**Attorney General Orders Western Wall Rabbi to Include Women in Hanukkah Ceremony**

*Following protests by feminist groups, attorney general's office tells Kotel rabbi to send list of women he will invite to official candle-lighting ceremony.*

Judy Maltz Dec 01, 2015 3:45 PM

Intervening on behalf of women’s groups in Israel, the attorney general’s office has ordered the administrator of the Western Wall to include women in the official Hanukkah candle-lighting ceremony held each year at the Jewish holy site.

Monday's move comes in response to ongoing protests that excluding women from the annual ceremony is a violation of recently-adopted government regulations banning discrimination in the public sphere.

This year, Women of the Wall, a feminist prayer group that has been fighting for women to pray as they see fit at the Kotel, launched a public campaign urging Israeli dignitaries to boycott the official Hanukkah candle-lighting ceremony if women continued to be excluded. Both this year and last year, the Center for Women’s Justice, an advocacy organization, sent letters to the attorney general’s office urging the state to intervene in the matter.

Last week, Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz, the chief administrator of the Western Wall, notified a group of female Knesset members who came out in support of the campaign that he had no intention of allowing women to participate in this year’s ceremony, calling their demands a “provocation.”

In a letter sent to Rabinowitz, Deputy Attorney General Dina Silber wrote that “separating women and men in the public sphere is unsound and severe discrimination against women for being women.”

To prevent such discrimination this year, she urged Rabinowitz to send her as soon as possible a list of the participants in the upcoming candle-lighting ceremony, including women amongst the invitees. The eight-day festival of lights begins on Sunday.

Contacted by Haaretz, Rabinowitz said he does “not intend to act against the instructions of the attorney general.”

Commenting on Silber’s letter, Susan Weiss, the director of the Center for Women’s Justice, said, “It’s wonderful that the attorney general has finally responded to our numerous requests to acknowledge that women are equal citizens in the state of Israel and that their rights have to be protected in the public space.”

Anat Hoffman, chairwoman of Women of the Wall, also expressed great satisfaction with the decision. “It is almost graphic how Women of the Wall were the match that ignited the flame on the first candle to ever be lit by a woman at the national Hanukkah ceremony at the Kotel,” she said in a statement.

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