



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

House of Commons Debate

Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism

col 1041 The Minister for Security (Tom Tugendhat): I beg to move, That the draft Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) Order 2024, which was laid before this House on 15 January, be approved. ...

The events of 7 October will be permanently ingrained on our minds. What Hamas did that day was barbaric. It was evil. Who can erase the images that we saw of mothers crying over their blood-soaked beds with their children missing, of teenagers gunned down at a festival of peace, or of women abducted, raped and slaughtered? Who among us could fail to be appalled by such depravity or to still feel the pain of those whose loved ones are hostages? Who could stay silent in the face of the worst pogrom against Jews on any day since the holocaust?

In the aftermath of 7 October, communities across the United Kingdom came together to condemn these vile acts and to stand with British Jews in their hour of grief. Not everyone, however, reacted with sorrow. Instead of horror, Hizb ut-Tahrir responded to the murder of civilians with elation. Instead of condemnation, it lavished Hamas with praise. ...

Free speech includes neither the promotion of terrorism nor the celebration of terrorist acts. It is not acceptable to describe Hamas as the “heroes” of Palestine or the events of 7 October as a “long-awaited victory”. It is not acceptable to refer to the killing of Jewish tourists by an Egyptian police officer as “a simple example of what should be done towards the Jews”.

It is not acceptable to call for so-called Muslim armies to rise up and carry out similar acts. Hizb ut-Tahrir has antisemitism at its very core. It rejects democracy and engages in vile homophobia. As an organisation, it does not just reject British values; it seeks to undermine them. We will not let groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir abuse our freedoms. We will never tolerate the promotion or encouragement of terrorism. We have zero tolerance for antisemitism. Hizb ut-Tahrir must be proscribed. ...

Proscription is a powerful tool with severe penalties, criminalising membership and invitations of support for organisations. It also supports other disruptive activity including immigration disruptions and terrorist financing orders. ...

col 1042 A decision to proscribe is taken only after great care and consideration, given its wide-ranging impact. It must be approved by both Houses. ...

We have carefully considered all the evidence. Hizb ut-Tahrir is concerned in terrorism. With the House's consent, it will be proscribed, including all regional branches such as Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain.

Although I am unable to comment on specific intelligence, I can provide the House with a summary of the group's activities. Hizb ut-Tahrir is an international political organisation with a footprint in at least 32 countries, including the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Australia. Its long-term goal is to establish an expansionist caliphate ruled under Islamic law, with no fixed borders, seeking new territories to occupy in the name of jihad. That is its stated aim. Hizb ut-Tahrir's headquarters and central media office are in Beirut, and its ideology and strategy are co-ordinated centrally.

The British branch, Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain, was established in 1986. It is afforded autonomy to operate in its local environment, but it is important to emphasise that it is part of a coherent international movement, and recognises the leadership of Hizb ut-Tahrir. The decision to proscribe therefore relates to Hizb ut-Tahrir, including all its regional branches. Any distinction between them is artificial.

There is evidence that Hizb ut-Tahrir is concerned in terrorism. Its central media office and several of its middle eastern branches have celebrated and praised the barbaric terrorist attacks on Israel and other nations' citizens carried out by Hamas, which, as Members will be aware, are already a proscribed organisation.

Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat): Is the Minister aware that Zeyno Baran of the Hudson Institute has observed that the British chapter of Hizb ut-Tahrir is the "nerve centre" of the international movement? ...

Tom Tugendhat: ... the unity of this organisation means that one branch cannot be separated from another. The UK branch is important when taking down the network around the world. ...

The British branch is supportive of—and indeed, subservient to—its global leadership and policy positions. It demonstrates a hatred not just of Israel but of all Jews. Its promotion and encouragement of terrorism is inspired by an abhorrent antisemitic ideology.

Hizb ut-Tahrir has frequently referred to Hamas as the heroes of Palestine. Hamas are not heroes. Those who perpetrated the attacks on 7 October are monsters.

col 1043 Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain published an article on its website that described the 7 October attacks as a long-awaited victory that "ignited a wave of joy and elation amongst Muslims globally".

It is the Government's view that the content included in that article and others like it betrays Hizb ut-Tahrir and Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain's true ideology and beliefs. Hizb ut-Tahrir has regularly engaged in homophobic and antisemitic discourse. It rejects democracy, and its aims bear similarities to those of terrorist groups, including Daesh, which is already proscribed. Internationally, Hizb ut-Tahrir plays the mood music to which other terrorists dance.

This proscription will serve as a reminder that the United Kingdom does not and will never tolerate the promotion or encouragement of terrorism. It will send the message that promoting or encouraging Hamas's sickening attack on 7 October is utterly unacceptable

and at odds with the values of this country. ...

To the Jewish community in the United Kingdom, I say this: "We will always protect British citizens. We will do whatever it takes to protect you." To British Muslim parents and to many mosques across the country, I say this: "We will remove this menace that claims to act in your name. Hizb ut-Tahrir does not represent Islam or Muslims. You are a crucial part of our nation and your Government is on your side." ...

Hizb ut-Tahrir is banned in many countries around the world ... It has declared the custodian of the two holy places in Saudi Arabia, the Khadim al-Haramayn, an apostate, and has been banned in Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Following coup attempts in Jordan and Egypt, it has been banned in those countries as well. ... When al-Nabhani split from the Muslim Brotherhood to found this organisation in 1953, it was to a great extent because he did not believe in its incrementalist policy of using democracy, but instead turned to violence and radicalising Muslim militaries to establish a single expansionist Islamist empire. ...

Let us not forget the impact of Hizb ut-Tahrir in the United Kingdom. One of its original leaders subsequently went on to set up al-Muhajiroun, a pernicious organisation, now also proscribed, with links to many of the perpetrators of Islamist-inspired attacks in recent years. We are taking this action to stop the pain and loss caused to countless families across our country who have lost loved ones to this cult. ...

col 1044 The United Kingdom must not be a hub for global terrorism: not today, not tomorrow, not ever. It will now be a criminal offence for a person to: belong to Hizb ut-Tahrir; invite or express support for Hizb ut-Tahrir; arrange a meeting in support of Hizb ut-Tahrir; and wear clothing, carry or display articles in public in such a way as to arouse reasonable suspicion that the individual is a member of, or a supporter of, Hizb ut-Tahrir. The penalties for conviction of proscription offences can be a maximum of 14 years in prison and/or an unlimited fine. ...

Dan Jarvis (Labour): ... it is vital that the Government and the Opposition work together in the national interest on these crucial issues. As the Minister laid out, the order will amend schedule 2 of the Terrorism Act 2000 to add Hizb ut-Tahrir to the list of proscribed organisations. Doing so will make it a criminal offence to belong to Hizb ut-Tahrir, to engage in activities such as attending meetings, to promote support for the group, or to display its logo. After years of serious and increasing concerns about Hizb ut-Tahrir's activity both internationally and in the UK, the Opposition strongly support its proscription. It is a necessary and proportionate step to effectively counter its hateful extremism and divisive rhetoric which threatens the safety and security of our country. ...

Hizb ut-Tahrir is being proscribed now because of escalating activity in the aftermath of Hamas's barbaric terrorist attack on Israel. Unlike other Muslim groups in the UK who condemned these attacks, Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain glorified as "heroes" the Hamas terrorists who revelled in acts of indiscriminate violence against civilians. In the aftermath of 7 October there was deep sorrow and outrage among the British people, shared with the Israeli people; but Hizb ut-Tahrir boasted of its "euphoria" on the news of that appalling and tragic loss of life. There is no place on Britain's streets for vile antisemitism. There is no place on Britain's streets for those who incite violence and glorify terrorism. There is no place on Britain's streets for Hizb ut-Tahrir. This terrorist group peddles hate, glorifies violence, and is not only hostile to our values but hostile to the common tenets of humanity. ...

col 1045 Organisations such as the Community Security trust, the Antisemitism Policy Trust and the Union of Jewish Students have long raised serious concerns about Hizb ut-Tahrir's antisemitism, alongside its misogynistic and homophobic hate speech, which provide a channel for extremism. ... Proscribing Hizb ut-Tahrir is the right thing to do for our national security. For too long the public have been exposed to its extremist ideology, its glorification of terrorist activity, and its core aim of overthrowing our democratic system of government to replace it with an Islamist theocracy. ...

col 1046 **Andrew Percy (Conservative):** As I speak in this debate, I will have in mind the 136 hostages who are still held by Hamas, including Eli Sharabi. ...

I thank the organisations that have campaigned on this issue over the years, including the UJS and the Antisemitism Policy Trust, which is ably led by Danny Stone—he has long campaigned on this and I congratulate them all on their efforts, which have now paid off.

My only slight point of disagreement with what has been said is that, once again, I voice my support for the proscription of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which is behind Hezbollah, Hamas and, of course, the Houthis. ...

As the Minister said, Hizb ut-Tahrir is an antisemitic, racist organisation that promotes and encourages terrorism. As both Front Benchers said, it openly celebrated the appalling pogroms of 7 October and has described Hamas as “heroes.” They are not heroes; they are murderers and rapists, for which they should be called out by everyone. Hizb ut-Tahrir is an explicitly antisemitic group and has targeted gay people, women and Muslims who do not share its perverse interpretation of Islam. It is right to ban this group, but will that ban include its pernicious online activities? ...

Omar Khan Sharif, one of the British bombers of Mike’s Place in Tel Aviv, was found with Hizb ut-Tahrir literature. The bombing took place in the second intifada, so let us remember what an intifada is, for those who have been marching in the streets with signs calling for an intifada. ...

The second intifada involved the bombing of pubs and civilian buses, and it involved the murder of countless innocent civilians. That is what people have been calling for on our streets, and they have been allowed to continue calling for it without any police action.

Christian Wakeford (Labour): It gets even worse, because this weekend we heard people not only on the march but on the stage saying that massacres should now become the norm. ...

Andrew Percy: ... Doubtless the majority of people who attend protests are peaceful, but that behaviour is making Jewish people in this country frightened of wherever the protests take place. The Jewish community in my region has expressed to me its concerns about the small marches we have had in my area, and of course Jews in London are afraid to come into central London when the marches are taking place, precisely because of that behaviour, which I believe is by a minority.

col 1047 The leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Denmark was convicted of racial hatred for distributing a leaflet that said: “Kill them, kill the Jews wherever you find them.”

The organisation tells its followers that they should not be close friends with non-Muslims. In fact, one of its leaflets says: “We maintain that the clash of civilisations is not only inevitable but imperative.”

Of course, it shares that view with neo-Nazis. ... Welcome though it is, however, the ban will not end the continued targeting of the Jewish community and Jewish people in this country, which has led to a 1,000%-plus increase in antisemitism.

This week I was informed by the police force in my area that pro-Palestinian activists might come to protest one of our Holocaust Memorial Day events. I am sure they will protest peacefully, but that event is being targeted for no other reason than Jews will be present. That is absolutely appalling and disgraceful behaviour, just as it would be for a person to protest Hamas or Hizb ut-Tahrir at a Muslim community event. ...

A Jewish charity that supports disaffected young men and young boys in the north of London was targeted this week by activists, who screamed and shouted abuse outside. What does a Jewish charity working with disaffected youth have to do with this conflict? It was targeted for no other reason than it involves Jews.

We have seen continued denial of the events of 7 October in online spaces and on the streets of this country. ... I have received the most appalling antisemitic communications, including describing the hostages as, “Them Zionist rat hostages.” Someone messaged me to say, “Nobody cares about the Jews.” Another messaged me to tell me that I should be flogged because of my beliefs. I have been targeted with emails directly quoting the

comments made about me on social media and telling me that they were false-flag operations, that the hostages do not exist and that it was the Israelis who killed people on 7 October ...

As I said in a Westminster Hall debate, it has seemed on occasion as if the Metropolitan police force is acting as the public relations arm of some of the protests, instead of doing what it should be doing and protecting British Jews from such hate speech. We are such a small community, just 0.5% of the population. ...

col 1048 Kirsty Blackman (SNP): ... The SNP absolutely supports the proscription of Hizb ut-Tahrir. We stand with Jews and Jewish communities against antisemitism.

I particularly thank the Union of Jewish Students for its work in Aberdeen, and I am grateful for the comments it has brought to me about its experiences in the wake of 7 October. ...

We recognise the horrifying, dangerous comments and attitudes of Hizb ut-Tahrir, and agree with the reasons the Minister set out for its proscription. ...

Can the Minister assure us that, after proscription, he and the Government will take further action to remove Hizb ut-Tahrir's ability to operate in the UK and, together with international partners, its ability to operate around the world, where we can do so? ...

I wholeheartedly agree with the comments made by the hon. Member for Brigg and Goole about the Antisemitism Policy Trust and Danny Stone. Danny is an absolutely dedicated public servant who does a huge amount of good in supporting his community and bringing advice and information to parliamentarians, ensuring that we are all far more knowledgeable as a result.

Will the Minister update the House on whether the Government have made a further assessment of whether to proscribe the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps? ...

col 1049 Iain Duncan Smith (Conservative): ... The proscription of Hizb ut-Tahrir is overdue because it has been well known for quite some time here that the UK has been at the centre of operations. ... Antisemitism is at the core of its whole being. It is not an organisation that is passingly antisemitic; antisemitism is its core belief.

Let us be clear that the killing of Jews is a priority for Hizb ut-Tahrir, and its activities here in the UK, as a result of the protection it is no longer to have, have influenced a lot of people who do not really understand what is going on in the middle east and who settle on the idea that Hizb ut-Tahrir is somehow espousing the views of a people who are persecuted abroad. It is not; Hizb ut-Tahrir is talking about the persecution and eventual eradication of the Jewish people. ...

It has also supported other groups in their attacks on Israel, as has been said already. Hizb ut-Tahrir celebrated the October murders and the taking of hostages, and it has encouraged terrorism globally, but it has also provided excuses for some of the nonsense being said at the moment on some of the marches. ...

col 1050 We know now that, since the attacks in October, Iran has accelerated its executions of those who have protested against the current regime. An astonishing number of executions is now taking place, under cover of what is going on in Gaza. It is quite appalling. We know that the IRGC is behind Hezbollah. It directs, it arms and it makes sure that Hezbollah acts as its arm in Lebanon and beyond. It is attacking Israel right now to keep Israeli forces tied up in northern Israel for tactical reasons. ...

Who is supplying the Houthi rebels—the terrorists—with arms and direction? It is Iran ...

When I was approached by somebody who had been protesting, I asked, "Are you aware of what is going on here?" They said, "What does it matter? These people in Israel are persecuting the Palestinians in Gaza, so they're right to do this." I replied, "So you don't mind massive inflation hikes and huge extra costs. You don't mind the fact that trade cannot travel down the shorter route and all the other considerations." They just looked at me blankly, because they had not understood what we were talking about. ...

Another part of it is that Iran was quite clearly involved in the attacks that took place in October on peaceful Israeli citizens and others, the murders and the hostage taking. ...

Iran knew that Israel would have to respond. That was exactly what the whole plan was:

to launch a vile attack, murder enough Jews and make sure that Israeli territory was invaded, so that Israel was bound to attack. ...

col 1051 Most people do not understand what “From the river to the sea” means, notwithstanding the fact that Hassan Nasrallah made it very clear that the chant means clearing the Jews out of Palestine, and Israel being gone. ... He said that that is what it means, yet people chant it and the Metropolitan police still does not seem to understand that it is an aggressive, antisemitic chant.

I have a Jewish sister-in-law who told me the other day that she has never felt more under threat and less safe in this country in her whole life. What a statement to make in this United Kingdom, which upholds freedom of speech and the rule of law—that a Jewish person now feels desperately under threat just getting up and going to work in the morning. ...

Christian Wakeford: ... [Hizb ut-Tahrir] poses a threat not only to democratic institutions but to people, including the vast majority of the Muslim community here at home. Hizb ut-Tahrir, or HUT, as I will refer to it, has blighted our shores and specifically our university campuses for years. It has run meetings and distributed leaflets, including one that described Jews as “cowards” and called on Muslims to “purify yourselves against the deceptions of the Jews”.

On the Israel-Palestine conflict, it has called for “the elimination of the monstrous Jewish entity, restoring all of Palestine to the lands of Islam”. If that is not an organisation preaching hatred, I do not know what is.

col 1052 Anti-racism campaigners including the Union of Jewish Students have been particularly alive to the threat, and its officers have run campaigns over many years, including, successfully, to have the group outlawed by the National Union of Students as early as 1994. Despite that, UK HUT activists have sought to circumvent such efforts. Reports have emerged that between 2022 and 2023, keynote speakers from HUT spoke to 10 separate campuses over 18 months ... The speakers included Luqman Mugeem, a prominent figure on the HUT website, who spoke five times at the University of Birmingham, despite having posted videos online in which he said that Muslims must fight Jews to the death and voiced support for the attack on Sir Salman Rushdie.

