Berlin Office

Though it has been in existence less than a year, AJC’s Berlin office has become a significant center for dialogue between Germany and American Jewry. Recent productive visits by Bruce Ramer, AJC president, and Lawrence Ramer, chairman of AJC’s Ramer Center for German-Jewish Relations, presage a constructive and fruitful relationship with the newly elected German government.

Our Berlin office is the first to be established in Germany by any American Jewish civic organization. The office coordinates AJC’s exchange programs with Germany and seeks to educate Germans about Israel and about American and world Jewry. Among recent initiatives is a lecture series at prominent German universities, featuring AJC experts.

WEOG Campaign

In 1997, AJC launched a drive to eliminate the UN’s double standard that bars only Israel, among all the member states, from a seat on the Security Council. This year, we are stepping up the pressure.

The UN’s anomalous treatment of Israel is reflected, in part, by the refusal of any regional grouping of member states to admit Israel. Since, at this point, it is unrealistic to expect the Asian group—with its large Muslim and Arab constituency—to let Israel in even though that is where it belongs geographically, AJC has campaigned for Israel’s temporary admittance into the West European and Others Group (WEOG), which contains non-European democracies.

Our campaign has brought results. Not only did UN Secretary General Kofi Annan recently call for “the normalization of Israel’s status within the UN,” but tens of thousands of people around the world responded to AJC call to action by phoning, mailing, or e-mailing influential UN diplomats about the situation. This May, the U.S. Senate passed by voice vote a resolution supporting Israel’s acceptance in WEOG and calling on the Secretary of State to monitor progress toward this goal.

AJC’s campaign continues. We have once again run full-page ads in the New York Times, the International Herald Tribune, and other papers listing, in one column, the 184 nations eligible to sit in the Security Council—including such rogue states as Libya and Iraq—and in the other column the name of the one country, Israel, that remains ineligible. In our recent meetings with the prime ministers and foreign ministers of 49 countries we raised this issue again and again, particularly in the sessions with European Union nations. Indeed, Foreign Minister Kinkel of Germany pledged his support, joining the U.S., Australia, Canada, and Norway as WEOG members favoring Israel’s admission.

Since the leadership of the European Union has changed, AJC has prepared new mail-in coupons to be sent to the representatives of Austria, the UK, and Germany—the current, immediate past, and next presidents—of the EU. AJC chapters are mobilizing grass-roots support for massive pressure.

AJC has also published One-Sided: The Intensified Campaign Against Israel in the United Nations, which summarizes key resolution related to Israel and the Middle East during the 1997-98 session of the General Assembly, and provides tables that catalog the votes of every member state. It also includes an appendix by Felice Gaer, AJC’s director of international organizations, on troubling issues relating to Israel at the 1998 session of the UN Commission on Human Rights. This publication makes clear that keeping Israel from eligibility for a Security Council seat is but one element in a broader attempt to isolate Israel by subjecting it to the kind of intense scrutiny and virulent criticism that no other nation faces.