

## RESOLUTION ON HIGH CAPACITY AMMUNITION MAGAZINES

*Background*

The “Large Capacity Ammunition Feeding Device Act” was introduced in both the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate in January, 2011, seeking to limit high capacity firearm magazines, with the following provisions:

- a) Amends the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act to prohibit: (1) the transfer or possession of a large capacity ammunition feeding device, except for its lawful possession within the United States on or before the date of this Act's enactment; and (2) the importation or bringing into the United States of such a device.
- b) Sets forth exceptions to such ban.
- c) Sets penalties for violations.
- d) Requires a large capacity ammunition feeding device manufactured after this Act's enactment to be identified by a serial number that clearly shows that the device was manufactured after enactment and such other identification as the Attorney General may prescribe.

*Resolution*

Whereas in light of the tragic murders of nine innocents and the attempted assassination of United States Representative Gabrielle Giffords, and the wounding of others, attention is once again focused on weapons that have the potential to do great harm in just seconds;

Whereas recent history from Columbine High School to Virginia Tech and now to Tucson has shown the devastating effect of accessibility to high capacity ammunition magazines that can discharge as many as thirty rounds of ammunition;

Whereas recently even gun rights advocates have suggested that it might be time to reinstate the magazine-size rule which the United States Congress allowed to lapse with the ban on assault weapons in 2004;

Whereas the Torah teaches us “*choose life*” (Deuteronomy 30:19);

Whereas the Rabbinic tradition (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5) teaches that every human life is unique and precious, created in the divine image;

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly has consistently (resolutions in 1990, 1995) called for the limitation of easy access to handguns and semi-automatic weapons; and

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly, has signed on as a supporter of Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence which is advocating for passage of this bill.

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly support legislation to limit the accessibility to “high capacity ammunition feeding devices” such as HB 308 introduced by United States Representative Carolyn McCarthy and SB 32 introduced by United States Senator Frank Lautenberg; and

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly commend our colleague Rabbi David Lerner for creating the interfaith effort [www.clergyagainstabullets.org](http://www.clergyagainstabullets.org) and encourage our members to support this effort.

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF EQUAL RIGHTS AND INCLUSION FOR GAY, LESBIAN,  
BISEXUAL,  
AND TRANSGENDER (GLBT) PERSONS

*Preamble*

*“Great is human dignity, since it overrides a negative precept of the Torah.”* (Sanhedrin 19b)

In 1990, the Rabbinical Assembly passed a resolution entitled “Gay and Lesbian Jews,” which called us to:

- 1) Work for full and equal civil rights for gays and lesbians in our national life
- 2) Deplore violence against gays and lesbians
- 3) Encourage inclusion of gay and lesbian Jews in our congregations, and
- 4) Increase our awareness of issues facing gay and lesbian Jews.

Since that time, we have learned much more about the nature of sexual identity, ways to create more inclusive communities, the necessity to combat discrimination and the harmful effect of bullying. In a 2002 national survey found that more than three quarters of teens (78%) report that children and adolescents who are gay or are thought to be gay are teased or bullied and studies have shown that GLBT teens are 1.5-7 times more likely to attempt suicide<sup>1</sup>.

In 2006, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement accepted three *teshuvot* on gays and lesbians in the rabbinate that reflect the wide spectrum of views in the Conservative Movement on the halakhic issues related to sexual identity. Despite our halakhic differences, we stand united in our opposition to discrimination against anyone based on sexual identity and in our commitment to make our synagogues and our community more welcoming and safe places for all.

*Resolution*

Whereas gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) Jews are an integral part of our families, our synagogues and, our communities and gay and lesbian rabbis now serve openly in our Movement;

Whereas GLBT couples still face legal discrimination in areas such as civil recognition of their relationships, health care and social security; and

Whereas GLBT Jews face discrimination and are victims of hate crimes in the broader community, based both on religion and sexual orientation.

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly reaffirm its 1990 resolution and extend its call for full and equal civil rights to bisexual and transgender persons;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly support the extension of civil rights and privileges granted to married persons to same sex couples;

Be it further resolved that we call on Rabbinical Assembly members to work with their communities to develop an action plan to create a safe and welcoming atmosphere for GLBT individuals. Such plans may

---

<sup>1</sup> Suicide Prevention Resource Center. (2008). *Suicide risk and prevention for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth*. Newton, MA: Education Development Center, Inc.

include, but not be limited to, the use of inclusive language in our marketing materials, membership forms, etc;

Be it further resolved that we call on Rabbinical Assembly members, within their understanding of the halakhic issues as the *mara d'atra*, to find appropriate ways to include GLBT individuals and their families in lifecycle events;

Be it further resolved that Rabbinical Assembly members should actively work to create safe spaces within the Jewish community for teens and adults to discuss issues related to sexual identity;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly shall join together in coalition with appropriate religious and secular organizations and encourage congregations to become involved in local and national anti-bullying campaigns; and

Be it further resolved that the leadership of the Rabbinical Assembly shall develop resource materials for its members to support their work in this area and help make members aware of appropriate resources developed by other organizations.

## RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF DARFUR AND SOUTH SUDAN INDEPENDENCE

“There is a real danger that the media, United States Government and international community will lose focus in the weeks and months ahead. During this critical time, we need your help to keep the spotlight on Sudan.” Mark Lotwis, Save Darfur Coalition

*Background*

## 1. South Sudan Referendum

- The South Sudanese Referendum Commission chair has announced that in the referendum held in January, 2011, 98.6% of voters voted for secession, and 1.4% voted for unity. [With more than three million votes cast](#), the turnout soared past the 60% threshold necessary for the referendum to be valid.<sup>2</sup>
- A number of post-referendum issues remain unresolved, including citizenship, border demarcation, the Abyei region,<sup>3</sup> wealth and power-sharing, popular consultations and transparency. Please note that the South will not become officially independent until July 9, 2011 and these issues have the potential for fomenting violence.

## 2. Darfur

- The Rabbinical Assembly has passed several resolutions (2005, 2007) calling for international intervention to solve this international humanitarian crisis. In 2007, the Rabbinical Assembly called on the International Criminal Court to prosecute Darfur’s President Bashir.
- In general, the situation in Darfur continues to deteriorate. According to a letter from Darfur diaspora leaders: “With the international communities’ focus on referendum for independence in South Sudan, Darfur has been largely overlooked and Omar Al-Basher’s regime has taken the opportunity to further oppress Darfuri civil society and initiate attacks against civilians.”
- Over four million people in Darfur and Southern Sudan have been affected by war and have depended completely on food aid for the past eight years.<sup>4</sup> Most of them have been internally displaced and remain subject to direct attacks, abduction, arrest, rape and the deprivation of food.
- Food shortages, missing health services and widespread malnutrition are increasing again. UNAMID (African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur) remains ineffective and restricted by the government of Sudan.
- 200 civilians were arrested and tortured and the market was burned down by government security forces in the city of Nartity. They were released after protests asking the City Commissioner to intervene.
- In 2010 alone, the conflict in Darfur claimed at least 2300 lives, according to a recent UN report. In addition, over 40,000 civilians were displaced just in the last few weeks of December by government aerial attacks on villages and clashes between rebel groups and Sudanese armed forces.

---

<sup>2</sup> “South Sudan Referendum Commission Office issues press release on progress of referendum in the South” [Sudanese News Agency \(Suna\)](#), 14 Jan 2011.

<sup>3</sup> “Abyei is a fertile region that has oil deposits in between north and south Sudan.” From: *Sudanese, UN officials work to quell violence in border region amid fears of more attacks*. Maggie Flick in [Canadian Press](#), March 4, 2011

<sup>4</sup> “Rising Violence and Stalled Peace in Darfur.” John Campbell. COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS. Jan. 25, 2011 (online)

- Talks between the Sudanese government and Darfur’s rebels have collapsed, and UN and AU mediators are turning their attention away from reaching a peace agreement.<sup>5</sup>

*Resolution*

“In a free society where terrible wrongs exist, some are guilty, all are responsible.”

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel.

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly is a founding member of the Save Darfur Coalition (savedarfur.org) and has been at the forefront of its activities, it is deeply concerned about both the success of the referendum on independence in South Sudan and the deteriorating conditions in Darfur;

Whereas violence against Darfur’s civilians continues unabated, with over 2,000 civilian lives lost just in 2010, and over 40,000 displaced in December by government attacks;

Whereas over the past decade the Rabbinical Assembly, in conjunction with the Save Darfur Coalition, has called numerous times both on the United States government and on the United Nations to make more efforts to save and protect the innocent civilian residents of Darfur, with some success;

Whereas the Sudanese citizens of South Sudan, called “the Jews of our time,”<sup>6</sup> who have been brutalized by enslavement, rape and murder by the North Sudanese dominated government of Sudan, have overwhelmingly in a “peaceful, free and fair” vote indicated their desire for independence; and

Whereas as Jews, we understand well the consequences of silence and global indifference from the international community to crimes against humanity and understand our moral obligation to accept our responsibility for righting these wrongs.

