

## India Persaud: Personal Statement

Just as nature abhors a vacuum, humans by nature abhor change, especially when that change challenges beliefs that have stood for centuries. Because of this basic principle of human nature, we cannot expect radical change to come through the mere notion of collective wishes or periodic outrage fueled by the most recent emotionally inflammatory news cycle. True, lasting change comes about by turning the fragmented and ever-shifting sands of human desires for life, prosperity and happiness into a coherent, unified and enduring movement that can withstand the intense opposition that radical change always encounters. *Zionism*, now more than ever, needs to bring together its varied ideals and goals into a unified, coherent and pragmatic movement that can bring about the great change needed to move it into an era of legitimacy that brings not only international recognition of Israel as the Jewish homeland, but ushers in with it mutual peace for both Jews and Arabs. I deeply desire to be a part of this movement to bring about the great change that Israel needs in these divisive times.

I define *Zionism* as supporting Israel as a sovereign Jewish nation-state, however, there are many other tenants that define it. The main principles of *Zionism* include religious, political, and cultural ideologies, focused primarily on uniting the Jewish people, and establishing an internationally recognized homeland for them that promotes, celebrates, protects and secures their rich culture and faith.

To be a *Zionist* means to be a faithful and loyal friend of Israel despite personal opposition. I have been shunned for simply recognizing Israel as a nation-state, but I fully accept this as the cost of my convictions. Without this kind of worldwide loyalty and conviction, *Zionism* will be impaired by the continual barrage of global anti-Semitism, weakening its tenants and future realization. This is why it is so important for the international Jewish community and

their friends to be inspired to stand with Israel through their positive exposure to true Zionist principles.

From a young age, I was always taught to pray for the peace and security of Israel. My Jewish mother taught me the importance of Israel as our faith's homeland. In college I served two years as an intern for the Hillel organization, and it was through this experience that my heartfelt connection and love for Israel and its culture truly manifested. It was a deeply rewarding opportunity to visit Israel and personally experience the incredibly rich and beautiful culture of the Israeli people. Because of these experiences, I deeply desired to immerse myself in Israeli culture by seeking out an in-country internship and was awarded one with i24 News in Jaffa, Israel beginning in January 2020. i24 News is dedicated to giving Israel a voice in the Middle East, and it is with this voice that I am excited to be a part of the effort to combat prejudice and bring positive global awareness of Zionism and Israel's legitimacy.

There is power in unity, and it is by unifying Jews and their friends internationally as to the true meaning of Zionism that the movement's legitimacy can be strengthened. As a supporter of Zionism, I will use the platform I am given in the media to righteously promote the legitimate right of Jews to exist as a nation and that Israel is that rightful home. Just as my direct experiences with Jewish culture have done for me, it is my greatest desire to share the beauty of Israel's history and culture to the world, inspiring others to be true supporters of Israel and the righteous tenants of Zionism.