



German-Israeli Parliamentary Friendship Group
at the German Bundestag

27. November 2015

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Dear Prime Minister,

As the executive of the German-Israeli Parliamentary Friendship Group at the Bundestag, we feel an especially strong commitment to the Jewish and democratic state of Israel. We are aware of our historic responsibility for the security of the State of Israel and recognise the importance of 50 years of diplomatic relations between Israel and the Federal Republic of Germany. Since its foundation in 1948, the State of Israel and its citizens have been constantly exposed to attacks, terrorism and war. In this instable region it is remarkable that the State of Israel, as the only democracy in the Middle East, has not abandoned its principles of democracy and the rule of law and, instead, has defended these principles against both internal and external attacks.

We also regard your country with admiration and respect. There is no other country in the world which permits such a vibrant civil society despite the threats posed by terrorism and war. For opposition and criticism from within one's own society can be painful, yet it too is part of an open and pluralist civil society. In this context, we wish to express our concern as the German-Israeli Parliamentary Friendship Group regarding the "Transparency Law". This legislative initiative would fundamentally change the work of Israeli NGOs and thus the activities of civil society as a whole. A law of this sort is out of line with the function of role model performed by Israel's democracy. We understand your desire to make the work of NGOs more transparent through this law. However, those NGOs mainly funded from private sources – which also influence politics and public opinion in Israel – are not covered by the law. We are in favour of measures to enhance transparency, yet double standards and excessive hampering of activities through red tape should be avoided.

We are expressing this criticism because, as friends of Israel, we fear a weakening of democracy and freedom of expression. As friends of Israel, it is not always easy for us in Germany to defend concrete measures taken by Israeli policymakers. Often, we have many sections of the media and public opinion against us. This legislative project thus also weakens us in our engagement as friends of Israel – which we have to defend against verbal attacks almost every day. As an example, we would like to cite our successful protest against the Berlin department store KaDeWe, which announced a boycott of Israeli products and then reversed this boycott on Sunday, with a public apology.

We respectfully request that you rethink the planned legislative initiative.

Respectfully yours,



Volker Beck
Chairman (Alliance 90/The Greens)



Gitta Connemann
Deputy Chairwoman (CDU/CSU)



Kerstin Griese
Deputy Chairwoman (SPD)



Jan Korte
Deputy Chairman (The Left Party)