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## Christian persecution in the news

The unjust treatment of Christians in modern Britain has often been in the headlines in 2009. During one week in February no fewer than four cases of anti-Christian discrimination hit the national news.

Members of the public were outraged at the sidelining of Christians. The Archbishop of York called for the persecution to stop. Even Tony and Cherie Blair said Christianity was being marginalised. MPs called for Parliamentary debates on why Christians are getting a rough

deal. During the recent Party Conference season the topic was the subject of a platform speech.

The growing intolerance against Christians is on the political agenda and The Christian Institute's Legal Defence Fund has helped to highlight the threat to religious liberty.

At least two important cases for gospel freedom are due in court before Christmas – both being backed by our Legal Defence Fund. You can read about them in this newsletter.



## Christians face trial for criticising Islam

A Christian couple in Liverpool have been charged with a crime because they defended their faith and criticised Islam during a debate with a Muslim.

Police arrested Ben and Sharon Vogelenzang, who run the Bounty House Hotel in Liverpool, after a female Muslim guest complained that she was offended by comments made on 20 March.

The debate involved discussion of whether Jesus is the Son of God or just a minor prophet of Islam.

It is alleged that the debate included comments that Mohammed was a warlord and Muslim dress for women is a form of bondage.

However, the facts of the case are disputed.

The pair are being prosecuted for a "religiously aggravated" public order offence. A criminal trial is set for 8 and 9 December at Liverpool Magistrates' Court.

A major client of the couple's hotel has ceased referring guests because of the allegations. This has led to an 80 per cent drop in the hotel's income, leaving the couple in financial difficulty.

The Christian Institute is funding the Vogelenzangs' legal defence.



Ben and Sharon Vogelenzang are set to face a criminal trial at Liverpool Magistrates' Court.

The couple's lawyer, David Whiting, said: "Ben and Sharon do not accept they were threatening, abusive or insulting.

"They are committed Christians and it is the defence's contention that they have every right to defend their religious beliefs and explain those beliefs to others who do not hold similar views."

# Prayer email mum takes school to court for religious discrimination

A primary school receptionist from Devon is taking legal action against her employers after they disciplined her for asking friends to pray about the school's treatment of her daughter.

Lawyers representing Jennie Cain have lodged papers with Exeter Employment Tribunal claiming that she has suffered religious discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

Mrs Cain's daughter Jasmine was attending the school. In January this year, then aged five, she was reprimanded by her class teacher for talking about her Christian faith to another child.

On hearing that her daughter had been reprimanded for expressing her faith, Mrs

Cain sent a private email to church friends and family asking them to pray about the incident.

The email was sent from Mrs Cain's home computer, outside work time, using her personal email account.

But the email ended up in the hands of head teacher Gary Read who launched an investigation against Mrs Cain for professional misconduct.

A panel of school governors decided to discipline Mrs Cain by issuing her a final written warning. This was reduced to a written warning on appeal.

The legal papers lodged with the Employment Tribunal claim that the decision to discipline Mrs Cain is part of ongoing hostility to her Christian faith by her employers.



The Legal Defence Fund is helping Mrs Cain defend her religious liberty and the liberty of others like her.

## Christian registrar Court of Appeal date approaches

The next round in the ongoing case of Lillian Ladele, the Christian registrar from Islington, is due to be heard by the Court of Appeal on 3 November.

Miss Ladele was threatened with dismissal by Islington Council because of her religious beliefs about marriage.

When homosexual civil partnerships became legally available in 2005, council bosses attempted to force Miss Ladele to register same-sex unions against her will.

Miss Ladele – an Islington employee for many years – had explained her religious belief that marriage is between one man and one woman, and asked for her beliefs to be accommodated.

Although the Council has admitted that it was able to offer the service without requiring Miss Ladele's involvement, it disciplined Miss Ladele because of her stance.

Lawyers acting for Miss Ladele say she was shunned by colleagues who mounted a witch

hunt against her because of her Christian beliefs on marriage.

In July last year an employment tribunal ruled that Islington Council had discriminated against and bullied Miss Ladele because of her religion.

However, six months later that ruling was overturned by the Employment Appeal Tribunal.

That decision has been appealed by Miss Ladele's lawyers to the Court of Appeal. Her case is backed by The Christian Institute's Legal Defence Fund.

## Success stories

### CASE: ROBERTS

FREEDOM PROTECTED? ✓

The Legal Defence Fund backed the case of Joe and Helen Roberts – Christian pensioners interrogated by the police because they disagreed with their local council's 'gay rights' policy. Following legal action, the police and the Council apologised and changed their procedures to avoid it happening again.

