

Dear Friends,

MK David Rotem has tabled a 3rd version of the Conversion Law to be presented to the Law Constitution and Justice Committee tomorrow 12.7.10. This version takes the worst of the two existing versions and if passed, all our fears that have been raised in our previous communications will be realized.

Article 1 states that "In the Israeli Chief Rabbinate Law 5740-1980 (hereinafter: "the main Law"), in article 2, after clause (6) shall be inserted:

(6a) **Responsibility in the matter of conversion in Israel**, there is nothing in this clause that will infringe upon the jurisdiction to perform conversions that was granted to the special conversion courts by way of government decision, or the existing jurisdiction of the Rabbinic Courts, according to all law."

The first part of this clause was present in the first version of the law and amended in the second version, in order not to give a clear monopoly in the area of conversion to the Chief Rabbinate. In the second version, the concluding lines were also more general in order to leave room for interpretation that non-orthodox conversions could be recognized. As you can see, this version only leaves room for the recognition of the orthodox special conversion courts.

In addition, Article 3 remains in its exact form - ie: that the Citizenship Law will not apply to anyone who was not entitled to Oleh status previous to his/her entry into Israel.

We know that MK Rotem is aiming to table this amendment before the Law, Constitution and Justice Committee tomorrow in order to bring it before the Knesset for a first reading. This is as a result of an agreement that he has reached with Shas. We do not know whether he intends to try and push forward the entire legislative process before the Knesset recess. .

This proposal completely contradicts the understandings reached with the Prime Minister and the Jewish Agency.

We apologise for sending these tidings on a Sunday morning, but we would really appreciate all that you can to help block this action- the Prime Minister's Office, Michael Oren, Natan Sharansky - and whoever else you see fit. We have managed to speak with Sheransky and with the Labor ministers, they all promised to put pursue on the PM to prevent Rotem's move. The Israeli media is starting to deal with this issue.

We will continue to update you in the coming few hours,

In appreciation of all your efforts,

Nicole Maor, Israel Religious Action Center  
Anat Hofman, , Israel Religious Action Center  
Yizhar Hass, Conservative Movement, Israel  
Rabbi Gilad Kariv, Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism