

Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu,

We write to you today out of our commitment to Israel, to Judaism and to the values of the Jewish people.

We are deeply concerned by reports that the residents of the West Bank Palestinian village of Susya are facing the imminent destruction of roughly 40 percent of their village, including multiple homes, their children's school and the solar panels that provide their only source of electricity. Representatives of your government recently informed the High Court of Justice that they plan to move forward with these demolitions almost immediately.

These demolitions would further devastate the already difficult lives of the people of Susya. Like other similar threats to several Palestinian communities throughout the West Bank, such as the village of Khan al Ahmar, they appear designed to advance the goals of the settlement movement -- paving the way for further settlement expansion, and undermining the prospects of ever achieving a two-state solution.

The claim that these demolitions are simply punishing "illegal" building is misleading and unacceptable. The village of Susya, like its counterparts throughout Area C of the West Bank, has consistently had its applications for building permits denied. We are taught in the Torah that there must be one law for all, yet the settlers living alongside Susya are allowed to participate in the planning and development of their own communities. In the South Hebron Hills alone, hundreds of settler structures that the Israeli government deems illegal are under no threat of demolition.

Denying Palestinians shelter, electricity and schools and derailing the eventual creation of a Palestinian state will do nothing to achieve the safe, peaceful and prosperous future for Israel that we all yearn for. On the contrary, without a two-state solution, we fear that Israel cannot in the long term remain the secure, democratic homeland for the Jewish people.

Without respect for the rights of Palestinians to live freely and safely in their own communities, conflict, animosity and mistrust will grow. With this pattern of demolitions and evictions, your government is ignoring the Jewish traditions that remind us and implore us to show respect and compassion to our neighbors and to all people. As Jews, we know what it means to be displaced from our homes and all that we know. We will not stand for the government of Israel continuing to do the same to others. True Zionism means building a solution for the future, rather than resigning ourselves to perpetuate the failures of the past.

As pro-Israel, pro-peace Jewish clergy committed to the pursuit of righteousness, justice and peace, we ask you to take immediate steps to prevent the demolitions in Susya, and to recognize and respect the rights of the village and other threatened Palestinian communities throughout the West Bank.

We urge you and your government to pursue a new path that advances a two-state solution and serves the interests and aspirations not of right-wing interest groups, but of the entire State of Israel and the Jewish people around the world.

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