HUT has a long history of using front groups on campuses. For example, radicals from the group have sought to pass themselves off as the One Nation Society, the Democracy Society, the Islamic Front, the Muslim Media Forum, the Muslim Current Affairs Society, the New World Society and the 1924 Society. In changing the legislation, will the Government also look at those organisations to ensure that HUT can find no further loopholes to preach its hatred on university campuses? ...

The Antisemitism Policy Trust’s Danny Stone, who has rightly been mentioned several times in the debate, highlighted to the Public Bill Committee for the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 the danger of HUT, in its many guises, misusing the new free speech protections in order to solicit compensation. ...

Although I welcome today’s move we need ... to go further and proscribe the one group that is not only providing funding but destabilising entire regions: the IRGC. That is more important now than ever, considering the last 100 days or so. Both groups are antisemitic; they blatantly repeat those tropes time and again. ...

col 1053 Alistair Carmichael: ... Whether to proscribe Hizb ut-Tahrir is not a new debate; it has been going on for a considerable time. ... We should be slow to ban any organisation because, as a society, it is not something we should do lightly. However, once the evidence is there, as it clearly has been for some time and as it has been in relation to the IRGC, then ... that raises questions about whether our processes for making such decisions are adequate.

Obviously, it is important to take this step as part of our domestic legislation at the moment, because not to do so would send the worst possible signal to those in the Jewish communities who have felt so embattled since the events of 7 October. ...

However, there is a wider legislative context. As important as it is to proscribe organisations like Hizb ut-Tahrir, that is only part of a bigger plan. It seems that many of the other tools in that fight, such as the Prevent strategy, are not achieving the goals we need them to achieve. ... Let us not forget that a spiral emerges here: we see the growth in antisemitism and antisemitic hate crime, but that in turn produces a growth in Islamophobia. So we do not proscribe Hizb ut-Tahrir in the interest only of Jewish communities, but in the interest of Muslim communities as well.

col 1054 Jim Shannon (DUP): ... It is important that we do something in relation to the Hamas murders of 1,200 innocent Israelis, the taking of hostages, the continuing war of aggression and their view about the annihilation of the Israelis. ... The Minister has outlined how we can take on the terrorist activities and intentions of those who march in the streets and think they have a status above the law of the land. ...

The proscription of the IRGC is critical because it funds, trains and gives weapons to many terrorist organisations across the world. We need to take that proscription a stage further, on top of this one ...

I want to put on the record my concerns about the connections between IRA republicanism and international terrorism. ...

On commitment by police forces, has the Minister had the opportunity to speak to the forces here on the mainland and to the Police Service of Northern Ireland, to ensure that they collectively take on Hizb ut-Tahrir, the terrorist organisation proscribed today? ...

col 1055 Tom Tugendhat: ... I will briefly answer ... questions about the timing of the proscription. This is, quite rightly, detailed legal work. The judgment has to be made extremely carefully. It must be not only lawful but proportionate, and we must get that balance right. ... This tool should be used only to protect the British people from terrorism—that is its purpose. We need to make absolutely clear that we are using it appropriately and only when necessary. ...

[Andrew Percy] rightly identifies what we are seeing today as being in the mould of the fascist movements of the 1930s. We could easily mistake some of the words on the works of Hizb ut-Tahrir as coming from the voices of some of the fascist leaders of the 1920s. They bear a stark resemblance to them. He is absolutely right that the online activities must be banned, and he will be pleased to hear that they are: all activities by this group are banned.

col 1056 My hon. Friend is also right to say that Jews should not be afraid to be in London at any time, and certainly not on a Saturday or a Sunday, when many people want to go out shopping or just to be with friends and family. These protests, sadly, have not only been vile demonstrations of some of the worst parts of our community, but radicalising moments in themselves. ...

Desmond Swayne (Conservative): May I suggest to my right hon. Friend that his Department look into the possibility of confining marches to a static location? The fact is that all people are currently being inhibited from attending central London at weekends and that is having a significant impact on commerce and shopping ...

Tom Tugendhat: ... I shall certainly take that away and I am sure that my colleagues in the Department will come back to him. ...

[Kirsty Blackman] rightly praised the Union of Jewish Students in Aberdeen and the work that it has done. The union has done some incredibly important work around the United Kingdom in our universities, which have seen a rise in antisemitism on their campuses. I have already spoken to Universities UK and the Russell Group about that. We simply cannot tolerate this. It is simply unacceptable to see students excluded from education because of the vile hatred of others. ...

col 1057 It would be wrong of me to comment further on proscription options that we may be holding in reserve. As Members will know, for very clear reasons these are matters that we do not discuss until we are ready to announce them. None the less, it is absolutely right

to say that we are taking the state abuse of our citizens, or the intervention of states in our Government or economic processes, extremely seriously. ...

col 1058 If there are aliases or name changes, provisions can be changed quickly. That is covered under the Terrorism Act 2000. Should it be necessary, we will update the House, but Members can be assured that simply changing a name does not avoid proscription. ...

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) Order 2024, which was laid before this House on 15 January, be approved.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-01-18/debates/C0A8AAC9-EA66-4DB0-A891-EC2048799B3D/PreventionAndSuppressionOfTerrorism>

The Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) Order 2024

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2024/9780348256307>

House of Lords Debates

Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) Order 2024

col 567 **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord Sharpe of Epsom):** My Lords, I am grateful to the House for its consideration of this draft order, which will see Hizb ut-Tahrir proscribed. ...

Some 79 terrorist organisations are currently proscribed under the Terrorism Act 2000. For an organisation to be proscribed, the Home Secretary must believe that it is concerned in terrorism, as set out in Section 3 of the Terrorism Act 2000. ...

Proscription is a powerful tool with severe penalties, criminalising membership and invitations of support for the organisation. It also supports other disruptive activity, including immigration disruptions and terrorist financing offences. The resources of a proscribed organisation are terrorist property and are therefore liable to be seized. ...

With this House's consent, Hizb ut-Tahrir, including all regional branches, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain, will be proscribed. Having carefully considered all the evidence, the Home Secretary has concluded that Hizb ut-Tahrir is concerned in terrorism and should be proscribed. ...

Hizb ut-Tahrir, which I will now refer to simply as HuT, is an international political organisation with a footprint in at least 32 countries, including the UK, US, Canada and Australia. Its long-term goal is to establish a caliphate ruled under Islamic law. HuT's headquarters and central media office are in Beirut, Lebanon, and its ideology and strategy are co-ordinated centrally.

col 568 The British branch, which I will refer to as HTB, was established in the 1980s. While HTB is afforded autonomy to operate in its local environment, it is important to emphasise at this point that HuT should be considered as a coherent international movement, with HTB recognising the overall leadership of HuT on its website. This decision to proscribe therefore relates to HTB, and other regional branches, in forming part of a single, global entity, which is HuT.

There is current evidence that HuT is concerned in terrorism. HuT's central media office and several of HuT's Middle Eastern branches have celebrated and praised the barbaric 7 October terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas, which, as noble Lords will be aware, is a proscribed organisation. When the proscription of Hamas was extended to include both the military and political wings in 2021, the Government were clear that Hamas prepares, commits and participates in acts of terrorism.

Further recent activity includes an article attributed to HuT's Egyptian branch, which referred to the killing of Jewish tourists by an Egyptian police officer as "a simple example

of what should be done towards the Jews”.

Elsewhere, HuT has frequently referred to Hamas as “the heroes of Palestine” in articles on its website. HTB also published an article on its website, which was subsequently removed, which described the 7 October attacks as a “long awaited victory” and referred to the fact that they “ignited a wave of joy and elation amongst Muslims globally”.

It is the Government’s view that the content included in this article betrays the organisation’s true ideology and beliefs, aligned with the organisation’s global output.

HuT has regularly engaged in anti-Semitic and homophobic discourse. ...

Proscription ... will significantly thwart HuT’s operations in the UK. It is a criminal offence for a person to belong to a proscribed organisation; invite or express support for a proscribed organisation; arrange a meeting in support of a proscribed organisation; or wear clothing or carry or display articles in public in such a way or in such circumstances as to arouse reasonable suspicion that the individual is a member or supporter of a proscribed organisation. The penalties for conviction of proscription offences can be a maximum of 14 years in prison and/or an unlimited fine. ...

Our message is clear: we will not tolerate the promotion or encouragement of terrorism, nor will we accept the promotion or glorification of Hamas’s abhorrent attack of 7 October. We will confront anti-Semitism wherever and however it rears its ugly head, taking every possible step to keep the Jewish community in the United Kingdom safe.

col 569 **Lord Polak (Conservative):** ... I am a Jew, and very proud of it. I know full well what Hizb ut-Tahrir wants to do to me, my family and my co-religionists. ...

Lord Purvis of Tweed (Liberal Democrat): ... These are difficult times. Therefore, as we protect our communities as well as our freedoms and liberties, it is unfortunately necessary to have measures such as these. ...

col 570 I note very strongly that the Community Security Trust and the Board of Deputies of British Jews have supported these measures. One of the more regrettable activities in the UK since October has been the heightened level of anti-Semitism. It is to be noted also that there has been an increase in the number of incidents of Islamophobia. The level of tensions in our societies has been heightened, but that is not an excuse for anti-Semitism or for putting fear into part of our community. ...

I would be grateful to hear ... whether the Minister has information on the monitoring of cases of anti-Semitism. What are the levels of prosecutions at the moment? ... It is clear that, even after 100 days, many parts of our communities do not feel safe. ...

I note that no impact assessment of this measure has been carried out—it does not necessarily meet the threshold—although that is not a criticism. The Government stated: “There is no, or no significant, impact on the public sector” or on “business, charities or voluntary bodies”.

If that relates to the police, does the Minister have an assessment of whether there are likely to be prosecutions, given what he outlined on unacceptable behaviour? ...

col 571 **Lord Coaker (Labour):** ... After years of serious and increasing concern about Hizb ut-Tahrir’s activity in the UK, His Majesty’s Opposition strongly support its proscription. It is a necessary step to effectively counter its hateful extremism and divisive rhetoric, which threatens the safety and security of our country. ... proscription of this international terrorist organisation comes after other countries, including Germany, have already banned it.

Hizb ut-Tahrir has been proscribed now because of its escalating activity in the aftermath of Hamas’s barbaric terrorist attack on Israel. Unlike the condemnation of these attacks by the vast majority of Muslims here in the UK, who are just as horrified as the rest of us, Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain glorified as heroes the Hamas terrorists who revelled in acts of indiscriminate violence against civilians. Again, unlike the deep sorrow and outrage the British people shared with the Israeli people in the aftermath of 7 October, Hizb ut-Tahrir boasted of its euphoria on the news of this appalling and tragic loss of life.

There is no place on Britain's streets for vile anti-Semitism. There is no place on Britain's streets for those who incite violence and glorify terrorism. There is no place on Britain's streets for Hizb ut-Tahrir. This terrorist group peddles hate, glorifies violence and is hostile not only to our values but to the common sense of humanity. ... Organisations such as the Community Security Trust, the Antisemitism Policy Trust and the Union of Jewish Students have long raised serious concerns about Hizb ut-Tahrir's anti-Semitism, alongside its misogynistic and homophobic hate speech, which provides a channel for extremism. ...

col 572 Given for how long these matters have been debated and considered, I would be grateful if the Minister could answer some questions when he responds. To start with, does he think that there are lessons to be learned regarding the length of time it has taken to proscribe this organisation? Does he believe that the current proscription process is robust enough to counter threats to our national security, and can he say when it became a proportionate response in this case as well as in others? ...

To conclude, proscribing Hizb ut-Tahrir is the right thing to do for our national security. For too long, the public have been exposed to its extremist ideology, its glorification of terrorist activity and its core aim of overthrowing our democratic system of government to replace it with an Islamist theocracy. If left alone, extremism can and will spread insidiously and spread deceit deep into our national conversation. ...

col 573 Lord Sharpe of Epsom: ... Of course, the Government will always consider the full range of powers available to tackle threats on our soil or against our people and interests. We will continue to make use of our counterterrorism powers, including the proscription tool, where appropriate, to tackle the modern threats we face. ...

The Home Secretary will exercise his power to proscribe only after thoroughly reviewing the available evidence on an organisation. This includes information taken from both open sources and sensitive intelligence, as well as advice that reflects consultation across government.

That brings me to the question ... why has it taken so long? I have explained how the Home Secretary must believe that an organisation is concerned in terrorism and, as the House has heard, since the 7 October attack HuT has promoted and encouraged terrorism, and celebrated and praised the 7 October terrorist attacks by Hamas, including in an article that referred to the killing of Jewish tourists by an Egyptian police officer, which I referred to in my opening remarks, as a simple example of what should be done to the Jews.

Elsewhere, HuT has frequently referred to Hamas as the heroes of Palestine, in articles on its website. As has been noted, it has a long history of praising and celebrating attacks against Israel and attacks against Jews more widely. This vile anti-Semitism cannot be decoupled from the statements recently attributed to HuT encouraging and promoting terrorism. But of course, the facts changed after 7 October. I think that explains the decision to act now. When the facts change, we change our minds.

... the growth in anti-Semitism is extraordinarily concerning. A number of my friends are affected by it and have said that they are now afraid to walk the streets in certain circumstances. ...

col 574 Lord Polak: ... I pay tribute to the Government because for a number of years they have helped to fund the security of our schools and synagogues, and so on. Noble Lords might not realise that, to get into a synagogue to pray, one has to go through security—that is here in Britain, in 2024. ... Just so that noble Lords understand, just days after 7 October my daughter called me and asked, "Dad, do you love your grandchildren?" I said to Natasha, "What's this question?" She said, "Should we send them to school?" That is a Jewish, state-aided school in Finchley, north London. They were scared to send their kids to school here in Britain. ...

Lord Sharpe of Epsom: ... The Jewish community protective security grant provides security measures, such as guarding, CCTV and alarm systems at Jewish schools,

colleges, nurseries and some other Jewish community sites, as well as a number of synagogues. The JCPS grant is managed on behalf of the Home Office by the Community Security Trust. In response to the Israel-Hamas conflict and reports of increased incidence of anti-Semitism in the UK, the Prime Minister has announced an additional £3 million of funding for the Community Security Trust ... that will provide additional security at Jewish schools, synagogues and other Jewish community sites. This brings total funding for CST through the Jewish community protective security grant to £18 million in 2023-24. The Chancellor's Autumn Statement confirmed that protective security funding for the Jewish community will be maintained at £18 million in 2024-25. ...

On the question about the statistics on anti-Semitism, I will have to write on that—I am afraid I do not have them to hand.

col 575 It would be wrong not to highlight also what is being done to protect Muslim communities, who obviously are also affected by events in the Middle East. We recognise that the developments there can impact British Muslim communities, and they lead to a rise in community tensions. The Government have made an additional £4.9 million available for protective security at mosques and Muslim faith schools this year and the next. That brings total funding for UK Muslim communities to £29.4 million for both 2023-24 and 2024-25. We have also extended the deadline for the protective security for mosques scheme, and invite mosques and Muslim faith community centres to register for protective security measures by 18 February 2024. The protective security for mosques scheme provides physical security measures such as CCTV, intruder alarms and secure perimeter fencing to mosques and associated Muslim faith community centres. Guarding services for both mosques and Muslim faith schools will become available early this year.

... There is obviously significant parliamentary media and public interest in potentially proscribing the IRGC. ... our policy is not to comment on the specifics of individual proscription cases. I am therefore unable to provide further details on this issue ... However, I think I can refer to the most recent public position on this, which was a comment from the current Foreign Secretary on the proscription of the IRGC. In an interview with the *Telegraph* on 23 December, the current Foreign Secretary said: "The move you're talking about is not something that either the intelligence agencies or the police are calling for. So I think our stance is the right one". ...

col 575 The noble Lord, Lord Coaker, asked me about investigation and prosecution of offences. He will be aware that that is an operational matter for the police and the Crown Prosecution Service. But His Majesty's Government are working with operational partners to support their management of terrorism offences, particularly in the context of the ongoing crisis in Israel and Gaza, and we will continue to do that to realise the disruptive benefits of this proscription swiftly. ...

In conclusion, the security of our communities is the Government's foremost priority. The effort to counter and contain terrorism is complex and relentless. When action is needed, we will not hesitate. ...

Motion agreed.

