

Apologists urge former Ravi Zacharias leaders to repent

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HOUSTON (BP)—A statement released Nov. 9 by a group of Christian apologists says three former members of Ravi Zacharias' inner circle "are not fit to be in ministry and leadership positions" because of their response to the late apologist's sexual misconduct.

The "Statement Regarding RZIM Senior Leadership Team Members Michael Ramsden, Sarah (Davis) Phillips and Abdu Murray" says the three former executives of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries "have not displayed a godly sorrow nor demonstrated the fruit consistent with repentance for their actions," nor have they "specifically owned their actions or expressed remorse to those they hurt."

For that reason, the apologists say, "We will not partner with them or endorse their work until the fruit consistent with genuine repentance is evident in their lives."

The statement was released at risenjesus.com, the apologetics ministry website of Mike Licona, an associate professor of theology at Houston Christian University, formerly Houston Baptist University. Licona and his wife, Debbie, are co-signers of the statement.

Other signers are Paul Copan, professor of philosophy and ethics at Palm Beach Atlantic University; William Lane Craig, professor of philosophy at Houston Christian University and research professor of philosophy at Biola University's Talbot School of Theology; and Sean McDowell, associate professor in the Christian apologetics program at Biola University's Talbot School of Theology and co-host of the Think Biblically podcast.

The statement summarizes the “types of abuse and deception that were representative of RZIM’s organizational culture,” including harassment of several employees who raised questions when allegations about Zacharias’ sexual misconduct surfaced.

Two investigations determined the veracity of the allegations against Zacharias, who died in May 2020. The first by Atlanta law firm Miller and Martin confirmed the sexual misconduct. The second by Guidepost Solutions found RZIM leaders overlooked Zacharias’ misconduct for years and used ministry funds to try to cover up the accusations and discredit his accusers.

Because there is no apologetics governing board, the co-signers of the statement say they felt a “spiritual and moral obligation” to make an inquiry into the evidence surrounding the Zacharias situation and the mistreatment of former RZIM employees by the named individuals, all of whom have either moved on to other apologetics ministries or expressed their intent to do so.

The inquiry involved about 1,000 hours of research and interviews of 25 people, along with a review of “copious amounts of supporting documentation” and consultation with experts of abuse and institutional response to abuse, according to the statement.

As a result of their investigation, the apologists call on Ramsden, Murray and Phillips to “seek counseling with someone skilled in the area of spiritual abuse, and move forward in genuine repentance.”

Murray, former senior vice president of RZIM, currently is connected to Embrace the Truth, an apologetics website. Christianity Today reported in 2021 that Phillips, a daughter of Zacharias who served RZIM as CEO under the name Sarah Davis (she has since remarried) was forming a new apologetics ministry called Encounter. It is unclear whether Ramsden, who

served as president of RZIM, currently is connected to any ministry organization.

If you are or have been a victim of sexual abuse or suspect sexual abuse by a pastor, staff member or member of a Southern Baptist church or entity, please reach out for help at 202-864-5578 or SBHotline@guidepostsolutions.com. All calls are confidential.

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