



Agudath
Israel
of America
אגודת ישראל באמריקה

January 30, 2012

Mr. Ronnie Eisenmann
Chairman, Executive Board NIHS Amsterdam
Joodse Gemeente NIHS
26, Van der Boechorstraat
1008 AD Amsterdam
Holland

Mr. Chanan Hertzberger
Chairman, Jewish Council NIHS Amsterdam
Joodse Gemeente NIHS
26, Van der Boechorstraat
1008 AD Amsterdam
Holland

Dear Messrs. Eisenmann and Hertzberger:

Agudath Israel of America is deeply dismayed at the suspension of Rabbi Aryeh Ralbag from his post as Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam for signing a statement, together with well over 100 other distinguished rabbis and mental health practitioners, regarding Judaism's attitude toward homosexuality.

The Torah forbids homosexual acts, in strong and unequivocal terms. Encouraging people with homosexual orientations to explore means of dealing with their urges in a manner that is Jewishly appropriate is precisely what one would expect an Orthodox rabbi to promote – and what, surely, a Torah-loyal Jew challenged by same-sex attraction would welcome.

Contrary to the insinuations of the press release published by the Jewish Community of Amsterdam announcing Rabbi Ralbag's suspension, there is nothing in the statement Rabbi Ralbag signed that shows any lack of compassion for Jews facing same-sex attraction challenges. In addition to the explicit language of the statement that such Jews "deserve our full love, support and encouragement," the very essence of the statement sends an encouraging message of hope that Jews challenged by same-sex attraction do have the ability to live their lives in accord with the norms of Torah.

THE RABBI MOSHE SHERER NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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Agudath Israel as an organization is not a signatory to the statement at issue here, and has not taken a position on the efficacy of any specific form of therapy for persons who have homosexual orientations. We have, however, taken note of the testimony of a number of professionals, as well as individual members of the community who were challenged by same-sex attraction, that therapies have proven to be helpful in changing or ameliorating homosexual orientations. This testimony deserves to be heard, not stifled.

It is especially troubling that a lay body like the Jewish Community of Amsterdam would suspend a religious leader like Rabbi Ralbag from his post simply for expressing his religious conviction. Such action delivers a terrible blow to the principles of rabbinic authority and rabbinic autonomy that have long been the hallmarks of Jewish communal life, and establishes an extremely dangerous precedent for the future.

Agudath Israel respectfully urges the Jewish Community of Amsterdam to reconsider this matter and reinstate Rabbi Ralbag as Chief Rabbi.

Sincerely,



Rabbi David Zwiebel
Executive Vice President

DZ/aa

cc: Rabbi Aryeh Ralbag
Jewish Council NIHS Amsterdam