

Chabad Rav is shocked by deafening silence

An East London rabbi has expressed outrage over the "deafening silence" from political leaders in condemning the terrorist attack by Hamas.

Rabbi Aryeh Sufrin, the executive director of Chabad Lubavitch Centre in Ilford, said they have had to increase the security around their building after the attacks from the Gaza Strip into Israel.

He said Jewish people in their community have been reluctant to go out, with parents worried about sending their children to school due to the fear of antisemitic attacks.

"Whenever there is an altercation of any sort in Israel, it affects us here on the streets and it's always a cause of concern.

"We have security all the time as unfortunately that is something that we've had to do for some years, but we've had to increase it just now, which is obviously a stretch on charity funding."

He slammed Redbridge Council and local faith leaders for "not coming together" in solidarity with Israel in a way that assures them of their support.

Rabbi Sufrin, who has lived with his family in East London for more than 40 years, said he has assisted local authorities whenever there have been problems impacting local people in the past. But that backing does not feel reciprocated this time.

He claimed: "We've always worked very closely with them (the council), and if there's ever any issues in relation to faith, whichever faith that may be, our community is the first to stand up.

"But on this occasion, we feel lip service is being paid. There is a deafening silence in condemnation for what has actually taken place in Israel".

He labelled Hamas as being "worse than ISIS" and says family members in Israel have been killed in recent attacks. He said his son is a serving soldier in the Israeli army and knows the reality in the country.

He added: "We hear first-hand how it is there, so for people to already start justifying that all of this barbaric behaviour is a result of Israel's suppression of the people of Gaza is something that turns our stomachs inside out.

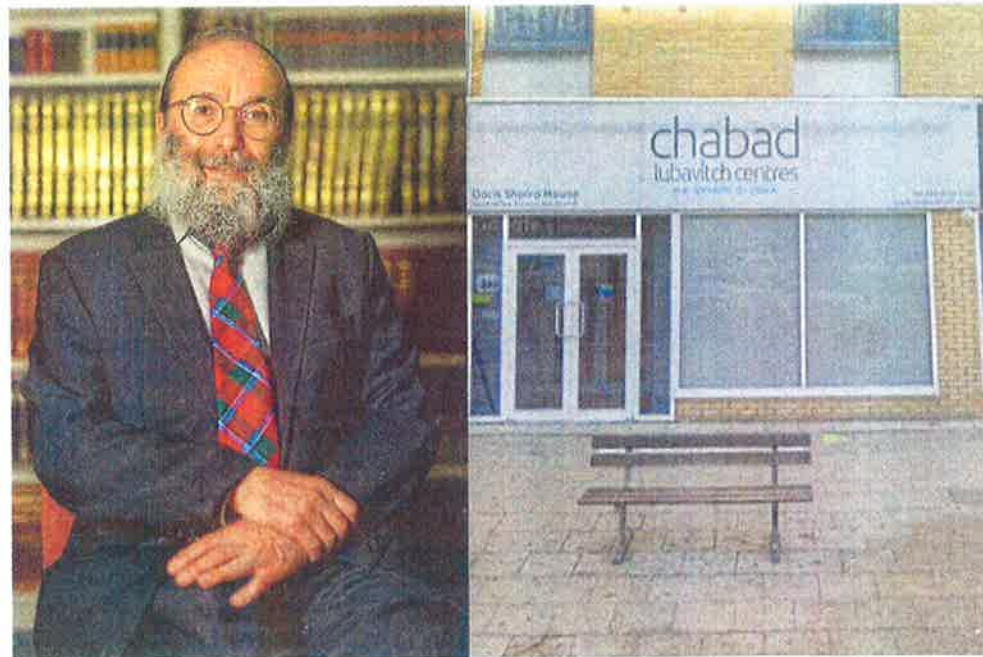
"Now is not the time for politics of rights and wrongs. Now is the time for everybody to get together and offer unequivocal support for Israel, but how is it that locally we haven't heard anything?"

He added that while there have so far been no reports of antisemitic attacks in East London, he is "not waiting for an incident to happen" and has ramped up the security in and around the building.

He stated: "Why is it that I as an Orthodox Rabbi in modern-day Britain still need to do that? But that is where we are at.

"So, they need to stand up and condemn what happened and anybody who doesn't do that is supporting terrorism."

Responding to these allegations, a spokesperson for Redbridge Council said: "We share our deep sorrow at the events in Israel and Palestine, and vehemently condemn the pain, suffering and violence towards others.



"In Redbridge, we are strong because of our diverse communities, and we recognise that many of us locally will have been deeply affected by the terrible news in recent days, and in the lead up to this in Gaza."

She said the council remains "steadfast in solidarity with everyone wishing for a peaceful solution to this conflict".

She added: "We have our arms open to all our communities affected by the situation in both Israel and Gaza and know that we will and must continue to come together as one against violence and suffering."

The spokesperson said that the council is in daily meetings with the Met Police and has been assured that there are visible patrols in key areas in Redbridge and across London to ensure people feel safe.

She added that the council is continuing to provide support to schools in the borough.

"We are in touch with all faith leaders in Redbridge and will continue to respond to any concerns", she said.

(This story originally appeared in the Ilford Recorder)