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly urge its international membership to call on its governments and leaders to:

- Ensure that the international community remain engaged in Sudan given that the South will not become officially independent until July 9, 2011, especially given there are still several outstanding post-referendum issues to be resolved;
- Continue to press the Sudanese leadership to come to a peaceful resolution of these outstanding issues before the July 9 deadline;
- Continue to prioritize a high level engagement and diplomatic surge, with enforceable incentives and pressures in order to influence the situation;
- Work to stop the violence in Darfur and develop a comprehensive peace process in that war-ravaged area;
- Increase humanitarian aid and ensure access for delivery to those suffering in Darfur; and

Be it further resolved that members of the Rabbinical Assembly continue to be involved in fundraising, programmatic and other activities on behalf of the Save Darfur Coalition in their communities.

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> “The *Vote in South Sudan for ‘the Jews of our time.’*” Charles Jacobs in the Canadian Jewish Congress Bulletin, Jan.21,2011, (online)

## RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE ROTEM CONVERSION BILL IN ISRAEL

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly passed resolutions in 1990, 2001, 2007 and 2009 in support of conversions of those committed to Jewish life in accordance with halakhah in the State of Israel from all main streams of Judaism;

Whereas a bill proposed by MK David Rotem in summer 2010 would for the first time legislatively grant the power over conversion to one religious stream through the office of the chief rabbinat;

Whereas conversion is a direct channel to the Law of Return, such granting to one religious stream undermines the principles of freedom and religion and conscience that are among the hallmarks of Israel's democratic society; and

Whereas a moratorium has been agreed upon through July 1, 2011 during which time a professional group will meet to address bureaucratic delays and obstacles encountered by converts whom the non-Orthodox movements believe already are clearly entitled to full status under existing Israeli law.

Therefore be it resolved the Rabbinical Assembly call upon the government of Israel to accept the validity of conversions under the auspices of the main streams of Judaism, particularly Masorti and the IDF to reduce the backlog of those who seek to become Jewish in accordance with halakhah; and

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly call upon the government of Israel to recognize and encourage the principles of pluralism and mutual respect within Israeli society as exemplified by the extraordinary work of our Rabbinical Assembly colleagues in Israel and the Masorti movement in Israel.

## RESOLUTION ON DURBAN III

Whereas the book of Psalms teaches, *“Guard your tongue from evil, your lips from deceitful speech. Shun evil and do good, seek amity and pursue it.”* (Psalms 34:14-15);

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly is on record with previous resolutions applauding the United Nations for rescinding Zionism is Racism (1992) and calling upon ourselves to improve relations with other races and religions (1993);

Whereas the United Nations has scheduled the “Durban III Conference” in New York City for September 2011 to take place only days after America marks the tenth anniversary of 9/11;

Whereas the first Durban Conference in 2001 produced the Durban Declaration, which singly and exclusively charged Israel with racism and became a platform for anti-Semitic and anti-American demonstrations;

Whereas the second Durban Conference in 2009 was similarly a pretense for anti-Israel, anti-Semitic and anti-American expression;

Whereas alone among the nations, Canada declared before the second conference that it would not be party to that agenda, withheld its support and became the model for the subsequent withdrawal of other nations;

Whereas the third conference has a similarly objectionable agenda, causing Canada and Israel to announce that they will not participate; and

Whereas eighteen United States Senators petitioned the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, urging removal of the United States from among the participants.

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly condemn the United Nations General Assembly vote to convene a special meeting commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Durban conference on racism which discredited Israel;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly commend those countries who voted against convening Durban III: Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Netherlands, Palau, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the United Kingdom and the United States;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly declare the Durban III gathering one that will undermine the fight against racism; and

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly urge the government of the United States, President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to speak out against the pervasive racism that will ultimately be expressed at Durban III.

RESOLUTION ON THE COMMUTATION OF JONATHAN POLLARD'S SENTENCE

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly has passed three resolutions (1992, 1994 and 1995) supporting clemency for Jonathan Pollard;

Whereas this past year marked twenty-five years of incarceration for Jonathan Pollard;

Whereas his sentence of life in prison abrogated the plea bargain with the federal prosecutor signed in June 1986, and now leaves Pollard serving a longer sentence than any other person convicted not of treason, but of the lesser crime of spying for a friendly nation;

Whereas Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a letter to President Barack Obama dated January 4, 2011, issued the first official written request from the government of Israel for clemency, noting that "Both Mr. Pollard and the Government of Israel have repeatedly expressed remorse for these actions, and Israel will continue to abide by its commitment that such wrongful actions will never be repeated"; and

Whereas members of the United States Congress and former security officials have recently joined with leaders of American Jewish organizations to appeal to President Obama to commute Pollard's sentence to time served.

