

# Daily media briefing

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**Wed, 3 Jan 2024**

## [26 East Devon churches benefit from government cash grants](#)

Nearly 5,000 religious buildings in the United Kingdom have received a share of up to £42 million in public funding.

Midweek Herald

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## [Hamas deputy leader Saleh al-Arouri killed in Beirut blast](#)

Israel has insisted the assassination of a Hamas leader in Beirut was not an attack on Lebanon, as its enemies warned of "punishment" for his death.

BBC

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## [Claudine Gay resigns as Harvard University president](#)

Harvard University's president has resigned after facing allegations of plagiarism and criticism over her comments about antisemitism on campus.

BBC

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## **Texas can ban emergency abortions despite federal guidance, court rules**

The ruling by a unanimous panel of fifth US circuit court of appeals comes amid a wave of lawsuits focusing on abortion exceptions.

The Guardian

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## **Trial of Salman Rushdie attacker could be delayed by memoir release**

Hadi Matar's lawyer has insisted he is entitled to a copy of the book.

The Times\*

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## **BJP win in India's 2024 general election 'almost an inevitability'**

Concerns raised over what a third term for Narendra Modi would mean for the country amid rising Hindu-Muslim tension.

The Guardian

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## **French bishop denies promoting banned gay conversion therapies**

The Catholic leader invited the priests of the diocese to give their blessing to homosexual couples if requested, but with certain conditions.

RFI

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**Tue, 2 Jan 2024**

## **The Commons would be lessened without its daily prayers, says Speaker's chaplain**

Opponents have argued against prayers in parliament, with the likes of the National Secular Society and Humanists UK calling for it to be ditched or replaced with a "time for reflection".

Express and Star

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## **Year in review: 2023**

With a general election on the cards for 2024, Stephen Evans of the National Secular Society discussed where the political parties stand on faith schools.

The Freethinker

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## **King honours Archbishop of Canterbury for key role in Coronation**

The King has personally honoured the Archbishop of Canterbury by making him a Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order.

The Telegraph\*

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## **Assisted dying is gaining support, MSP says before Holyrood vote**

A bid to allow assisted dying in Scotland appears to have enough support to pass its first crucial hurdle at Holyrood, according to the politicians pushing the new law.

The Times\*

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## **Huge poll will ask 175,000 people why royals exist**

One possible choice is "to be the Supreme Governor of the Church of England".

The Mirror

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## **'Deeply worrying' police data shows sharp rise in religious hate crimes after Israel-Gaza war**

The number of antisemitic hate crimes recorded by many of the UK's largest police forces jumped sharply in the weeks following the outbreak of the Hamas-Israel conflict, new figures reveal.

ITV

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## [Ireland: 'Church hides its assets rather than pay the survivors'](#)

Victims of mother and baby scandal still waiting for money from congregations, says campaigner Catherine Corless.

The Times\*

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## [US: LGBT+ teacher alleges he was fired by school 'for not living a Catholic lifestyle'](#)

More than 100 people attended a rally to reinstate Michael Califano as a teacher at Maria Regina Catholic School.

Independent

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## [Israel supreme court strikes down Netanyahu's judicial overhaul law](#)

The judges ruled on Monday by a slim majority of eight to seven to throw out a law that curtailed the court's own powers, saying it would severely damage Israel's democracy.

The Guardian

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**Fri, 22 Dec 2023**

## [Sir Keir Starmer supports assisted dying law change](#)

Labour Leader Sir Keir Starmer has said there are "grounds for changing the law" on assisted dying.

BBC

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## ['Our ridiculous assisted dying laws need to be brought into the 21st century'](#)

In an exclusive poll conducted by the Telegraph, 68 per cent of over 17,000 readers backed the legalisation of assisted dying.

The Telegraph\*

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## [London school shuts amid 'threats towards staff' after pupils 'warned' about support for Palestinians](#)

A Department for Education spokesman said: "Intimidation of teachers and staff is unacceptable, and we are working with Barclay Primary School to support them."

The Standard

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## [Government scheme gave £42m to help restore UK churches in 2023](#)

Listed places of worship grants were awarded to almost 5,000 religious buildings for essential work to roofs, masonry and monuments.

The Guardian

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## ['No doctor in the country will touch you': how the NHS is failing FGM survivors](#)

At least 137,000 women in the UK live with the painful and traumatic consequences of cutting, but there is no provision for reconstructive surgery.

The Guardian

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## ['Spate of Iranian executions cannot go unchallenged'](#)

"The surge in executions is intended as a show of strength by the regime, instilling fear in the wider population. The reality is that it merely underlines the increasing desperation of the ruling mullahs", writes Jawad Iqbal.

The Times\*

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## [Italy's ruling party drafts law to 'safeguard' school nativity scenes](#)

Italy's ruling far-right party has identified a new battleground in its war to protect the country's "cultural roots": the school nativity scene.

The Guardian

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## [The Sikh separatist at the centre of US murder plot allegation](#)

The US has accused Delhi of plotting to assassinate an American citizen who advocates for Khalistan - an independent Sikh state carved out of India.