### CASE: GOOGLE

FREEDOM PROTECTED? ✓

When internet giant Google refused to place The Christian Institute's moderate pro-life ad because it had "religious" content, the Institute sued for discrimination. The case was settled out of court when Google agreed to change its policy worldwide with immediate effect.

### CASE: PILGRIM HOMES

FREEDOM PROTECTED? ✓

A care home for elderly Christians lost £13,000 of public funding from Brighton and Hove Council because it would not ask its residents about their sexual orientation every three months. The funding was restored after The Christian Institute backed a legal action against the Council.

# Gay men sue guesthouse over double rooms policy

The Christian owners of a guesthouse in Cornwall are facing legal action from a homosexual couple after they were refused a double room.

Since buying the Chymorvah Hotel in 1986, Peter and Hazelmary Bull have operated a policy of only offering double rooms to married couples.

However, homosexual Martyn Hall and his civil partner Steven Preddy are now taking the couple to court under controversial new equality laws.

When Mr Preddy booked a double room by telephone in September 2008, Mrs Bull assumed he would be staying with his wife.

When the two men arrived, the guesthouse's manager said it could not accommodate them. Mr Preddy and Mr Hall said the



The Chymorvah Hotel, Cornwall

manager was breaking the law and went away to inform the police.

The previous month the Bulls had received a letter from homosexual lobby group Stonewall claiming that their marriage policy was against the law.

Mr Hall and Mr Preddy are now alleging direct discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, and are each seeking up to £5,000 in damages.

# Christian foster carer struck off for allowing Muslim girl to convert

A Christian foster carer is taking legal action because she was struck off for allowing a Muslim child in her care to convert to Christianity.

The girl, in her late teens, was interested in exploring Christianity before she was placed with

the foster carer.

But when the girl decided she wanted to be baptised, council officials said her carer had failed in her duty to preserve the girl's religion and should have used her influence to prevent the baptism from going ahead.

They said the girl

should stay away from church for six months, and later struck the carer off the fostering register.

The carer, who has over ten years' experience looking after more than 80 children, is seeking a judicial review of the local authority's decision.

**Please support the Legal Defence Fund**

# Help us defend your freedom

Our Legal Defence Fund is financing the cost of several strategic cases. As money goes out, more needs to come in.

The aim is to fund the costs of legal action and the associated campaign work in cases of national importance for religious liberty.

There is a growing number of cases where Christian freedom is being restricted by official bodies, often acting completely outside the law.

Parliament and the courts have laid down many precious rights and freedoms in the UK.

These freedoms need to be used.

We want to use the Legal Defence Fund to protect Christian religious freedom and restrain those who are unlawfully harassing and discriminating against Christian believers.

We also want to use the fund to intervene in strategic court cases where precedents could be set which may affect Christian religious liberty.

For more information, and to make a donation, visit [christian.org.uk/ldf](http://christian.org.uk/ldf)

## FREE RESOURCES

### ▶ The law relating to street evangelism

Extracts from legal advice issued by a solicitor to the Open Air Mission.

### ▶ Giving out tracts in public places

Leaflet on the law relating to the distribution of free Christian literature.



### ▶ The law relating to Christian Unions

Extracts from laws which support the freedom of university Christian Unions.

### ▶ Religious liberty in the workplace

A handy booklet written by an employment lawyer.



*These publications and many more are available to download from our website [christian.org.uk](http://christian.org.uk) for free. You can also phone us for free copies on 0191 281 5664.*

## Street preachers being mistreated by councils

We have been supporting several street evangelists who have encountered opposition from local authorities while preaching in public places.

Andy Robertson, a street preacher with the Open Air Mission (OAM), was told by his local council that he could no longer preach in Gainsborough market place. The police were called in and Mr Robertson was accused of making homophobic remarks, but this was unsubstantiated.

Solicitors wrote to West Lindsey District Council informing them of Mr Robertson's legal right to continue

preaching, and warned them that legal action would be taken unless they recognised this right. Further legal correspondence ensued. Following that correspondence, Mr Robertson has continued to preach without any further complaints or objections being raised.

Brian Dee, also with the OAM, was told by officials in Bury St Edmunds to stop handing out tracts, even though he had been doing so for more than ten years. Following a solicitor's letter pointing out Mr Dee's legal rights, St Edmundsbury Borough Council backed down.



CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE IN A SECULAR WORLD