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## COMMUNITY BRIEFING

Labour's decision to drop Ian Austin  
investigation is 'long overdue'



Board of Deputies Vice President Amanda Bowman has called the Labour Party's announcement that it has dropped its disciplinary investigation into Ian Austin MP, "long overdue".

Amanda said: "The announcement that the Labour Party has dropped its ill-judged investigation into Ian Austin MP over comments he made to party Chair Ian Lavery about its failure to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism is long overdue. Labour's handling of Mr Austin's case has been appalling.

"The so-called 'disciplinary process' has become nothing more than a kangaroo court, with criteria for action that appear to repeatedly put factionalism over any recognisable form of justice. We continue to call for Labour to open up its processes to independent scrutiny."

Meanwhile, Amanda Bowman has condemned the election of Stephen Marks – a member of the pro-Corbyn Jewish Voice for Labour group – to the Labour disciplinary body which deals with alleged cases of antisemitism.

Amanda said: "The election of antisemitism-denier Stephen Marks to Labour's National Constitution Committee seems to be part of a concerted effort to make Labour's disciplinary process less and less credible and more and more open to claims of partiality and corruption. At a time when there should be attempts to restore confidence, we are increasingly forced to conclude that we should have no confidence in Labour's disciplinary process, and that we will have to increasingly look outside the party for justice on antisemitism."

## Board of Deputies supports Jewish Women's Aid campaign against domestic violence

A Jewish Women's Aid campaign supported by the Board of Deputies to raise awareness of violence against women and girls in the Jewish community began last Shabbat.

As part of the campaign, the Board of Deputies asked all rabbis to speak on the issue in their sermons and to show their support for the campaign. JWA research has shown that Jewish women are waiting on average 11.5 years before speaking out. This is shocking, and shows how desperately important it is for a woman to know that her rabbi and her community will believe and support her.

We asked rabbis to speak out about violence against women, against domestic violence and abuse in the Jewish community; to write about it if they were not giving a sermon, to display the campaign poster and encourage members of their communities to donate to help provide JWA's vital services, at [www.jwa.org.uk/idevaw2018](http://www.jwa.org.uk/idevaw2018).

Board of Deputies President Marie van der Zyl said: "For most Jewish women experiencing domestic violence and abuse, it is a huge secret which they are too ashamed, embarrassed or fearful to admit it is happening to them. Most people don't see it, and don't talk about it. That is why we asked for the help of rabbis in changing that. We wanted to challenge the community to open its eyes, to acknowledge that abuse happens, and to ensure that every Jewish woman and child affected by domestic violence and abuse knows where to get help."

JWA Chief Executive Naomi Dickson said: "We were delighted to partner with the Board of Deputies to raise awareness of domestic abuse in our community. Together with the local community leaders, we are working to create a community where abused women can seek help as soon as they need it. That they are waiting over 11 years on average before reaching out for support is too long and we need to reduce this by ensuring that all women know where to go for help, and all parts of the community are educated about domestic abuse. We are pleased that we had so much support for this campaign from rabbis who spoke to their communities on Shabbat.

Read a full report [here](#).



Board of Deputies President Marie van der Zyl is pictured with Prime Minister Theresa May at this week's Sara Conference focusing on gender-based antisemitism. Vice President Amanda Bowman and Chief Executive Gillian Merron attended the launch at Speaker's House. Marie van der Zyl, Gillian Merron and Public Affairs Director Phil Rosenberg attended the reception at 10 Downing Street

# ACTIVITY REPORT

## INTERNATIONAL

**President Marie van der Zyl** has reacted to comments made by Turkish President Erdogan about businessman George Soros. Marie said: "We are very concerned about the comments made by Turkish President Erdogan who called George Soros an 'infamous Hungarian Jew' and accused him of being behind the historic protests in Turkey in 2013. Accusing a wealthy Jewish philanthropist of exercising global influence and fomenting discord draws on antisemitic conspiracy theories and tropes. We are well aware where these stereotypes can lead."

Jennifer Ritchie, a Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney and board member of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) shared her experience in fighting hate crime with **Senior Vice President Sheila Gewolb**, **International Relations Officer Marius Bischoff** and Deputies from The International Division at a breakfast briefing. Jennifer was interested to hear about the work of the Board of Deputies and the reporting systems for antisemitic attacks in the UK.

**Chief Executive Gillian Merron** was interviewed by **Public Affairs Director Phil Rosenberg**, who is also a Jewish Diplomatic Corps' member, as part of a webinar for the World Jewish Congress on 'Antisemitism in the UK'. The webinar was organised by **Parliamentary Officer Joel Salmon** and kindly livestreamed by Leo Mindel.

**Phil Rosenberg** met Rabbi David Rosen, of the American Jewish Committee, to talk about international interfaith engagement.

**Marius Bischoff** met Johannes Boermann, the European Commission's deputy coordinator on combating antisemitism, to talk about EU-UK relations and antisemitism.

## CAMPUS

**Vice President Amanda Bowman** spoke with the President of City, University of London Professor Sir Paul Curran following the deferral of Mark Regev's engagement at the University. It was agreed that a follow up meeting with communal representatives would be arranged. Amanda had previously said: "We are dismayed that Israeli Ambassador Mark Regev has been forced to cancel his engagement at City, University of London today based on the advice of the Metropolitan Police. The fact that City, University of London and City Students' Union refused to guarantee the safety of the ambassador and students on campus by implementing basic security measures is unacceptable. We are committed to the principles of free speech and the belief that universities should be safe spaces for all students. We will be taking this up with the university as a matter of urgency together with the Union of Jewish Students."

## EDUCATION

Shenley Primary School, which is hosting the Board of Deputies Jewish Living Experience exhibition, this week held an open evening for the local community with guests including Mayor of Hertsmere Brenda Batten and Deputy Mayor Rabbi Alan Plancey. The school's head teacher Tracy Madigan welcomed guests while Year One teacher Nicole Grossman highlighted the value of the exhibition for children at the school. **Pikuach Director Jeffrey Leader** and **Interfaith and Social Action Officer Anthony Silkoff** both spoke. Jeffrey offered an explanation of the exhibition and benefits to the local area. Anthony explained the work of The Board of Deputies and the educational outreach programmes managed by **Education Development Manager Sara Perlmutter**.

## POLITICAL

**Marie van der Zyl**, **Chief Executive Gillian Merron**, **Public Affairs Director Phil Rosenberg**, **Parliamentary Officer Joel Salmon** and **Education Policy Officer Jake Berger** attended the Labour

Friends of Israel Annual Lunch, at which Jewish Agency for Israel Chair Isaac Herzog was the keynote speaker.

**Jake Berger** met with Celia Hart from Solutions Not Sides to discuss education initiatives.

## RESEARCH

**Phil Rosenberg** met Dr Jonathan Boyd, Executive Director of the Institute of Jewish Policy Research, to discuss the community research agenda.

## INTERFAITH

**Sheila Gewolb** attended the London Faith and Belief Community Awards which recognises small faith-based projects within the Greater London Area. The programme is a joint initiative between the Faith & Belief Forum and the Lord Lieutenant of Greater London's Council on Faith, as part of his Building Bridges for a Fairer London programme.

## YOUTH

**Jake Berger** met with FZY Mazkir Joe Woolf to chat about youth engagement.

## COMMUNITY

**Marie van der Zyl** spent the weekend with the communities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen, You can read a full report of her visit [here](#).

**Gillian Merron** was the guest speaker at the World Jewish Relief brunch at Singers Hill Synagogue in Birmingham.

**Marie van der Zyl** and **Gillian Merron** attended the Liberal Judaism annual dinner.

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