

A light unto nations?

We have been called together to celebrate the 65th Anniversary of the establishment of the State and to **get closer** to Israel.

During its brief life, Israel has taken its place on the world stage. A nation has been created with many remarkable achievements to respect and admire in science, technology and culture.

However, this is also the 46th anniversary of Israel's conquest of Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan heights; we cannot celebrate a nation that forgets Rabbi Hillel's plea: '**That which is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour**'.

We stand in a Jewish tradition that celebrates justice, equality and human rights for all – and for that reason cannot celebrate today. Too much of humanity has been forgotten by Israel. We see instead the tragic cost of Israel's rejection of international law, abandonment of human rights for the Palestinians whose land it occupies and discrimination against its non-Jewish citizens.

We believe passionately that the rights we demand for ourselves in all the countries of the world, cannot and must not be denied to non-Jews in the **one** part of the world ruled by a Jewish majority.

Thus, we cannot **get closer** to a country which:

- refuses to engage in a genuine peace process, maintaining instead a stranglehold on Palestinian life in the West Bank and an ongoing blockade of Gaza
- has planted half a million Israeli citizens in illegal settlements on the Palestinian West Bank in clear violation of international law
- holds thousands of Palestinian political prisoners, administrative detainees – including Palestinian children – again in breach of international law
- discriminates against the Palestinian citizens of Israel through discriminatory land rights, inferior housing, education and healthcare
- destroys traditional Bedouin life in the Negev, to give Israeli Jews exclusive use of land the Bedouin have inhabited for centuries
- fails to this day to recognise the Nakba of 1948 in which 750,000 Palestinians – fleeing or being driven from their homes, their property confiscated, their villages destroyed – became refugees.

We look forward to the time when we can genuinely celebrate, when Israelis and Palestinians, two peoples, can share a common future. But that is not today.

A light unto nations?

We have been called together to celebrate the 65th Anniversary of the establishment of the State and to **get closer** to Israel.

During its brief life, Israel has taken its place on the world stage. A nation has been created with many remarkable achievements to respect and admire in science, technology and culture.

However, this is also the 46th anniversary of Israel's conquest of Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan heights; we cannot celebrate a nation that forgets Rabbi Hillel's plea: '**That which is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour**'.

We stand in a Jewish tradition that celebrates justice, equality and human rights for all – and for that reason cannot celebrate today. Too much of humanity has been forgotten by Israel. We see instead the tragic cost of Israel's rejection of international law, abandonment of human rights for the Palestinians whose land it occupies and discrimination against its non-Jewish citizens.

We believe passionately that the rights we demand for ourselves in all the countries of the world, cannot and must not be denied to non-Jews in the **one** part of the world ruled by a Jewish majority.

Thus, we cannot **get closer** to a country which:

- refuses to engage in a genuine peace process, maintaining instead a stranglehold on Palestinian life in the West Bank and an ongoing blockade of Gaza
- has planted half a million Israeli citizens in illegal settlements on the Palestinian West Bank in clear violation of international law
- holds thousands of Palestinian political prisoners, administrative detainees – including Palestinian children – again in breach of international law
- discriminates against the Palestinian citizens of Israel through discriminatory land rights, inferior housing, education and healthcare
- destroys traditional Bedouin life in the Negev, to give Israeli Jews exclusive use of land the Bedouin have inhabited for centuries
- fails to this day to recognise the Nakba of 1948 in which 750,000 Palestinians – fleeing or being driven from their homes, their property confiscated, their villages destroyed – became refugees.

We look forward to the time when we can genuinely celebrate, when Israelis and Palestinians, two peoples, can share a common future. But that is not today.