

200 LEADING RABBIS CALL GAYS ‘PERVERTS,’ OPPOSE GAY SURROGACY

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Municipal chief rabbi of Safed Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu (C), municipal chief rabbi of Jerusalem Rabbi Aryeh Stern (L) and Temple Institute Rabbi Yisrael Ariel (R) at a prayer rally at the Western Wall. (photo credit: JEREMY SHARON)

More than 200 rabbis from the national-religious sector – some prominent leaders of their community – published an extraordinarily vitriolic and bitter condemnation of surrogacy and adoption for gays on Thursday, describing homosexuals as “perverts.”

The letter on Thursday caused outrage among liberal leaders and organizations, who castigated the rabbis and called for any of them on the public payroll to be fired.

The rabbis’ letter was signed by the most prominent leaders of the hardline wing of the national-religious community, including Rabbi Dov Lior; president of the Har Hamor Yeshiva Rabbi Tzvi Tau; Chief Rabbi of Safed Shmuel Eliyahu; co-dean of the Eli pre-military academy Rabbi Yigal Levenstein; dean of the Ateret Yerushalayim Yeshiva Rabbi

Shlomo Aviner; and Rabbi Ouri Cherki, an educator in the Machon Meir yeshiva.

The rabbis said they were writing in defense of Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem Aryeh Stern who said earlier this week that allowing surrogacy for gay couples would cause “children to be born and enter a very strange and unnatural life, a life without a mother and father,” and that these children’s lives would become “wretched.”

Stern’s comments came against the

background of the fierce opposition expressed by large sectors of the public to the new surrogacy law passed last Thursday in the Knesset, which extended access to surrogacy to include single women but not single men or gay couples.

The 200 signatories on Thursday's letter wrote that Stern had spoken "simply about the eternal truth of our holy Torah and human normalcy, which the healthy majority of the State of Israel identifies with, and which is outraged by the provocations of the organizations of abomination, who carry out impudent marches in the cities of Israel and even arrange marches of abomination on the Fast of Av, a day of national mourning for the Temple which was destroyed in part due to illicit sexual relations and baseless hatred."

Demonstrators in favor of gay surrogacy took to the streets of Tel Aviv on Sunday to protest the amended legislation, with tens of thousands turning out for the protest.

The rabbis continued in their letter to say that "the aggressive terror which accompanies the media's brainwashing"

designed to "destroy the concept of family and turn perverts into heroes will not succeed, and nor will the attempt to silence rabbis and sane people and turn them into delusional extremists."

"Rabbi Aryeh Stern came out in defense of the children of Israel who will become wretched if they are not adopted by normative families," they said, adding that their comments and Stern's were designed to ensure that children are given "the basic right to live in natural, normative families and grow up to be normal and psychologically healthy."

Yesh Atid MK Yael German said that the rabbis, instead of calling for unity, were trying to claim ownership over the concept of family and determine what is normative and what is a perversion.

"The time has come for them to realize that the national-religious community also has homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people, and no letter will change the fact that they are totally normative and want to live a full and equal life out of the closet," said German.

Meretz MK Michal Rozin said that the

rabbis had “missed the train” since Israeli society is “progressive and understands that love has many diverse colors, and benighted rabbis will be left behind, and they are in a panic.”

The Israel Be Free secularist group described the rabbis’ missive as a “letter of the ayatollahs,” and said that it could only be interpreted as a call for violence against the entire LGBT community.

“A large number of this group of crazies receive a wage from the State of Israel, and the silence of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked testifies to the fact that they do not intend to do a thing to stop these men of religion who have no god,” said the organization in response