



JULY 12, 2010

ANAT HOFFMAN TAKEN INTO POLICE CUSTODY FOR CARRYING TORAH

Chairperson forcefully removed by police for carrying Torah Jerusalem, Israel –

One of the leaders of the Reform movement in Israel and Women of the Wall (WOW) was arrested for holding a sefer Torah during a Rosh Chodesh celebration at the Western Wall. Women of the Wall (WOW) gathered this morning for their monthly Rosh Chodesh services at 7 a.m. on the women's side of the Kotel. Anat Hoffman, with a sefer Torah in her arms, led the 150 women strong prayer group in song as it continued its celebration in a procession toward Robinson's Arch. Moments after leaving the Wall, police confronted and blocked the procession and began menacingly to attempt to remove the Torah from Hoffman's arms. Hundreds of participants watched in shock and distress as the Torah was jostled by police.

Hoffman was detained under the pretext that she was not praying according to the traditional customs of the Kotel. Hoffman was taken into police custody and interrogated for five hours. Police claim that holding the sefer Torah is against the Supreme Court ruling. Police are currently consulting with Attorney General to determine her charges.

Anat and her lawyer stated that the act of carrying a Torah is not mentioned in the Supreme Court ruling. Women of the Wall stood in solidarity with Anat outside of the Kishle Police Station near Jaffa Gate. Hoffman was released from police custody and banned from the Kotel for 30 days. The arrest of a woman on the first day of the month of Av is a harsh reminder of the price that Israeli society may pay for its religious intolerance and fanaticism. Tomorrow at 13:30, WOW will lobby at the Knesset for civil equality and pluralism at the Kotel, emphasizing the Wall as a holy site for all streams of Judaism and advocating for equal rights of women at the Wall.