



**Executive Council of  
Australian Jewry**

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

**25 February 2019**

**Otzma Yehudit political deal in Israel**

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the elected peak representative body of the Australian Jewish community, situated at the apex of more than 200 Jewish organisations across Australia, has expressed its deep dismay at the announcement that two mainstream Jewish political parties in Israel, Jewish Home and the National Union, have agreed to join forces with Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power) in Israel's upcoming national election.

The ECAJ does not ordinarily comment on Israel's internal politics taking the view that these are matters for Israel's citizens, whose rights, interests and security are at stake.

However, we have never hesitated to speak out in support of Israel's basic right to exist in peace and security, or against attempts to undermine Israel's foundations as a Jewish and democratic State, as these are matters which engage the interests of the Jewish people as a whole. We have condemned attempts from the extreme left of politics to impugn Israel's legitimacy, through the BDS campaign and by other means; fought against Islamist bigotry towards Israel and the Jewish people; and denounced the agenda of the extreme right to convert Israel from a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-party democracy into an ethnically or religiously exclusivist society.

We are therefore compelled to express our deep dismay that two mainstream Jewish political parties in Israel, Jewish Home and the National Union, recently announced an agreement encouraged by the Prime Minister to join forces with Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power), a party which is widely seen as extremist and racist, and the political heir of the Kach Party founded by the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, who was banned from the Knesset in the 1980s under a Basic Law outlawing incitement to violence and later exiled entirely from Israel.

The unity ticket announced by the three parties is cynical and opportunistic, and a betrayal of fundamental Jewish and Zionist values. The leaders of Otzma Yehudit are disciples of Kahane, and there is now a possibility that at least one of them will be elected when Israel goes to the polls on April 9, and Kach's poisonous ideology will return to the Knesset.

Whilst the presence of one MK from Otzma Yehudit out of a total of 120 MKs would be largely symbolic, this is the kind of symbolism that matters. It will be used with equal cynicism by those who seek to demonise and delegitimise Israel.

All of Israel's citizens equally, regardless of ethnic background, religious affiliation (or absence of religious affiliation), gender or sexual preference, will have the right to vote in the elections. We trust that they will have the good sense to turn their backs on Otzma Yehudit, and treat the recent agreement with the contempt it deserves.

**Contact:**

**Peter Wertheim AM | co-CEO**

**phone: 02 8353 8500 | m: 0408 160 904 | fax 02 9361 5888**

**e: [pwertheim@ecaj.org.au](mailto:pwertheim@ecaj.org.au) | [www.ecaj.org.au](http://www.ecaj.org.au)**