



הסתדרות הרבנים דאמריקה  
**THE RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF AMERICA**

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**October 20, 2014**

**RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF AMERICA ISSUES STATEMENT  
REGARDING FREUNDEL MATTER**

**All Conversions Remain Halachically Valid**

**Announces Other Steps to Ensure Integrity of Future Conversions**

New York, October 20, 2014 – The Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) today said that since the arrest last week of Rabbi Barry Freundel of Washington, DC, it has been working assiduously to address the many challenges that its members and their communities now face.

Rabbi Leonard Matanky, President, and Rabbi Mark Dratch, Executive Vice President, said, “First and foremost, our hearts continue to go out to the individuals who were converted to Judaism by Rabbi Freundel whose trust was violated and who have worried about their personal status. We pray for the welfare of all victims, including the many women who used the Keshet Israel mikvah for taharat hamishpacha (family purity) purposes, and for the continued strength and healing of the Keshet Israel community, which is a vibrant center of our sacred Torah and that is suffering greatly at this time. We also feel for the Freundel family and offer them our support during this difficult personal time.”

Today the RCA is able to announce that the Beth Din of America – under the leadership of Rabbi Gedalia Dov Schwartz – has concluded as a matter of Jewish law that conversions performed by Rabbi Freundel prior to his arrest on October 14, 2014 remain halachically valid and prior converts remain Jewish in all respects. This ruling follows a review of the charges contained in the court documents that have been released to date (including the criminal complaint, search and arrest warrants, and accompanying affidavits) and applicable Jewish law with respect to the status of prior conversions.

In an effort to create an avenue for greater comfort and accountability in the

conversion process following this most unfortunate episode, the RCA also announced two additional actions:

- The RCA and the Beth Din of America have agreed that every Beit Din assembled under their Geirus Protocol and Standards (GPS) will appoint a woman (or group of women) to serve as ombudsman to receive any concerns of female candidates to conversion. The name of this person will be provided to all conversion candidates at the beginning of the conversion process. Prospective converts will be assured that their standing in the conversion process will not be compromised by communicating with the ombudsman, and that any such communications will remain confidential to the extent possible.
- This week, the RCA will appoint a commission composed of rabbis, lay leaders and mental health professionals (including men and women) to review the current GPS conversion process and suggest safeguards against possible abuses. This commission will report its findings to the RCA Executive Committee by January 31, 2015.

As the RCA continues to address this very serious case of rabbinic abuse, it has made available a summary outlining its responses to prior accusations of rabbinic misbehavior by Barry Freundel. This document is available on the RCA website at [www.rabbis.org](http://www.rabbis.org).

Rabbi Freundel has been suspended from membership in the RCA and its Executive Committee, and together with the Beth Din of America from all activities related to conversion.

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