

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 29, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to express strong concerns over the recent media reports that a U.S. taxpayer funded 501(c)(3) non-profit¹ organization called OneVoice is actively working with a campaign operation called V15 or “Victory 2015” in an effort to influence the outcome of the elections in Israel on March 17, 2015.

On January 26, 2015, the Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported² on the close coordination between these two entities. The reporter described his visit to the campaign operation in Tel Aviv, Israel, and the significant role Jeremy Bird, President Obama’s former deputy national field director (2008) and national field director (2012), is playing with V15.

The Haaretz report makes clear that the purpose of this alliance is to advance a particular ideological agenda: “With the help of American money and a former campaign adviser to President Barack Obama, V15 is trying to replace Israel’s government. The money and organization comes from V15’s partnership with OneVoice...OneVoice is expected to merge with V15 before the March 17 election.”³

One of the lead V15 organizers reiterated this point to the Haaretz reporter, noting that instead of calling the operation “Anyone but Bibi,” members of V15 merely phrase it slightly differently: “We say ‘replace the government,’ it’s not directed at specific individuals. There have been many years of right-wing governments during which little happened, it’s time to change course and give people hope... We will go to homes and we will win... The work with the research team that Bird brought has really ignited sparks...”⁴

¹ “Recurring Donation Form,” OneVoice, <http://www.onevoicemovement.org/subscription/>.

² Roy Arad, “The Obama Campaign Strategist Who Could Break the Israeli Elections Wide Open,” Haaretz, January 26, 2015, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/israel-election-2015/.premium-1.639158>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

The January 27th OneVoice press release confirmed this goal. As its Executive Director declared, “We need a prime minister and a government who will be responsive to the people.”⁵

Of course private American citizens are free to engage in political activities according to their inclinations, but given the overtly partisan nature of this particular case, we are deeply concerned by the relationship that also exists between OneVoice and the U.S. Department of State. OneVoice lists the State Department as a partner on its website.⁶ In its 2013 annual report, the CEO of OneVoice touted the organization’s work “together in partnership with the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv and the U.S. Consulate General in Jerusalem...made possible by two parallel U.S. Government grants.”⁷ According to a U.S. government website, OneVoice twice received grants^{8,9} from the State Department in 2014.

Given the public statements by a number of Obama administration officials, including the President, that it would be “inappropriate”¹⁰ for the government of the United States to exercise any influence over elections in a foreign country including Israel, we believe this issue demands your urgent attention. There appears to be a danger that U.S. taxpayer funds are being used to directly shape the outcome of the upcoming Israeli election--and specifically to campaign against Prime Minister Netanyahu--something all would agree would be highly inappropriate.

We request a thorough investigation by the State Department’s Inspector General within the next 15 days that answers the following questions:

1. How much funding has the U.S. Government provided to OneVoice, PeaceWorks Network Foundation, and any connected initiatives, projects or subsidiaries?
2. Who approved providing such funds?
3. What is the oversight and accounting process for how these funds are being spent?
4. How often and on what dates has such funding been provided?
5. What were the specific reasons and terms for providing funds, and how are these funds specifically being spent?

⁵ “OneVoice Israel Partners with V15 to Change Status Quo,” PRNewswire, January 27, 2015, <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/onevoice-israel-partners-with-v15-to-change-status-quo-300026229.html>.

⁶ “Our Partners,” OneVoice, <http://www.onevoicemovement.org/partners>.

⁷ “The OneVoice Movement Annual Report 2013,” PeaceWorks Foundation/The OneVoice Movement, <http://issuu.com/peaceworks/docs/onevoice2013annualreport>.

⁸ “The PeaceWorks Network Foundation-OneVoice Palestine,” USASpending.gov, http://www.usaspending.gov/explore?frompage=assistance&tab=By%20Prime%20Awardee&comingfrom=searchresults&federal_award_id=SIS40013CA0073&fiscal_year=all&typeofview=complete#section_1.

⁹ “OneVoice Israel,” USASpending.gov, http://www.usaspending.gov/explore?frompage=assistance&tab=By%20Prime%20Awardee&comingfrom=searchresults&federal_award_id=SIS70013GR143&fiscal_year=all&typeofview=complete.

¹⁰ “Obama: Netanyahu Meeting Before Israel Election ‘Inappropriate’ – CNN Interview,” Reuters, January 28, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/28/us-israel-usa-iran-obama-idUSKBN0L11PM20150128>.

6. Can the Department of State guarantee that none of these funds have been or will be used in the endeavor detailed above, namely the partnership with V15, or any similar effort to exert undue influence over the Israeli political process?
7. Was there any knowledge from the State Department or other U.S. government officials of the partnership with V15 prior to providing funds to OneVoice?
8. Does OneVoice's work with V15 violate its 501(c)(3) status (or the status of the PeaceWorks Network Foundation) as a tax-exempt organization and should such status be revoked?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this disturbing matter, and we look forward to your swift and detailed reply.

Sincerely,



Sen. Ted Cruz
Member of Congress



Rep. Lee Zeldin
Member of Congress