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Mother testifies in abusive 'rabbi' case

Mother compares torturous abuse inflicted on her children to Holocaust, citing Elijor Chen's 'sadism'

Aviad Glickman

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The testimony of a Jerusalemite mother who claims she subjected her children to abuse bordering on torture due to orders she received from a self-ordained rabbi was cleared for publication Sunday.

The testimony describes the behavior of some of "Rabbi" Elijor Chen's followers and the mother's feelings regarding the abuse, which often included sadistic acts of violence.

Severe Abuse

Abusive mother turns state witness against 'rabbi' / Aviad Glickman

Mother of young boys subjected children to severe abuse on 'rabbi' Elijor Chen's command agrees to testify against him, several other defendants in exchange for reduced jail sentence

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"Many times I thought it was like in the Holocaust," she said. "That this was probably what went on there, but I just thought that this torture fixes people, that through the torture and pain and grief – the children will be righteous."

She recounted an episode in which Chen's followers had given her 3-year old toddler liquor. "I remember he threw up a lot and I changed his clothes. I have never seen such a small child so drunk, and I just remember telling myself, 'Be strong, he's just trying to help him to be a good boy'," she said.

The followers, three men who have also been indicted, were said to have deprived the children of sleep, forcing them to stand all night, and of food, in addition to the liquor they made the children drink.

'This is how Nazis behaved'

Allusions to the Holocaust are prevalent in the testimony, as in the mother's account of one of Chen's followers beating her child.

"He punched him and slapped him and pushed him," she said. "My child was just standing next to me and I started to think that this was how the Nazis behaved. I had never been in such a situation and didn't know how to react."

The mother said one of the indicted men, Avraham Kugman, would force feed her son. "It was like an educational lesson – you'll eat as much as I tell you to," she said.

'Rabbi' case



Abusive mother in court Photo: Guy Assayag



'Rabbi' Elijor Chen Photo courtesy of Israel Police



Additional forms of torture inflicted upon the children included the searing of skin and confinement in a suitcase. "They tied (my child's) hands and feet together like a chicken, and stuffed a yarmulke in his mouth so he couldn't scream," she said.

Asked about her reaction to the abuse, the mother said, "I suffered daily, but I thought this was reparation, that through this torture they would be fixed. I would have preferred to take their place, to be tortured instead, but that wasn't a possibility."

When asked why she did not complain to authorities she said, "I think this strong influence, that Elijah is like God, led me to be silent. I said to myself, 'How can I complain about them after all they've done for us?'"

The mother described Chen: "He is a sadist, sick, and evil. I even compared him once to Hitler. I think he is just a very sick man."

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