

[conversion to judaism](#)

Mentoring and conversions All around the world
www.convertingtojudaism.com

[Arab-Israeli Conflict](#)

The latest news and analysis of events in the Middle East
bicom.org.uk/news

[Jewish](#)

Meet singles in your area - browse our huge database of UK members!
www.DatingDirect.com



Subscribe to Print Edition

Thu., March 06, 2008 Adar1 29, 5768



Israel Time: 18:31 (EST+7)

HAARETZ.com

[Back to Homepage](#)

web haaretz.com

- [TV](#)
- [Rosner's Domain](#)
- [Diplomacy](#)
- [Defense](#)
- [Jewish World Opinion](#)
- [National](#)
- [Print Edition](#)
- [Advertising](#)
- [Books](#)
- [Arts & Leisure](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Easy Start](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Week's End](#)
- [Anglo File](#)
- [Singles](#)

Talkback

Last update - 18:27 06/03/2008

U.K. Jewish school sued for barring pupil over conversion

By Anshel Pfeffer, Haaretz Correspondent, and Saul Sadka

Tags: U.K., Judaism, JFS >>

A British couple is suing the largest and oldest Jewish high school over the school's refusal to accept their son as a student because his mother did not convert in an Orthodox ceremony.

The case, now before the High Court in London, has attracted wide media attention in the U.K. and is a source of contention in the Jewish community.

Most of the 1,900 students in the Jewish Free School (JFS), founded in 1732, do not come from Orthodox

Advertisement

homes. Nevertheless, the school is identified with the central stream of British Jewry, the United Synagogue, which accepts the authority of the London Beth Din, or rabbinic court. The London rabbinic court is considered more strict on matters of conversion than rabbinic courts in Israel.

The parents, who have remained anonymous, describe as racist and illegal the school's refusal to accept their son because his mother was converted to Judaism in a Conservative ceremony. They say this is racist and illegal because the school receives government funding.

Other couples whose children were refused entry by the JFS have also joined the suit.

One of the parents, David Lightman, father of 14-year-old Maya, said his wife underwent an Orthodox conversion in Israel 20 years ago, and although they keep a kosher home, go to synagogue every Saturday and are very active in the community, the London religious court said she had not been sincere in her conversion because he is a Cohen (descendant of a priest), and according to Jewish law should not marry a convert.

"Fundamentally it is running a racist admissions policy. You could eat bacon every day and have no problem but a religiously practicing Jew cannot attend," Lightman told *Haaretz* last month.

"There is a small cabal at the top that has Anglo-Jewry by the throat and holds the Chief Rabbi in the palm of their hands," he added.

Today Online

Olmert: Talks with Syria worth serious consideration
 Responses: 64

Settlers agree to leave several illegal West Bank outposts
 Responses: 56

Gaza humanitarian situation said at worst point since 1967
 Responses: 84

Soldier killed in strike on IDF jeep near Gaza border
 Responses: 36

Hamas: Cease-fire deal with Israel must include West Bank
 Responses: 3

Rosner's Domain

What does the American voter want?

Dennis Ross: I am not an Obama advisor (WTR)

Americans have a favorable view of Israel. Democrats, less so

Poll: Should Abbas and Olmert continue their talks?

Rosner's Mailbox: McCain is a trimmer Sharon

Print

Send to a friend

Send response

More Headlines

18:20 Hamas: Cease-fire deal must include West Bank

18:03 Soldier killed, three others hurt in attack on IDF jeep near Gaza border

14:41 Olmert: Talks with Syria worth serious consideration

14:28 Three held in Manila over plot to bomb U.S., Israeli embassies



Meet
Jewish Singles
in your area



Special Offers

Advertisement

Free the Palestinians from: Corrupt Kleptocracy, Tyrannical Theocracy, Abysmal Anarchy

Long-term Israel programs
 MASA is your gateway. More programs. More grants.

"[Chief Rabbi] Jonathan Sacks won't speak to us, we are very much pawns in this situation," says Lightman. "I am an ex-pupil, my sisters attended the school, my wife is head of English yet they will not take my daughter," he says.

According to Rabbi Danny Rich, chief executive of the Liberal Judaism movement in Britain, "the acceptance policy of the school is discriminatory and motivated by political considerations. They are trying to shore up the beth din and the United Synagogue establishment, while 35 percent of British Jews belong to Reform and Liberal streams. JFS is state-funded and should serve the entire Jewish community."

A spokesman for the school declined to respond during the hearing. But in a position paper the school released, it said no discriminatory policy existed and argued that according to British law, it was within its rights to prefer certain students in keeping with rules set for the school by Britain's chief rabbi.

