

Israeli tax authority tries to seize church assets

John L. Allen Jr. | Jun. 8, 2009 NCR Today

The Asia News agency, a Catholic media outlet based in Rome, [reported this morning](#) [1] that the Chief Tax Collector at Israel's Finance Ministry, Yehezkel Abrahamoff, had notified some Catholic institutions that funds were being seized in order to compel them to settle what Abrahamoff regards as delinquent tax bills.

Less than three hours after Asia News moved the story, and in response to what the Israeli Embassy to the Holy See described as inquiries from various media organizations, the embassy released a statement indicating that the seizure was a non-starter.

"It will not be carried out, and the situation remains unchanged," the one-sentence statement said.

Speaking on background, sources told *NCR* that Abrahamoff's threat had been directed at a "major Catholic institution" in Israel. Those sources said Abrahamoff stated in a meeting with officials from that institution that his move was part of a broader strategy to compel church-affiliated institutions to pay up, regardless of the course of negotiations between the Vatican and the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

Here is my full report: [Short-lived tax dispute in Israel may fuel Catholic-Jewish tensions](#) [2].

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[1] <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=15448&size=A>

[2] <http://ncronline.org/node/13433>