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The Honorable Andrew Cuomo
Governor State of New York
The Executive Chamber
Albany, New York 1224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Permit me to introduce myself. My name is Rabbi Fishel Todd and I serve as the Executive Director of Pirchel Shoshanin, a nationally recognized Jewish Organization that endorses Jewish Chaplains for service in the Armed Forces of the United States.

Currently we have 16 endorsed Chaplains serving in all branches of the Armed Forces both on Active Duty and in the Reserves to include the National Guard. Among the Chaplains we have endorsed, is Chaplain (1st LT) Raziel Amar, an outstanding and fine individual. Among Chaplain Amar's outstanding qualities are his linguistic skills. These include fluency in Arabic, a much sought after skill in the military today.

Governor Cuomo, you are recognized as a compassionate one, outstanding leader in our country. You follow in the footsteps of your great father and Governor, Mario Cuomo. You are compassionate, respectful, support all religions and faiths and you are a fighter against discriminatory practices based upon faith, color and religious beliefs. Because of your leadership and position as Commander in Chief of the New York National Guard, I bring to your attention a discriminatory act of leadership that currently exists in the upper ranks of the New York National Guard.

Chaplain Raziel Amar is being blatantly discriminated against for his religious beliefs by the New York Army National Guard Chain of Command, beginning with the Joint Forces Chaplain, Chaplain (COL) Eric Olsen. Chaplain Olsen has from the first day that he met Chaplain Amar made him a target for discrimination. Chaplain Amar who wears a beard for religious reasons, verbally approached his Commander to be allowed to wear his beard and was given the okay as long as he remained with his unit. Along

came Chaplain Olsen and made it his life's mission to make Chaplain Amar's life miserable as possible.

As part of Chaplain Olsen's ongoing war with Chaplain Amar, he ordered Chaplain Amar to a meeting recently, at which Chaplain Amar and Chaplain were present along with Chaplain Amar's Commander. The kindest thing I could say about this meeting is that it was absolutely hostile. Chaplain Olsen displayed his control as the Senior Chaplain for the National Guard in a most vile manner. He told Chaplain Amar that he was going to move him to a different unit for "better supervision and mentoring". To cover himself so he would not be accused of being anti-Jewish, he transferred a Jewish Chaplain Candidate to cover this battalion instead of Chaplain Amar until another Chaplain is brought in July for assignment to this battalion. Governor Cuomo, according to Army regulations this is ILLEGAL. A Chaplain Candidate is forbidden from conducting services, burial services, sacred rites and counseling. A Chaplain Candidate although in uniform cannot do a Chaplain's job. He is but a candidate learning and being mentored by the Chaplain of that unit. Who is the Chaplain mentoring this candidate at the unit? Chaplain Olsen wanted to substitute a Jew for a Jew, Chaplain Amar, notwithstanding the illegality and hoping nobody would raise the issue.

At this meeting with Chaplain Amar, Chaplain Olsen issued a directive which raises a question of Anti-Semitic feelings harbored by the senior leadership of the New York National Guard. Chaplain Olsen told him "do not raise Chaplain Goldstein's, or Chaplain Baron's name to the senior leadership of National Guard because they are both not held in high esteem by Major General Murphy or his Chief of Staff. I was astounded when Chaplain Amar told this to me. Chaplain (COL) Jacob Goldstein, spent nearly 29 years as a Chaplain in the New York Army National Guard, serving at all levels of Command till he was chosen by the National Guard to be the Joint Forces Chaplain, the same position Chaplain Olsen currently holds. Chaplain Goldstein is held in the highest esteem by all who know him and come in contact with him. He has been deployed all over the world as a Chaplain having served in Bosnia, Desert Shield/Desert Storm, Iraq and Afghanistan. He was the Senior Chaplain at Ground Zero where he spent nearly five months and was recognized by all for his heroic efforts in bringing calm to this terrible tragedy. Chaplain (COL) Barry Baron, another Jewish Chaplain, is equally highly respected, spent many years in the New York National Guard, served at Ground Zero with distinction and is currently serving in the US Army Reserve as the Senior Chaplain in the 353 Civil Affairs Command.

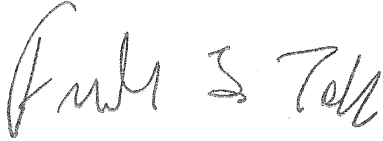
Perhaps Chaplain Olsen is telling the truth, the Anti Jewish feeling that permeates the current leadership of the National Guard is a fact, and its trickledown effect has reached Chaplain Olsen, who has expanded on it. Governor Cuomo, I wish to point out to you the following. No Jewish officers are in any senior leadership position in the New York National Guard. Why? Perhaps none need to apply because of the current environment.

Governor Cuomo, as the new Governor of New York you need to look into this matter personally, not simply sending this letter to the National Guard for a possible cover up. The issues raised should be assigned to one of your trusted aides to investigate and come up with the truth. As Attorney General your actions were seen by the entire nation, as fair, honest, truthful, and just. I trust these will continue characterize your actions as Governor.

I am taking the liberty of attaching Chaplain Olsen's counseling statement to Chaplain Amar, along with his Officer Evaluation Report that was given to him, (See Part VII on Page 2) that mentioned illegal action by Chaplain Amar's Commander regarding his promotion. I have attached the Army regulation that describes this blatant illegality.

Perhaps the time has come for new leadership in the New York National Guard.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fishel Todd". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rabbi Fishel Todd