

**Response to the Complaint of Misconduct  
brought by the Board of Deputies of British Jews**

**Revd Dr Stephen Robert Sizer**

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## Introduction

1. The following is a detailed Response to a complaint made against me by Mr Jonathan Arkush of the Board of Deputies of British Jews dated 26 October 2012 (henceforth “the Complaint”).
2. Mr Arkush, on behalf of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, alleges “a clear and consistent pattern” of misconduct “unbecoming or inappropriate to the office and work of a clerk in Holy Orders”, between March 2011 and June 2012. Their complaint alleges:
  - i) I have made “antisemitic statements”.
  - ii) I am an “avid reader and publicizer of websites that are openly and virulently antisemitic”, “trawling dark and extreme corners of the internet for material” to add to my website.
  - iii) I regularly publish links on my website “to antisemitic websites, thereby re-publishing their anti-Semitism” to introduce readers to “racist and antisemitic websites”.
  - iv) I knowingly delayed removing a link to an article on an antisemitic website for three months.
3. In the following pages I will provide evidence to refute the allegation that I have made antisemitic statements. I will provide evidence to demonstrate that I am not antisemitic; rather that I oppose anti-Semitism and have done so repeatedly.
4. An analysis of the content of my website demonstrates that I am not an “avid reader and publicizer of websites that are openly and virulently antisemitic”, nor do I regularly publish links on my website “to antisemitic websites, thereby re-publishing their anti-Semitism.” Both these allegations are false.
5. Complaint is made in respect of a link to an article on a website named *The Ugly Truth*. This is a matter which was the subject of a previous complaint to Bishop Christopher and to the Police and which was resolved in my favour, the Police having concluded that there was no evidence of any criminal conduct.
6. This complaint follows a four year campaign of intimidation and harassment which began with the anonymous blog *Seismic Shock* in 2008, a series of inflammatory articles published on the internet, intimidating emails sent to my staff, a failed attempt by the Council of Christians and Jews to bring a complaint against me earlier this year and then an equally fruitless attempt to bring a criminal prosecution for ‘race hatred’.
7. Unfortunately, the Board of Deputies seek to support the assertions made in their complaint by quoting directly from the work of individuals who have routinely misrepresented and distorted my views in the past. Mr Arkush appears to have taken at face value these misrepresentations (including a false claim that I am a believer in supercessionist theology) and to this extent, the complaint is misconceived.
8. Other aspects of the complaint are based on assertions that are factually wrong and are similarly misconceived (for example, that I “trawl dark and extreme corners of the internet”). An analysis of the content of my website demonstrates I cite overwhelmingly from mainstream news sources. The websites mentioned in the complaint form a tiny minority of the sites to which I have linked and it is not suggested that I have linked to any of these sites on more than one occasion. It is asserted that by linking to an article (which

is not in itself said to be antisemitic) on a website which contains other material that may be antisemitic, I am in some way endorsing or seeking to publicise that other material. Yet it is absurd to suggest that citing a particular article from a newspaper or website implies agreement with every other article in that newspaper or website or even that one necessarily has knowledge of that other material. It certainly does not amount to “re-publishing” that material.

9. The Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 and the Code of Practice accompanying the measure specifically excludes from the definition of conduct unbecoming or inappropriate to the office and work of the clergy “lawful political opinions or activities”. In this, the Clergy Discipline Measure is written so as to give effect to rights protected by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. These rights cannot be suppressed other than on strong grounds. It is a matter of fundamental principle that a member of the Clergy should be entitled to express legitimate political opinions. Freedom of expression has been held by the European Court of Human Rights to apply not only to ideas or information “*that are favourably received or regarded as inoffensive or as a matter of indifference, but also to those that offend, shock or disturb the State or any sector of the population*” (Handyside v. United Kingdom 5493/72). Therefore, even if the content of my site was offensive to some readers (which I do not accept) it would be subject to the protection of Article 10 and therefore fall outside the definition of unbecoming conduct as set out in paragraph 8 of the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003. For this reason, I submit that the matters complained of do not come within the jurisdiction of the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 and in making this submission draw attention to the fact that the police have already determined in the course of a previous complaint that I have not committed any crime.
10. However, in reality, the content of my website cannot be characterised as either offensive or shocking. I have done nothing more than express legitimate political opinions, based on reasoned argument.
11. None of the opinions I have expressed on my website are capable of bringing the office of the Clergy into disrepute.
12. The Board of Deputies is entitled to disagree with these opinions and to do so publically. However, to misrepresent my views as antisemitic and invoke the Clergy Discipline Measure, publicising their allegations before they have been determined, has the effect of threatening my right to freedom of speech.
13. I deny the allegation of conduct unbecoming or inappropriate to the office and work of a Clerk in Holy Orders.

## **Background**

14. The factual background to the Complaint is as follows.
15. In September 2008, an anonymous ‘*Mordechai Maverick*’ sent a defamatory message about me individually to everyone on our Church Facebook. The message drew attention to an anonymous blog entitled *Seismic Shock*, which described me as a “dangerous anti-Semite” and promised to publish articles to expose me.
16. Ignoring several invitations to meet, the anonymous author began to write articles about me on a weekly basis, sometimes daily. These were subsequently re-posted on other websites such as *Rosh Pina Project* and *Harry’s Place*. In a one year period September 2008-to July 2009 well over one hundred articles about me were published on the *Seismic Shock* website.

17. Because the anonymous attacks were persistent and increasingly associated me with Holocaust denial, anti-Semitism and terrorism, Surrey police began an investigation out of concern for my safety. They visited me on several occasions in 2008 and 2009 and gave advice on improving the security of our home as well as our family. They also tagged our postcode in case of emergencies. Based on a search of IP addresses of those who visited my website, it was discovered that one or more persons associated with *Seismic Shock* had been using a Leeds University computer for extensive periods of time in order to search my site. The times also coincided with the publication of articles about me on the *Seismic Shock* website. Leeds University information security policies as well as JANET acceptable use policy prohibit their use in this way.
18. On 10<sup>th</sup> July 2009, I therefore wrote a formal complaint to the IT security coordinator to advise that Leeds University IT equipment was being used to harass me. The IT Co-ordinator at Leeds University subsequently confirmed to me that the individual's activities were in breach of the University's Use of Computer Systems Policy and that the consequences of this had "brought the University into disrepute".
19. On 29<sup>th</sup> November 2009, I received a report from West Yorkshire Police to advise that they had visited an individual and asked him to desist writing defamatory material about me and remove from his website material of that nature. I was asked to contact them if I became aware of further articles by the same individual "causing you harassment". Despite the fact that at the time we did not know the author, a Mr Joseph Weissman, subsequently admitted being the owner of the website, and then accused me of using the police to suppress free speech on the internet.
20. On 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011, Mr Weissman also wrote to each of my staff, but not me personally, drawing their attention to three defamatory videos about me on YouTube <http://youtu.be/vi5l6rpjgRo> : <http://bit.ly/mMoRHh> : <http://bit.ly/kXY2zC> . He stated,

"I am concerned about the way your church is being used to form ties with extremists. I will be making a formal complaint to the Bishop of Guildford, but I want to alert your church leadership to these facts beforehand. I am keenly aware of how the Incumbent reacts to lay criticism."
21. I believe Joseph Weissman has continued to write articles about me under the name 'Joseph W' for *Rosh Pina Project* and *Harry's Place* as well as also occasionally on his own *Seismic Shock*.
22. The Board of Deputies rely upon the opinion of "Joseph W" in their analysis of an article posted to my blog on 9 March 2011, adopting wholesale what I consider to be a gross mischaracterisation of my words.
23. Following the Facebook link to an article by Ray McGovern on the website *The Ugly Truth*, in October 2011, complaints were made to Bishop Christopher by Revd Nick Howard and Mr James Mendelsohn and then by the Council of Christians and Jews who also made a separate complaint to Surrey police. I was exonerated on each occasion. Despite this, the same allegation has been cited in the Complaint.

## **Refutation of the accusation of anti-Semitism**

### **Defining anti-Semitism**

24. The [Encyclopaedia Judaica](#) (2007) defines anti-Semitism as:

“a term coined in 1879, from the Greek ἀντί = anti, and Σημ = Semite by the German agitator [Wilhelm Marr](#) to designate the then-current anti-Jewish campaigns in Europe. "Antisemitism" soon came into general use as a term denoting all forms of hostility manifested toward the Jews throughout history. It is often qualified by an adjective denoting the specific cause, nature or rationale of a manifestation of anti-Jewish passion or action: e.g., "economic antisemitism," "social antisemitism," "racial antisemitism," etc.”
25. The [Oxford English Dictionary](#) defines anti-Semitism as: “Anti-Semitism is theory, action or practice directed against the Jews.”
26. I accept these historic definitions.

