

GLOBAL

## London judge jails husband who withheld Jewish divorce from his wife

BY CNAAN LIPSHIZ APRIL 1, 2022



Cars parked along one of the sharp curves of Singleton Close, where Alan Moher drove recklessly to intimidate his estranged wife in London, UK. (Google Maps)

(JTA) — A judge in London has sentenced to 18 months in jail a Jewish real estate mogul who, among other abuses against his wife, refused to allow her to divorce him in a religious court.

Alan Moher, 57, pleaded guilty to the charges of controlling or coercive behavior and was sentenced Friday, the Daily Mail reported.

He and his estranged wife, Caroline, separated in 2016 after 21 years together, during which they had three children. But he declined her requests that he grant her a get — the name of a formal divorce in Judaism.

In Orthodox Judaism, a marriage cannot be dissolved unless the man willingly and without coercion gives his wife a get. Women may also decline their husbands a get, but rabbinical courts may in such cases may allow the man to remarry regardless.

Women of recalcitrant or absent husbands, however, become agunot, Hebrew for chained women, unable to remarry in an Orthodox Jewish ceremony and destined to have any children they birth outside their marriage branded as bastards who would also be unable to marry in a Jewish Orthodox ceremony.

It was not immediately clear from reports about the sentence, which is unusual, how much it owed to Moher's refusal to divorce his wife or to other abuses. He was also found to have stalked and otherwise threatened her, including with physical harm. In one instance, he drove toward her on Singleton Close, a winding street, before swerving sharply out of the way.

The court did hear about the get issue. "You are not f—king getting a get, you will be one of those chained women," Moher told his wife, according to the news site MyLondon. He also said: "You may get all of the money, but I swear on [their daughter's] life, you will never ever get the get from me," according to the report.

In explaining the sentence, the judge did not name the get issue but did appear to reference it.

"Your wife sought to walk away from you to start a new life and as a result you have sought to make it as difficult and painful as you could," the judge said.

In 2021, the British parliament passed amendments to two pieces of legislation — the Domestic Abuse Bill and the Serious Crime Act — that clarified that withholding a get may also constitute a violation of those laws. Moher does not appear to have been sentenced under those amendments.

In 2019, legislation in the Netherlands passed making it possible for judges to fine and even jail recalcitrant spouses.

