

The Archbishop of Canterbury was joined by Muslim and Jewish leaders at Lambeth Palace this morning to condemn the sharp rise in antisemitic incidents over the past 10 days, and to call for unity across the religious community in the face of the current period of war between Israel and Hamas.



Neil Turner/Lambeth Palace

Archbishop Justin Welby, Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra and Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg stood together outside Lambeth Palace and delivered statements calling for solidarity and unity between communities in the UK, and rejecting any form of hatred or discrimination.

Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra is a scholar and imam from Leicester, and a former Assistant Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain. Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg is the Senior Rabbi of Masorti Judaism UK, and Rabbi of the New North London Synagogue.

Read the transcript of their remarks as delivered:

Archbishop Justin Welby:

Thank you all for being here this morning. I know that all of us are profoundly concerned by what is happening in Israel and Gaza – and here at Lambeth Palace we are praying constantly for all those who are caught up in this war that has already brought so much suffering to so many people.

But today we have come together out of shared concern for our communities and neighbourhoods here in the UK, and to stand together against any form of hatred or violence against Jewish people or any other community.

I want to introduce to you two religious leaders and I welcome their solidarity on this matter: Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra, a scholar and imam from Leicester, and a former Assistant Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain, and Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, the Senior Rabbi of Masorti Judaism UK and Rabbi of the New North London Synagogue. They speak for their own communities and networks, and not for any others, but



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Sheikh Ibrahim Mogra:

I stand before you in my capacity as an imam alongside my dear friend Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg. We are all deeply pained by what is happening in Palestine and Israel. We have found some comfort and a lot of hope in our friendships that have been built over many years. We stand together to express our shared commitment to protecting the relationship between our communities. British Muslims and Jews have much in common and there are many personal ties between us. We have celebrated happy times together, and stood together in solidarity during difficult and challenging times. We have, and will sometimes be on opposite sides, but we live together as neighbours in peace and harmony, disagreeing with each other respectfully, without resorting to hate or violence.

At this critical time, we share deep concern for the welfare of everyone. We are determined to do our utmost to prevent violence and intimidation across our country, whether on the streets, in places of worship, in schools, in universities, or in any other institutions.

It is deplorable and wrong that our Jewish community here has been the target of hate crimes. It is unacceptable that synagogues and Jewish centres have been targeted. There has been a 500% rise in antisemitism. I condemn these attacks and call on all fellow citizens to stand up and speak out against all and every form of hate.

I pray for an end to this war and all wars. I pray for the innocent caught up in the carnage, I pray for the safety of everyone, wherever they are,



Neil Turner/Lambeth Palace

Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg:

Thank you, my friend, Shaykh Ibrahim Mogra, for your important statement.

As you have said, over the last week there has been a five-fold rise in incidents of antisemitism. Your solidarity in standing up and speaking out clearly against all forms of antisemitism and antisemitic intimidation at this most deeply painful time means a great deal.

The Jewish community, led by the Board of Deputies, the Jewish Leadership Council and the Community Security Trust has long condemned and continues to condemn all racism directed against Muslims, from whatever source.

As leaders in the British Jewish and Muslim communities we affirm the importance of maintaining our relationships even, and especially, in troubled times.

We have so much in common; there are many friendships between us, and we have stood together through both peaceful and challenging days. As you say, we will sometimes have different loyalties, yet it is essential that we live together across the United Kingdom as neighbours and fellow citizens in peace and with respect.

I share your prayers for an ultimate end to war. My prayers, too, are with all the innocent people caught up in this horror, for all those who are hurt and grieve, and all who long for the safety and wellbeing of their loved ones.

We are both on the side of life. We share deep concern for the welfare of everyone and pray for a better future for all.

Archbishop Justin Welby:

Thank you both for this important sign of friendship and solidarity. I want to echo what you've both said about the importance of maintaining our relationships, even in this time of deep crisis. We cannot allow the seeds of hatred and prejudice to be sown afresh in our communities. And at this time especially, we cannot allow the cancer of antisemitism to spread in our nation. I pray that we remain united against all forms of discrimination, and for our Jewish neighbours and all our communities to know that they are an essential part of our country.

I add my own prayers to yours for the welfare of all our communities. And I offer my prayers, as the whole of the Anglican world is doing today, for all the people of the Holy Land.

Amen.

5 min read

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