



**BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF  
BRITISH JEWS**

ADVOCACY | DEMOCRACY | COMMUNITY



# **BOARD OF DEPUTIES OF BRITISH JEWS**

## **2023 HIGHLIGHTS**

# STANDING WITH ISRAEL

[bod.org.uk/israel](https://bod.org.uk/israel)

## STANDING WITH ISRAEL

With the war between Israel and Hamas at the forefront of all our minds, the final three months of the Board's 2023 activity was strongly focused on [our support for Israel](#) and addressing the resulting spike in antisemitism here in the UK.

Our activity in the days immediately following the October 7<sup>th</sup> attacks included [a Board of Deputies JLC joint vigil](#) outside Downing Street attended by 5,000 people. Later that week, the Board, together with the Jewish Representative Council of Greater Manchester & Region and JLC, held a vigil in Manchester.

An estimated [15,000 people gathered in Trafalgar Square](#) on 22<sup>nd</sup> October to call for the hostages taken by Hamas on October 7<sup>th</sup> to be released and to hear harrowing testimony from family members of the kidnapped and murdered.

During October and November, the Board, together with a number of other Jewish communal organisations, held emergency briefings on all aspects of the crisis in Israel for members of the Jewish community. These were attended by thousands of people.

Online briefings attended by thousands of people, were held for parents of Jewish students at university and parents of children in non-Jewish schools.

## CHALLENGING MEDIA BIAS

We quickly observed significant media bias against Israel and this was particularly so within the BBC output. We met with the BBC Director General and his team focusing discussion on the BBC description of Hamas and general reporting of the conflict. The BBC was left in no doubt as to the strength of feeling in the Jewish community. Since then, the Board has provided spokespeople for a wide number of media outlets including *BBC Question Time*, *Sunday Morning with Trevor Phillips on Sky News*, *LBC*, *Times Radio* and other stations.

The Board of Deputies organised [an open letter from more than 50 Parliamentarians](#), including the Chancellor of the Exchequer, to the BBC, criticising their refusal to describe Hamas as terrorists. We also arranged for MPs to hold a minute's silence for victims of the Hamas.

## SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY

The Board of Deputies put together [a resource for Jewish employees](#) to help navigate workplace issues following the surge in antisemitism after the October 7<sup>th</sup> terror attack.

The Board has also put together [a resource for parents of children in non-Jewish schools](#), and teachers in non-Jewish schools, to help navigate issues which may arise.

Together with the CST, Jami, JLC and PaJeS we published some [Top Tips for Psychological Wellbeing](#).

## INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

Marie van der Zyl was part of [a World Jewish Congress delegation of senior Jewish leaders](#), led by WJC President Ronald Lauder, to Qatar. They met senior officials including the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, to urge Qatar to help facilitate the release of the hostages.

The Board arranged twice-weekly vigils outside parliament for the community, together with MPs and peers, to highlight the plight of the Israeli hostages in Gaza. These continue.

Senior Vice-President, David Mendoza-Wolfson spoke at the UN Human Rights Council on behalf of the community about Jewish life in the UK.



## EDUCATION FOR CHANGE

In 2023, [the Jewish Living Experience Exhibition](#), which educates children and adults about the Jewish way of life, travelled the country visiting cities and towns including Blackburn, Hull, Blackpool, Liverpool and schools throughout South Wales. Around 4,400 people viewed the exhibition last year.

In partnership with ADL, we developed a ground-breaking digital education programme for secondary school students about the Jewish people, antisemitism, and how to be an ally against Jew-hatred to be launched this Spring.

We delivered more than 200 [Holocaust-themed Legacy Boards](#) to synagogues, Jewish secondary schools, youth groups and communal organisations all over the UK to serve as a continuing reminder of the Shoah to present and future generations.

## FIGHTING TERRORISM & EXTREMISM

In response to a campaign by the Board of Deputies & We Believe in Israel, [Spotify removed violent, extremist content](#) from the platform.

Over the course of 2023, the Board of Deputies met more than 30 MPs to discuss proscription of terrorist organisations. In May, the Board hosted a panel event in Parliament as part of our efforts to have the Iranian regime's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) proscribed as a terrorist entity.

## PROMOTING INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

At [a landmark Board of Deputies event in London](#), attended by more than 300 people at the historic Bevis Marks Synagogue, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, in conversation with historian Simon Sebag-Montefiore, spoke of his commitment to fighting antisemitism and the duty of care that universities have for their Jewish students.

President Marie van der Zyl [hosted an interfaith seder](#) for members of all the UK's major faith groups in order to promote good interfaith relations and cultural cohesion.

We campaigned for the Church of England to sanction the activities of Stephen Sizer, a rogue vicar who had been posting egregious material online. After a hearing last year at which the Board gave evidence, a Church of England Tribunal banned Sizer from serving as a minister until 2030.

## HONOURING COMMUNAL HEROES

We [honoured the 'unsung heroes' of the Chevra Kadisha](#) (Jewish burial society) organisations at a special event in Parliament recognising their efforts during the Covid pandemic.

## POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

At the last General Election, one of our Jewish Manifesto policy asks was for the next Government to resist boycotts that divide communities. Following our campaigning against the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction movement against Israel, we were happy that in 2023 the Government introduced legislation to prevent public bodies from implementing their own boycotts against Israeli goods.

With London Jewish Forum and Jewish Leadership Council, we held an intensive seminar for London borough councillors where they engaged in a range of sessions including panels on antisemitism, Israel, and listened to a Holocaust survivor's testimony.

When controversial musician Roger Waters announced his UK tour, the Board of Deputies wrote to politicians and councillors noting concerns from the Jewish community. We had powerful responses from the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Communities and Local Government and the Leader of the Opposition supporting the Board's position.

Our staff and HOs attended Labour and Conservative Party conferences to highlight the concerns of the Jewish community and to promote Board projects.

## A ROYAL HONOUR

Ahead of the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III, [the Board of Deputies were invited to petition him](#) – an honour accorded to a few selected organisation in various fields, and a clear sign of respect the Board has attained.



**CONTACT**

The Board of Deputies of British Jews  
info@bod.org.uk  
[www.bod.org.uk](http://www.bod.org.uk)  
@BoardofDeputies  
+44 (0)20 7543 5400

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**TO STAND TOGETHER, COME ON BOARD**

For more than 250 years, the Board of Deputies has been the enduring voice of the British Jewish Community. It has defended it, spoken up for it, fought for it and protected its interests.

Now, with historically high levels of antisemitism in this country, this voice is needed more than ever.

The Board speaks for the entire community, talking to the Government, Opposition, other authorities, the media, other faiths and civil society organisations.

Our credibility comes from our democracy – representing synagogues and organisations across the country. Learn more at: [bod.org.uk](http://bod.org.uk)

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