

INTERVIEW / ADAM SMITH-CONNOR

UK democracy “on trial”: ex-soldier challenges “thought-police” on abortion

LIFE AND BIOETHICS

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**Patricia
Gooding-
Williams**



I fought to protect the values of freedom and democracy in Afghanistan and now I am prosecuted in England for praying silently for my son Jacob who was killed in an abortion. I see laws pass in England that criminalise charitable acts and prayer. It's

outrageous.”

Army veteran Adam Smith-Connor (49) from Marchwood, UK, is the third Catholic to be charged with a “thought crime” in England this year. [Isabel Vaughan-Spruce](#) and [Catholic priest Father Sean Gough](#) were famously arrested in Birmingham for the same “crime”: allegedly breaching a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) by praying in the privacy of their minds. Mr Smith-Connor is concerned “thought-crime” could rapidly become embedded in British legislation and the facts so far certainly point in that chilling direction. “There will be more cases in the future”, the ex-soldier predicts.

Mr Adam Smith-Connor was in Bournemouth on 24th November 2022, when he was “caught” praying in silence outside an abortion facility by two council-employed Community Safety Accredited Scheme officers (CSAS). Initially, Mr Smith-Connor was issued a warning and then slapped with the statutory £100 fine. Council officers told him he was being fined because of “the prayer that you’ve admitted to.” Supported by [Alliance Defending Freedom](#) (ADF), he pleaded not guilty last August 9, at Pooles Magistrates’ Court to the charge of failing “without reasonable excuse to comply with a requirement of the PSPO” by refusing “to leave the required area when asked by an authorised officer”. [His case](#) goes to trial next November 16.

In this exclusive interview with the *Daily Compass*, Mr Smith-Connor shares details about his conversion to Catholicism, why he is embroiled in the battle for life and why fundamental democratic freedoms are at jeopardy in the UK.

Mr Smith-Connor let’s start at the beginning. What happened outside the abortion clinic in Bournemouth when you were stopped last November 2022?

Not much happened really, there wasn’t time. The authorities knew I would be there in advance. It’s standard practice to inform the Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) authorities when you intend to pray outside an abortion clinic. But, this time, two council officers were waiting for me when I arrived. They watched me pray for two minutes and then questioned me if I was praying and what was the nature of my prayer. When I admitted I was praying and it was for my deceased son Jacob, they told me I was breaching the PSPO and could be fined if I didn’t leave. I refused stating I considered the request “an interference with my absolute right to freedom of thought”. They thought that was an “unreasonable excuse”. They then handed me the statutory fine of £100.

Does this mean the police or council officers in England have the legal right to stop people and demand knowledge of their thoughts if they are in a PSPO?

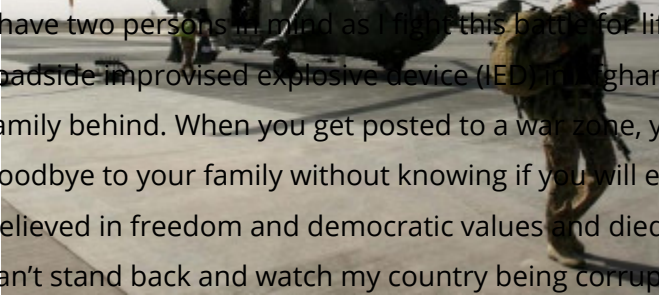
That’s the issue. This is the country of the Magna Carta. We have a history of upholding

human rights we can be proud of, and a respect for freedom that I fought to uphold when I served this country for twenty years in the army reserves, including in Afghanistan. No one has the power to intrude in your thoughts and punish you for them. The problem is council officers and some police officers think they do have that legitimate power. I question that because it violates laws on fundamental human rights.

What do you mean by “some police officers”?

Birmingham police arrested Isabel and Father Sean because they thought silent prayer in a buffer zone is illegal. The CPS, however, said there was insufficient evidence and returned non guilty verdicts. Dorset police told me my silent prayers outside the abortion clinic in Southampton were lawful ([watch video](#)). Bournemouth council officers said my prayers were illegal, fined me and are taking me to court ([watch video](#)). It can't be right that fundamental rights can be treated so inconsistently under the law.

A **say, the “fundamental rights and democratic freedom” you defended including on the battle field in Afghanistan are “today being taken away on the streets of Britain.” Is there a relationship between your stand for life and your service in the military forces?**



I have two persons in mind as I fight this battle for life. A friend Rick who was killed by a roadside improvised explosive device (IED) in Afghanistan, in June 2008. He left a young family behind. When you get posted to a war zone, you have to write your will, say goodbye to your family without knowing if you will ever see them again. Like me, Rick believed in freedom and democratic values and died fighting to uphold those values. I can't stand back and watch my country being corrupted in this way. I see a law pass that criminalises charitable acts and prayer. It's a totally un-British Act and the betrayal of all those people ([see photos](#)) who gave their lives to defend the freedom that Britain has always stood for. It's outrageous.