To read the full transcript see

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-01-18/debates/3FB8F53A-3A23-4AEA-91AC-461E81896E3E/TerrorismAct2000\(ProscribedOrganisations\)\(Amendment\)Order2024](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-01-18/debates/3FB8F53A-3A23-4AEA-91AC-461E81896E3E/TerrorismAct2000(ProscribedOrganisations)(Amendment)Order2024)

The Telegraph article referred to above can be read at

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2023/12/23/cameron-foreign-secretary-hamas-sunak-gaza-egypt-iran/>

The Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) Order 2024

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2024/9780348256307>

Religious Education in Schools

col 71GC Lord Harries of Pentregarth (Crossbench): To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve the quality of religious education in schools.

col 72GC My Lords, the 2023 report by Ofsted on religious education could hardly be more damning. It said that, in too many schools, RE was of "poor quality" and "not fit for purpose". Ofsted suggested that, as a subject, RE was "undervalued" and often considered as an "afterthought" by schools. It argued that the "lack of clarity and support" from the Government made the schools' job "harder". ...

Religious education is education. It is not propaganda. It is simply basic to any understanding of what it is to be a citizen of our society in the world today. First, it is impossible to understand the literature, art, music, history or political values of this country and Europe without some basic knowledge of the Christian faith and the Hebrew scriptures on which it was built. ... Then, in our plural society in which Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism, for example, are so widely present, religious education should give people the mindset to begin to enter into the narrative of other worldviews. ... Most young people today say, apparently, that they have no religion. This makes it all the more important for them actually to know something about what it is that they say they do not believe. ...

At the moment, the major responsibility for RE lies with local authorities and SACREs. Some of them take this responsibility seriously but, in others, very little has been done. In August last year, a survey of LA funding to SACREs found that five authorities declared no spending on RE at all, and a further 34—39 in all, or 31%—stated they do not spend any money supporting RE in schools. ...

col 73GC ... there should be a properly funded national plan for RE, which should include a national curriculum. A national curriculum is used as a benchmark for standards in other subjects and, if academies do not choose to follow it, they must provide a curriculum that is similarly broad and ambitious. The present situation, where responsibility lies at a local level, means that there is no standard available to the Government to challenge weak or invisible RE provision. ...

In England, schools have a statutory obligation to provide RE to their students. However, according to the school workforce data, one in five schools offers zero hours of RE in year 11; this equates to around 500 secondary schools. In the absence of a national standard, the current Government have no mechanism to challenge this.

It should also be noted that no government money has been spent on RE projects in schools over the last five years ... There should also be ... the provision of teachers who are properly qualified to teach the subject and able to take part in continuing professional development ... While the total number of secondary teachers in history and geography has risen by 6% and 11% respectively during that period, the number of teachers of RE has declined by almost 6% in the same time. ...

col 74GC Lord Griffiths of Burry Port (Labour): ... Since it is required of the education that we offer to our young people that the spiritual and religious be part of what a good education is considered to be ... I wonder, for example, why between 2016 and 2021 no government money was spent on RE projects in schools. ...

I know that the way that we look at and feel about religion varies from person to person and that it can produce great difficulties, because people feel that those with religion want to have an angle on the educational curriculum of a school to introduce and emphasise the things that are important to them. I do not think that is the case. I am a member of the British humanist society and its APPG here for the simple reason that I, like they and all religious people, believe in the humanum and that it is our duty, wherever our values are to be found, to seek the well-being of humanity at large. I certainly do not want religion to be categorised as simply reneging on its promises or undermining its commitments. ...

col 75GC Lord Storey (Liberal Democrat): ... We are a very successful multicultural and multifaith society, and two-thirds of young people and more than 50% of people as a whole are non-religious, and an increasing number have humanist values and beliefs.

It is important that children and young people understand different faiths and those of no faith. That has to be taught and available through our school system, with teaching of the highest quality—not the prevalent “pass the parcel” to see who will do it.

The figures, as we have heard, speak for themselves. Of our schools in England and Wales, 25% use teaching assistants to deliver the subject, while 20% of RE teachers have received no training and only 63% of teachers feel confident in teaching the subject—a worse situation than three years ago. In 30% of schools, RE is funded less than any other subject taught, and in 28% of schools no funding at all is provided towards the teaching of RE. One in five schools does not offer RE in the curriculum in year 7—they are breaking their statutory responsibilities, by the way—while 27.4% of academies which are not faith-based schools do not even teach RE. ... Some 31% of schools spend less than the designated time teaching RE—again, a worse situation than three years ago. ...

The Open University, in collaboration with a range of UK and international partners, has developed an exciting initiative in religious, civic and historical education for young people aged 13 to 18. They are encouraged to think outside the box about their own experiences of religious diversity, tolerance and intolerance. The creative process means working together and developing skills such as teamwork, empathy, curiosity and imagination, critical thinking and making “docutubes”, which are short films. Perhaps the Minister would look at this exciting project and its possible use in schools.

The Lord Bishop of Durham: ... Religious education gives young people an understanding of different world religions and beliefs, in a world where 70% of people affiliate themselves to a religion. It gives pupils an opportunity to explore their beliefs, enabling them to think critically and discuss belief systems in a non-offensive and non-discriminatory manner. However, RE is too often seen as inessential, with Ofsted stating, as was said earlier, that “schools often consider RE as an afterthought”.

col 76GC When current global conflicts have roots in religious histories, and with increases in faith hate crime in Britain, the provision of high-quality RE is crucial to creating a more respectful and tolerant society. Faith hate crime often comes from a lack of understanding, and it will not be eradicated when citizens lack knowledge of the beliefs of those alongside whom they live and work. ...

Religious education has the potential to be a vital component in addressing discrimination in the UK and creating a more understanding society. I urge the Government to ensure that RE is considered not as an afterthought, but as an essential part of education, equipping young people to live and engage in society today. ...

Lord Hastings of Scarisbrick (Crossbench): ... I thoroughly enjoyed my six years of being a religious education teacher. I loved that I was able to inspire a transformation of attitudes and mindsets ...

col 77GC I remember a phrase that went round at that time, the 1980s: “Those who can’t, teach. Those who can’t teach, teach RE”. As an RE teacher, that made me feel that I was at the back end of the bottom of the bucket ...

There is a distinguishing characteristic to RE that has been substantially and consistently ignored: it has to come from a living and vibrant commitment to faith. Whatever the faith, it had better be dynamic, realistic, passionate, personal and meaningful. ...

Lord Parekh (Labour): ... [RE] it is not properly thought through or carefully organised; it is taught by teachers who are not properly trained and who do not have sufficient time; and there is no careful planning or organic build-up from one year to the next. ...

The two other criticisms are far more significant. It is not clear why we want to teach religious education. Is it to fill time? Is it to deal with undisciplined children? Is it to placate religious people? Why is religious education part of our curriculum? ...

col 78GC It is concerned with how to make somebody a decent human being so that his humanity inspires citizenship in all that he does and is. ...

What is distinctively religious about religious education? Here, many of us tend to lose

sight of the fact that religion is ultimately concerned with spirituality, which is neither moral nor religious. I can be spiritual without having to believe in God—lots of people are. I can be deeply moral without being religious. In other words, spirituality has a distinct space in human life, and religious education should cultivate this and the ability to sensitively appreciate the spiritual aspect of life. Religious education, as we teach it, does not seem to do so.

Lord Warner (Crossbench): ... In 2021, the British Social Attitudes survey revealed that 53% of the population had no religion. Only 12% said they were Anglicans, with young people making the biggest shift to secularism: 68% of 18 to 24 year-olds belonged in no religion, with just 18% saying they were Christians. Only 0.7% were Anglicans. ...

Yet the Church hierarchy, Parliament and educational policy-makers seem unwilling to recognise this new reality. This House still insists on starting proceedings with Anglican prayers, and we still have 26 Anglican Bishops here by right. ... There is now no justification, in my view, for compulsory daily acts of Christian worship in the two-thirds of state schools in England and Wales that are not Church schools. ...

col 79GC Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-affiliated): My Lords, we live in a period in which Jewish schools have had to ramp up security to protect their pupils, and religious symbols of Judaism are being hidden by students in fear in non-Jewish schools. ... given that religion and politics have got very messy, who would be an RE teacher dealing with such fraught difficulties? Over the last few days, the front pages had the story of Michaela Community School, led by Katharine Birbalsingh ... the school has been taken to court by a pupil for banning Muslim prayers. The head teacher had basically said, “We shouldn’t be divided by religion. We should have no prayers”. I was fascinated that one of the things the teacher said was that some pupils were being intimidated by their peers for not being religiously pious enough, and it was a kind of bullying.

There is a poisonous atmosphere out there. ... many British institutions seem embarrassed by the western Judeo-Christian tradition. Its accomplishments are more likely to be labelled as white privilege than as the repository of positive values and virtues.

Instead, in recent years the new religion is diversity and inclusion, which has incentivised faith groups to adopt politicised cultural religious identities and has proved a recipe for stirring up divisive tensions and encouraging group grievance-mongering and offence-taking. We should not forget that a schoolteacher from Batley Grammar School is still in hiding, in fear for his life, for the blasphemy of showing pupils an image of Muhammad in a religious studies class. ...

I shall finish with the Reverend Bernard Randall, who lost his job at a Christian school—Trent College in Derbyshire—because he delivered a sermon expressing approval of mainstream Christian teaching on marriage, biological sex and gender, and the head teacher reported him to Prevent. ...

col 80GC Baroness Meacher (Crossbench): ... When the UK was overwhelmingly religious and Christian, the treatment of RE with that focus was completely understandable. ... If RE is to be relevant to all children ... the Government’s first step should be to issue guidance making it clear that RE needs to be fully inclusive of non-religious worldviews. Indeed, the subject needs to be renamed “religion and worldviews”. ...

Last year’s Bowen judgment in the High Court provided legal clarity about the need for the subject to be objective and pluralistic and to include humanism within it. ... [the] High Court ruling found that it was unlawful for Kent County Council to refuse to accept a humanist pupil as a member of an RE group. The Bowen judgment makes it clear not only that syllabuses must include humanism but that humanists must be included within RE. ...

col 81GC Baroness Garden of Frognal (Liberal Democrat): ... Many years ago, I taught French A-level at a convent where one of the set texts was Flaubert’s story of Salome and the beheading of John the Baptist. My convent-educated and bright sixth-formers had

never heard of John the Baptist. When I asked what they studied in their RE lessons, they said social issues, such as drug-taking, poverty and war, but not, it appeared, the Bible. ... even in a convent, the Bible was a mystery. ...

Bible stories should be part of general knowledge, quite apart from the value of learning about goodness and sacrifice and understanding religious diversity, toleration and peace. There should be open, in-depth discussions of faith, so that all students, whether from faith families or not, can learn what religion means to practitioners and how important it is to be tolerant of those whose beliefs are different from one's own.

In our own communities, we see great division through religion, so it has to be good when Christian, Jewish and Muslim places of worship open their doors and welcome all to experience their forms of worship. To know is to understand and not to fear. But this will not be helped if children start life with no knowledge of religion. Can the Minister therefore say what consideration has been given to encouraging schools to work with local churches and faith groups to find people of religion for these lessons ...

col/ 82GC Baroness Twycross (Labour): ... Our communities in the UK reflect the rich religious diversity of our population, but also include people without faith, such as humanists ... who also choose to have a value-led approach to how they live their lives. ... Children today are growing up in a far more diverse and increasingly secular society than the generations before them. ... RE is fundamental to both a knowledge of our country's Christian heritage and values and an understanding of other worldviews. ... This debate is set against the context of conflict in the Middle East and the backdrop of a rise in hate crimes targeting people of particular faiths. We must work to counter hatred, intolerance and bigotry. Good RE teaching can and does contribute to this ...

col/ 83GC The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education (Baroness Barran): ... it is vital that our children receive high-quality religious education. In a society where, according to the 2021 census ... there has been a significant shift in the religious demographic in recent years, it is as important as ever for our children to gain knowledge, understanding and tolerance of a wide range of religious and non-religious beliefs. ...

... from the Government's perspective, when done well, religious education can develop children's knowledge of British values and traditions, help them better understand those of other countries, and refine their ability to construct well-informed, balanced and structured arguments. It provides opportunities for pupils to engage with questions of belief, values, the meaning and purpose of life, and issues of right and wrong, and to do so ... in a respectful and safe environment.

Knowledge of world religions is also valuable in supporting our children to thrive in our own multicultural society as well as in terms of Britain's relationships with other countries. It is important that we all understand the values and perspectives of those who live around us as well as of those with whom we wish to conduct business or build diplomatic relationships overseas. The Government are committed to ensuring that RE delivers on all this, which is why it remains a compulsory subject in all state-funded schools in England for each pupil up to the age of 18. ...

col/ 84GC Teacher recruitment and retention are crucial to every curriculum subject. ... in the academic year 2023-24, 44% of the recruitment target for RE was reached. ... There is work to be done here and the Government recognise that initial teacher training recruitment remains challenging due to the competitive graduate labour market. Therefore, we were pleased to announce that the department will again be offering a £10,000 bursary for RE trainee teachers starting initial teacher training in 2024-25, which we hope will incentivise greater numbers to apply.

We also continue to offer eight-week subject knowledge enhancement courses, or SKEs. ... They include an eight-week course in religious education. All these courses can be undertaken on a full-time or part-time basis but they must be completed before qualified teacher status can be recommended and awarded. Eligible candidates may be entitled to

a bursary of £175 per week to support them financially while completing their course. ... The noble Baroness, Lady Meacher ... referred to the recent court rulings which have made it clear that religious education should include the teaching of non-religious world views. Non-religious world views are already an integral part of the department's religious studies GCSE and A-level subject content specification. ...

Oak National Academy is in the process of procuring curriculum resources for religious education which will mean that high-quality lessons are available nationwide, benefitting teachers and pupils where schools opt to use them. They will begin to be available from autumn this year and will be fully available by September 2025. ...

Having said that, the Government also welcome the work that the Religious Education Council has done to assist curriculum developers by publishing its *National Content Standard for Religious Education in England*. ...

col 85GC ... schools that are not teaching RE are acting unlawfully or are in breach of their academy funding agreements. ... we do not monitor each school's compliance with the duty to teach RE any more than we do for English, maths or any other subject. If there are concerns that a school is not teaching RE, they can be raised via the school's complaints procedure. If they are not resolved, they can be escalated to the department.

In concluding, I restate the Government's commitment to ensure that every school is fulfilling its statutory duty to deliver RE. It is mandatory now and there are no plans to change this. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-01-18/debates/AA74B35D-579A-4814-9363-ADF5056B5831/ReligiousEducationInSchools>

The Ofsted report referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-annual-report-202223-education-childrens-services-and-skills/the-annual-report-of-his-majestys-chief-inspector-of-education-childrens-services-and-skills-202223>

The High Court judgement referred to above can be read at

<https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2023/1261.html>

The *National Content Standard for Religious Education in England*, referred to above, can be read at

<https://religioueducationcouncil.org.uk/rec/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/National-Content-Standard-for-Religious-Education-for-England.pdf>

Home Office

Hizb ut-Tahrir proscribed as terrorist organisation

The organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation ... after Parliament approved a draft order laid on Monday (15 January).

This order makes belonging to Hizb ut-Tahrir or inviting support for the group a criminal offence, with a potential prison sentence of 14 years which can be handed down alongside or in place of a fine.

Hizb ut-Tahrir has now been added to the [list of proscribed organisations in the UK](#), alongside 79 other organisations.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/hizb-ut-tahrir-proscribed-as-terrorist-organisation>

TOP

Holocaust

House of Commons Oral Answer

Business of the House

Peter Bottomley (Conservative): ... Next week, the Select Committee on the Holocaust Memorial Bill continues its hearings. ... One issue that comes up is the Government's continued failure to publish the minutes of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation from 2015 to 2016. There was a consultation on a site for the proposed memorial and learning centre. The consultants analysed the responses and shortlisted three. Two days later the Government produced an alternative option, which was Victoria Tower Gardens.

No one outside the Department has seen the comparisons between the merits of Victoria Tower Gardens and other possible sites. No one has seen the minutes of discussion changing the specification behind the backs of the public. Will my right hon. Friend look to see the redactions made by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and why it is continuing to instruct lawyers to oppose the freedom of information request, which is vital to the work of the Select Committee? Through her, may I recommend to the Select Committee asking for that information and making it public? ...