### **Evidence of opposition to anti-Semitism**

27. I have repeatedly and unequivocally repudiated racism, anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial in my lectures, books and website articles.

### **Repudiation of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial**

28. In October 2008 I wrote about the arrest of an alleged Holocaust denier at Heathrow airport, [Alleged Holocaust Denier Arrested at Heathrow](#) I concluded,
29. “Holocaust denial has no place what so ever in contemporary political, social or religious discourse. Good resources are to be found [here](#) and [here](#). A recent gathering of Nazi sympathisers at a pub in Redhill, Somerset, is also to be deeply deplored. See here for the [BBC Report](#)”
30. In December 2008, I wrote [Globalising Hatred: The New Antisemitism](#) about a new book by Denis MacShane, the Labour MP for Rotherham, and former Minister of State for Europe at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office entitled, "Globalizing Hatred: The New Antisemitism"
31. “This week [Newsweek](#) published an article by MacShane entitled, '[Europe's Jewish Problem](#)' It makes sober reading.”
32. I referred readers to reviews by Rafael Behr in the [Observer/Guardian](#), Alasdair Palmer, in the [Telegraph](#), and Geoffrey Alderman in the [Jewish Chronicle](#). I concluded:
33. “While MacShane does not address the correlation between Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, or with criticism of Israel's policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, at least not in the Newsweek article, the two issues are clearly linked. But legitimate criticism of Israeli policies toward the Palestinians must not be used as an excuse for racism or attacks against Jewish people. Whatever the causes of the rise of the new Anti-Semitism, it is totally unacceptable and must be repudiated unequivocally.”

34. In June 2010, I wrote about a recent visit to Auschwitz and published a video entitled [Walking the Wire](#)

“My first visit to [Auschwitz](#) was in 1976. It was then under (Russian) Communist control. In my early twenties, my understanding of the events of World War 2 were largely shaped by William Shirer's [The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich](#). On that occasion, the propaganda about Russia's role in liberating Poland and Europe from Nazi domination was very obvious. The Allies it seems had played little part in the defeat of Hitler.

Returning last weekend, 35 years later, it was still just as sobering to visit the two death camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau as it had been the first time. As I walked the wire, it was sobering to reflect on how a democratic European country had so easily tolerated, acquiesced and then endorsed the ethnic cleansing of Jewish people, Gypsies and dissidents on such a vast scale.

This time, a Polish perspective and the role Europeans and American's played in helping to defeat Fascism was more evident. Russia's complicity in its alliance with Nazi Germany was faithfully recorded. Have we learnt the lessons of history? I think not.”

35. In November 2010, I wrote [A Symphony of Anti-Semitic Dog Whistles](#), about a controversy between George Soros and Glenn Beck.

“Michelle Goldberg writes a spirited defence of George Soros and searing rebuke to Glenn Beck for his anti-Semitic rants on Fox last week. She described the Fox host's stunning two-day tirade against George Soros as a “symphony of anti-Semitic dog whistles.” and “a new low on American television.”

36. I concluded, “Repugnant it is indeed.”

37. In December 2010, I wrote [Building Community to Defeat Extremism](#) for our parish magazine in which I asked,

“Remember Oswald Mosley and his Black Shirts that fed off the back of the Great Depression? How do we avoid it ever happening again? If we are tempted to think it could never happen here, we need to think again. I was pleased to see that the Holocaust Research Centre of Royal Holloway University are collaborating with German educational institutions in a conference this month in Berlin on holocaust perpetrators. The conference will address how and why ‘normal’ people become genocide perpetrators.”

38. In March 2011, I highlighted a story by Stefan Theil in [Newsweek](#) about a group of Far Right European politicians who visited Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial, met with members of the Israeli Knesset and with Jewish settlers in the West Bank. I concluded “A step indeed ‘too far to the right’, even for Israel.”

39. In January 2012 I reported the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. [Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism have no place in PSC \(or anywhere else\)](#)

“Tony Greenstein has written a brilliant defence of the [Palestine Solidarity Campaign](#) and its stand against racism, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

In his latest blog article, [Holocaust Denial and anti-Semitism Have No Place in PSC](#).

published on Monday, he explains why several motions on racism are being debated at the upcoming PSC AGM on 21st January.

Motion 10, for example, defines racism, anti-Jewish prejudice and Islamophobia "as the belief that inherent different traits in human racial groups or Jews or Muslims respectively, both as individuals and collectively, justify discrimination. These terms apply especially to the practice or advocacy of discrimination of a pernicious nature i.e. which harms these groups."

Greenstein rightly insists, "Opposition to all forms of racism is a core principle of Palestine solidarity". In case there is any doubt, I will be supporting the motions. Read more [here](#)."

40. I concur wholeheartedly with [John Stott](#) who once said,

"Away then with anti-Semitism! It has been an appalling scandal in the history of Europe, and even the Christian church has been implicated. Christians should be 'pro-Semitic', in the sense that we recognize how the people of Israel have been highly favoured by God. We Gentiles are their debtors, Paul wrote (Romans 15:27). We owe them a huge spiritual debt, especially in their bequest to the world of both the Scriptures and the Christ."

41. Rabbi Professor Dan Cohn-Sherbok is a rabbi of Reform Judaism, a Jewish theologian and a prolific author on religion. He is Professor Emeritus of Judaism at the University of Wales, Honorary Professor at the Aberystwyth University, Visiting Professor at St Mary's University College, York St John University and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, and Visiting Research Fellow at Heythrop College, University of London.

42. He is a prolific writer, the author and editor of over 80 books, three of which deal explicitly with anti-Semitism, *Understanding the Holocaust* (1989); *Anti-Semitism* (2002); and *The Paradox of Anti-Semitism* (2006). He has also served as an expert witness on anti-Semitism for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). In a letter to Bishop Christopher he wrote,

"No doubt Stephen Sizer's detractors are acting in good faith, and I agree with them that anti-Semitism must be confronted. But they are regrettably misguided in their allegations about Stephen Sizer. He is in no sense antisemitic, and instead is fully in sympathy with those who seek to eradicate all forms of Jew-hatred in the modern world... it would be a travesty of justice to construe Stephen Sizer's mistake in linking an offensive website to his Facebook and not removing it immediately as a deliberate attempt to encourage racial hatred."

43. Professor Ilan Pappé is an Israeli historian and socialist activist. He is a professor with the College of Social Sciences and International Studies at the University of Exeter in the United Kingdom, director of the university's European Centre for Palestine Studies, and co-director of the Exeter Centre for Ethno-Political Studies. He has written or co-written 14 books including *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (2004); *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (2006) and *The Bureaucracy of Evil: The History of the Israeli Occupation* (2012). In a letter to Bishop Christopher he wrote,

"I was shocked to read the very recent allegations made against Revd. Dr Stephen Sizer – a recent wave in a never ending campaign to try and silence a human Christian voice. As someone who is a victim of a similar campaign, indeed by the very same people, I am only too familiar with the potential damage such a sinister enterprise can cause in the long run. I have read all of Stephen's works and participated with him in numerous panels and seminars. Quite often in churches



and community centres all over the country. The audience was always mixed: people of all religions and persuasions were present on such occasions. If there was a dividing line it was between the humane, peaceful and inclusive message of Stephen and those who sought to challenge him in the name of religious, national or ethnic eccentricity and false purity. There was not a hint of anti-Semitism in anything Stephen wrote or spoke about. On the contrary, the message was always clear – a concern that some of Israel’s policies and ideologies can create a misguided association of Judaism with dispossession, colonisation and discrimination. This is why there are always many Jews, like myself, who work in close association and collaboration with Stephen for the sake of a universal goal of bringing peace and justice to Israel and Palestine. This is also why many progressive Jews read and rely on Stephen’s scholarly work and come in great numbers to attend his talks.”

### **Repudiation of racism, the British National Party (BNP) and English Defence League**

44. In December 2008, following the leaking of the names, addresses and occupations of the 12,000 members of the British National Party (BNP), I wrote [The Church and the BNP](#)

“While I deplore the threats and attacks that ensued, I am encouraged by two aspects of the incident.

