

Mormons agree to no LDS proxy baptism of Simon Wiesenthal: As requested by Jewish human rights organization

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The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints removed the name of Holocaust survivor and Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal from a list of those to be posthumously baptized, after the organization bearing his name issued a statement calling for the removal.

“They did the right thing,” said Rabbi Marvin Hier, founder and dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center. “I’m sure they realized this was a terrible mistake on their part.”

The center, a Jewish human rights organization based in Los Angeles, issued a statement on December 18 asking the church to remove Wiesenthal’s name from the list of those to receive posthumous rites, which include baptism. Later the same day the church said his name had been removed.

“In response to a request by the Simon Wiesenthal Center and in accordance with the commitments the church made in 1995, no church ordinance was performed for Simon Wiesenthal and his name was immediately removed from the International Genealogical Index,” said Bruce Olsen, a church spokesperson.

In 1995 the church agreed to remove the names of Holocaust victims and Jews from the list of those to be posthumously baptized, unless they were direct ancestors of current church members or written permission had been obtained from all living members of the deceased’s family.

“It was astonishing to us that they went against the agreement,” Hier said. “We understand that from their point of view they think they’re doing Simon Wiesenthal a good deed. From the Jewish point of view, it’s rather an insult because it suggests

that there's no other way to get to heaven except through the Mormon church. We believe that Simon Wiesenthal, who lived a full life with great deeds on behalf of mankind, can get to heaven on his own and doesn't need any assistance."

In the LDS statement, Olsen said, the church emphasized its policy that members should only submit names of their own ancestors for such baptisms. -*Religion News Service*