Penny Mordaunt: I know that this issue, which my hon. Friend raises almost weekly, is of great concern to him, and that he wants to ensure that the final outcome of the process is as good as it can be. I will again make sure that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has heard what he has said. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-01-18/debates/E843288D-1FC0-4A61-9197-90EAD5662D92/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-28055542-1C56-4B7B-9855-2EB654260F01>

Holocaust Memorial Bill Committee

Petitions Against the Bill (10 January 2024)

13 Mr Katkowski KC [for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities]: ... in October through to November 2020, there was a planning inquiry. ... The inspector ... heard evidence from basically everyone who wished to participate ... on whether or not the Holocaust memorial and learning centre should be permitted in the form in which it was proposed and in the location in which it was proposed. ...

15 The inspector weighed all of the competing pros and cons, if you like, and he recommended that planning permission should be granted. ...

16 There was then a High Court challenge. ... for a particular reason, and a very focused and narrow reason, the decision of the Minister was quashed ...

17 ... the inspector ... found that there was some potential for some harm to a section of the trees on one side of the gardens.

18 The Buxton memorial ... is Grade II* listed – this is really the only heritage asset that the inspector thought there would be any tangible or particular harm to by way of harm to its setting, because the memorial is going to be close to, or very close to, some would say, the Buxton memorial. ...

19 He found there would be some harm to the gardens. ... but he found that that harm would be moderate. ...

22 He then looked at the public benefits ... and ... found that there would be clear fulfilment of the recommendations of the Holocaust Memorial Commission. ...

23 ... He then decided the educative approach set out for the memorial and the learning centre – he said 'authoritatively endorsed', and that is because there was a lot of support for it ... and he found that that approach was of great importance. He found that the

content and purpose of the memorial and learning centre, again, would be a public benefit of great importance and then, very controversially, the location of the memorial and learning centre is put forward by the proponents of the project as being fundamentally important, the idea of locating this memorial right next to Parliament, in the lee, so to speak, of Parliament, was seen by us as phenomenally important, to ensure that we attach, as a nation, the right degree of significance to the memorial to the Holocaust. ...

25 And then he went on to make a point, which, as we will see, had particular resonance when this case ended up in the High Court ... He attached significance to the proposition that we put forward ... that we really need to get this memorial open, if we possibly can, while there are Holocaust survivors there to be able to witness this. Achieving the memorial within the lifetime of survivors, so as to honour the living as well as the dead, has a resounding moral importance that can legitimately, he considered, be seen to be a public benefit of great importance, considerable weight. ...

27 ... Another controversy, which had to be tackled at the planning inquiry, was, 'Okay, if you have a memorial to the Holocaust, and if you do end up having it in the gardens, why should there be a learning centre there? Why shouldn't the learning centre be somewhere else? Do you need the two things to be together?' ... [The inspector] concluded ... that the integration of the memorial and the learning centre would have its own power, if you like, in relation to the experience of memorialisation in what he thought to be profound and meaningful ways, which you could not achieve by disaggregating the memorial on the one hand from the learning centre on the other. ...

29 We had to deal with flooding, the consequences should the embankment wall give way, and he found that the chance of that occurring was extremely remote and that we had met all relevant tests in relation to flood risk etc.

30 ... Objections were made on the basis of the security implications of having a memorial to the Holocaust beside Parliament and he considered that we, the promoters, had been through all the relevant processes and so on, and none of the relevant expert bodies had objected to the proposal on the basis of security concerns. ...

31 ... The inspector drew all of these points together. ... his overall conclusion was, 'When the measures of harms and benefits are respectively accounted, it is clear to me,' he said in his report, 'that the significant range of truly civic, educative, social and even moral public benefits the proposals offer would demonstrably outweigh the identified harms the proposals have been found to cause', and so he recommended that permission should be given. ...

33 Some of the opponents of the project ... applied to the High Court for what is called a statutory review. ... We ended up going to the High Court for the High Court to grapple with three particular grounds ...

34 The first was that the inspector and the Minister, who, in effect, just agreed with everything the inspector had said, applied the wrong legal test when they looked at how much harm would be caused to the Buxton memorial ...

35 Then ground 3 is the one that leads us here and that is that there was some legislation from 1900 ... which set out that the gardens were to be laid out and maintained as a garden open to the public and the argument in court under ground 3 was that the memorial and learning centre, being a substantial structure, above ground in the case of the memorial and below ground in the case of the learning centre, and everything that came with them, the entrance courtyard etc, were incompatible with maintaining Victoria Tower Gardens as a garden open to the public. ...

36 And then the fourth ground, alternative sites ... argued that it should go somewhere else ...

37 ... it was decided by the High Court that the Minister, and the inspector in his report, had not grappled with the implications of this legislation and that that also undermined not only delivering the project in the gardens, but also the comparison of the gardens with other locations and, because of all of that, the Minister's decision was quashed. ...

38 ... all of the inspector's conclusions still stand. ... The only caveat to that is that anything that he said in terms of deliverability within the lifetime of Holocaust survivors, and the issue of starting all over again in an alternative location, has to be read in view of the High Court saying, 'Well, wait a minute ...

42 What the High Court held – and we tried to go to the Court of Appeal but the Court of Appeal said there was not an arguable case against the High Court's decision – was that these parts of the 1900 Act were an obstacle to the delivery of the Holocaust memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens. They provided a statutory restriction, which meant the project could not proceed all the time section 8 was in place in relation to the gardens ...

44 ... the real substance of the Bill, and that which you will be hearing petitions about in due course, really is clause 2 ... which would remove the impediment that I have just spoken about that section 8 places in the way of delivering the project in the gardens. ...

46 So, basically, the whole purpose of the Bill is to say the High Court decided section 8 stands in your way and the Bill is there to remove that impediment in relation to the Holocaust memorial and learning centre, not anything else, but to the Holocaust memorial and learning centre. ...

47 ... When the Bill was introduced, it was found to be prima facie hybrid. ...

48 So, in easy language, local residents had a greater interest ... They were more affected than the general public and it was found that the interests of local residents are clearly affected in a manner different from the interests of members of the public who live far away from the gardens. ... We are here with this special stage, this particular Committee stage, because of that finding. ...

53 As far as we are concerned, many of the points made by the petitioners that you are going to be considering ... fall within the principle of the Bill and are therefore outside the scope of this Committee's business; that is to say, whether there should be a learning centre, whether there should be both a memorial and learning centre, whether it should be this memorial and learning centre and similar such points.

54 ... If you think about what this Bill is all about, it is to remove a statutory obstruction, which stands in the way of delivering the memorial and learning centre that the Secretary of State proposes in Victoria Tower Gardens. Now, any point made by a petitioner which in any way would lead to a result that the project that the Secretary of State proposes for a memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens would still be obstructed, could not happen, could not take place, obviously goes to the principle of the Bill and obviously, with great respect, is not a matter for consideration at this Committee.

55 My acid test is, to the extent that any of the petitioners either have or will propose any form of amendment to the Bill that is in front of you, if the result of any such amendments would mean that there would still be a statutory obstruction to building the proposed memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens, obviously that would defeat the whole principle of the Bill. It goes to the whole principle of the Bill. It goes to matters of public policy, which are not, with great respect, for this Committee. ... One always needs to ask oneself, 'Well, wait a minute, this is all very interesting but would it actually mean that the Secretary of State could not actually build the memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens?' And if the answer to that question is that any of the points made by the petitioners would lead to the Secretary of State not being able to build the proposed memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens, then it is out of scope. ...

57 I suppose another way of looking at all this is to ask oneself the question, 'Well, what does this Bill do?' And the first answer to that question is to remind oneself of what the Bill does not do, and the Bill does not authorise the building of the memorial and learning centre in the gardens. This Bill will not give any form of consent to the building of the structure in the gardens ... All these arguments about, 'We don't like the memorial. It doesn't look right. We don't like its design. We don't think the two things should be located together. They should go somewhere else etc', goes to whether or not planning

permission should be granted for the project. It does not go to anything that the Bill was doing because the Bill is not authorising the building of the memorial and learning centre. It is the other way round. What the Bill is doing is removing an obstruction. ...

71 ... how did this idea of having a Holocaust memorial and learning centre, in these gardens, come to be put forward? ... the then Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission, a cross-party commission appointed in 2014 to investigate the idea of whether or not Britain should have a more fitting and permanent memorial to the Holocaust and more meaningful and educational resources for future generations ... went through a process of call of evidence. ... and here is what the recommendation was – that there should be a striking new memorial to serve as a focal point of national commemoration of the Holocaust. It should be prominently located in central London and make a bold statement about the importance that we as a nation place on preserving the memory of the Holocaust and that should be co-located with a world-class learning centre.

72 Those recommendations were accepted by the Government and the Holocaust Memorial Foundation was established to support the implementation of that. ...

74 Well, the Holocaust Memorial Foundation conducted an extensive site search. They looked at all sorts of sites and at the end of this process ... the foundation proposed Victoria Tower Gardens as the most fitting location for the memorial and learning centre and that was their recommendation, which was made. That was accepted. ...

83 ... The learning centre, audio-visual exhibition, it would set out the events of the Holocaust. There would be a particular British perspective but ... this is not going to be a celebration that Britain led the way and has an entirely unblemished record, so to speak. It is going to address the complexities of our ambiguous responses to the Holocaust, as is said here, and we would encourage visitors to critically reflect on what more could have been done, whether by policymakers or by society as a whole. ...

84 Plainly, the Holocaust will be set within its context of the history of antisemitism, including the antisemitism experienced by Jewish communities in our country over many centuries. It will also deal with and memorialise and have learning centres in relation to subsequent genocides, and the intention is to work with other institutions across the United Kingdom supporting Holocaust commemoration and education. ...

94 Karl Turner (Labour): ... I think what you said in your submission is that, if we hear from petitioners who seek to prevent the building of the memorial and learning centre within Victoria Tower Gardens, that is effectively outside of the scope of this Committee. Was that your submission? You were effectively saying we should be ignoring any petitioner who submits to us that this should not be built within Victoria Tower Gardens.

95 Mr Katkowski KC: Yes, not within the scope of this Committee ...

99 To be quite frank, there's very little in the petitions which falls within scope. ...

101 ... I would certainly regard as within scope for the Committee to consider whether the lifting of the restrictions which the Bill seeks to secure should apply, once the memorial and learning centre are built, across the entire gardens or whether they should be in some way territorially restricted so that the lifting of these restrictions only applies to the memorial and learning centre as in this eventuality would have been built in the gardens.

102 So, query, is there some way in which, territorially, the extent of what this Bill seeks to achieve should be drawn in, if you like. ...

103 ... The construction period is more difficult because the truth of the matter is that we will need most of the gardens, over time different parts of the gardens, to build the project. And so although in principle the idea of saying, 'Well, could you have a territorial restriction on the lifting of the 1900 Act's obstacle? Could you have a territorial restriction on the extent of that during the construction period?', in principle you could ... but we will need, as I'm instructed, over time to use all sorts of different parts of the gardens to construct this project. So it would be very, very difficult, as far as we would see it, to map out the gardens during construction and say, 'Well, the lifting of the restrictions during construction applies to nine-tenths of the gardens but not that tenth'.

104 Once the project is built – assuming it's permitted, assuming the Secretary of State goes ahead with it, etc. – I can certainly see a way in which one could map out a territorial restriction on the lifting of the 1900 Act so that it fitted with the project itself and didn't impinge upon the rest of the gardens. ...

106 The second thing which is potentially in scope is temporal ... I'll break this down into two steps.

107 ... planning permissions come with restrictions on them, so they don't just sit there forever. You have to get on and start your project within a certain period of time and that's all controlled through the planning legislation and the planning permission.

108 And on the face of it ... one could certainly imagine as a matter of logic saying, if the Secretary of State continues with this particular memorial and learning centre and that memorial and learning centre is granted planning permission, at least in principle we could see how you could say, 'Well, the Bill's restrictions are going to be lifted for a certain period of time, a number of years, to allow you to get underway with this project, and if you don't get underway with the project within that period of time then the 1900 Act restrictions come back into place'. ...

119 Keir Mather (Labour): ... I appreciate your comments about not hearing aspects of petitioners' cases which lie outside of the instruction as is contained in the Bill, but we've also discussed what lies within the Bill, what lies outside of it, but also the function of a Hybrid Bill Committee, as it were, in its role to have a duty to listen to petitioners and their concerns. ...

121 I'd be interested in your perspective on a situation in which a petitioner would put forward their views, a certain percentage of them lie outside the content of the Bill and are therefore discounted, but in that space, as you were saying previously, around concessions and undertakings, it might be better to tease it out in that context rather than, in a sense, not hear it at all. ...

122 Mr Katkowski KC: ... So we're here because it's been decided the Bill's hybrid. That's to say that there are private, directly affected, specially affected, differently affected local residents and so they can make their points, whatever they might be. It's obviously for you to decide the extent to which and how you're going to go about hearing the petitioners. But I've said what I've said about scope, what's in and what's out of scope.

123 Should any petitioner who has a private, directly affected, specially affected local interest, etc., raise a point which is within scope then of course you'll consider it, and I wouldn't in any way wish to get in your way, so to speak, in you carrying out your role. ...

124 But there's obviously a difference between someone legitimately being able to say, 'Well, yes, I have this special local interest here and therefore I'm within the very reason why this Bill has been found to be a hybrid'. There's a difference between that and what that person then says. And if that person then says all sorts of points such as, 'I don't like this memorial. It's a horrible thing. It shouldn't be here. It should be somewhere else,' then I'm afraid that is not within scope. ...

139 The Chair (John Stevenson, Conservative): ... just one probably last question from me, ... Why didn't they just put on the face of the Bill the fact that it was going to be constructed in Victoria Gardens?

141 Mr Katkowski KC: ... the purpose of the Bill is to remove the obstruction to the building of the memorial and learning centre. It isn't in any way to authorise the building of the memorial and learning centre. The planning process is there to authorise or to refuse consent for the project to actually take place. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14054/html/>

Petitions Against the Bill (16 January 2024)

6 Nicholas Brown [Petitioner]: ... As a Westminster person, man and boy, I am very keen to ensure that the gardens are kept as green as possible for as long as possible. It is a beautiful place. I walked round there before I came here this afternoon and it reminds me, as I wander round there, how beautiful it is and how quiet it is. Also there is a magnificent area at the far end, the southern end, where children play. ...

7 I am also here because, as I mentioned in the petition, my grandfather was the grandson of W.H. Smith. ... W.H. Smith paid a considerable amount of money in those days to ensure that the gardens were used as gardens and kept as gardens in that way. I think it is a great shame that the Government wish to override such philanthropy ...

8 What I would like, respectfully, the Committee to do is to ... amend the Bill ... to ensure that only part of the land and the gardens are ever used by the Government ... I will come to my plan ... The 'specified land' should be sufficient to build a very nice memorial and a learning centre, which is what I am not allowed to object to – which I quite understand ...

9 ... My second point is that subsection 3 of my amendment ceases to have effect if ... the works, are not commenced by 31 January 2027. ... if planning permission is granted, if this Bill is passed without any amendments, I would like to see work started no later than 31 January 2027 and I would like it completed by 31 December 2028. If for some reason it was decided not to proceed with the works ... then the land would remain protected under the London County Council (Improvements) Act 1900. ...

Mr Katkowski KC [for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities]:

18 ... [for] clarification ... I just wanted to understand the territorial restriction, the extent of the land restriction. ...

20 Would you see that applying ... to the completed project, because as you will understand during construction we will need a lot more of the gardens than on completion?

21 Nicholas Brown: I have to say, I do not know the detail of it, but ... that is quite a large area and you can get to that area quite easily from Dean Stanley Street entrance ...

30 Mr Katkowski KC: Territorial restrictions, I will call evidence about in a moment. If the Committee is interested in the notion, then in due course we can come back with an amendment and a plan. Temporal time restrictions, we would find very, very difficult for the reasons which my witness will explain shortly. ...

34 Paul Downie: ... I am a deputy director in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and I am programme director for the Holocaust memorial programme. ...

37 Paul Downie: ... we have not yet appointed the construction contractors, the people we would need to work with to build the memorial, and it would be important that we do work with them to put in place plans for construction. Until we have done that, we don't really have a high degree of expertise and knowledge of the detail of how that would be carried out. Assuming we get to that stage, which will assume we have got planning consent, we would expect planning consent to come with conditions such that we would have to agree with Westminster City Council as the planning authority a construction logistics plan. ...

38 It is worth saying that at the moment we think, because the construction involves fairly extensive excavations ... there would also need to be space for a site compound, for offices for the people working on the site, and for machinery. We do think it is likely to take up a reasonable amount of the gardens ... It is also true that the proposals involve landscaping of the whole gardens so at some stage we would expect to close off parts of the gardens, hopefully for fairly short periods of time, to relay turf, to put new paths down and to put new planting in place. ...

