

**M.K. Yair Lapid**

**ח"כ יאיר לפיד**

February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Dear Ambassador Belle,

Your country's decision to engage with radical left wing elements of Israeli civil society is not just an issue of diplomatic misconduct but an insult to all those who serve, or have family and friends who serve, in the IDF.

Ambassador, your Prime Minister owes the people of Israel an apology and as his representative in Israel you should reconsider your government's priorities. There is great scope for cooperation between Israel and Belgium but it will not come through engaging with the fringes of Israeli society who distort reality as part of the campaign to delegitimize Israel. Their most recent public letter to you is an example of the kind of distortion of reality which pervades the global campaign against Israel.

My son is serving in the army; he's in the armored corps. He's a good boy with a deep sense of morality. His friends are the same and so are his commanders. Over the past few years they've spent a considerable amount of time rescuing injured children from Syria and bringing them to hospitals in Israel. They are patriotic, law-abiding Israelis.

This isn't political; it's not about left or right. This is something much deeper and more significant – as a father and as a public figure I won't allow anyone to spread lies about these incredible soldiers, and all the rest of our brave fighters. So no, we don't need you to provide international support or send money so that radical left wing groups will supervise my son and his friends. They're doing fine on their own.

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Our soldiers don't need lessons in morality from these organisations, or from the Belgian government. They know that their duty as soldiers in the IDF is to abide by international law and protect the innocent. If you have money to spare in Belgium and you're really concerned with human rights then focus it on places that really need it – like the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria with millions of refugees.

I urge you to consider that as you decide whether to continue your engagement with these peripheral groups who represent no-one but themselves.

Sincerely,



MK Yair Lapid

Chairperson of Yesh Atid

Member of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense committee