

**Clergy Discipline Measure 2003**

**In the Clergy Discipline Tribunal – Diocese of Winchester**

**Re the Reverend Dr Stephen Robert Sizer**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF  
DIANA NESLEN**

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I, **DIANA NESLEN**,

**WILL SAY** as follows:

1. I make this statement on behalf of the Reverend Dr Stephen Sizer in support of his Answer to a Complaint made against him by the Board of Deputies of British Jews (**“the Board of Deputies”**).

**Biography**

2. I am a South African born, naturalised British Jew. I am a member of an Orthodox synagogue. I have been active in Jewish organisations including those that support Palestinian self determination, like Jews for Justice for Palestinians..
3. I was an executive member of Jews for Justice for Palestinians (**“JPJFP”**) which is a network of British Jews who oppose Israeli policies that undermine Palestinian civil and human rights and who demand that Israel abide by international law and international human rights. I am still a signatory of the organisation and keep abreast of its activities. In my capacity as an executive member of JPJFP, I was also a member of IMRI (interfaith group for morally responsible investment). I have come to know Stephen as a respected colleague on this group.

**The Board of Deputies**

4. The Board of Deputies of British Jews comprises Deputies elected by affiliated individual synagogues, confederations of synagogues, and other organisations within the Jewish community such as charities and youth groups. Haredi, ultra orthodox, synagogues have chosen not to affiliate. Besides the Haredi community, secular and non practising Jews are not

affiliated to the Board. Non- and anti-Zionist Jews, like me, do not accept that the Board speaks for us. Indeed none of the Jewish organisations that are now active in support of Palestinians with the exception of Yachad, a liberal Zionist organisation, are affiliates of the Board of Deputies.

5. The Board of Deputies promotes itself as '*the voice of the British Jewish community, the first port of call for government, the media and others seeking to understand Jewish interests and concerns*'. Clearly they speak for some of the community but not for all, so this is not necessarily an accurate depiction of the reality.
6. The Board of Deputies sees itself as an advocate for Israel. As the advocate for Israel it sees its role as defending that state from all challenge and encouraging the community to continue to hold fast to that country. To maintain hegemony around its support for Israel, the organisation excludes Jewish organisations which challenge the primacy of Israel in Jewish life. While it makes much of its commitment to fight antisemitism, it pulls its punches when dealing with those who have shown true antisemitism but who have also shown strong commitment to and support for Israel.
7. The Board of Deputies also has a record of targeting individuals and organisations, particularly those with a public profile that criticise the State of Israel and refuse to toe the line of support for Israel's policies. Their complaints are often not necessarily about anti-Semitic speech. Rather, they focus their attacks on individuals who are a thorn in the side of those who provide unqualified and uncritical support for Israeli policies. These politically partisan attacks dressed up as complaints about anti-Semitism do the Board of Deputies a disservice. The complaint against Stephen is in my view, a good example.

### **Christian Zionism**

8. It is through IMRI, the interfaith group, that I have come to know and indeed respect Stephen Sizer as a brave and often lone voice challenging the distortions of a Christian Zionism that supports Israel because it believes that the final battle in Armageddon will take place in Israel and that all Jews who refuse to convert to Christianity will be consumed by fire. Many Jews, myself among them, regard this theology as profoundly anti-Semitic. It is indeed a source of much distress to many of us that Jewish voices like the Board of Deputies, rather than challenge these theological distortions and anti-Semitic views, chose to cleave to representatives of Christian Zionism organisations because they support Israel's policies.

9. It would therefore seem to me that the complaints against Stephen are not about anti-Semitic speech, but rather about his criticism of the State of Israel and his refusal to toe the line of support for its policies.

**Stephen and anti-Semitism**

10. In all my dealings with Stephen, and at all the meetings I have attended where Stephen has been present, I have never experienced any anti-Semitic statements made by him. I have no reason to believe he is anti-Semitic. In fact, he is a strong anti-racist who challenges oppression wherever he finds it.

**Statement of truth**

11. I believe the facts and matters in this statement to be true.

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DIANA NESLEN

Date: