

Dr. Efrat Sopher

Historian, Foreign Policy and Security Analyst of Israeli, Iranian & Gulf Relations

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RESEARCH PROFILE

I work on Israeli–Iranian relations principally from primary documentary sources. My doctoral research at the LSE, supervised by Professor Fred Halliday, challenged the realist reading of Israeli foreign policy towards Iran by reconstructing the relationship from previously unexamined government and private records. I hold and am currently working through a private archive of diplomatic papers, diaries and correspondence covering Israel’s mission in Tehran from 1958 to 1979, alongside recently declassified Israeli and British material. My current work addresses what the pre-1979 relationship reveals about the durability of covert state-to-state channels, how the Pahlavi period is being invoked in contemporary Iranian opposition politics, and how the IRGC’s external architecture is understood and countered in UK policy.

CURRENT RESEARCH

The Man in Tehran: Israel’s Secret Diplomacy in Pahlavi Iran, 1958–1979. Monograph in preparation.
A study of Israel’s diplomatic mission in Tehran under Ambassador Meir Ezri, drawing on his private papers, diaries and photographic archive; newly declassified Israeli and British government records; and interviews conducted directly with Ezri. The book examines how a formally unrecognised relationship sustained intelligence, military, energy and agricultural cooperation across two decades, and what that implies for unacknowledged diplomacy more broadly. Under discussion with academic and trade publishers.

DEFENCE AND SECURITY POLICY ENGAGEMENT

World Jewish Congress. *Head, International Task Force on Islamist Extremism and Iran; Executive Committee member.* 2017–present
Direct the Task Force’s research and policy output on Iranian external operations and Islamist extremist networks. Led the evidence base for the Hizbullah and IRGC proscription campaigns, producing source material subsequently used beyond the WJC. Authored the WJC’s formal position on the UK’s IRGC proscription under the National State Threats Bill, 2026. Established the WJC International Law group with the General Counsel and external jurists to assess questions of recourse before international fora. Convening a briefing to international Special Envoys for Combatting Antisemitism on the Muslim Brotherhood with the European Union and the White House.

House of Lords, Select Committee on International Relations. *Expert Contributor.* 2016–2017
Contributed regional expertise on Israel and Iran to the inquiry *The Middle East: Time for New Realism*; participated in roundtables with representatives of Middle Eastern states; questioned by members on my assessment; commented on the published report.

UK–Israel Future Projects. *Board Member, chaired by Lord Bew.* Convened a House of Lords roundtable on Iran bringing together British and Israeli specialists. 2023–present

Haifa Research Center for Maritime Policy & Strategy. *Board of Advisors.* Served alongside Prof. Rear Admiral (Ret.) Shaul Chorev and former commanders of the Israeli, US, Indian and French navies. Taught at doctoral and master’s level and chaired the annual conference. 2020–2023

RESEARCH LEADERSHIP

University of Haifa. *Chair, Board of Advisors, and Research Fellow, Ezri Center for Iran and Gulf States Research. University Governor; Co-Chair, University of Haifa UK.* 2017–present
Set research direction and strategic priorities for the Center in partnership with its Director. Convened and chaired the Center’s annual international conference on Iran and the Gulf States. Negotiated memoranda of understanding with institutions in the Gulf and represented the Center on a British delegation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Hosted the former Empress of Iran in London and arranged the visit of Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi to Israel.

TRACK II DIPLOMACY AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Drumlanrig Accords. *Founding Trustee.* The Muslim–Jewish Reconciliation Accords agreed at Drumlanrig Castle, Scotland, in January 2025, bringing six rabbis and six imams together to establish a standing Council of Muslims and Jews. Presented to HM King Charles III. 2025–present

World Jewish Congress, Kishreinu Commission. Co-developed a framework document between the Jewish people and the Catholic Church as part of renewed engagement with the Holy See. **Voice of the People** (2025–present), Council Member of the global initiative launched by the President of Israel; co-founder of the Jewish & Indian Alliance. Also: Woolf Institute delegation to Saudi Arabia; Srebrenica memorial delegation; British Embassy panel on Freedom of Faith and Belief.

MEDIA AND PUBLIC COMMENTARY

Regular contributor on Iran, Israel and Gulf security. **Broadcast:** Sky News, BBC News, BBC Persian, BBC Arabic, Times Radio, LBC, Israel Channels 12 and 13. **Print:** The Times, The Guardian, The National. Broadcasting in English and Hebrew, with Persian-language reach through BBC Persian and Iran International.

EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION

PhD, International Relations. London School of Economics and Political Science. “The Foreign Policy of Israel Towards Iran 1948–1979: Beyond the Realist Account.” Supervised by Professor Fred Halliday. Examined the effect of strategic interest, perception and personal relationship on foreign policy across intelligence and military cooperation, trade, development and energy, drawing on several thousand previously unexamined government and private documents. 2018

MSc, International Relations, London School of Economics and Political Science. **BA, International Relations,** University of Southern California. 1999 · 1998

Postgraduate Diploma in Law and Legal Practice Course. The College of Law. Admitted to the Roll of Solicitors. Trainee then qualified solicitor, Forsters LLP, London, 1999–2003, commercial practice. 2000

GOVERNANCE AND APPOINTMENTS

Board Member, Institute for Jewish Policy Research · Board Member, Israel Council of Foreign Relations · Steering Committee, WJC Jewish Diplomatic Corps, a network of 400+ members across 60 countries · Deputy, Board of Deputies of British Jews, and elected member of the International Division · Vice Chair, Board of Governors, Naima Jewish Preparatory School · Founding Board, I-GNITE · Advisory Member, Israel Philharmonic Orchestra UK · formerly Vice President, S&P Sephardi Community, the first woman to hold the office in its 300-year history.

Languages: Hebrew (fluent), Farsi (working), French (working).