1. Membership of such parties is still perceived to be an embarrassment to the majority of people in Britain.
  2. Given legitimate concerns over evidence of institutional [racism](#) and [anti-Semitism](#) within the Church, I am relieved that so few Christian leaders were listed. [Ekklesia](#) claims five were identified.
45. It has been previously suggested that the BNP is seeking to gain ground by playing on false fears about race and immigration, and by seeking to exploit the mythology of a white ‘Christian Britain’.
46. The BNP has also attempted to exploit hard-line Christian conservatism by seeking to set up a body claiming to be a ‘Christian Council of Britain’, by scaremongering about Muslims, and by getting in on anti-Jerry Springer opera protests promoted by the controversial group Christian Voice – which has since distanced itself from them.”
47. According to Haroon Siddique, writing in the [Guardian](#),

“Ben Wilson, a spokesman for the Church of England, which is not a public body under the Race Relations Amendment Act, said it had seen “no evidence” that any serving vicars were on the list, despite media reports.

“The church’s General Synod passed a motion in 2004 stating that any political movement that seeks to divide our communities on the basis of ethnicity is an affront to the nature of God revealed in creation and scripture and is a grave danger to harmonious community relationships; consequently voting for and/or supporting a political party that offers racist policies is incompatible with Christian discipleship.

“It would be difficult to take any formal action against a vicar on the basis of their alleged membership of the BNP, as membership of any lawful political party is excluded from the grounds for complaint under the clergy discipline measure.”

48. I pointed out that the best piece of reporting on the relationship between the BNP and the Church has been written by [Richard Bartholomew](#). I concluded,
- “There may indeed be others who were ‘relieved’ that they too were not outed. Nevertheless the tally of church leaders associated with the BNP, while just a handful, is, in my opinion, one handful too many.”
49. In April 2012, I wrote [Counter-Jihad Report from Hope not Hate](#). Formed in 2005 as a positive antidote to political extremism with the support of the Daily Mirror, trade unions, celebrities and community groups across the country, Hope not Hate, in particular, mobilises opposition to the British National Party’s (BNP) and English Defence League’s (EDL) politics of hate.
50. In October 2012, I reported the publication of [Faith Hate and The English Defence League](#) by Faith Matters, a counter-extremism organisation. The 51 page report answers two important questions: "What Draws People of Faith to Right Wing Organisations?" and "What Effects Does the EDL Have on Interfaith Relations?"
51. I have consistently exposed and refuted the racism of the BNP and EDL.

### **Distinguishing anti-Zionism from anti-Semitism**

52. In April 2012, I wrote a positive review of Rabbi David Goldberg’s new book, [This is Not the Way: Jews, Judaism and the State of Israel: Rabbi Dr David J Goldberg OBE](#). I pointed out:
- “Goldberg argues that many of the shibboleths of the Jewish establishment, especially in the USA, are exaggerated or false. It is wrong automatically to equate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism: one can be a trenchant critic of Israeli policies without being hostile to all Jews: 'Zionism as an ideology should no more be protected from critical analysis than capitalism, socialism, colonialism or Islamism.' Israel is often treated too indulgently, he argues, by the Diaspora. It is becoming an alien place for secular or religiously liberal Jews who find its aggressive nationalism and assertive fundamentalism increasingly difficult to take. And the axiomatic identification of Israel with the Holocaust - always using the enormity of the latter to justify the actions of the former - has had baneful results for both.”
53. I also quoted favourably Gerald Jacobs’ [review for the Telegraph](#)
- “One of Goldberg’s prime targets are “knee-jerk” defenders of modern Israel. People who insult the intelligence of their fellow Jews and gentiles alike, thoughtlessly stigmatise opponents (not to mention Palestinians) and promote an obdurate, self-righteous and dangerous attitude to peace negotiations. Goldberg’s strongest condemnation is for those who, he says, deflect criticism of Israel by calling it anti-Semitism in anti-Zionist clothing.”
54. In August 2012, I reported the intervention of Rabbi Goldberg, defending the Church of England General Synod against accusations of “endorsing an ‘Israel hate agenda’” [Rabbi David Goldberg Defends Church Synod](#). The quote is taken from an interview by Robert Cohen with Rabbi David Goldberg published in the Church Times.

"Rabbi Goldberg has always been a champion of interfaith dialogue, but he now believes that the Israel question has contaminated Jewish-Christian relationships that have been built up over decades. He recognises that centuries of anti-

Semitism, with its origins in Christian teaching, have left Christians in an ethical bind. Who are they to lecture Jews on morality? On the other hand, how can Christians stand by when they see an injustice being committed against the Palestinians?"

"Israel as a state has become politicised," he says. "When it comes to interfaith dialogue, it's become the elephant in the room, because those Christian organisations that have dared to voice criticism of what goes on in the Occupied Territories suffer the full force of the Jewish community bearing down on them, and risk the ultimate sanction, and ultimate deterrent, of being accused of anti-Semitism."

55. Cohen says, "He is "not optimistic" that the situation can be unlocked, "because it requires honesty on both sides, and I have to say that organisations like the Council of Christians and Jews are too timid to grasp the nettle. They always look for the anodyne consensus that will please nobody. Ultimately, they can't confront the situation, because there is a lack of real openness."

56. To clarify my own position, in the introduction to my book [\*Zion's Christian Soldiers: The Bible, Israel and the Church\*](#), I wrote the following:

"It is true that at various times in the past, churches and church leaders have tolerated or incited anti-Semitism and even attacks on Jewish people. Racism is a sin and without excuse. Anti-Semitism must be repudiated unequivocally. However, we must not confuse apples and oranges. Anti-Zionism is not the same thing as anti-Semitism despite attempts to broaden the definition. Criticising a political system as racist is not necessarily racist. Judaism is a religious system. Israel is a sovereign nation. Zionism is a political system. These three are not synonymous. I respect Judaism, repudiate anti-Semitism, encourage interfaith dialogue and defend Israel's right to exist within borders recognised by the international community and agreed with her neighbours. But like many Jews, I disagree with a political system which gives preference to expatriate Jews born elsewhere in the world, while denying the same rights to the Arab Palestinians born in the country itself." (page 15)

57. I continue to hold this view.

58. Anthony Julius is chairman of the London Consortium and a Visiting Professor at Birbeck College, University of London. His book, *Trials of the Diaspora*, is a magisterial 800 page examination of the history of Anti-Semitism in England, published in 2010 by Oxford University Press.

59. The final chapter includes an analysis of the distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. In it, Julius writes of me,

"He has recently explained, however, that he 'categorically reject[s] any position that threatens the territorial integrity of Israel as a sovereign nation.... Stephen Sizer's work has the merit of clearly setting out the issues that divide the two sides, and furthermore doing so without the rancour or sheer nastiness of tone typical of the polemics in the conflict." (p. 571)

60. As I have pointed out above, Mr Arkush fails to define anti-Semitism in his complaint. I maintain that to do so accurately would demonstrate that the concept of anti-Semitism cannot be widened to include criticism of Zionism or Israel.

## **Refutation of the allegation of promoting anti-Semitism**

61. Mr Arkush claims on page 2 of Form 1a “The evidence in support of the complaint reveals Rev Sizer to be an avid reader and publiciser of websites that are openly and virulently anti-Semitic.”
62. On page 3, in the 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph, Mr Arkush further alleges,
- “The matters complained of disclose a clear and consistent pattern of activity on the part of Rev Sizer. The evidence indicates that he spends time trawling dark and extreme corners of the internet for material to add to his website. Rev Sizer re-publishes such items to support the target of his polemical writing, while at the same time introducing his readers to the racist and anti-Semitic websites from which he draws his material. As the evidence demonstrates, there are five instances of this over the 11 month period from July 2011 to June 2012.”
63. I deny the allegation that I trawl “dark and extreme corners of the internet” or indeed that I re-publish material “to support the target of his polemical writing”, or draw my material from “racist and anti-Semitic websites”.
64. Mr Arkush fails to provide any comparative evidence to substantiate his allegations. An analysis of the content of my website and blog demonstrates conclusively, on the contrary, that I draw from a broad range of mainstream news sources for my articles.

