

## **Actions Diaspora Liberal Jews Can Take**

**This document suggests a number of general actions that Liberal Jews around the world can take to promote a democratic and peaceful Israel. We do not exhaust all the possibilities and realize that the actions depend on the particular context in which you live and the communities of which you are a part.**

**The actions proposed in this letter reflect what the state of Israel expresses as its expectations- Jews of Diaspora, care, be concerned, involved and active in your attachment to Israel. This letter calls for the fulfillment of these expectations. It builds on core Jewish values, including those espoused by Zionist fathers like Herzl and Ahad Ha'am.**

**In fact the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel from 1948 appeals "...to the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally round the Jews of Eretz-Israel in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream - the redemption of Israel". Thus it is your responsibility to help to realize the dream.**

**Please accept these suggestions as a basis for further discussions within your community. The goal is to arouse awareness, a commitment to become more informed, the courage to face these difficult issues and eventually to take action. The authors of this letter call on liberal Jews to form an alliance across the world for support and coordinated action.**

- 1. Learn and understand.** The first step is to know and understand, because as Daniel Barenboim wrote, "Knowledge is the beginning." Gather multiple perspectives, especially those that may stretch your understanding. Read *Haaretz* (<http://www.haaretz.com>) and other sources that also provide alternative information and views. Google groups doing peace and justice work, and read their materials. Check out various reliable sources of information.
- 2. Talk with allies in the community.** Because taking a peace/justice position on Israel can be challenging, alienating and even dangerous, it is important to try out, debate, and discuss ideas, questions, strategies, plans, and lines of action with

allies. Like any new skill, talking about peace, democracy and morality in Israel takes practice; it is helpful to begin in a safe environment, with allies, and then branch out.

3. **Join others.** It is important to join others who share the same concerns and values. Organize support groups, group discussions and learning groups. Form Israel Working Groups in synagogues, schools, universities, communities and even neighborhoods; this base is a place to learn, practice and speak with a strong collaborative voice.
4. **Expand knowledge in the groups.** Organizing support groups is only a means; the next step is to raise topics that should be learned, organize debates on various issues related to the situation of Israel with multiple views, collect information, and invite experts.
5. **Open the mind of the younger generation.** Do not allow the younger generation in various Jewish institutions to be indoctrinated with values that contradict core Jewish commitments to human rights, peace and democracy (“What is hateful to you do not do to others”). Demand that these educational institutions present complex and multifaceted views of Israel and the conflict in the best tradition of progressive education.
6. **Talk with those you think will more easily relate and then those with whom you disagree.** This is an important step based on the fundamental right to freely express your views, without fear. There is no need to justify or explain or be apologetic to realize this right as it is an essential part of pluralism and democracy.
7. **Join Jewish organizations.** There are many different Jewish organizations that share your liberal values and struggle for a better Israel. Join them.
8. **Voice your concern.** Jewish organizations that unconditionally support immoral and undemocratic mal-practices by the Israel government should hear your objections. Do not be afraid. It is your duty as a Jew who loves Israel to express your concern and support human rights, democracy and moral actions.
9. **Contact media.** It is critical for the voice of liberal Diaspora Jews who seek a sustainable peace and care about democracy, to be read and heard. Almost every

day there are opportunities to respond to news items with letters to the editor or even guest columns in Jewish outlets.

- 10. Contact elected officials.** Elected officials often hear only one point of view, especially in United States: uncritical support of anything done by the Israeli government. Elected officials need to hear from their constituents about this issue; they are often prepared to change positions if they feel support from those who keep them in office.
- 11. Contribute to local groups.** There are hundreds of small groups working for democratic peace and justice policies and programs, within Israel and within our own communities. The internet is a great tool to find them. The next step is to contribute – with money, time and public support.
- 12. Ensure that the views of liberal Jews are heard.** Demand that any debate, trip, visit in Israel by you, your family, Jewish officials and leaders or by young people organized by Jewish formal organizations or the state of Israel, include alternative information and analyses of the situation by liberal forces in Israel.
- 13. Speak with Israelis who share your liberal values.** Organize a speaking tour of prominent liberal Israelis who can provide first-hand information and experiences about the situation in Israel.
- 14. Visit and see for yourself.** Visits to the region are a critical, often painful and inspiring way to deepen your understanding and make new allies. Thankfully, many groups lead tours and provide an open and multi-perspective outlook on the situation.
- 15. Talk with others, share your stories, and help others understand.** In addition to financial support, groups doing peace and justice work in the region need us to share their stories -- carefully, honestly, humbly and courageously. It is too easy to turn away from the pain and discomfort created by media coverage of the current Israeli situation, so our responsibility is to help others expand their empathy and their capacity to understand; sharing our stories is a powerful tool.
- 16. Write letters and appeals to the Israeli establishment when you find that moral and democratic codes are broken; initiate petitions with many supporters; write letters**

to Israeli media; write letters to Israeli diplomats, who represent the state; it is also possible to demonstrate and visibly express your values and views.

**Your voice has to be heard –as the call letter stated:**

"Our voices must be heard loud and clear, so that it will be known that a moral and humane Judaism exists, and has the courage not only to criticize injustice and immorality elsewhere, but also to denounce the Israeli government for adopting immoral and unjust policies and actions. **This is an ultimate expression of our concern and love for Israel. It is our responsibility to speak out and take action, as an ultimate expression of our identity and conscience. Ultimately, history will judge us by our actions.**"