

**THE ORTHODOX UNION'S  
116<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION**



**RESOLUTIONS**

**DECEMBER 26, 2014  
4 TEVET, 5775  
TARRYTOWN, NEW YORK**

THE UNION OF ORTHODOX JEWISH CONGREGATIONS OF AMERICA  
ELEVEN BROADWAY, NEW YORK, NY 10004

**Table of Contents**

I. Procedures.....3

II. Jerusalem; Reaffirming Our Connection and Commitment.....4

III. Personal Integrity and Communal Propriety.....6

IV. The Resurgence of Anti-Semitism in Europe .....8

V. Bringing Women to the Orthodox Jewish Leadership Table.....9

VI. *Gittin*.....10

VII. The Iranian Threat.....12

VIII. Summary of Standing Positions.....13

## Procedures

### Procedures

Procedures by which the Resolutions will be considered include the following:

1. There are no amendments to these procedures.
2. Each resolution will be considered in turn. The Resolution's content will be presented by the Chairman of the Resolutions Committee and, having been approved by the Executive Committee, not require a "second."
3. The Parliamentarian, appointed by the president, shall make decisions with respect to these procedures including but not limited to whether amendments (a) change the substance of the Resolution or (b) are purely editorial in nature, which can't be made.
4. Amendments germane - i.e., relating to and having a direct bearing on the subject matter of the pending Resolution may be offered by:  
(a) a minimum of five (5) accredited delegates among whom are represented a minimum of three (3) separate Orthodox Union member synagogues,  
OR (b) five (5) officers or directors of the Orthodox Union.
5. A proponent of the amendment shall have three (3) minutes to propose and explain the amendment to the delegates; an opponent of the amendment shall then have three (3) minutes to express contrary views. Additional speakers in support of or opposition to the amendment will be limited to one (1) minute. The proponent of the amendment and an opponent shall each have two (2) minutes to make closing remarks prior to a vote on the amendment. The chairman of the session may, at his discretion, impose additional time limits upon debate.
6. If the amendment is deemed not to change the substance of the proposed Resolution, it shall be adopted by a (simple) majority vote of the duly accredited delegates.
7. If the amendment is deemed to change the substance of the proposed Resolution, it shall be adopted by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the duly accredited delegates.
8. A new Resolution, not previously approved by the Executive Committee, must be offered by the same number of sponsors denoted above in Paragraph (4), shall require a "second," and shall require a two-thirds majority of duly accredited delegates for adoption.
8. Those who wish to propose amendments or additional Resolutions must submit their proposals in writing to the Chairman of the Resolutions Committee Gerald Schreck by 9:00am Friday morning December 26, 2014.
9. Duly filed amendments may be modified in the course of their consideration by the delegates by a two-thirds (2/3) vote or with the agreement of the amendment's proponents.

## **Jerusalem; Affirming Our Connection and Commitment**

We convene the Orthodox Union's Biennial Convention at a time when violence is again being perpetrated against Jewish citizens in and around Israel. These acts of terror – which recently included the murderous invasion of a *beit kneset* during *shacharit* -- have all too often been incited by the Palestinian leadership.

In the face of our enemies' absurd calumny that the Jewish People lack any claim to the *Har HaBayit*, the Temple Mount – we gather today to assert the truth of our historic relationship to that site and the holy city of *Yerushalayim (Jerusalem)*.

*Yerushalayim* has represented the spiritual epicenter of Judaism for three millennia and The Temple Mount has always been our most hallowed site. Our relationship to *Yerushalayim* is one that transcends time, space and other physical constraints, and our attachment to this holy city remains constant in our psyche, spirit and practices, wherever we may be. Three times a day the Jew prays towards Yerushalayim. For two millennia two of our most sacred moments, the daylong Yom Kippur Service and the Passover Seder, have ended with the fervent prayer of *L'Shana Habah B'Yerushalayim* - next year in the rebuilt Jerusalem

Following the Roman destruction of *Yerushalayim* and the forced exile of the Jewish people in 70 C.E., the Jews faithfully reestablished their community in *Yerushalayim*, preserving their legacy and maintaining daily prayer vigils before the Western Wall. That steadfast Jewish presence continued virtually uninterrupted until the wanton and indiscriminate destruction of the Jewish Quarter inflicted by Jordan in May, 1948. For the nineteen years that it remained under Jordanian control, the Old City was closed to Jews of all nationalities and even to Israeli Muslims and Christians. The City of Peace was sundered by Jordanian barbed wire, cinder block and snipers. During this period holy sites of all religions were neglected and destroyed.