### **An analysis of the content of my website**

65. I have conducted a detailed analysis of the content of my website [www.stephensizer.com](http://www.stephensizer.com) over a three year period between 2010 and 2012. There are 239 articles. I cannot find any that could remotely be construed as critical of Jews or Judaism let alone as anti-Semitic.

<b>Website Subject</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Sermons and Bible teaching	154
Evangelism and mission	27
Church in the Middle East	19
Christian Zionism	9
Parish events (most on the church website)	7

### **An analysis of the content of my blog**

66. I have also analysed the 974 articles published on my blog <http://stephensizer.blogspot.co.uk/> in 2011 and 2012. The most frequent subjects covered are:

<b>Blog Subject</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Evangelism and mission	44
Palestine	35
Israel (primarily breaches of international law)	33
Christ at the Checkpoint conferences	27
Theology (general)	22
Syria	21
Iran	20
Arab Spring	16
Letters of support	16

New Zealand	16
Christian Zionism	15
Christianity Explored in Africa	14
Photography	11
Tearfund	11
Anglicanism	10
USA	9
Egypt	7
Islam	7
Family	5

### **An analysis of the sources used on my blog**

67. The most frequently cited sources in 2011-2012 were:

<b>Blog Source</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Guardian	32
Independent	19
BBC	17
Haaretz	14
Tikun Olam	14
Church Times	13
Palestine Solidarity Campaign	12
Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions	9
Church of England Newspaper	7
Christianity Today	7
Al Jazeera	6
Mondoweiss	5
Christ at the Checkpoint	5
New Statesman	4
Daily Mail	4
Middle East Monitor	4
Revelation TV	4
Laidlaw College New Zealand	4

68. Contrary to the allegations made by Mr Arkush, the evidence indicates that the overwhelming majority of blog sources used hyperlink to mainstream British newspapers, the Church Press and Christian media sources.
69. I cited 95 different sources in 2011 and 94 in 2012. These represent a broad and diverse range of political and religious news sources. Significantly, I can find none that link directly to anti-Semitic material.
70. These figures do not include the websites which form the subject matter of the complaint. I removed the links to these websites after I became aware that I was being criticised for linking to them and that they might therefore contain problematic material and as a result, I have not counted them. I will discuss these sites in more detail below, but this stage I merely point out that they form a tiny minority of those which I have cited.
71. This analysis discredits the allegation that “The evidence indicates that he spends time trawling dark and extreme corners of the internet for material to add to his website.” In fact I very rarely search the internet for sources. Instead I rely on links sent by fellow

peace activists. As a busy priest of a large parish with a staff team of 12, I simply do not have the time to “trawl dark and extreme corners of the internet”, even if I wished to.

72. Of the more than 1200 articles posted in 2011-2012, Mr Arkush bases his criticisms on a tiny proportion that appeared briefly on my blog or website. Clearly, very little research has gone into substantiating their allegations.
73. The specific articles or hyperlinks for which I am criticised will be analysed individually in the next section. It may be noted that none are more recent than six months ago.

### **Response to the specific complaints**

#### **14<sup>th</sup> March 2010: Photos of Israeli soldiers**

74. Mr Arkush claims that in describing the Israeli occupation force in Bethlehem as ‘Herod’s Soldiers’ I was “therefore insinuating that the Israeli soldiers are therefore both child killers and potential killers of Christ, or that any Jew in uniform becomes these two things.”
75. I was not in any way insinuating that “any Jew in uniform” becomes a child killer or a potential killer of Christ. It is not possible to extrapolate from the use of the words “Herod’s soldiers” that this is what I meant.
76. The wording below the title explained the context:

“Here are some close ups of Israeli soldiers in Beit Jala. This is Area A and therefore under Oslo, supposedly under Palestinian military and civilian control. Not so. These occupation soldiers fired on a peaceful demonstration and would not allow us to visit a family whose land has been confiscated and olive trees uprooted to make way for Israel’s apartheid wall.”
77. The photographs referred to were taken during the Christ at the Checkpoint conference in March 2010 of Israeli soldiers assaulting peaceful demonstrators in Beit Jala. This is designated Area A and therefore under the Oslo Peace Accords, under full Palestinian military and civilian control. I was very upset at being violently attacked for participating in a peaceful demonstration.
78. I entitled the selection of photographs ‘Herod’s Soldiers operating in Bethlehem today’ because not only Bethlehem but the whole of Palestine is living under a harsh military occupation as it was in the 1st Century.
79. I also reject the allegation that “This venomous accusation is reinforced by the sub-heading of the photographs ‘Christ at the Checkpoint’”. This was simply the title of the international conference we were attending at the time. The Board of Deputies concedes this very point in their article [One Sizer does not fit all](#) but appears ignorant of it in the actual complaint.

80. When it was suggested to me that the title was capable of being misunderstood and because I did not want to cause offence, I replaced the word 'Herod's' with 'Bibi's' referring to Bibi Netanyahu.
81. I have published over 25,000 photos online including 67 different sets of photographs of Palestine, detailing the illegal apartheid wall, the settlements, refugee camps, intifada, demonstrations, etc. This is the first and only time anyone has objected to a word used in one of the titles.
82. I repudiate all forms of illegal violence, whether directed toward Jews or Palestinians. I have repeatedly advocated for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by peaceful means based on the implementation of international law.
83. In January 2012 I helped draft the Seven Affirmations of Bethlehem Bible College, arising from the Christ at the Checkpoint conference. The first three are as follows:

**Affirmation #1: Israelis and Palestinians**

We affirm that all people are created in the image of God. In turn we are called to honor the dignity of every human being and to respect their inalienable rights. We affirm that Jews and Palestinians are loved by God and capable of living together within peace, justice and security. This is God's view toward all of humanity, residing in any political boundary and manifested through the mission of Jesus in bringing to everyone, "life to the full" (John 10:10).

**Affirmation #2: Theology and Land**

The New Testament clearly teaches that God continues to invite Jews and Arabs into His kingdom and in no way is finished with any people group. Further, Scripture speaks of Jesus as its ultimate fulfilment. For example, the need for animal sacrifices, Levitical priesthood, and expectation of a rebuilt Temple, find their ultimate fulfilment and completion in Jesus Christ.

**Affirmation #3: The Palestinian-Israeli conflict**

As followers of Jesus Christ we regret more than 60 years of conflict. We look forward to the time when the conflict will end and both peoples will enjoy genuine reconciliation. We commit ourselves to be peacemakers and to this ministry of reconciliation. As such we stand resolutely against all forms of violence and racism, regardless of the perpetrators.

84. This is why I am pleased to be a patron of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHAD) and a member of the organising committee for the Balfour Project, which is calling for a public apology for the broken promises made by the British government toward both Jews and Arabs in the Balfour Declaration.

### 9<sup>th</sup> March 2011: Gaddafi family ties to Israel

85. Based on a report in the Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot, and an Arab source, Al Akhbar, I speculated in, *The Ties that Bind: Israel to Libya*

"Saif al-Islam, son of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi made a surprise visit to Israel last week to buy more weapons for his dad. Is this why the US is so reluctant to impose a no fly zone and wants the UN to decide? Shame they did not do the same in Iraq."
86. I am criticised for saying, in the original post, "Blood is indeed thicker than water. Perhaps this is why the US is reluctant to impose a 'no-fly' zone over Libya". Mr Arkush alleges these comments were racist and antisemitic.
87. I was in fact speculating on comments by The Right Revd Riah Abu El Assal, the retired Bishop of Jerusalem, who had advised me that he knew of members of the Gaddafi family who apparently live in Israel. I was under the misapprehension that Saif Gaddafi's mother and aunt were, or had been, Israeli citizens and that therefore the Israeli government may have been willing to support the Gaddafi regime at a time when it was becoming isolated internationally, because of some familial link.
88. When I referred to blood being "thicker than water" I was simply referring to the possible blood ties of the Gaddafi family, not ties between Jews in general.
89. Nor was I suggesting that this had anything to do with Jewish influence over US policy. I was suggesting that if Israel was supporting Gaddafi's regime with military weapons, the US might be more reluctant to impose a no-fly zone over Libya as a result of US strategic ties with Israel. At no point did I say that the USA is "run by Jews".
90. In February 2011, Israeli TV Channel 2 broadcast a programme about Gaddafi relatives living in Israel. In September 2011, *The Economist* also published *Come and be an Israeli*,

