

Jerusalem, 20 Tamuz 5780
July 12, 2020

Habonim Dror North America

יצחק הרצוג
יו"ר ההנהלה

Isaac Herzog
Chairman of the
Executive

Dear all,

Recently, I learned about a petition circulating within the network, signed by past and present members of Habonim Dror North America. I was astounded and shocked by the petition's clear and harsh call to boycott Israel and Aliyah. The Jewish Agency for Israel condemns and denounces any call for a boycott of Israel. Signing petitions like these, which call for a boycott of the state, undoubtedly crosses a red line and borders on support for BDS.

The Jewish Agency for Israel, as it enters its 91st year, remains committed to strengthening and supporting the State of Israel and Israeli society. The Jewish people entrusted the Jewish Agency with the task of establishing the State of Israel, as the national home for every Jew, as the spiritual and symbolic beating heart, and as a source of unity for the Jewish people.

The Jewish Agency, as a Zionist institution to which the Jewish people entrusted the establishment of the State of Israel, the realization of the Zionist dream, and the return of the Jewish people to their homeland after thousands of years of exile, remains committed at all times to strengthening and supporting the State of Israel and Israeli society—as the national home for every Jew with Aliyah as a central Zionist value, as the spiritual and symbolic beating heart of the Jewish people, and as the source that unites all of us.

We are a pluralistic Zionist organization, with a very wide “tent” that honors the range of views that exist among the various Zionist movements and streams. For this reason, we have worked for many years in full cooperation with the Habonim movement and its various branches around the world. We consider the education of the young liberal generation to be very important. We are also aware of and respect the significant processes that have taken place within your organization and other liberal organizations like yours. We believe these voices of liberal progressive Judaism are very important and need to be heard in Israel and the entire Jewish world but without crossing a terrible red line.

I am aware that we are living in a very sensitive period in many ways, including concern among some streams of the Jewish people about potential steps toward annexation on the part of the Israeli government, as well as the tense political

environment in the United States. Of course, as a result of this situation, some criticism from various parts of the Jewish people is to be expected, and as a pluralistic and apolitical body we understand it. **However, we can do so only if the criticism falls within the ideological limits to which we are committed, which I have described above.**

Therefore, I would like to express our firm protest and make it clear that the signatures of movement members, madrichim, and alumni undermine the deepest foundations linking the Jewish people and state and the ideological basis on which The Jewish Agency was founded. Therefore, they cross all of the red lines we have set.

I would like to make it clear to the leaders of Habonim Dror North America that we will not be able to continue to cooperate with and/or support in any way any movement or educational organization that signs shameful calls such as these.

I received your letter dated July 5, 2020 and was pleased to see your formal and emphatic statement that the leadership of the movement disapproves of, opposes, and does not endorse the blatantly anti-Zionist statements of the petition, and that you are ideologically opposed to any expressions of boycott or support for BDS.

In your letter, you pointed an accusatory finger at the incitement of the IfNotNow organization, which successfully worked to influence members and madrichim to sign the petition without fully understanding its content.

We at The Jewish Agency urge the leadership of the movement to take firm and immediate responsibility for the serious result: **the signatures of dozens of members, madrichim, and alumni are publicly attached to an ideological manifesto that is completely contrary to the values of the movement and those of Zionism is utterly unacceptable.**

We request clear answers as to how you intend to uproot the boycott conversation from its core within your movement. We expect that you will make clear to members, madrichim, and alumni that anyone who holds these positions will not be welcomed as a part of Habonim Dror North America.

If you do not answer clearly and decisively, we will be obligated to stop supporting the activities of the movement, through shlichim and other programs.

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הסוכנות היהודית
לארץ ישראל
JEWISH AGENCY
FOR ISRAEL
כל אחד מאיתנו, יחד.

Awaiting your reply,

Isaac Herzog

Chairman of the Executive

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Copy: Mr. Michael Siegal, Chairperson of the Board, JAFI
Ms. Beth Kieffer- Leonard, Chair of Budget & Finance Committee, JAFI
Ms. Amira Ahronoviz, CEO & Director General, JAFI
Mr. Yehuda Setton, COO, JAFI
Mr. Gal ben Shimol, Chief Program Officer, North America, JAFI
Ms. Abi Dauber Sterne, Director of Makom, JAFI