40 ... Ministers have previously said that the intention would be to keep reasonably large areas open as much as we can, that is safe to do and is practical. We have in mind

particularly the path that is alongside the river. We think it ought to be possible to keep that path open for much, probably not quite all, but for much of the construction period, and for some of the land at the northern end of the gardens around the Burghers of Calais, we would hope to keep that available too. ...

42 ... There is, of course, an issue which we do keep in mind, which is that we haven't got planning consent. We cannot assume that we will get planning consent; it is a separate decision that is out of our hands. If we were not able to get planning consent, we would want it at least to be open to Ministers at the time to consider whether alternative schemes could be brought forward for Victoria Tower Gardens.

43 It has, after all, been accepted even by a number of objectors that it could be an appropriate place for a memorial. If we had left restrictions in place that meant the memorial could only be built on a very specified area of the site, that would restrict the options that could then be considered. ...

44 Mr Katkowski KC: ... If the current project is granted planning permission, as matters stand at the moment, is the expectation that that is the project that would be taken forward?

45 Paul Downie: That is the expectation.

48 Mr Katkowski KC: ... The other fork in the road, of course, is that the planning consent which we seek is not granted. In those circumstances, would there be a decision letter that explains the reasons why the permission has not been granted?

49 Paul Downie: We would certainly expect that.

50 Mr Katkowski KC: ... What would be the expectation, having received such a decision, in relation to considering whether to bring forward a smaller memorial, for example, or a memorial in a different part of the gardens? ...

51 Paul Downie: We would have to go to Ministers and see how they wanted to proceed at that stage. ...

54 Mr Katkowski KC: ... Can I move to temporal restrictions, time restrictions ... We must start by a certain time; we must finish by a certain time. The other is the particular period which is referred to in the petitioner's amendment. ...

51 Paul Downie: Again, we come back to the question of planning consent. When we had planning consent in July 2021, it came with a condition that the development had to be started within three years. We would expect to get the same condition if planning consent were awarded again. ... Of course, it is the Minister's clear intention to get on with it as quickly as possible anyway. The express view has always been that we want the memorial completed as quickly as we can, particularly with a view to opening with Holocaust survivors present. ...

58 ... we expect construction to take round about three years. There would probably be an extra period for fitting-out before we could open. ... We would feel pretty uncomfortable about having a target date to complete with the risks of adding pressure on contractors to do something that might be unsafe. ...

59 Mr Katkowski KC: ... If you had built three-quarters of it, and then the restrictions come back into place, you have got a three-quarters building which is not allowed under the 1900 Act. ...

61 You will know that the petitioner has put forward 31 January 2027, you must start by, and then you must finish by 31 December 2028, which we've already said would not be long enough. Forget the actual dates, but if there were to be time restrictions would it make sense to actually nominate specific dates or not?

62 Paul Downie: I would say not, principally because we're not in control of when we might or might not get planning consent.

63 Mr Katkowski KC: Even if one does get planning permission, you've made the point about the length of time it might take the constructor to construct the project. ...

71 Nicholas Brown: ... how long would it actually take to build and construct what you

presently propose to build?

72 Paul Downie: Our current estimate is round about three years ...

73 Nicholas Brown: ... that is a very long time to keep a very nice part of green London under construction. ...

74 Paul Downie: ... It is a relatively complicated building to construct; there needs to be excavation. One point which does take up quite a lot of time is the archaeological work that we're expected to do, which involves quite a lot of careful digging by hand, to quite a depth of ground. That takes up quite a chunk of time, many months ...

75 Nicholas Brown: If you think it is going to be three years and planning permission is going to be three years, why is it not reasonable to put a deadline on this? What I, and possibly other petitioners, do not want to see is this land blighted by the ability of a Secretary of State to come forward at any time, with any planning permission, over this land. ...

77 Paul Downie: ... Ministers are absolutely firmly committed to the current proposal. There is no intention at this stage to change the proposal ...

79 Nicholas Brown: The very worst scenario from my point of view is that you get planning permission and you take three years, you build and take up quite a large part of the garden. Do you accept that the rest of the garden should maintain the restrictions?

80 Paul Downie: Yes. I can see a number of risks in terms of unintended consequences from retaining restrictions that the 1900 Act would put in place around the gardens, things like the definition of what constitutes the memorial. We know there will be a memorial, we know there will be an underground learning centre, there will be a kiosk, there will be a playground. Being absolutely precise about which parts of the new development that we put in place are covered by the Act could create complications which might lead to future challenges and difficulties.

81 That question aside, what I would say is that we intend to construct the memorial and learning centre as proposed, and that is all we intend to do. ...

82 Nicholas Brown: ... What I am suggesting is that, because of that view, there is no reason not to maintain the protection over the rest of the land, and that seems to me a simple point to concede.

83 Paul Downie: I'm nervous to concede it for you, just because of the unintended consequences point. Arguably, I would say the fact that we are not repealing section 8 of the 1900 Act shows that we accept that the restrictions – we want it to be maintained as a garden open to the public, so that is why we are not seeking to repeal the provisions of the Act. We expect the rest of Victoria Tower Gardens to remain as a garden open to the public. ...

92 Karl Turner (Labour): ... Do you anticipate any conditions on any construction contract requiring the accessibility of the public to use the park during the build? Would that be a condition of a contract you might think about adding in?

93 Paul Downie: We would certainly consider that sort of approach. We have always been clear, we want to keep as much of the park open as we can, that is safe to do so and that is consistent with it being built efficiently....

94 Karl Turner And in terms of the time that it might take to construct, would that be something you would want to add into a contract? ...

95 Paul Downie: We'll certainly set expectations about how long it would take. I would be slightly nervous about putting very firm requirements on it. ...

103 The Chair (John Stevenson, Conservative): ... how long do you think it would be after Royal Assent that you would get planning consent?

104 Paul Downie: It is very difficult to know. ...

107 The Chair: When it comes to the construction of the memorial, is it possible that you

could have an allocation of where the memorial is going to be and an allocation of land you need for the works during the construction? You would effectively be identifying two different sites.

108 Paul Downie: Yes. The difficulty with that is that we will not know that until we have the contractors in place, which we will not do before planning consent, which cannot happen before the Bill is passed. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14082/html/>

Petitions Against the Bill (17 January 2024 – morning)

4 Peter Bottomley MP [Petitioner]: ... I'm going to try to fill in some of the gaps from what we were told on the first day. The big gap was that not a word was mentioned about the September 2015 specification, and if you look up 'Holocaust Memorial Foundation specification September 2015', you'll find a document where on page 10 they say they want to have suggestions for a site in central London. ...

5 The recommendation from the commission, which preceded the establishment of the foundation, put forward three possible, not exclusively, but three possible sites for the proposed Holocaust memorial and associated learning centre. One was at Millbank, which is now the London University of the Arts; one was City Hall near Tower Bridge; and one was the Imperial War Museum. When the foundation, in effect the government agency, put out their request for suggestions for sites, the Imperial War Museum were told not to pursue their suggestion that they would be a good place to have it. The commission had already said that the Holocaust exhibition at the Imperial War Museum could be combined with what they are proposing for the learning centre.

6 Combining is a good idea, but it does not have to be confined in the smallest royal park in London. It could be combined in the Harmsworth Park, the peace park, which surrounds the Imperial War Museum, the old Bethlem Hospital. ...

7 ... when promoters say that they expect that during the construction of their proposal you will be able to walk along the path by the river, no one has been able to walk along the path by the river since April last year and the reason for that is work needs doing for the Buxton memorial, which they expect to have done by July this year and they have totally, unnecessarily, blocked off that path. If the Ministers responsible, whether it is Levelling Up or, more likely, Culture, Media and Sport, have that attitude to the users of the park, I do not think they should necessarily be trusted without assurances and commitments and conditions with what they are proposing now.

8 If you then come into the park, you will see what essentially confirms the words you will hear later, I hope, from Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, aged 98, who played in the women's orchestra at Auschwitz and survived internment at Bergen-Belsen, who said to me in autumn last year, when she came to Westminster, 'The proposal is too small for its purpose and too big for the park'.

9 We know from the Minister's words in the House of Commons that the learning centre does not have to be there. In fact, there does not have to be a learning centre. ...

10 Under the promoter's expectation, were this Bill to go through, and were the Government to maintain this proposal, there could not be an opening of a memorial before 2027, 12 years after the first proposal. And on the money, the promoters should have drawn your attention to the National Audit Office report early last year expressing doubts as to the management of the project and whether those in charge had the capability of doing it, and saying the cost had gone up from the expectation total cost of £100 million, of which over half would go on education, so that implies less than £50 million for the learning centre and the memorial. Then, on the day of the debate in the House of Commons, the Minister did not refer to the fact that she had issued a written ministerial

statement saying that the cost had gone up in the previous 12 months from £102 million to £137 million, an increase of over 33% in a year, with money they didn't have.

13 I live close by. I have been to school here. I first came to school here in 1953 and used to use the gardens. I have worked here since 1975. I am a user of the park. I have a special interest in what is happening and when we hear that over half of the park is going to be denied to the general public and to the residents locally, especially the children, whose nearest other green space is St James' Park, and if we are living south of Westminster, that is quite a long walk, especially for children. ...

14 Bluntly, if you are just going to have the memorial, you would not have this one, you would not put it on top of a box, and you would not start saying you want it open before the last Holocaust survivor has died by having a programme which is the longest possible. You would say, 'What can we do with the Imperial War Museum Holocaust memorial galleries? What can you do, for example, to ask the promoters to consider having a one-month competition for a memorial, which can be designed, approved and agreed with the local authority and local community, that can be put up within two years, for £20 million?' That's quite an extensive memorial, £20 million. ...

16 Nickie Aiken MP [Witness]: ... I am the Member of Parliament for the Cities of London and Westminster and obviously Victoria Tower Gardens is in my constituency. Before that, I was leader of Westminster City Council.

17 Peter Bottomley: Thank you. While you were leader of Westminster City Council, were you aware that the National Holocaust Commission had proposed a monument, a memorial and learning centre?

18 Nickie Aiken: Yes, I was. I had a meeting with the organisation that was proposing the application to the council, obviously as the planning authority. ...

20 ...at the time, the understanding was that Millbank Tower was going to be used as an education centre. There have always been two sides to this: there is the actual Holocaust memorial and then there is the education centre. Both have issues around them but the specific issue has always been the education centre. There are two concerns. From a planning authority side, which obviously has statutory obligations, there were concerns regarding flooding and the actual structure, and the ongoing maintenance and security of the site, but then particular residents' concerns were around the loss of the park. ...

21 I think it would be a great loss to many families, from all socioeconomic backgrounds, but particularly those from poorer households, if we lose this vital park. ...

24 Peter Bottomley: So in the last, say, three years or so, have either the foundation or the Ministers voluntarily asked you in to come to discuss the situation over their difficulties with the present proposal?

25 Nickie Aiken: No. ...

27 I think, from a statutory planning authority point of view, the biggest concern, and it was very clear from the very first submissions we had from statutory agencies who have to respond, was the Environment Agency, and I would ask the Committee to really look at the Environment Agency's initial submissions, I think in February 2019 and late August and maybe December 2019, where they made it very clear that they had serious concerns and objected to the application initially because of the flooding risk.

28 And it's not just the flooding risk for the park, which is obviously very serious, but it is also the impact it will have on this palace, which is a world heritage site ...

36 I, as the Member of Parliament representing many, many people who have written to me and spoken to me about their concerns for this Bill, is for this Bill to be not given Royal Assent or passed, is my view. I must also say I was a board member of the Royal Parks from 2017 to 2019, and there were very clear concerns from the Royal Parks about this memorial and this education centre being placed here. ...

38 Mr Katkowski KC: ...I take it from what you have just said that you are not actually on

behalf of the petitioner putting forward any specific amendment to the Bill; you are asking that it not be passed.

39 Nickie Aiken: Yes. ...

45 And I think one of the biggest issues that the Committee really needs to dig down to, I would personally ask, is the ongoing security issues. Now we are seeing issues in the Middle East, which are having a serious knock-on effect to this country, particularly in Westminster, which is obviously the heart of Government here and we do see ongoing protests. I think that we have to understand who is going to cover the cost of security. It is going to have to be 24/7. Who is going to cover the cost? How much is that cost going to be? And is it appropriate to ask the taxpayer to pay that? ...

54 Keir Mather (Labour): On this point about security, and presumably not wanting to have the Holocaust memorial in Victoria Gardens because it would be a target for antisemitism, essentially, for flare-ups in the Middle East or for whatever reason, that surely stands in contrast to the laudable actions that the Government has taken since the 7 October attacks to provide more funding for, say, the CST or for other security organisations that provide support to the Jewish community to commemorate the suffering that they have seen since 7 October.

55 The Government has been very clear that Jewish people – and other people too – should be able to reflect on what has happened since 7 October and have the protection in order to do so. Surely the argument that having the Holocaust memorial there is inappropriate because anti-Semites would seek to cause a disturbance there doesn't stack up with the Government's ambition to provide a safe and secure place for Jewish people to be able to commemorate the suffering that their community has faced. Should we not be creating this space for that to happen, irrespective of the fact that other people might seek to undermine it?

56 Nickie Aiken: I have never said we should not have a Holocaust memorial. I am a great supporter of a Holocaust memorial. I have been for the last eight or nine years. I have always said it is the wrong location for a number of reasons – flooding risk – but particularly also because it is a much-loved and much-used park and, as I said earlier, we do not have enough green space in this area, particularly for those living in social housing. ...

57 For me, it will be a flashpoint, yes, absolutely. I think there are a number of reasons, security being one of them but not the sole issue, and I absolutely welcome the Government's recent announcement on further funding for the CST. We should be doing all we can to highlight and stamp out any form of racism, but I do think this particular area, next to the palace here, which is a world heritage site and is home of Government, it is not the best place for a memorial to be.

58 I have also personally always thought the Imperial War Museum is the best place, because I have been to the Holocaust galleries. If you have not been, I would highly recommend them. They are outstanding but you come out feeling drained, feeling very emotional and I have always thought how appropriate it would be to then find somewhere quiet, with a Holocaust memorial in the gardens, where you can reflect and you can remember those who were murdered and also give thanks for those who survived those atrocities. I personally think that the Imperial War Museum has always been the best place and, initially, I know that they were keen to do it. ...

73 Philip Smith [Witness]: ... I am a great grandson of William Henry Smith, who was Member of Parliament for Westminster from 1868 until 1885 and, following the revision of the parliamentary constituency boundaries, for The Strand from 1885 until 1891. ...

75 ... when he was First Lord of the Admiralty, he donated £1,000 for the creation of a garden on the recently reclaimed land to the south of Victoria Tower for the use of the inhabitants and children, especially of Westminster. ...

79 ... at a later stage ... a scheme for the development of the adjoining land to the south by a private company was rejected by the Parliament in 1898. ... The First Commissioner of Works, who was responsible for the existing garden, stated that because of the undertakings made to William Henry Smith, he had only agreed to give up part of the further reclaimed land on the condition that the land between the relocated Millbank and the river should be laid out and maintained for use as a garden open to the public and as an integral part of the existing Victoria Tower Garden. ...

83 Peter Bottomley: Do you think many people, like William Henry Smith, would feel less confident in making similar large donations if they thought Parliament would unnecessarily overrule their wishes?

84 Philip Smith: The answer to that is certainly yes. It would set an unfortunate precedent. ...

94 Peter Bottomley: ... if this Bill goes ahead, would you like to see the memorial separated from the learning box so that the damage to the gardens was minimised?

95 Philip Smith: Well, I think that that is what you might call a least-worst case. ...

100 Louise Hyams [Witness]: ... I am the ward member for St James' ward, which includes the area that we are talking about, and I have been since 1998. So I am a councillor in the City of Westminster.

106 ... I would like to say initially that I am Jewish. I was delighted to hear that the Government were proposing a Holocaust memorial. I have been to many around the world. I always make a point of visiting them in cities that have them. I went to an exhibition at Number 10 Downing Street when the final 10 proposals had been decided and it was an open exhibition at that time. I must admit I did not particularly like the design that was finally chosen. I thought there were others that were smaller but a lot more poignant than this one, but on the actual concept of having a Holocaust memorial in London, I cannot tell you how delighted I am that that has been proposed and I do hope to see one, and I hope to see one very soon.

107 I think one of my largest regrets over the whole matter has been the length of time this is taking. Had the memorial trust listened to the objections to using this park and chosen the preferred location in the Imperial War Museum, we would have had a memorial built now so that the last survivors would have had a chance to see such a memorial. ...

