

NEW HAVEN REGISTER

By Anna Bisaro

May 3, 2016

BRIDGEPORT >> Former New Haven police commissioner Rabbi Daniel Greer is accused in a federal lawsuit of the rape of a student at a Jewish school in the city.

More than 10 years after the alleged abuse, a former student at the [Yeshiva of New Haven](#) and The Gan School. Eliyahu Mirlis, now 28, is claiming that he was raped by Greer during his sophomore, junior and senior years as a boarding student.

Greer served as the rabbi, school principal, chief administrator, president, director and treasurer of the schools at the time of the alleged abuse, according to the federal complaint filed at U.S. District Court.

“Dozens and dozens of times for a period of years, Greer sexually assaulted and abused a young boy in his care,” said the victim’s attorney, Antonio Ponvert III of the Bridgeport-based firm Koskoff, Koskoff & Bieder. “The complaint describes a child-molester who, as all child-molesters do, preyed on a vulnerable child.”

According to the federal complaint, Mirlis was 15 when the abuse started and Greer was in his 60s.

The complaint alleges that the sexual abuse sometimes lasted entire nights and Mirlis was forced to partake in sexual acts, watching pornography, and was provided alcohol by Greer. The alleged abuse occurred on school property, in Greer’s bedroom, in motels in Branford, and in some rental properties in New Haven owned by the schools, according to the complaint.

The schools are also charged in the suit, as Mirlis alleges other school administrators and officials, including the assistant principal, knew about the abuse and did nothing to stop it or prevent it.

Calls were placed seeking comment from Greer. New Haven Police Department spokesman Officer David Hartman released a statement by Police Chief Dean Esserman that, “Upon the announcement of this information, the department will be reaching out to the plaintiff’s attorney.”

William Ward, the attorney representing Greer spoke with the Register Tuesday prior to seeing the case or the allegations in writing.

“It only takes a moment to make allegations with despicable indifference to the consequences of the damage they could cause to my client, his family, and his reputation that he has spent his lifetime building,” Ward said. “This is a difficult time for my client and his family, but I would encourage the public to ask for evidence before making judgements.”

Ward also said he wished the public would question why Mirlis came forward now, more than 10 years later, with the abuse and why it appears that he made the decision to file a case in federal court asking for monetary damages, rather than through a religious court.

Greer, his wife, and other parents in 1977 founded what was then seen as an experiment blending religion and education, the Gan School, the Register reported as the school celebrated its 25th anniversary. The school began in one room in a basement on Blake Street, then to a basement in a synagogue and in 1982 moved into the former Roger Sherman Elementary School on the corner of Elm and Norton streets.

Mirlis now lives in New Jersey and has claimed that the abuse he suffered as a teenager has resulted in distress, humiliation, depression, low self esteem, post-traumatic stress disorder, and an inability to maintain emotional relationships.

Mirlis is seeking compensatory and punitive damages, and his lawyer reported to the Associated Press that he would cooperate in a criminal probe, though criminal charges have not been filed against Greer for the alleged abuse.

New Haven Police Department Officer David Hartman said that the department would not look into the alleged abuse unless a criminal complaint is filed, and members of the department will reach out to Mirlis's lawyers to remind them of that.

While the Register and The Associated Press generally do not name people who allege sexual assault, Mirlis wanted to come forward, Ponvert told the AP.

David Clohessy of St. Louis, director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, or SNAP, said in a statement released about the allegations, "It takes great courage to do what Mirlis is doing and we praise him for protecting others and exposing a credibly accused child molester. Regardless of the legal outcome, we hope Mirlis feels some comfort and relief by taking action against an alleged predator. We also hope that others with information or suspicions about Greer will summon the strength to call police, prosecutors, therapists, attorneys or support groups like ours so that wrongdoers can be punished, victims can be healed and youngsters can be protected."

"No matter what synagogue or school officials do or don't do, we urge every single person who saw, suspected or suffered child sex crimes and cover ups in churches, synagogues or other institutions to protect kids by calling police, get help by calling therapists, expose wrongdoers by calling law enforcement, get justice by calling attorneys, and be comforted by calling support groups like ours. This is how kids will be safer, adults will recover, criminals will be prosecuted, cover ups will be deterred and the truth will surface," Clohessy said in the statement.

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