"If he needs a refuge, Colonel Muammar Qaddafi might consider the Israeli town of Netanya. An Israeli family of Libyan origin has recently surfaced saying they are the colonel's relatives and that he should think of making aliyah (the Jewish voyage of return) and claim Israeli citizenship as any Jew may do under Israeli law. Gita Boaron told Israeli television she shares a great-grandmother with the colonel. "She fled her Jewish husband for a Muslim sheikh," she says. "Her daughter was the colonel's mother, making him Jewish under rabbinic law.... "After all, he's a Jew. "
91. I made an error in suggesting Saif Gaddafi's mother was Jewish. I understand that, as Mr Arkush suggests, it was actually Saif Gaddafi's grandmother and not mother who was Jewish. When the error was first pointed out (within days of the article appearing) I removed the sentence altogether because I realised that it was factually wrong.
92. Again, the Board of Deputies has extrapolated from my words a meaning which was wholly absent in the text. In short, words have been put into my mouth.
93. It is notable that the Board of Deputies quote directly from an article by Joseph Weissman on the website *Harry's Place*: [Church of England Vicar's Theory About Mass Murder & Jewish Blood](#). As explained above, Joseph Weissman has consistently caricatured and misconstrued my views in his blog articles for the past four years. I therefore find it both surprising and disappointing that the Board of Deputies should rely on Mr Weissman's interpretation of my words as reliable support for their complaint.



### 13<sup>th</sup> June 2011: Zionists and Far Right

94. It is alleged that comments which drew attention to co-operation between Zionists and the Far-Right, were in some way anti-Semitic. However, the comments I made in these interviews cannot in any way be considered antisemitic. The Board of Deputies has once again misrepresented me, attributing to my words a meaning which was absent and in any event, wholly alien to my views.
95. What I said was that the “far right in the Britain is forming an alliance with Zionists”. It is claimed that when I referred to Zionists, I really meant Jews, yet there is no justification whatsoever for this suggestion.
96. In common with many leading Jewish academics and religious thinkers, I believe that it is wrong to conflate Zionism with Jewish identity and that it would be antisemitic to suggest that the Jews as a people are or should automatically be supportive of the State of Israel or the policies of the Israeli government.
97. However, Mr Arkush seeks to conflate Zionism with Jewish identity. He alleges without any substantiation that:
- “Zionism is the belief in Jewish national self-determination. The majority of Jewish people share that belief and therefore characterise themselves as Zionists.”
98. Mr Arkush offers no sources for these assumptions, but instead goes on to allege quite wrongly,
- “When Rev Sizer refers to Zionists, he does so disparagingly and in the knowledge that most of his readers will readily understand the term as a paraphrase for Jews.”
99. In my [doctoral research](#), books, articles and blog articles I have made it clear that the vast majority of Zionists are not Jewish at all, but Christian. Based on the research of organisations such as the [Pew Forum](#), conservative estimates suggest Christian Zionists worldwide outnumber Jewish Zionists at least ten to one. The Pew Forum estimates between 20 million to 40 million people in the United States alone are Christian Zionists. John Hagee, the founder of [Christians United for Israel](#) (CUFI), claims.
- “When 50 million evangelical bible-believing Christians unite with five million American Jews standing together on behalf of Israel, it is a match made in heaven.”
100. The [Unity Coalition for Israel](#), which is the largest Zionist organisation, brings together 200 different Jewish and Christian Zionist organisations including the International Christian Embassy, Christian Friends of Israel and Bridges for Peace. They claim a support base of 40 million active members.
101. I further reject the deduction made by Mr Arkush that,
- “The claim quoted above would suggest to most of Rev Sizer’s listeners that the Jewish community (the Zionists) have formed an alliance with Neo-Nazi’s... Since this is the natural and obvious meaning of Rev Sizer’s claim, he must therefore be taken to have intended it to be so understood.”
102. Mr Arkush has attributed to me, assumptions which are untrue and which no reasonable person could possibly infer from what was said.

103. I did not say, nor did I mean, that *all* Zionists were forming an alliance with the far right in Britain or indeed that *all* members of the far right were forming an alliance with Zionists. This would be an absurd suggestion. However, *some* members of the far right in Europe have sought to attract the support of Zionists (both Jewish and non-Jewish).
104. The phenomenon has been discussed in mainstream journals (see [Newsweek: Europe's Extreme Righteous](#) ).
105. It is undeniable that some Zionists have been receptive to these advances. To the extent that it has happened in Britain, this development has caused understandable alarm within the Jewish community and Jewish communal organisations representing a wide range of political opinion (both supportive and critical of Israel) have attempted to address the problem.
106. In June 2010, the Jewish Chronicle published an article entitled [EDL step up their Jewish recruitment](#). It was noted in this article that a former member of the Community Security Trust (CST) had joined the EDL and was calling on other Jews to do so on the basis that mainstream communal organisations were insufficiently supportive of Israel.
107. In November 2011, organisations ranging from the Board of Deputies of British Jews to Jews for Justice for Palestinians, supported a petition opposing the EDL. The Jewish Chronicle reported that this was an initiative designed to "[combat Jewish support for the English Defence League within the community](#)".
108. Note that both these articles refer specifically to Jews, not to Zionists. I reiterate that when I talked of Zionists I was referring both to Jews and non-Jews. What I said cannot in any sense be considered antisemitic.

#### **5<sup>th</sup> July 2011: Assassination of Iranian scientists**

109. Mr Arkush criticizes me for linking to an article on the Palestine Telegraph alleging the article accused "Israel of killing scientists all over the world." Mr Arkush does not suggest the article I linked to was antisemitic. I was not aware of other material the author had written, and therefore I do not know whether Mr Arkush's allegations about him are true or not.
110. My article was simply reporting the fact that several Iranian nuclear scientists had been assassinated. I wrote "To lose one nuclear scientist in suspicious circumstances is unfortunate, to lose five is just plain careless" and linked to an article speculating, as many others had done, that in these cases, Mossad might have been responsible.
111. Of the 95 news sources I cited in 2011 and the 94 in 2012, I can find one reference to an article on the [Palestine Telegraph](#). I have not personally come across any antisemitic material on this website. I do not endorse everything on this website, or any other for that matter. It is absurd to suggest that citing an article implies agreement with every other article in a newspaper or website. It is equally absurd to suggest that linking to an article by a particular writer implies agreement with all other material written by him or her or even any knowledge of what the person may have written in the past. If this were true it would be impossible to link to any website or any article.

#### **4th October 2011: Israel's window to bomb Iran**

112. The Facebook link which Mr Arkush draws attention to here was previously the subject of complaints to Bishop Christopher made by Revd Nick Howard and Mr James Mendelsohn,

then by the Council of Christians and Jews who also made a separate complaint to Surrey police. I was exonerated on each occasion. I am therefore not sure why it is being raised once again.

113. Ray McGovern, an ex-CIA analyst, wrote an article entitled "Israel's Window to Bomb Iran" for [www.Consortiumnews.com](http://www.Consortiumnews.com) on 3rd October 2011. The 6 page exclusive was headed:

"Israeli leaders continue to pound the drum about taking out Iran's nuclear program – and some hardliners may want to strike soon, fearing the window of opportunity will close if President Barack Obama wins re-election and is less susceptible to political pressures, as ex-CIA analyst Ray McGovern observes."

114. In the opening paragraph, McGovern warned,

"There are mounting signs that the right-wing Israeli government may think the timing is right for an attack on Iran, with growing alarms inside Israel about alleged Iranian progress on building a nuclear bomb – and with President Barack Obama fearing loss of key Jewish political support in 2012 if he doesn't go along."

115. Within days it had been re-posted on hundreds of other websites. A colleague sent me a link to the article on the website *The Ugly Truth* on 4th October. I read the article, found it helpful and posted a link on my Facebook without checking other material on the website itself. I regularly read posts on a blog called [The Ugly Vicar](#) and may subconsciously have linked the two.

116. On 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011, Bishop Christopher received a complaint from Revd Nick Howard insisting I be suspended for posting a link to the article by Ray McGovern "[Israel's Window to Bomb Iran](#)". Bishop Christopher rejected the suggestion.

117. At no time did I scroll down and read the original complaint. I get criticised for my views on a weekly basis. I considered this to be just another example in a long and concerted campaign of harassment from a small group of Messianic believers who disagree with my theology and who oppose my views on how to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict based on international law. I simply no longer read threatening or abusive correspondence, especially when sent to others rather than personally to me.