110 Peter Bottomley: ... can you confirm that Government was standing by for Westminster to consider the planning application and then shortly before Westminster would have come to a decision on the evidence, it was taken away from Westminster without Westminster being asked?

111 Cllr Hyams: Absolutely, it came as a great shock. ...

112 In the event, the council decided that although the decision would not matter in the long term, they would still have the planning committee and it was extremely well attended and lots of people spoke very eloquently ... Everybody has said they are not against the principle of a Holocaust memorial. I have not encountered anybody that has said that to me on the council, local residents, nobody, but it was just the location. ...

116 ... when the planning committee did meet to consider the application, it was unanimously rejected on the grounds of size, location, the flooding, the traffic issues, security of the park ...

118 ... I think it was too large, too imposing. It did not really, I think, get over the message that a Holocaust memorial should. I think anybody going to the park would not know it was a Holocaust memorial unless they actually read a script about it. Some of the other memorials I have seen are so poignant. There is a tree of life, which has always stuck in my mind, in a synagogue in Budapest, a beautiful steel tree with the leaves and on those leaves are inscribed the names of some of the people who were victims of the Holocaust. There is the place in Prague where they have the names of all the victims

inscribed around a memorial wall.

119 I just felt this memorial did not say what it should. I think I have seen ones that are showing book burning. There are powerful messages that could have been used for a memorial. This one, I feel, lacked that. ...

122 ... I cannot express strongly enough how much I would like to see a Holocaust memorial, especially in this day and age, as we have heard. Antisemitism, as we know, is on the rise and the message I want to be put over very well is, 'Lest we forget', and that is what the memorial would indicate and that is the message I want to be here in this country where we are seeing antisemitism. It is not something that happened to other people across the water; it happens here too. ...

147 Peter Bottomley: And if the Bill came out with an amendment that required the learning centre to be put aside for the time being and the Government or the promoters would say, 'We'll go to a competition to have a standalone memorial', which could be close to the Palace of Westminster ... that is the kind of condition, amendment or assurance you would seek from the promoters.

148 Cllr Hyams: I would, yes. ...

155 Professor Stevenson [Witness]: ... My name is Christine Stevenson and until I retired a year ago, I taught at the Courtauld Institute of Art, which is part of London University, and I am interested in Holocaust memorials and I have some expertise in the subject. ...

157 I thought it might be useful for the Committee to understand the existing Holocaust memorial in London. It might leave the impression that Britain's concern with the Holocaust is a minority or peripheral interest and that would not be right, because at least since the Stockholm declaration of 2000, which established the Holocaust as a crime against civilisation and one that should be universally central to national memory, Britain has taken a leading role in Holocaust education, Holocaust studies, but the memorial is extremely unobtrusive. I think that what is happening ... is that an element of national pride is coming into play. I do not mean national pride in the sense of what Britain did, during the years of the Holocaust, in relation to Jewish refugees but simply a sense that in a single respect, a big above-ground memorial, Britain is lagging behind and it is.

158 The first memorial, what is considered the national one, is a grove of trees, birch trees in Hyde Park, surrounding big granite boulders, of which the largest has a text from *Lamentations* carved on it in English and Hebrew. The use of the natural objects by the designer, Richard Seifert, the boulders and the trees, was a very deliberate decision. The thinking was that with an event so impossibly horrible, so inexpressible, you cannot set up a conventional memorial. You cannot do a triumphal arch; you cannot do a man on a horse. It is a gesture towards the horror.

159 But the unobtrusiveness is also the outcome of a prevailing mood among the Board of Deputies of British Jews, who led the initiative, which at the time, the leaders within the board were of a very assimilationist temperament. Jews were not to be seen as particular but merely as a grouping that would assimilate very easily into British society. They did not want something huge but they did want something very central and what was proposed was Whitehall or the little garden by the Jewel Tower, opposite the Victoria Tower, but the Secretary of State for Culture, Michael Heseltine, was very worried that such siting would attract anti-semitist desecrations or self-declared anti-Zionist desecrations at a time when there was ongoing war in the Middle East.

160 A lot has changed in 40 years and I think the emphasis in all the discussions about the new memorial ... that it must be bold, it must be ... striking, it must be prominent, all of this is in implicit contrast to the grove of trees ...

167 Peter Bottomley: If the promoters were to say, 'We'd like to have a memorial by itself', ... close to the Palace of Westminster ... do you think that they could quite quickly have a

competition for a design for a memorial by itself, rather than with a box of a learning centre underneath it?

168 Professor Stevenson: Yes. This is done all the time. As you probably know, there are hundreds of Holocaust memorials in the world – there is a list in Wikipedia – that are not attached to learning centres. The idea of attaching to a learning centre, I think, was probably inspired by the Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe, which is in Berlin, which is an extraordinary field of concrete stelae of varying heights so you look across it and it seems to be rippling. It is attached to an extraordinarily comprehensive learning centre that is underground, underneath this field of stone. But in both Ottawa and Berlin, there was a lot of land available. ...

171 But the physical joining is by no means essential for a successful monument, by which I mean a monument that does make a successful intervention into a public space, that does encourage people to reflect, that even gives people a kind of melancholy pleasure. ...

172 Peter Bottomley: The original specification, Mr Chairman, was to have an area between 5,000 square metres and 10,000 square metres. What is being proposed is less than 4,000 square metres. The original proposal said that there should be all the organisations associated with the Holocaust having, in effect, a campus there. That has been dropped. To what extent do you think the requirements of the Holocaust memorial are being met by the present proposals?

173 Professor Stevenson: I am not a specialist in Holocaust education ... but I think what is being proposed, instead of a centre for research, for discussion, for teaching, as a node for a digital programme that would encompass all these initiatives, for example by the Association of Jewish Refugees, which has done a fantastic map of all the sites in the country, what we are going to get are screens. And increasingly, every visitor who goes there has grown up with screens. The content may be absolutely excellent but the format, the medium of the message, is going to be so conventional, I think, as to slide off.

174 I have taken students to the Holocaust Museum. The encounter with real objects makes an enormous difference ...

180 Mr Katkowski KC: ...The Bill seeks to do something, which is to remove a restriction from Victoria Tower Gardens on building a memorial to the Holocaust and a learning centre. ... What are you asking the Committee to do in relation to that?

185 Professor Stevenson: I would strike the second part.

186 Mr Katkowski KC: Clause 2?

187 Professor Stevenson: Yes ... I have absolutely no objection to a new Holocaust monument but I think that the compromises that this very restricted site, which came along quite late in the process, after it had been decided that the monument must be enormous, after it had been decided that there must be a learning centre, then came relatively small Victoria Tower Gardens and everything has been so badly compromised. ...

201 Keir Mather: ... do you feel that there is any difficulty in the fact that you are asking the Committee, as sort of an assembly of policy makers, to make a decision about whether to strike through part of the Bill as to the memorial's location that is based on considerations about the design of the memorial and the sense that it creates for those who engage with it? Those principles are fundamentally contested and objective for each individual who considers them and, in a sense, could it not be said that where considering a matter of distinct policy as to a location, are these two things not in conflict when we are considering abstract matters to justify what is, in effect, a matter of practical policy?

202 Professor Stevenson: Yes. I think that is an extremely good point. They are in conflict. ...

209 Dorian Gerhold [Witness]: ... I was a House of Commons Clerk for 33 years, up to

2012, latterly as secretary of the House of Commons Commission. I am now an independent historian. I am a fellow of the Royal Historical Society and the Society of Antiquaries. I was the person who identified the 1900 Act as the reason why building the memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens would –

210 The Chair: That is why we are all here today.

211 Dorian Gerhold: Exactly ... I am not questioning the need for the memorial and learning centre, only the location. ...

219 The way that the gardens came into existence led fairly directly to the provisions in the 1900 Act, which require the southern part to be maintained as a public open space. ... The 1867 Act said nothing about how the land was to be used and it lay empty for years. Eventually, in 1879, WH Smith offered £1,000 for laying it out as a public open space, as you've just heard, and the remaining £1,400 needed for that was voted by Parliament. Crucially, Smith asked for and received from the Government, a promise to maintain the new public space as a recreation ground. ...

223 So section 8 of the 1900 Act was the result of the Government honouring the promise made to WH Smith. ...

230 So the land which the Government now seeks to build on was not paid for by the Government but came into its hands only because of an agreement that it should remain a public open space and not be built on and, therefore, building on it now would be a breach of trust. The 1900 Act is not a random legislative obstacle which happens to have popped up in the path of the memorial and learning centre but was passed by Parliament to prevent exactly the sort of, I would say, casual destruction of an open space that the Government is proposing. ...

232 The first peculiarity was the compressed timescale in January 2016. ... The criteria for the site of the memorial and learning centre were set out by the foundation in September 2015 ... Proximity to Parliament was not a criterion at all ... There was a professional review of potential sites ... which reported to the foundation on 11 January 2016. On 13 January ... the foundation's board received for the first time both CBRE's recommendations and the proposal to use Victoria Tower Gardens. The gardens had not been considered by the CBRE but had been looked at separately and informally by government officials and two of the board's members. At the same meeting, without any further investigation, the board rejected CBRE's proposals and agreed to recommend Victoria Tower Gardens to the Government. Years later, we learnt from a PQ answer that the recommendation had been in principle only, yet just 14 days later on 27 January the then Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the memorial would be in Victoria Tower Gardens, committing the Government to that site.

233 The Prime Minister's announcement referred only to the memorial. The September 2015 criteria had provided for the memorial and learning centre to be co-located or 'close at hand'. ...

234 The obvious consequence of the compressed timescale is that no due diligence was done before the Government committed itself to the Victoria Tower Gardens site. ...

235 The second peculiarity is that there is almost no audit trail for the decision making ...

238 The third peculiarity followed from the fact that the Victoria Tower Gardens site could not get anywhere near meeting the specifications set out in September 2015 either in terms of floor area or facilities. Evidently, therefore, the criteria were changed in January 2016, either implicitly or deliberately, so that only proximity to Parliament mattered. ...

239 The fourth peculiarity is that there seems to have been no consideration of the cost of an underground learning centre. ...

240 ... I would suggest that the Committee could give the Government to do that rethinking by amending clause 2 of the Bill ... so that it covers just the memorial and not the learning centre. ...

247 Peter Bottomley: On education, and I ought to say in parenthesis that, since the

proposal came forward from the Holocaust Commission in January 2015, I now know that it is not 10 of my grandfather's extended family who died in the Holocaust; it is over 120. So that education has mattered to me and it is one of the reasons why I feel strongly that, as the Government has said, more than half the money that is available should be spent on education rather than building and boxes and the like. ...

260 Mr Katkowski KC: ... it is for the Committee to consider whatever they want to consider. But the instruction that came after the Minister's statement is very clear. The Committee is not to consider whether there should or should not be a centre for learning in Victoria Tower Gardens. ... What you are seeking would run flat contrary to the instruction given by the House to this Committee, would it not? ...

263 Dorian Gerhold: ... I do not accept that.

264 Mr Katkowski KC: It obviously would ...

265 Dorian Gerhold: ... I agree that is what the words say, but they were interpreted by the Minister, and that is the basis on which the House approved the instruction. ...

286 Mr Katkowski KC: ... the only specific idea that we have had is the one from Mr Gerhold just now, which is that one should leave in place the 1900 Act's restriction on the building of a learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens. That is patently flat contrary to the instruction. It is not a matter, with great respect, for this Committee and I therefore say that there is nothing for us, that is to say the promotor, to respond to and certainly no need for us to call evidence. ...

290 Keir Mather: ... I am sure the whole House would be up in arms were the recent march against antisemitism, which went down Whitehall and was in a place of prominence, if people had said that it should not happen because the security focus would be too great and it would be a potential flashpoint. Would that argument not apply to a Holocaust memorial that was in a place of national prominence, such as Victoria Tower Gardens, in your view?

291 Peter Bottomley: ... It is an interesting question. My answer would be, can you try to have both the learning and education effect which the promoters are after, and have a memorial which would be prominent, noticeable and accessible? If it is not accessible unless you have gone through scanners in a park which is supposed to be walk in/walk out – and I also remind myself that the original proposal was for people to be able to come to the memorial without booking and appreciate it, go into the learning centre, as they can, for example, to the Holocaust galleries at the Imperial War Museum, which is less than a mile away from here – I would think that is a distinction from saying protests bring risks and restrictions. I believe that, were this to happen here, even without the present consequences of the ghastly attack of 7 October and the consequences of the actions in Gaza, which presumably the attackers on 7 October intended to induce, that is different. I think that, even without those, within months people would start saying, 'You can't do it'. ...

293 But if you deliberately try to gather people together where a lot of them will be Jewish and someone wants to make a demonstration, what is to stop someone just taking an explosive device and dropping it from around the Buxton Memorial into the gathering place by the learning centre? We do not have that kind of risk at present with the Holocaust galleries in the Imperial War Museum. We would not have that kind of risk if you had a walk-up memorial which was noticeable and people could come to it, even if they did not intend to see it, and then learn from seeing the memorial. ...

294 Keir Mather: ... I think one of the criticisms that you outlined of the existing project as it stands is that it will not be open until 2027, at which point it is questionable how many Holocaust survivors would be able to attend its opening. If there were to be a decision where it would be built, say, at the Imperial War Museum and that restarted what we know from the previous process has been quite a drawn-out planning procedure that has taken multiple years, does that not compound the problem in your view in terms of the timing? ...

295 Peter Bottomley: ... Government allowed a month for suggestions of sites and we have heard from Dorian Gerhold that by 11 January 2016 CBRE had come to their shortlist out of 24 and suggested three. ... So you could probably do that within four months. If you were going for a standalone memorial ... you could probably get it chosen in competition within the next two months. It would probably take, assuming you are going to involve metal in it, about eight months to a year to do the modelling and the casting. And then it would take about a month to install.

296 So within two years, and I put the suggestion of whole cost of less than £20 million, you could have an opening and there could be Holocaust survivors present. You then start saying, or you might say, I would say, 'What about the learning campus? What about the learning facilities?' Well, first of all I would look and see what the Imperial War Museum has done in updating their Holocaust galleries and their extension work, which is similar to much of what was proposed by the Holocaust Commission and supported by the Holocaust Foundation, and by Government and by me. And you could then say, 'What else do you need? Can you then go back to having a campus? Can you bring some of the Holocaust organisations together so they can work together and interact both nationally and internationally?' ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14088/html/>

Petitions Against the Bill (17 January 2024 – afternoon)

309 Lord Blencathra [Petitioner]: ... I have lived in the area for almost 30 years. ... I detour through the gardens every day in my wheelchair en route to Parliament, that is every day when the House is sitting, because I find it much more pleasant than using Millbank.

310 ... I am a member of the Conservative Friends of Israel and the Transatlantic Friends of Israel. In my capacity as a member of the Council of Europe, I have made speeches in Strasbourg on the evils of antisemitism. Mr Chairman, I have made that second declaration because I do not want anyone to misconstrue my opposition to this particular development as any opposition to education or commemoration of the Holocaust. I totally support the need for some sort of appropriate monument and learning about the Holocaust but I submit that the planned proposals for Victoria Tower Gardens will fail abysmally.

311 ... I approve of expenditure on a monument and a learning centre on the Holocaust. Indeed, I shall propose greater expenditure on learning about the evils of the Holocaust and the greatly increased Jewish hate we have seen in recent months. Never before has education about the eradication of six million Jews been more essential, as we see frightening calls for a new Holocaust in our streets now.

312 ... for teenagers, Instagram gives them 29% of their news, TikTok 28% and YouTube 28%, and they are way ahead of the BBC, ITV and the standard terrestrial channels.

314 Oxford analysis, reveals that up to half of Holocaust-related content on Telegram denies or distorts the facts, and distortion and Holocaust denial are prevalent on all social media platforms ...

315 ... they analysed 4,000 posts related to the Holocaust on five major platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok and Twitter.

316 ... On Telegram, there was 50% distortion and denial of the Holocaust in English messages; on Twitter, 19% distortion and denial; TikTok 17%; Facebook 8%; Instagram 3%. And many of them were antisemitic as well. ...

318 ... this is just one I found. ... They are suggesting that the Jews launched the missile attack that attacked the United States warship and the Jews were the ones who actually knocked down the twin towers ...