Israel's miraculous liberation of the Old City in 1967 and re-unification of *Yerushalayim* brought with it -- for the first time in centuries -- a guaranty that people of **all** religions could freely access all of the city's holy sites. Under Israeli sovereignty *Yerushalayim* is now being openly explored by all peace-loving persons, regardless of religion or nationality. *Yerushalayim* symbolizes how the Jewish people have seized every opportunity to create, build and restore, to give life to their prayers and dreams, and to show peace to the world.

Accordingly, we reaffirm and again Resolve that:

Jerusalem must forever remain the spiritual, cultural and political center of the Jewish people and the State of Israel, and the Orthodox Union will continue to support all efforts that are necessary to secure and maintain Jerusalem as the eternal and undivided capital of the State of Israel;

The Orthodox Union shall continue to advocate to the U.S. Administration and Congress to fully implement existing U.S. laws concerning Jerusalem, which includes a recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the movement of the United States embassy to Israel's capital city.

## **Personal Integrity and Communal Propriety**

Rabbi Ahron Soloveichik teaches us that all of Judaism can be summarized in one sentence, “A Perfect G-d dared to create an imperfect world, and deigned to create an imperfect creature – all of us, Jew and Gentile – and gave that imperfect creature the daunting task of perfecting His imperfect world.” When a Jew is *m’kadesh Shem Shamayim* when they sanctify the Divine Name, they become partners with the Creator in the ongoing sacred task of perfecting His world. Conversely, when an ostensibly Orthodox Jew is *m’chalel Shem Shamayim*, they desecrate the name of Heaven; they embarrass our community and endanger our eternal communal mission.

We are mindful that the vast majority of North American Orthodox Jews have always behaved in a fashion that demonstrates an abiding sensitivity to our obligation to be *m’kadesh Shem Shamayim* in our personal and public lives. But we must express our anguish that, all too frequently we have another example of the communal damage done by the misguided few who create *Chilul HaShem* by failing to be scrupulously appropriate in their individual and communal lives.

The Torah does not merely require that we live our lives in a way that reflects our adherence to Civil Law and our fellow citizens. The demands of Halakha in fiscal affairs, business ethics, the use of governmental and communal funds, obligations towards employees, employers, investors and consumers, parishioners and students are in most cases, far stronger than the mandates of secular law. Lofty ends never justify less than appropriate or legal means. There is simply never an excuse for any ostensibly Orthodox Jew to violate either the *din d’malchute*, the law of the land, or the usually stronger dictates of Halakha in these areas.

The *Yalkut Shimoni* teaches that Moshiach, the Messiah, cannot come until his appearance will be a *Kiddush HaShem* because the nations will all exclaim “G-d, what an upright and honest nation you have chosen as your own.” Sadly, “upright and honest” are

hardly the first terms that come to mind when one faces dishonest, immoral, unethical or criminal behavior on the part of individuals in our community.

It is axiomatic that not every accusation is true, and not every accused individual is guilty; but it is also true that not every accusation is an anti-Semitic libel; and not every accused individual is worthy of our support.

The incoming administration of the Orthodox Union is mandated to make Personal Integrity and Communal Propriety an important part of the Orthodox Union's agenda. To that end we Resolve that:

Our OU Advocacy Department shall ensure that officials and the media are aware of the Orthodox Union's strongly held views in these matters, especially when they arise in the context of acts perpetrated by self-identified Orthodox Jews;

The Orthodox Union's Synagogue Services Department in conjunction with NCSY, JLIC and other departments should prepare and disseminate appropriate educational materials and programs stressing the importance of individual and communal integrity, including talks by scholars –in-residence and community shiurim discussing the necessity of abiding by secular law, ethical and communal propriety;

JLIC, NCSY and JSU shall expand their emphasis upon all aspects of personal and communal ethics in their programming.

## **The Resurgence of Anti-Semitism in Europe**

The Orthodox Union is gravely concerned, and certain of its constituent institutional and individual members feel directly threatened, by the dramatic upsurge in overt acts of Anti-Semitism, both physical and verbal, throughout the world, especially in Europe.

We are distressed that such acts are sometimes being rationalized, marginalized or ignored by Government authorities on the grounds that their genesis is reflective of deeply felt and justifiable opposition to Israeli actions with regard to the Palestinians, or to the very existence of a Jewish State.

