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“Every time I see something in the Middle East that disgusts me, it's usually associated with men. Where are all the women?”

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January 22, 2016

Gush Katif Rabbis, Teachers, Political Leaders Alleged Covered Up String Of Child Sex Abuse Cases In The Run-Up To The Disengagement From Gaza

As the Gaza Jewish settlement bloc of Gush Katif was about to be forcibly evacuated by Israel just over a decade ago, settlement leaders, teachers and rabbis were allegedly doing something other than simply fighting the evacuation – they were allegedly actively covering up a string of child sex abuse complaints and harassing the alleged victims.



Gush Katif Rabbis, Teachers, Political Leaders Alleged Covered Up String Of Child Sex Abuse Cases In The Run-Up To The Disengagement From Gaza

Shmarya Rosenberg • [FailedMessiah.com](#)

As the Gaza Jewish settlement bloc of Gush Katif was about to be forcibly evacuated by Israel just over a decade ago, settlement leaders, teachers and rabbis were allegedly doing something other than simply fighting the evacuation – they were allegedly actively covering up a string of child sex abuse complaints and harassing the alleged victims, Ha'aretz [reported](#).

One of those former leaders, Nissim Haviv, recently wrote about the abuse on Facebook.

"Mistakes were made," Haviv wrote, "but the community did [not] evade anything, the leadership did not paper over the cracks and the community acted using the tools available – carefully and responsibly."

Another former Gush Katif leader, Gal Kirschenzaft, wrote that the “unfortunate incident” regarding a different alleged child

sex abuser "was not silenced." Instead, one of the Zionist Orthodox rabbis in the Neve Dekalim settlement in Gush Katif "dealt with it personally...and after speaking with the victim he came to the conclusion that she was unfortunately correct and her attacker was a criminal. The rabbi didn't give up. The patient was sent for professional treatment and other steps were taken. I don't know what was decided with the police, but the incident wasn't covered up."

Many former Gush Katif residents resettled in Nitzan, and the local council chairman there, Nati Zarviv (who wasn't part of Neve Dekalim's leadership before the evacuation) told Haaretz it was focusing on the future, not the past.

"We are focusing more on the future and less on the past. We established a large team of professionals to assess whether we still have other victims and perpetrators among us. We are unaware of anything new and all the old cases are being dealt with by the authorities," Zarviv said.

Rabbi Ygal Kamintzy was the rabbi of Neve Dekalim before the disengagement from Gaza. He was also part of the settlement's formal leadership structure. When Ha'aretz contacted him to talk about the abuse, he declined.

"Today, I am a private person," Kamintzy said, "and I'm not interested in responding."

But more than a decade ago Gush Katif children began complaining of being sexually abused. Little was done to address their concerns then, and even less appears to be happening to address them now. In fact, as child victims who are now adults are exposing their abusers and the leaders – including rabbis and teachers – who enabled them, community attempts to silence them have increased, and recently an internal email was sent calling for the exposure of the abusers and enablers to end.

The tension between the victims and the settlement bloc's former leaders came to a head about two weeks ago when a teen committed shot himself to death in his parent's home in Nitzan. He was one of five known victims of alleged Neve Dekalim pedophile Shlomi Cohen, the settlement's security coordinator and a tutor – positions that gave him access to children, much in the way Chabad child rapist David Cyprys gained free access to children at Chabad's Yeshivah Centre in Melbourne, Australia.

The suicide victim and the four other victims named in Cohen's indictment allegedly suffered aggravated sexual abuse by Cohen for years – abuse some victims believe settlement leaders covered up.

The suicide prompted other teens who grew up in Gush Katif to come forward, using their full names, and breaking the silence surrounding the abuse they allegedly suffered. This reportedly could lead to additional criminal charges against Cohen and could also lead to others being indicted.

The leadership of Neve Dekalim reportedly knew that at least two men were each sexually abusing multiple children. But the few cases which were actually reported to the police did not lead to prosecutions, except for one case which ended with an acquittal.

Matanya Eliakim, now 27-years-old, and his wife Eliya are among those leading the fight to have the coverups exposed. He equated police in Gush Katif to a sheriff in an old movie about the Wild West who makes up the law as goes.

