

Harriet P. Schleifer
Chair

William C. Daroff
Chief Executive Officer

Malcolm Hoenlein
Vice Chair



July 14, 2023

Ambassador Karin Olofsdotter
Embassy of Sweden
2900 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20007

Dear Ambassador Olofsdotter

We are dismayed by the decision of the Stockholm police to permit the burning of a Jewish Torah scroll and other holy books. It is a direct affront to the vulnerable Jewish minority in Sweden and our community around the world. This heinous act follows the burning of a Quran in front of a mosque.

A torah scroll is one of Judaism's most sacred religious items, containing the first five books of the bible. They are handwritten on vellum, a painstaking process which can take months and is strictly governed by religious laws. Their care, use, and eventual disposal are also strictly regulated by Jewish law.

The violent destruction of Jewish religious texts has a long and painful history for the Jewish community stretching back over 2,000 years. During Greek and Roman persecutions of Jews, numerous texts and torah scrolls were burned, including an instance of Roman soldiers wrapping an important rabbi in the scroll before setting both alight. Jewish religious texts were routinely burned during the Middle Ages, most famously by King Louis IX of France, who was later canonized as a saint, as well as a long succession of popes. During the Spanish Inquisition, bibles were burned by the church and throughout the Holocaust, the Nazis organized numerous public book burnings of Jewish texts.

This history of the burning of Jewish texts coincides with our community's history of persecution, expulsion, and massacre and is the living embodiment of Heinrich Heine's prophetic observation that "where one burns books, one will soon burn people." Additionally, the burning of holy Jewish texts outside of the Israeli embassy creates a perverse link between the Jewish community of Sweden and the State of Israel, which may lead people to hold Swedish Jews directly responsible for the actions of the Israeli government and invite antisemitic attacks.

Alpha Epsilon Pi
Ameinu
America-Israel Friendship League
American Friends of Likud
American Israel Public
Affairs Committee
American Jewish Committee
American Jewish Congress
American Jewish Joint
Distribution Committee
American Sephardi Federation
American Zionist Movement
Americans for Peace Now
AMIT
Anti-Defamation League
ARZA
B'nai B'rith International
Bnai Zion
CAMERA
Central Conference of American
Rabbis
Emanah of America
Friends of the Israel Defense
Forces
Greater Miami Jewish Federation
Hadassah, Women's Zionist
Organization of America
HIAS
Hillel International
JCC Association of North America
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Federations of North
America
Jewish Institute for National
Security of America
Jewish Labor Committee
Jewish National Fund
Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan
Chicago
Jewish Women International
Mercaz USA,
Zionist Organization of the
Conservative Movement
NA'AMAT USA
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Young Israel
NCSEJ - National Coalition
Supporting Eurasian Jewry
ORT America, Inc.
Rabbinical Assembly
Rabbinical Council of America
Religious Zionists of America
UJA-Federation of New York
Union for Reform Judaism
Union of Orthodox Jewish
Congregations of America
United Synagogue of Conservative
Judaism
WIZO
Women of Reform Judaism
Women's League for Conservative
Judaism
Workers Circle
World Zionist Executive, USA
Zionist Organization of America

We ask that your government take all necessary and legal steps to halt this vile demonstration of hate, as well as to redouble Sweden's efforts to counter antisemitism and educate its citizens about the Jewish experience throughout history.

Respectfully,



Harriet Schleifer
Chair

William C. Daroff
Chief Executive Officer



633 Third Avenue • New York, NY 10017 • 212.318.6111 • Fax 212.644.4135
www.conferenceofpresidents.org | info@conferenceofpresidents.org