



המרכז הישראלי לנפגעי כתות

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To:  
Mr. Michael Appelbaum, Maire of Montreal  
Via Mail

## RE: "Lev Tahor" Community in St.Agat - Canada

The ICVC is the "Israeli Center for Victims of Cults", active since 2006 and is dealing with destructive cults in Israel, as well as Israeli cults abroad.

We would like to report some very disturbing testimonies that have reached our center regarding a certain group, located in St.Agat, Canada, under the leadership of an Israeli citizen by the name of *Erez Baranes*, who changed his name to **Shlomo Elbrans** or *Elbranz* or **Helbranz**.

The testimonies reveal clear signs of conduct of a destructive cult, whose leader abuses his followers and enslaves them as he pleases, using manipulations, threats, psychological and physical violence (details to follow).

The group includes some 60 families, of which 120 are adults and more than 100 are minors.

This intensive group life within the community requires total devotion to the leader, expressed in tight schedule that prevents rest or private time for thinking or discussions with friends and family. The community members are required to take part in long and endless "prayers that cause damage to their mental state.

Helbranz is living from the charity money that the members collect day long in the streets for him, and/or from transfer of their own property as a "donation" to the community, and/or from parents that are given child allowance. All this money is being transferred directly to the community cashier and to the leader.

Helbranz is using threats and intimidations to control his followers. So according to him, for example, diseases befall those who disobey him.



Members who refuse to cooperate will be condemned to Hell for eternity, and other threats.

Those who follow the community will be the only in the world to be redeemed.

Helbranz claims to have the power to heal each and every disease, however if the individual has not recovered, it is only due to his disobedience.

Helbranz forces his followers to sign oaths letters where they admit that they are mentally sick and need to take psychiatric drugs.

Also, the followers must sign on papers where they swear not to tell anyone about the events within the group.

Our center has received some knowledge about a local psychiatrist that is cooperating with Helbranz and is giving prescriptions for psychiatrist pills to certain members.

Any time Helbranz decides that a certain member disobey him, he forces him to sign on a letter that states that he's in a bad mental state and needs to take psychiatrist pills. He than sends him to the psychiatrist to get the prescription.

Member's lack of financial resources, the psychological and concrete manipulations (such as using psychiatrist), harassments, creating dependencies etc., reduce very much the ability of members to leave the group- which is very typical to destructive cults such as "Lev Tahor".

Worship is only part of what the cult followers are going through.

Unfortunately we found out that also **young children** and **babies** are suffering under clan control of the undisputed leader. The children's basic right for normal development – under any law in any modern state such as Canada - is being flagrantly violated.

Helbranz is the only one to decide on marriages and divorces within the community, and he often wed children when they are barely 13, (we have marriage certificates to proof it). His decisions are exclusive and arbitrary. There is no way to refuse or to speak one's mind. The parents too do not have any say on the issue.

Often he decides to wed a young girl of 13 with a 40 year old man, with all that entails!

As punishments to the parents, who were declared as "not qualified to raise children" by Helbranz, children are being moved to live with other parents for unclear period of time and are living a complete portability life.

Often, parents are not allowed to see their children, and children are refused to see their parents.

If the parents disagree to give up their children, the community is banning them. Banning means also separating husband and wife from each other.

Since the children are not being "adopted" for long periods and often change families, the "adoptive" parents are indifferent to the children.

According to the testimonies, children are being neglected with no reasonable care.

Although Helbranz himself lives in a luxurious house and have delicious meals whenever he wishes, the children suffer undernourishment.

Testimonies claim they eat dough, goose eggs and goat milk.

Their nutrition does not include vegetables, fruits, meat, fish or any other lentils and Carbohydrates.

Children do not go to any public school or kindergarten and often do not leave their home. Their home is locked and windows are closed with dark curtains. Children are not allowed to go out, to meet with friends, to play.

Testimonies report that children do not interact with the environment and look indifferent. They look as if suffer from mental retardation, and are looking for food all day long.

The cult has the following punishment techniques:

Beating (include children): with hands, with belt, iron bars.

Imprisonment – also for children.

Forcing people (also children) to dive in snow river.

Forcing young children to do difficult housework.

Taking away children from parents.

Forcing divorce and marriage.

Boycott of cult member by other cult members.

Degradations.

Harassments.

Long prayers of hours while forced to stand.

Forcing psychiatric pills on members.

Isolation from family, and more.

It seems that some families do not have residence permit, and it is possible to exorcise them back to Israel.

If this will be decided, we urge the authorities in Canada to contact a senior Israeli police officer in time, so the welfare authority in Israel will be able to receive those people and to give them a proper mental and physical help.

All this information is gathered testimonies that reached our center. We will be able to give more information about the people who contacted us. Some of the information is from people who has left the cult after many years and escaped to Israel.

It is important to mention that the ex-members fear that any outdoor activity to break the cult or to arrest the leader might risk the group members, and they might hurt themselves and their children, similar to many other destructive cults (i.e. David Koresh religious cult who burned themselves in 1993 – 54 adults, 28 children found their death). It is therefore important to take precautions before performing any activity.

I would like to emphasize that the ICVC is a well known and a reliable body in Israel, which has done much to help and defeat destructive cults in Israel. With the help of testimonials, the ICVC has broken some destructive cults in Israel in the last few years. In those cults – similar to "Lev Tahor", minors were mentally and physically abused. Those cases were broadly published in the media.

Sincerely,



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