



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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The Board		26 July 2007
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Biographies		
Organization Chart	Israel: Activities of anti-Zionist orthodox Jewish groups; including attitudes toward and treatment by authorities of members of anti-Zionist groups, specifically Lev Tohor (December 2004 - June 2007)	
Employment		
Legal and Policy	Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa	
References		
Publications		
Tribunal		
Refugee Protection Division	Current information on the treatment and activities of anti-Zionist orthodox Jewish groups, including attitudes toward and the treatment of members of Lev Tohor, was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.	
Immigration Division	However, in a 23 December 2004 article, the <i>Canadian Jewish News</i> featured Rabbi Shlomo Erez Elbarnes, the founder of an organization called Hisachdus Hayereim (Union of the God-Fearing) that supports Arab rule over the state of Israel. The <i>Canadian Jewish News</i> reported that, in October 2003, Elbarnes was granted refugee status by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) and was	
Immigration Appeal Division	subsequently the subject of a government request to review his case on the grounds that the IRB did not adequately examine internal flight alternatives within Israel (23 Dec. 2004). Elbarnes, an active anti-Zionist, claimed that he was unable to live in Israel for fear of persecution ( <i>Canadian Jewish News</i> 23 Dec. 2004). At the time of the writing of the 23 December 2004 article, Elbarnes was living in Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts, Quebec and was the leader of a small community of families (ibid.). A 13 August 2006 article in the <i>The Gazette</i> (Montreal) corroborated that Elbarnes lived in Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts but also noted that the group which he led had ties to an anti-Zionist organization called Neturei Karta. According to Web sites accessed by the Research Directorate in March and April 2004, which are no longer available online, Shlomo Helbrans (Elbarnes), founder of Hisachdus Hayereim (Union of the God-Fearing), was the leader of the Lev Tohor community in Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts which families began joining in 2000 (Jewish Embassy n.d.a; ibid. n.d.b; ibid. n.d.c; ibid. n.d.d). No further information could be found about Lev Tohor among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.	
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News	Established in Jerusalem in 1938, Neturei Karta (also Naturei Karta) (Jewish Virtual Library n.d.) is an anti-Zionist orthodox Jewish group (AP 2 Apr. 2007; Neturei Karta n.d.), whose name, according to its Web site, is Aramaic for "Guardians of the City" (ibid.; Jewish Virtual Library n.d.). Neturei Karta actively advocates the non-recognition of the state of Israel on the basis that its existence contravenes Jewish law (Neturei Karta n.d.). On its Web site, Neturei Karta states that its organization is "relatively small" and is composed of several thousand members (ibid.); <i>The Gazette</i> estimated that Neturei Karta has roughly one thousand supporters (13 Aug. 2006). Its members are reported to live in the United	
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States, England, Israel (AP 2 Apr. 2007) and Austria (*National Post* 16 Dec. 2006).

In December 2006, Neturei Karta was the subject of significant controversy when a delegation of its representatives attended a Holocaust-denial conference in Iran and met with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (AP 27 Jan. 2007; see also *Manchester Evening News* 22 Dec. 2006; Reuters 25 Dec. 2006). The Associated Press (AP) reports that after the conference in Iran, members of Neturei Karta experienced harassment and were forbidden from entering synagogues (27 Jan. 2007). One member from England, Rabbi Ahron Cohen, required police protection upon his return from Iran (AP 27 Jan. 2007; *Manchester Evening News* 22 Dec. 2006). The *New York Sun* reported that the Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, Avigdor Lieberman, stated on 12 December 2006 that he would "deny Israeli citizenship to extreme anti-Zionist Orthodox Jewish groups, such as the Neturei Karta" (13 Dec. 2006). No further information could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate on the Deputy Prime Minister's statement.

Other Neturei Karta activities include a March 2006 visit by a number of its rabbis to the Palestinian parliament to pledge support for Hamas (AFP 21 Mar. 2006) and participation in a February 2005 conference in Beirut examining the right of return for Palestinian refugees (*Daily Star* 28 Feb. 2005). Associated Press (AP) states that Neturei Karta followers "heckle marchers in annual Israel Day parades in New York and regularly burn the Israeli flag" (2 Apr. 2007). An article in *The Gazette* reports that one Neturei Karta rabbi has "close ties to Palestinian leadership" and was allegedly on Yasser Arafat's payroll (13 Aug. 2006). According to the Jewish Virtual Library, Neturei Karta refrains as much as possible from availing itself of Israeli government services such as "courts, identity cards, schools, currency and public utilities" (n.d.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

#### References

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*Manchester Evening News*. 22 December 2006. "Rabbi Barred in Holocaust Row." (Factiva)

*The Gazette* [Montreal]. 13 August 2006. Chaim Steinmetz. "Anti-Zionist Jews Steal Spotlight: Orthodox Fringe Group Neturei Karta are Enamoured with Israel's Enemies, and Good at Getting Media Attention." (Factiva)

*The National Post* [Toronto]. 16 December 2006. Yoni Goldstein. "Neturei Karta: Israel's Jewish Enemy." (Factiva)

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*The New York Sun*. 13 December 2006. Ira Stoll. "Israel's Lieberman Calls for Tougher Stance on Israeli Arabs." (Factiva)

Reuters. 25 December 2006. Jonathan Saul. "Anti-Israel "Rabbis" Face Fallout from Jewish World." (Factiva)

#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** Attempts to contact two professors specializing in religion and politics in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem were unsuccessful.

**Internet sites, including:** The Association for One Democratic State in Palestine/Israel, Jews Not Zionist, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Middle East Institute, Middle East Policy Council, Middle East Research and Information Project, *Middle East Review of International Affairs* [MERIA].

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