

## **True Reason for Almost 2 Month Closure of Vilna Shul**

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to: [list of recipients deleted]

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Boruch Hashem

Erev Chanukah, 5784

Conference of European Rabbis,

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you from Vilna, Lithuania, at a time when Jews in Eretz Yisroel and around the world are collectively under attack in a way not seen since the days of the Holocaust.

The one silver lining we've been seeing within the dark clouds of lies, hatred and wickedness being fomented by the enemies of the Jewish People, has been the powerful and inspiring expressions of unity and solidarity amongst Jews in all camps and from all walks of life.

As the horrific events of this past Simchas Torah are still so painful and raw, there is, thank G-d, a newfound awareness that the only way Am Yisroel can be victorious in this fight for our physical and spiritual survival is by rejecting the paths of sinah and machlokes that divide and weaken us, embracing instead the paths of ahava and achdus that bind and strengthen us.

That is why I find it so shocking and appalling that there are those who would use a time like this to try to continue to undermine and sabotage those who have been single-handedly working on behalf of the spiritual needs of Jews of Vilna and Lithuania since 1994 – in a blatantly divisive and destructive manner – for the sake of monetary gain and organizational control.

Specifically I am talking about the cynical and self-serving steps being taken by the co-chairs of the restitution fund in Lithuania known as the Good Will Foundation (GWF), in their ongoing efforts to crush and bury the vital work Chabad has been doing in Vilna for the past thirty years.

To try to further achieve their ends, these individuals went ahead on October 13 and shuttered the only Shul in Vilna preventing those who wish to attend services at the Vilna Shul from gathering, praying, studying and worshiping in this time of crisis and need! They did this without consulting with the head of the Vilna Religious Community, whom they repeatedly sideline, ignore or overstep when it comes to any issue of consequence.

The Soviets closed synagogues. Jews do not close synagogues – period!

The fact that these self-serving actors claimed to be doing so for the community's safety – so as to ostensibly ward off any “potential antisemitic attacks” – has only added insult to injury! As you know, there is not much of a Muslim presence here in Vilna, and as such, there is no greater present threat of attack here than anywhere else.

No! Their shuttering of the shul again was nothing but a sly, cynical and underhanded move to once again attempt to deny me access to the Shul, as they have done more than once in the past. It's all part of their calculated campaign to remove me because they don't like the fact that I dare to speak up and raise questions about the manner in which they have been – and are continuing to - use and abuse their positions as leaders of the GWF to the detriment of Torah-true Judaism and Jewish education in this country.

Dear leaders of the CER: The fact that these detractors of Torah-based Yiddishkeit are doing what they're doing is painful enough. The fact that you would partner with them in these maneuvers is not only deeply disturbing and distressing, but also extremely short-sighted!

The fact that you are sending a rabbi to Vilna in cooperation with their conspiratorial efforts to oust me – is not only blatantly neged darchei sholom and darchei Torah, but it is bound to backfire!

This is not the first time other rabbis have been brought in by these actors to be used as a foil against me, as part of their attempts to sideline our demands for fair funding from the restitution monies granted by the Lithuanian government, which they seek to monopolize.

Despite the disgraceful sabotage and premeditated undermining that has been thrown at us by these individuals – with the Almighty's help, protection and revealed blessings, we continue.

For the past thirty years, ever since the breakup of the Soviet Union, I have been living here with my family, devoting our lives with mesiras nefesh to the physical and spiritual needs of the Jews of Lithuania, starting from 1994, when no other Orthodox Jewish entity would touch it with a ten foot pole.

We took all the slings and arrows, weathered all the storms, to rebuild Jewish traditional life here in the aftermath of the destruction wrought by the Nazis and the Soviets.

As mentioned, the Lithuanian government gave a sum of money as restitution to a fund called the Good Will Foundation (GWF) in lieu of returning religious communal property. This fund is chaired by those who have spent decades undermining our extensive efforts to rebuild Torah Yiddishkeit here, in an extremely underhanded and dirty manner.

I cannot begin to describe how many Yiddishe neshomos have been deprived of their essential spiritual oxygen and Jewish education due to the control exerted by these so-called leaders.

The souls murdered in cold blood in this part of the world during World War II demand that the GWF funds be used properly – toward the replacement of that which was so brutally destroyed. My continued insistence in that regard is what has made me persona non grata with the folks at the GWF all these years.

If they had any shred of decency and integrity to them, they would resign today. More Jews of conscience will undoubtedly speak out against this travesty, which will bring about its end, speedily.

Chaverim of the CER: these are the folks you are now (perhaps unwittingly) in cahoots with to try to hurt Chabad and sabotage the real Jewish outreach work being done on behalf of the Jews of Vilna and Lithuania for decades.

I respectfully ask you to not allow yourselves to be used in this manner, but rather, to join me in a united front in standing up to those who would effectuate such a “Chilul Hashem” by shuttering a shul for almost two months now – for nefarious and manipulative purposes.

The fact that it will somehow be safe to unchain the gates of the shul when the rabbi you’re about to send shows up, should tell us all we need to know about why they shuttered it in the first place. I can assure you that it has got nothing to do with safety and security (except perhaps for that which they’re seeking to usurp and control.)

שְׁלוֹם וְהַשְׁלָמָה וְכָל נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שְׁלוֹם – Our Torah is about bringing Jews together by sharing the beauty of our heritage and tradition in a way that uplifts and unites.

I implore you not to take actions that that will work contrary to these ideals, and to not align yourselves with those who make all sorts of friendly and appealing overtures to you while working – overtly and covertly – against the goal of l’hagdil Torah V’yaadir at every turn!

I would urge you not to take such actions at any time, but how much more so at a time like this when the crucial necessity of our Achdus and Ahavas Yisroel is at an all-time high.

L’maan ha-Torah u’l’maan ha-sholom, I hope that you will reverse course and do the right thing here.

וְהָאֵמֶת וְהַשְׁלָמָה אֲהַבּוּ  
Rabbi Sholom Ber Krinsky  
Chabad of Lithuania