

Judge Slaps 4 Years on "Modesty Patrol" Thug

Jerusalem court sentences "Modesty Patrol" thug who beat a woman who had begun to lead immodest lifestyle. Judge: "The group is not modest."

By Hillel Fendel

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Jerusalem District Court Judge Noam Solberg sentenced a hired thug of the "Modesty Patrol" group to four years in prison for beating a woman who had begun to lead an immodest lifestyle. The judge cited religious sources to determine that the "Modesty Patrol" is far from modest itself.

News1's Ruthie Avraham reports that Elchanan Buzaglo was sentenced on Sunday. Buzaglo had been found guilty of arriving at the woman's house during the evening hours in June of last year, together with four others, a club and tear gas. The five beat, kicked and cursed her, taped her mouth, questioned her about her relationships with men, and threatened her with tear gas, stabbing and even murder. Buzaglo accepted \$2,000 for the job from the local "Modesty Patrol" group, which wanted her to leave the neighborhood – the increasingly hareidi Ma'alot Dafna, near Ramat Eshkol.

Judge Solberg had harsh words for Buzaglo's actions, but partially accepted his defense plea that he was merely a tool of the Modesty organization. The judge recommended that the law enforcement agencies take action against the organization, and said that it had "raised such wild weeds... It must be totally condemned." Leaders of the organization were arrested together with Buzaglo at the time of the incident.

Immodest modesty group

The judge cited the Middle Ages commentator Ibn Ezra (to Proverbs 11,2), who wrote that the truly modest are those who "are ashamed to do evil, and walk modestly." This means, wrote Judge Solberg, "that the convicted [Buzaglo] and his fellow Modesty Group members are '500 parasangs away' [based on a Jewish idiom –ed.] from being truly modest."

Judge Solberg added a citation from another traditional source -- 17th-century Rabbi Avraham Gombiner, author of the famous "Magen Avraham" commentary on the Shulhan Arukh law code – stating that "one should not fight over any Torah precept."

The judge did not note, however, that this was an admonition against fighting over the privilege of performing a commandment, whereas the case at hand deals with a fight to ensure that a commandment is fulfilled altogether. However, the late Bnei Brak Rabbi Natan Tzvi Freedman explained that the proper understanding of this approach is that one must be internally "bold and unafraid" in performing mitzvot, even in a hostile environment, and at the same time externally "bashful," with no "toughness showing on his face," when doing so.

The Modesty Patrol originated some 60 years ago in certain hareidi-religious neighborhoods with the goal of ensuring that the neighborhoods remain that way. It has long been active in Jerusalem and Bnei Brak, and had branched out in recent years to Modiin Illit, Beitar Illit and elsewhere.