"The Gush Katif police were the closest thing to the sheriff in a western. There's no way of knowing how they did things," Eliakim told Ha'aretz.

Working with the assistance of Tair, a center for victims of sexual assault, the Eliakim's and a few others are trying to connect with other victims, find the abusers, and expose the coverups. But that doesn't sit well with Nitzan's leaders or with many of the former leaders of Gush Katif, and the anti-activists are being pressured to stop their work.

"You are trampling on us...you have irresponsibly exposed things," Doron Gilboa, who was youth coordinator in Neve Dekalim and volunteered to assist the victims, recently wrote to Eliakim in an email.

In the years before the evacuation of Gush Katif, Neve Dekalim leaders were told Cohen, the popular security coordinator and tutor, was "doing things" with male and female children. There were demands that Cohen be expelled from Neve Dekalim. Settlement leaders refused to do so.

On Facebook, Avidav Goldstein recently wrote on Facebook that he was abused by Cohen from the third grade onward and complained to the police, as did other alleged victims, when he was in ninth grade. But police closed Cohen's file after several months due to "lack of evidence" – Israeli police terminology that often really means "because we chose not to look

too hard.”

"Shlomi continued to walk around the place like a peacock, free, untroubled, embraced by all and with an air of triumph," Goldstein wrote. "At the same time, I was a leper, with comments flung at me from all directions, glances and whispers everywhere. Close friends abandoned me and kept in touch with him. The leadership and rabbis of the community had their hands up in surrender because 'the file was closed and there's nothing we can do about it.'"

And then something even more sinister allegedly happened. According to Goldstein, just before the evacuation Cohen was given a certificate of good conduct by the Gush Katif police. His police file, opened when the abuse allegations were made and closed due to "lack of evidence," was changed to read "lack of guilt." And they gave Cohen a permit to work with children.

Cohen is allegedly an active pedophile to this day. After the evacuation he became a sports teacher in a Zionist Orthodox community in central Israel, where he was again accused of sexually assaulting a child.

When questioned about this by Ha'aretz, a police spokesman said there was nothing police could do.

"After such a length of time, with changes in documentation processes and the fact that the police station that issued the permit closed many years ago, it is impossible to relate to the content of the complaints and the way the file was dealt with," the police spokesman said.

The prosecutor's office declined to respond to Ha'aretz's questions because a court had, conveniently for Cohen, put the case under a gag order.

Cohen's now faces two separate indictments, the first for sexual assault on a youth in Petach Tikva and the second for sexual assault on five boys and girls in Be'er Sheva.

The case of another alleged pedophile from Neve Dekalim became public this week. The alleged molester, a rabbi, is described as having standing in the Neve Dekalim community. He allegedly sexually assaulted a string of girls there before disengagement. Police complaints were made and his story was known to Neve Dekalim leadership. But shunning and other tactics from Neve Dekalim leadership and rabbis stopped other victims from coming forward.

On Facebook, 22-year-old Racheli Greenberg wrote she was one of the rabbis alleged victims. After her father filed a criminal complaint with the police, "we were joined by several other girls who said he had assaulted them as well. But no other parents agreed to join the complaint. They were scared. My parents were ostracized. They were pressured to withdraw the complaint," Greenberg told Ha'aretz.

The man was put on trial but was acquitted. Ha'aretz reports he now holds a public position in one of the evacuee communities.


Eliakim told Ha'aretz rabbis demanded the victims and their families stand with the community during the evacuation, and are still making the same demand today.

"We are not looking for revenge. But today, as opposed to the time of the expulsion, we are no longer willing to keep our mouths shut," Eliakim said.

Shlomi Cohen's attorneys sent their "condolences" to the family of the suicide victim but claimed Cohen "continues to maintain his innocence" and that there is no connection between the suicide and Cohen. "There are things that we can't reveal right now in order to maintain the dignity of those involved," the attorneys told Ha'aretz.

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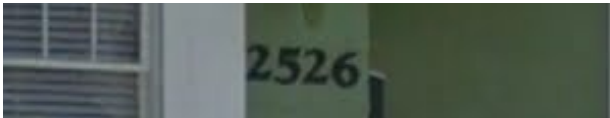
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