Who is the other person?

My son Jacob who I very regretfully sacrificed to an abortion over 20 years ago.

Can you say what happened?

I was 27 at the time doing intensive military training. My girlfriend was due to join the military as well. At the same time she became pregnant. Abortion seemed like the obvious solution. I was an atheist with no moral understanding of what the decision to kill my son meant. The moral standard of society told me it amounted to no more than pulling a tooth out. I thought I was being an honourable person by driving my girlfriend to the clinic and paying for the abortion. The abortion lobby lies to you. I murdered my own son. That decision and its consequences stay with you for the rest of your life.

Yet today you are a Catholic, what happened after that abortion that led to your conversion to Christianity?

I am a physiotherapist. In 2016, I accepted an invitation to attend an introductory course on Christianity from a patient leading the workshop. It led to my conversion. I joined the born-again Evangelical Church in 2017. Then I was baptised in 2018. After my baptism though, I had a graphic dream. In the dream, I was butchering my son. I was carving him up into pieces like you carve a chicken. I was struck that while I was doing it, I felt nothing. When I woke up the next morning, I felt the horror of that dream. I thought about my two children sleeping in the room next to me. I hadn't thought of that abortion for twenty years. But, like a cancer it eats away at you, grows metastases.

What changed after that dream?

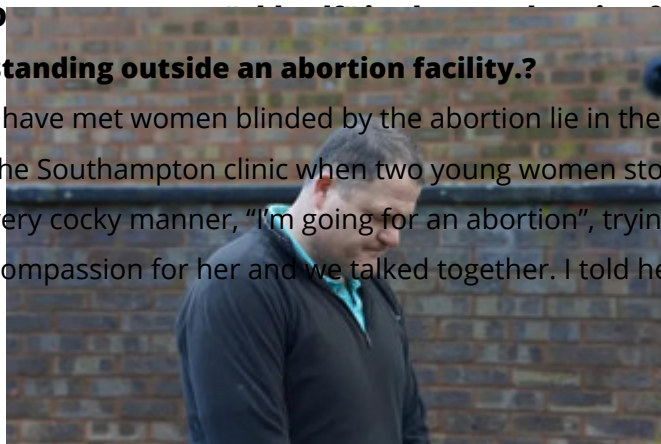
God replaced my heart of stone with a heart of flesh. I decided to do something to help others facing abortion and to defend life. I consider it my duty as a Christian to make a public stance on Christian values: feed the hungry, clothe the naked etc. I joined *40 Days for Life* and was struck that the majority trying to help vulnerable women were Catholics. They were the Christians who stood up for life. I converted to Catholicism last Easter.

Why did you call your deceased son Jacob?

Jacob was a father of Israel. I want my aborted son to be the father of a nation of babies saved from abortion by my efforts and those who fight for life in the name of Jesus Christ.

Do you ever regret going for an abortion when you are standing outside an abortion facility.?

I have met women blinded by the abortion lie in the same way I was. Once, I was outside the Southampton clinic when two young women stopped to speak to me. One said in a very cocky manner, "I'm going for an abortion", trying to provoke a reaction. But I felt compassion for her and we talked together. I told her, I really cared about her and that I



was there to help her resolve her problems if she wanted. She gradually changed attitude and said, "you could be my father". I don't know what happened after she went into the clinic. But it's evident these women need someone who doesn't judge them but is willing to listen and offer an alternative through concrete help: housing, money, moral support, friendship. That's what we do outside clinics if we are asked. The law is stopping us from offering that alternative which could save lives and prevent future trauma for the mothers.

Why do you think it's still worthwhile to defend life when the slogan, "My body, my choice" appears to have triumphed?

We know as Christians God wins. I have no doubt abortion will end. And to be part of that battle is a great honour for me. God plus one person is an unstoppable army. Abortionists say they have won but Satan knows his time is up. Nobody thought Roe versus Wade would be overturned, but it was. More people should come forward to make a stand. The victory would come sooner.

If you could send a message to His Majesty's Government about the new Public Order Bill which rolls out buffer zones around every abortion facility in England and Wales, what would it be?

Don't destroy our country. Don't rip up our freedoms and liberties. Don't allow this law to put another massive nail in the nation's coffin. It will sink us. Wake up King and country and defend our values. Stop thought-crime" becoming embedded in British legislation. Stop this before it goes any further!