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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### **Hiddush reacts to the Government's approval of the Kotel compromise:**

*Hiddush President Rabbi Uri Regev said that much credit is due to the Reform movement, the Conservative movement, and the Women of the Wall for making the painful sacrifice of ceasing their demands of being allowed to hold egalitarian services and women's minyanim at the traditional Western Wall plaza. While a section of the Wall, which hitherto functioned as an archeological garden, and had never operated under the dictates of the Orthodox rabbinic establishment, has now been designated as a pluralistic prayer space, it must be underscored that this compromise stipulates that the main Western Wall prayer plaza will officially remain under ultra-Orthodox authority.*

Regev noted that "In recent months, Prime Minister Netanyahu has sent very mixed messages regarding the equal status of the non-Orthodox streams in Israel - one for external consumption, abroad, and one for domestic Israeli policy. When Netanyahu speaks with leaders of the Diaspora Jewish community, he voices his support for equality, while the persistent discrimination and denial of key religious freedoms and equality within Israel only continues to degrade. The Ministry of Education's recent, public freezing of funds designated in the State budget for Jewish renewal, intended for non-Orthodox and secular educational initiatives, serves as a clear reminder of this.

The Western Wall compromise, which requires no concession on the part of the ultra-Orthodox, only further highlights the willingness of PM Netanyahu to trade away the core values of religious freedom and equality, in exchange for the religious parties' votes, necessary to keep him and his party in power. Therefore, we expect the Western Wall agreement will simply be used as a smokescreen, aimed at convincing Diaspora Jewry that this represents the implementation of the PM's promise to ensure that every Jew will feel at home in Israel, while in truth it avoids addressing the real issues that impact the lives and dignities of so many Israeli and Diaspora Jews. So, as welcomed as the Kotel compromise is, it must not distract world Jewry from the need for dramatic changes in Israel in such critical arenas as freedom of marriage and

divorce, Who is a Jew, and state-sanctioned, religiously-based gender discrimination."

### **What is Hiddush?**

Hiddush is an advocacy and public education organization that works to strengthen Israel as a Jewish and democratic state and to realize the promise of Israel's Declaration of Independence, "for religious freedom and equality for all". Hiddush is a non-denominational, non-partisan partnership between Israel and world Jewry.

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