BBC

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**Thu, 21 Dec 2023**

## [Bill halted for public consultation on bishop's future in Tynwald](#)

A private members' bill to remove the bishop's right to vote in Tynwald has been adjourned while a public consultation is carried out.

BBC

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## [I would welcome assisted dying law debate, says cabinet minister](#)

Mel Stride said the government did not have plans to bring the law back to parliament but he would not be resistant to discussions if it did

The Times\*

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## [Leaked Iran hijab documents call for mobile courts and jail terms for celebrities](#)

"Highly confidential" documents obtained by BBC Persian outline how Iran's government is trying to crack down on women who do not wear a hijab.

BBC

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## [German court convicts man inspired by IS of two knife attacks](#)

A Syrian man has been convicted of murder, attempted murder and bodily harm over two knife attacks in Germany this year.

ABC News

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## [China wields Mazu 'peace goddess' religion as weapon in Taiwan election](#)

CCP is ramping up exchanges with folk religious groups in Taiwan to manipulate political opinion, say Taiwanese officials.

Reuters

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## [India 'ready to look into' alleged plot to kill Sikh separatist in the US, says Modi](#)

Indian prime minister Narendra Modi said India was concerned about 'extremist groups' based overseas after US charges Nikhil Gupta.

The Guardian

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## [Many Trump supporters believe God has chosen him to rule](#)

Some liken him to Cyrus, a heathen emperor who did God's will.

The Economist\*

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**Wed, 20 Dec 2023**

## [Islamic charity worker shared video defending October 7 attack – NSS quoted](#)

Stephen Evans, the chief executive of the National Secular Society, said it was "alarming" to see charities involved in the dissemination of "divisive rhetoric".

The Telegraph\*

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## [Archbishop of York calls for public consultation before bishop vote changes](#)

"I realise it is not really my place to interfere in these matters but I would urge you to consider carefully making constitutional changes", wrote archbishop Stephen Cottrell.

Manx Radio

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## **Isle of Man: Bid for citizens jury to consider bishop's vote**

MHK Chris Thomas wants a panel of 24 people to consider a number of elements relating to the potential change in law.

BBC

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## **Family of Sikh activist call for new UK investigation into his death**

Family of Avtar Singh Khanda, 35, say Home Office decision could allay fears of Sikhs in UK of being targeted by India.

The Guardian

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## **Italy court jails parents for life over 'honour killing' of Pakistani teen**

Following Saman Abbas's disappearance, the country's union of Islamic communities issued a fatwa rejecting forced marriages.

BBC

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## **India: Hindus get boost to change mosque into temple**

Hindu nationalists assert that Islamic invaders and rulers destroyed temples over several centuries and are compiling a list of 3,000 mosques to target.

The Times\*

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## **US: With a deadline looming, the United Methodist Church breaks up**

A quarter of the denomination's churches have left, as the faith divides over LGBTQ policies.

The New York Times\*

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**Tue, 19 Dec 2023**

## **Church of England faces disestablishment bill in Parliament**

Establishment has long been a target of the National Secular Society who think 26 bishops in the House of Lords is 26 too many.

Religion News Service

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## **Vatican gives conditional approval to blessings for same-sex couples**

In 2021, said the Vatican said the Catholic church could not bless same-sex couples as God "does not bless sin".

The Guardian

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## **Edward Little jailed over Hyde Park gun attack plot**

In May, Muslim convert Little admitted preparing to commit acts of terrorism.

BBC

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## **'We live with a gun to our heads': how Iran is targeting protesters in Britain**

As David Cameron says the Iranian regime threatens people on UK soil, Iranians talk about the threats, harassment and intimidation they experience for organising British protests.

The Guardian

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## **Abortion: PSNI investigate safe access zone protest law breaches**

The police are investigating up to 50 potential breaches of laws providing safe access zones (SAZs) outside abortion clinics in Northern Ireland.

BBC

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## **Esther Rantzen says she's joined assisted dying clinic**

The broadcaster Dame Esther Rantzen says she has joined the Dignitas assisted dying clinic in Switzerland.

BBC

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## **EU launches investigation into Elon Musk's X over Hamas propaganda**

Social network under fire for failing to counter misinformation and violent content.

The Telegraph\*

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## **US archbishop secretly backed bid to free priest convicted of raping child**

'I join you in the prayer to guide those regarding your appeal,' Gregory Aymond of New Orleans wrote to priest given life sentence.

The Guardian

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## **US: Satanic Temple condemns vandalism of its statue by Christian military veteran**

Michael Cassidy arrested over tearing down of satanic altar – symbol of humanism and anti-authoritarianism – at Iowa capitol.

The Guardian

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## **Timbuktu: Mali's ancient city defies jihadist siege to stage a festival**

Timbuktu has been under blockade by the al-Qaeda affiliated group Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin since late August.

BBC

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## **India opposition fury as 141 MPs suspended**

On Monday, the opposition accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government of attacking democracy after a record 78 MPs were suspended in one day.

BBC

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**Mon, 18 Dec 2023**

## [German spies say Briton is Hamas's man in Europe](#)

A British pro-Palestinian activist living in Berlin has been accused of running Hamas networks across Europe after three alleged members of the terrorist organisation were arrested on suspicion of planning an attack in Germany.

The Times\*

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