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## Monsey, NY - Charedi Rabbi Apologizes Amid Backlash Over Comments About Molestation Victims "Consenting" To Abuse

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Rabbi Boruch Dov Lesches

Monsey, NY - Amid a backlash stemming from comments he made about young Australian sexual abuse victims "consenting" to sex with their abuser during the 1980s, a prominent ultra-Orthodox rabbi apologized on Monday, also stating that despite his admission that he withheld from reporting abuse to authorities in the past, he now "endorses" the rabbinical ruling urging victims to report molestation to police.

THE AGE (<http://bit.ly/1354j1P>) reports that in a legally recorded recent phone interview, Rabbi Boruch Dov Lesches also said that "goyims" begin acting on their sexual urges as early as five years-old.

Lesches also said that re-opening the case now would "not be productive."

Lesches comments drew the immediate ire of many religious leaders, including the Rabbinical Council of Victoria who called his comments, "appalling."

Rabbi Lesches disputes that he admitted to Fairfax Media or The Age that he ever "withheld from reporting abuse to authorities in the past."

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**Read the complete text of Rabbi Lesches' statement below:**

*I would like to apologize for statements made in a private telephone conversation that caused pain to the greater public. I deeply regret the incident.*

*I would like to make my position absolutely clear: Without any reservation, I endorse the rabbinical rulings encouraging victims of abuse to report to the police.*

*I was saddened to see an edited audio clip released by the Australian media regarding a personal phone conversation I had with an alleged victim of child abuse. I am troubled by the unprofessional conduct of the reporter who did not call me to verify the facts. Had he called me, I'm sure the information I would have provided would have produced a dramatically different article.*

*As I clearly told the caller in a subsequent phone conversation: I had no knowledge of the alleged charges claimed to have occurred some twenty-five years ago and discussed in the news report. In the conversation, I was discussing a separate incident where I was under the impression that both alleged parties were similar in age, twenty-one years old, a fact noted by Fairfax at the end of the audio clip. I was never informed of any allegations regarding minors prior to this call.*

*In retrospect I am shocked to hear of these allegations, because I often entrusted my own young children to the care of the alleged perpetrator, without hesitation. I would never have done so had I known of the allegations.*

*I reiterate my apology, and am firmly committed to taking every effort to eradicate child abuse in all communities. If the caller had mentioned present abuse, I would have advised him to contact the proper legal authorities.*

*In my present community, where I am the Rabbi, there is no reticence to contact the police. We do not hide from or cover up criminal behavior. In our schools this is a known fact, and one of the reasons we, may G-d protect us, have to date not been afflicted with the evil disease of child sexual abuse.*

Baruch Dov Lesches - June 23rd, 2013