



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

### CHRISTIAN BANNED FROM DISPLAYING BANNER PROCLAIMING HIS BELIEFS IN SPEAKER'S CORNER ROW VOWS TO TAKE HIS CHALLENGE TO COURT

- Roland Parsons has displayed banner sharing his beliefs for more than 20 years
- Last Sunday two police officers told him he could no longer show his slogans
- They ordered him to remove them from Speaker's Corner at Hyde Park, London

For more than 20 years, he has displayed a banner proclaiming his Christian beliefs while preaching the Gospel at Speaker's Corner.



**Roland Parsons at 'Speakers' Corner'.**

But last Sunday, at the nation's historic home of free speech, two police officers told Roland Parsons he could no longer show his slogans and ordered him to remove them.

The 72-year-old former engineer has now vowed to go to court to challenge their actions. He told The Mail on Sunday: 'I have come to Hyde Park at least once a month for 20 years to preach with my banner. I have never before been stopped by police but now suddenly I am told it is a crime.'

'Speaker's Corner is the bastion of free speech and this is my calling from God. Yet neither seems to matter to the authorities.'

He was told to take down his banner saying 'The blood of Jesus Christ' and a Biblical family tree going back to Adam and Eve.

'How can these words be a crime?' he said. 'There is nothing inflammatory or disrespectful about them.'

Mr Parsons – who travelled to London from his Gloucester home with his wife Frances, 74 – was told he was in breach of Royal Parks regulations banning the display of printed material. But he says the police ignored other large notices displayed nearby.

One officer told him: 'That is a physical banner and you aren't allowed to display it.' The other explained he would be allowed to show the banner if he left the park, adding: 'You're in a Royal Park. It's not a normal park.'

But last Sunday two police officers told Mr Parsons he could no longer show his slogans and ordered him to remove them. However, Mr Parsons is now taking legal advice to fight the ban 'not least because of the undue effect it has on evangelical Christians'. Lawyer Raj Chada of Hodge Jones & Allen said he could have a case under human rights legislation. 'As long as the message is not offensive, I struggle to see how these regulations are compliant under the Convention on Human Rights,' he said. 'They may be unlawful.'

Mike Phillips, legal adviser to Christian Concern, added: 'If you are doing something which has been allowed for many years, and suddenly the authorities prohibit it, then arguably they are acting outside their powers.'

The Metropolitan Police confirmed officers 'spoke to a man who had attached a large banner to infrastructure in the park in contravention of regulations. He was asked to remove the banner, which he did.'