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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Women's Rabbinic Network Reacts to Strip Searches at Kotel**

The Women's Rabbinic Network, representing over 700 Reform women rabbis, strongly condemns the invasive body searches of female students of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at the Western Wall yesterday morning. These students, our future colleagues, were violated and disrespected, and we join our colleagues of the Central Conference of Reform Rabbis and the Jews of the greater Reform Movement in calling for an immediate apology and the appropriate discipline of Rabbi Shmuel Rabinowitz who ordered these searches and the security personnel who carried out them.

This is just the latest incident in an ongoing battle for egalitarian rights at the Kotel and the right of all Jewish women to pray freely at this holy site. As women rabbis, and as Jews who identify with the Reform movement, we are acutely aware of our second-class status in the eyes of the Chief Rabbinate in Israel. Month after month, Women of the Wall gather to celebrate Rosh Chodesh and are subjected to mistreatment, verbal and sometimes physical assault. With the latest position of the Israeli government in abdicating the agreement to create a fully egalitarian space, it is not surprising that the mistreatment of women and Women of the Wall members is escalating even further. The WRN stands firmly in support of Women of the Wall, with all the women cantors, rabbis, and students, as well as all who fight for equal status and treatment at the Kotel in the face of increasing violence and disrespect.

For Comments Contact:

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