actions of the Israeli government must never be used to delegitimize Israel's existence or excuse antisemitism. We know from recent experiences, such as the aftermath of the May 2021 Israel-Gaza escalation, that [criticism of Israel can cross the line](#) and lead to acts of antisemitism, including scapegoating, accusations of dual loyalty, and online bullying.

As Bay Area Jews, most of us are not Israeli voters, nor do we live with the same consequences as people on the ground. However, recognizing the shared peoplehood, traditions, and future of Bay Area and Israeli Jews, and our longstanding advocacy for a Jewish and democratic state, we believe we have a legitimate role to play in ongoing discussions about Israel's future:

1) We believe in a strong liberal democracy that respects both the will of the majority as well as the rights and protections of minorities. The separation and division of powers between the judiciary and the legislative and executive branches must remain intact. A strong and independent judiciary provides critical checks and balances, including consideration of minority rights and constraint on the concentration of power. Any reforms to the judiciary should reflect a broad consensus of Israeli citizens rather than a narrow majority, and should preserve the rights and protections of minorities and equal application of the law.

We also believe a strong liberal democracy requires civil discourse and respectful disagreement. The rights of free speech and lawful dissent are basic and indispensable in

a democratic society. Israel must maintain an atmosphere in which differing viewpoints are respected, while rejecting extremist rhetoric that incites hateful, illegal, and violent acts.

2) We hold that the diversity of the Jewish community is core to our strength, and underscores why Israel serves as a beacon for the entire Jewish world. We believe Israel should be a homeland for all Jews, regardless of religious practice, nation of origin, or lineage. We embrace Jewish pluralism, including our Orthodox and Haredi communities, and believe all Jewish families deserve equal recognition, legitimacy, and rights on issues such as marriage, divorce, adoption, conversion, access to holy sites, law of return, and more.

3) We believe in civil, economic, and social equality of all citizens of Israel, including its Arab citizens. While Israel's [Declaration of Independence](#) is clear about the equal treatment and inclusion of all, Israel has yet to fully live up to this promise. Just as the United States must right historical injustices, Israel must choose to strengthen protections, rights, and freedoms for historically disadvantaged communities.

The participation of Israel's Arab minority in Israeli society contributes to its diverse fabric, and ensures the country's continued political, social, and economic stability and prosperity. We believe it is the moral responsibility of elected leaders to promote engagement and investment in Israel's Arab sector, rather than to sow division and distrust between its Arab and Jewish citizens.

Thanks to more than 40 years of relentless activism, Israel's LGBTQ+ community has been a global trailblazer. Israel was among the first countries to allow openly gay and later openly transgender military service, as well as the provision of spousal benefits to same-sex couples. Israel must remain committed to the path of LGBTQ+ rights and inclusion by addressing homophobia and transphobia, continuing public spending to support education and health services, and attaining same-sex and civil marriage rights for all.

We similarly hold that women's rights are fundamental, and that gender protections must be preserved and strengthened. At a time of decreased female representation in the Knesset, increased violence against women, and continued wage inequality, elected leadership must lift up the role of women in strengthening Israeli society by ensuring their equal participation and civil rights.

4) We believe the Palestinian people deserve to live in peace, security, and dignity and have the right to national self-determination. This vision includes an independent and viable Palestinian state within defined, secure, and internationally recognized borders, living side by side with the Jewish and democratic state of Israel. As a community, we have long championed the many coexistence programs working to build the trust, cooperation, and partnerships on the ground that will make a future peace between Israelis and Palestinians more likely.

We must pursue policies that strengthen, rather than impede, such possibilities for the Palestinian people, including the protection of human rights. Rhetoric of incitement will only serve to provoke wider conflict, and it is the responsibility of those in power to exercise restraint with their words and their actions. Palestinian territory and autonomy must also be respected, and the viability of a Palestinian state is essential for Israel's Jewish and democratic future.

Action Steps

This statement of our institutions' shared values and positions is based on longstanding [consensus positions](#) of the Bay Area Jewish community. Below is a list of the actions we continue to take to advocate for the Israel we love.

Together:

Engage Israeli emissaries, including diplomatic and other government representatives, to convey our community's positions and expectations so that they reach the highest levels of government.

The Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund:

Supports and amplifies organizations advancing an equitable future for Israeli Arabs and Jews through a shared society. We prioritize working with organizations that represent all facets of Israeli society and forge relationships based on belonging, mutual commitment, and ownership of a shared future. Through both grantmaking and impact lending, we have invested over \$5M over the past several years towards shared society:

Each year, we grant over \$1M to Israeli organizations like Sharahit, Matan, and those that are engaged in community organizing, coalition-building, and establishing cross-sector partnerships. The Federation has invested over \$4M in impact loans to Ogen, KIEDF, and Social Finance to help change the social structure in Israel to be more equitable and integrated through providing opportunities for economic mobility, training, and more to marginalized populations.

Supports and amplifies organizations advancing minority rights including efforts to advance Israeli Arabs, LGBTQ+, Ethiopian, and women sectors. We do this through traditional grantmaking, impact lending, and collaborative philanthropy such as the [Jewish Pride Fund](#) giving circle. For example, we grant to organizations like Tebeka and Olim b'Yachad, which support the Ethiopian community.

Curates giving opportunities around [Shared Society in Israel](#) for more than 1100 Donor Advised Funds and Supporting Foundations.

JCRC Bay Area:

Changes the way our community and civic leaders engage with peacebuilding work in the region through JCRC's [Invest in Peace](#) initiative.

Promotes civil discourse and consensus-building within and beyond the Bay Area Jewish community
Addresses rising antisemitism and delegitimization of Israel through relationship building and community advocacy

Provides ongoing education with civic and elected leaders, corporate partners, and more about the role that Israel plays in Jewish identity, within our own community, in local K-12 schools and universities.



The Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund mobilizes innovation, collaboration, and investment to shape diverse and dynamic Bay Area Jewish communities where people find meaningful connection to Judaism and each other; and where we work together to better lives and communities locally, in Israel, and around the world.

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