



# Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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## Home Affairs

### House of Commons Written Answers

#### Metropolitan Police: Airports

**Theresa Villiers (Conservative)** [10753] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has had discussions with the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police on the use of posters in UK airports requesting information on alleged war crimes in Gaza.

**Chris Philp:** Police are operationally independent and should remain so.

The Home Secretary meets with the Met Police Commander to discuss a range of issues.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-22/10753>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### Energy: Religious Buildings

**Liz Saville Roberts (Plaid Cymru)** [11154] To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of supporting places of worship with high electricity and gas costs.

**Liz Saville Roberts (Plaid Cymru)** [11155] To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, whether she has made a recent assessment of the impact of rising (a) electricity and (b) gas prices on places of worship.

**Amanda Solloway:** The Secretary of State has not made these specific assessments. However, the Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS) has provided all eligible businesses and other non-domestic energy users, including places of worship, with a baseline discount on high energy bills, since April 2023 and until 31 March 2024. The EBDS replaced the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, which has successfully delivered support of £7.4 billion to cut energy costs for businesses.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-23/11154>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-23/11155>

*The following three questions all received the same answer*

### **Protective Security for Mosques Scheme**

**Afzal Khan (Labour)** [10242] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications he has received under the Protective Security for Mosques Scheme as of 17 January 2024, by region.

**Afzal Khan (Labour)** [10243] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications have been approved under the Protective Security for Mosques Scheme as of 17 January 2024, by region.

**Afzal Khan (Labour)** [10244] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many applications have been denied under the Protective Security for Mosques Scheme as of 17 January 2024, by region.

**Tom Tugendhat:** The Protective Security for Mosque Scheme is a new scheme in 2023/24 and opened on 21 June 2023.

As of 17 January 2024, the Home Office has received 269 applications to the scheme. By region, applications have been received from the East Midlands (32), East of England (24), Greater London (57), North East (21), North West (54), South East (22), South West (8), West Midlands (36), Northern Ireland (3) and Wales (12). Decisions on applications will be communicated to applicant mosques and Muslim faith community centres in due course. The scheme remains open to applicants and information can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/places-of-worship-security-funding-scheme>

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-17/10242>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-17/10243>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-17/10244>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

### **Protective Security for Mosques Scheme**

**Afzal Khan (Labour)** [10245] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, which organisations his Department consulted when establishing the Protective Security for Mosques Scheme.

**Afzal Khan (Labour)** [10246] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether his Department plans to consult representatives of Muslim organisations on the effectiveness of the Protective Security for Mosques Scheme.

**Tom Tugendhat:** The Home Office works with a number of stakeholders in relation to the Protective Security for Mosques Scheme and our wider work on protective security for faith communities, including the police, delivery partners, other government departments, devolved administrations and faith and community organisations.

We continue to work closely with these stakeholders to understand the safety and security issues affecting Muslim communities in the UK, to ensure that our protective security interventions remain effective and aligned with good practice.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-17/10245>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-17/10246>

Information about the Protective Security for Mosques Scheme, referred to above, can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/places-of-worship-security-funding-scheme>

*The following six questions all received the same answer*

#### **Sikhs: Threat to Life Notices**

**Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour)** [10503] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to (a) assess and (b) ensure the safety of members of the Sikh community issued with Osman notices.

#### **Sikhs: Safety**

**Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour)** [10505] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether he has made an assessment of the potential risks to British Sikh activists of international incidents involving members of the Sikh community.

**Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour)** [10507] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what processes are in place to evaluate the credibility of threats leading to the issuing of Osman warnings in the Sikh community.

**Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour)** [10509] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to liaise with the Sikh community over safety concerns.

#### **British Nationals Abroad: Politics and Government**

**Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour)** [10506] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he is taking to help ensure the safety of British citizens involved in international political movements.

#### **Threat to Life Notices**

**Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour)** [10510] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will review the (a) support and (b) protection measures available to (i) individuals and (ii) families who have received Osman warnings.

**Tom Tugendhat:** The UK is proud of its diverse communities, and British Sikhs contribute immensely to the strength of our society.

We continually assess potential threats in the UK, and take the protection of individuals' rights, freedoms, and safety in the UK seriously.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-18/10503>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-18/10505>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-18/10507>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-18/10509>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-18/10506>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-18/10510>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### **India: Sikhs**

**Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour)** [10504] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what discussions he has had with his Indian counterpart on allegations of intimidation against British Sikhs by agents of the Indian government.

**Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Labour)** [10508] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential

impact of alleged foreign interventions targeting the British Sikh community on UK-India relations.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:** The UK Government takes the safety of individuals in the UK extremely seriously and we do everything we can to keep people safe and the country secure. Any attempts by foreign governments to coerce, intimidate, harass, or harm their critics overseas are unacceptable. We continually assess potential threats to individuals' rights, freedoms, and safety in the UK, and wherever we identify such threats, we use measures necessary to mitigate the risk to individuals. The UK Government has a broad and deep partnership with the Government of India. This enables us to discuss all elements of our relationship, including concerns where we have them.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-18/10504>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-18/10508>

### **Batley Grammar School: Harassment**

**Matt Vickers (Conservative)** [10333] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will have discussions with West Yorkshire police on the steps being taken to (a) provide support to and (b) respond to threats made against the suspended teacher from Batley Grammar school.

**Chris Philp:** The Home Office was in close contact with West Yorkshire Police, who worked with local partners to take swift action at the time to protect the individual involved, in recognition of the significant interest both locally, nationally and across various media outlets. We expect the police to continue to take appropriate and proportionate action in relation to any threats made.

It would not be appropriate to provide further information or details in relation to a specific case. The government remains steadfast in our commitment to tackling those who spread views that promote violence and hatred against individuals and communities in our society, and must always stand up to those who seek to undermine our fundamental values.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-17/10333>

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

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-leeds-56524850>

## **Charity Commission**

**Charities Act 2022: information about the changes being introduced**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charities-act-2022-guidance-for-charities>

**TOP**

## **Holocaust**

### **House of Commons Debate**

#### **Holocaust Memorial Day**

*col 458 Margaret Hodge (Labour):* ... Let me ... pay tribute to two organisations, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust, both of which devote much energy and time to organising the events that help us to commemorate the holocaust. Without their excellent work, we would not keep alive the memory of those who

lost their lives in the Nazi death camps, or indeed those who were killed in other genocides from Rwanda to Cambodia and from Bosnia to Darfur. Without them, our efforts to learn the lessons of history would weaken and fade away. ...

I have just returned from a short visit to Israel. We went to support the people who lived on Kfar Azar, a kibbutz that we had visited in February last year. Many of those living on the kibbutz were people committed to peaceful co-existence with their neighbours in Gaza, but tragically many were killed on 7 October, many who survived are distraught because their loved ones were captured as hostages, and many, especially the women, were treated with the utmost abominable, sadistic cruelty, sexually assaulted in utterly inhumane ways, and then murdered. Israel and its people are experiencing a national trauma and a real, existential fear for their survival, with memories of the holocaust at the heart of their minds; and the same is true in Gaza, with innocent civilians experiencing a similar national trauma, an identical existential fear and a comparable terror of genocide as they live with bombardment, death, injury, displacement, and a lack of humanitarian aid.

So we meet at a deeply depressing time to reflect on the holocaust, with many asking themselves, "When will the world ever, ever, really learn from our past?" But the truth is that we must keep trying. ...

Like others, I lost close relatives in the holocaust: my grandmother, whose last written words to her son, my uncle, were "Don't forget me completely", and my uncle, whose wife wrote in a letter pleading for his release, "He's only a number to you. He's everything to me." But I had other relatives who escaped days before the start of the war, and were dispersed across the diaspora as they sought safety. They too were victims of the assault on Jews, they too suffered hugely, and they too should be the focus of our concerns as we commit ourselves to its never happening again.

col 459 My grandfather came to England on 29 March 1939. ... We have a powerful account of his experiences and emotions in the diary that he kept. He described his last visit to his parents' graves in Vienna, in tears because he would never visit those graves again. He recalled how his parents, my great-grandparents, visited the graves of their own parents, my great-great-grandparents, in Poland, in tears because they were driven out of their homes by pogroms—a never-ending cycle of violence.

My grandfather described his feelings a few days after arriving in England: "Because of the lack of language skills very lonely, depressed, cannot memorise, miserable pronunciation. Living like a recluse."

Even six months later, he said that those who stayed in Vienna "may have saved themselves from all the horrors and all the difficulties of emigrating."

He talked about antisemitism in Britain and how it reached up into the Government, when the only Jew in the Cabinet was sacked by Neville Chamberlain. On his arrival in Britain, my Jewish refugee grandfather was classified as an "enemy alien." That was later changed to "friendly," but he was still an alien.

At 8.30 am on 27 June 1940, in the middle of a war that led to the death of 6 million Jews, my grandfather was in his bath and there was a knock on the door. He was arrested, removed from his home and interned. ... He was housed in overcrowded conditions with a rubber sheet, straw and blankets. In the early days, he was not allowed to write or receive letters. The sanitary conditions were dreadful, and the German Jews found themselves housed with German Nazis. His freedom was indeed fragile. Our treatment of Jewish refugees was unconscionable. ...

I came to the UK from Egypt, stateless, in 1949. After the creation of Israel, Egypt became an increasingly hostile environment for Jews. ... We were rejected by three English-speaking countries, and the UK finally, to my father's eternal gratitude, gave our family of six entry visas to this country. My father's freedom was indeed fragile.

Five years later, we were still stateless and my father applied for British nationality. At that time, my mother was dying in hospital and my older sister and brother were away at school and university, so I was at home with my younger sister. She was six and I was nine. A

Home Office inspector came to tea. ... we were interrogated —two young girls on their own—for a full hour on who our friends were, what books we read and what games we played. My freedom was indeed fragile, dealing with a hostile, not friendly, environment that remains forever locked in my memory.

*col 460* My family know, and indeed the families of millions of refugees know, that freedom is never guaranteed. We should understand that how we treat those who escape persecution and genocide is central to our reputation as a country that boasts a humanitarian approach to genocide and the holocaust.

**Jim Shannon (DUP):** ... I think of what the nation of Israel was put through because so many people would not speak out, and we saw the result in the horrific atrocity that is remembered today. Does she agree that we remember not out of a sense of morbidity, but out of the absolute necessity to ensure that the lessons taught by the slaughter of the Jewish people are learned by people of all faiths, so that it is never permitted to happen again?

**Margaret Hodge:** I completely share that sentiment ...

As I was saying, we are not as good as we proclaim to be. My grandfather did not feel welcome and I did not feel wanted as a nine-year-old girl. The asylum seekers who try to come here today face a similar hostile environment. ...

The language we use today matters; the laws and practices of today designed to exclude many of those seeking freedom from persecution, which make a mockery of our commitment to the victims of genocide, matter; the fees we charge for visas today matter; and our refusal today to allow those seeking asylum to work matters. ...

So before we applaud ourselves for keeping alive the memory of the holocaust, we should think about how fragile freedom was then for those who sought to escape death and how fragile it remains today. ...

*col 461* **Peter Bottomley (Conservative):** ... We have rightly been reminded that our hands are not clean. It would have been possible for the state of Israel to have been created in the 1930s, and possibly 6 million people would have thus survived. Three quarters of the Jews in Europe died.

I have said in the past how much I welcomed the emphasis that the Holocaust Commission has put on education, which has been followed up by words from the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation. I have said that I had had a vague idea that perhaps 10 of my grandfather's extended family had died, but we now know that the real figure is more than 110 and possibly more than 120. That kind of education matters. ...

*col 462* In any education associated with the holocaust—or whatever name people choose to call it, because “the holocaust” is a relatively recent name for the horrors, the terrors and the intended annihilation of a whole people—we need to understand that people can come up in the way that Adolf Hitler did. They may have gone to a meeting, found a small group, turned it into a more powerful one, recruited a private army and started marching around with the aim of taking control. If that sounds familiar from recent events in other countries, so be it.

We have to beware of private militias. We have to give the state a monopoly on resisting the potential of violence, so that it can resist by force those who are behaving dangerously badly. We have to ensure that message is not known just in this country, but in other countries as well. ...

When there was the attack on 7 October in Israel, on Israelis, someone wrote to me saying, “Why do they keep picking on us?” There are 16 million Jews around the world, but the number would probably be three times higher if it had not been for the holocaust. We have a responsibility to get better education about the holocaust going. We ought to ensure that people do not just get the chance to see an exhibition, but that in virtually all parts of their life, whether geography, history, current affairs or international relations, they understand how people rose to take control of their countries. ...

It is important that we learn the lesson that democracy is about trying to achieve a good purpose but being willing to be defeated and to try again, without taking to the streets with guns or going into exile. Even more importantly, we have to ensure that people do not find themselves dead because of other people's prejudices and very cruel behaviours.

**col 463 Alistair Carmichael (Liberal Democrat):** ... Next year, it will be 80 years since the end of the second world war. With every year that passes, the act of memorial becomes more and more important. Members can do the maths for themselves: I was born in 1965, 20 years after the end of the second world war. I was born into a world where many of the older people in my community had lived experience of it. ...

As we get further from the lived experience, and those who survived the holocaust or served in the second world war become rarer, moments such as this become more important. As the right hon. Lady said, the work of organisations such as the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust—I pay particular tribute to the work of Karen Pollock—becomes more important too.

In the community that I represent in Shetland, we have our own story to tell on Holocaust Memorial Day. The Shetland bus was a fleet, or progression, of small fishing boats that went from Lunna and Scalloway in Shetland to bring those who were fleeing persecution and whose lives were at risk in Nazi-occupied Norway to safety—in Shetland, and then in the United Kingdom mainland. When we talk about the Shetland bus, we talk mostly about the work that it did in bringing downed airmen and others to safety, but it should be remembered that no fewer than 350 refugees came to Britain through that route. ... They were not all Jews, but many were. ...

**col 464** We have to recognise the context of today's debate: what is happening in the world, and what is happening in Israel and Gaza as we speak. Apart from anything else, we know that the Jewish communities in this country feel so much more at risk and vulnerable than ever, as a consequence of what happened on 7 October. There is a balance to be struck. The focus has to be on what happened—otherwise, we risk disrespecting those who perished and those who survived it, and the families for whom it is a lived experience—but surely the whole point, as others have said, must be to ensure that it does not happen again. That is why when I read stories about a restaurant opening in Jordan called "October 7", frankly I despair. ...

As somebody who has massive reservations about what Netanyahu is doing in Gaza—and we can debate that another day—I look with horror at the incipient antisemitism that is creeping up in so many different ways. Let us not forget that antisemitism—something that is wholly irrational but that we never seem to eradicate—was at the root of what happened in the holocaust. The price of it not happening again is that those of us who care about what happened in the past have to be honest, open and courageous in calling it out when we see it starting again. If we wait until it has taken hold, it will be too late.

**Bob Stewart (Independent):** ... I was in Germany commanding an infantry battalion in 1992 when I rang my mother. I said, "Mum, my camp is beside this ghastly place called Bergen-Belsen. Do you know, Mum, it has rectangular mounds with signs that say, 'Here lie 3,000 bodies.' It's heathland. It's a foul place." She said, "I know, Robert." I said, "How would you know, Mum? You've never been here with me." She said, "I went there in 1945." In 1945 my mother was a member of the Special Operations Executive, in something called the FANY—the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry. It was the uniform they put spies into. She had gone there to try to find women who had been caught by the Germans and put into concentration camps. ... I asked my mother, "Why the heck haven't you told me this before?" She had only told me that she was SOE a couple of years before that. She said, "Because I was ashamed." I asked, "What do you mean you were ashamed? As soon as you could, you joined up, you learned to parachute and you learned to fight the Germans. You did your bit." And she said, "You don't understand; I was ashamed because genocide had occurred in my generation and we are all responsible." That is what this is all about.

We are all responsible for what happens in this world, and genocide happens so easily. col 465 I did not understand what my mother was talking about until a few months later, when I went to Bosnia as the British United Nations commander. There was one hell of a lot of killing around us. I was appalled. ... I will not repeat some of the stuff that I saw, but how about crucifixions on barn doors; people scalped; people's eyes pulled out with implements that are designed just to do that; and women in trees, because they had been raped and had then hanged themselves ... I felt what my mother had told me about: shame. Why had I not been able to stop this? ...

Things got worse. Let me give the example of Ahmići. On 22 April 1993, the European Commission ambassador asked me to try to stop the battles, and I asked how. He said, "I'll deal with the politics; you deal with the front- lines." ... As I went to the Bosnian Muslim frontline up on the hills, above the Lašva valley, a commander said to me, "We are not stopping this battle." I was trying to stop the battles and bring about a ceasefire. "We are not stopping this", the commander said, "because at Ahmići village, women, children and men are being massacred." And I said, "No, that cannot be happening". I did not think that could actually happen in this day and age. So I said, "Look, if I go there with my men and I discover you are wrong and I come back, will you stop fighting?" He said yes. I came off the hills and went down into the valley. I was with my platoon—about 30 men—and had four armoured vehicles. ...

As I went into Ahmići, the first thing I saw was the minaret, crippled and broken. It had been brought down. Then I went all the way through the village—it was a linear village about a mile long. When I took my men all the way to the top, I said to Alex Watts, my platoon commander, "Put a section on either side of the road in a sweep position. Let's go down and find out what's happened." I walked down the road with my platoon commander in front of me. We started finding houses that had been destroyed. And then, at one house, the soldiers called me over and asked me to take a look. In the doorway was a man and a teenage boy. They were dead; they had been burned.

Around the back of that house, the men found a cellar. When I went in, I was hit first by the smell. Then my eyes focused and I saw what was in there—it looked like bodies. There were bones and heads—there was a head bent back, and I saw the eyes. I rushed outside and was sick. I thought, "God, how can this happen?" And I was there, with this great UN, the people who are meant to police the world, and I had failed.

col 466 I then had to make a decision. My instructions from the British Government—the Ministry of Defence; the politicians—were that I was neutral and was not to get involved; this was not my war. I was there purely to deliver aid. I thought that was appalling. The whole point of the United Nations, I thought, was to stop people dying. So I extended that role a bit. I escorted aid, but if people attacked me, I responded pretty robustly—not me, but my men. ...

Do you know how we had to clear up that village? Do you know what genocide means? It means some poor devils with shovels having to clean it up ...

