

Witness Name: Jehudah
Baumgarten

Statement No: 2

Exhibit No's: 4 & 5

Dated:

THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Witness Statement of

Jehudah Baumgarten of The Union of Hebrew Congregations (UOHC)

I, Jehudah Baumgarten will say as follows: -

1. I make this statement as an Honorary Officer of the Executive of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations (UOHC).
2. This is the second statement I have made in connection with the Child Protection in Religious Orders and Settings investigation. This statement answers questions raised in connection with a Channel 4 Dispatches programme titled "Britain's Hidden Children Abuse" broadcast on 13th January 2013.
3. I previously referred to the Dispatches programme and steps taken by UOHC in response to the same in paragraphs 76-82 of my first statement.
4. The Dispatches programme features an undercover interview with Rabbi Ephraim Padwa. He was the Chief Rabbi of the Rabbinat of the UOHC at the time of the film. Today he is frail and in ill health, and no longer able to undertake communal duties. However, he retains the title in name, may occasionally attend Rabbinat events, and in name may continue to represent the Rabbinat, as a signatory or otherwise.
5. Due to his frailty, Rabbi Padwa is not able today to speak for himself, and I do not wish to speculate on the incident that was filmed; whether or not any other similar incidents occurred and what his reasoning was in this particular case.
6. When filmed, Rabbi Padwa was acting in his personal capacity. Had he been acting as a member of the Rabbinat, the matter would have been brought to him through the Office of the Rabbinat which was not the case. It appears that a personal request was made to discuss the matter with Rabbi Padwa. If acting for the Rabbinat, the meeting would have normally been expected to take place at the Rabbinat Office. Rabbi Padwa would not have taken a position in isolation from fellow Rabbinat members. .
7. In Paragraphs 45 – 49 of my witness statement I explain some of the traditional barriers to disclosure of allegations of abuse to the authorities, including a historic instinct to deal with allegations within the community and a fear of mesirah. The film demonstrates how these matters may arise.
8. The incident that was filmed does not reflect UOHC Rabbinat position today.

9. Subsequent to the film the Rabbinate collectively considered their position on child safeguarding, which is set out in paragraphs 76-82 in my statement. Prior to that incident, the Rabbinate had not collectively considered their policy or position in respect of responding to allegations of child sexual abuse.
10. The Rabbinate position was published shortly after the film in 2013 and a translation appears as Exhibit 4. It is signed by Rabbi Padwa himself on behalf of the Rabbinate, indicating that he and the other Rabbinate members subscribe to this position. The reference to 'five circumstances' appears to be a misquote in the Channel 4 transcript (Exhibit 5). The quote refers to the same UOHC document as Exhibit 4 but it should read as follows *'The Rabbinate recognises that there are certain circumstances which it is right and proper to contact the social services and/or the police'*.
11. Today, an allegation of abuse would be directed to the UOHC's own trained committee members. The committee consists of myself and Rabbi Abraham Pinter, who effectively serve as the Designated Safeguarding Leads for the UOHC. Rabbinate members would not be advising someone with an allegation not to go to the police nor referring to mesirah as a reason for not going to the authorities. They would look to the UOHC's safeguarding leads to deal with any disclosure, and their own role would be to offer spiritual or other forms of support to victims.
12. Over recent years, I and Rabbi Pinter have made a number of disclosures to children's social services. I make disclosures in line with training that I have received, through approved provision of the City and Hackney Children's Safeguarding Board. In every case I have discussed the disclosure with one of the senior Rabbinate members (without providing identifying details). In every case, the Rabbi has supported the disclosure. From my dealings with other community organisations and leaders, I know that other members of our community also have made disclosures, and their actions have been endorsed by Rabbinate members. For example, Ezer Leyoldos makes regular referrals to the authorities with whom there is regular on-going collaboration, and a number of these referrals include concerns about child sexual abuse.
13. The cases that I have referred to the authorities have not come to me via the UOHC committee or helpline, but have reached me in other capacities, particularly through my role as a school governor. In paragraph 81 of my witness statement I explain that the level of referrals through the formal UOHC systems have been negligible.
14. My UOHC colleague Rabbi Pinter is currently working with the police and the courts to procure a sexual restraint order against a member of the community. His actions are wholly supported by the Rabbinate.
15. In my first witness statement, I gave evidence that in recent years there has been a notable increase in awareness of child safeguarding, and that making disclosures to the authorities has become more acceptable. I believe that the strengthened awareness and processes reflect similar changes across many sectors and across society as a whole.
16. Appended to my first statement was a letter (Exhibit 3) which was a translation of an original in Hebrew and which is dated 28th November 2019. That referred to a meeting in December 2019. The purpose of that meeting was to raise awareness amongst synagogues with regards to safeguarding. It was attended by representatives of over 40 settings. This was the first public event organised by the UOHC in conjunction with the Interlink Foundation targeted specifically at synagogues and similar public spaces. The main objective of the December event was to highlight safeguarding risks, alert settings to their responsibilities, and encourage every setting to ensure that they have a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who ensures that the settings' policies are

appropriate and are consistently implemented. The event was very well received and demonstrated how seriously safeguarding is regarded. The UOHC is working with the Interlink Foundation to plan follow up support for synagogues, and to run similar events targeted at different sectors such as yeshivas.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this statement are true

Signed

DPA

Dated: 24/02/2020