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Claremont Firm Files Four Additional Holocaust-Era Lawsuits on Behalf of Survivors

William M. Shernoff, a nationally recognized expert in insurance bad faith law, filed four additional lawsuits today on behalf of Holocaust survivors and their heirs in the ongoing international crisis over unpaid life insurance claims by Europe's largest insurance companies.

"Our work on behalf of Holocaust survivors is a natural extension of the insurance bad faith work my firm has been doing for the last 25 years. It's gratifying to know the law would allow us to rectify the wrongs of 50 years ago," Shernoff said.

The four suits, filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, bring to five the number of Holocaust-era lawsuits on which the Claremont-based Shernoff, Bidart, Darras & Arkin firm has been retained. In February, the firm filed a \$135 million bad faith lawsuit on behalf of the Stern family of Los Angeles against Italy's Assicurazioni Generali for wrongfully denying life insurance benefits owed to them.

Each of the new lawsuits alleges breach of contract, unfair business practices, and allegations of bad faith, said Shernoff, the firm's senior partner and pioneer of the bad faith tort in California.

Los Angeles sole practitioner Lisa Stern, a family relative in the Stern lawsuit, is co-counsel on all five cases.

According to Shernoff, the new suits are:

Julia Sladek, M.D. v. Assicurazioni Generali (L.A. Superior Court, BC188679) -- A Beverly Hills internist, Dr. Sladek is the only heir to her father's life insurance policies. Emerick Schlesinger, the Director General of the Electric Company of Slovakia, purchased several life insurance policies from Generali before the war to protect his wife and infant son who ultimately died in a concentration camp. In 1946 he remarried, changed his family name to Sladek and set out to rebuild his life. After Mr. Sladek died in 1959, his wife and daughter, Julia Sladek, sought redress. All claims to Generali have been rejected to date despite the family having an actual policy in hand.

Sophie Stahl, et al. v. Viktoria Insurance Co. (L.A. Superior Court, BC188677) -- A 73 year-old resident of West Los Angeles, plaintiff Gabriele Lansing's grandfather, Heinrich Stahl of Belgium, was the Director of Viktoria Insurance Company and President of the Jewish Community in Berlin before the war. His son, Bruno Stahl, was Viktoria's managing director of the Brussell's office. After the war Sophie Stahl (now age 100), Bruno's wife, and their daughter, Gabriele Lansing, requested that the company pay benefits on the huge stock options, life insurance and annuity policies that the family owned. Viktoria rejected all claims. In 1993, Viktoria invited the family to participate in a centennial celebration honoring Heinrich Stahl, its founder. The family turned over original company policies to Viktoria after being told they had only sentimental value.

Nicholas Babos v. Assicurazioni Generali (L.A. Superior Court, BC188680) -- A resident of mid-city Los Angeles, Nicholas Babos is the 76 year-old sole survivor of large family that perished in the Holocaust. His father, Jozsef Schwarcz, purchased life insurance and an education annuity policy for his only son. Generali has rejected all claims for redress.

Eugene Hofstadter v. Allianz (L.A. Superior Court, BC188678) -- A 73 year-old resident of Rancho Mirage, Mr. Hofstadter's father, R. Moric Hofstadter of Bratislavia, was the cantor, mohel and caretaker of the Great Synagogue of Pressburg. The elder Hofstadter purchased life insurance and dowry policies for his family,

including 11 daughters, from the Phoenix Insurance Company, now Allianz of Germany. Allianz refuses to allow access to its archives and has rejected all claims made by the family.