We then had the problem of what to do with the bodies. No one was going to deal with them. It was nothing to do with me—I was not meant to get involved in the war—but I had to deal with them, because of the disease, the smell. I got my Royal Engineers—lovely blokes—to dig a big pit, and we made a mass grave. We put about 100 bodies into that pit. Even then, we got it wrong—no one had taught me how to make mass graves—because we put them into the pit in plastic bags, until the International Committee of the Red Cross delegate, who happens now to be my wife, came along and said, "What the hell do you think you're doing?" I said, "I'm burying people." She said, "You're not burying them in plastic bags. That's not how you do it," so she led and my men emptied the bodies out—horrendous. ...

col 467 **Lyn Brown (Labour):** ... I join colleagues in expressing my gratitude to the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust for the amazing, extraordinary and dedicated work they do. At a time when hatred and mistrust are surging,



this work is more important than ever. When I reflect on the holocaust, I simply marvel with horror at how ordinary people could herd children, toddlers, babes in arms, women, elderly people and the infirm into a gas chamber to kill them: the industrial slaughter of human beings. They were vulnerable human beings, including tots, who, in the normal course of the world, we would do our utmost to protect, whether they were ours or not. ...

*col 468* This year marks the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda, so if hon. Members will allow, I shall give a voice to the testimony of Daphrosa, one of the survivors of that atrocity, and put it on the parliamentary record. Before the genocide, Daphrosa lived with her husband and five children. Her husband had a good job as a customs officer, and she had opened her own business, running a bar from the side of their home. They were happy. ...

For years before the genocide, though, hatred and suspicion—words—had been growing, fuelled by divisive politicians and media incitement. ... Discrimination and segregation started to take hold, with shops refusing to serve Tutsis and even some churches refusing to offer the Eucharist to Tutsis. ...

When the genocide began, Daphrosa tried to continue with her normal life. On the third day of the genocide, she and her children fled, but her husband was captured and beaten, and she was forced to return home. Her injured husband was sat in a chair in the living room. Daphrosa and her daughters were forced to take off their clothes. The housekeeper who had promised to protect them was the first to take part in their rape. ...

Daphrosa's eldest son was called Allan. She remembers him as the model child, clever, with a great future in front of him. Allan tried to stop the rape, but the men beat and slashed him until he died and then threw him behind the chair. They raped Daphrosa and then her daughters. They slashed her breast and they mutilated her. Her husband was forced to watch the nightmare, terribly injured from blows with hammers and nailed clubs. He did not die until the next day.

On the third day of their torment, the militia brought a community officer with them. She took away the children, supposedly for protection, but Daphrosa heard the men joking that the girls would soon become their wives. ...

Miraculously, Daphrosa's four younger children survived. The two youngest, Innocente and Eric, were taken in and hidden by a neighbour after being removed from the house. The older girls, Aline and Tina, were found alive in the capital Kigali after the war. However, as we know, survival does not mean an end to suffering. Daphrosa, Aline and Tina all fell pregnant as a result of the rape they were subjected to, and they were infected with HIV at a time when medicine was extremely scarce.

*col 469* Aline's own testimony tells how she was raped countless times after being taken away from her mother and their home. Not only that, but, after their return, as the only surviving Tutsis from their village, Aline endured further torment from the taunts of neighbours, who spread rumours about how she had been infected. ...

Like the holocaust, it was fuelled by dehumanising propaganda. Like the holocaust, it was organised and systematic in its brutality and, like the holocaust, the genocide in Rwanda was perpetrated, collaborated with—and resisted by—ordinary people ...

**Andrew Percy (Conservative):** ... When I used to deliver holocaust education as a secondary school history teacher, I used to put up pictures for my students of the holocaust and those appalling scenes that we all know too well. We used to show the video footage and the pictures of the gas chambers and of the bodies of murdered Jews piled high. Never did I think that I would have the experience in my lifetime of visiting the site of a pogrom and smelling the rotting flesh of Jewish people who had been murdered. That happened for me three and a half weeks after 7 October, when I visited Israel with my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon (Dr Offord). That is a memory and a trip that will live with us all.

Although in my 14 years in Parliament I have taken a number of parliamentary trips, I have never undertaken a visit that has been more important to me—and important to me in my lifetime, not just as a Member of Parliament. We visited Kfar Aza, the kibbutz that the right

hon. Member for Barking (Dame Margaret Hodge) spoke about. It was founded by peaceniks and led by a peace-loving leader, who was also the chair of the regional council and who was picked out and shot by Hamas fighters on his own doorstep specifically because of his leadership of that peaceful group.

*col 470* At the time of our visit we could still smell the blood and the flesh that was still rotting in that community. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon will attest, we also visited the base where the bodies—or should I say the body parts—were being identified. I do not think either of us will forget the emotions we felt when the doors were opened to where the bodies were being kept in the refrigerators. The wave of smell coming towards us was truly shocking. Having delivered education on the holocaust, I never thought that in my time I would bear testimony and see the bodies and smell murdered Jews. It was a truly horrendous visit, but one I am very proud to have made ...

When I delivered that education on the holocaust to year 9 students, what did I teach? I taught them about boycotts and how people were told not to buy Jewish goods and products. I taught them about Jewish community facilities and synagogues being attacked. I taught them about how Jews used to huddle in dark spaces, about how they were held in captivity against their will and about the people shouting on the streets for the death of Jews. I taught them about how children were indoctrinated with hate against the children of Israel.

I am afraid all that is what we are seeing today across large parts of our own country and, indeed, across the west. We now see Jewish products in shops attacked. We have seen Jewish schools in Canada shot at, not on one occasion but on two occasions. We have seen Jewish businesses torched in other parts of the west and, of course, we have had marches on our own streets where people have called for the death of Jews. ...

It is not the brownshirts of the Nazis on our streets or the streets of Europe, parading through screaming and shouting that society needs to be cleansed of Jews. They have been replaced, I am afraid to say, by hard-left activists and associated useful idiots—“useful idiots” is a polite way of describing them—calling for a socialist intifada. They are joined by progressives, LGBT groups and feminists, who would not last a second in Hamas-controlled Gaza.

The cries of, “The Jews are our misfortune” have been replaced on our streets by calls for jihad, calls for an intifada and demands for Muslim armies to rise up and fight Israel. It is no longer Nazis crossing international borders to murder and round up Jews; it is Islamist extremists in Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and, of course, in Hezbollah if it had its way. Those groups are as clear in their intentions to commit a genocide against the Jewish people as Adolf Hitler was in his ramblings. That is not to say that we do not still have a problem with far-right antisemitism and racism—of course we do—but it has now been joined by those sinister groups and alliances of Islamist extremists and hard-left activists.

What was the response to the atrocities on 7 October by some of those people? It was not to come out in sympathy after the events of that pogrom; it was to stand outside the Israeli embassy within hours demanding boycotts of the state of Israel. As I have called out before, I am afraid that even in this place some people have spent a lot of time on their feet criticising the response to the atrocities of 7 October and not a lot of time condemning those actions. We have seen that in the media and civil society. Football pundits and actors who have never uttered a word about Yemen or the 85,000 children killed there, or about Sudan and the millions of people displaced, find time to add their voices and offer us commentary on Israel, sometimes promoting ancient blood libels.

*col 471* We have even had Members of this place tweeting about an attack on a hospital that never took place. A blood libel; Jewish bloodlust—that is what that feeds into. Some of them never apologised for that, of course. Yesterday, we even had somebody accusing the Prime Minister of having blood on his hands. Who has blood on their hands for 7 October? It is Hamas, and the thousands of civilians who followed those fighters into

Kibbutz Kfar Aza, Kibbutz Be'eri and other communities and stepped over the bodies of murdered Jews to loot and pillage their homes. That is who has blood on their hands. Some people in this place would do well to remember that.

I have been attacked for daring to call people out for giving a free pass. I will continue to do that—the bile and hate for me that came up as a result does not bother me, including from people targeting my post on Holocaust Memorial Day with words such as “Zionist scum”. I am a proud Zionist. I have never been prouder to be a Jew or a Zionist. People attack my Facebook page and tell me about the “Zionist rat hostages” and that “Nobody cares about the Jews”—all because I dared to say freely, as I thought I had a right to do in this Chamber, that I thought some people were not contextualising the response of Israel with the events of 7 October and were giving a free pass to terrorists. I will go on doing that, because I will not be silenced by those who seek to bully me.

And from members of the community who would otherwise be screaming and shouting about the gender-based violence that took place on 7 October? Not a peep. Not a word. Why not? Is it just the pressure of people’s inboxes? Is it something deeper and more sinister? I do not know, but I find it hard to understand how that is not called out. Why is that gender-based violence not acknowledged? Why do we not have young people on the streets of this country marching against what happened to those young Jewish women on 7 October? The most brutal rapes, breasts sliced off, people shot and then raped—necrophilia—and under-age girls subjected to the most appalling abuse.

Look at our streets. What do we have? Nazi and Soviet-era propaganda marching down our streets, and it is not being tackled. The police stand by as people call for jihad. They say that it is about context. ...

Look at what is happening in our schools. Just a couple of weeks ago, I mentioned at Prime Minister’s questions the letters being produced by pupils in our schools that included such phrases as, “I do not believe all Jews are bad”, and a phrase challenging a Member of Parliament on why they believed the western media narrative that Hamas were a terrorist organisation. Where is that coming from? It is coming not from the school but from within communities in this country.

col 472 In Jewish areas in this country, we have flags put up illegally that will not be brought down. I, like many hon. Members, have watched the 47-minute video of the slaughter of people on 7 October, and the same flag was proudly displayed on the breasts and lapels of Hamas fighters. That flag is not being removed in Jewish areas because people are scared. Councils are scared to remove them and cannot guarantee the safety of people who take them down. Imagine if we had swastikas up. How long would they last? I am not comparing the two flags—of course not—but in a Jewish area where concerns have been raised about these triggering incidents, something that would be so triggering in a different way would be dealt with very quickly. ...

What do I want from my Government? What do I want from this country? I want it to stand up for the values that I thought it stood for. ...

I want to feel safe on the streets. I want Jewish people in this country to feel safe coming into central London on a weekend, which they do not at the present time. ... I want to live in a country in which children are not brainwashed with hate—be it hate against Jews, hate against members of the Muslim community, or any other hate. I want a Government and institutions that stand up and say, “That is not acceptable and we will do something about it”—not just standing up and saying, “We all condemn it,” but actually doing something about it. ...

In the time that I have, I want to refer to two holocaust survivors I met this week. One is Eve Kugler ... She gave us examples, which are all too familiar today, of growing up in Germany and of experiencing Kristallnacht. Her father was taken off to Buchenwald but, fortunately, the whole family were eventually able to escape. ...

I also want to mention briefly John Hajdu, another survivor I met this week. He was born into a Jewish family in Budapest, Hungary, in 1937. He shared with me his experience of

being hidden in a cupboard by a non-Jewish neighbour. Again, that rings true with 7 October, when Jewish children on those kibbutzim were hidden in cupboards—it did not save some of them, of course. After hiding, John was eventually forced to live in the ghetto. Those who were not taken to concentration camps were forced into about 290 buildings, where at least 20 people lived in each overcrowded flat. ... fortunately during the liberation of Budapest, he was freed, minutes before the ghetto was about to be blown up.

*col 473* As I recounted those two stories, they made me think that John and Eve at least have one fortunate thing that some of the people who were affected by 7 October do not have: they lived to tell their story. Right now in Gaza, there are Jewish people who do not have a voice—who cannot tell their story. Those are the 136 hostages who remain, and in the brief time I have, I would like to name just a few of them. I would like to name all of them, but I appreciate that that is not going to be possible today.

I think particularly of Liri Albag, Karina Arie and Noa Argamani—who, as Members will remember, was the young girl on the motorbike, seen pleading to her boyfriend as she was whisked away into Gaza. Her mother is dying and wants her daughter home, but Hamas refuse to release her. I think of Romi Gonen, Carmel Gat, Inbar Haiman, Judi Weinstein, Arbel Yehud, Maya Goren and Doron Steinbrecher. I think of Daniela Gilboa, 19 years old, Naama Levy, 19 years old, and Agam Berger, 19 years old—all women held currently by Hamas. I think of the Bibas family, the ginger-haired family; Members might remember the little baby who turned a year old in captivity, his parents, and of course his brother Ariel.

I think of Omer Shem Tov, the 21-year-old Israeli at the Nova music festival. I met his mother in early November: she was desperate for news about her son and utterly distraught. Of course, he has no voice today in this place, and neither do so many others. I think of Amiram Cooper, 85 years old; Oded Lifshitz, 83; Gadi Moses, 79; and Shlomo Mantzur, 85—people who are not too different from my parents' ages. They should be at home with their families, enjoying the peaceful life of their retirement and their dotage. Of course, it is not just Israelis who are held: Bipin Joshi is a Nepalese citizen, and Avera Mangisto is a Tanzanian. There are so many other names I wish I could mention—Shlomi Ziv, Tsachi Idan, Matan Zangauker, Andrey Kozlov, Ohad Ben Ami, Sahar Baruch, Uriel Baruch, Ziv Berman, Gali Berman, Rom Braslavski—but of course, I cannot name them all today.

As I end my contribution, those are the people I will be thinking about: the Jews who do not have a voice, who again are being held as Jews were held 80 or 90 years ago, in dark tunnels, in cupboards and in cages, as we have heard. How is this happening again? It is now 2024, and here we are again: Jew hate, which never really went away, is manifesting itself for all to see in all of its gory, disgusting detail.

*col 474* **Christine Jardine (Liberal Democrat):** ... I am of that generation for whom the holocaust was always history. We were told about it by our parents who had been children during the war and had heard about it. We had no personal experience of it, but information and knowledge about it was everywhere. It was in comics, in the films that we saw and the books that we read, everything from “The Diary of a Young Girl” by Anne Frank to “Schindler’s List”. We were aware of it, but we did not actually believe that it would or could ever happen again, because we would not let it happen again—it would never have happened in this country anyway, because we would not let it happen. However, since 7 October, I have become increasingly worried that we in this country are just a fraction complacent about the danger that anything like the holocaust, Darfur or Cambodia could happen here. ...

A few weeks ago, I was speaking to a handful of students at the University of Glasgow, and we were talking about various issues on campus. They told me that they had been to a debate about an international chain of coffee shops that happened to have an outlet just off campus. It was all very civilised—a chat and a strong debate—and then one of the students, who was Jewish, told me that one of the other students had said, “But it’s only

Jews that go there anyway.” I was utterly horrified that a comment like that could be made in a meeting of young people in this country.

That is not the only example. I visited the synagogue in Edinburgh recently, where I heard the concern of ordinary people about what they are experiencing every day. The Jewish students’ association at Edinburgh University is one of the largest and fastest growing in the country, but its members feel completely isolated. Jewish students have written to associations across the country—to every university—asking for support against the antisemitism that they see creeping into their daily lives, and only a handful replied.

**Helen Morgan (Liberal Democrat):** Does my hon. Friend agree that the answer is for people to engage with the lived experience of Jewish people and to understand the profound effect that it has on their lives? ...

*col 475* **Christine Jardine:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right: it is about listening to, hearing and engaging with the experiences of holocaust survivors. ... surveys in America have discovered that 20% of young Americans do not believe that the holocaust actually happened, and something like another 30% believe that the holocaust is exaggerated — that it was a minor event. We are in a very dangerous position at the moment. Antisemitism is creeping in everywhere: we hear of it every day, from people who are finding that it is becoming part of their daily experience, and we are not aware of it. We are all good, liberally minded, intelligent people; how easy it would be for us to get drawn in and not realise what is happening around us—to let it happen. By the time we notice, it would be too late.

A few years ago, I visited Yad Vashem, the holocaust memorial in Israel, and one of the things that struck me is that it is built on a hillside. It is dark, scary and depressing. We hear the tales, we see the remnants of people’s lives that were destroyed by the holocaust and it has an oppressive feel to it. However, as we move towards the end, we see the light at the end of the tunnel, and we come out to a breathtaking view of Israel. At the moment, I feel that we are truly in such a dark spot, and we have to make sure that we do not get trapped and pulled further into antisemitism becoming accepted in this country. We have to remember the light is at the end of the tunnel, and strive for that.

**Paul Beresford (Conservative):** ... The United Kingdom medical and dental profession is very multiracial. There are a lot of people from the middle east, but also many Jewish people, some of whom I rank not just as colleagues, but as friends. Many are among the best of the profession, with lists of achievements to their name that go across the whole page. Most of them live in north London, and periodically they have made me aware of the progressive rise of what I saw as irrational antisemitic abuse, sometimes associated with violent activity. This activity and violence increased in the run-up to the last election, and then seemed to dull down a bit. To me, however, the Hamas outrage on 7 October—12,000 women, men and children raped, tortured, murdered and beheaded, and some 240 hostages—lit the fire again, as I have seen.

*col 476* For many of us, this is the stuff of horror, but it has been submerged in the rise of these attacks on Jewish people, including the professional Jewish people in our community. These people have nothing to do with what Israel does to Hamas and no say in that, and what is happening to them is a complete disgrace, with hints of the early days of the Nazis in Germany. The attacks are frightening, and the most vicious, as I had explained to me by a very senior, top-notch dental practitioner ... she had tears in her eyes as she was telling me this ... are the attacks on social media. Those attacks are coming on special social media for the profession, so we would assume that every single person writing on it was intelligent and educated, yet the vile abuse on it is ghastly. ...

**Steve McCabe (Labour):** I grew up in a household where it was common to hear family members discuss world war two. I knew about Hitler, the Sudetenland, Neville Chamberlain and Winston Churchill, and I had heard about Barnes Wallis and the Dambusters. To my shame, however, I have to say that I was an adult in full-time

employment before I began to understand the meaning of the holocaust. ...

My education has been assisted by a few very specific things. One is the work of the Holocaust Educational Trust. I will never forget going with a group of sixth-formers from a local school to Auschwitz one bitter cold February morning. I do not know who was more distraught by what we encountered, these young sixth-formers or me ... I am also extremely grateful to Scott Saunders, the chairman and founder of March of the Living ... I am indebted to him for helping me to learn that, before the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, there were 3.3 million Jews living in Poland, but by the end of the war, less than 400,000 of them had survived.

**Alex Sobel (Labour Co-op):** ... Mine was one of those families in Poland. There are now very few survivors left, and I think it is important that we recognise the experience of my father's generation ... but also the work of independent researchers and organisations such as the Wiener Holocaust Library in bringing home to us what happened. ...

