

## PETITION TO PRESERVE THE CEMETERIES IN THE OLD CITY OF LVIV

Facts: In the old city of Lviv, Ukraine are two Jewish cemeteries. The OLD Jewish cemetery was started in the mid fifteenth century and was filled by the mid eighteenth century. The NEW Jewish cemetery was started in the mid eighteenth century and is still the only available cemetery for Jews in the Lviv area. The cemeteries are the final resting places of the Jews of the city and include many of the most revered sages of the Jewish community. Both cemeteries are located within the UNESCO buffer zone and State historic Reserve. The City Hall totally ignored the obligation to protect the both grave sites and permitted construction and improper use on both OLD and NEW cemeteries, atop a number of Jewish mass graves where about 500 000 Jews remains are resting in those graves after the Holocaust waiting for commemoration.

The Union of Councils for Jews in the former Soviet Union (UCSJ) has an office in Lviv whose director is Meylach Shechet. The UCSJ speaking for the Jews of Lviv has instituted a number of law suits in the courts of the Ukraine to restrain the City Council of Lviv from authorizing the building of a hotel on the top of the New Jewish cemetery, take away the two fleet markets from the OLD Jewish cemetery. The court cases for the OLD Jewish cemeteries are in process in the district courts while one of the court cases for the NEW Jewish cemetery rejected the UCSJ claims for baseless illegal reasons. In all cases the City Hall denied the Jewish rights for protection the Jewish grave sites.

Starting about eight years ago the City Council of Lviv has tried to make a contract with a builder to construct a hotel on the top of the ancient Jewish Quarter in the Center of Lviv, designated by UNESCO as the World Heritage site. The UCSJ has successfully won all of its law suits, but the City Council of Lviv has ignored the decisions of the courts and the Rule of Law and has announced plans to go forward with the construction of the hotel.

The US Ambassador's office of the Ukraine in Kiev has also asked the City Council of Lviv to desist from its actions, but this has fallen on deaf ears. Attempts to have the President of the Ukraine speak out on this issue have also been unsuccessful.

Individuals and Organizations concerned about international religious freedom join in this Petition to the City Council of Lviv, the President of Ukraine, Secretary of State of the USA, and the Ambassador of the USA to the Ukraine to take whatever steps are necessary to stop this desecration of the OLD and NEW cemeteries, mass graves of Holocaust and the UNESCO site – the ancient Jewish Quarter .