



Israel
Religious
Action
Center



Israel Movement for Reform
and Progressive Judaism
התנועה הרפורמית והתנועה מתקדמת בישראל

Pluralism in Action

Equal Access to the Western Wall for all Jews

The Western Wall, the holiest site for the Jewish people, is run as an ultra-Orthodox synagogue. It is a reflection of the ultra-Orthodox monopoly on all aspects of Jewish life and identity in Israel. And all attempts at egalitarian prayer are met with harassment and violence.

The fact that ultra-Orthodoxy is the only Judaism permitted at the Western Wall is unacceptable.

In recent years, equal access to the Western Wall has increased, and IRAC has played an active role in this progress:

- April 2013: The Jerusalem District Court ruled that women are permitted to wear tallitot and pray at the Western Wall, a year after Anat Hoffman, IRAC Executive Director, was arrested for doing so.
- January 2016: An agreement including an egalitarian prayer space connected to the main Western Wall plaza, and leadership composed of representation from Women of the Wall and the Reform and Conservative Movements, was promised, sparking uproar from ultra-Orthodox Knesset members and a campaign of anti-Reform incitement.
- June 2017: The government voted to “freeze” the Western Wall agreement and responded to IRAC’s petition that renovation of Robinson’s Arch will take place, but no other components of the original agreement would be honored.
- November 2017: A protest march carrying Torah scrolls into the Western Wall plaza was met with verbal harassment against protestors and violence against Anat Hoffman and URJ President, Rabbi Rick Jacobs.
- January 2018: The Supreme Court held a hearing in which it gave the government three months to provide concrete plans for the renovation of the egalitarian prayer space at Robinson’s Arch. The State has failed to do so.
- February 2022: IRAC and Reform leadership met with Israel’s Prime Minister for the first time since 2016. While he would not promise to implement the Western Wall Agreement, he promised to address the violence at the Western Wall.

Our work is obviously not nearly done, and IRAC will remain a driving force of progress until all Jews have the right pray as they choose at their religion’s holiest site.