*col 477* **Steve McCabe:** ... we must do everything to remember and to preserve that memory so that people do not forget. ...

... the other thing that has really helped me has of course been listening to the testimonies of holocaust survivors. They are all amazing people, but two in particular have had an impact on me: Mindu Hornick MBE, who lives near Birmingham, who was sent to Auschwitz when she was 12 years of age and never saw her mother or her brothers again; and Harry Olmer MBE, who is just an incredible man and an inspiration to anyone who meets him.

When I hear protests about current events in Gaza, I wonder what we have learned. I deplore the killing and the suffering we are seeing there. I want a ceasefire and an end to the killing, an enduring peace and a two-state solution, with Palestinians and Israelis living side by side in recognised and secure independent states. I want that as much as anyone else. But I struggle when I hear marchers, demonstrators and protesters chant "Ceasefire now" in one breath, and "From the river to the sea" in the next. What are they saying? What have they learned, and what are they advocating? Some know well what they are doing, but others need to stop and spend a little more time learning the lessons of the past. They need to reflect on how little their behaviour shows a desire for peace, and how much it is encouraging division and hatred.

*col 478* I also wonder at the genuinely concerned people who contact me about the deaths and suffering in Gaza but skip over the 7 October attack, and who use with ease terms such as "war crimes" and "genocide" to condemn Israel and the Israelis, but seem to have overlooked an attack on Israeli civilians that was based on torture, mutilation, rape, murder and hostage taking. Some even tell me that the Hamas attack needs to be understood because of Israel's previous behaviour. They usually show little knowledge that Israel pulled out of Gaza and removed all its settlements there in 2005, in accordance with the peace accords, and was promised in return a demilitarised Gaza that could become something like a Singapore of the middle east. Two years later, Hamas took over Gaza, and it has been a launch pad for attacks on Israel ever since.

The Nazis took people in. They used excuses and demands. They talked about the suffering of the German people. They blamed the Jews. They offered seemingly plausible explanations for their actions, and they lied about their intentions, while laying plans to exterminate 6 million people.

I am, and I always will be, a friend of Israel and the Israeli people. I am not a fan of the current Prime Minister, and I totally disagree with him and others who oppose a two-state solution. I believe such views are an obstacle to peace, and that such attitudes and behaviour risk giving succour to those who oppose the very existence of the Jewish state. But I will not accept the blaming of the entirety of the Jewish people for things I dislike, and I will not demand higher standards of the world's only Jewish state than we do of any other nation. We need to remember the holocaust, and the way that seemingly decent people resorted to cowardly, wicked and savage behaviour, designed to wipe out the Jewish

people. Those who shout for peace and ceasefires but not for peace and reconciliation have not learned those lessons. ...

*col 479 Nicola Richards (Conservative):* ... The holocaust was the murder of 6 million Jewish men, women and children, but it was so much more than that. The number 6 million is huge, but on its own it does not encompass the true scale of suffering. It is millions of people who did not get the opportunity to wake up in the morning in their homes and feel safe; millions of people who did not have the privilege of making normal, everyday decisions to get married, start a family, go to school, or have a career. It tore humanity apart, and stole the future from 6 million Jews and their future families.

The seventh of October was not on the same scale. It was not over the same long period of time, and it was not carried out by the same perpetrators. It was not even on the same continent. But 7 October was the biggest loss of Jewish life in a single day since the holocaust. On Tuesday I met a delegation of family members of hostages with the Leader of the House. A brave 23-year-old told us that she lost 60 friends on 7 October. Can anyone imagine losing 60 friends in one day? Sadly, many Jewish families know what that feels like.

I have really struggled with this, Mr Deputy Speaker. Accusations of genocide are thrown around too frequently, and I am the last person who would ever wish to draw comparisons with the holocaust. As Lord Pickles said earlier this week, there can be no comparison with the holocaust. We now have the Jewish state, and that was designed to ensure that history does not repeat itself. It was born out of the need to do just that. However, it is true that 7 October was the largest murder of Jewish people since the holocaust, and sadly the comparisons do not end there.

I visited Israel at the beginning of the year. I had the chance to visit the exhibition that survivors of the Nova festival have created. It was heartbreaking. On tables lay shoes, clothing and other items of ordinary festival goers who just went to dance. I could not help but see the table of shoes and be reminded of the pile of shoes in Auschwitz. Lying next to this table of clothes and shoes was make-up—the kind of make-up I use. In Auschwitz you see personal items that make you wonder what that person might have looked like or how they might have lived. When I saw brands such as L'Oréal, I did not have to think about that. I know exactly how they looked and how they might have lived. I know exactly what they were doing on that fateful day when their life ended. I know that they were not any different from me: young women in their 20s or 30s. They were doing what normal young people around the world should do—they were dancing.

*col 480* I had hoped my visit would help me to understand how the attack happened, and perhaps the true motives. ... I heard stories about families murdered in a kibbutz. We visited Kfar Aza. We heard about a mayor who will never stand for re-election, because he bravely tried to defend his community, and about the young couple who were going to get engaged and how they texted their parents in the last moments of their lives before being slaughtered. I heard about a teacher set on fire in her house

I watched 47 minutes of this footage. Until then, some of the most disturbing images I had ever seen were of the holocaust and images of bodies strewn across Bergen-Belsen upon the liberation, but I had never known what a body looks like after being tortured, shot in the head, or burned until the only thing left is their teeth. I have seen footage of two young boys witnessing the brutal death of their father. I wondered how they survived. Why did the terrorists so calmly help themselves to a drink from their fridge while they screamed? Why were they not taken as hostages? Why were other children taken hostage? Why were other children and babies murdered without a chance?

The events on 7 October started with rockets, followed by a massacre at a music festival. They slaughtered people one by one, setting cars alight, raping women and girls and throwing grenades into bomb shelters. It did not end there. They went hunting for soldiers in military bases, raped more women, murdered more people and took more hostages. They went house to house, having already identified who lived where. Hamas enjoyed

every second of it, even boasting in calls to parents that they had killed at least 10 Jews. No two stories from 7 October are the same. I felt completely overwhelmed trying to grasp the scale of it, and the scale of the fear. If I am confused now, how must they have felt on that day and every day since? I never believed I would use today as an opportunity to talk about something other than the holocaust. I firmly believe that is what today is for; there are 364 other days in the year to talk about everything else, but I also know what holocaust survivors today are thinking, and I can only begin to imagine how they are feeling. ...

We rightly label those who seek to distort or deny the holocaust ever happened as antisemites. They have the evidence, and plenty of it, but to them facts do not matter, because they believe they have a deeper understanding, borne of their hatred for Jews. Holocaust denial is antisemitic, so what about those thousands who do not believe that 7 October happened? They do not believe women were raped. They argue about how many babies' heads were cut off, or if they were at all. Some, who have kindly written to me, tell me that 7 October, if it happened at all, was actually carried out by Israel. Recounting how I have witnessing 47 minutes of death and destruction makes no difference to their view.

col 481 One theory within holocaust denial is that the holocaust was carried out by European Jews. Some believe that Nazis and Zionists worked together in partnership and that, as a result of having scammed the world, the state of Israel was born. That theory features in a book called "The Other Side: The Secret Relationship Between Nazism and Zionism", written by President Mahmoud Abbas in 1984. The same theory, but set in 2023, is now gaining traction on social media, particularly among young people. They believe that 7 October was carried out by Israel to legitimise military action against Hamas, or that Israel has been funding Hamas, or that Israel is exaggerating claims of the death and destruction at the hands of Hamas. What is this theory at its core? You tell me. ...

... people should understand what has happened to the Jewish people in October last year and since. We have the largest increase in antisemitic incidents on record, in response to the largest murder of Jewish people since the holocaust. The Chief Rabbi, Sir Ephraim Mirvis, last week made an important intervention. He said that claiming Israel is carrying out a genocide "is a moral inversion, which undermines the memory of the worst crimes in human history."

He said: "It is a term deployed not only to eradicate any notion that Israel has a responsibility to protect its citizens, but also to tear open the still gaping wound of the Holocaust, knowing that it will inflict more pain than any other accusation". ...

col 482 **Bob Blackman (Conservative):** ... Some 79 years on from the end of the holocaust, we still have people persecuting and attacking people based solely on their religion. It is unacceptable, and I am proud that the Government are committed and steadfast in their support for Israel and the wider Jewish diaspora.

The theme of this year's Holocaust Memorial Day is "fragility of freedom." That is particularly fitting, given the unstable position we find ourselves in today all over the globe. Although there will always be mild tensions between communities, we have to remember that there is a war raging in Europe, a terror war raging in Israel and Gaza, attacks in the Red sea, the Sudan war and growing concerns on the Asian continent. ...

We often take for granted the privileged position of being able to get up in the morning, work in a career of our choosing, and be confident that we are being represented by elected individuals looking to represent our views. We do not fear for our lives every moment of the day, and we are not on constant alert for potential rockets. Sadly, that cannot be said for the rest of the world's population, or even the Jewish population in this country ...

Each year the remarkable survivors of the holocaust grow older, and sadly year by year their numbers decrease. It is therefore vital that we make a continued, conscious effort to learn their stories and the true history of the holocaust, so that we not only let them live on, but educate each other to ensure that we never allow the same atrocities to occur. ...

col 483 I have an overwhelming amount of respect for the survivors of the holocaust, who



so importantly and bravely share and recount their stories over and over for the benefit of others. To live through those circumstances and then be brave enough to share them continuously with others is a phenomenal feat, but it is crucial.

Antisemitism is not new, and it did not originate with Hitler. Throughout Europe, Jewish people have been subjected to antisemitism since the middle ages. The hatred escalated significantly after the great war, when the reparations placed on Germany and its allies were extreme. We had the Wall Street crash, followed by the depression, leading in turn to rampant inflation in Germany and the collapse of the Weimar republic.

Last year, I related some of the challenges faced between the wars in this country, particularly on the growth of antisemitism, but we should remember that the same thing happened in the United States, growing from the traditional hostilities of Christianity towards Judaism. Jews have been targeted since the middle ages. America was rife with antisemitism from the early colonial days. However, as Jews represented only a small part of American society, it remained dormant. Antisemitism flourished in the 1880s with the arrival of 2 million Jewish immigrants fleeing eastern Europe, particularly from parts of the Russian empire, where persecution was frequent.

Towards the end of the 19th century, conditions for Jews worsened with the passage of ever more restrictive legislation and recurring Government-initiated violent attacks against Jewish communities, commonly known as pogroms. Consequently, Jews began fleeing in great numbers to the United States. ...

We rarely talk about the antisemitic movement in America—more often than not, we concentrate wholly on Nazi Germany—but it was a grave situation across Europe, and also specifically in the States. Antisemitism became ever more common in almost every aspect of American culture.

**Bob Stewart:** What I struggle with is this: what is it that people hate about Jews? Is it about religion? What is it that has come across the ages? I just do not get it.

**Bob Blackman:** ... It is hard to understand blind prejudice, but that is what it is. People are possibly fearful of the success of those who strive to do better for themselves, their children and their children's children. That is the only reason I can think of: that people are jealous of what Jewish people have been able to do, solely through their own efforts. ...

col 484 I turn back to what happened in the United States. Newspapers and magazines were commonly printing antisemitic attacks. There were racist cartoons. Antisemites represented high positions in the federal Government. There was Jewish exclusion from social clubs and discrimination in employment opportunities. Many towns adopted zoning regulations to prevent the sale of land and houses to Jews. From 1922, following the example set by the leading University of Harvard, many prominent educational institutions imposed strict quotas on the number of Jews they allowed to study. Throughout the 1920s, renowned car producer Henry Ford published a weekly newspaper called *The Dearborn Independent*, which attracted an audience of over 700,000 people. He launched a vicious and persistent campaign against "The International Jew". He blamed the Jewish community for all that was wrong with society, from threatening the capitalist system to undermining the moral values of the nation. ...

Many miles across the globe, that narrative was gaining traction in Germany with the rapid rise of the Nazi party under Adolf Hitler. ...

The political landscape in Germany took a sharp turn following the Wall Street crash in 1929. The economy slammed to a halt, and the USA loans that were helping repay the great war reparations soon dried up. The Nazis used that polarising landscape to exploit the crisis and loudly condemn the ruling Government. Slowly but surely, the Nazi party was gaining more and more support. ...

The Nazi persecution of the Jewish community continued: subtly at first, then more and more discriminative, until in 1938 it took an exponential and unignorable turn. The night of Kristallnacht was a significant moment in the persecution of Jews in Germany. Until that point, although still despicable, the repressive policies had been largely non-violent.

However, on the night of Kristallnacht, the Nazis torched synagogues, vandalised Jewish homes, schools and businesses, and murdered over 100 Jews. In the aftermath, some 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to the concentration camps. After Kristallnacht, the conditions for German Jews grew increasingly and drastically worse. ...

*col 485* It saddens me that, almost 80 years later, the Jewish community is again being unjustly marginalised. The conflict in Gaza following the horrific terror attacks on Israel by the Hamas terror group on 7 October is a terrifying example of religion-based hatred still occurring today. The repercussions include a huge surge in antisemitic hate in the United Kingdom. It is truly appalling that in this country today schoolchildren have to hide their uniforms on the bus to protect themselves just because they show them to be Jewish. ... Israel is a small country, and it is highly likely that Jewish people in the UK will have family, friends or connections who are suffering from the deadly attacks that Hamas are inflicting on the state of Israel every single day. ...

**Theresa Villiers (Conservative):** ... Every year in preparing for Holocaust Memorial Day, I struggle all over again to comprehend how a well-educated, highly cultured and seemingly civilised society in Germany could turn on its Jewish citizens with such cold-hearted barbarism. Those Jewish communities had been part of central and eastern Europe for centuries, and were so dehumanised by hate-filled Nazi propaganda that most people just stood by when their Jewish neighbours were herded in ghettos and then on to trucks and trains bound for the death camps.

Holocaust Memorial Day is an opportunity to remember a series of genocidal crimes, including the holodomor perpetrated on the Ukrainian people, about which I have spoken in past debates. But it is hard to think of anything that can match the sheer scale of the evil perpetrated by the Nazis in carrying out murder on an industrial scale, brutally cutting short the lives of six million Jewish men, women and children, and millions of others just because they were gay, Roma, Sinti, disabled or because they were brave enough to resist the Nazis. ...

*col 486* We also need to reflect on this country's approach to its mandate in Palestine and its decision to seek to reduce Jewish migration there in the 1930s, just when so many were trying to flee attacks in Europe. It is possible that many more could have escaped the Nazis if the British mandate authorities had taken a different approach. Even after the savagery of the holocaust was fully revealed, British resistance to Jewish migration to the Holy Land continued. Those Jewish people trying to make a new life for themselves in the Jewish state that had been promised were turned away and left in displaced persons camps. Some were even sent back to Germany, from where they had come. ...

Like my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich East (Nicola Richards), I felt a palpable sense of shock a few weeks ago when I saw another collection of shoes and belongings forever lost to the Jewish people who owned them. I saw that in an exhibition in Tel Aviv on the Hamas terror attack on the Nova music festival. The items had been retrieved from the Nova site and provided a truly chilling and harrowing reminder of the Yad Vashem display. ...

During that visit, I, too, saw the chilling 47-minute film of footage from the 7 October attacks. I did not want to see the film, but I felt I ought to. The horror of that footage stays with me in my nightmares, and I mean that literally—it haunts my sleeping hours. ... It was a horror to see those scenes replayed just over 100 days ago. We should be in no doubt in this House of the genocidal intentions of Hamas towards Israel and all Jewish people—intentions in their founding charter, and which they have reiterated many times since the 7 October atrocity.

I want to conclude with a reflection on the recent brave article by Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, responding to those who accuse Israel of genocide. We should heed his words that misappropriation of the word “genocide” is an affront to the victims of the unspeakable crimes that we remember today. As he said, its use in this context is the ultimate demonisation of the Jewish state. It is a moral inversion that undermines the memory of

the worst crimes in human history. As we say, “Never again”, on Holocaust Memorial Day, and we renew our commitment to combating antisemitism and racism, let us remember the November march in London, where hundreds of thousands turned out to support Israel and the Jewish community, many with placards telling us, “Never again is now”. ...

**col 487 Matthew Offord (Conservative):** ... For many years, I have been interested in the holocaust. I was interested in how it happened, how it came about, why no one spoke out against it, why ordinary decent middle class Germans either did not know about it or refused to accept that it happened, and what consequences remain today. ...

**col 488** It has been acknowledged and is not disputed that the UK refused to take refugees from Jewish communities after the second world war. Many other countries in Europe also refused. Some populations took part in the murder of Jews alongside the Nazis. Others had simply misappropriated Jewish lands and property, and were not giving it back. Jewish people had nowhere to go and it was vital that a homeland was provided for the survivors. Israel is the historic homeland of the Jewish people and it was the right course of action to re-establish the country on 14 May 1948. Almost half of all Jewish survivors of the holocaust, 49%, today live in Israel. About 18% live in north America and about 18% in western Europe. Approximately 1,200 survivors live in Britain, many of them in the Hendon constituency. ...

Yesterday, I spoke to a neighbour of mine, who told me about her daughter’s university experience at University College London. As she said, they are a liberal Jewish family who have a Jewish faith but are not orthodox. You would not know by looking at them that they are Jewish. Unless my constituent’s daughter told you she was Jewish, it would not be apparent. But what her daughter has heard in lectures and in the university itself are things she refuses to leave unchallenged. I have known her for many years and she is not a belligerent person, but students have told her that there are no Arabs in Israel, all Jews are wealthy and Jews control the world—all the usual tropes that we are now hearing more and more. She has pushed back but has been shunned by the other pupils, who refuse to sit next to her in lectures. Another student complained that there is an antisemitism tsar at UCL. My constituent’s daughter said that it was not a competition or even a privilege to have such a tsar, but that explanation was rejected and a demand was subsequently made for an anti-Islamophobia tsar, for no other reason than there is an antisemitism tsar. Young people in my constituency are now fearful of attending university and it is obvious why. Jewish students are held responsible for the actions of the Israeli Government, and the same is now steadily creeping into our schools.

