

Pro-Israel Evangelicals Urge Netanyahu to Stop Ultra-Orthodox Bill to Outlaw Sharing the Good News of Jesus in Israel

JERUSALEM, ISRAEL – On Sunday, ALL ISRAEL NEWS was the first news outlet to report that two influential members of the Israeli Knesset (parliament) have just introduced a bill to make it illegal for Israeli or foreign Christians to share their faith in Jesus with other Israelis, be they Jewish, Muslim, or of some other faith or no faith.

The bill was authored by Knesset Members Moshe Gafni and Yaakov Asher.

Both are ultra-Orthodox Jewish members of the United Torah Judaism (UTJ) political party.

As a party, UTJ has seven seats in the 120-seat Knesset and is, therefore, a vital component of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's 64-seat majority government.

If the bill were actually to become law, violators could be prosecuted and sentenced to "one year imprisonment" for explaining their faith in Jesus to an adult.

Violators face "two years imprisonment" if they discuss their faith with a minor under the age of 18.

However, the bill doesn't only make it illegal to have a personal conversation about one's faith with an Israeli.

It also outlaws the sharing of New Testament theology via online videos, online articles, social media, written

literature and other forms of media.

[To read the actual text of the bill in English, please click [here](#).]

[To read the text of the bill in its original Hebrew, please click [here](#).]

EVANGELICALS REACT TO BILL AUTHORED BY KNESSET MEMBERS GAFNI AND ASHER

Evangelical and Messianic Jewish leaders in Israel are very concerned that this new bill could pass in the current political environment.

Why?

Because so many members of Netanyahu's government coalition this time around are hardline Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jewish Knesset members who are aggressively seeking to impose policies based on their theological beliefs on all of Israel with the force of law behind them.

They are, therefore, concerned that the rights of religious minorities could be trampled.

That's why they are looking to Netanyahu for help.

As we reported on Sunday, Netanyahu has long been a great friend and ally of Christians all over the world.

He routinely speaks to Evangelical Christian audiences at conferences, hosts an annual "Christian Media Summit" in Jerusalem for Evangelical journalists and loves to invite Christians from all over the world to come and tour the Land of Israel.

Netanyahu has also been a strong and unwavering defender of protecting the human rights of free speech, freedom of religion and freedom of conscience for all Israelis, including

Christians.

What's more, over the years Netanyahu and his center-right Likud party have consistently shot down any bills that would have threatened the rights of Christians here in Israel, even though they don't agree theologically with Christians about who Jesus is.

Sources close to Netanyahu in the last 24 hours have told ALL ISRAEL NEWS that the prime minister would never allow this bill to pass.

However, major pro-Israel Evangelical leaders in the U.S. are asking the prime minister for more than private assurances.

Evangelicals are asking Netanyahu to make a formal statement opposing the Gafni-Asher bill and publicly promising that such a direct assault on free speech and religious freedom will never become Israeli law.

Here are the statements that have been sent to ALL ISRAEL NEWS since Sunday:

- "I love Israel for many reasons, including because it's the only democracy in the Middle East. Religious freedom, including the right to change one's beliefs, is at the very heart of any democracy. Given Prime Minister Netanyahu's long-standing friendship and alliance with Christians and solid commitment to religious freedom and free speech, I pray that he will make it clear soon that this disturbing bill will never become law on his watch." – **Dr. Jack Graham, senior pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, and former President of the Southern Baptist Convention (2002-2003), largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. with 16 million members**
- "For the past 75 years, Israel has been an island of democracy, religious freedom, and stability amidst the

raging seas of war, revolution, religious hatred, intolerance, and even genocide in the Middle East. Nowhere have followers of Jesus been safer in the Middle East more than in Israel since its modern founding in 1948. But I must say that I quite concerned by the introduction of this new bill in the Knesset that would make it illegal for Israelis who follow Jesus from talking about Him and the New Testament with fellow Israelis, punishable by prison time. This is a grave threat to democracy and to fundamental human rights, including religious freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of conscience. I call on the 60 million Evangelicals in the United States – and many others around the world – to join me in praying that the bill is stopped. Let's pray particularly that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu – who has always been a true friend of Christians – will act wisely and quickly to prevent such a law from passing.” – **J. Kenneth Blackwell, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Human Rights Commission**

- “As an Evangelical leader who deeply loves, publicly supports and strongly advocates for the relationship, I am appalled at the idea of Christians being prosecuted for sharing their faith. In Matthew chapter 28, in what is widely known as ‘The Great Commission,’ Jesus commanded us to share our faith, which we must do with love and respect. Christians in the United States are counting on Prime Minister Netanyahu and Knesset members to reject this bill, which is a violation of the human rights of our Brothers and Sisters in Israel. This kind of oppressive policy would be more indicative of hardline Muslim regimes than the democratic Jewish state. Please don't violate Christians' right to religious freedom.” – **Penny Nance, president of Concerned Women for America, the largest conservative Christian women's organization in the U.S. which more than 500,000 members**

- “Never in history have so many Christians – and people of faith – had access to the holy sites in Israel as they have in the modern State of Israel. This is because of Israel’s sacrosanct commitment to religious freedom as a democracy. I am sure this will not change and it must not change. At the heart of religious freedom is God-ordained freedom of choice, the freedom to believe, not believe, or to change one’s beliefs” – **Greg Laurie, senior pastor of Harvest Church in Orange County, California, and a member of the White House Faith Advisory Committee (2017 to 2020)**
- “A key pillar for all presidential hopefuls in the first in the nation Caucus state, Iowa, is their alliance and steadfast commitment to standing with and blessing the nation of Israel. Thousands of Christians journey to the Holy Land every year to celebrate their Faith and to showcase their commitment to this special and shared Land, Israel. Genuine faith is not imposed but, instead, embraced freely. Israel understands this more than most which is why the Knesset and all leaders of Israel should vigorously champion true Religious Liberty.” – **Bob Vander Plaats, president and CEO, The FAMILY Leader, the leading faith-based organization in Iowa**

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