FORM 3 (Rules 6 and 17)

Clergy Discipline Measure 2003

Statement in support of a Complaint, or in support of an Answer to a Complaint

Box for use only by the Registrar of Tribunals	*Statement submitted by:* *Name of maker of statement:* *Date of statement:*

In the matter of the complaint

Enter the name of the complainant.
Enter the name of the member of the clergy about whom a complaint is made.

made by The Board of Deputies of British Jews

against: Rev Dr Stephen Sizer

My full name is: Robert Cohen

My contact address, including postcode, is:

1 Moons Acre
Bentham
North Yorkshire
LA2 7BL

***Telephone & e-mail details are optional, but it could be helpful to the registrar and bishop to have them.*

**My telephone number is:

**My e-mail address is: robertahcohen@gmail.com

The matters in this statement to which I refer are all within my own knowledge, except where I indicate otherwise. If anything is not within my own knowledge then I set out the source of any matters of information and belief:

*You must explain in your statement how you know about each of the matters you describe, **unless** you know about them because you have **personally** seen or observed them.*

Dear Bishop Tim,

I'm writing to give my support to Revd. Dr. Stephen Sizer following the Complaint of Misconduct brought by Marie van de Zyl of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

I am a British Jew brought up in the Movement for Reform Judaism where I was inspired by Hebrew scripture and my study of Jewish history to value the importance of building a just society and working to 'repair the fractured world' in which we live. I am a trustee of Amos Trust, which has thirty years of experience working in Israel/Palestine. I am married to an Anglican Priest, Revd Anne Russell, a Team Rector in the Leeds Diocese.

For the last seven years I have written and spoken publicly about my criticism of Zionism and the actions of the State of Israel in its treatment of the Palestinian people. I write not from a secular or left wing position but from an understanding of what it should mean to be a Jew in the 21st century in the long shadow of the Holocaust and following the creation of the State of Israel. I take my inspiration from the Hebrew Prophets, from the experience of the Jewish people throughout the Jewish diaspora and from the ethical teachings of Judaism across the centuries.

My journey to Palestinian solidarity has been long and difficult. I chart its beginnings from when I was a student at Manchester University in the late 1980s struggling to understand the out break of the first Palestinian Intifada in the Occupied Territories. My final break with Zionism came when I met Christian clergy in Nazareth in 2011 and realised that the failings of Zionism reached far beyond the post 1967 Occupation. Since then I have discovered the principled tradition of Jewish opposition to Zionism dating back to the 19th century and also experienced first hand the lengths the Board of Deputies will go to to prevent such voices being heard, especially to Anglican audiences.

I believe it's impossible to understand the motivation of the Board, in regard to my own work and Revd. Sizer's, without recognising the Board's strong conviction that Zionism is now integral to Jewish identity and indeed central to the expression of Judaism today. So any criticisms of Zionism, or even particular actions by governments of the State of Israel, are seen as an attack on Jews and Judaism and therefore must be considered expressions of antisemitism.

The Board of Deputies is right to say that the majority of Jews in Britain feel strongly attached to the State of Israel and have a profound concern for its safety and security. I would include myself in this thinking. However, it should be noted that a growing number of Jews, especially a younger generation, are becoming increasingly uneasy and disillusioned about how the Zionist project has played out. This is particularly true in the United States. The Board in the U.K., just like its counterparts in America, is loathe to acknowledge this fracturing of the Jewish consensus on Israel and Zionism.

The Board has adopted a position of uncritical support for Israel to the point where its interfaith and public affairs work can only be understood as part of a wider pro-Israel lobby in the U.K which includes many other U.K. Jewish organisations. I don't see this as in anyway conspiratorial or nefarious. It's how politics works on many issues. However, it means that the Board's allegations against Revd. Sizer should be seen as taking place within a highly political context.

Revd. Sizer, as you know, has become an important and authoritative voice in helping Christians to understand the roots of Christian Zionism, which is quite different to the Jewish idea of Zionism but hugely influential in generating uncritical support for Israel and considerable hostility towards the Palestinian people. Revd. Sizer has been a firm advocate for equality for all who call the Holy Land home. In addition, he has consistently spoken out against antisemitism and against Holocaust denial. However, as a high profile figure, the Board view his writing as a threat to its own ability to influence Christian denominations in their thinking about Israel and Zionism.

Revd. Sizer has already comprehensively refuted past allegations made against him by the Board and the latest allegations are equally spurious and have been equally refuted. I find it very disturbing that the Board is willing to conduct a character assassination of a good man doing good work in the name of justice and inspired by his Christian faith.

I hope that following your review of the evidence you will feel confident in rejecting the complaint of misconduct against Stephen Sizer.

Yours Sincerely

Robert Cohen
Bentham
North Yorkshire

I believe the facts in my statement to be true. I am aware that the contents of this statement may be made public

You must sign and date this statement.

Signed: Robert Cohen

Dated: 29 November 2018