

Conference of Presidents Members Rebut Statement on Majority Leader Schumer Meeting

March 20, 2024: We are deeply disturbed by the condemnatory statement issued yesterday by the Conference of Presidents (COP) following a meeting with Majority Leader Schumer. Though the critical COP statement was made in the name of the CEO and President, it claims to speak for COP “membership” when in fact it clearly fails to reflect the diversity of views within the COP.

Each of us has slightly different takes on Senator Schumer’s speech: many of us welcomed his forceful condemnation of Hamas, his passionate call for the hostages’ release, his expression of pain for the humanitarian crisis gripping innocent Gazans, and his vivid critique of PM Netanyahu’s rejection of eventual demilitarized Palestinian statehood and sovereignty. Others have taken a different view.

Nonetheless, following Sen. Schumer’s meeting yesterday with COP members, COP leaders chose to independently issue their unduly harsh missive, which was divisive and unfair. Their statement does not reflect the views of several member entities who support much of the important content of Sen. Schumer’s speech, or even those who disagreed with some of what he said but understood that this speech was a constructive critique made by one of the U.S. Congress’ most passionate champions of a strong and safe Israel.

Since October 7, our community has been challenged in unprecedented ways. Each of us has sought to respond, leading by our commitment to a Jewish, democratic, pluralistic state of Israel. We and others have called for measures that ensure that Israel is strong and secure, that the hostages are released immediately, that humanitarian aid reaches Palestinians in Gaza, and that a future in which an Israeli and Palestinian state exist side by side in peace is not foreclosed.

At this critical moment, we urge the COP to clarify the processes it follows in deciding when and how to speak with the goal of more effectively reflecting the diversity of legitimate views that our organizations hold. The COP can play an essential role in that regard and in doing so it can foster debate that is, as our tradition teaches, “for the sake of heaven.”

Organizations:

Union for Reform Judaism

Jennifer Brodkey Kaufman (she/her)
Chair

Rabbi Rick Jacobs (he/him)
President

Ameinu

Kenneth Bob (he/him)

President

Americans for Peace Now

Hadar Susskind (he/him)

President and CEO

Jim Klutznick (he/him)

Chair of the Board

Association of Reform Zionists of America

Daryl Messinger (she/her)

Chair

Rabbi Josh Weinberg (he/him)

Director

Central Conference of American Rabbis

Rabbi Erica Asch (she/her)

President

Rabbi Hara E. Person (she/her)

Chief Executive

Jewish Labor Committee

Stuart Appelbaum (he/him)

President

Arieh Lebowitz (he/him)

Executive Director

Women of Reform Judaism

Sara Charney (she/her)

President

Rabbi Liz P. G. Hirsch (she/her)

Executive Director

Individuals:

Mark Hetfield (he/him)

President and CEO, HIAS

Jeff Blattner (he/him)

Chair, HIAS