

**REFORM RABBINATE OPPOSES REMOVAL OF ANCIENT MUSLIM
CEMETERY TO MAKE WAY FOR JERUSALEM MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE**

*Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), World's Largest Group of Jewish
Clergy, Commends Municipality of Jerusalem for Suggesting Alternate Locations*

**Resolution Opposing the Removal Passed at CCAR's 120th Annual Convention
Currently Under Way in Jerusalem**

JERUSALEM – (February 25, 2008) – The leaders of the Reform rabbinate, the world's largest group of Jewish clergy, have passed a resolution strongly opposing the removal of the Mamilla Cemetery, an ancient Muslim burial place in Jerusalem, to make way for the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Jerusalem Museum of Tolerance. The Board of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the representative organization of nearly 2,000 Reform rabbis, passed the resolution today at its 120th Annual Convention, which is taking place in Jerusalem through March 1.

According to the Resolution, "Cemeteries are sacred ground in our Jewish tradition... We would protest, in the strongest terms, not only the desecration, but any removal of a Jewish cemetery, no matter what the purpose. Therefore, it is self-evident that we must oppose the removal of another people's sacred burial ground, no matter how worthy the purpose. While the Israeli Supreme Court has permitted the Wiesenthal Center to move ahead, an organization with high-minded goals like those of the Museum of Tolerance cannot be satisfied with mere adherence to the law."

The Resolution also states that "Dr. Rafi Greenberg, a prominent archaeologist at Tel Aviv University, has argued that Mamilla is one of the few surviving Islamic sites in western Jerusalem and, therefore, must be left intact." And it thanks the Municipality of Jerusalem for "...offering alternative locations, and encourages the Municipality, the Israeli government, Wiesenthal Center supporters and all who are able to labor mightily to assure that the Jerusalem Museum of Tolerance be built in an alternative location."

Following is the full text of the CCAR Resolution on the Jerusalem Location of Museum of Tolerance:

CCAR Resolution on the Jerusalem Location of the Museum of Tolerance

Adopted February 24, 2009

Jerusalem, Israel

Background

Cemeteries are sacred ground in our Jewish tradition, from the days of the Torah, which tells of Abraham's purchase of a burial ground as our people's first land acquisition in *Eretz Yisrael*, to this very day.

Too often, during painful times of our Jewish history, our cemeteries have been desecrated by those who wished us ill. It happened frequently in Medieval Europe. It happened during the Holocaust. Sadly, our burial places were also destroyed and treated with disrespect by Arab neighbors of Israel, when they occupied the West Bank of the Jordan River and much of Jerusalem from 1948 to 1967.

We are taught, “Let another’s property be dearer to you than your own.” Though these rabbinic words most often refer to ordinary property, how much more must they apply to cemeteries. If we hold our own cemeteries to be sacred, we surely must treat the burial places of others with respect.

We are also taught, “What is hateful to you, do not do to any person.” Those words of our ancient sage, Hillel, constitute the Jewish formulation of the “Golden Rule.” We would protest, in the strongest terms, not only desecration, but any removal of a Jewish cemetery, no matter what the purpose. Therefore, it is self-evident that we must oppose the removal of another people’s sacred burial ground, no matter how worthy the purpose.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center, a most worthy organization, is seeking to build its Jerusalem Museum of Tolerance atop the Mamilla Cemetery, an ancient Muslim burial place. While the Israeli Supreme Court has permitted the Wiesenthal Center to move ahead, an organization with high-minded goals like those of the Museum of Tolerance, cannot be satisfied with mere adherence to the law. As CCAR member and Union for Reform Judaism President, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, has pointed out, “A large and growing number of responsible, mainstream Jewish voices have spoken out against the museum, including the Reform movement’s Israel Religious Action Center. Dr. Rafi Greenberg, a prominent archaeologist at Tel Aviv University, has argued that Mamilla is one of the few surviving Islamic sites in western Jerusalem and therefore must be left intact.”

The Municipality of Jerusalem has offered attractive alternative sites to the Wiesenthal Center for its Museum of Tolerance.

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Central Conference of American Rabbis:

1. Urges, in the strongest of terms, the Simon Wiesenthal Center not to build its Jerusalem Museum of Tolerance atop the Mamilla Cemetery.
2. Commends Rabbi Eric Yoffie and all who have spoken so strongly in opposition to this particular location for the Museum.
3. Thanks the Municipality of Jerusalem for offering alternative locations, and encourages the Municipality, the Israeli government, Wiesenthal Center supporters, and all who are able to labor mightily to assure that the Jerusalem Museum of Tolerance be built in an alternative location.

Rabbi Peter Knobel
President

Rabbi Steven Fox
Executive Vice President

The Central Conference of American Rabbis (www.ccarnet.org), founded in 1889, is the oldest and largest rabbinic organization in North America. As the professional organization for Reform Rabbis of North America, the CCAR projects a powerful voice in the religious life of the American and international Jewish communities.

Since its establishment, the CCAR has a rich history of giving professional and personal support to Reform rabbis, providing them opportunities for study, professional development and spiritual growth beginning while they are still in seminary, through mid-careers, and into retirement. The CCAR is uniquely positioned to meet the ongoing needs of its 1,850 member rabbis (virtually the entire Reform rabbinate) and the entire Reform Jewish community.