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1/3

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## CHIEF RABBI OF POLAND SLAMMED BY BOARD OVER HIS SUPPORT OF JEWISH PRAYER

The Board of the Union of Jewish Religious Congregations in Poland slammed the Chief Rabbi claiming his actions were 'not exemplary.'

BY HAGAY HACOEN / JULY 17, 2019 16:45

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JCC Krakow leader Jonathan Ornstein praying outside a locked house of prayer in Krakow. (photo credit: Courtesy)





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2/3

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**C**hief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich was fiercely criticized on June 11 by The Board of the Union of Jewish Religious Congregations in Poland, due to his support of Jewish efforts to pray at the historic Izaak Synagogue in Krakow.

Schudrich and Krakow JCC head Jonathan Ornstein [climbed over the fence of the locked house of prayer](#) to retrieve prayer books and kosher food kept there under lock and key, away from the owners of these items.

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Police were called and they were both briefly detained but soon after released.

The Jewish residents of Krakow, who prayed in the synagogue for roughly a decade, were kicked out overnight, when the Krakow Jewish Culture Festival ended, by the official Jewish Community of Krakow in an act that led to an uproar around the Jewish world.

The Chief Rabbi of Israel as well as Rabbinical leaders from the US objected to the closure of the house of prayer, which survived the Nazi occupation of Poland and the years of Socialist rule in that country, and urged for prayers to continue.

In a press release to *the Jerusalem Post*, Chief Rabbi of Russia Pinchas Goldschmidt, President, of the Conference of European Rabbis, lamented the situation in Krakow saying that "The synagogue is the heartbeat of any Jewish community, for it to be used as weapon in an internal dispute, as it is in Krakow, is simply soul destroying."

"We urge all parties to follow the call of Chief Rabbi Schudrich and fulfil the most basic responsibility of every Jewish community – open the doors of the synagogue and allow Jews to pray."

The official stand of the Jewish community is that the site was used illegally by a community that refuses to pay the requested rent fee and is led by Chabad [Rabbi Rabbi Eliezer Gurary](#). Their claim is that they wish to renovate the historical site, after which it will be open to all Jews, regardless of their form of practice.

The Jewish community rejects these claims pointing out that under Gurary every Jewish person was warmly welcomed and that the rent had been increased in an unlawful way to an unreasonable amount.



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3/3

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The issue, wrote Rabbi Avi Baumel who also serves in the community that was removed, is not rent but that the official Krakow Jewish community "with real estate worth tens of millions of dollars" does not use that money to support Jewish life in Poland, but in unknown ways controlled by one family.

"What happened to all the money?" He asked, "Where is the trail of tens of thousands of Zloty in revenue from the multiple properties yielding rental revenue each month?"

He further claimed that the official community, at a time in which more and more Jews are able to live openly as Jews in Krakow, declined in numbers as those who rule it wish to keep things under their own control.

"If you control the votes you stay in power, maintain hegemony, act with impunity and keep getting richer," he complained, "while the rest of the Jewish community in Krakow struggles and relies on foreign donations."

Baumol called on the Board to dissolve the Krakow Jewish community, saying "what better reason could there be to dissolve the Krakow Gmina than squandering of money, financial opacity, possible criminal activities, threatening and bullying of Jewish tourists for decades?"



Since the closure of the synagogue prayers were held every morning in the street facing it and a social media campaign under the banner of Free the Izaak Synagogue began with people posting online from Poland and the whole Jewish world, including the Western Wall.

<https://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Chief-Rabbi-of-Poland-slammed-by-board-over-his-support-of-jewish-prayer-595835>

