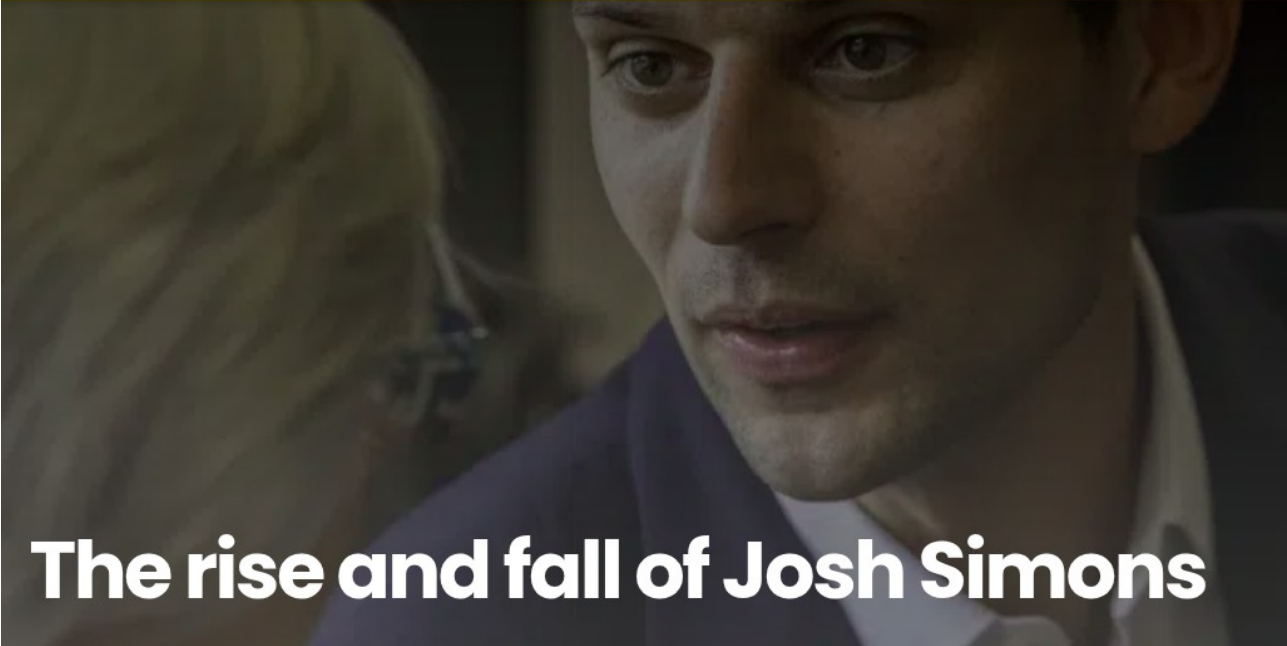




The rise and fall of Josh Simons

On the afternoon of Thursday 14 May, Labour MP [Josh Simons](#) [announced](#) that he would be “giving up” his Makerfield seat for [Andy Burnham](#), the Labour Friends of Israel veteran currently being paraded as the saviour of the party.

Simons was forced to [resign](#) from Keir Starmer’s cabinet after revelations that, whilst serving as a director of Labour Together, he ordered private investigators to go after journalists looking into Morgan McSweeney.

How Simons was selected for Makerfield

Before considering the democratic implications of an MP essentially attempting to donate their seat to the mayor of Greater Manchester, it is worth reminding ourselves of how Simons secured the Makerfield constituency in the first place.

At the time, Simons [said](#) that he was “honoured to be selected”, but no selection contest ever took place. Indeed, when local publication the *Manchester Mill* [contacted](#) Jenny Bullen, then the deputy mayor of Wigan council, her response was curt:

Makerfield constituents want a local candidate and have made that abundantly clear. Nothing else to say, bye bye.

No easy win for Burnham

Despite the desire for a quick coronation, Burnham will not face an easy ride in Makerfield.

At the 2024 general election, Reform UK increased its vote share by 18.7%.

Labour lost all 22 of the Wigan council seats it was defending at the local elections this month. Reform gained 24 seats.

At the last by-election in Greater Manchester, held in Gorton and Denton in February, Labour's vote share dropped by 25.4%; it came third, behind the Green Party and Reform.

Simons' links to the Israeli lobby

Like Burnham, Simons has his own links to the Israel lobby.

In February, it was revealed that he had failed to properly declare a donation from Trevor Chinn, the former Labour Together director and funder who, after being nominated by Labour Friends of Israel, received an Israeli Presidential Medal of Honor for "skills and work to the benefit of the State of Israel".

In 2013, Chinn told an LFI meeting:

I've spent my entire life working for Israel, for a better image for Israel, for success for Israel.

At the 2024 conference of the Jewish Labour Movement, Simons spoke alongside former Israeli spy Assaf Kaplan at an event that promised to teach the audience "how to run a good campaign".

Simons' other funders

Last June, Simons received £5,000 from Mike Craven, a former press officer for Tony Blair. Craven, still listed as a director of Labour Together Limited on Companies House, has previously attacked Jeremy Corbyn "and the far left" for not recognising the Israeli state's "right to exist".

In October, Simons received £30,000 from Francesca Perrin, a Labour Together donor who also served as a director until her resignation three weeks ago.

Simons is a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Israel, which states its purpose in the following terms:

To create a better understanding of Israel and to foster and promote links between the UK and Israel; to unite parliamentarians from across both Houses who are proud to be friends of Israel; and to make the case for Israel and for the UK's bilateral relationship with the Jewish state.

The Israel APPG's co-chair is Damian Egan, a vice-chair of the Labour Friends of Israel lobby group. Egan is married to Yossi Felberbaum, a former IOF soldier who used to recruit officers from the deadly Unit 8200.

Simons has previously mentioned having “friends and family in Israel” – a state with compulsory military service. And in a parliamentary debate with Conservative MP Kit Malthouse last June, he asserted his “right to claim citizenship in Israel”.

Two months later, Simons was part of a group of “Labour Friends of Israel-affiliated MPs” who confronted National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell in a “testy and emotionally charged conversation”, regarding the government’s decision to recognise a Palestinian state.

No ‘redemption’ for Simons

Some have posited that Simons may be giving up his seat for Burnham as a way of seeking “redemption” for his actions at Labour Together. Perhaps there is also a desire to avoid the fallout from recently released Subject Access Requests from Labour Together, which relaunched with the new name “Think Labour” (but the same company number) this week.

On Thursday, former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn had his Subject Access Request, which came in at a whopping 583 pages, returned to him. We learn that in January 2024, whilst serving as a director of Labour Together, Josh Simons sent an e-mail to an unknown recipient:

*I f***ing hate Jeremy Corbyn.*

All in all, sounds like a lovely guy.