There is a clear link between these attitudes and the terrorist attacks in Israel on 7 October. Those attacks were no different from what the Nazis were doing. Their intention was to kill as many Jews as possible and it remains a real concern to many of my constituents. Just like the holocaust deniers, there are deniers of what happened in Israel on 7 October. ... We did visit Israel a few weeks after the attacks and we did see things that I certainly never expected to see. ...

**col 489** When we were at the Shura base, the colonel, I believe it was, in charge opened the mortuary. ... what I remember is the smell. It was the smell not only of blood and death, which I have smelt before, but formaldehyde, some kind of chemical used to preserve the bodies. Many of the bodies, approximately 200, were left there because they could not be identified. The reason they could not be identified is that some were headless, some were just a head, some were limbs and some were bodies fused together by fire. What really upset me and my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole was when the colonel whipped his phone from his pocket and showed us a video. I will not even mention what was on it. I do not talk to my staff or my family about what was there, but it was something that is not in the 47-minute video and it is not something that can be forgotten. ...

In the weeks since 7 October, I have received several emails from constituents. ... One email said: “I am writing to you today as a concerned member of your constituency and, more importantly, as a British Jew who is increasingly fearful for the safety of my family,

friends, and community. Recent events have compelled me to express my deep concerns about the rise of antisemitic incidents and the apparent inadequacy of the response from law enforcement. Following the advice from the police on October 7th, instructing our sons to conceal their Jewish symbols while traveling to school, my family and I were already grappling with a heightened sense of vulnerability. As a community, we have observed instances where the police seemed to turn a blind eye to chants and unpleasant behaviour during weekly marches, fostering an environment where antisemitic sentiments are allowed to flourish unchecked. Recent events have left me questioning the assurances we once held that if these protests were to turn violent, the police would intervene decisively.” She goes on to mention the alleged assault on a group of Israelis in Leicester Square on 20 January. She concludes by saying that she feels that she cannot allow her son “to use any Hebrew or Jewish-sounding words when traveling, out of fear that he may become a target for senseless violence. It is deeply disheartening to realize that, in London 2024, Jewish people feel compelled to hide their identity and censor their innocent language for their own safety.” ...

**col 490 Kirsten Oswald (SNP):** ... The theme of this year’s Holocaust Memorial Day is “fragility of freedom”. To me things seem that bit more fragile and that bit more strained, and I was struck by hearing the same point made earlier this week by Rabbi Rubin, the Senior Rabbi of Scotland. I often speak in this place about the importance of freedom to follow the religion of one’s choice or to follow no religion, and across the globe that freedom is increasingly under threat. We are witnessing eye-watering spikes in antisemitism and Islamophobia. We need to mean what we say and stand up against that hatred—against the misinformation and disinformation, the tropes and the trolls, and the plain holocaust deniers. ...

We also need to be vigilant, and face hard truths. Intolerance and hatred are increasing, and those who peddle hatred, here and throughout the world, do feel empowered. ... We need to remember that genocides do not just suddenly happen in faraway places. They are always the product of the gradual and deliberate “othering”, demeaning, dehumanising and diminishing of people simply because of their identity. ... they are fuelled by ordinary people acting in extraordinarily awful ways, empowered by the encouraging and normalising of hatred. ...

I was fortunate to attend my local holocaust memorial event at the start of the week, as I do every year. These events have been, without exception, profoundly moving, and this year’s was no different. I am grateful to East Renfrewshire Council and the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, especially Kirsty Robson, for putting it together so effectively. ...

**col 491** At the event we also heard from Geraldine Shenkin, who spoke powerfully about her lovely mum, Marianne Grant, whose story has been captured in materials used in Scottish schools thanks to the work of Vision Schools Scotland ... Suffice it to say that her mum endured the most terrifying, inhumane and shocking treatment as she survived Theresienstadt and Auschwitz before her liberation from Bergen-Belsen.

Marianne Grant was an artist, and while in Auschwitz she was forced to draw for Dr Mengele, known as the Angel of Death, whom she recalled walking back and forth in front of her nose in his black uniform as she drew, “like a clock pendulum”. The horrors that she experienced are beyond our imaginings, but of course they would have been unimaginable to her too until her life was turned upside down in that most horrific way.

The same can be said of the lives of Henry and the late Ingrid Wuga, Kindertransport children who escaped and later met, married and made their home in my constituency. They have changed countless lives with their work telling our young people about the reality of the Holocaust, and we owe them both a huge debt of gratitude for that. ...

**col 492** It would not be a Holocaust Memorial Day debate for me without my touching on another ray of hope, offered in the person of Jane Haining, the Scottish matron in a Budapest school who refused to leave her young Jewish charges despite knowing what the dangers were, and who paid for that decision with her life. ...

**Liz Twist (Labour):** ... We remember the families, communities, cultures and traditions lost forever to hatred and persecution, and we pay tribute to the survivors. Their lives irrevocably altered by devastating violence, we owe them great gratitude for sharing their testimonies and exposing the true horrors they experienced, in order that we can all bear witness. ...

*col 493* Recalling his return to the site of Auschwitz-Birkenau, holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said: "It has swallowed an entire people...a people with hopes and memories."

This week we honour those hopes and memories and the rich individual lives that lie behind the dreadful statistics that have been referenced across the House throughout this debate. We also remember the many others killed by the Nazi regime, including more than a quarter of a million disabled people, up to half a million Roma and Sinti people, and thousands of LGBT people, many of whom have had to fight to be recognised as victims. These crimes were the most terrifying consequences of identity-based persecution.

Today, people around the world, and here in the UK, continue to face deep hostility because of who they are. Over the past decade, we have seen rises in hate crime of every category. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities face persistent discrimination. Many LGBT+ people continue to face hostile environments. And in the months since 7 October, as we have heard today, we have seen an unprecedented rise in incidents of antisemitism and Islamophobia. This Holocaust Memorial Day, we must all remember our common humanity. We must remember, too, that the prevention of atrocities begins at home, and we must seek to unite our communities, to prevent hatred and polarisation, and to warn against the dangers posed by insidious hatred. ...

As Nazi horrors spread across Europe, Jews in occupied countries were forced into ghettos and deported to concentration or extermination camps. This was the ultimate manifestation of violence, which took away their freedom to live, but it did not come from nowhere. That is why this year's theme asks us to remember how climates for genocide are created. It is a reminder that freedom can be vulnerable, and that we should not take it for granted.

By providing a focal point, Holocaust Memorial Day ensures that we come together to remember and to mourn victims of genocide each and every year. Local activities will be taking place all over the UK this week, and I pay tribute to the many organisers who are ensuring that generations of young people continue to hear these vital messages. It is estimated that more than 10,000 such local activities take place across the UK around 27 January each year, which is a magnificent achievement.

*col 494* I also pay tribute to the Holocaust Educational Trust and the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, which have worked hard to embed understanding of the holocaust in our education system. It is thanks to the Holocaust Educational Trust that learning about the holocaust has been a compulsory part of the national curriculum for more than 30 years. Since 2006, its "Lessons from Auschwitz" project has allowed post-16 students in schools and colleges to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the face of dangerous holocaust denial and distortion, these lessons are of paramount importance. ...

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Simon Hoare):** ... As many right hon. and hon. Members have noted, the theme of this year's Holocaust Memorial Day is the "fragility of freedom". It is not just about the fragility of freedom in emerging democracies or elsewhere in the world; it is about the threat and the challenge to all mature western democracies. Frankly, we have grown complacent about our rights and privileges, and about our freedom to think, speak, write, congregate, worship and pray. Too much of it is under attack, whether by social media, the ease of populism or the search for the simple in a complex world. ...

The big numbers of the holocaust make it hard to envisage, as all big numbers and statistics do, so let us pause for a moment not to think of 6 million as just another statistic. I follow the Auschwitz Memorial Twitter feed ... and, virtually every day, it presents a picture or pictures of men, women and children. These ordinary folk were starved, taken from their homes, persecuted and incinerated—the true meaning of the word "holocaust"—

for their faith. Let us recommit to always seeing these people for what they are, people, fellow human beings, and never as just a statistic, whether they be Jewish, Bosnian, Rwandan or Cambodian.

*col 495* What we must always remember, as many contributors have reminded us so powerfully today, is that down the centuries the Jewish people have always been forced to look over their shoulders, with pogroms, the holocaust, displacement, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion” and the Dreyfus case. They are a people always worried that they are only temporarily tolerated, rather than permanently welcomed. ...

*col 496* A common theme has been smell, a sense that is often not spoken about enough. We talk about our memories of what we have seen or heard, but smell can be hugely evocative, be it of a time or place in our childhood, a holiday or whatever. ... My right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet and my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Goole also spoke about the recent smell of death and rotting flesh. The father of a great friend of mine had been part of the medical team that went into Belsen, and until his death he always spoke about the smell that was still on his skin. We should remember that always.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh West (Christine Jardine) spoke of the complacency of the view that, “It’s all history.” It is not history; it is happening now. When we think it is history—that either it is not happening or it cannot happen again—we have lost the battle, have we not? What was the holocaust and why should we remember it? We can remember it for the horror, the statistics, the figures and the scale, but the eternal shame, to use the phrase of my right hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham, is that it was man’s inhumanity to man. We should all be ashamed and embarrassed by it, because it shows, at the darkest and basest moments of humankind, precisely what we can do to each other, in the name of doctrine, theology, ideology. It is a terrible thing that we have somewhere deep within our DNA. Let us resolve to keep it buried. ...

*col 497* How right my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet and my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East were to remind us of the uncomfortable truth, as the right hon. Member for Barking did, of our slightly uncomfortable position with regard to the welcoming of Jewish children through the Kindertransport but not their parents, and the controls that we placed on Jewish migration and the problems that caused for too many people. ...

However, wherever, whoever and whenever, how they died, where they died, and who they were, let us unite today and always to mark and reflect on all of those who have lost their lives, to both the holocaust and all holocausts. May all of their sacrifices not have been in vain. May all of their memories be a blessing.

*col 498 Margaret Hodge:* ... I want to reflect on what the hon. Member for West Bromwich East (Nicola Richards) said. Like her, I went to the exhibition about the Nova festival ... The picture of the shoe lying on the ground, as people were slaughtered at the festival, reminds us of the Holocaust and what we see in Auschwitz, which I do not think any of us can forget. I never smelled the smell in Kfar Aza—I probably went a few weeks after the hon. Members for Brigg and Goole (Andrew Percy) and for Hendon (Dr Offord)—but I felt the misery and horror that people experienced there. I agree with all hon. Members that the growth of antisemitism on our streets today, as with the growth of Islamophobia, should chill us all and make us think about how we do things.

My final words relate to what was said by the hon. Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman). Jews have maintained hope through the generations—that is probably why we have survived in the way we have. I hope we can leave today’s debate with a feeling of hope and determination that we will build a society of tolerance, both here and across the world. We should learn that hate will not bring us the peaceful co-existence we all want. Freedom is fragile, and we all have to put every effort into securing freedom for everybody, wherever they live, whoever they are and whatever their background or religion. ...

***To read the full transcript see***

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-01-25/debates/AA595636-3E4E-4943-9849-85FC2512730A/HolocaustMemorialDay>

and

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-01-25/debates/4DF50C6F-D23B-48B4-9133-276FC08CC763/HolocaustMemorialDay>

## House of Commons Oral Answers

### Business of the House

**Peter Bottomley (Conservative):** Will my right hon. Friend ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to make a statement next week on the instructions to the advocate for his Department at the Holocaust Memorial Bill Select Committee? Yesterday, on a number of occasions, the lead advocate said that the design had not been awarded to Sir David Adjaye, or that he was not the architect.

I refer the Leader of the House to the press notice on 24 October 2017, in which the Department and the Cabinet Office said that Sir David and his team would design the memorial; the then Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir Sajid Javid), and the Mayor of London congratulated Sir David; and Sir David was quoted as saying that it was “architecture as emotion”.

I believe that the advocate may have inadvertently told the Committee things that are clearly contradicted by the facts six years ago, and by every other quotation until Sir David Adjaye became a name that could not be mentioned.

Will the Leader of the House please ask the Secretary of State to consider making a statement to correct what was said to the Committee yesterday, and perhaps acknowledge the four holocaust survivors who gave evidence, and look at what they said?

**Penny Mordaunt:** I thank my hon. Friend for again diligently raising this important issue; I understand that the forums in which he can do so are limited, which is why he brings it to the Floor of the House each week. He has put those points on the record, as well as his thanks to those survivors for their important intervention. As the Secretary of State will not take questions until 4 March, I will again ensure that he has heard what my hon. Friend has said.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-01-25/debates/1948D8A9-8F06-4135-ABEB-7FEDA9E0C5C9/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-C44ABB1C-D9FA-45E6-A648-66C8E882BC43>

*The comments in Select Committee referred to above can be read in paras 474 to 488 at <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14140/html/>*

*The press notice referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/adjaye-associates-and-ron-arad-architects-win-uk-holocaust-memorial-international-design-competition>

### Business of the House

**Barry Sheerman (Labour Co-op):** May I inform the Leader of the House that we already have a holocaust memorial centre at the University of Huddersfield at the heart of Huddersfield? All Members hope that the new holocaust memorial centre at the heart of Westminster will happen soon. ...

**Penny Mordaunt:** I thank the hon. Gentleman. I learn something new every session. I shall have to investigate the first half of his question ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-01-25/debates/1948D8A9-8F06-4135-ABEB-7FEDA9E0C5C9/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-C5064C42-22FC-4217-B594-6CB1C4C97CC7>

## Holocaust Memorial Bill Committee

### Petitions against the Bill: 24 January 2024 (morning)

**7 Ms Prothero [Witness]:** ... I am a landscape architect and director of my own practice and I specialise in new design within the historic landscape and public parks. I am consultant to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, advising on numerous historic park projects, and I have carried out over 40 significant restorations and new-design park projects for various clients, including Kew Gardens, Royal Parks, private clients and local authorities and preservation trusts. ...

**9** So I am giving evidence at this Committee as a trustee of the London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust and I am chair of their planning and conservation working group. ...

**10** So the main three points that I will talk about are that the Holocaust memorial should be treated separately from the learning centre, as it is referred separately in the Act. There is sufficient space in the park to accommodate a suitable memorial and place the learning centre elsewhere. The promoter has considerably underestimated the amount of usable green space that will be left in the park, should the current Adjaye architects' designs go ahead. And if only a memorial were to be built in Victoria Tower Gardens, there would be no need to lift the 1900 Act and either clause 2 could be omitted or at least amended to allow a memorial of a suitable scale that the park can take. ...

**12** So it has been consistently said by the promoter that the proposals take up only 7.5% of Victoria Tower Gardens. ... As a result, it may have been difficult for people to understand the likely impact of both the memorial and the learning centre on the gardens and the space to be taken up. ...

**13** It has been repeatedly said that the memorial and learning centre takes up only 7.85% of the park and this might sound acceptable on first hearing ... But there has not been a publicly available measured plan showing how the 7.5% has been arrived at and therefore what the real impact on the gardens is. ...

**16** ... [in] the proposed plan, the architect's plan ... you can see the triangular shaped entrance building; you can see the memorial fins, which are sort of in the middle of the slide; the ramp that leads down between the entrance building and the fins into the learning centre steps; and then the mound, which is to the right, covering the underground learning centre box. And you can see in this plan as well that – well, you cannot see – the tree canopy, as depicted, obscures much of what is proposed at the perimeter. You cannot see the reduction in the lawn at the perimeter or the paths ...

**26 Mr Doctor KC [on behalf of London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust, Petitioner]:** And it is on the basis of this they say that red part ...

**28** ... is meant to be 7.5% of the green part.

**29 Ms Prothero:** Yes, yes, it is, 7.58% of the internal, and the internal room spaces are measured. ...

**32** ... but they do not reflect the space that the whole development occupies in the park and so that seems to be contrary to Baroness Scott of Bybrook's response to the parliamentary question as to how much space of the park will be occupied. The area given in that plan is 1,429 square metres and it was described in the answer as being 'the area in square metres of Victoria Tower Gardens, as a whole, that will be occupied by the intended UK Holocaust memorial and learning centre, including (a) the entrance pavilion; (b) the courtyard and ramp into the learning centre; (c) the associated hardstanding; (d) the service access; (e) new access paths; and (f) the parts of the mound not accessible to the public; and (g) areas to be enclosed to ensure the security of the centre'. So that is what is supposed to be included in that red line but, clearly, it is not. ... [[click here](#) to read the parliamentary answer referred to above, and [here](#) to see the plans referred to above]

**37 Mr Doctor KC:** So the answer was that this is the area in square metres as a whole that would be occupied by the intended Holocaust memorial and learning centre. ...



**39** They said it included (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f) and (g).

**40 Ms Prothero:** Yes. ...

**47 Mr Doctor KC:** ... the area of 1,429 is said to include, but it is not within the red area ...

**49** ... the service access, the new access paths ...

**51** The parts of the mound not accessible to the public ...

**52** And the area is to be enclosed to ensure the security of the centre ...

**56 Ms Prothero:** ... The words do not match the drawing. ...

**57 Mr Doctor KC:** ... so the point you are making is the answer, which contains the calculation, contains much more area than the red line contains.

**58 Ms Prothero:** That is correct. That is it. ...

**60** ... many of the items identified in the 1,429 square metres or the 7.5%, have not been included. ... The area is being misrepresented ... So it is possible that the impact in the park is being misunderstood by people to date. ...

**64** ... the total area occupied by the proposals is not 1,429 square metres but between 3,257 square metres and 4,565 square metres and this is really only the parts of the proposals that are within that green, central, open, usable grass space of the park. It does not include the area that has been taken from the play area.

**65** So just to explain, the 3,257 square metres is a conservative measurement ... It does not include the additional planting, which is proposed to be adjacent to the sunken courtyard. People obviously cannot walk up right to the edge of the courtyard. It does not include the majority of the mound. ... As a percentage of the open space used in the conservative calculation, it is 30% of that central green area ... but if you include the ... mound ... and the planting, then that percentage of the usable space taken up is 42%. And just remember that this still does not include the space ... which is the area taken from the play area.

**66** So as a percentage of the whole park ... that equals between 17%, on a very conservative calculation, to 24% ... and, remember, that does not include the space taken from the play area, which are another 370 square metres. ...

