

## Dear Chancellor Angela Merkel and Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel,

We, the undersigned, are **a group of Israelis who are deeply concerned for the future of our country**. We are writing to you to convey our sincere gratitude for standing with Israeli civil society during Minister Gabriel's recent visit to Israel.

It is with great sorrow that we mark the upcoming anniversary of 50 years of occupation. Over the past half century, **our beloved country has engaged in the denial of basic freedoms and rights of millions of Palestinians**, and in building settlements that stand in the way of any just resolution of this conflict. Israeli civil society, including **groups like Breaking the Silence, B'Tselem and Peace Now, have been a beacon of hope in the midst of despair**. These groups, who struggle for a better future for Palestinians and Israelis alike, operate from a place of love and dedication to the future of our country.

We thank you, Minister Gabriel, for refusing to give in to Prime Minister Netanyahu's ultimatum, and for insisting on meeting with representatives from Breaking the Silence, B'Tselem and Peace Now.

We thank you, Chancellor Merkel, for supporting this decision and emphasizing the importance of a vibrant civil society in Israel, for the sake of its democracy.

**By showing support for Israeli human rights organizations who struggle against the occupation, you have acted as true friends of Israel**, and for that, we commend and thank you.

**Colette Avital**, former ambassador, former consul general and former member of Knesset

**Prof. Élie Barnavi**, historian, former ambassador to France

**Ilan Baruch**, former Israeli ambassador to South Africa

**Michael Ben-Yair**, former Attorney General of Israel

**Prof. Yoram Bilu**, recipient of the Israel Prize

**Avraham Burg**, former chairman of the Knesset and chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel

**Prof. Naomi Chazan**, former member of Knesset and past president of the New Israel Fund

**Yael Dayan**, former member of Knesset and former Deputy Mayor of Tel-Aviv-Jaffa City Council

**Prof. Ya'acov Dorchin**, artist, recipient of the EMET Prize and of the Israel Prize.

**Prof. Itzhak Galnoor**, former head of the Civil Service Commission

**Assaf Gavron**, author and musician.

**Prof. David Harel**, recipient of the Israel Prize and Vice President of the Israel Academy of Science and Humanities

**Prof. Eva Illouz**, sociologist, former president of Bezalel Academy of Art and Design

**Dani Karavan**, sculptor and recipient of the Israel Prize

**Miki Kratsman**, photojournalist, recipient of the EMET Prize

**Alex Levac**, photojournalist, recipient of the Israel Prize

**Dr. Alon Liel**, former director general of the Foreign Affairs Ministry and former ambassador to South Africa

**Prof. Ronit Matalon**, author, recipient of the EMET Prize

**Michal Na'aman**, artist, recipient of the Israel Prize

**Hadas Ophrat**, artist, recipient of the Israel Prize.

**Mossi Raz**, secretary general for the Meretz party and former member of Knesset.

**Joshua Sobol**, playwright, author and director

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