

Evangelical Leaders in US, Israel Praise Netanyahu for Stopping Legislation to Ban the Gospel in Israel

JERUSALEM, ISRAEL – A former U.S. State Department official and Evangelical leaders in the United States and Israel were quick to thank Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday after he publicly vowed to block a bill by members of his own governing coalition making it illegal for followers of Jesus in Israel to discuss the Gospel message with other Israelis.

An article on Sunday by ALL ISRAEL NEWS first broke the **story of the dangerous bill** in which **two ultra-Orthodox members of Knesset – Moshe Gafni and Yaakov Asher** – were determined to outlaw anyone from sharing the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah in Israel, and punish violators with prison sentences.

Sam Brownback – former U.S. ambassador for international religious freedom in the Trump-Pence administration – was the **first American leader to publicly sound the alarm** about what a threat to religious freedom and human rights the bill posed.

Brownback also became the first to praise Netanyahu for taking a strong stand against the bill.

“Bibi Netanyahu is an amazing leader of courage,” Brownback told ALL ISRAEL NEWS in a text message on Wednesday. “I applaud his quick and decisive move to address what could have become a major issue.”

Later on Wednesday, I interviewed Brownback via Zoom from his home in Kansas.

He went further in expressing his gratitude to Netanyahu.

He also praised the State of Israel for being “a beacon of religious liberty” in the Middle East and a model for other nations to follow.

A HIGHLY SENSITIVE ISSUE

Brownback acknowledged that the issue of talking about one’s religious faith with another person – and even hoping to persuade that person to change religions – is a highly sensitive issue, especially between Jews and Christians.

But he noted that the freedom to not only hold one’s religious beliefs but to be able to discuss them openly with others is part of the UN Charter on Human Rights, to which Israel is a signatory.

Brownback emphasized that another fundamental right enshrined in the UN document is the right to change one’s faith if a person wants to do so.

That, too, he said, is a highly sensitive issue in the Jewish world, as in much of the world, but vitally important.

NETANYAHU’S QUICK ACTION

Initially, I heard hesitation – even resistance – from some Netanyahu confidantes about the need for him to issue a statement because they believed that there was no chance that such a bill would ever really become law.

Nevertheless, Evangelical leaders were **respectful but adamant** that private assurances were not enough.

They asked for a clear, definitive statement from the prime minister.

And that’s exactly what they got.

At 4:43 p.m. Israel time on Wednesday, Netanyahu issued the

following tweet in Hebrew and English to his 2.2 million followers.

“We will not advance any law against the Christian community.”

Soon thereafter, one of the bill’s authors – Gafni – issued a statement that he was withdrawing his proposal from consideration.

As the original ALL ISRAEL NEWS coverage spread – including statements of concern by prominent American Evangelical leaders – it was quickly picked up by a wide range of Evangelical Christian media outlets.

The story was picked by major Israeli news outlets, as well.

As the prime minister and his staff heard from more and more Evangelicals and reporters about the issue, Netanyahu took action.

And just like Brownback, many Christian leaders were quick to express their gratitude to Netanyahu for his strong stand on this issue and for being such a solid and valued friend of the Christian world for so many years.

PRAISE FOR NETANYAHU FROM PROMINENT EVANGELICAL LEADERS

“I want to give a special word of thanks to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for making the right decision for the people of Israel and thousands of us who visit Israel every year from around the world,” said Greg Laurie, senior pastor of Harvest Church in Orange County, California, and the author of JESUS REVOLUTION, a book telling the story of the greatest spiritual awakening in the U.S. in the past century, which recently was turned into a very popular movie in the U.S.

“I’m so glad to see Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu promise to oppose the bill in Knesset that was targeting Christians, that would have outlawed the ability of anyone to share their faith with others,” said Mrs. Nadine Maenza, the former chair of the

U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. "This is an important right for all people of all faiths and is a win for religious freedom!"

Dr. Juergen Buehler, president of the Israel Christian Embassy Jerusalem, told ALL ISRAEL NEWS, "We appreciate the assurance from Prime Minister Netanyahu that the proposed anti-missionary bill will not go forward, and we thank him for speedily putting this matter to rest. He has done much over his long political career to strengthen and guard Israel's relations with Christians worldwide, and our embrace of this nation is warmly returned."

"As the president of Concerned Women for America, the largest women's public policy organization in the United States, I am once again so thankful for Benjamin Netanyahu," said Penny Nance, head of the largest conservative faith-based women's organization in the U.S. with some 500,000 members. "Our members are mostly Evangelical Christians and like me, deeply love and support Israel. We will continue to be strong defenders of the important US-Israel relationship. Prime Minister Netanyahu has once again proven to be a friend to Christians, and a worthy ally."

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