118. Bishop Christopher did not ask me to do anything specific at that time. I maintain that citing an article does not necessarily indicate endorsement of everything else by an author, let alone everything else on a particular website.

119. On 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2011, I wrote to Bishop Christopher,

"I am embarrassed and sorry that I have caused you this concern. I will be more careful in what I allow to be posted on my Facebook. I normally take great care to avoid material that promotes racism or violence and have in the past 'unfriended' people who abuse my trust.

I am very relieved this does not constitute cause for discipline and am grateful for your patience as well as support.

Criticism of the stand I am taking, along with others, in support of the church in the Middle East is becoming almost a daily event.

Yesterday, Joseph Weissman on Seismic Shock made selective use of an interview I made with Brother Andrew to suggest we advocate violent Jihad. Nothing could be

further from the truth but I don't intend responding to him. The full interview is here <http://vimeo.com/10224645>

I gave a paper on the [Christian Jihadist](#) at a Christian-Muslim Dialogue conference in Toronto in May last year. This expresses my views on what the New Testament has to say about the inner struggle for holiness. I emphatically repudiated violence as a means of achieving God's purposes.

Thank you once again for your support."

120. During October and November 2011, I was also away from my parish for considerable periods of time, travelling to Palestine twice, for a planning conference (3-6<sup>th</sup> October), then leading a pilgrimage for 44 people (21-30<sup>th</sup> October). I also travelled to the USA for the EMEU annual conference in Washington (14-17<sup>th</sup> November). During this period, I also spoke at conferences in Hammersmith and Arlesford as well as participated in a live debate with Dr Calvin Smith, on Revelation TV. In early December I also gave two presentations in Belfast. This heavy schedule inevitably meant that I was unable to give as much attention to non-parochial email correspondence during this period as I might have wished.
121. On 27<sup>th</sup> December 2011, Revd Howard then wrote a six page critique of my ministry entitled "[The Church of England must take action against Revd Stepen Sizer](#)" on the website *Harry's Place*.
122. He falsely accused me of "explicit anti-Semitism, implicit anti-Semitism; and complicity with anti-Semites." The same day he wrote to all 13 of my staff individually asking them to read his article, but not to me personally:

"Since then I've continued to keep an eye out for any information about Stephen which might put me at ease or confirm my suspicions. Very sadly, I've come to the view that the evidence is now so overwhelming and undeniable that it would be wrong not to take action against his continuing in Christian ministry. I contacted the Bishop of Guildford (copied into this email) but was very disappointed by his response..."
123. On 30<sup>th</sup> December 2011, Bishop Christopher received a similar complaint from Mr James Mendelsohn, this time insisting there might be grounds for legal action. This too was copied in all my staff on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2012, but not to me personally. I therefore did not read it either.
124. On New Year's Eve, 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011, Revd Howard phoned my curate, to persuade him to disassociate from me. My curate subsequently told me "he applied pressure to me by saying that when you were ousted then people would be asking what I had been doing as your fellow clergyman."
125. On 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2012, Bishop Christopher received an enquiry from the Jewish Chronicle about the Facebook link. I initially could not find it and assumed I had already removed it in the Autumn. The next day, 4<sup>th</sup> January, the link was found and I removed it straight away.
126. The reality is I add several links to my Facebook page daily. I removed this particular link as soon as I found it. Although one of my critics has claimed otherwise, I have not yet found a simple method of finding a link from several months ago on Facebook.

127. The article itself that I linked to was about Israeli threats to Iran. No one has actually criticised the article itself, merely the link to a website on which it was hosted. At the time I linked to the website, I was not aware of the nature of other material posted on it.
128. On 5<sup>th</sup> January 2012 I spoke with David Gifford, CEO of the Council of Christians and Jews, by telephone and I explained the reasons for the apparent delay in removing the link. He asked if I would be willing to explain that to representatives of CCJ and I indicated that I would be pleased to meet with them.
129. On 14<sup>th</sup> March, I wrote to David Gifford, "Just to reassure you, following your telephone call recently, I am still willing to meet with you and/or Jewish leaders if you or they so desire."
130. His Administrator, Lindsay-Jane Smith replied the same day,
- "Thank you for your email. David Gifford is currently in Israel leading a group of Christian Clergy on a 9 day Study Programme at Yad Vashem. He is trying to pick up emails when he can while he is out there. He will get back to you in due course."
131. Surprisingly, therefore, the day before, on 13 March 2012, presumably someone else at CCJ posted a statement on their website entitled "[CCJ Statement About Anti-Semitic Website](#)." It stated that CCJ had "drawn the attention of the Surrey police to what they claim was an action tantamount to encouraging race 'hatred'." The CCJ said that I was "alerted to the anti-Semitic nature of the website in November and again in December, but only removed the link in January when contacted by the Jewish Chronicle."
132. The CCJ article did not identify the alleged circumstances in which I was alleged to have been alerted to the link or seem aware of the explanations already given them, in writing and by telephone.
133. Given that I spoke with David Gifford by telephone in January and gave an explanation for the delay in removing the hyperlink, it is surprising that despite this, they still chose to make a public statement critical of my actions some two months later.
134. More specifically, it would have been helpful if the Bishop of Manchester had consulted Bishop Christopher before making his allegations that "The content and the delay in removing the link from Mr Sizer's Facebook page was disgraceful and unbecoming for a clergyman of the Church of England to promote." The Bishop of Manchester appears to have deduced, without checking and quite wrongly, that the delay in removing the link was intentional.
135. Surrey Police eventually advised me that they were not going to prosecute me because there was no evidence that I had committed any crime.
136. On 23<sup>rd</sup> April, CCJ issued a second statement saying "The Council of Christians and Jews has now received the advice of the Surrey Police, together with that of the appropriate legal authorities".
137. The CCJ is a venerable organisation with distinguished supporters. I would have hoped that, having accused me of serious criminal conduct, it would want to make it clear that the police investigation has revealed no evidence to support my prosecution.

138. If the CCJ does not feel able to make it clear that its allegations were ill founded it will, I hope, reflect on the reliability of its informants and think very hard before naming people who might in the future be the innocent victims of ill-considered complaints.

139. Phil Groom is a member of CCJ. He took exception to their behaviour and wrote a blog article about the affair entitled [Jeremiah's Underpants](#). Accepting my explanation, he observed,

“... which to me, as another heavy facebook user, makes perfect sense; and I wonder if that is part of CCJ's problem: they simply don't get social media? Be that as it may, however, as a member of CCJ, I find the way they have elected to handle this situation extremely disappointing on two particular fronts: First of all, the announcement itself seems disingenuous at best: entitled “CCJ Statement About Antisemitic Website” it is, in fact, nothing of the sort: it is rather a direct, personal attack on Stephen Sizer. Far better, I suggest, to thank Stephen for drawing attention to the site and then go, with even greater determination, after the people who run The Ugly Truth website. Next, one thing that I've always admired about CCJ, one of the things that makes me proud to be a member, is its commitment to dialogue: making dialogue make a difference is one of CCJ's straplines, used on almost every poster we produce at CCJ Hillingdon, where I'm the webmaster. What, I wonder, has happened to the dialogue process in this instance? Stephen removed the link as requested; and at CCJ CEO David Gifford's invitation he met with some Jewish leaders where, in Stephen's words, “we had a heart to heart about what had happened, but nothing materialised except this press release.” Why, I ask, some two months on, have CCJ now chosen to pursue the matter in this way rather than engage in further dialogue with Stephen, or indeed with CCJ's wider membership?”

140. Had Revd Howard, Mr Weissman or Mr Mendelsohn contacted me personally about the Facebook link rather than called for my dismissal, copied their complaints to all my staff, and publicized their grievances on the internet, I would have substituted an alternative link to Ray McGovern's article much sooner. I welcome dialogue and constructive feedback on my web articles and links.

141. Three individuals have kindly agreed to help proof read my material to avoid any inadvertent links to websites containing anti-Semitic material in the future.

#### **14<sup>th</sup> October 2011: Helen Thomas**

142. The article about Helen Thomas was actually written on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2010, a year earlier. [Helen Thomas: You cannot criticize Israel in the U.S. and survive](#). It seems unusual that, after a delay of over two years, it now forms part of this complaint. Mr Arkush claims,

“Rev Sizer posted comments on his blog from Helen Thomas, the former White House correspondent forced to retire after telling Jews in Israel to go 'home' to Poland, Germany or America. He prefaced the comments with: “Helen Thomas is one gutsy 90 year old lady to take on the Israel Lobby.” And ended them with “Bring it on.”

