



The Zionist Organization of the Conservative Movement

Our Platform

MERCAZ USA is the Zionist Organization of the Conservative/Masorti Movement, the voice of Conservative/Masorti Judaism within the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Jewish National Fund/ Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael, ensuring that our values are expressed at the highest level in regard to matters relating to Israel and the Jewish world. Conservative/Masorti Judaism was the first of the modern Jewish religious movements to embrace Zionism and has steadfastly remained at the forefront of the effort to promote its values: the centrality of Israel in the life and consciousness of the Jewish people and the unity of the Jewish people wherever they may live.

Our connection to the Land and State of Israel and its capital Jerusalem begins first and foremost with our people's 4000-year covenant with the Divine. This covenant has imposed upon us the responsibility not only to support and defend the State of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people but also to create in Zion an exemplary society — democratic and pluralistic — that empowers all streams of Jewish practice, guarantees the rights of all of its citizens, is uncompromising in its struggle for security even as it strives for peace with its Arab neighbors and is committed to protecting the environment and its natural resources.

MERCAZ Stands For:

An Open Pluralistic Jewish Society — A vote for MERCAZ is a vote for an Israeli society that celebrates Jewish values without limiting itself to one particular stream of Judaism. We insist on the acceptance and registration of all conversions, weddings and divorces performed by Conservative/Masorti rabbis in Israel and demand that all non-Orthodox rabbis functioning as community spiritual leaders receive State-funded salaries as do their Orthodox colleagues. We applaud the campaign to provide alternatives for marriage and divorce for all Israelis and support the concept of redeveloping the entire Western Wall plaza to answer the legitimate demands of the Conservative/Masorti Movement, the Reform Movement, the Women of the Wall and others who seek to pray according to their egalitarian and pluralistic traditions.

A Contemporary Zionist Agenda, including Aliyah, Hebrew and Zionist Education — A vote for MERCAZ is a vote for keeping Zionism relevant in the 21st Century as exemplified by the 2004 MERCAZ-initiated revision of the Jerusalem Program. MERCAZ USA supports a pro-active policy to combat anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, encourages Aliyah from all countries, champions the partnership between the Jewish Agency and Nefesh B'Nefesh and opposes all attempts to restrict the Law of Return. We also call for the strengthening of Jewish/Zionist education in the United States and throughout the world, including increasing the number of shlichim to college campuses and Jewish youth movements. We recognize the vital importance of Hebrew as a means of conveying Jewish culture and identity and are committed to joining with others to revitalize Hebrew language instruction and culture in the United States and throughout the world.

A Negotiated Two-State Settlement between Israel and the Palestinians — A vote for MERCAZ is a vote of support for a two-state solution – one Jewish and one Palestinian Arab – that is the declared policy of the current Israeli prime minister and of every other Israeli administration for the past ten years. These policies, based on the principles of territorial compromise, appropriate security arrangements and an explicit recognition of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people, will preserve Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. We support the government's decision to launch this past summer's operation against Hamas and back its insistence on Gaza's demilitarization as a condition to reconstruction. We expect the Palestinian Authority to fulfill its commitment to confiscate terrorist weapons, prepare its people to accept the right of Jewish statehood and stop incitement against Israel in its media, mosques and school textbooks.

Pro-Active Concern for Israel's Environment — A vote for MERCAZ is a vote for strengthening good governance and ecologically sound "green" policies within the Jewish National Fund/Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael as have been championed for the past decade by our MERCAZ representatives on the JNF/KKL Board of Directors. While mindful of the need to maintain development and security to meet Israel's needs in the 21st century, we urge more resources be dedicated for river restoration, mass transportation options and recycling projects and support the maintenance of policies aimed at preventing Israel's limited irreplaceable natural and water resources and green spaces from being sacrificed for low density housing projects and unnecessary highway construction.

Support for the Conservative/Masorti Movement — A vote for MERCAZ is a vote for strengthening the Conservative/Masorti Movement in Israel and throughout the world. We call for increasing the Jewish Agency's "Stream Funding" to bolster the institutions of Masorti Judaism in Israel — the Masorti Movement, Schechter Institute, TAL Schools and Fuchsberg Center— and the allocations from the WZO's Pluralism Unit to build Masorti Olami communities in South America, Europe, Ukraine and elsewhere around the world. MERCAZ also calls for enhanced funding to support North American Conservative programs in Israel, such as USY's Israel Pilgrimage, Camp Ramah's Israel Seminar, Schechter Day School Network Israel trips and the United Synagogue's NATIV and Conservative Yeshiva.

MERCAZ is Endorsed By: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, Rabbinical Assembly, Women's League for Conservative Judaism, Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs, Cantors Assembly, Masorti Foundation for Conservative Judaism in Israel, Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, Masorti Olami, United Synagogue Youth, Masorti on Campus, National Ramah Commission, Jewish Educators Assembly, North American Association of Synagogue Executives and Schechter Day School Network; and,

Represents the Israeli Masorti Movement, Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, TAL School Development Fund, NOAM Youth Movement, MAROM Student/Young Adult Movement, Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center and Kibbutz Hannaton; and, is

Affiliated with MERCAZ OLAMI and the other MERCAZ chapters in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Mexico, Netherlands, Russia, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Uruguay.

For more information about MERCAZ USA and its campaign, go to www.mercazusa.org