In light of these disturbing developments, it is Resolved that the Orthodox Union:

Calls upon governmental authorities at every level, as well as civic and religious leaders, to forthrightly and unequivocally declare that there is absolutely no justification whatsoever for physical or verbal attacks on individual Jews or Jewish institutions and enterprises, irrespective of one's views on Israel;

Urges that a policy of zero tolerance be adopted, backed by vigorous and publicized enforcement of appropriate statutes to punish and deter perpetrators of such acts;

And, directs the incoming Orthodox Union administration to explore initiatives through which the Orthodox Union can provide appropriate support and assistance to our co-religionists in European communities and other communities throughout the world.

### **Bringing Women to the Orthodox Jewish Leadership Table**

It was last in 2002, when the Orthodox Union Biennial Convention Resolutions stated:

“It is our considered opinion that the parameters of participation by Jewish women within Orthodoxy is at once an issue of premier importance...and also the most potentially divisive issue facing Orthodoxy today.”

This remains true now, one dozen years later, but it is also true that within mainstream Orthodoxy Judaism more women, than at any prior time in Jewish history, are learning and teaching Torah and playing leading roles in Orthodox communal life. Moreover, given the range and depth of challenges and opportunities currently confronting American Orthodoxy, it would be irresponsible not to fully engage the wisdom and energy of our community’s women in our efforts.

The Orthodox Union therefore Resolves:

We shall continue to urge and support our community to expand the opportunities for women to pursue and disseminate Torah knowledge and values in accordance with Halakha;

We recognize and value that member congregations of the Orthodox Union contain a diverse range of opportunities for women’s participation within the framework of Halakha and the Orthodox Jewish community and with the guidance of their respective *morah d’asrah*;

That the Orthodox Union’s incoming Administration actively seek the increased participation of women in the OU’s lay leadership and professional staff.

### **Gittin (Jewish Divorce)**

We Resolve that:

The Orthodox Union shall use its considerable resources to demonstrate our disapproval and repudiation, in accordance with Halakha, of the conduct of any spouse who fails or refuses to follow the dictates of an authorized Beit Din (religious court) in regard to providing or receiving a "*Get*" (religious divorce decree).

We must be careful to follow the guidance of Halakha with regard to the appropriate personal, communal and societal measures for addressing any specific situation in which a spouse is withholding, delaying or impeding the *Get* process.

We reiterate our previous Convention calls on all synagogues and communities to deny any and all synagogue and communal honors to any such individual. Such public honors and privileges that shall be denied to such a recalcitrant individual shall include but not be limited to: Aliyot to the Torah ("being called up" to the Torah), publicly leading the tefilla (the prayers), access to the synagogue, being honored by schools or charitable organizations.

The Orthodox Union encourages the increased use of the use of pre-nuptial agreements endorsed by the Rabbinical Council of America and the Beth Din of America, which attempt to reduce the possibility of a *Get* being withheld or delayed inappropriately. We particularly urge rabbis in our community to encourage the use of these pre-nuptial agreements when they officiate at weddings.

The Orthodox Union supports steps endorsed by Halakha which resort to the secular legislature, mediation, and courts in seeking to redress cases in which a *Get* is being impeded, withheld or delayed inappropriately.

The Orthodox Union supports efforts to educate all lawyers involved in divorce and

separation proceedings, whether through mediation or the secular court system, about the importance of obtaining a *Get*.

The Orthodox Union supports efforts to educate all Jews who are being or have been divorced about the importance of obtaining a *Get*.

## **OU Policy Resolution: The Iranian Threat**

(Approved by OU Board of Directors, Feb. 4, 2015)

The Orthodox Union is gravely concerned about the Iranian regime's potential development of a nuclear weapons capability. With such a capability, Iran would not only threaten the very existence of Israel, as well as the safety and security of the United States and its Western allies, but would also spark a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could endanger the region and the entire world.

The Iranian leadership's animosity toward Israel and Western nations is not in question. The leadership regularly calls for the destruction of Israel and aggressively pursues nuclear weapons technology in violation of many UN Security Council resolutions (while at the same time denying that very pursuit).

The Orthodox Union applauds the stringent sanctions imposed on the Iranian regime by the U.S. Congress and Administration in order to halt and reverse Iran's advancement toward nuclear weapons capability. The pressure of these sanctions brought Iranian leaders to the negotiations table in order to seek relief from those sanctions.

The United States, together with the other nations that are part of the "P5+1" group, entered into negotiations with the Iranian regime to find a diplomatic solution and identify a deal that truly dismantles and reverses Iran's nuclear weapons capability. The group issued an extension to the negotiations when it did not reach a deal by the November 24, 2014 deadline.