**69** ... some people will say, 'Well, planting is part of the park. What is your problem with having more planting? That is a good thing. That makes the park nicer, doesn't it?' But you cannot picnic in the planting beds adjacent to a path with lots of people walking through it. If you have a national event like the Queen's lying in state, where the queue covered these entire gardens, you cannot have people and all the infrastructure for a queue on a mound, certainly not on the very steep part of the mound. But even a shallow mound makes this space very difficult for those kinds of national events and we need to remember, this park was used for the same purpose for Churchill's lying in state as well. So this is a place of national significance for many different things and this proposal would make those very, very difficult or curtailed in scale and function. ...

**72 [a]** very limited space that will be created around the Buxton memorial, now proposed to be a seating area, the 'Buxton seating area', it is referred to. ... that is between one and a half and two metres, depending on whether you have the seating or not around the Buxton memorial. And in a public space ... two metres is incredibly narrow for trying to get round even a seating area, let alone a part of the public walkway. Of course, there is the public walk to the south but it is a very tight space. ...

**75 Mr Doctor KC:** ... I just want to get your description of, the area, the courtyard as it were from the entrance pavilion ... there is then a courtyard leading to the fins. ...

**77** The purpose of the courtyard is to contain the crowds which are meant to walk through the fins into the underground learning centre. ...

**79** So if you had no underground learning centre and you just had the memorial itself, the memorial itself, that is the fins ...

**81** ... you could walk around them or through them. ...

**82 Ms Prothero:** ... yes, those memorial fins could be placed there or somewhere else

within the gardens as they were not serving as the entrance to a major building.

**83 Mr Doctor KC:** ... So the courtyard is the entrance to the underground centre. ...

**85** And it has to, of course, have a fence around it, which is security conscious ...

**86 Ms Prothero:** ... it is actually a ramp down to the entrance to the building, to the learning centre building ...

**87 Mr Doctor KC:** And do you know what the promoters suggest are the numbers of people who will visit per annum? ...

**89** It is at least 1 million extra visitors per year. ...

**91** 10,000 a day or 1 million a year are going to have to be corralled in this area, the ramp, in order to get into the learning centre. ...

**97 Ms Prothero:** ... A lot of people have said, 'Oh, but it's fine. You won't see [the learning centre] because it's underground' ... [but] it is not as completely underground as people might like to have thought.

**98** ... the steep area of the mound ... is very impractical in park terms, both for use and access and maintenance. It is really, really difficult to maintain such a steep grass slope as this. I do not know if you have been to the café in St James' Park where they fenced it off because it is too steep for people running up it or throwing things over the top of the viewing area there ... It is very likely to become muddy and eroded in such a small space. We are not told of the detail at the top of the mound, or how it will be kept out of bounds for people potentially wanting to throw things into the sunken courtyard below. Will there be more fencing or CCTV? I mean, this is a park. The mound might be great for kids on mountain bikes and they will not mind a bit of mud, but is that how you want your national Holocaust memorial to look? ...

**102 The Chair (John Stevenson, Conservative):** ... there seems to be an awful lot about planning. ... an awful lot of this, I think, is outside the remit of this Committee at this stage. ...

**104 Mr Doctor KC:** ... the purpose of this is to support our proposed amendment ...

**111 The Chair:** ... we are going an awful long way round, talking about things that are not within the remit of this Committee, and I think it is more important to get to the nub of the argument ...

**123 Ms Prothero:** ... So the proposals for the memorial and learning centre mean that the Grade II registered gardens will fulfil all the criteria to be put on Historic England's heritage at risk register. This is because, and to quote Historic England's criteria for inclusion on that register, 'the cohesiveness of its historic design will be lost'. ...

**129 Mr Katkowski KC [on behalf of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities]:** ... Where is this all going? What do you want the Committee to do on behalf of the petitioner?

**130 Ms Prothero:** ... We would like them to separate the learning centre from the memorial itself.

**131 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... and what does that actually mean? We have had mentioned yesterday the suggestion that an amendment should be made to the Bill so that there could not be a learning centre within Victoria Tower Gardens. Is that the same point that you are making today or is it some different point? ...

**132 Ms Prothero:** That is pretty much the same amendment, yes. ...

**138** I seek that clause 2 should be removed. ...

**141 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... An amendment to clause 2, which would retain clause 2 but in some way say that it does not apply to a learning centre, is one thing ... Getting rid of clause 2 completely is wholly different because that would prevent a memorial. ...

**142 Ms Prothero:** It could be amended to allow a memorial of a suitable scale that would fit in the gardens. ...

**152** ... we would like clause 2 to be omitted or at the very least amended to allow a

memorial of a suitable scale.

**153 Mr Katkowski KC:** Right. Well, I have got the bit about no learning centre so what is this bit about a memorial of a suitable scale? Because obviously that is all planning. The argument about whether the memorial we propose is of a suitable scale, or whether it should be something else, is quintessentially a planning argument. ...

**154 Ms Prothero:** ... the percentages that were given at the planning inquiry were incorrect. ...

**157 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... We have dealt with all of that and the inspector agreed with us on some points and agreed with you on some points and came to an overall conclusion ...

**163** And it is not for this Committee to start questioning what has been said to Parliament. There have been three written answers on this subject. Plans have been deposited with each of them and they set out the various different areas. I am sorry but this is all not within the remit of this Committee. ...

**167 The Chair:** Would you accept that, had it not been for the 1900 Act, this planning application would have been going ahead?

**168 Ms Prothero:** ... if it had been dealt with by Westminster City Council, it most certainly would not have. ...

**170** It would, yes. ...

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**179 Mr Moggridge [Witness]:** ... I am Hal Moggridge. I am a patron of the London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust and a landscape architect and I am a past president of the Landscape Institute. I am now a consultant of my practice, Colvin and Moggridge, which is the oldest landscape architecture practice in the UK ...

**180** I am a member of ICOMOS-UK, Cultural Landscapes and Historic Gardens Committee and a life member of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes. I have served on the Royal Fine Art Commission and on the National Trust's architectural panel, and perhaps most important from this subject, from 1992 to 2005 I was landscape consultant to the inner London Royal Parks. ...

**184** ... I have developed a design ... to show the potential for a suitable memorial, in keeping with the gardens and existing monuments, which could be achieved quickly, which is the desire of both promoters and Parliament. I am placing the learning centre elsewhere and developing the new design for the memorial, which responds to UNESCO's expressed concerns. And if Parliament is resolved that the underground learning centre, with the associated mounding, really is needed in Victoria Tower Gardens, then it will be important to confine its overground physical extent to the 1,429 square metres. ...

**186** First, I will consider where a new freestanding memorial could be placed in Victoria Tower Gardens so as to protect the interests of the existing users of Victoria Tower Gardens and the heritage significance of the park. A fitting Holocaust memorial must clearly be present as a memorial. The promoter's memorial proposal significantly fails in this respect because it would appear to be just a large entrance portal to an underground learning space. If possible, there should be a nearby place for quiet contemplation where it is possible to weep internally and quietly for the horrors of the Holocaust. Crowds entering a learning centre provide exactly the opposite atmosphere, as a visualisation supplied by the promoter illustrates, an atmosphere even more merry by the presence of the children's playground. ...

**187** ... Siting the memorial to protect the existing users of Victoria Tower Gardens. A calm and simple space, a lawn framed by trees, uninterrupted by paths or significant level changes, is the core of this small public park intended for recreation and enjoyment, whether by local residents, workers or tourists. ...

**188** The present playground for little children was designed with local children, giving it an inherent value for the local community which should be conserved by keeping the

playground to its present layout ...

**189** Any Holocaust memorial, in my opinion, should be kept well away from the happiness of playing children. Little children also play all over the level green lawn in the centre of the park ... The new Holocaust memorial should not be placed anywhere in the middle of this invaluable public space ... Like other memorials in Victoria Tower Gardens, such as the Buxton memorial, the new memorial should be located somewhere to the side of the open lawn and the Buxton memorial deserves an undisrupted, open semi-circle, at least the width of the gardens, for full appreciation of its beauty. ...

**193** Sometimes large groups fill up Victoria Tower Gardens for purposes of great civic importance and the British way of life. Occasionally, the park becomes crowded with people preparing to demonstrate about some cause outside Parliament. ...

**194** Rarely, but constitutionally very importantly, the gardens are host to a crowd attending a great civic event. Recently, they served this vital purpose for both the lying in state in Westminster Hall of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and then for the coronation of King Charles III ...

**195** Now, the ideal way of conserving the park for these many uses is for the learning centre to be outside the park but the memorial, it would be possible for a memorial of reasonable scale to be in the park and the wording of the Bill appears to make this ideal option a possibility ...

**196** ... it should confine itself to the 1,249 metres squared which has been quoted as being required. ...

**197** Possible practical future built elements such as toilets for visitors at the entrance pavilion – which is planned without toilets at present ... should also be contained within this area.

**198** The current plan tabled by the promoter is to convert virtually the whole of Victoria Tower Gardens as a setting for the new learning centre. ...

**226** ... The most suitable place for a freestanding memorial is towards the north east corner of Victoria Tower Gardens, not too close to The Burghers of Calais, and it should be accessible from the path system round the edge of the open lawns ...

**228** ... This memorial would have no other function and its size as a discrete sculptural structure gives it a striking impact of a sort which a larger, more architectural construction lacks. ...

**232** ... the building ... is proposed to be made of stainless steel with a small, enclosed area inside, which could have things written up and that is the proposed memorial. The garden itself, which is in the shade of the trees, could be enriched by evergreen shrubs with nice little flowers. ...

**247 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... As I understand it, your point is this. If there is to be the memorial and learning centre which the Secretary of State proposes, if that is to happen in Victoria Tower Gardens, we all know that for that to happen, the 1900 Act has to be lifted to allow that to happen and I think you are saying that there should be an amendment to the Bill so that the extent of that lifting of the obstruction should be limited in some way, should be limited in geographical, territorial extent. ...

**255** So my understanding is that what you are saying to the Committee is that if there is to be the proposed memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens, there should be a limitation on the extent to which the statutory obstruction is lifted, either by square meterage or by percentage.

**256 Mr Moggridge:** Yes ...

**265 Mr Katkowski KC:** So concentrating on the principle, the difficulty that I want to put to you about either quoting a square meterage and/or quoting a percentage is that they are both controversial because those, including your good self ... and including the previous witness as well, Ms Prothero, do not accept the square meterage and the percentage that, for example, the promoter has put forward. Now, it would be much more sensible, would

it not, if you are to limit the extent of the lifting of the obstruction, the statutory obstruction, to do that by reference to a plan?

**266 Mr Moggridge:** Yes ...

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**277 Mr Lambert [Witness]:** My name is David Lambert and I am a director of a consultancy called the Parks Agency, which since 2000 has specialised in the history and also the management and use of public parks. ...

**279** I have served an expert adviser to three House of Commons Select Committees on public parks, cemeteries and on open space and I have been a member of advisory committees for the National Trust, Historic England, Historic Royal Palaces and in 2020 I gave evidence to the public inquiry for the memorial and learning centre.

**280** I understand that the evidence to this Select Committee should be restricted to the wording of the Bill so I will not rehearse objections to the proposed development but instead restrict my evidence to three points: with regard to the Bill, section 1(1)(a)(i), the difference between the memorial and the learning centre in the context of the function of public parks generally and Victoria Tower Gardens in particular; with regard to the Bill, section 1(1)(c), the need for clarification over the long term management and maintenance of the learning centre, if it is located in Victoria Tower Gardens, which is currently managed by the Royal Parks; and with regard to the Bill, section 2 – I will be very careful over this particular subject – the importance of legislation in protecting these vital parts of our urban infrastructure, and the need to respect such legislation and the risks of undoing it.

I preface these comments by stating I wholly recognise the importance of Jewish heritage in the UK and of memorialising and learning about the Holocaust. On that first point, although treated as a single entity throughout the planning process, the Holocaust memorial and the Holocaust learning centre are correctly and helpfully treated separately in the Bill, which refers in section 1(1) to expenditure on the construction of: (i) a memorial commemorating the victims of the Holocaust; and (ii) a centre for learning relating to the memorial.

**281** I note that ... the Minister, Ms Buchan, said in the debate on the instruction of this Committee on 23 June that the Committee's remit included the question of whether or not there should be a memorial commemorating the victims of the Holocaust or a centre for learning relating to the memorial, whether at Victoria Tower Gardens or elsewhere. The Minister's words seemed quite clear to me, but I gather there has been some debate over the precise meaning of those words. It seems to me that it is asking to separate consideration for the memorial and the learning centre ...

**282** While Victoria Tower Gardens, for reasons rehearsed elsewhere and in the public inquiry at length, is not an appropriate location for the learning centre, there is no reason why a Holocaust memorial, subject to an appropriate design and siting, could not be accommodated within the gardens. ... Public parks have always been appropriate locations for monuments and memorials; most of them accrete them gradually over time. ...

**283** Whatever their origin, the basic test for a monument in a park, apart from design, has always been subsidiarity to the park as a whole. ... Sculptural or monumental memorials in a wide range of contemporary designs have continued to be built in London parks, large and small, without compromising their basic function of providing a safe and beautiful place for recreation. Indeed, good quality memorials add to the public enjoyment and the cultural richness of those places. ...

**289** The Holocaust memorial, as proposed, is not simply a memorial; it doubles up as the entrance to a building. That building is so substantial that it contravenes the purposes of the 1900 Act to provide a public garden. Its central siting is such as to dominate visually but also functionally the open lawn which is the key feature of Victoria Tower Gardens. It is one thing to build a monument or a memorial in a garden or a park; it is quite another to

treat the park as a convenient space for a major new building. ...

**296** Victoria Tower Gardens is managed by the Royal Parks for the benefit of its users. It is proposed that the memorial and learning centre will be run by Holocaust Memorial Ltd. This new body will lease the area outlined as the footprint of the memorial and learning centre from DCMS or the Royal Parks. This area will, therefore, be excluded from the area directly managed by the Royal Parks. There are good reasons to be concerned about this divorce of the core from the rest of the park, especially in so small a site as Victoria Tower Gardens. ...

**298** ... I ask the Committee to consider introducing an amendment to clarify the future management structure and maintenance regime and to include a reference to safeguarding provisions for those members of the public who visit the gardens without wishing to visit the learning centre. ...

**313** Primary legislation in the form of Acts of Parliament has been and remains vital to safeguarding these urban open spaces. As Mrs Justice Thornton found in the High Court, the 1900 Act imposed an enduring obligation to retain Victoria Tower Gardens for use as a public garden. Seeking to overturn the 1900 Act is a drastic step in response to an adverse legal judgment on the proposed building and should not be undertaken except as a matter of last resort. ...

**323 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... Your point made to the Committee just now that removing section 8 of the 1900 Act from the gardens is a drastic step, that it should be a matter of last resort, what are you saying the Committee should do in response to that point, if anything? ...

**327** ... The very reason that we are here, obviously, is because the Bill seeks to remove the obstruction to building in the gardens, and the hybrid element which has led to this Committee is that local people are more affected than the general public. ...

**328 Mr Lambert:** My point is that it seems to me you are being invited to consider the memorial and the learning centre separately. ...

**335 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... The ... thing that I think is new with your evidence, so to speak, as opposed to the others who have spoken on behalf of the petitioner, is this point about maintenance and clarifying future maintenance. Can we just understand how the Bill works and then I can ask you exactly what it is that you want the Committee to do? Clause 1 is not hybrid at all; clause 1 is simply that the Secretary of State should have the ability to spend money on a memorial and learning centre anywhere in England and Wales. There is nothing hybrid about that, nothing to do with the Committee at all.

**336** Clause 2 is to lift the section 8 restrictions to allow a memorial and learning centre, which I say includes the memorial and learning centre, to allow those to be built in Victoria Tower Gardens and in the future maintained, so the section 8 restriction should not stop us being able to maintain the Holocaust memorial if we have built the Holocaust memorial and learning centre in the gardens in the first place. What on earth is wrong with any of that? What are you asking the Committee to do about that? It seems extremely sensible to be honest that if there is a memorial and learning centre in the gardens, we should be allowed to maintain them without some bit of legislation getting in our way.

**337 Mr Lambert:** All I am pointing out is that you are going to split the management of the site as a whole between two different bodies.

**338 Mr Katkowski KC:** That is nothing to do with the Bill ...

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**349 Response by Mr Katkowski KC:** ... Pretty much everything we have heard really is planning and not for this Committee. To the extent that amendments have been asked for, none of them are within scope apart from one, and that is the point which we previously touched on which is the idea of restricting the lifting of the statutory obstruction in some or other way. ...

**350** ... It is obvious that if there is to be anything in relation to that point, whatever it is

needs to refer to a plan rather than a percentage of the gardens or a square meterage. I say that because ... a large amount of time was spent at the planning inquiry arguing about the accuracy of percentages and square meterage. One would have thought it should not be beyond the wit of man and woman to be able to agree square meterage and percentages but, unfortunately, we never got to that position, and so any percentage and square meterage would prove to be controversial.

**351** The sensible way, if there is to be anything along these lines, is to have a plan. ...

**353** ... If I can then just come back to the broader point about this, this obviously is to control the extent of the lifting of the 1900 Act in relation to the completed project and what I said in opening plainly still stands today; it is potentially in scope for the Committee. The Committee has our position, that we do not regard any such restriction as necessary. I am going to come back to why the word 'necessary' is important, because the extent of the project is fundamentally controlled by the planning process. We cannot build anything beyond that which we get planning permission for, assuming that we do get planning permission in due course for the project, or for some other project.

**354** ... In the event the Committee considers that something is necessary on this point ... there is a sequence of potential ways in which the matter could be dealt with. There's the giving of an assurance; there's the giving of an undertaking; and then a final option on the list would be to actually amend the Bill in some way.

**355** On the first two of those, an assurance or an undertaking, I would simply need to have instructions on the matter, and we would simply need to draft some words and put them before you. Were there to be any thought of an amendment, then that is a matter for parliamentary counsel to draft. ...

**356** Now I will come back to that word 'necessary' ... Anything, whether it is by way of assurance, undertaking or amendment, needs to be something which is considered by you, the Committee, to be necessary. ... not just a nice thing to have; it needs to be necessary. ... it is for the petitioners to make good their case that one or other of these things – an assurance, an undertaking or an amendment – is necessary. The onus is on them, and entirely and only on them, to persuade you that one or other of those things is necessary, in the sense that without it the Bill would not be satisfactory to you.

**357** The flip side of that is that it does not fall to the promoter, to us, to prove the opposite, to prove that an assurance, an undertaking or an amendment, is unnecessary. The burden is entirely on the petitioners. ...

