

For Immediate Release

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**Attorney Exposes Generali's Efforts to Dismiss Holocaust Survivor's Cases
William M. Shernoff Joins Gov. Davis and Comm. Quackenbush to Put Pressure on Insurers
to Settle Claims**

Calling Assicurazioni Generali's efforts at settling Holocaust-era insurance claims an affront to the elderly survivors and their heirs who have already suffered so much, attorney William M. Shernoff is going on the offensive today to expose the disparity between Generali's public statements and its legal arguments in California courts.

Generali and its attorneys have done everything in their power to diminish and destroy the viability of these cases and have not offered our clients one single penny in compensation for their valid claims, said Shernoff, who is leading the fight for justice on behalf of individual Holocaust survivors and their heirs in California.

Shernoff - whose firm Shernoff, Bidart, Darras & Dillon has filed four individual lawsuits against Generali -- will share a platform today at the Simon Wiesenthal Center with Gov. Gray Davis, Insurance Commissioner Chuck Quackenbush, and several other elected officials to put public pressure on insurers that have refused to pay Holocaust-era insurance claims.

According to Shernoff, Generali has urged the state's courts to dismiss the claims of Holocaust survivors and their heirs by making the following arguments in court:

Generali contends that the Holocaust Victims Insurance Act signed into law in May 1998 is unconstitutional. Not only was the HVIA passed unanimously and signed into law by former Gov. Wilson with the support of the Department of Insurance, but the superior court upheld the law, ruling that California does have jurisdiction to resolve these decades-old claims.

Generali contends that the policies at issue have nothing to do with the Holocaust. Of course, the owners of the insurance policies in question died in the Holocaust.

Generali asserts that the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Italy are the proper venues for resolving such claims. Unfortunately, this ignores the fact that these countries were Axis partners in genocide, and laws would not support recovery for these types of claims. Furthermore,

Generali contends it has no legal or moral responsibility to pay these claims because some of its branch offices were nationalized after WWII. Generali, in fact, was paid restitution from the very governments that nationalized its assets.

Generali has continually argued in court that it does not have the jurisdiction of the California state courts and it stated in a sworn declaration that it cannot locate any records of ever having filed a lawsuit in this state. On March 19, Superior Court Judge Florence-Marie Cooper sanctioned Generali \$14,126.06 to reimburse plaintiffs in the Stern action for their costs in obtaining evidence of Generali's litigation history in this state. Plaintiffs uncovered 104 lawsuits filed in California where Generali was a litigant. Furthermore, Generali described in its own court papers that it earned \$27 million in premiums from California in 1998 and obtains 20% of its nationwide business from this state.

Generali contends that the value of the three identified insurance policies in the Stern case is approximately \$300. Nowhere in the record does Generali attempt to support this assertion. Indeed, it is blatantly false. Los Angeles sole practitioner Lisa Stern of the Law Office of Lisa Stern is co-counsel on all Generali cases filed by Shernoff, Bidart, Darras & Dillon.