

Moscow Chief Rabbi Leaves Russia, Alleging State Pressure Over War

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Pinchas Goldschmidt, President of the European Rabbinical Conference, at the 32nd General Assembly of the Conference of European Rabbis (CER) in Munich on May 30, 2022. **Sven Hoppe/dpa**

Moscow chief rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt fled Russia two weeks after the invasion of Ukraine due to pressure to support the military campaign, his daughter-in-law [said](#) Tuesday.

Journalist Avital Chizhik-Goldschmidt, the wife of Goldschmidt's son Benyamin, tweeted that Goldschmidt "refused" to support the war.

Goldschmidt and his wife, Dara Goldschmidt, traveled to Hungary in March to fundraise for Ukrainian refugees, and then settled in Israel.

"They are now in exile from the community they loved, built & raised their children in, over 33 years," Chizhik-Goldschmidt said.

Rabbi Goldschmidt [said](#) in early May that he was in Israel because of his father's hospitalization and did not know when he would return to Russia.

Embed:

Can finally share that my in-laws, Moscow Chief Rabbi [@PinchasRabbi](#) & Rebbetzin Dara Goldschmidt, have been put under pressure by authorities to publicly support the 'special operation' in Ukraine — and refused.
pic.twitter.com/Gy7zgI3YkI

— Avital Chizhik-Goldschmidt (@avitalrachel) [June 7, 2022](#)

Goldschmidt, who was born in Switzerland, [told](#) Britain's The Times on Sunday he had been advised against returning to Moscow for the time being.

The rabbi said he could not go further in publicly condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine to ensure the "survival" of Russia's Jewish community of 500,000.

The Ashkenazi and Sephardi chief rabbis of Israel have [urged](#) the leaders of Russian Jewish communities to respect Goldschmidt's authority despite his physical absence from Russia, according to the Jerusalem Post.

"The rabbinic court he headed continues to operate under his guidance and provides a proper response to those in need," they wrote in a letter, the Jerusalem Post reported.

Goldschmidt was [re-elected](#) as chief rabbi in the Russian capital this week for another seven-year term despite his self-imposed exile and efforts to sideline him, the Jewish outlet [newsru.co.il](#) reported Wednesday.

A spokesman for Russia's chief rabbi Berel Lazar, who has also criticized the Ukraine invasion, said he is not aware of any pressure on Jewish leaders to endorse the war.

"It would be surprising to learn that Rabbi Goldschmidt was being pressured," Boruch Gorin [told](#) the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

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