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly urge President Obama to commute the sentence of Jonathan J. Pollard to time served;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly join with other organizations to attain clemency for Mr. Pollard; and

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly urge any and all American Jewish organizations which have not publicly taken a stand in support of Jonathan Pollard to do so at this time.

## RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

*You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:19)*

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly has continuously and consistently advocated for the rights of immigrants in resolutions passed in 1992, 1995, 1997, 2003 and 2007, and the Rabbinical Assembly had distributed a High Holiday packet on the issue;

Whereas there is recognition of the need for appropriate border enforcement measures given legitimate security concerns and the interests of American citizens and workers;

Whereas many of the approximately 12 million undocumented individuals and their families currently residing in the United States are law abiding and taxpaying, live in fear due to workplace raids, harsh detentions and deportations brought about through state laws and legislation, which are often costly and destructive to states' economies; and

Whereas proposals have been put forward to deny citizenship to children of undocumented immigrants or those on temporary visas born in the United States thus subverting the intent of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly call upon the United States Congress to work towards comprehensive immigration reform in order to streamline our immigration system and deal with this problem in an effective and humane fashion;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly urge Congress to enact legislation to allow the children of the undocumented as well as foreign students studying here to become permanent residents on a path to citizenship and contribute their talents and skills to the civic and economic life of the United States; and

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly reaffirm its support for faith groups and organizations working on behalf of the rights of undocumented immigrants and legal immigrants in keeping with Jewish values and teachings.

## RESOLUTION ON HEALTH CARE

Whereas Jewish law mandates that the community provide affordable health care, as evidenced in a responsum on Medical Issues: “It has been enacted that in every place in which Jews live, the community sets aside a fund for care of the sick. When poor people are ill and cannot afford medical expense, the community sends them a doctor to visit them, and the medicine is paid for by the communal fund.” (Tzitz Eliezer [Rabbi Eliezer Yehuda Waldenberg, 20<sup>th</sup> century halakhic scholar]);

Whereas the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement passed a teshuvah (responsum): “Responsibilities for the Provision of Health Care” in 1998 that concluded, “The community bears ultimate responsibility to assure provision of needed health care for individuals who cannot afford it, as a matter of justice as well as a specific halakhic obligation.”;

Whereas on January 19, 2011, the United States House of Representatives passed a bill, entitled “Repealing the Job-Killing Health Care Law Act (H.R. 2),” which sought to repeal the Affordable Care Act; a measure which the United States Senate rejected in a vote taken on February 2, 2011. In addition, nearly two-dozen federal lawsuits have been filed trying to block portions of the Affordable Care Act;

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly has consistently resolved to support health care reform (2002 and 2008);

Whereas the Rabbinical Assembly is a member of the Faithful Reform in Health Care Coalition and has endorsed its statement “in support of quality and affordable health care for all because we see it as a moral calling”; and

Whereas the Affordable Care Act will give Americans new rights and benefits, “including helping more children get health coverage, ending lifetime and most annual limits on care, and giving patients access to recommended preventive services without cost sharing.” (healthcare.gov)

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly support the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010;

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly applaud the United States Senate for upholding the Affordable Health Care Act and express its disappointment that the United States House of Representatives passed “Repealing the Job-Killing Health Care Law Act”; and

Be it further resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly encourage the United States Congress to continue to promote a system of health care that is inclusive, affordable, accessible and accountable.

## RESOLUTION ON INTERNET PRIVACY

Whereas the Internet has been a great advance in human communication, and in particular has provided far-reaching resources and opportunities for Jewish study;

Whereas the Internet has also opened many opportunities for invasion of privacy, including the secret collection of personal data by commercial enterprises, government monitoring of social networks, and, in our own domain, the potential of congregations loaning or renting lists to raise funds;

Whereas Jewish law has long been concerned with protecting individual privacy, as we learn in Tractate Bava Batra (2a). The law of *hezek ri'ab*, the damage caused by looking, forbids a person from creating a window that looks into a neighbor's private domain, which by extension would prohibit unauthorized surveillance of any kind; and

Whereas this is the basis of the *takkanah* of Rabbenu Gershom (11<sup>th</sup> century), against opening and reading another person's mail, which remains in effect in Jewish law.

Therefore be it resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly

- Encourage congregations and all the organizations of our movement to assure the privacy of their membership data and communications;
- Support legislation and practices that require data collectors to provide individuals with clear advance notice about the types of data they collect and how that data will be treated;
- Support efforts to guarantee consumers' control over their own data; and
- In general, support efforts to protect people's privacy as an expression of our ongoing concern for *k'vod ha-b'riyot*, human dignity.