

## 2018-2019 Israel Policy Priorities

For nearly seven decades, Federations have helped strengthen the State of Israel. And our commitment continues. Federations are dedicated to ensuring that 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.

Federations work tirelessly to deepen connections between the Jewish State and the global Jewish community. That global connection is fostered by immersive experiences for young Jews and programming that brings Israel to life in communities throughout North America. And when Israel is threatened, we mobilize our networks at home and overseas to come immediately to her aid.

Alongside this work and in partnership with JFNA's Washington Office, JFNA Israel promotes the Federations' international interests 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) supporting a two-state solution with Israel living in peace with a demilitarized Palestinian 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.

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 2018-2019 and include the following issues.

### **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 remain united and discuss matters constructively, particularly in times of crisis and tension.

JFNA Israel will work to build and sustain constructive relationships with Israeli leaders by:

- Maintaining a continued presence in the halls of the Knesset and in Israeli governmental forums.
- Encouraging the presence of Israeli leaders at important events for North American Jewry in Israel and the Diaspora.
- Bringing delegations of Israeli leaders, including Knesset Members and journalists, to visit Federation communities.
- Providing educational opportunities for Israeli leaders to understand the nature, work, institutions, developments and important trends within the North American Jewish community through ongoing communication and a Hebrew-language newsletter about North American Jewry.

### **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.
- Proactively reaching out to determine the type of materials and other services that might advance these goals.

### **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 the Jewish Federations of North America in partnership with the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, 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 takes place, including the promotion of boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel. 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.

### **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 14 years, these programs have brought more than 550,000 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.
- Offering a short program to select MASA participants, teaching them about Federations and encouraging them to take an active role in Federation life upon their return home.

### **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.
- 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.
- 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.

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

Federations have provided over \$450 million in emergency assistance for Israel since 2006, including nearly \$55 million during Operation Protective Edge that supported trauma relief, economic development, respite, and resiliency training for over 430,000 Israelis. JFNA Israel strengthens these efforts by:

- Maintaining ongoing relationships with the 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, 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.
- 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 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 Government Relations Staff:**

Rebecca Caspi, SVP, Israel and Overseas; Director General, JFNA Israel  
Dani Wassner, Managing Director, Government Relations  
Yedida Wolfe, Senior Associate, Government Relations

*For more information please contact Yedida Wolfe, Communications and Government Relations, Global Operations, Jewish Federations of North America at [Yedida.Wolfe@jewishfederations.org](mailto:Yedida.Wolfe@jewishfederations.org)*