**361 The Chair:** Clearly, if section 2 were to go through, for all we know – and nobody can make a judgment of the future – there could be a completely different planning application.

**362 Mr Katkowski KC:** Indeed, yes.

**363 The Chair:** It could be lifted to allow to whatever planning proposal came forward and was accepted at some point in the future.

**364 Mr Katkowski KC:** That is right on that approach because you have our position that the merits of whether there should be something – whatever it is – in the gardens is entirely a planning matter. That is the process that weighs the pros and cons. And if it is something different – for example, as I said in my opening, we might very well not get permission – in which case we would have to think again.

**365 The Chair:** Or somebody could bring forward a completely different planning application.

**366 Mr Katkowski KC:** Or somebody could bring forward a completely different planning application.

**367 The Chair:** ... Secondly, is it the promoter's position that no amendments of any kind could be brought forward by this Committee?

**368 Mr Katkowski KC:** No, no, no, no. No, that is not my position at all. ... the Committee would need to think through, would an assurance be satisfactory? If not, would an undertaking be satisfactory? If not, and only then, is there a need for an amendment. If

you get to that stage, of course –

**369 The Chair:** That was my understanding. I just wanted to make sure it was also your understanding. ...

**371** And just out of interest, are there any conversations presently going on between the promoters and the petitioners?

**372 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... we have in correspondence invited discussions about various matters but ... there has not been any great enthusiasm on the part of the petitioners to discuss any such matters with us. ...

**373 The Chair:** Slightly left field, has any thought ever been given to moving the Buxton memorial?

**374 Mr Katkowski KC:** Yes. It is not left field at all. Personally, it was one of the first thoughts I had about this when I got involved many years ago on the planning side. There was evidence at the planning inquiry about this very point and it was decided, rightly or wrongly, that the position that should be adopted is to leave the Buxton memorial in situ, not to move it. It has already been moved from Parliament Square in the 1950s into the gardens, but not to move it again. ...

**378 Mr Doctor KC:** ... we do not accept that we have been reluctant to respond to any overtures from the promoter ...

**382** Point number two is this constant referral to the planning application with the understanding that this will be a planning application in the normal way and that these points would be gone over again, and that all these objections which people have raised, and these references they have made ... the Committee should not be under any misapprehension that it is not open to the Government, through the Minister who is going to decide this, to simply say, 'We've had a planning application; nothing has changed; you can go ahead with your existing application'. That is not something you can discount. You have no assurances that any of these points would be looked again, even if they are new points. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14139/html/>

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#### **Petitions against the Bill: 24 January 2024 (afternoon)**

**412 Baroness Deech [Petitioner]:** ... I have the privilege of chairing a Select Committee myself ... and I would like to respectfully suggest that you will, of course, have views about what is in scope and what is not but I also think that a Select Committee has a constitutional opportunity, maybe even obligation, to tell MPs a lot of things that they do not know, because we may be embarking on something historic, a building that may stand for a hundred years. We certainly do not want a building that people agree should be torn down in a few years. ...

**413** My father was a refugee who got here 3 September 1939, which was the day that war broke out. He was interned. He was a founder member of the World Jewish Congress and, as a journalist, he went to the Nuremberg trials. My grandmother was refused entry to the UK at the start of the war and she died in a concentration camp in Poland. My other grandmother, aunt, cousins and other relatives died also at the hands of the Nazis in Poland.

**414** I happen to have a graduate degree in contemporary Jewish studies. ... I attended the Eichmann trial when I was a student in Jerusalem. I have visited Holocaust memorials and museums all over the world and I have become familiar with their objects and effects. And, by the way, I have noticed that those that are without particular reference to the Holocaust are much more likely to be vandalised than those that are pictorial or figurative. ...



**415** ... So the Government adopted Sir David as their designer and the Government has announced that he is stepping aside until issues about his conduct are resolved ...

**416** ... When I saw the design, I thought, 'This is familiar'. ... his designs are, to my mind, generic and I conclude that the design offered for Victoria Tower Gardens is generic. It seems to me to have nothing to do with the Holocaust at all. Twenty-two sticks sticking up in the air, or is it 23, justified similarly for Niger as referring to something else and in Barbados.

**417** On its own, it is not a memorial and I am asking, what is a memorial? If you just came across it on its own you would say, 'What?' Would you feel reverence? Would you start thinking about the Holocaust? I fear not. ...

**419** I am really anxious that my family should be commemorated in a way which is appropriate and reverent. The current design cannot achieve that. ...

**420** There are over 300 memorials around the world ... and as we have sadly seen, antisemitism is on the rise. Nearly every week, I read about another memorial and I read about more and more antisemitic incidents. No one seems to have asked what effect does a memorial have? Who goes? Who goes to a learning centre? What effect does it have on them? There has been no impact assessment. ...

**422** I propose an amendment that I cannot draft. I propose an amendment to confine the lifting of the 1900 restriction to a memorial only. I can envisage a beautiful, handsome memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens. ... I hope that this Committee will call for a new memorial design to be completed relatively speedily and independently. ... Commissioned in the year, delivered in 24 months or less. It can be done.

**423** And I would like the Committee to call for a larger learning centre in central London that includes a history of the Jews in Britain. I draw to your attention that the one and only Jewish museum in this country has just closed down for lack of funds. I find it unacceptable that there should be, as it were, a memorial to dead Jews at a cost of £140 million or more and no museum setting out the history of the Jewish people over 1,000 years, their triumphs and tragedies here. ...

**424** Also, it is a matter of context. If you wrap up the Holocaust in a shoebox, which is what is going to be done, it enables people to say, 'Oh, that was a long time ago. Nothing to do with us. Frightfully sorry', and they ignore what is going on today. I reference, for example, Elon Musk posing outside Auschwitz two days ago with his child round his shoulders as if he was on a trip to Disneyland. Deeply disrespectful. ...

**425** ... VTG, as we call it, is inappropriate. First of all, how can it be contemplated for a moment that there should be a children's playground hard by a memorial to children who had no childhood, with visitors tramping round that children's playground. ... How can one have a café, the sort that is going to sell Coke and crisps, by a memorial to people who starved to death? ...

**426** The site is too small, as the survivors will tell you, for what is needed, because of a decision to build underground, which results in only four rooms and it is a political project. It is being used to convey a political message about British democracy. Lord Pickles said at the inquiry, 'People will emerge from the learning centre, look at the Houses of Parliament and say, "Oh, this couldn't happen here. We have British democracy"'. Sadly, given what is going on in the streets and the marches, I am afraid democracy is not actually a protection but it is being done there as a political message. The values that he says are attached are not exclusively British and it is no protection against antisemitism. It will simply be a backdrop for visits by politicians. Indeed, of the things that started me on this was seeing Jeremy Corbyn in the front row of a Holocaust memorial meeting several years ago and I think it is all too easy for politicians to stand there and say, 'Look at me', and then do nothing about the extremism and hatred that we are seeing today.

**427** A memorial, a learning centre is no excuse for not combatting this very complex, really troubling, worse than I have seen in my lifetime, the hatred going on today. ...

**428** ... This all started with a report in 2015 which said, 'The memorial should be a place

where people can pay their respects, contemplate, think and offer prayers and there must be somewhere close at hand where people can go to learn more about the Holocaust'. The call for evidence of that report exposed the absence of a professorial chair on Holocaust studies, anywhere in this country. The commission in 2015 called for that and said they wanted a professional chair. They wanted a campus to bring together all the educational organisations. They wanted a lecture hall for 500. All that has gone by the board because there is only room to build four small rooms in a shoebox.

**429** ... The commission wanted an endowment fund for the long-term future of Holocaust education, with projects all over the country. That has gone by the board. The new centre, they said, would be the heart of a physical and virtual campus, supporting a network of Holocaust organisations which would collaborate to extend high-quality Holocaust education all over. All been abandoned because of the cost of digging down.

**430** Sir Richard Evans ... the greatest expert we have in this country on that period ... said, 'The Imperial War Museum, less than a mile away, is already the National Holocaust Memorial Centre and remains the premium location for a comprehensive and scholarly coverage in the UK of this tragic episode. ...

**432** What would the learning centre, as proposed, add to the existing ones? I say, nothing. It is a 45-minute walk-through. It cannot attract the casual visitor. You would learn more about Britain and the Holocaust from the wonderful films, 'One Life', which I recommend to you, about Nicholas Winton rescuing children and how difficult it was, and 'Exodus'. Israel has not been mentioned. People do not want to mention it but it is important to ask how the learning centre will cope with that. If the British mandate had ended 10 years earlier, think how many hundreds of thousands, if not millions, would have been able to take refuge there. We cannot skate over that particular British aspect. The learning centre, as far as I can see, is a political narrative built on a false premise that British democracy saves everything.

**433** We also have to ask ... in the present context, you have read the papers, you know the discussion, what is a Holocaust? What is the context? What is genocide? There are competing versions. What will this learning centre add, if anything, to the existing ones?

**436** ... The Holocaust is about antisemitism. I put it to you, it is not about generalised hate or not about being a bystander, which I believe is the message that is going to be given. Lord Sachs, who we miss such, the former Chief Rabbi, pointed out that antisemitism today is addressed to our one and only state, our safe haven, Israel, and the question of Israel needs to be addressed. There is too much misunderstanding which is leading people to say, 'Israel, with another 6 million Jews, should be wiped off the face of the map.' A memorial and learning centre has to address that. I put it to you that much of the Holocaust education going on now in schools is compulsory, judged by the terrible things I see on campus. I specialise in helping students who suffer from antisemitism.

**437** Dreadful things are going on on campus and in our schools and on our streets, the marches that you see every Saturday, and that is because, as I said, there is a disconnect between the Holocaust and how it is presented and what is going on today. The lines must be joined up because the children who have had Holocaust education at school, it seems that all they have learned is, if they are angry with Israel or the Jews, they walk around waving a swastika or make hissing noises about gas because the only thing they know about Jews is the Nazis, nothing about our culture, our history, our presence in Britain. This learning centre will reinforce it: all in the past, there it is in a room.

**438** ... the public inquiry of three years ago is out of date. Many of the things I told you were now known then and not considered. We must have a fresh planning inquiry because everything has changed. ...

**439** ... All sorts of things have happened since the inquiry. VTG used for crowds ... The Jewish Museum closed down. The potentially violent anti-Israel marches. All my requests for meetings with Ministers and promoters to consider alternatives, have been unanswered

or refused. ... I have offered to the promoters to meet and compromise. We have a compromise document. Absolute silence. I have been boycotted, vilified. It has been insinuated that anyone opposed to this is antisemitic. Every possible leverage has been used to stop us talking about it and having a compromise.

**440** The Hybrid Bill Committee suggested that there should be dialogue. There has been none. ...

**441** The Jewish community has not been consulted. The Board of Deputies has never voted. There are more donors to the party than scholars involved. The Jewish community is more and more divided. There is no debate. The truth has not always been told about how this has come about. ...

**443** We need a new museum and learning centre and campus setting the Holocaust in the context of hundreds of years of global antisemitism and Jewish history up to the present, bringing together all the organisations that I mentioned earlier and a fresh look at education. What is genocide? Many Jews believe that one should not combine the Shoah, as we call it, with other genocides because it de-Judaises what happened. It waters down the Jewish element and leads only to unhelpful waffle about hatred and not being a bystander. We think we should at least have our own memorial and learning centre and other minorities can have their own. I do not think anyone has asked them what they want.

**444** ... What is happening now is being forced on Jewish parties and other minorities without their consent. ... Why, I ask, is the Government so determined to push this project through when it has alienated so many people, it adds nothing, costs a fortune? Why pick this obviously inappropriate and difficult site? Is it because it is free? There are other free sites. Why spend more than £130 million when we have no museum and no overhaul of Jewish education? And why, in this hearing, are the promoters trying to shut down any objection, no matter how powerful, and even from the people most intimately affected? ...

**445** ... I want a memorial; I want a learning centre. I want it to proceed with consensus and good will and we can achieve that if the Government will simply listen to us and think again ...

**453 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... You will recall ... that it is not simply your petition; it is a petition of six other petitioners as well and you will recall in your petition, and your fellow petitioners' petition, there are five amendments sought. ... the first of them ... is to say that in the two clauses, the words 'over' and 'under' should be deleted. In other words, there cannot be an underground learning centre. That is the first point.

**454** The second amendment that is sought is ... that in the event that planning permission is re-determined, there should be a further public inquiry....

**455** ... the next one, that there should be an amendment to clause 1, that the sole purpose of the learning centre should be in relation to the Holocaust, the Nazi period and antisemitism.

**456** ... Penultimate one ... that again clause 1 should be amended so that the activities referred to should not begin until the Government has established an endowment fund for Holocaust education.

**457** And the final one is ... that there should be no sales of food and drink within 200 metres of a memorial in the garden. ...

**470** ... You will recall ... that the design of the memorial was a subject which was contested at the planning inquiry and I very well remember the architect of the memorial being cross-examined by Mr Doctor, I think on your behalf ... That is right, isn't it, factually?

**471 Baroness Deech:** Yes. ...

**474 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... I just want to correct the record, for what it is worth – you have said repeatedly that the design of the memorial is Sir David Adjaye. The design of the memorial was a gentleman called Mr Bruno. I carry his photo in my breast pocket. He is Jewish, Israeli. He was cross-examined extensively by Mr Doctor about the design ethos

of the memorial. Sadly, he died just a few days before the Minister's decision was issued. This is the architect of the memorial as you very well know. Why have you sat here today and said to the members of the Committee that the design of the memorial was Sir David Adjaye when you very well know it was this gentleman here?

**475 Baroness Deech:** ... I dispute that. I am quoting the Government. 'Sir David Adjaye' ... 'to lead design of new, national landmark'. Why has the foundation said, 'Sir David Adjaye is stepping aside?' It is all over his website. ... We know that it is his name eternally associated with it. He has a big team but it is an Adjaye design.

**476 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... if the Committee is at all interested, if they look at the inspector's report conclusions at pages 108 to 191, they will see the correct factual position set out there. ...

**482 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... Do you recall Sir David giving evidence at the inquiry and explaining his role in the overall project?

**483 Baroness Deech:** Yes. ...

**484 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... And do you recall Mr Bruno giving evidence at the inquiry, explaining that he designed the memorial?

**485 Baroness Deech:** Yes. It is an Adjaye design as we all know.

**487 The Chair:** Does this really matter to the Committee?

**488 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... You are the Committee and I am just here on behalf of the promoter and I have, I think, very, very fairly, and very straightforwardly, simply said on many occasions, 'Look, this is really planning. Not for this Committee etc'. On this one, which is just a straightforward misleading of you, I really felt that I had to dig my heels in ...

**490** ... as for the content of the learning centre, that was again controversial at the planning inquiry. Four pages of the inspector's conclusions on this, that it is a raging debate. ...

**491 Baroness Deech:** We now know much more about it and the situation has changed.

**492 Mr Katkowski KC:** No, the situation has not changed at all about the contents of the learning centre. ...

**493 Baroness Deech:** We know what it was supposed to be, five years ago. I have asked repeated questions in Parliament and given FOI requests. I get nowhere. Sometimes the Government says it will be about Nazi atrocities. Other times they say Darfur, Rwanda and Kosovo. They do not seem to have made up their mind. ...

**502 Keir Mather (Labour):** ... you put forward some sort of revised proposals as to how a memorial could look in regard to its size but also where it could be located ... I just wonder from your perspective whether you agree with the Government's original aspiration that, in effect, this would be the national Holocaust memorial ...

**503** Then I was also wondering if you could provide your assessment of how the debate around whether or not this particular memorial is the right choice, has played out within the Jewish community? Because I know you mentioned in your testimony that the Board of Deputies did not have a vote on the matter but I just wonder in regard to potentially what BoD members have said, or perhaps the Jewish Leadership Council, just your perspective on what the landscape of opinion is like within the Jewish community.

**504 Baroness Deech:** The VTG learning centre cannot be a national learning centre. It is too small and it has a political message. ... It does not begin to compare, for example, with the Imperial War Museum exhibition. ... We also already have one called 'National' in Newark.

**505** As far as the Jewish community goes, well, many people have been coerced into not talking out about it. I was banned on my first attempt from talking to the survivors' centre in Golders Green. I was phoned up a day before I was supposed to go and told I could not. Why not? Because some of the people who support financially the survivors' centre are also people behind the Holocaust memorial. So there is a small group of leaders, nearly all men, who are pushing this. And I am not saying that I am a scholar but I think

now I know a bit more than they do and the Jewish community is divided. The National Jewish Assembly took a vote on this and was against. It is not that the Board of Deputies has not had a vote. I have asked them repeatedly to hold a vote and they have refused and they would not hear me or anybody else. ...

**506 The Chair:** Can you just clarify, you are saying there are supporters of this.

**507 Baroness Deech:** Some are, and some are not, yes. ...

**508** But the more people know about it, the more they have questions. ...

**512 Karl Turner (Labour):** ... I think I am right in saying that there was some urgency spoken about by the planning inspector in the sense that the memorial and learning centre should happen whilst there are living survivors. How sympathetic with that contention –

**Baroness Deech:** We are blessed to have a few with us here today. Who knows how long the memorial will take but my view is that the memorial is for the future. It is for the next 100 years. It is for future generations. Our survivors know how much we honour them. ...

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**521 Professor Evans [Witness]:** ... I am Sir Richard Evans. I was born and grew up in east London in the Welsh community, as was, there and I became very interested in modern German history and the Nazis, particularly because of all the damage to the houses and the infrastructure, the bomb damage you could see in the east end in the 50s, and even to an extent in the early 60s.

**522** My career has been based really on researching modern German history. I am regius professor emeritus of history at the University of Cambridge. ...

**523** I am deputy chair of the Spoliation Advisory Panel, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on applications for the restitution of Nazi looted artworks, or as they put it in artworks culture, artworks looted, spoliated – sold under value for example – during the Nazi era and I am proud to say that we have recommended the restitution or compensation for a number of cultural objects. ...

**524** I was also the principal expert witness in the unsuccessful libel action brought before the High Court in the year 2000 by David Irving over accusations against him of Holocaust denial ...

**525** I advised the Imperial War Museum on its Holocaust exhibition wing. ...

**526** And, finally, it is worth mentioning, when I was an undergraduate at Oxford, a long time ago, my tutor for modern history was Sir Martin Gilbert ...

