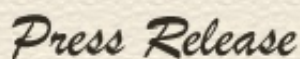


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A rectangular logo with a light beige background and a thin black border. The words "Press Release" are written in a black, cursive script font.

KKL-JNF Adopts 'Beisky' Committee Recommendations on Bulgarian Jewry Forest (16/7/2000)

KKL-JNF Adopts 'Beisky' Committee Recommendations on Bulgarian Jewry Forest (16/7/2000)

The public committee on Bulgaria Forest headed by retired Judge Moshe Beisky presented its recommendations last week to the Chairman of the KKL-JNF board of Directors. These propose that the Memorial commemorating Bulgarian Monarch Boris III and other memorials be removed from the forest site and replaced with a joint memorial commemorating Thracian Jewry and the Bulgarian People.

KKL-JNF, the representative of the Association of Bulgarian Jews Yossi Kioso and the representative of Former Thracian and Macedonian Jews in Israel, Dr. Nissim Yosha, adopted the recommendations of the KKL-JNF Committee and have pledged to implement them.

The Committee members, including Lova Eliav and Professor Dalia Ofer, proposed that KKL-JNF remove the existing memorial pillars from the forest dedicatory plaza in Bulgarian Jewry Forest and replace them with a joint memorial, to be installed prominently and as close as possible at the entrance to the woodland. The decision means that KKL-JNF will remove the memorial standing in Bulgarian Jewry Forest at Haruvit in the Judean Hills honoring the contribution of King Boris III and his wife, Queen Jana in helping to save Bulgarian Jewry during the Holocaust. In its stead, a joint memorial commemorating Thracian Jewry and the Bulgarian People will be established. The upper part of the memorial will commemorate 11,384 Thracian and Macedonian Jews who perished in the Treblinka death camp in 1943; and the lower part will honor Bulgarians who risked their lives and fought to save their Jewish brethren during the Holocaust between 1941-1944.

The Chairman of the KKL-JNF Executive, Yehiel Leket and Shlomo Gravetz, did not regard themselves as competent to arbitrate in the bitter dispute and consequently decided to establish a public committee chaired by Justice Beisky to decide in the matter.

A public conflict erupted when the installation of a memorial marking the contribution of Bulgarian King Boris III and his wife Queen Jana to saving Jews during the Holocaust met with the bitter opposition of Thracian, Macedonian and Trajeki Jews who accused the royal couple of responsibility for the murder of some 11,384 Jews by the Nazis.

The conflict whipped a storm of angry emotions among former Thracian, Macedonian and Trajeki Jews on the one hand and Bulgarian Jews on the other. The former categorically demanded that the memorial be removed, arguing that KKL-JNF's recognition of a person, whom they charge with responsibility for delivering Jews to the Nazis, was inconsistent with basic conceptions of the Jewish People. By comparison, Bulgarian Jews firmly refused to concede the honor bestowed on a person whom they regarded as having saved their lives and the lives of their families.

The current memorial in Bulgarian Jewry Forest at Haruvit stands alongside memorials remembering Thracian and Macedonian Jews who perished in concentration camps and pays tribute to the assistance given by the Heads of the Bulgarian Church and the Deputy Speaker of the Bulgarian Parliament Dimitri Pashov .

