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Managing Director

11 Cheshvan 5778

October 31, 2017

Rabbi Josh Weinberg
President, ARZA

Dear Rabbi Weinberg,

The Rabbinic Board members of the Coalition for Jewish Values were saddened and distressed to learn that your board member, Shoshana Dweck, was reported to have likened the Israeli government and traditional Jews to white supremacists of the early South. According to the New York Times of this morning, she told Israeli Minister Tzachi Hanegbi that "it was never about a seat at a lunch counter, or a seat on the bus," to underscore the notion that non-Orthodox Jews in Israel are "second-class."

There is nothing "second-class" about provision of services that exceed requirements, and the prayer space for alternative services vastly exceeds actual usage. Unlike the space for traditional prayer, which was filled beyond capacity on multiple occasions during the recent holiday season, the Ezrat Yisrael section built for your use by then-Religion Minister Naftali Bennet stood mostly or entirely empty.

To characterize Israelis as racists plays directly into the hands of the anti-Semites of today, who claim that Israeli Jews, the majority of whom were violently ethnically cleansed from surrounding Arab countries, are the practitioners rather than the victims of "apartheid." It also appears to specifically violate a Statement on Public Discourse adopted in 1995 by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, including ARZA, which warns that "those from all sides of the spectrum who engage in verbal violence, demeaning characterizations and other excesses violate basic Jewish tenets as well as standards of decency while endangering the interests of the community."

For this reason, we ask: will you, on behalf of ARZA, dissociate yourself from Dweck's inflammatory statement, or call upon her to retract it?

We await your earliest possible reply.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pesach Lerner".

Rabbi Pesach Lerner
President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yaakov Menken".

Rabbi Yaakov Menken
Managing Director