319 ... United Nations Secretary General, commenting on the report ... said, 'Antisemitism

and Holocaust denial and distortion and other forms of religious bigotry are a seismograph. The more they rattle our world, the greater the cracks to the foundations of our common humanity' And he says, 'The cracks are now impossible to ignore. It is a wake-up call to jolt us into action to pursue truth, remembrance and education and together build a world of peace, dignity and justice for all'....

320 Now even up to six months ago, I thought that education on the Holocaust of 80 years ago was all we needed to do, tell them about the historical facts. But now we see hundreds of thousands of people on our streets calling for a new Holocaust and the destruction of Israel and the extermination of the Jews. Now, colleagues, I have not tried to do the sums on those last few slides but, if you recall, we have got millions of teenagers getting their news and views from social media platforms and those platforms have an average of about 20% Holocaust denial and distortion. Therefore, putting that together, we should not be surprised at the current levels of Jewish hate, which young people are getting from these sources. ...

321 ... in 2019, the BBC published a poll themselves of more than 2,000 people, which was carried out by OpinionMatters for the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust. Slide 9, please. This is what they said. 'Holocaust Memorial Day', says the BBC, 'shocking levels of denial remain'.

322 ... 5% of UK adults – the 45 million is the UK adults – do not believe the Holocaust took place and one in 12 believe the scale has been exaggerated, the survey found. So 45% of those polled said they did not know how many people were killed in the Holocaust. That is, 20 million people in this country did not know the 6 million. 19% believe that fewer than 2 million Jews were murdered and 5% believe there was no Holocaust at all. That is, 2.2 million of our people did not believe there was a Holocaust at all. Therefore, colleagues, I conclude that a centre for learning is absolutely essential, but what and where should it be?

323 Now, I can understand way back in 2015, eminent members of the Committee believed that only a physical building could undertake the learning role. However, in my opinion, that is an irrelevant old-fashioned concept, which will fail its objective of teaching young people about the Holocaust. ... Learning things visually from computers and iPads is a whole new way of education and if we are to make any impact on anti-Jewish hatred then we have got to fight back using the same technology that is spawning this evil.

324 There are already five excellent museums in the UK of which I am aware. The prime one is the Imperial War Museum ...

327 ... they have got some physical things and ... if you have got physical things, you need a museum. If you have not got physical things, there is not any point in taking people to a museum to see the same photographs and the same video as before. I understand that the proposed bunker under Victoria Tower Gardens will just have copies of the same posters and same videos. ... why would the kids want to visit a building to see the same things they can get better on their mobile phones and iPads?...

328 Then, colleagues, we come to the numbers of young people we could possibly influence in a physical learning centre. ... There are approximately 12 million schoolchildren aged from five to 18 in the UK at any one time. Now, if each child was to make one visit to London or to the learning centre, once in their school life, that is 1 million children per annum.

329 ... let us even say now that our learning centre here is getting 100,000 kids per annum. That is only 8% of all children in the UK who would need to visit the learning centre to learn and, of course, statistics suggestion that children closer to London are more likely to make the journey to London. The 50 children I met outside the Imperial War Museum this morning were from reasonably close to London ... So a physical centre in London will not reach over 90% of the school kids we need to get at. ...

331 So I suggest, colleagues, that an old-fashioned physical building will fail and the proposed underground learning centre will not be high on the list of things that children will

want to visit. Nor should something as horrendous as a Holocaust be part of the fun visits to tourist sites. ... I think it is quite wrong in concept and some schools in places in the UK – I say this carefully – where the Jewish hatred may be greatest may never visit the museum for various reasons. Therefore I submit that only virtual and online education can get the message across to millions of children, rather than just tens of thousands and I cannot see this underground learning centre do it. ...

332 ... That is why, colleagues, I would like to propose an amendment to the Bill: to increase funding to £20 million per annum, index-linked, for online education about the Holocaust. ...

333 ... So the question is, is an online centre within the scope of the Bill? Now, the Bill does not state that the centre for learning has to be physically attached to the monument or adjacent to it. Nor does it actually stipulate that it has to be a physical building. ... The only requirement is that it has to be related to the monument ...

334 The Bill would permit a building to be constructed anywhere in England and Wales to house an online team of experts who would be able to issue Holocaust learning to everyone in the UK, 24 hours a day, and update it daily as new lies emerge, which needed to be rebutted. ...

338 ... 6 million Jews exterminated. We have got over 2 million people in this country believing it never happened. 8 million believe that only 2 million were murdered. So any physical memorial needs to represent that 6 million figure, time and time again, and not some obscure number no one else has heard of. So 6 million Jews exterminated must be the message. ...

339 I do worry that people and children who have not read about the Holocaust, or those who have learned lies from social media, will come away from this proposed exhibition with the wrong impression. No doubt, downstairs will mention the 6 million in the underground exhibition, but the one thing that will hit them in the eyes when they get there are the giant fins. You know better than I what children are like. That's where they will take their selfies. The Berlin Holocaust Memorial black slabs are being used by tourists for sunbathing and picnicking. Some tourists are even posing for selfies under the Auschwitz gates. ...

342 What I am suggesting is that the monument is in the wrong place for political impact. I pop through these gardens every single day – twice a day actually, going home as well – and I very rarely see an MP being interviewed there, very rarely, because it is all done on the green and no Ministers ever go through there. A memorial should be in the right place in Westminster, right in the faces of senior Government Ministers. ...

343 ... We do not have the Cenotaph stuck in a back garden. The Holocaust memorial should be in the same category. ...

347 All of us in this Parliament, you particularly in the Commons and those of us in the other House, have a pressing duty to get this right. It was British soldiers who found and liberated Belsen and here is the sign they erected and it is quite horrifying. '10,000 unburied dead. Another 15,000 have since died'.

348 A prophetic message from a military observer. 'Why did I visit Belsen? Given the opportunity, I went, because I know that in a few years' times only, clever people will say, "Nonsense. Don't you realise that was just wartime propaganda?" I shall know how to reply and the more who do, the better for the peace of the world'.

349 This is the result of hatred of Jews in 1945. ...

350 ... This is the hatred of Jews we saw in December '23. What will we do to stop it now? A photo of the Jews being pushed into the sea. ... My proposal would tackle both the original Holocaust and the calls for a new one. ...

367 Lord Carlile of Berriew [Witness]: ... I would like to cite three credentials for being here as petitioner. First, I have an intense personal interest in this subject. My own parents were Holocaust survivors, as was my sister. My mother, Frederika Katzner, was

in Poland throughout World War II as a young Jewess and she witnessed first-hand the horrors of the Holocaust. Her first husband, Alfred Susswein, a young neurologist, died in 1944 at the end of a Nazi gun in front of her very eyes. Her brother, Karol Katzner, another young doctor, was shot dead in the centre of Warsaw, after being stopped by a German patrol in the city centre and after he was told to lower his trousers so that they could check that he was a Jew. My father, another doctor, was in the UK by 1940 but his first wife, his parents, his sister, his cousins and all the rest of my paternal relatives, perished, his wife in Auschwitz Birkenau after spending four years there. Their child, Renata, survived and she is my beloved sister, really my half-sister, whose graphic and riveting book about her horrific wartime experiences as a hidden Jewish child was published by the Bloomsbury publishing house in 2014.

368 As an individual therefore, I strongly support the creation of a Holocaust memorial – and I emphasise a physical memorial – and educational centre, which would be both physical and online. Its objectives should be to remember, to educate and to warn of the dangers and horrors of genocide, a subject which is very topical today. ...

369 I do believe that the site in Victoria Tower Gardens is too small to achieve the objectives I have set out. I believe it has poor access and is likely to have poor facilities. I do not accept what has been suggested about the symbolism of placing it near to the Palace of Westminster in Victoria Tower Gardens as being sufficient justification ...

370 My second credential is as a lawyer. ... I do consider and submit that there are public policy issues, which are not planning issues, which make the site unsuitable for what I suggest are overarching non-planning law reasons. ...

371 My third credential, and it is probably the most important for this purpose, is as a person reasonably expert in national security matters. ...

373 I believe ... that the site proposed presents a very real terrorism risk. If I am right about that then that will affect the way in which my extensively murdered family is given accountability and respect, and other families like mine, of which there are a great many. I suggest that recent events in Israel-Palestine cannot be ignored. They have heightened the danger of action against perceived Jewish interests in London and sadly may have diluted public support – I do not believe it has been measured – for having such a memorial and centre so close to the Palace of Westminster.

374 Two illustrations, one big, one tiny, seem to me to illustrate this. The recent terrorism arrests associated with the stock exchange, provide an example of the changing landscape of London terrorism ... And a very small thing, this morning, as I was walking to a meeting, I crossed Bridge Street from the palace side to the Whitehall side and I noticed that the parliamentary gift shop ... has now had all its windows shuttered, apart from the doorway, and I am absolutely certain that that will have been on the basis of advice that they should protect themselves from demonstrators and from others who might be malignly concerned about Parliament and about all things connected with the Holocaust as well. ...

377 ... I believe that all those entering and leaving Victoria Tower Gardens from the opening of the centre, or very soon thereafter, maybe even during its building, would have to be subjected to electronic and intrusive personal searches. Indeed, security reasons include vulnerability to attack from the River Thames. That may require the whole of Victoria Gardens to be treated as a high-level security risk, if this centre is built, and this is inimical, in my view, to the purposes and the ambience of such a memorial and also to the other uses of Victoria Tower Gardens as a public park. ...

379 ... in my judgment, there is a real and present and serious prospect that that the site would be regarded as iconic and as tempting by both Islamist and right-wing extremists, given its proximity to this palace and to the lack of any secure or meaningful perimeter and its close proximity both to busy public highways and the river. ...

382 The remembrance provided by such a centre should be spacious enough to contain and embrace personal histories, an extensive and accessible online library and physical

library of those who survived and settled in the UK and our families and to examine the history of the Holocaust in a robust and determined way. The warning aspect should provide sufficient physical capacity to depict and analyse the contemporary sources that describe what was happening in the Holocaust. This would require an exhibition area of some scale and also a cinema-type space ... And the education aspect should be big enough to include the opportunity for on-site study from school to doctorate level, hopefully to be supported by on-site academic staff with adequate teaching and seminar facilities.

383 To achieve all this, in my view, what is required is a spacious site, accessible from central London but not in an already security sensitive position. As examples, plainly one would cite Yad Vashem. Anyone who has been to Yad Vashem knows what a Holocaust memorial can be and one thing Yad Vashem is not is small. ...

387 If I were asked whether I would wish to amend the Bill and, if so, what amendment I would seek ... I would look for an amendment to the effect that there should, before the Bill is passed, if it is to be passed, be a full security review and report by the Intelligence and Security Committee, which should be debated by both Houses of Parliament so that I, as a member, and others, could be satisfied, if so satisfied, that there had been a full use of research, up to date, on the security issues, which I have raised before you. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14089/html/>

Trades Union Congress (TUC)

Holocaust Memorial Day 2024

Freedom is fragile, and we must not take it for granted. That is [the theme of this year's Holocaust Memorial Day](#), marked on 27 January.

Holocaust Memorial Day is a time to remember the millions murdered during the Holocaust, under Nazi persecution, and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

We must all commit ourselves to learn the lessons of the past and build a safer future for everyone.

Just over ninety years ago, in 1933, the Nazis banned free trade unions. In doing so, they removed a bastion of democracy and opposition to totalitarianism that stood in their way. And this helped enable murder on a scale never seen before – the Holocaust, which culminated in the murder of six million Jewish men, women and children by the Nazis and their collaborators.

We encourage every trade unionist to mark Holocaust Memorial Day – at home, in workplaces and union branches, and in their communities.

This year, everyone is invited to take part in the national moment, [Light the Darkness](#). At 8pm on 27 January people across the UK will safely light candles in their windows, to remember those who were murdered for who they were, and stand against prejudice and hatred today.

Across the country, iconic buildings and landmarks will light up purple during this powerful national moment of commemoration and solidarity. As part of this, the TUC will light up Jacob Epstein's powerful sculpture at the home of the trade union movement, Congress House. ...

This Holocaust Memorial Day, we can all reflect on how freedom is fragile. As we come together as trade unionists and in our communities, let's pledge not to take our freedoms for granted, and consider what we can do to strengthen freedom around the world.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/blogs/holocaust-memorial-day-2024>

TOP

Israel

See also the Commons debate “Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism” and Lords debate “Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscribed Organisations) (Amendment) Order 2024”, and the Home Office press release “Hizb ut-Tahrir proscribed as terrorist organisation” that are included in the Home Affairs section above, and the two Holocaust Memorial Bill Committee evidence sessions of 17 January that are included in the Holocaust section above.

House of Commons Oral Answers

Business of the House

col 1021 ... **The Leader of the House of Commons (Penny Mordaunt):** ... I also thank the families of those held hostage by Hamas for again coming to Parliament this week to talk about their loved ones. We will all keep them at the forefront of our minds and do all we can to bring them home. I remind the House that Kfir Bibas turns one today in captivity. ...

col 1033 **Debbie Abrahams (Labour):** ... My constituent’s partner has been awaiting evacuation from Gaza for months now. Her partner has evidence that others in exactly the same circumstances as him are being prioritised over him. Although my office and I have been in almost daily contact with not only the Foreign Office—I thank Lord Ahmad for his support—but the Israeli and Egyptian embassies, I would be grateful if the Leader of the House could liaise with the Foreign Office and identify exactly when my constituent’s partner can be brought home.

Penny Mordaunt: I am sorry to hear about the situation with the hon. Lady’s constituent, and I thank my noble friend Lord Ahmad for the work he is doing. I know he is focused on the protection of British nationals, ensuring that people can be returned to the UK and offering them all assistance. I will certainly ensure that Ministers hear what the hon. Lady has said today. As with cases regarding hostages, I have helped facilitate some services being stepped up for Members of Parliament. I think I am perhaps not able to assist her in quite the way she wishes me to, but I will ensure that the Foreign Office has heard what she has said and, although I know that she is in contact with them already, I will raise her concerns with FCDO officials to see whether anything further can be done. I know she appreciates that these are very difficult circumstances.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-01-18/debates/E843288D-1FC0-4A61-9197-90EAD5662D92/BusinessOfTheHouse>

House of Commons Written Answers

Gaza: Israel

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [9018] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had discussions with the Israeli Ambassador on her comments during a radio interview with LBC regarding the extent of the Israeli operation in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: We continue to engage closely and regularly with a range of senior Israeli officials. We continue to call for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to be respected and civilians to be protected. There must be a reduction in civilian casualties. Israel must act within IHL and we want to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-10/9018>

The interview referred to above can be heard at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKwDJP9nka0>

Gaza: Israel

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [9017] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the South African application to the International Court of Justice on Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: In terms of the situation in Gaza, we recognise that Israel has the right to defend itself against Hamas, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). We do not believe that calling this genocide is the right approach. It is wrong to suggest that Israeli leadership, and Israel as a country, have the intention to commit genocide

Ultimately, it is for the courts to decide on matters of genocide, not for states. We respect the role and independence of the International Court of Justice.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-10/9017>

Information about the ICJ case referred to above can be read at
<https://www.icj-cij.org/case/192>

South Africa's presentation of its case can be watched at
<https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k11/k11qf661b3>

and Israel's presentation of its case can be watched at
<https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1c/k1c10lsjq>

Israel: Gaza

Marsha De Cordova (Labour) [9630] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential merits of supporting the case brought against Israel by South Africa at the International Court of Justice.

Andrew Mitchell: This development is unhelpful and we do not support it. We recognise that Israel has the right to defend itself against Hamas, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. We do not believe that calling this genocide is the right approach. It is wrong to say that Israeli leadership, and Israel as a country, have the intention to commit genocide. Ultimately, it is for courts to decide on matters of genocide, not for states. We of course respect the role and independence of the International Court of Justice.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-15/9630>

Information about the ICJ case referred to above can be read at
<https://www.icj-cij.org/case/192>

South Africa's presentation of its case can be watched at
<https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k11/k11qf661b3>

and Israel's presentation of its case can be watched at
<https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1c/k1c10lsjq>

Israel: Gaza

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [9945] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 16 January 2024 to Question 8588 on Israel: Gaza, what assessment he has made of the relevance to the case brought against Israel at the International Court of Justice by the Republic of South Africa of the speech by the Israeli Prime Minister on 28 October 2023.

