

Mr



Minister Annelies Verlinden  
Minister of the Interior  
Wetstraat 2  
Brussels 1000

Brussels, 23 June 2021

Dear Madame Minister Verlinden,

### **Removal of Army protection of Jewish Institutions and buildings – 1st September 2021**

It was with great alarm that we learned via our partners at the Jewish Forum in Antwerp, and Member of the Federal Parliament Michael Freilich of government plans to remove the security provided by the Army to Jewish Institutions and Buildings starting on 1st September this year.

Madame Minister, following the Brussels terror attacks and murders at the Jewish Museum, the Belgian authorities swung into action swiftly and decisively and immediately brought comfort and reassurance to the Jewish Communities here by posting the army outside our places of worship, schools and other buildings. As a pan-European Jewish Association based in Brussels, we have hitherto held up the Belgian model of security provision to Jewish communities as an exemplar to be emulated by other Member States. We have always been extremely grateful and appreciative of this protection afforded to us.

Whilst we understand that the overall threat level as determined by CUTA stands at medium, we note that the threat level towards Jewish Communities and the American and Israeli embassies is 'serious' and 'probable'. Unlike the US and Israeli embassies, Jewish communities do not have access to any State security apparatus

Jewish communities have not been properly consulted about this move. Nor is the government presently proposing any alternatives. As of now, it leaves Jews wide open and with a target on our backs.

I am urging the Belgian government to reconsider this decision or at the very least offer a solution in its stead.

In the spirit of the latter, we understand that Federal Government Member of Parliament Michael Freilich is tabling resolution, number 55K141300, to be voted this upcoming Tuesday in the Committee on Internal Affairs of Parliament. Mr Freilich is proposing legislation that would see a 3 million fund made available to Jewish Communities to increase their security in light of the 1st September plans and will be urging the government to preserve the same level of security as before.

I would be grateful for a meeting with you at your earliest convenience. We would be joined by MP Freilich and the President of the Jewish Forum in Antwerp in order to find common ground and to try and mitigate the effects of this proposal.

Yours faithfully,

Rabbi Menachem Margolin - Chairman