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**29 June 2015**

**Dear member of the Board,**

On June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015, the President of the Claims Conference, Mr. Julius Berman, telephoned me and informed me that he had decided to discontinue my employment contract, which terminates on June 30th 2015. He stated that this decision was in response to the report I prepared for the Select Committee some two years ago (as detailed below). On June 17th 2015, a telephone discussion was held by the Leadership Counsel. I was not invited to participate in this discussion, and therefore have no idea what was said or alleged in my regard. Thus my work in the organization comes to an end after less than three years.

In this context, I would like to recall that around the time of the Board meeting in July 2013, following demands by Board members and other public figures, Mr. Berman and the Select Committee asked me to examine the affair of the anonymous letter which sent warning of the suspicion of major fraud at the CC offices in New York. The letter was apparently not attended to properly or promptly in a manner that could have limited the enormous scope of the fraud (At the time the figure of \$ 57 million was reported, though the final sum is in all probability much higher). Despite the short period of time placed at my disposal to accomplish this task, and together with my professional assistant, Attorney Avital Rosenberger, I submitted a detailed and impartial account of the facts, based entirely on the testimonies and documents that were submitted to us. The members of the Select Committee examined every word and sentence therein scrupulously, accepted these findings fully and without reservation, and integrated them into their own report. Two members of the committee later withdrew their signatures, despite the fact that they were full partners in the final drafting of the report.

On August 27th 2013, a statement was sent to the German Ministry of Finance signed by four senior figures in the organization (Mr. Julius Berman, Mr. Roman Kent, Mr. Reuven Merhav, and Mr. Greg Schneider). This statement, intended to weaken the arguments presented in the report, referenced mainly the insufficient resources and time at my disposal when undertaking my fact finding mission. The findings of the report were repudiated on this basis, but without relating to the actual facts themselves.

Two of the signatories on this statement were full partners in drafting the very report whose credibility they challenged in the statement. To the best of my knowledge, heavy pressure was applied to at least one of the signatories to sign the statement.

Since the report directly addressed the involvement of the two remaining signatories, Mr. Schneider and Mr. Berman, in the matter of the anonymous letter, they both considered themselves directly and gravely injured by it. By signing the statement as official representatives of the organization, rather than in a personal capacity, it appears that they placed themselves in a position of a personal conflict of interest.

As I was informed by the signatories of the statement, it was sent following the ostensible demand by the German Ministry of Finance, which informed the organization that without such a document, there would be future financial consequences. It later became apparent to me that the senior official in charge of such matters in the Ministry of Finance was in fact unaware of any such demand on the part of his Ministry, and as such this case raises suspicion of the violation of proper administrative behavior.

At the time, and in the wake to the above, Mr. Berman informed me that he had full confidence in me as Ombudsman to the organization, and he promised that my position in the organization was secure for a protracted period. Despite the commitments made by Mr. Berman, it became apparent that Mr. Schneider had a different agenda. He perceived me as a hostile element whose actions must be blocked. Punitive actions towards my office quickly followed. Numerous obstacles were placed in our path, hampering our work. Relevant information was withheld from us, and formal obligations were violated, and staff members in the organization even received an instruction at one point not to reply to inquiries from us without approval from New York.

This instruction constituted a gross violation of the mandate which empowers the Ombudsman to receive replies from any staff member. It hardly needs to be noted that the independence of the Ombudsman, as established in the mandate approved by the Board, was not respected.

Despite my appeals to Mr. Berman, and later to laymen he appointed to handle the matter, no one was able or willing to stand up to the management of the organization or to resolve the matter. Over the past year, Mr. Berman himself has refused to speak to me or to meet with me, despite repeated requests. It is difficult to accept or understand such an abandonment of responsibility by the President of the organization.

I would like to emphasize that despite the difficulties and the attitude of Mr. Berman and Mr. Schneider as described above, the staff of the Ombudsman's Office and I have done our best to help the many Holocaust survivors who turned to us. As time passed and our existence became more widely known, the number of requests we received increased dramatically – a noteworthy achievement given that the institution of the Ombudsman did not exist in the past and was established less than three years ago. I am glad to say that, on the whole, we enjoyed the assistance and encouragement of most of the professional workers in the organization, with whom we developed good working relations and mutual esteem.

It is a pity that Mr. Schneider did not share the approach of the applicants and workers.

In a properly run organization, the report should have met with a substantive and thorough response. With regret, I must determine that the Claims Conference is an organization that is incapable of hearing criticism regarding its senior management. In light of the organization's conduct toward the Ombudsman's office, I must conclude that the organization wanted only a "yes man" – a fig leaf or a charade of an Ombudsman. If this was indeed the goal, I was not the right person to select for the role.

I was chosen for the position of Ombudsman after a long career of some forty years in the civil service of the State of Israel, during which I filled some of the most senior positions in the service, including a senior legal position in the State Comptroller's Office; legal advisor to the Prime Minister's Office; Government Secretary; and Civil Service Commissioner. In this latter position, I served for 14 years as the most senior figure responsible for the personnel management of the entire civil service in Israel – government ministries, the security system, and the government hospitals.

I filled the roles under the direct authority of six prime ministers of Israel from different parties and political directions, from the late Yitzhak Rabin to Benjamin Netanyahu, and I enjoyed their absolute trust.

At the time I was appointed to this position, I had also received a proposal to serve in a prestigious diplomatic position on behalf of the State of Israel. After consideration, I preferred to take the position in the Claims Conference due to my desire to end my public career by working on behalf of Holocaust survivors. I myself am the son of Holocaust survivors and the subject is close to my heart.

I regret that my employment has come to its end, and I regret the manner in which this has happened. The Claims Conference is an important Jewish organization whose functions constitute a sacred mission. It is incumbent on the organization to act cautiously and for the benefit of the Holocaust survivors who live among us today. The real problem is not the arbitrary dismissal of the Ombudsman, but the manner in which the organization is managed – an area that requires a thorough and dramatic change.

It has been my privilege to meet some wonderful people among the staff of the organization, who are dedicated to their work and to assisting survivors. I have also developed good relationships and even personal friendships with several of the Board members. I regret that I must leave these people. Even more, I regret that after tremendous investment, I must prematurely leave our important and welcome work on behalf of Holocaust survivors and just as our work is beginning to bear fruit.

**Best wishes,**  
  
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