



Dear Friends,

After 16 years at AJWS — including the past nine as President and CEO — I am writing to share that I will be stepping down at the end of this year and to reflect with deep gratitude on our shared journey.

I wanted to be in touch with you directly because you are one of our most committed supporters. It has been an extraordinary privilege to lead AJWS and partner with remarkable people like you around the world. I have had the opportunity to lead through a tumultuous period in global history and I am proud of what we have accomplished together.

Together, we built a community of conscience and courage that embodies the Jewish and universal values of our founders. We have donated generously and built strong partnerships with activists, organizations and social movements who are making demonstrable change in their communities and countries. And we have enabled our global partners to bring their visions of justice to the United States to advocate for policies that prioritize human rights and democratic norms. Through AJWS's distinctive grassroots approach, we have improved the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world.

This year marks AJWS's 40th anniversary and as we celebrate this milestone, I am convinced now more than ever that AJWS — an organization that works at the intersection of Jewish values and global justice — was made for these unprecedented times.

In the months ahead, I will remain deeply engaged with our work. I also will partner closely with our Board of Trustees and staff to ensure a smooth leadership transition. Below, I've included a brief note from Jill Minneman, our Board Chair, about what comes next and the plans to find AJWS's next President and CEO.

When I stepped into this role of President and CEO, I shared a vision rooted in three priorities: that AJWS would increase its impact and be recognized as a leader in the field of global human rights; that we would deepen our supporters' connection to AJWS and expand our fundraising capacity; and that we would build a high-performing, sustainable

organization. Thanks to the commitment of our staff, the leadership of our Board of Trustees, and the partnership of our donors and supporters, we have not only met these goals — we've exceeded them.

Every victory — big and small, internal and global — has mattered. Together, we have built a strong, vibrant, more diverse and inclusive organization that is well-positioned for the future — even amidst this moment's profound uncertainty and political turmoil.

We rose above the challenges of the COVID pandemic, worsening climate change, increased discrimination and violence toward women, girls and LGBTQI+ people, and a move toward authoritarianism around the world, including in our own country. From all of this we emerged a stronger, more sustainable organization that has made — and continues to make — a powerful impact by fighting for dignity for those who are most marginalized.

We've stood by countless people around the globe — funding grassroots movements, amplifying local voices, and supporting transformative change. At the same time, we've strengthened our U.S.-based advocacy, helping bring the visions of our global partners to the halls of power to shape policies rooted in human rights and dignity. I've had the privilege of leading three strategic planning processes, each deepening the clarity of our role and sharpening our impact. Throughout, we've remained true to our north star: the belief that the sky's the limit when local leaders are equipped with resources and accompanied by trusted, on-the-ground experts.

Because of this model, our partners have made significant social change: hundreds of thousands of adolescent girls in India, Kenya and the Dominican Republic are thriving because they have been provided with the support to negotiate when and whether they will marry. Millions of Thai people are celebrating last year's victory that their country is the first in Southeast Asia to legalize same-sex marriage. And the Rohingya people in Bangladesh, forced from Burma into the world's largest refugee camp, are receiving humanitarian support in a world that too often looks away. None of this work, and so much more, would have been possible without you and your support.

I continue to hold steadfast to a belief I shared years ago, in the words of Arundhati Roy, an Indian writer and activist, that "another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing." While it might seem insurmountable right now to imagine this better, more just world, I know that what we have built together is

stronger than our feelings of despair. I am inspired by Rabbi Shai Held's reminder that, "To take Judaism seriously is to insist that the world as it is, is not the world as it ought to be — and that it is our task to help bring the one closer to the other."

On the precipice of AJWS's 40th anniversary, I am ready for my next chapter. I am humbled to have served as AJWS's fourth executive and remain grateful to my remarkable predecessors Laurence Simon, Andrew Griffel, and Ruth W. Messinger. It is time for me to hand the baton to the next leader of AJWS who will continue our shared legacy of connecting thousands of Jewish and other philanthropists to leaders and activists on the frontlines of some of the world's most fundamental challenges.

Thank you for the privilege of leading this extraordinary organization. As AJWS turns 40, I step into this next chapter with immense pride, enduring gratitude, and boundless hope. The world we dream of — more just, more loving, more free — is still ahead of us. And on a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.



Warmly,

Robert Bank
President and CEO

Dear Friends,

I hope you all will join me in thanking Robert Bank for his exceptional leadership as President and CEO of American Jewish World Service for the past nine years following his announcement earlier today that he will step down at the end of this year.

It has been my honor to work closely with Robert over the past seven years in my different leadership roles on the AJWS Board of Trustees and most recently as its Chair. Robert has led AJWS through some of the most challenging moments of our time with humility, compassion and conviction.

Under his leadership, AJWS has maximized our impact, expanded our donor base, and refined our distinctive programmatic approach. Robert's persistent passion for improving the lives of those who are most vulnerable, combined with his dogged commitment to focus our work to

achieve demonstrable results, has built AJWS into a strong, strategic, and sustainable organization. He has partnered with our Board and staff to increase our diversity and to ensure that we are always striving to align our external values with our internal operations and his work with our Board, like all that he does, exemplifies his grace and empathy.

I've had the good fortune to travel with Robert to meet our grantee partners and witnessed time and again how he has devoted himself to creating possibilities for American Jewish and other philanthropists to link arms with remarkable leaders, activists and movements fighting for human rights in some of the world's most difficult contexts.

We will have much more to say about Robert's incredible legacy at AJWS in the coming months. However, I want to take a moment to share with you what comes next. As Board Chair, I will appoint a search committee made up of AJWS Trustees, which will retain a search firm and oversee a process that is rooted in our values to identify the next President and CEO to lead us into the future and continue AJWS's life-changing work.

I hope you'll join me in thanking Robert for the extraordinary leadership that has enabled AJWS to arrive at its 40th anniversary resilient, ready and poised to build a better world.



Thank you,
Jill Minneman
Board Chair

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