Therefore, we resolve:

The Orthodox Union believes that the focus of American and international policymakers as well as advocates must remain clearly on the goal of preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons capability. Thus, any agreement to be concluded and approved must be a deal which achieves that goal, and "no deal is better than a bad deal" which falls short of that goal.

The Orthodox Union believes the parameters and content of an acceptable agreement are those set forth in a letter from U.S. Senators to President Obama dated March 18, 2014. These include the necessity for a robust and intrusive compliance inspection regime.

The Orthodox Union shall support Congressional legislation that would address Iranian compliance violations and impose additional sanctions in the event that the six-month extension fails to reverse Iran's progress toward a nuclear weapon.

The Orthodox Union will continue to work with Congress and the White House to ensure that Iran's efforts to achieve a nuclear weapons capability are halted and disbanded.

## **A Summary of Standing Policy Positions of the Orthodox Union<sup>1</sup>**

### **The Orthodox Union and the North American Jewish Community**

#### **1. Jewish Outreach**

NCSY is a youth movement of the Orthodox Union that works to enhance and the Jewish lives of high school youth. Yachad seeks to enrich the Jewish lives and opportunities for people with special needs and Our Way seeks to do the same for the hearing impaired. The Seif Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus is the Orthodox Union's effort to bolster Torah lives at American universities. The OU resolves to continue to take vigorous measures to ensure that these critical programs receive the guidance, resources and oversight necessary to achieve its goals.

#### **2. Jewish Education**

The Orthodox Union is strongly committed to the importance of a comprehensive Jewish education and to working to promote policies and initiatives which make day school tuition more affordable.

#### **3. Homeland Security for the Jewish Community**

The Orthodox Union will continue and increase its work with synagogues and schools in our community in the arena of physical safety and security. The Orthodox Union will seek to facilitate the provision of expert guidance on security matters to member synagogues. The Orthodox Union will continue to work to increase the availability of financial assistance – including government funds – to community institutions deemed at-risk and in need of such assistance.

#### **4. Communal Propriety**

The OU urges our synagogues to develop appropriate guidelines for their own activities and for limiting ostentatious consumption and soaring expenses.

The OU's divisions will work to prepare and disseminate educational materials and programming to stress and bolster the community's commitments to ethical behavior.

#### **5. The Jewish Woman**

a. *Women's Learning* – The OU urges the Orthodox community to increase opportunities for women to pursue and disseminate Torah knowledge and values in accordance with Halacha, and we continue our practice of having sophisticated shiurim and presentations by and for women at our conventions and retreats.

b. *Leadership* –The OU calls for increased efforts, consistent with Halacha, for the administration of the Orthodox Union to include and encourage women to participate in leadership positions in our organization.

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted by previous Convention Resolutions or resolutions adopted by the Board of Directors

6. The Jewish Home; Domestic Violence
  - a. *Prevention* – The OU resolves to support legislation that combats domestic violence, and to encourage our legislators to continually explore ways to prevent these crimes and appropriately punish its perpetrators.
  - b. *Response* – The OU supports the training of rabbinical, health, social service, educational, religious and criminal justice personnel as well as Orthodox social workers and family counselors to recognize the symptoms and to properly respond to cases of domestic violence in the Jewish community.
7. Gittin – The Problem of Agunot
  - a. The Orthodox Union encourages all Jews seeking divorce to obtain a proper *get* from Halachically competent rabbinical authorities in addition to obtaining a secular divorce in order to halt the tragic and growing division of the Jewish Community that results when these measures are not undertaken.
  - b. *Prevention* –The OU resolves to increase the use of pre-nuptial agreements endorsed by the Rabbinical Council of America and Beth Din of America, which attempt to reduce the possibility of a *get* being inappropriately withheld or delayed. We particularly urge rabbis in our community to encourage the use of these agreements when they officiate at weddings.
  - c. *Response* – The OU supports steps endorsed by Halacha which resort to the secular legislature and courts in seeking to redress cases in which a *get* is being inappropriately withheld or delayed.