**532** Well, the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust galleries, which opened quite recently, and attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors in a normal year, they are linked to the museum's very significant archival collections, which make it an important research centre on World War II and the Holocaust. The proposed exhibition and research centre in Westminster would be an unnecessary duplication of the museum's offering. It would be on a much smaller scale and so less comprehensive and less effective but, at the same time, it would no doubt divert attention from the Imperial War Museum's larger and more important collection and displays.

**533** It is my view that the Imperial War Museum, which is located less than a mile away from here, is already the national Holocaust learning and research centre. It remains the appropriate location, in my view, of a comprehensive, scholarly and professional coverage in the UK of this most tragic episode in modern human history.

**534** Now the arguments that politicians of all parties have put forward, that the Holocaust must be remembered and publicly commemorated, future generations need to learn about it and a memorial is necessary as a signal that the UK is determined to fight racism, antisemitism and prejudice of all kinds are, of course, laudable and I completely endorse them. But we already commemorate and research the Holocaust, not just at the Imperial War Museum but at other centres across the country: in Hyde Park; in Nottinghamshire; in Huddersfield; in particular, the Wiener Holocaust Library in London, the world's oldest Holocaust research centre and collection. ...

**535** ... As a research centre on the Holocaust, the proposed new Westminster memorial and learning centre will not be able to compete ... [it] will only be an embarrassment for this country if it lay claim to be a national centre of learning and research of the Holocaust.

**536** ... well over a third, would be, I gather, exhibition space, leaving very little space for learning ...

**538** I do not think it should be suggested that the Holocaust will no longer be remembered or understood when the last remaining survivors are no longer with us. If the Irving trial proved anything, it is I think that historians can be relied upon to provide accurate, detailed information about the Holocaust and its history.

**539** The location of the proposed memorial in Westminster has been justified on the grounds that it symbolises the importance of British values and parliamentary democracy as a bulwark against genocide. As an historian, I think this is rather misleading. To begin with, the democratic and humanitarian values that underlie hostility and other kinds of discrimination – mass murder, genocide – are not just British. They are universal, or should be. To suggest otherwise, I think, is to encourage complacency and self-satisfaction about the British response to the Holocaust, which I gather is to be the focus of the exhibition and presented in a positive light. And I am afraid that looking through the 20<sup>th</sup> century and indeed the 21<sup>st</sup>, the existence of a parliamentary democratic political system is no guarantee against an appallingly rapid descent into dictatorship, war and genocide.

**540** The Weimar Republic in Germany was a functioning democracy until 1929 to 1930. ... It can happen with frightening rapidity.

**541** An objective historical appraisal of the British response would need to be much more nuanced, I think. Britain placed many obstacles in the way of Jews who tried to escape from Nazi Germany; strict immigration quotas on the British mandate of Palestine; turning back Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany whose arrival would breach these instructions; the British Government's acceptance of the Anschluss, the incorporation into the Third Reich of Austria and its brokerage of the Munich agreement in 1938 in the name of appeasing Hitler, turned a blind eye to the fact that these actions brought hundreds of thousands of Jews under Nazi rule with terrible consequences for them all.

**542** Antisemitism was widespread in the higher ranks of the British Civil Service, a disturbing fact brought to public attention by my former tutor Martin Gilbert's book, *Auschwitz and the Allies*, which found that antisemitic sentiment played a significant part in dissuading the Allies from taking action against the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, such as bombing the railway lines that delivered the victims to the camp, for example.

**543** ... We need a satisfactory, a properly constructed and informed coverage of the Jewish experience in Britain, which goes back of course to the Middle Ages and has many aspects to it that I think are poorly understood. The younger generation in this country seems disturbingly unaware of many of the central facts of the Holocaust. Let me just bring one to your attention, just as a closing remark. It always seems to me, and still seems to me, that what we call the Holocaust, that is to say, the mass extermination of 6 million Jews in Europe by the Nazis or at their behest, is a reflection of the fact that antisemitism is different from other kinds of racial prejudice and that the Holocaust, the Shoah, is different from other genocides. And the reason is that it is antisemitism, whether in a strong or a weak form, but antisemitism in the strongest form practised by the Nazis, rests on a belief that Jews everywhere, all over the world, by their nature, by their heredity, are determined, predetermined, whether they know it or not, to be subversive and destructive people. ...

**545** ... I would like to endorse the plea that a properly funded, comprehensive and large-scale learning centre and research centre be set up, a task for which the proposed small shoebox, as it has been called, underground, in the Victoria Tower Gardens, is in no way adequate. ...

**553 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... which of the amendments that the petitioner has put forward is your evidence aimed at? And I think we have homed in on the learning centre.

**554 Professor Evans:** Yes, it is the underground.

**555 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... is the idea of a learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens alright but it is the underground nature of it that is not?

**556 Professor Evans:** No. It would do a lot more damage to the environment and the surroundings if it was above ground. ...

**557 Mr Katkowski KC:** Exactly, and so then the principle then that that takes us to is that there should not be a learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens at all.

**558 Professor Evans:** That is right. ...

**565 Keir Mather:** ... if there were to be a Holocaust memorial in SW1, whether in Victoria Tower Gardens or elsewhere, would it, in your view, be appropriate for it to be regarded as the national monument for commemoration of the Holocaust or do you think it forms part of a broader spectrum of memorialisation across the United Kingdom?

**566 Professor Evans:** Well, I think it would have to work hard to establish itself as the national memorial ...

**567 Keir Mather:** ... I do wonder, though, what you think about the merits of the argument that, in a sense, a learning centre might try to fill a more distinct gap in the market, as it were, say for – we have seen a really concerning rise in Holocaust denial, antisemitism amongst British schoolchildren, things like that that do not directly pertain to advanced academic study but it is still an important piece of the educational puzzle. Do you think this merits the argument that a learning centre could add and fulfil that sort of role within the overall tapestry of Holocaust education?

**568 Professor Evans:** Yes, I do. But it has to be large and comprehensive enough and well enough put together. There just is not the space, there is not the room in the present plans for the one that is proposed beneath Victoria Tower Gardens. ...

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**577 Mr Doctor KC:** I have asked your son but you do not mind if I tell the Committee your age.

**578 Ms Lasker-Wallfisch [Petitioner and Witness]:** Not at all, on the contrary.

**579 Mr Doctor KC:** You are 98. ...

**585** Now, you have generally been referred to as a survivor of the Holocaust. Can you just briefly tell the Committee your experience and how you come to be here?

**586 Ms Lasker-Wallfisch:** It is impossible to talk briefly about my experience but I will just give you the headlines. I was arrested in 1942 in Wroclaw, which used to be Breslau, went to prison, Auschwitz and Belsen. Every name that I mention has a big story attached to it but I was 19 years old when I was liberated by the British army in Belsen. ...

**590** Well, when I arrived in Auschwitz expecting to be gassed, I had a conversation with one of the prisoners who wanted to know what was going on in the outside world, not that I knew so much because I had been in prison for so long. And I said, 'Well, I used to play the cello'. 'Oh, fantastic. There is an orchestra here and they need a cellist'. This is what saved my life. ...

**593 Mr Doctor KC:** The Committee is hearing evidence about the desirability of a Holocaust memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens together with what they call a learning centre.

**594 Ms Lasker-Wallfisch:** It is supposed to be a learning centre, yes. ...

**596** In my opinion, we are unlikely to learn now what we have not learned in the last 80 years, especially in the current climate of escalating antisemitism. ... If the proposal should go through, it would mean a felling of hundreds-year-old trees, a serious risk of flooding, inaccessible to wheelchairs or buggies and overshadowing the Buxton memorial on

banning slavery and has nothing to do whatsoever with the Holocaust, which is going to be lumped together under the general title of genocides. Like it or not, this genocide was different. It has not stopped.

**597** A Jew, unlike a Rwandan, is not safe anywhere now. Countless museums and memorials have not stopped rising antisemitism and then events of 7 October and the reaction of the world should tell you enough. What we have to do is to get a learning centre about these peculiar people, Jews, and that could be anywhere and does not have to be on a dangerous, impossible place, like Victoria Gardens. ...

**599** ... it is all a matter of jumping on the bandwagon. Everybody wants to make money. Oh lovely, we can build a museum. You know, the background, the thoughts behind these things are not necessarily terribly worthy. ... It is a completely idiotic idea and it is almost an insult to think of a learning centre. ... What are we learning: we should not kill each other? Good idea. So what are we learning? ...

**601** I am appalled that we even talk about this place, which is contrary to everything sensible and will not serve any purpose. ...

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**610 Dr Stern [Petitioner and Witness]:** ... just to be very clear at the very beginning, I agree with Baroness Deech. I agree with every single word. That will save me needing to repeat what she has said.

**611** I am a Holocaust survivor. As a Holocaust survivor, my fate was not typical. The typical fate was people being dragged from their houses and taken up to the ditch and shot. I was arrested at the age of five by the Nazis with the simultaneous arrest of my one-year-old sister, and both of us were sent to a prison camp in the Netherlands called Westerbork. From there, where most of the Jews were sent to Auschwitz or Sobibor, we were exceptions in that we were sent to Terezin, in the Czech Republic now, or Theresienstadt, a deception by the Nazis who used Jews with connections in the outside world to pretend that this was resettlement and not mass murder, although the intention was that every Jew there would be sent to an extermination centre and die, and about 1,000 at a time regularly did on cattle trucks and goods trucks. And out of 15,000 children who passed through Theresienstadt, only a tiny number survived.

**612** I also want to say that I have a tremendous admiration for the people who have proposed the current legislation. Their intentions are good and they are people I admire and they are people I passionately want to work with in the future. What I say is not derogatory to any of the people who have tried to do their best but, in my view, made a very serious mistake.

**613** The other thing is, I am grateful for the support that this proposed legislation has for the Jewish population. My goodness, how we need the support. ...

**614** ... My father resisted the Nazis in Germany, escaped to the Netherlands, was married by a young German woman who was not a Jew, so she was risking her life by doing that, and he was captured hiding on a farm near Amsterdam airport. ...

**615** He was sent to Auschwitz. He reappeared in Buchenwald concentration camp ... where he died on 25 March 1945. ...

**617**... I ... came to Britain at the age of 12, stateless. And at age 16, I obtained British nationality, for which I am exceedingly grateful. ... In 2002 I retired from medical practice in the hospital and I have been working at Holocaust and genocide education ever since. ...

**618** ... I have committed my life to that; I am not against Holocaust education. ...

**620** One of the problems with the proposed plan of the education centre is that a rather doctrinaire, simplistic education will be set up whereas what we need is very serious academic research on how such education is best put into practice. ...

**621** We have the problem that the Victoria Tower Gardens were partly bequeathed to the nation, protected by the law. It bothers me that by breaking this arrangement in



perpetuity that we discourage other gifts to the nation ... I do not wish this one to be betrayed.

**622** ... I believe the proposed education centre is far too big for the little park, the site, and it is far too small for the purpose. If this is supposed to be a national centre for education on the Holocaust and maybe on other genocides, this is ridiculously small. ...

**624** There is a huge problem about the security of such a centre. I believe that it would be a magnet for terrorism ...

**625** I am concerned that this site, which is intended to counteract anti-Semitism, will in fact increase it. People will say, 'Look at the Jews; they pushed themselves to the front'. I do not want something protecting Jews to be carried out to the detriment of others and to create further ammunition for anti-Semites, quite apart from what we have recently seen in public demonstrations where, for example, red paint was splashed across the door of a Jewish girls' high school before Israel took countermeasures against what happened on 7 October. ...

**629** I do support a memorial to the Holocaust right next to the Palace of Westminster. I think it should be there as a memento mori. ...

**630** We take democracy for granted but ... I do not think we should be glib about the security of democracy in Great Britain.

**631** But it should be a memorial comparable in size to The Burghers of Calais or one of the other existing memorials that is already there like the Buxton memorial. But the education centre should not be in Victoria Tower Gardens. ...

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**643 Ms Tischler [Petitioner and Witness]:** I spent two years in Theresienstadt, three years in Auschwitz, and six months in a work camp in Germany, then was liberated, actually – we got back in Terezín where we were liberated by the Russians, and I came to England in 1945. ...

**649** ... Please do not erect this memorial in my name. It really has absolutely nothing to do with the Holocaust, the proposed memorial but if you ask me what kind of other memorial, I have two suggestions. One is a group of emaciated children in striped pyjamas surrounded by barbed wire, something like The Burghers of Calais, is it?

**650 Mr Doctor KC:** You mean a figurative representative?

**651 Ms Tischler:** ... that would actually convey really what the Holocaust was about. The other suggestion I have is ... one of the people who survived has become a sculptor, and he would be another person who could probably produce something that would relate much more to the Holocaust than the proposal that is before you at the moment. ...

**652** My question really is why now and why another memorial? As has been mentioned, there are so many already. As for the learning centre, I do not know who is going to teach there and what they're going to teach, and who is it for – for people who are interested in the Holocaust? The people should know about it are the ones who really do not really quite want to believe that it happened.

**653** As a psychologist, I actually think that just to teach people about the Holocaust, to tell them what happened and how terrible it was is not going to change anybody's attitude unless they are so inclined, but it does not actually explain what made it possible, what made it possible for such a thing to happen, unless you actually understand the psychological mechanism which makes it possible for me to believe that I am as good as gold, I have no hostile feelings, I have no destructive feelings in me, it is all in the other person, they're the baddies, I am the goodies. And until people accept that and take responsibility for their own hostile feeling to someone who is not like me, this is going to go on.

**654** When I have been asked to go and talk to children in schools about my experiences in the Holocaust, I have always used it really only not so much to tell them what happened to me and how I suffered; that is not the point. The point is to bring it to the present and to

show them how by – ‘Because you are a Muslim or because you are something else, you are not like me; therefore you are no good, I have the right to despise you.’ Unless people understand this, we have no hope of changing things. ...

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**661 Ms Millan [Petitioner and Witness]:** My name is Joanna Millan. My birth name was Bela Rosenthal. I was born in Berlin. I was deported to Theresienstadt and I was therefore two years. Both my parents were killed and my only surviving grandmother also was killed in Auschwitz.

**662** I came to England in 1945, one of the Windermere children, and I came with nobody, an orphan, with nothing, absolutely nothing. Nobody had told us we were liberated so going on a military plane with military uniforms was very, very frightening.

**663** When we arrived in England, I didn't know what was going to happen to us and we were six very young children. Nobody expected us to survive. No provision was made for us but eventually, through the good offices of Anna Freud, a place was found for us in the south of England and eventually went to a children's home in Lingfield and later adopted by a Jewish family in London who were very anglicised.

**664** So, growing up in London, I had to hide my identity and they changed my name. I was not to talk about the past. ...

**665** Now, I have been talking about the Holocaust for over 30 years now. I have been speaking in schools and I am sorry to say, I do not really see any change in attitudes, despite all my efforts. I have spoken to thousands and thousands of children in those 30 years. I do not see any change. Holocaust education, somehow, does not seem to be working.

**666** So, I endorse all the previous speakers' comments so I will not bore you with those. But I would add that the cost of this memorial, first of all, has been kept a fairly closely guarded [secret]. ... I think that the non-Jewish community, the wider community, if they knew how much it was going to cost, I think it would cause more anti-Semitism saying, 'Why should all this money be spent on Jews? What about our hospitals and all the rest of it?'

**667** I think not much is known that ... that the Jewish community are committed to contributing to the cost, and again, that is not well known and it is diverting much needed funds away from our community. For example, the closing of the Jewish Museum and our other brilliant services are starved of money. ...

**668** And second of all, the underground part of the memorial. ... I have lived in this area for many years and every so often, all the basements are flooded. ...

**669** I have been to Berlin ... Whenever I speak to people who've been there, and they see the stones and I say, 'Oh, did you go to the museum underneath?', nobody has. Nobody. ... What is the point of the stones? What is the point of the memorial on top if you do not know what it is about? ...

**670** I really think that on those counts, certainly, I feel very strongly that we are going to create more anti-Semitism. It is going to be a target for all the anti-Semites. ...

**673** I think that we need to embed the Holocaust memorial in Jewish history. It does not stand on its own. It is a five year period in 3,000 years of Jewish history. It does not define what Jews are. ...

**675** I do not want this being rushed through because the last survivors have got to see it. ... It would be very nice to know that it is being planned, but it is not a competition ...

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**684 Mr Doctor KC:** You are Dr Trudy Gold and you are an historian. You have over 40 years' experience of teaching and your subject is Jewish history, the Holocaust in the UK, Europe, particularly eastern Europe and latterly, even in China. ...

**689 Dr Gold:** I would like to reiterate that my teaching career actually encompasses over 40 years of experience of teaching Jewish history and Holocaust studies. ...

**691** I was one of the original British delegates to the ITF, which is now known IHRA ... It is important to remember that the ITF, IHRA, was actually established because of the rise in anti-Semitism in Europe. ...

**694** ... there are over 300 memorials and museums all over the world. There are wonderful survivors who so desperately do not want ... it to happen to anyone else. They've been going to schools, in universities, telling their stories. It is on the core curriculum. The survivors have now been recorded but the problem is, and I am saying this as someone who gave 40 years of my life to it, we failed.

**695** If our aim was to make the world more sensitive to racism, prejudice and anti-Semitism, we have failed dramatically. None of these efforts have made one indent on the history of anti-Semitism. It is on the increase to such an extent – and I am not being alarmist here – that many Jews in the democratic diaspora are talking of leaving. The marches through London, and I am not going to talk politics – but Holocaust memorial day is on Saturday and I believe there will be another march.

**696** My grandsons can't go into London anymore ... Jewish families feel under threat. We have failed in our well-meaning efforts, both Jew and Gentile, and I believe everyone behind the memorial and learning centre is actually honest ...

**697** I am not against a very discrete memorial ...

**698** The other thing I want to point out: we have de-Judaised the Shoah. ... We now commemorate along with so many other catastrophes. Now, every catastrophe is appalling. But what it does, it obfuscates the causation ... People do not understand. There is a difference between what happened in Rwanda.

**699** There have been 16 genocides since World War II, by the way. The point about the Holocaust against the Jews: it didn't happen because a madman came to power in Germany. It didn't happen just because there was economic, social and political unease. It didn't happen because the tradition of democracy was not that well ingrained. There is a much more important reason; it happened because of a 200-year-old history of Jew hatred and that is what is missing.