143. I was also merely quoting verbatim an interview conducted and published by the Israeli newspaper [Haaretz](#). Mr Arkush does not specify what I have done wrong in doing so. I do not necessarily share all Ms Thomas' views, least of all on where Jewish people should live.

144. I do however stand by my comment that “Helen Thomas is one gutsy 90 year old lady to take on the Israel Lobby.”
145. I should also point out that Ms Thomas’ comments were much debated and articles supportive of her published on mainstream news sites such as the Huffington Post.

#### **24<sup>th</sup> December 2011: Israel and the Arab Spring**

146. This interview with the [Qods News Agency](#) was primarily about the Arab Spring. In answer to the question, “how do you assess the current position and future of Israel, with a view to the Middle East revolutions” I concluded “I pray for a peaceful resolution of the conflict based on the rule of international law.” I do not see this as evidence that I “attacked Israel.”
147. I regard interviews such as this as opportunities to correct Muslim (and in this case Iranian) misconceptions and prejudices about the West in general and of Christianity in particular. I do not consider my answers to be an attack on Israel as Mr Arkush suggests. He does not comment on anything specific that I am alleged to have actually said.
148. I clearly do not necessarily agree with every interview or article published on such websites. To suggest that I cannot give an interview to a news agency because it may, on other occasions, have published objectionable material of which I am unaware, is ludicrous.

#### **31<sup>st</sup> December 2011: Uri Avnery on Israel and Iran**

149. This blog article [Israel, Hamas, Hizbollah, the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran](#) is about the views of Uri Avnery, as the title suggests, about Israel, Hamas, Hizbollah, the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran.
150. Uri Avnery was a member of the Irgun as a teenager and sat in the Knesset from 1965–74 and 1979–81. He is the founder of the [Gush Shalom](#) peace movement and an internationally respected Israeli peace activist.
151. The Redress website does indeed also publish the occasional writings of Gilad Atzmon, as Mr Arkush points out. However, I was not commenting on Atzmon’s writings or drawing attention to them. This is clearly an example of “guilt by association.”
152. I have written critically of Mr Atzmon’s views elsewhere, notably reporting the decision of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign to reject his position. [Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism have no place in PSC \(or anywhere else\)](#). I have also drawn attention to Tony Greenstein’s criticism of Atzmon. See here [PSC AGM – A Crushing Defeat For Gilad Atzmon and the Anti-Semites](#)
153. The Redress website publishes articles by a number of other academics beside Uri Avnery – notably, Paul Balles, a retired American university professor; Jonathan Cook, writer and journalist based in Nazareth, Israel, and winner of 2011 Martha Gellhorn Special Prize for Journalism; William Cook, professor of English at the University of La Verne in southern California; and Lawrence Davidson, professor of history at West Chester University. On these writers, Mr Arkush is silent.

154. I do not agree with his assumption that “It would have been impossible for Rev Sizer to visit the site without appreciating this from the list of articles shown in each topic.” I believe this is the only time in two years I linked to an article on the Redress website and did so purely because of the importance of the article itself, which, once again, Mr Arkush ignores.

### **1<sup>st</sup> March 2012: Map of US military bases surrounding Iran**

155. I published a map showing US bases surrounding Iran which I found through a Google search. I did not check the *Veterans Today* website. Mr Arkush is quite wrong to assume that I was “searching the site for material to post on his blog.” I did not.
156. When I learnt that I had been criticised for linking to this website, I removed the map and reproduced it from another website in July 2012 See: [Who is threatening whom?](#) Mr Arkush makes no comment on the significance or veracity of the map itself.
157. Mr Arkush produces a screen shot of an anti-Semitic article from that site. Prior to reading the Board of Deputies complaint, I had never seen this article. I was not aware that *Veterans Today* contained antisemitic material because I do not read the material on that site. The fact that I posted the map in no way suggests that I endorse the content of *Veterans Today* nor that I agree with the views expressed on it.
158. Mr Arkush also criticises me for recommending Al Manar, a popular TV channel in Lebanon. I have been interviewed by them in the past. I do not believe that recommending Al Manar as a news source necessarily means I concur with every programme broadcast by the company, least of all one concerning the spurious Protocols of the Elders of Zion.
159. In a recent paper, based on my PhD research, [Evangelical Theology & American Politics in the Middle East](#), delivered at the Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding Briefing held at the Billy Graham Centre at Wheaton College, Illinois, I pointed out that Arno Gaebelein, an early Christian Zionist, wrongly believed the Protocols to be authentic.

‘... they certainly laid out a path for the revolutionary Jews that has been strictly and literally followed. That the Jew has been a prominent factor in the revolutionary movements of the day, wherever they may have occurred, cannot truthfully be denied, any more than that it was a Jew who assassinated, with all his family, the former Autocrat of all the Russians; or than that a very large majority (said to be over 80%) of the present Bolshevist government in Moscow, are Jews: while along other lines, in the assembly of the League of Nations, the Jew’s voice is heard, and it is by no means a plaintive, timid, or unimportant one—the Jew is the coming man!’ [\[xxxvii\]](#)

160. I repudiate the thesis behind the Protocols that there exists a worldwide Jewish conspiracy to undermine civil authority, destroy Christianity and take over the international economy. However, I see nothing anti-Semitic about referring in specific terms to the “power of the Zionist lobby”.

### **1<sup>st</sup> June 2012: The BBC Duped over Iraqi-Syria photograph**

161. This criticism, like that made of my use of a map on 1<sup>st</sup> March, concerns the location of a photograph found on the internet through a Google search, not the photograph itself. I



was merely drawing attention to the fact that the BBC had been duped into publishing a photo allegedly from Syria which had indeed been taken several years earlier in Iraq.



162. When I learnt that I was being criticised for reproducing the photograph from the Window into Palestine website, I removed the article. At the time I posted the photograph, I did not know that the *Window into Palestine* website contained antisemitic material. I was not familiar with the contents of the website. I had never seen the article on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the cartoon which has been reproduced in the appendix to the Complaint or any other anti-Semitic material on the site.
163. The story is also reported by the Daily Telegraph [BBC News uses 'Iraq photo to illustrate Syrian massacre'](#)
164. I would add that when I checked the site subsequent to the complaint being made, I could see no material on the home page that I would consider to be antisemitic. I do not accept that “any visitor to *Window into Palestine* would see that it is racist and antisemitic”.

### Conclusions:

165. It is said in the Complaint that I have made antisemitic statements. However, my record in opposing anti-Semitism is consistent and clear. In all that I have said and written over the past three years or so, the Board of Deputies has found only three statements which it alleges are antisemitic.
166. The question is: how does one judge whether a statement is antisemitic? If one concludes that a statement can be interpreted as antisemitic, can one necessarily go on to conclude that the person who made the statement intended it to be antisemitic? There may be a risk that the reader or listener will ascribe to the maker of the statement a motivation that he did not possess or views that he does not actually hold. Where it is not immediately obvious from the statement itself, one might be expected to look at the context in which the statement was made (e.g. by reference to a wider text). One might then expect to examine the statement in the context of other statements made by the writer or speaker: has he or she said similar things in the past? Is this someone who subscribes to familiar antisemitic themes or tropes?
167. As a basic matter of fairness, any analyst should seek to guard against any misrepresentation of what has been said or written and should try not to extrapolate too far from the text.
168. Whether a statement is anti-semitic may be a matter of opinion. Definitions of anti-Semitism vary. The concept of anti-Semitism has, sadly, been exploited by those who seek

to use it to silence legitimate criticism of the State of Israel. For this reason, it is important to refer to definitions that are both academically rigorous and widely accepted, as I have endeavoured to do in this Response.

