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## Top settlement leader rocked by sexual assault allegations

Davidi Perl, head of Etzion Bloc Council, says large amount of hush money he paid to his accuser is not admission of guilt

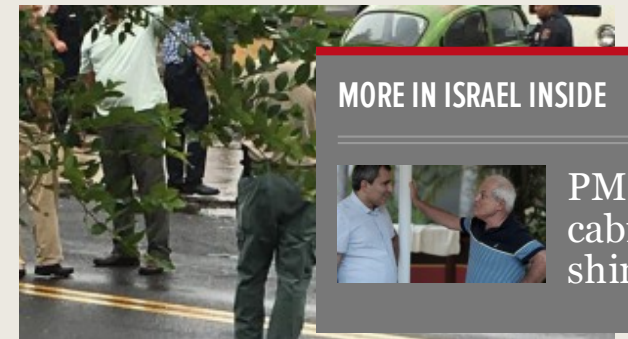
BY STUART WINER | September 18, 2016, 4:39 pm | 🗨️

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Gush Etzion Regional Council head Davidi Perl, October 6, 2014 (photo credit: Elhanan Miller/Times of Israel)

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### Stuart Winer

Stuart Winer is a breaking news editor at The Times of Israel.

A prominent settler leader faced calls for his resignation Sunday after media reports revealed he agreed to pay compensation to a woman in return for her dropping complaints of sexual assault against him.

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Davidi Perl, head of the Etzion Regional Council, has protested his innocence and said he paid the woman hush money solely to protect his family and prevent the accusations from being made public.

Channel 10 television

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reported last week that Perl agreed to pay hundreds of thousands of shekels to a 20-year-old Jerusalem woman who made a complaint against him with the Takana Forum, which specializes in dealing discreetly with sexual abuse cases within the Modern Orthodox community. In return, the woman withdrew her complaint and Perl agreed to not run for council in any future elections.

Takana, which includes prominent Modern Orthodox rabbis and officials, tried unsuccessfully for months to persuade Perl to attend a hearing. Finally, one of the rabbis hired an attorney to represent the woman and two months ago managed to secure Perl's consent for a negotiated settlement. In return for the payment — reported by the Modern Orthodox Srugim website to be NIS 200,000 (\$53,000) — the accuser would retract her complaint and Perl would not run in future elections.

Perl, who had previously declined to comment on the matter, on Friday sent a letter to other members of the council in which he insisted that the money he paid was not an admission of guilt.

“The things that have been published in various articles have no basis other than that I paid money to prevent publication of slander, which was made clear to me would be published if I didn't pay,” he wrote.

“Don't see my willingness to pay as a form of assent,” Perl continued.



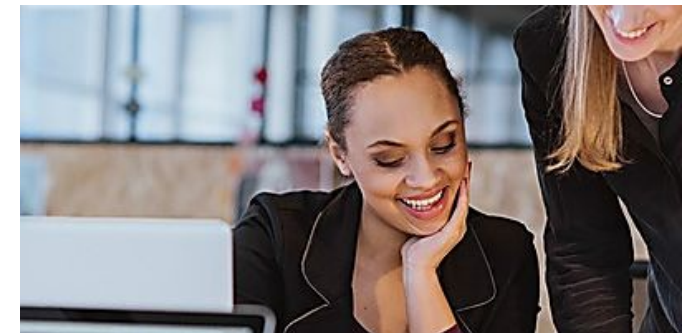
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“Sometimes a person gives up the fight even if he is right, and so I did it out of a desire to protect my family.”

Details of the letter were first published by the national-religious aligned Kippa website and then picked up by other Hebrew media outlets.

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Kulanu parliament member Rachel Azaria seen at a committee meeting in the Knesset, March 08, 2016. (Miriam Alster/FLASH90)

MK Rachel Azaria, an Orthodox member of the centrist Kulanu party, urged the national religious movement and the Yesha umbrella council of settlers to force Perl out of office immediately.

In a Facebook post Sunday, Azaria wrote: “This is the time to demand that Davidi Perl resign. I ask, where is the Yesha Council? Where is the Torah-orientated [Orthodox] leadership? Why are your voices not heard? What are we teaching our daughters and sons?”

Yuval Cherlow, a leading moderate Religious Zionist rabbi, and one of the initial founders of Takana, told Israel Radio that if the reports that Perl paid his accuser to keep quiet are true, then he cannot continue to lead



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the council. Cherlow stressed that he is not personally familiar with the details of the case, but noted that he would approach other members of the forum and urge them to give the woman full support.

According to Channel 10, the case began a year ago when the woman lodged a complaint with the Takana Forum. The forum questioned the woman in detail and reached the conclusion that her accusations were valid. Takana consulted with Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit, who advised the forum to deal with the matter as best it could given that the alleged victim refused to file a police complaint out of fear of making her identity public.

The media exposure has put the Etzion Bloc community in a quandary, Channel 10 said, because so far the Takana Forum has maintained a policy of strict silence on any cases it deals with, refusing to even confirm if there is a case against Perl.

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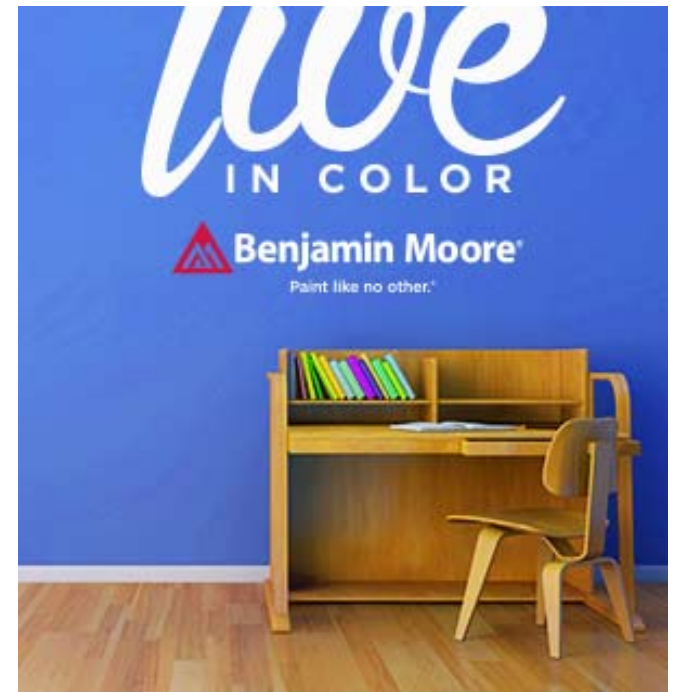
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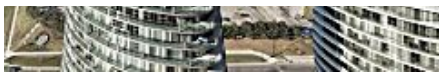
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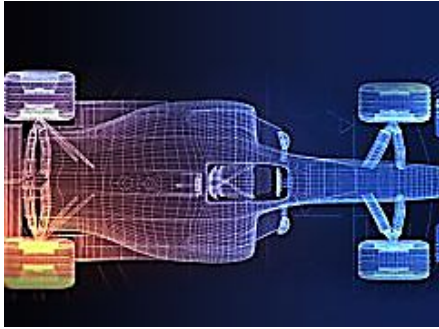
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