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Haredi 'Rabbi' Elior Chen Sentenced to 24 Years in Prison for Child Abuse

Chen was convicted of abusing and ordering the abuse of eight children, which included beatings with clubs and hammers, kicks to the head, severe shaking, burning, being handcuffed and stuffed in a suitcase, food and sleep deprivation.

Nir Hasson | Feb 28, 2011 3:41 PM

The Jerusalem District Court Monday sentenced self-proclaimed Rabbi Elior Chen to 24 years in prison, one and a half years suspended sentence for multiple counts of severe abuse against eight minors.

Chen was also ordered to pay a compensation fine of NIS 400,000 to the children who suffered from the abuse.



Alleged cult leader Elior Chen in court. Credit: Daniel Bar-On

Judge Noam Yaron called Chen's action "unprecedented, difficult and outrageous. The children remain wounded both physically and emotionally with critical brain damage."

Chen was convicted in December for abusing the children of one of his disciples, which included beatings with clubs and hammers, kicks to the head, severe shaking, burning, being handcuffed and stuffed in a suitcase, food and sleep deprivation, being forced to eat feces, and being forced to stand outside in the cold naked.

One of the children remains in a vegetative state to this day due to the abuse.

According to the verdict, Chen's followers possessed "blind admiration" for him, obeyed him unquestioningly and all their abuse of the children was at his express command.

Chen not only witnessed most of this abuse and handed out orders, the document continued, he also actively participated in the abuse.

The judge wrote in the sentencing that the defendant "contrived and initiated the violent acts against the children."

"These were violent, cruel and horrifying acts of abuse that were executed systematically and continuously, while raining terror over

the children and dictating fear and terrorism; while oppressing, humiliating and debasing the minors," the judge wrote.

The child abuse affair was uncovered two years ago, when a child Chen had been treating was taken to the hospital unconscious. Once the story became public, Chen fled to Brazil, which extradited him back to Israel.

Chen, who called himself a rabbi, told his disciples the abuse was necessary to "purify" the children, all members of one family.

Four of Chen's disciples were convicted earlier and sentenced to jail terms of up to 20 years each. Prosecutors plan to seek a longer sentence for Chen, who was the ringleader.

In her conviction of the four disciples, Judge Nava Ben-Or called the case "incomprehensible," adding that Israel has never before known anything like it.

Chen's attorney, Ariel Atari, said he plans to appeal the conviction to the Supreme Court, arguing that his client did not receive a fair trial.

The mother of the eight children, who remains unnamed, was sentenced in May 2010 to five years in prison after pleading guilty to shaking, burning and tying up her children.



Nir Hasson
Haaretz Correspondent

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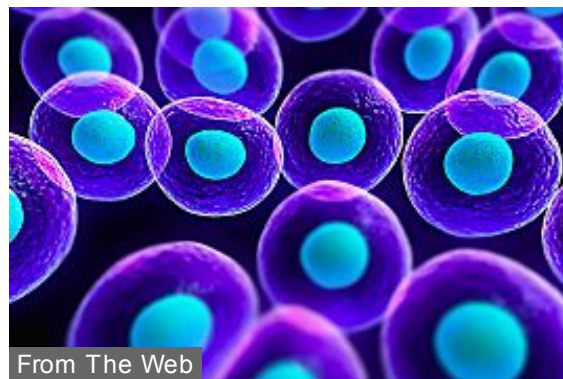
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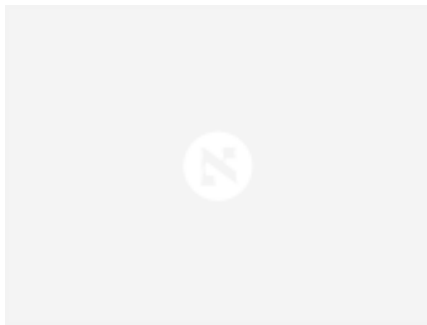
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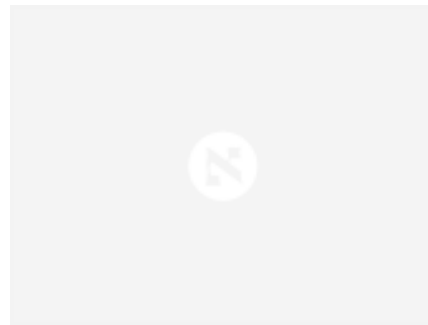
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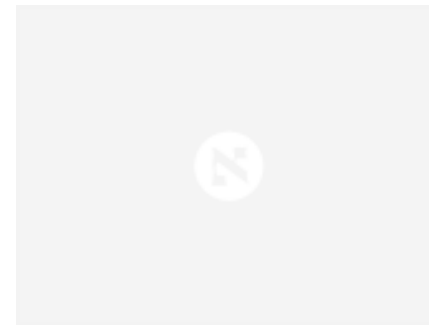
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