**The silence of our leadership is deafening**

Where is the South African official communal leadership when we need them to take a moral stand? We swiftly pounce on the racism that is anti-Semitism. But why does leadership not publicly condemn prejudice and racism within our Jewish world and in Israel?

JDI calls on Leadership to clarify our Communal position concerning the following recent developments: -

1. The Board of the JNF/KKL has voted to spend vast sums in order to purchase land
alongside Jewish settlements in the West Bank to expand those settlements.
This represents a substantial increase of resources and focus of the JNF’s work in order to expand Jewish Settler initiatives in disputed territory.

Displacing Palestinians and expanding settlements is obviously antithetical to efforts for any future peace agreement and/or 2-State solution to the dispute and conflict.

Will the Leadership speak out against this proposal? Or does the silence represent acquiescence and support of the expansion of Jewish settlement and the displacement of Palestinians?

1. Recent Israel election maneuvering amongst political parties has served to legitimize and encourage Jewish supremist ideologies. There is a strong possibility that the next government of The State of Israel will include politicians that advocate for the removal of non-Jews from Israel, further delegitimize non-Orthodox Judaism within Israel and strengthen discriminatory legislation and policy against all residents and citizens by withdrawal of rights currently in place. Will the South African Jewish leadership join the majority of Jews in Israel in condemning openly racist, homophobic and Islamophobic parties and their policies? Or will we excuse ourselves by maintaining that this is an internal Israeli matter where the Diaspora has no say?

The Jewish Democratic Initiative stands for upholding civil and human rights as foundational to our support and connection with the State of Israel and the concept of a Jewish Homeland that is *A Light Unto the Nations אור לגויים* .

Welcoming the Religious Zionism party (who are neither religious nor Zionist in any moral reading of these terms) into the Knesset and possibly into a ruling coalition is a significant departure away from democratic norms. They represent a tiny fraction of voters whose prejudiced views have been amplified by this move.

JDI condemns these parties’ platform and policies. We must create maximum distance between our South African Jewish community and the racism and prejudice represented by the Religious Zionism party and their supporters.

Silence can be misconstrued as acquiescence.

There must be an ethical and moral basis underpinning our South African communal institutions.

We call on our SA leadership to officially distance ourselves - as a community - from support of racist dispossession and oppression in Israel.

Opposing these two developments creates an opportune time to clearly enunciate these basic values to our compatriots.