The British Department of Education responded that "the ministry does not intervene in internal school policy."

What is really going on is a power struggle between the British Chief rabbinate and its Israeli counterpart," says Geoffrey Alderman, an academic involved in the case. "The Chief Rabbi wants the London Beit Din to be the only body competent to convert British people anywhere in the world. Mrs Lightman is merely a pawn in this dispute," he adds.

Related articles:

- [Report: U.K. Jewish school told to cut ethnic admissions criteria](#)
- [Judaism bound by the charter](#)

[More Jewish World news and features](#)

[Subscribe to Print Edition](#)

[Bookmark to del.icio.us](#)
[Digg It!](#)



Halimi, relived

A Jewish teen is tortured where Ilan Halimi died in similar circumstances.



Bus-bomb capital

Four buses designed to thwart suicide bombings are tested in J'lem.

[conversion to judaism](#)

Mentoring and conversions All around the world

[Jewish](#)

Meet singles in your area - browse our huge database of UK members!

Talkback

[Send your response](#)

1. Racism?	10:17 Joseph	06/03/08
2. Not much of a case	10:21 Sherlock Holmes	06/03/08
3. Why sue us?	10:26 Ben Azai	06/03/08
4. Get your facts straight	12:38 D Hirod	06/03/08
5. Ben - it's not an "Orthodox school" as you suggest	13:23 Hannah	06/03/08
6. Also, Ben - the couple who are suing the school are Orthodox!	13:28 Hannah	06/03/08
7. Enough already	13:32 Michael	06/03/08
8. on "not much of a case"	13:37 rob	06/03/08
9. Jewish racism	13:52 Fussion	06/03/08
10. JFS	14:04 Paul	06/03/08
11. cohen convert marriage	14:09 maya	06/03/08
12. Brilliant!!!	14:14 ScotGuy	06/03/08
13. JFS	14:35 Bernie Ralph	06/03/08
14. The school's underlying problem	14:55 AliciaYasmeen	06/03/08
15. Far from racist	15:47 Jewish State	06/03/08
16. Religion or Politics?	17:21 oh well	06/03/08

[Top](#)

[Home](#) | [TV](#) | [Print Edition](#) | [Diplomacy](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Arts & Leisure](#) | [Sports](#) | [Jewish World](#) | [Underground](#) | [Site rules](#) |

18:08 Those who left Hillary for dead, get ready for a long fight

18:27 U.K. Jewish school sued for barring pupil over conversion

11:59 Who leaked the details of a CIA-Mossad plot against Iran?

12:33 Barak refuses to exempt 1,000 Haredi men from army service

17:02 Study: Gaza humanitarian situation worst since 1967

13:59 U.S. urges citizens in Lebanon to keep low profile, fearing attack

15:33 Haaretz.com launches innovative Jewish genealogy service

Previous Editions

Select Day



[Jewish](#)

Meet singles in your area - browse our huge database of UK members!
www.DatingDirect.com

[Jewish Community Centre](#)

Opening up Jewish life in London. Join us for great events and more.
www.jewishcommunitycen

[Middle East In Prophecy](#)

What is the future of the Middle East & Israel? Find out now free.
www.gnmagazine.org/mid

[War in the Middle East?](#)

Why is the rest of the world so concerned about events in Israel?
www.glasgowkelvin.org.uk

NEW! Dan Boutique Jerusalem Hotel

Hip Dan Hotel in Jerusalem. Attractive Introductory Rates

7589 rockets fired so far

HELP US TO HELP THEM

Marina Royale Herzelia Pituach

Your Luxurious Suite While Staying in Israel

Fattal Hotel Chain

Perfectly located hotels on best resorts of Israel.

ISRAEL BONDS Build Israel

Israel bonds - a multi-purpose way to celebrate Israel's 60th

Eldan Rent a Car

Israel's leading car rental company offers you a 20% discount on all online reservations

Junkyard

Junk a car - get free towing nationwide and a tax-deductible receipt

HAMMERSITE
STARTING PRICE:
 \$10,000

SOLD FOR \$19,990

IsrArt.com
Israeli Art Auctions

Oleg Stavinski

Haaretz.com, the online edition of Haaretz Newspaper in Israel, offers real-time breaking news, opinions and analysis from Israel and the Middle East. Haaretz.com provides extensive and in-depth coverage of Israel, the Jewish World and the Middle East, including defense, diplomacy, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the peace process, Israeli politics, Jerusalem affairs, international relations, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Israeli business world and Jewish life in Israel and the Diaspora.

© Copyright 2008 Haaretz. All rights reserved