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Holocaust Victims' Families Sue Insurer

LOS ANGELES - Six Holocaust survivor families sued an Italian insurer for denying claims on policies held by victims of the World War II genocide.

The Superior Court suit, filed Thursday, contends that Assicurazioni Generali of Trieste, Italy, acted in bad faith by failing to honor life insurance or other policies purchased by the plaintiffs' parents or grandparents before the war.

Most of those suing live in the San Fernando Valley.

Ebi Gabor of West Hills said she believes she is the beneficiary of three policies bought by her father, who owned a winery in Hungary, and a fourth purchased by her grandfather.

Gabor, 76, was sent to a concentration camp, detailing the experience in a book, "The Blood Tattoo."

Jean Greenstein of Tarzana said he was paid \$2,806.80 on a policy bought by his father but believes two other policies were purchased that Generali said it cannot find.

"I know my father had three policies because he gave them to me, and I sewed them into my pants," Greenstein said.

Germans later found and confiscated his documents, he said.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages and asks the court to grant an injunction against Generali for alleged unfair business practices.

Peter Simshauser, an attorney for the company, said Friday that he had not seen the lawsuit claims but "we don't believe they have merit."

He said Generali has paid out more than \$100 million to settle Holocaust-era insurance claims and the company believes the new claims should be handled through an international commission established to deal with the issue.

Other European insurers also have been sued for refusing to honor pre-World War II life insurance policies because there was no documentation of the policyholders' deaths.

William Shernoff, an attorney representing plaintiffs in the lawsuit, said the case probably will be transferred to a federal court in New York that is hearing more than a dozen other pending Holocaust reparation suits.