



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on August 7, 2023

U.K. Man Prosecuted for Silent Prayer Outside Abortion Clinic

A United Kingdom army veteran has been charged with a crime for silently praying outside an abortion clinic, despite the fact that police had told him he was “entitled” to do so.

The Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole (BCP) Council is one of five U.K. councils that have passed ordinances establishing “buffer zones” around abortion clinics. According to [Christian Today](#), “The buffer zone forbids protesting, harassing, intimidating or photographing visitors or staff within 150 [meters] of the abortion clinic. The restrictions cover prayer, counseling and offering information or help to women visiting the clinic.”



ChristianChan/iStock/Getty Images Plus

On November 24, Adam Smith-Connor prayed silently outside a Bournemouth abortion clinic, taking care to face away from the building “to avoid any impression of approaching or engaging with women using the facility,” [reported](#) the Alliance Defending Freedom UK (ADF UK), which is supporting Smith-Connor’s legal defense.

Smith-Connor says he was praying for the son he conceived with a former girlfriend more than two decades ago — a child whose abortion he bankrolled. That decision, he said, “now grieves me deeply.” He added that he “was praying also for those contemplating abortion, especially those in vulnerable situations who believe abortion is their ‘only choice.’”

The next month, Smith-Connor was issued a fixed penalty notice, which [Wikipedia](#) defines as “a notice giving an individual the opportunity to be made immune from prosecution for an alleged criminal offense in exchange for a fee.” Curiously, the pro-abortion authorities described Smith-Connor’s alleged offense as “praying for his deceased son,” indicating that abortion is indeed the taking of a human life.

Smith-Connor wasn’t about to pony up the extortion fee for a non-crime. Thus, wrote ADF UK, the BCP Council

issued a charge against Smith-Connor on 12th May 2023. Despite the Council being legally required to notify Smith-Connor of the summons as soon as possible, they did not do so, nor did they engage in any other form of communication with him until 19th July 2023 — eight weeks after the elapse of the statutory time-limit for charging him, and almost ten weeks after the charge was issued.

Smith-Connor was not brought in for questioning throughout the eight-month period which the council had to gather evidence. Had he been questioned under caution, he would have had an opportunity to give an account of his actions and [been] entitled to legal



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representation.

The charges brought by the Council come as a surprise, given that in a filmed encounter with police on another occasion in which Smith-Connor had silently prayed in the same spot, officers had informed him that he was not breaking the law, remarking, *“this is England and it’s a public place and you’re entitled to do that.”* [Emphasis in original.]

“Nobody should be prosecuted for silent prayer. It is unfathomable that in an apparently free society, I am being criminally charged on the basis of what I expressed silently, in the privacy of my own mind,” said Smith-Connor. “I served for 20 years in the army reserves, including a tour in Afghanistan, to protect the fundamental freedoms that this country is built upon. I continue that spirit of service as a health care professional and church volunteer. It troubles me greatly to see our freedoms eroded to the extent that thoughtcrimes are now being prosecuted in the U.K.”

Jeremiah Igunnubole, legal counsel for ADF UK, said, “In permitting the prosecution of silent prayer, we are sailing into dangerous waters regarding human rights protections in the U.K. Censorship zones are inherently wrong and engender unhelpful legal confusion regarding the right to free thought. Both domestic and international law have long established freedom of thought as an absolute right that must not ever be interfered with by the state.”

The abortion-clinic buffer “zone was created by the Council, enforced by the Council and now also prosecuted by the Council,” observed Igunnubole. “This is a remarkable consolidation of power, making the council the judge, jury, and executioner.”

He further noted that while the Code for Crown Prosecutors requires them to be evenhanded and to safeguard the rights of suspects, this “has been ignored at every stage by the Council, which has not only shown itself to be incapable of impartiality, but also failed to grasp the gravity of inaugurating thoughtcrime trials in the U.K.”

In actuality, Smith-Connor’s prosecution is not the first of its kind in the U.K. At least two other people, charity volunteer Isabel Vaughan-Spruce and Catholic priest Father Sean Gough, have already faced similar charges in Birmingham for their own silent prayers near abortion clinics. Both were found [not guilty](#) in February, yet “Vaughan-Spruce was arrested a second time in March after she prayed silently in the same spot near the abortion facility once again,” penned ADF UK. “Six police officers attended the scene. Vaughan-Spruce was released on bail and awaits a decision on her charge, five months after West Midlands Police began their investigation.”

As if local tyrants’ trampling of rights in the name of “reproductive freedom” weren’t bad enough, in March, Parliament passed a law creating abortion-clinic buffer zones throughout England and Wales. Pro-life activists fear that it could end up banning silent prayer near clinics, especially given that, according to [LifeNews.com](#), lawmakers “rejected an amendment that would have specified that silent prayer and consensual conversations are allowed.”

Smith-Connor’s first court hearing is set for Wednesday. He is expected to plead not guilty, upon which the court will set a trial date.



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