169. With these principles in mind, I will now summarise the evidence in relation to the three allegedly antisemitic statements.
170. Firstly, it is alleged that by using the headline “Herod’s Soldiers Operating in Bethlehem Today” (14<sup>th</sup> March 2010) I was insinuating that “any Jew in uniform” becomes a child killer or a potential killer of Christ. Yet this is not what I said and not what I meant. Opinions have been ascribed to me that I do not hold, have never voiced and would regard as unacceptable. It would simply never occur to me to think that “any Jew in uniform” becomes a potential killer of Christ. However, I did accept, when it was pointed out to me that the headline was open to misinterpretation and might therefore cause offence. I then changed the headline. I would suggest that this is exactly what would have been expected had I *not* intended the meaning to be antisemitic.
171. Secondly, it is suggested that the article on Gadhafi family ties to Israel had an antisemitic meaning. I have explained above what was meant by the post, which was not intended to be antisemitic. I simply did not say that “the Ghaddafis are Jews, Israeli is full of Jews and the USA is run by Jews” nor that “they all murder innocent civilians; they are all linked by Jewish blood and evil motives”. As Mr Arkush says, my words had been “characterised” by a blogger on the *Harry’s Place* website (Joseph Weissman). How did Mr Arkush come to the conclusion that this characterisation was correct? Did he take into account Weissman’s history of antipathy towards me? Does he even know about it? Can he point to any occasion when I have suggested that the US is run by Jews or that Israel and the US is linked by Jewish blood and evil motives? Does anything I have said in the past suggest that I might believe this?
172. In both cases, I would have expected the Board of Deputies to have taken into account my publically stated views on anti-Semitism before coming to the conclusion that my words were antisemitic – indeed, reading into them about the most extreme antisemitic meaning possible. The fact that I openly repudiate such attitudes and have publically opposed anti-Semitism on many occasions must surely be relevant, yet has apparently been ignored without explanation.
173. The third allegedly antisemitic statement concerns my comments about Zionists and the far-right, the allegation being that when I drew attention to links between Zionists and the far right, I was alleging that the entire Jewish community was in league with neo-Nazis. I simply do not understand how it can seriously be suggested that this is what I meant, let alone that this was the “natural and obvious meaning of my words”. No fair or unbiased reader could possibly have come to this conclusion. I would suggest that the attempt to twist my words so as to read into them an antisemitic meaning is transparent.
174. It is bizarre that Mr Arkush should allege that it is antisemitic to draw attention to co-operation between Zionists (whether Jewish or Christian) and the English Defence League when the organisation that he represents has itself signed up to an initiative designed to combat support for the EDL within the Jewish community.
175. The remaining allegations do not concern the making of antisemitic statements, but largely concern publishing of articles or images from sites containing antisemitic material. This is alleged to amount to misconduct because:
  - 1) By publishing material that originates from a site hosting material that is antisemitic, I am endorsing the views expressed in other articles on that site.

- 2) That it can be inferred from the evidence in support of the complaint that I am “an avid reader and publiciser” of antisemitic websites.

176. Both claims are false.

177. There is no evidence that I have intentionally “introduced” my readers to antisemitic material. Had this been my intention, I would surely have published articles that were themselves antisemitic. It is also absurd to suggest that citing an article from a particular website or newspaper implies agreement with every other article in that newspaper or website and even more ridiculous to suggest that by publishing a photograph that originates from a particular website, one is endorsing that website or its contents. This would be the case even if one was aware that the site in question contained material that was objectionable (for example, because it is racist or antisemitic). However, the reality of the internet is that one can easily provide a link to a website without knowing that the site in question contains material that is objectionable. For this reason, it is dangerous to assume the person providing the link necessarily knows what other material may be posted on that site.

178. The frequency analysis that I have conducted shows that I cite overwhelmingly from mainstream sources and therefore do not seek to introduce readers to antisemitic material. This would tend to support my contention that where I have linked to websites that contain antisemitic material, I have done so inadvertently. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that the claim that I spend time “trawling dark and extreme corners of the internet for material to add to (my) website” is untrue. The reality is that I do not wish to cite material from websites that may contain antisemitic material and on those rare occasions where I have learnt that a link may be problematic, I have removed it.

179. However, whilst I have not, in fact, published antisemitic material from websites such as *the Ugly Truth* or *Veterans Today*, my critics, including [Revd Nick Howard](#) as well as the [Board of Deputies](#), have [published images from these websites](#) on their own. If the Board of Deputies has indeed brought this complaint against me in order to prevent me from “continuing to publish antisemitic material” why did Mr Arkush publicise this material (which I have never published) on the Board of Deputies website? I do not understand why this was necessary.

180. In June 2012 I wrote, [When Zionists promote Anti-Semitism](#).

“It is ironic that those who claim to oppose anti-Semitism the strongest sometimes, however unintentionally, appear to be the ones who actually promote it the loudest.

I have never knowingly and intentionally cited or drawn attention to antisemitic material, but some who disagree with me have repeatedly done so. But then what can you do when you don't want to address the message (the resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict by peaceful and diplomatic means based on the rule of international law and UN Resolutions)? Simple, deflect attention from the message by discrediting the messenger. See [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) for recent examples.”

181. In October 2012, I appeared on the 4Thought programme aired by Channel 4, which addressed the question, ‘[Are Jews still persecuted in Britain today?](#)’ I conceded that lamentably, anti-Semitism does still occur in Britain. However, I also pointed out that some people fail to distinguish between critics, who are opposed to the Israeli government’s policy towards the Palestinians, and fascists and racists who are simply antisemitic. In the feedback left after the programme was aired, seven out of eight people agreed with me. (365 agreed while 47 disagreed = 88% to 12%).

182. In their complaint, the Board of Deputies have not sought the opinions of any independent or authoritative sources in support of their allegations. Instead, critical articles, written by the very people guilty of pursuing a politically motivated vendetta against me have been cited to prove their case. This is circular reasoning at its worst. As has been demonstrated above, the agenda of these individuals has been to deliberately misconstrue my views in such a way to corroborate their allegations.
183. It is my concern that in avoiding any definition of anti-Semitism, the effect of the Complaint is to conflate anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism and thereby silence legitimate criticism of the State of Israel.
184. I care passionately about the safety of the Jewish people and the right of Israel to exist within internationally agreed borders. I repudiate unequivocally racism, anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial. I also repudiate Islamophobia and the denial of the Palestinian right to self-determination. This is because the Christian gospel repudiates racism, emphasizing God's love for all people. Jesus calls his followers to be peacemakers and to fulfil a ministry of reconciliation. The New Testament assumes and reinforces the mandate of the Jewish prophet Micah, "And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)
185. I am committed to seeking justice for Palestinians, peace and security for Israelis and reconciliation between both, either in two independent, sovereign, contiguous states based on the 1967 borders, or in one state encompassing Israel and Palestine with full and equal rights for both Jews and Palestinians.
186. Whilst calling for the dismissal of this Complaint, I remain willing to meet with representatives of the Board of Deputies and/or CCJ as well as those individuals named, who have criticised me, to explain my motives and seek conciliation. I regret that so far they have consistently been unwilling to do so. I have reason to believe that the Board of Deputies may be labouring under genuine misapprehension as to my beliefs and motives. For example, on the Board of Deputies website, [One Sizer does not fit all](#), they claim that I am a supercessionist. Supercessionism is the fallacious view that the Gentile Church has somehow replaced Israel within the purposes of God and that the promises God made to Israel now apply to the Church. In my book, [Zion's Christian Soldiers](#) (IVP, 2007), I clarify the relationship between Israel and the Church and carefully distinguish historic covenantalism from the error of supercessionism, which is also commonly called "Replacement Theology". The Board of Deputies clearly do not understand supercessionism or my published views on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.
187. Since it is clear that some individuals monitor my websites closely, if the Board of Deputies genuinely wishes, as they claim on their [website](#), that I avoid "publishing or re-publishing material that we find to be not merely offensive, but antisemitic" I simply request they inform me personally and directly of any hyperlink or article they are concerned about in the future and I will review it straight away.
188. The allegations made by Mr Arkush on behalf of the Board of Deputies, that I have made antisemitic statements and promoted anti-Semitism, are unsubstantiated because they are without foundation.
189. I reiterate my submission that the Complaint amounts to a wholly disproportionate and unreasonable interference with my right to freedom of speech and as such falls outside the definition of unbecoming conduct as set out in paragraph 8 of the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003. No evidence has been adduced of unlawful conduct on my part.

190. I do not believe my criticisms of Zionism and some Israeli policies constitute “conduct unbecoming or inappropriate to the office and work of a clerk in Holy Orders.” On the contrary, I believe they are entirely consistent with the Ordinal and our calling to be faithful ministers of the gospel. I therefore call for the dismissal of this Complaint.

Stephen Sizer  
18 January 2013