Andrew Mitchell: Our position on this is clear: Israel has the right to defend itself

against Hamas, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law. We do not believe that calling this genocide is the right approach. It is wrong to suggest that Israeli leadership, and Israel as a country, have the intention to commit genocide. Ultimately, it is for the courts to decide on matters of genocide, not for states. We respect the role and independence of the ICJ.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-16/9945>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-08/8588>

The Israeli Prime Minister's speech referred to above can be read (in translation) at

<https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/statement-by-pm-netanyahu-28-oct-2023>

Information about the ICJ case referred to above can be read at

<https://www.icj-cij.org/case/192>

South Africa's presentation of its case can be watched at

<https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k11/k11qf661b3>

and Israel's presentation of its case can be watched at

<https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1c/k1c10lsjoq>

Israel: Gaza

Kenny MacAskill (Alba) [9946] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 16 January 2024 to Question 8588 on Israel: Gaza, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the speech by the Israeli Prime Minister on 28 October 2023.

Andrew Mitchell: We recognise Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas, but we have been clear that there must be a reduction in civilian casualties. Israel must act within International Humanitarian Law and we want to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-16/9946>

The Israeli Prime Minister's speech referred to above can be read (in translation) at

<https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/statement-by-pm-netanyahu-28-oct-2023>

Israel: Gaza

Andy McDonald (Independent) [8442] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of the comments on imposing a complete siege on Gaza by Israeli Defence Minister on 9 October 2023.

Andrew Mitchell: We support Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas, but it must comply with International Humanitarian Law and there must be a reduction in civilian casualties. We want to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes. There is a desperate need for increased humanitarian support to Gaza. The UK trebled our aid commitment this financial year and is doing everything it can to get more aid in and open more crossings. Israel must now take steps, working with other partners including the UN and Egypt, to significantly increase the flow of aid into Gaza including allowing prolonged humanitarian pauses, opening more routes into Gaza and restoring and sustaining water, fuel and electricity.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-08/8442>

The Israeli Defence Minister's comment referred to above can be listened to at

<https://twitter.com/yoavgallant/status/1711335592942875097>

Gaza: Israel

Claudia Webbe (Independent) [7723] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that individuals are held to account for alleged human rights violations in the conflict in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: Israel has endured the worst terrorist attack in its history at the hands of Hamas. We support Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas, but it must comply with International Humanitarian Law.

We continue to closely monitor the situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including with reference to alleged violations of human rights in Gaza.

In Israel's case, in the first instance, the UK Government would expect the Israeli domestic legal system to investigate and, where appropriate, take action against those accused of human rights violations and abuses, including members of Hamas.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-12-19/7723>

Gaza: Israel

Mark Logan (Conservative) [7438] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether the Government is taking steps to assess the level of compliance with international humanitarian law of Israel's recent actions in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: Israel has endured the worst terrorist attack in its history at the hands of Hamas. We support Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas, but it must comply with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). We keep under continuous review whether they are abiding by their obligations. We continue to call for IHL to be respected and civilians to be protected.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-12-18/7438>

Gaza: Israel

Andrew Selous (Conservative) [8691] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what information his Department holds on (a) the raid by Israel Defence Forces on the premises of Action around Bethlehem Children with Disability in Gaza on 3 January 2024 and (b) the destruction of paperwork and the removal of children's clothing; and whether he has held discussions with his Israeli counterpart on this matter.

Andrew Mitchell: We are aware of these reports. We continue to stress the importance of the Israeli security forces providing appropriate protection to the Palestinian civilian population, in particular the need to protect children. In our dialogue with the Israeli authorities we have recognised their legitimate need to deploy security measures. However, we encourage them to deploy these in a way which minimises tension. In instances where there have been accusations of excessive use of force, we have advocated swift, transparent investigations.

We continue to call for international humanitarian law to be respected and civilians to be protected. Too many civilians have been killed and we want to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes. We regularly raise the issue with the Israeli authorities, including encouraging transparent investigations into whether use of live fire had been appropriate and to use restraint in deploying live fire.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-09/8691>

Gaza: Food Supply

Dan Carden (Labour) [8102] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, with reference to the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Report on Gaza, published 21 December 2023, what assessment he has made of (a) the risk of famine in

that region and (b) the potential implications for his policies.

Andrew Mitchell: According to the World Food Programme (WFP), nine out of every 10 Palestinians in northern Gaza may be eating less than one meal a day. The situation is desperate - and projected to get worse. What matters is simple: more aid delivered by land, more quickly and more effectively. We have already supported the United Nations World Food Programme to deliver a new humanitarian land corridor from Jordan into Gaza, with 750 metric tons of life-saving food aid arriving in the first delivery. The Foreign Secretary continues to discuss and press for the action that needs to be taken to increase aid to Gaza in his regular calls with his Israeli, Egyptian, Jordanian, Lebanese, US and Palestinian Authority counterparts. As he has outlined, Israel must take steps, working with other partners including the UN and Egypt, to significantly increase the flow of aid into Gaza including allowing prolonged humanitarian pauses, opening more routes into Gaza and restoring and sustaining water, fuel and electricity.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-05/8102>

The IPC report referred to above can be read at

<https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/gaza-strip-ipc-acute-food-insecurity-november-2023-february-2024-december-21-2023>

Gaza: Migrant Camps

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [9019] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department is taking to work with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to help prevent the spread of disease in refugee camps in Gaza.

Andrew Mitchell: FCDO Ministers and officials are in regular contact with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the World Health Organisation on the health situation in Gaza. We trebled our aid commitment this financial year and have been delivering life saving supplies for Gaza, including medical items and supporting partners working in the health sector. The UK has also funded an experienced epidemiologist who is assisting UNRWA on disease surveillance.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-10/9019>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Rachael Maskell (Labour Co-op) [9018] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether recent progress has been made towards opening the Kerem Shalom border crossing into Gaza for humanitarian aid.

Andrew Mitchell: The UK Government welcomes Israel's opening of the Kerem Shalom crossing for humanitarian aid deliveries into Gaza, including food, water, medicine and shelter. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary were among the first to call on Israel to do this, including with Prime Minister Netanyahu. Significantly more aid needs to reach Gaza to address the humanitarian crisis. As the Foreign Secretary has set out, Israel must take steps, working with other partners including the UN and Egypt, to significantly increase the flow of aid into Gaza, including extending the opening hours and capacity of the Kerem Shalom checkpoint so more trucks, aid and fuel can enter Gaza, and open the crossing seven days a week. The British Government continues to discuss and press for the action that needs to be taken to increase aid to Gaza in his regular calls with his Israeli, Egyptian, Jordanian, Lebanese, US and Palestinian Authority counterparts.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-08/8518>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [7391] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth

and Development Office, what diplomatic steps he is taking to help secure the permanent opening of the Kerem Shalom crossing.

Andrew Mitchell: The UK Government welcomed Israel's opening of the Karem Shalom crossing in December for humanitarian aid deliveries into Gaza. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary were among the first to call on Israel to do this, including with Prime Minister Netanyahu. We urge Israel to extend the opening hours and capacity of the Nitzana screening facility and open the Kerem Shalom checkpoint to 7 days a week, so that more trucks, aid and fuel can enter Gaza. We call on Israel to open further routes for aid to Gaza, such as Asdod Port and the Erez crossing.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-12-18/7391>

House of Commons Library Briefings

UK and international response to Houthis in the Red Sea 2024

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9930/CBP-9930.pdf>

UK response to international human rights abuses

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2024-0011/CDP-2024-0011.pdf>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Watch: Foreign Secretary @David_Cameron on the importance of an immediate humanitarian pause, ideally leading to a sustainable ceasefire in Gaza without a return to hostilities. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1748044325496275285>

David Cameron The news overnight from @whitehouse that the Port of Ashdod will open for a shipment of flour for the Palestinian people is a welcome move. The UK has been pushing hard for Ashdod to be used for the delivery of life-saving aid into Gaza. We need these shipments to continue and for this port to remain open for aid.

https://twitter.com/David_Cameron/status/1748716230125523050

Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon The UK's commitment to the two-state solution is longstanding, clear & unequivocal. A secure Israel next to a viable and sovereign Palestinian state is the only way of ensuring dignity, peace, justice & security for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1749132998736277927>

Department for Business & Trade

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Israel

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65a7ff0db2f3c6000de5d4b1/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2024-01-19.pdf>

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65a7fcfded27ca000d27b1b4/occupied-palestinian-territories-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2024-01-19.pdf>

Scottish Government

Humza Yousaf Netanyahu's dangerous views, denying Palestinian Statehood, are not just "disappointing" but must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. For those who want to see peace in the region, we must see meaningful progress on a two state solution.
<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1749053945857671676>

European Parliament Resolution

Humanitarian situation in Gaza, the need to reach a ceasefire and the risks of regional escalation
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2024-0051_EN.pdf

United Nations

Secretary-General's remarks to the Non-Aligned Movement [as delivered]

... Geopolitical tensions are rising.

Democracy is eroding, while populism and extremism are increasing. ...

Human rights, international law, the Geneva Conventions, and the UN Charter are being flouted with impunity.

And conflicts are raging and proliferating — from Sudan to Ukraine to Gaza.

Following the abhorrent Hamas attacks on 7 October, the wholesale destruction of Gaza and the number of civilian casualties caused by the Israeli army in such a short period are totally unprecedented during my mandate.

And this includes 152 of our own UN staff members — a heartbreaking tragedy for our organization, for their families, and for those they were serving in Gaza.

While humanitarian workers are doing their best to deliver relief, they face constant bombardments, daily dangers to themselves and their families, and the enormous constraints posed by damaged roads, communication blackouts and access denials.

Meanwhile, disease and hunger are deepening.

People are dying not only from bombs and bullets, but from lack of food and clean water, hospitals without power and medicine, and gruelling journeys to ever-smaller slivers of land to escape the fighting.

This must stop.

I will not relent in my call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

And we must do all we can to prevent spillover of this conflict across the region — in the West Bank, across the Blue Line between Israel and Lebanon, and in Syria, Iraq and the Red Sea. ...

The refusal to accept the two-state solution for Israelis and Palestinians, and the denial of the right to statehood for the Palestinian people, are unacceptable.

This would indefinitely prolong a conflict that has become a major threat to global peace and security; exacerbate polarization; and embolden extremists everywhere.

The right of the Palestinian people to build their own state must be recognized by all. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2024-01-20/secretary-generals-remarks-the-non-aligned-movement-delivered>

President of the General Assembly remarks at the Opening of the 19th Non-Aligned Movement Summit in Kampala, Uganda

... I must tell you that I am deeply concerned and indeed dismayed about the ongoing calamity in the Gaza Strip; and so, I call upon this Movement to exert its influence in bringing a halt to the carnage that we are all haplessly witnessing.

That situation behoves us to ask: We must ask: how much is enough? And does the very concept of enough *even exist* in this setting?

Looking to the future of the region, I reiterate my urgent call on all parties to refrain from any action that could further spill-over into neighbouring countries.

The General Assembly, encompassing the voice of the vast majority of Member States, has been clear.

In that regard, I renew the demand for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and for the release of all hostages.

This stands as the only credible course of action to authentically address – let alone resolve – this conflict.

The wanton prosecution of violence only inspires inter-generational and cyclical appetite for retribution and reprisal.

After various iterations of war over several decades, I am convinced that a negotiated political solution is the sole path through which both Israelis and Palestinians will see realized their fundamental right to a life of peace, based on a two-state solution.

As President of the General Assembly, I will support and encourage any and all initiatives to that end. You can count on me to remain steadfast in that commitment. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://www.un.org/pga/78/2024/01/19/pga-remarks-at-the-opening-of-the-19th-non-aligned-movement-summit-in-kampala-uganda>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Gaza: Report from the ground: Head of UN Human Rights Office Occupied Palestinian Territory Ajith Sunghay

We are reaching yet another staggering milestone in Gaza – nearly 25,000 people reported killed, according to the Gaza Ministry of Health. Seventy per cent of them women and children. Another 61,500 – at least – have been injured. Several thousands more are under the rubble, many presumed dead. ...

People continue to arrive in Rafah from various places in their thousands, in desperate situations, setting up makeshift shelters with any material they can get their hands on. I've seen men and children digging for bricks to be able to hold in place tents made with plastic bags. This is a massive human rights crisis. And a major, human-made, humanitarian disaster. ...

The communications blackout has continued for a sixth consecutive day, adding to the confusion and fear, and preventing Gazans from accessing services and information on areas to evacuate.

Heavy bombardment of Middle Gaza and Khan Younis is clearly visible and audible from Rafah – especially at night, I hear bombing, sometimes several times an hour. Night-time is clearly the most terrifying time for the people, even in Rafah. And I also think of the over 100 civilians held hostage in Gaza, unseen, who most certainly hear the same sounds and feel the same fear.

During my time here, I have managed to meet a number of released detainees. These are men who were detained by Israeli Security Forces in unknown locations for between 30 to 55 days. They described being beaten, humiliated, subjected to ill-treatment, and to what may amount to torture. They reported being blindfolded for long periods – some of them for several consecutive days. One man said he had access to a shower only once during

his 55 days in detention. There are reports of men who were subsequently released – but only in diapers, without any adequate clothing in this cold weather. ...

Israel must take urgent steps to ensure that all those arrested or detained are treated in line with international human rights and international humanitarian law norms and standards, notably with full respect for their due process rights.

Unless Israel can demonstrate imperative security grounds for each person remaining in detention, they must be charged or released. Israeli authorities must ensure that families have access to information about their loved ones. All instances of ill-treatment or torture of people arrested or detained must be fully and transparently investigated, and, if found to have taken place, action must be taken to ensure accountability and to prevent recurrence. Victims and their families have the right to truth, justice, and reparations. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2024/01/gaza-report-ground>

UN Women

Statement on Gaza by UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous

It is now more than 100 days since the horrors of the Hamas attacks on Israel of 7 October and the horrors that have followed, especially in Gaza.

Since then, we have seen evidenced once more that women and children are the first victims of conflict and that our duty to seek peace is a duty to them. Without change, these last 100 days will be mere prelude to the next 100.

We have heard shocking accounts of unconscionable sexual violence during the attacks that have led to [calls such as UN Women's for accountability, justice, and support for all those affected](#). We unequivocally condemn all acts of sexual and gender-based violence wherever, whenever, and against whomever they are perpetrated. I call again for accountability for all those affected by the 7 October attacks.

Those 100 days have also seen unparalleled destruction rained on the people of Gaza. For them there is no place of safety, no rest or respite. Women and girls make up the majority of those killed, wounded, and displaced. Our [Gender Alert](#) estimates that some 1 million women and girls are displaced in Gaza, two mothers killed every hour, while around 10,000 children have lost their fathers. There is a cruel inversion of the situation before 7 October. In the past 15 years, 67 per cent of all civilians killed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were men. Less than 14 per cent were women and girls. That percentage has reversed. Today, 70 per cent of those killed are women and children. These are people, not numbers, and we are failing them. ...

However much we mourn the situation of the women and girls of Gaza today, we will mourn further tomorrow without unrestricted humanitarian assistance and an end to the destruction and killing. These women and girls are deprived of safety, medicine, health care, and shelter. They face imminent starvation and famine. Most of all they are deprived of hope and justice. I call again for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and unhindered humanitarian access for all those in Gaza including the provision of vital assistance and services to all women and girls.

It is also more than 100 days that the families of those held hostage in Gaza, some of whom I have met, have waited in unimaginable pain for those they love to return to them. Their courage in the face of suffering and their commitment to peace is humbling. I call again for all hostages to be released immediately and unconditionally.

This is a time for peace. We owe this to all Israeli and Palestinian women and girls. This is not their conflict. They must no longer pay its price.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/statement/2024/01/statement-on-gaza-by-un-women-executive-director-sima-bahous>

Gender Alert: The Gendered Impact of the Crisis in Gaza

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/Gender%20Alert%20The%20Gendered%20Impact%20of%20the%20Crisis%20in%20Gaza.pdf>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Arms Trade (Inquiry and Suspension) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3567>

Disestablishment of the Church of England Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3539>

Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3475>

The Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 [Draft]

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2023/9780348253191/contents>

Genocide Determination Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3535>

Genocide (Prevention and Response) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3521>

**** Holocaust Memorial Bill**

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3421>

Select Committee evidence sessions

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14054/html/>

and

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14082/html/>

and

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14088/html/>

and

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14089/html/>

International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3564>

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3596>

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/terrorism-protection-of-premises-draft-bill-overarching-documents>

Scottish Parliament

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/gender-recognition-reform-scotland-bill>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Strategic Equality Plan 2024 to 2028: proposed principles of approach and objectives [Welsh Government] (closing date 12 February 2024)

<https://www.gov.wales/strategic-equality-plan-2024-2028-proposed-principles-approach-and-objectives>

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Enhanced Dataset [England] (closing date 5 March 2024)

<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/clinical-audits-and-registries/female-genital-mutilation-datasets/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-enhanced-dataset-overview-of-2024-consultation>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438