## **The Orthodox Union and Contemporary American Life**

8. Religion and the State
  - a. *Religion and State in the United States* – The OU supports the increasing consensus of a religiously informed, but tolerant “public square.” This consensus supports the full participation of all Americans, including those individuals and institutions whose beliefs and actions are informed by faith, in America’s public life. It champions the notion that religion is not merely a “private matter” to be excluded from the public sphere, but that our society is all the stronger when it lets voices of faith into its public conversations. The OU believes that this moderate approach is one that will be most beneficial to all Americans of faith, including American Jews.
  - b. *Religious Accommodation in the Workplace* –The Orthodox Union continues to seek to secure the passage of the Workplace Religious Freedom Act which would restore to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act protections designed to prod employers to accommodate the religious observances of their employees when it is reasonable to do so.
  - c. *Religious Observance in Public Schools* –The Orthodox Union opposes efforts to promote formal, state-sponsored prayer in the public

school and at school-sponsored activities. We continue to strongly support public schools' accommodation of student's rights to personal religious expression as well as the right of voluntary religious groups and associations to utilize public school facilities for religion-neutral criteria outside of regular school hours.

- d. *Charitable Choice* – The Orthodox Union supports the notion that religious institutions should be eligible to receive government subsidies for social service programs on the basis of religion-neutral criteria when the government already supports these programs if given by other non-governmental service providers.

9. Anti-Semitism and Racism

The Orthodox Union supports effective civil rights legislation that will address the problems of social, religious and gender discrimination in order to secure equal employment opportunity for all while eschewing quotas.

10. The Fate of Jonathan Pollard

The Orthodox Union supports ending Jonathon Pollard's incarceration through parole or commutation.

11. Support for the Family

The Orthodox Union promotes initiatives that provide increased support for quality childcare that empower parents to choose the type of childcare they deem most appropriate for their child. In this regard, we believe public policy must allow parents to choose which outside childcare facility – including faith-based facilities – in which to place their child. The Orthodox Union supports continued efforts to reform the tax code in a family friendly manner such as the elimination of the “marriage penalty” and the possibility for “income splitting.”

12. Criminal Justice Issues

- a. *Death Penalty* – The Orthodox Union supports efforts to place a moratorium on executions in the United States and the creation of a commission to review the death penalty procedures within the American judicial system.
- b. *Gun Regulation* – We endorse common sense gun regulation including banning of certain sophisticated attack weapons, and continue to support meaningful national gun control efforts.

13. Biotechnology Research

The Orthodox Union supports efforts, structured in a manner consistent with preserving society's veneration of human life, to allow for the full development of embryonic stem cell and therapeutic cloning research in the United States, Israel and elsewhere, including support for public funding of such research within the United States.

#### 14. Energy Policy

The Orthodox Union supports efforts to increase energy efficiency in home, car and office through improved and more effective utilization of our resources. We support an increase of “CAFÉ” standards and we similarly favor full exploration of the Alaskan Oil Fields subject to rigorous maintenance of environmental standards.

### **The Orthodox Union and Israel**

#### 15. Support for Israel

- a. *Aliyah and Tourism* – The Orthodox Union continues to encourage *aliyah* and positive Israel experiences among its members. We stand behind our brethren in Israel and will work to increase our commitment to tourism to Israel. We urge our constituencies to organize trips and congregational tours to Israel during vacation periods, and to conduct seminars and conventions in Israel.
- b. *Soldiers Missing in Action* -- *Shabbat Parashat VaYeishev* should be designated as a *Shabbat Ne'edarei Tzahal* at which time all Orthodox Union synagogue rabbis will be asked to address the issue of the Israeli MIAs in *Shabbat drashot* and prayers, and encourage political action on their behalf.
- c. The Orthodox Union will work with other partners in the pro-Israel community to counter the Boycott-Divestment-Sanctions movement and its actions to delegitimize Israel.

#### 16. Peace and Security

The Orthodox Union shall lobby U.S. and Israeli leaders to refuse to give recognition to any Palestinian government unless such a government explicitly renounces violence, agrees to honor all past agreements with Israel and concretely demonstrates its capacity to dismantle terrorist infrastructures and eliminate educational programs which incite hostility to Israelis and Jews.

### **The Orthodox Union and the Global Community**

#### 17. The Iranian Threat

The Orthodox Union shall support legislation and other methods as appropriate in the United States and elsewhere to deter Iran from its support of terrorism and to prevent Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons.

#### 18. Counterterrorism & Anti-Proliferation

The Orthodox Union supports and will promote legislation and other measures that will deter the abilities of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and other rogue nations to develop non-conventional weapons and to continue to foster and perpetrate acts of terror and violence.

19. International Religious Freedom

That the Orthodox Union shall continue to speak out against religious persecution around the globe. That the Orthodox Union shall work to ensure the continued implementation of the International Religious Freedom Act by the United States government.

20. International Criminal Court

Vigorously oppose the politicization and misuse of the ICC, which should be a completely non-political body.