

February 18, 2017

Jeremy Ben-Ami, President
J Street
P.O. Box 66073
Washington, DC 20035

Dear Mr. Ben-Ami:

As descendants of Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, a leader in the American Zionist movement, we are writing to express our opposition to the nomination of David Friedman as U.S. Ambassador to Israel and the apparent shift in U.S. policy opposing Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

We and our family have long been strong supporters of the people of Israel. We continue to support Israel's and the Israeli people's right to exist and thrive, and their security remains a paramount concern. Moreover, we do not live in Israel and respect the Israeli people's right to choose their course through their own democratic political system.

That said, as Americans, we must choose our own response to certain actions of the Israeli government and some Israelis. We recall the words of Justice Brandeis with respect to the need for a Jewish homeland:

How can we secure for Jews, wherever they may live, the same rights and opportunities enjoyed by non-Jews?

Obviously, no individual should be subjected anywhere, by reason of the fact that he is a Jew, to a denial of any common right or opportunity enjoyed by a non-Jew. But Jews collectively should likewise enjoy the same right and opportunity to live and develop as do other groups of people.

Just as we believe Jews are entitled to such rights, we believe that non-Jews, including those living in Israel and the West Bank, are entitled to such rights. As Justice Brandeis stated: "We should so conduct our affairs in Palestine that what we do shall inure to the interest of all the inhabitants of Palestine, Moslem and Christian as well as Jew."

Thus, we are opposed to the taking of land and property owned by Palestinians by the Israeli "settler" movement. We are opposed to Israeli government policies that support the settler movement by extending military protection to illegal settlements, or new legal settlements, because security measures often restrict Palestinians' access to their own property. Because we prefer a "two state" solution to indefinite Israeli occupation of the West Bank, we do not support any new settlements in the West Bank unless and until there is a peace agreement between Israel and Palestinians that allows such settlements.

Over the past eight years, the Israeli government has blocked any serious peace negotiations by its continued support of settlements and insistence on pre-conditions.

The Israeli government seems intent on preventing any “two state” solution. Given that Mr. Netanyahu demands that the Palestinians accept that Israel is a Jewish state, we are doubtful that the Israeli government supports a “one state” solution in which all residents of Israel would enjoy the “same rights and opportunities.” A state in which non-Jews are deprived of the right to an equal vote and equal opportunities should not be supported by Americans or the United States government.

Mr. Friedman, by his words and support of the Israeli settler movement, does not reflect what we believe should be American policy toward Israel. Further, Mr. Friedman appears intolerant of opposing views and unable to represent American interests in the Middle East. We oppose his nomination.

The United States should renew its commitment to the two-state solution and opposition to new Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

We hope for peace, with security, among Israel and neighboring people and nations.

Sincerely,

Walter B. Raushenbush

Richard W. Raushenbush

Paul B. Raushenbush

Carla Raushenbush

Lorraine Raushenbush Bucy