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FORMER TORONTO DAY SCHOOL HEAD ARRESTED ON CHILD PORN CHARGES IN CALIFORNIA

By **Ron Csillag** - February 23, 2016



David Prashker

The one-time director of Leo Baeck School in Toronto was arrested in California earlier this month on child pornography charges.

David Prashker, 60, was charged Feb. 22 with possession and distribution of child pornography and attempting to destroy evidence.

Prashker served as director of Leo Baeck School from 2004 to 2008, when he resigned over violent and sexually explicit poetry he wrote and posted online.

On Feb. 18, members of the Contra Costa Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, northeast of San Francisco, attempted to serve Prashker with a search warrant at his home in Lafayette.

According to local reports, Prashker fled to the rear of the house and threw a laptop from a second storey into the backyard. Investigators discovered that the computer's hard drive contained evidence of child pornography.

Prashker's bail was set at \$205,000. He did not post bail, and he remained in custody as of Feb. 24.

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In an email to *The CJN*, Jordan Sanders, the deputy district attorney assigned to the case, said Prashker pleaded not guilty at an arraignment Feb. 23. The defence requested he be released on his own recognizance with a GPS ankle monitor.

"I objected to the release based on the defendant's potential flight risk and the seriousness of the charges," Sanders wrote. "The judge denied the release from custody."

Prashker's preliminary hearing was scheduled for March 3.

Prashker made headlines in Toronto in 2008 when his poetry was found to contain graphic allusions to sex and murder.

In one poem, *Voluntary Admission*, he wrote, "I raped her lust I confess," while in another, he described "the first act of killing [as] the hardest... and the second time is remarkably straightforward."

Another verse spoke of an "earth-shaking, messianic orgasm."

Prashker tendered his resignation in August, 2008 after parents complained that the poetry was inappropriate and that posting it online reflected poor judgment. Parents were alerted to the poems via an anonymous email.

A native of London, England, Prashker was recruited in 2004 to run Leo Baeck, Canada's only Reform day school. Its two campuses have about 800 students from kindergarten through Grade 8.

He most recently worked as a substitute teacher at two private schools in central Contra Costa County, according to the local CBS affiliate, KPIX.

California investigators said the schools where Prashker taught have been notified and there is no evidence at this point that he engaged in any crimes involving students of either school.

Officials at Leo Baeck were "appalled" to hear the news about Prashker, head of school Eric Petersiel told *The CJA* via email.

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But they have had "no contact with Mr. Prashker in the eight years since he and the school parted ways. As I am sure you can understand, the interests and security of our students is paramount in everything we do as a school," Petersiel stated.

KPIX reported that in California, Prashker continued to be "a Jewish community leader and fundraiser, and has apparently spent the past few years working to build BibleNet, an educational online encyclopedia regarding the Jewish and Christian scriptures."

He faces a maximum penalty of 44 months in prison and fines if convicted on all charges.

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