

## 2019-2020 Israel Policy Priorities

Federations have helped strengthen the State of Israel since pre-independence days. And our commitment continues. Federations are dedicated to ensuring all of Israel's citizens have equal access to educational and economic opportunity. We provide a safety net for the most vulnerable, we advocate for those in distress, and we support initiatives that encourage religious diversity. Federations have helped millions of immigrants move to Israel and start new lives. Through our direct allocations, we invest more than \$250 million every year in furthering these goals.

Federations also work tirelessly to deepen connections between the Jewish State and the North American Jewish community. This global connection is fostered by immersive experiences for young Jews and programming bringing Israel to life in communities throughout North America. It also involves exposing top Israeli influencers to Jewish life in Canada and the United States. And when Israel is threatened, we mobilize our networks at home and overseas to come immediately to the aid of the Jewish state. Federations work with our primary partners – the Jewish Agency for Israel, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and World ORT – to advance our programmatic agenda.

Alongside this work and in partnership with The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) Washington Office, JFNA Israel promotes the Federations' international interests on a non-partisan basis, by: (i) safeguarding Israel's defensive capabilities and qualitative military edge in the Middle East, (ii) defending Jews from global anti-Semitism and protecting Jewish communities around the world and (iii) reflecting the strong support of the North American Jewish community for a two-state solution with Israel living securely in peace alongside a demilitarized Palestinian state.

JFNA speaks for our community to the Government of Israel, Knesset members and municipalities, as well as Israeli leaders in business, the military, academia, media and the religious community. JFNA's Israel and Overseas Department engages with Israeli leaders on issues of concern to North American Jews. The Israel Policy Priorities outlined below are designed to inform discussions with Israeli policymakers in 2019-2020 and include the following issues.

### **Opposing the Delegitimization of Israel**

Federations advocate on behalf of Jewish communities to counter delegitimization of Israel. The Israel Action Network (IAN), a project of JFNA, works strategically with local Jewish communities across North America to expand the network of allies on campus, in churches, labor unions, and other sectors where anti-Israel activity (including the promotion of boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel) often takes place. JFNA Israel will continue to work as a closely integrated part of the Israel Action Network and continue to represent IAN in Israel vis-à-vis local government officials and other partners.

### **Strengthening the Relationship between Israel and the North American Jewish Community**

The relationships built between Federations and influential Israelis position Federation leadership to engage with the Israeli government and other institutions on matters of importance to the North American Jewish community. These relationships enable Federations to fulfill their commitment to bolster broad, apolitical and multigenerational support and understanding between Israel and the North American Jewish community. They allow the Jewish community to build consensus and discuss matters constructively, particularly in times of crisis and tension and emphasize all that we have in common. JFNA Israel will work to foster and sustain constructive relationships with Israeli leaders by:

- Maintaining a continued presence at the Knesset and in Israeli governmental forums.
- Encouraging the presence of Israeli leaders at important events for North American Jewry in Israel and world Jewry.
- Bringing delegations of Israeli leaders, including Knesset members, senior officials, and journalists, to visit Federation communities with the Jewish Agency to develop understanding about the nature, work, institutions, developments and important trends within the North American Jewish community.
- Fostering ongoing communication and a monthly Hebrew-language newsletter about North American Jewry and working with the Jewish Agency through its Ami Unity and other initiatives focused on the connection with North American Jewry.
- Defining and including issues that Israel and North American Jewry have in common.
- Promoting people-to-people connections and mutual understanding between Israelis and North Americans, including visits by Israelis to see North American Jewry firsthand. Partnership 2Gether and other programs help realize this goal.

### **Providing Transformative Israel Experiences for Young Adults**

Federations are a primary supporter of immersive Israel experience programs that build Jewish identity and foster deep and lasting connections with Israel. Over the past 18 years, these programs have brought more than 610,000 young Jews to Israel. JFNA Israel will further support these efforts by:

- Working in partnership with the Jewish Agency for Israel to ensure that the Government of Israel maintains its support for Birthright, MASA, and Onward Israel programs.
- Expanding its partnership track with MASA which engages select MASA participants, teaching them about Federations and encouraging them to take an active role in Federation life upon their return home.

### **Encouraging open, constructive, and respectful dialogue**

In light of increased polarization in our communities, Federations open doors to varying perspectives and hold difficult discussions in a respectful and productive manner. Constructive dialogue strengthens our communities and fortifies the existing strong bonds between Israel and the North American Jewish community. JFNA Israel will assist Federation communities in conducting constructive dialogue on issues of social policy in Israel by:

- Drafting materials on emerging social issues in Israel to prepare Federation leadership in advance and further enable constructive political discourse within communities.

- Providing toolkits and discussion guides to assist Federations as they address potentially divisive issues.

### **Promoting Religious Pluralism and Equality of Religious Expression**

Federations support grassroots efforts to promote freedom of religious choice and expression in Israel. JFNA Israel will continue to advance these efforts by:

- Working with Israeli leaders to increase awareness about the ways in which specific matters of legislation and policy impact Jewish identity worldwide and specifically within the North American Jewish community, including efforts to emphasize the importance of the Diaspora to Israel.
- Through iRep (the Israel Religious Expression Platform), providing interested Federations a strategic platform for joint Israel-based advocacy to promote diversity of religious expression in the country.
- Maintaining an active dialogue with high level Israeli leaders about implementing the January 2016 Kotel arrangement, recognizing different forms of religious conversion, enabling freedom of choice in marriage and other religion-state issues.

### **Delivering Rapid and Effective Israel Emergency Relief**

Federations have provided over \$450 million in emergency assistance for Israel since 2006. JFNA Israel strengthens these efforts by:

- Maintaining ongoing relationships with the IDF Home Front Command, National Emergency Authority and local Israeli municipalities to ensure that the Federation system is able to respond to a crisis in the most efficient, timely and effective manner.
- Convening roundtable discussions of key stakeholders including the JDC, the Jewish Agency, local Federation representatives, and other Federation partner organizations to ensure coordination and prevent duplication of efforts. These efforts will periodically include key government representatives.
- Leading a joint effort together with Israeli public officials to better coordinate philanthropists during times of emergency.
- Working closely with the Israel Trauma Coalition during times of calm and during crisis.
- Managing allocation of Federation funds to partner organizations.

### **Speaking Out for Minority Rights**

JFNA builds understanding between the North American Jewish community and Israelis around the complex challenges of building a democratic society that respects minority populations, including Arab-Israelis, Ethiopians, the LGQBT community, and asylum-seekers. Federations invest in programs across Israel that foster the development of a strong Israeli society shared by all of its citizens.

#### **JFNA Israel Office Government Relations**

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