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*Deceased

June 29, 2017
5 Tamuz 5777

H.E. Benjamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister of Israel
3 Kaplan Street
Jerusalem, Israel

Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu:

As you know, the American Zionist Movement (AZM) represents a broad and diverse spectrum of Zionist organizations in the United States from across the religious and political streams of the American Jewish community. We are united in our support for Israel and the unity of the Jewish People connected to the State of Israel and Jerusalem, its capital. In the past we have strongly rejected the statements of UNESCO and others who wrongly choose to revise history in rejecting the rights of Israel, and the Jewish people, to our ancestral homeland and in denying the Jewish connection to Jerusalem.

We emphasize in our work that Israel has long stood for the principles of providing, assuring and protecting freedom of and access to the holy sites for peoples of all religions in Jerusalem and its Old City, whose quarters are precious and holy to the great religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and the peoples of the world who share the Old City in the Jewish, Christian, Moslem, and Armenian Quarters. Indeed, for the Jewish community, the Western Wall, our "Kotel" – the holiest site remaining from our Temple, is more than a symbol, it is the centerpiece for Jewish communities throughout the diaspora and must be preserved in perpetuity and dignity for all Jewish people.

A full delegation of leadership from the American Zionist Movement and our organizations was in Jerusalem this week for meetings of the Jewish Agency for Israel. They have shared with us their concerns as to the developments of this past week which have been elevated to near crisis level. Indeed, we regret the decision of the Cabinet of the State of Israel on Sunday to suspend the prior agreement regarding expanded access to prayer areas at the Kotel for all denominations and practices within Judaism. AZM is a member organization of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and we note with support their letter on this matter which was sent to you yesterday.

In our view, Mr. Prime Minister, it is imperative that the Kotel remain a place that represents the unity of our Jewish nation and faith. The unity of the Jewish people, in connection to the land of Israel, is a key element of the Zionist movement, since it was launched 120 years ago at the First Zionist Congress convened by Theodor Herzl.

We believe, Mr. Prime Minister, that this is a time for leadership and unity within the Jewish community. It is not a time for actions that lead to further divisiveness that conquers our spirit, destroys our will, and sends a message to our enemies of weakness and lack of respect for own people, who must be free to worship in their own way and in a manner respectful of others.

Therefore, Mr. Prime Minister, we appreciate the steps you have immediately and subsequently announced to lay a path for the Government of Israel to assure freedom of prayer expression at the Kotel and expeditiously move forward on plans for greater access to worship areas for all streams of Judaism.

We stand ready to assist in addressing these issues of concern to you, the people of Israel and the Jewish people. Our commitment is to an approach to be taken, through the unity of our wide coalition of American Zionists, so that all Jews and Zionists feel and remain connected to Israel and its capital Jerusalem as we commemorate 50 years of the reunification of Jerusalem and approach and honor the upcoming 70th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel.

Sincerely,



Richard D. Heideman
President



Herbert Block
Executive Director