**700** ... I have no problems with a very discreet memorial. I think that is perfect, but a learning centre of such a small size is ... ridiculous. I have taken groups to practically all the important memorials in the world. It is not stopping anti-Semitism and racism.

**701** Do you really want to be brave? Do you really want to make a difference to education in this country? Why not introduce Jewish history onto the core curriculum? You have got to dissolve the tropes, you have got to demystify the Jews.

**702** What if I tell you there is not a positive example of a Jew anywhere in European culture right up until the European enlightenment when a German thinker called Lessing wrote a play called, 'The Jews' and it fails on the German stage because no one can imagine a Jew as a hero. That is what you have got to unpack. ...

**703** ... Now, I am not just saying, 'We are a special case. Tell our history'. What I am suggesting to you, this could be a pilot – a pilot in schools to actually tell the story of the Jews at GCSE level as a way of introducing the other communities that make up Britain. ...

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**718 Response by Mr Katkowski KC:** ... Briefly, the main target of the petitioners and their witnesses this afternoon – main, not only – main target has been the learning centre, and particularly being an underground centre and whether it will be of any great utility or otherwise.

**719** Because of the nature of these proceedings, you are hearing petitioners who wish to make points against. ...

That said, turning to the amendments that are sought ...

**721** ... The first ... is to say that there should be an amendment to clause 1(a) of the Bill and also clause 2, to delete the words, 'over and under'.

**722** Clause 1, as I have said earlier on today, is not within the scope of this Committee ...

**723** The suggestion that clause 2 should be amended so as to remove ‘over and under’; as we know, clause 2 relates only to Victoria Tower Gardens. It is designed that amendment to prevent the project which the Secretary of State has promoted for quite a long time, actually taking place. You will understand that my submission which I have made many times over is that that is out of scope for this Committee.

**724** The next amendment ... is that any re-determination of the planning application should only be made after there has been a further public inquiry; that is completely out of scope. ...

**725** The third and the fifth amendment ... seeks an amendment to clause 1 of the Bill. The sole purpose of the centre for learning should be to provide education about the Holocaust and the Nazi period and anti-Semitism. Repeating the point that clause 1 is outside your scope but moving on from that, if you just look at clause 1, the expenditure expressed in clause 1, is expressed to be only – the only thing that is stated is in relation to victims of the Holocaust and learning in relation to that. ...

**726** The penultimate amendment ... that no money should be spent under clause 1 and 2 or if there’s been an endowment funds set up for Holocaust education, completely out of scope. The final amendment ... is that there shouldn’t be any food and drink sold within 200 metres of the memorial in the gardens, and that is a pure planning issue as you will understand. ...

**731 Angela Richardson (Conservative):** You, as the promoter, in your opening statement to the Committee told us that you’d made an effort to reach out to the petitioners. In Baroness Deech’s presentation ... she said, ‘All requests for meetings with ministers and promoters to consider alternatives have been unanswered or refused’. How did you manage to keep missing each other?

**732 Mr Katkowski KC:** ... Step number one, the last slide of my opening presentation related to the letters which ... I know you have copies of – that we wrote to all the petitioners, asking the petitioners whether they would be interested in meeting with us to discuss matters, you have those letters and we haven’t had a positive response in relation to them. ... I am told that Baroness Deech didn’t respond at all ...

**733** As for wider requests made by Baroness Deech to meet ministers and so on, I can’t sit here now and tell you the factual position in relation to that. ... we can obviously write to you and explain what meetings have been asked for and whether they have or haven’t taken place. ...

**735 Angela Richardson:** And would you consider a meeting like that to be helpful to our current proceedings?

**736 Mr Katkowski KC:** My view on behalf of the promoter of the Bill would potentially such meetings could be helpful, and discussions could be helpful, but I would put this caveat: as long as they’re about the scope of the business of this Committee, and therein lies the problem. Because there is no point, in relation to this stage of the parliamentary process – and remember, there are other stages where Parliament can do what it pleases to this Bill. It can amend it as it pleases but here, there’s a very narrow scope for this Committee. There is absolutely no point, with great respect, in having a meeting saying, ‘Well, why do not you put the memorial somewhere else? Why do not you put the learning centre somewhere else?’ in relation to the business of this Committee. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14140/html/>

## House of Lords Library Briefing

**Holocaust Memorial Day 2024**

<https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/holocaust-memorial-day-2024/>

## Home Office

**James Cleverly** This #HolocaustMemorialDay, we must promise: never again. We will do everything we can to protect the Jewish community, so they can live their lives without fear. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/JamesCleverly/status/1751191387863703644>

**Lord (Tariq)Ahmad of Wimbledon** Today, on #HolocaustMemorialDay, we remember all those who were murdered during the Holocaust. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/tariqahmadbt/status/1751202657895657664>

## Scottish Government

**First Minister** "The freedom and dignity of every citizen relies on our willingness to defend each other's human rights." On @HMD\_UK #HolocaustMemorialDay, First Minister @HumzaYousaf is honouring everyone killed and all those who continue to be affected by the atrocity. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/ScotGovFM/status/1751183373446353029>

**First Minister** @HumzaYousaf lit a candle in memory of all those murdered during the Holocaust. On #HolocaustMemorialDay he has issued a reminder that we all must "unite against hatred wherever we see it." #LightTheDarkness @HMD\_UK [plus photo]

<https://twitter.com/ScotGovFM/status/1751334339801985488>

## Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

**Holocaust Remembrance Day is a time to learn from the past and work together towards a more peaceful future, OSCE says**

... "On Holocaust Remembrance Day, we honour the resilience of those who survived the unimaginable horrors of the Holocaust and remember those who perished, with the unwavering pledge to ensure that such atrocities are never repeated," said OSCE Chair-in-Office, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta Ian Borg. ...

As we pay tribute to the victims and survivors, we also recognize the ongoing need to stand against hatred, discrimination, and acts that threaten the principles of humanity. ...

The recent attacks by Hamas in Israel on October 7th and human suffering in the ensuing violent conflict in the Middle East serve as a stark reminder that the echoes of history's atrocities remain with us. ...

The Holocaust is a historical truth, and it is our duty to honour the memory of those who perished by educating future generations about the consequences of hatred, discrimination, and prejudice. ...

"Anti-Semitism is an age-old and insidious prejudice that has no justification and no place in our societies," said Matteo Mecacci, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). "Young people's awareness of the Holocaust is declining, while their exposure to Holocaust denial and distortion online continues to grow. With ever fewer survivors left to provide eye-witness accounts, our societies must all work harder to ensure the memory of this terrible tragedy remains alive." ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.osce.org/odihr/562055>

### **Mourning Death of Six Million Jews, Secretary-General Urges Global Community to Speak Out for Human Rights, Never Let Guard Down, in Holocaust Remembrance Day Message**

... Today, we pause to mourn the 6 million Jewish children, women, and men systematically murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators — and we grieve the Roma and Sinti, the people with disabilities, and so many others who were persecuted and killed in the Holocaust.

We honour their memory. We stand with the survivors, their families and descendants. We pledge never to forget — nor let others forget the truth of what happened. And we recognize the horrific resonance this day of commemoration finds in our own times.

The antisemitic hate that fuelled the Holocaust did not start with the Nazis, nor did it end with their defeat. Today, we are witnessing hate spreading at alarming speed. Online, it has moved from the margins to the mainstream.

But today of all days, we must remember: That demonization of the other and disdain for diversity is a danger to everyone. That no society is immune to intolerance — and worse. And that bigotry against one group is bigotry against all.

As the former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, Jonathan Sacks, so memorably said: “The hate that begins with Jews never ends with Jews”.

And so today — especially in the wake of the abhorrent 7 October terror attacks by Hamas — we must resolve to stand up against the forces of hate and division.

We must condemn — unequivocally — whenever and wherever we encounter antisemitism — just as we must condemn all forms of racism, prejudice and religious bigotry, including anti-Muslim hatred and violence against minority Christian communities. Let us never be silent in the face of discrimination, and never tolerant of intolerance. Let us speak out for human rights and the dignity of all. Let us never lose sight of each other’s humanity, and never let down our guard.

To all who confront prejudice and persecution, let us clearly say: You are not alone. The United Nations stands with you.

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22119.doc.htm>

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### **Amid Rise in Antisemitism, Standing Up against Forces of Hate, Discrimination More Important than Ever, Secretary-General Says at Holocaust Memorial Ceremony**

... I am moved and humbled by the presence of Holocaust survivors and their families ... Each of you carries the memories of communities lost; lives destroyed or changed beyond recognition — and lives rebuilt. ...

All of us — leaders and citizens — have a responsibility to listen and to learn from what you have to say. And to act on it: By condemning these terrible crimes against our common humanity; By striving to eradicate antisemitism, and all forms of bigotry, hatred and intolerance; And by finding a way forward to a shared, safe, and inclusive future for our human family.

This is particularly important in today’s dangerous and divided world. And a few short months after Hamas’ horrific terror attacks, in which so many innocent Israeli civilians and citizens of other countries were killed. ...

Every year on this day — the day of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau — we honour the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. ...

And, today in particular, in keeping with this year’s theme, we recognize the courage of victims and survivors. There are countless stories of bravery and resilience from the Holocaust: From those who resisted the Nazis’ brutality through armed struggle or quiet

dignity; to the individuals, families and communities providing support, solidarity, and even a semblance of normality in the face of dehumanization, deprivation and death; and survivors who have had the courage to tell their stories to a world that has not always wanted to listen. ...

And I think of those thousands of acts of courage and fortitude of which we will never know: The parents who contained their terror to comfort a child; the prisoners who risked Nazi wrath to perform small acts of kindness; and the individuals who found the strength to retain their sense of self, despite all attempts to demolish it. We remember and revere today all such acts of bravery.

The antisemitism that fuelled the Holocaust did not start with the Nazis. Nor did it end with their defeat. The Holocaust was preceded by thousands of years of discrimination, expulsion, exile and extermination, including by my own country, Portugal.

Today, we are witnessing hate spreading at alarming speed. Online, it has moved from the margins to the mainstream. And Holocaust denial and distortion are proliferating. It is up to all of us to defend the truth. And to defend our common humanity.

Working together, we must combat online lies and hate. We must promote Holocaust education — as a critical part of our defence against ignorance, indifference, and intolerance. And, crucially, we must listen to survivors, and we must remember ...

And today it is more important than ever, especially in the wake of the horrific 7 October Hamas attacks that claimed the lives of more than one 1,000 Israelis and others, injured many more and resulted in the brutal seizing of hostages. Hostages that must be immediately and unconditionally released.

In the last several months, we have seen an outburst of antisemitism and anti-Muslim bigotry around the world. Every one of us must resolve to stand up against the forces of hate, discrimination, and division. We must condemn antisemitism — unequivocally — whenever and wherever we encounter it. ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22117.doc.htm>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

**Recalling the Holocaust, Türk calls for an end to Antisemitism and racism: International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust - "Recognizing the Extraordinary Courage of Victims and Survivors of the Holocaust"**

This is a day of profound importance. We remember and honour the millions of victims of the Nazi Holocaust – children, women and men on whom atrocious suffering and injustice were inflicted by an abominable machinery of mass murder.

Some six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust, 1.5 million of them children. Millions of other people from targeted groups were also murdered, including Roma and Sinti people; Slavs; people with disabilities; LGBTIQ+ people; members of resistance networks; and other opponents of Nazism.

Six extermination camps, at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka, were equipped with machinery designed specifically for killing on a massive, industrial scale. About one million Jews were killed at Auschwitz alone. Millions more were imprisoned, abused and murdered in a vast network of thousands of other concentration camps, where they were forced into slave labour, including sexual slavery, and medical experimentation.

The scale of these crimes engaged many perpetrators. The Nazi concentration camps and death trains were staffed. The victims had often been identified to the police, and therefore sent to their deaths, by people whom they knew. Countless bystanders looked away from – or were indifferent to – what they must have suspected was extraordinary, inhuman brutality. The dehumanisation that enabled the Holocaust – the depth and scale of this

failure of empathy and fellow-feeling for other human beings – is incomprehensible and terrifying.

It is our duty to seek answers to how these crimes could have been prevented. If we do not, they could happen again.

As part of this work, and in the face of genocide denial, it is essential to ensure accurate historical knowledge of the Holocaust, or Shoah, in all its appalling detail.

The testimony of survivors of the Holocaust is both essential to that work, and extremely painful. Simone Veil, who later became a magistrate and President of the European Parliament, entered Auschwitz-Birkenau at the age of 16. Until her death, in 2017, she spoke to schoolchildren and others about the brutality, terror, humiliation and enslavement that she, her family and so many others were forced to endure. She also recounted moments of tenderness and courage – encounters with other prisoners that were often deeply touching.

Austrian Holocaust survivor Helga Pollak-Kinsky spoke at the UN in Geneva about the adults – “carers, teachers, artists” – who helped children in the camps “to maintain our faith in ourselves and in humanity.” Viktor Frankl and many others have also spoken of the human bonds that were forged in these horrific conditions, and the ways in which those bonds of fellow-feeling helped individuals to retain their sanity, and survive the camps.

I pay tribute to the extraordinary courage and important lessons that so many survivors have brought to us. I admire their resilience. I thank them from the bottom of my heart for the humanity and selflessness of their testimony.

The world's horror at the Holocaust led directly to the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 75 years ago. It was also instrumental in the adoption of the European Convention on Human Rights and a host of international treaties that enshrine our equality, our dignity and our rights in the face of tyranny and destitution.

These are conventions and principles and values that must forever be upheld.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Antisemitism and all forms of racism and racial or religious discrimination are intolerable. They are unacceptable. Today and forever, we must stand against dehumanisation. We must work to overcome indifference and strengthen our understanding of and empathy with others. The atrocious crimes of the Holocaust must never be forgotten.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/01/recalling-holocaust-turk-calls-end-antisemitism-and-racism>

TOP

## Israel

***See also Commons written answer 10753 “Metropolitan Police: Airports” that is included in the Home Affairs section above, and the Commons debate “Holocaust Memorial Day”, UN press releases “Mourning Death of Six Million Jews, Secretary-General Urges Global Community to Speak Out for Human Rights” and “Amid Rise in Antisemitism, Standing Up against Forces of Hate” that are included in the Holocaust section above, and Commons written answer 10555 “Australia: Antisemitism” that is included in the Foreign Affairs section below.***

## House of Commons Business of the House

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Penny Mordaunt):** Let me also thank two



delegations to Parliament this week: the families of Liri Elbag, Eliya Cohen, Idan Shtivi, and Ziv and Gali Berman, who are five of the many hostages still held in Gaza—we must not rest until they are all home ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-01-25/debates/1948D8A9-8F06-4135-ABEB-7FEDA9E0C5C9/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-59C01A87-9F55-407F-B6EF-793952D01775>

## House of Commons Written Answers

### Gaza: Development Aid

**Anum Qaisar (SNP)** [9715] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment his Department has made of the scale of damage to UK-funded projects in Gaza since 7 October 2023.

**Andrew Mitchell:** Given the ongoing conflict, we are not able to provide this assessment at this time. There is a desperate need for increased humanitarian support to Gaza.

We have trebled our aid commitment for this financial year and are working closely with partners in international agencies and in the region to increase access. We are pushing to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians and destroying homes. We continue to call for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to be respected and civilians to be protected.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-15/9715>

### Israel: Gaza

**Andy McDonald (Independent)** [10819] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 17 January 2024 to Question 8441 on Israel: Gaza, whether he has sought legal advice on the (a) absence of intention to commit genocide on the part of the Israeli leadership and (b) threshold for engaging signatories to the Genocide Convention to comply with their duties under Articles I and VII.

**Andrew Mitchell:** As previously stated, 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 the matters of genocide, not for states.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-22/10819>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-08/8441>

### Gaza: Hospitals

**Claire Hanna (SDLP)** [10566] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had recent discussions with (a) his Israeli counterpart and (b) international agencies on taking steps to help ensure the (i) safe use and (ii) protection of medical facilities in Gaza.

**Andrew Mitchell:** Israel has a right to defend itself against Hamas, but it must comply with International Humanitarian Law (IHL); including the protection of hospitals, civilians, and medical staff. We want to see Israel take greater care to limit its operations to military targets and avoid harming civilians. The Prime Minister has made this clear to Prime Minister Netanyahu and has been in close contact throughout. The UK trebled our aid commitment this financial year and is doing everything it can do to get more aid in and open more crossings. We are working

closely with partners in international agencies and in the region to get aid to where it is desperately needed.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-18/10566>

#### **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

**Caroline Lucas (Green)** [9792] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what diplomatic steps he is taking with his (a) Israeli counterpart and (b) the UN to help ensure the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2720.

**Andrew Mitchell:** The UK Government continues to discuss and press for the action that needs to be taken to increase aid to Gaza in his regular calls with Israeli counterparts. The Foreign Secretary's Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Mark Bryson-Richardson, is also working intensely to address the blockages preventing more aid reaching Gaza. The Foreign Secretary recently met with Sigrid Kaag, the UN Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, who was appointed by the United Nations Secretary General pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2720 (2023). We are exploring options to support Ms Kaag in her role, as she develops her priorities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-16/9792>

*UNSC Resolution 2720, referred to above, can be read at*

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2720\(2023\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2720(2023))

#### **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

**Alan Brown (SNP)** [10166] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 16 January 2024 to Question 8039 Gaza: Humanitarian Aid, how much and what proportion of UK aid destined for Gaza has been (a) shipped to Egypt and (b) held by the Egyptian Red Crescent Society as of 17 January 2024.

**Andrew Mitchell:** The UK has delivered 156 tonnes of UK aid for Gaza via Egypt. 74 tonnes were delivered on board ship RFA Lyme Bay and the remainder by air. UK supplies have been passed on to our partners in the region and the majority are already in Gaza.

We have trebled our aid commitment for this financial year and are working closely with partners in international agencies and in the region to increase access.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-17/10166>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-05/8039>

#### **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

**Caroline Lucas (Green)** [9495] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what proportion of UK aid sent to Gaza since 7 October 2023 has entered Gaza as of 15 January 2024.

**Andrew Mitchell:** UK supplies have been passed on to our partners in the region and the majority are already in Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-15/9495>

#### **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

**Rosena Allin-Khan (Labour)** [9909] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 16 January 2023 to Question 9028 on Gaza: Humanitarian Aid, can he provide a full list of the UK aid supplies for Gaza that have been refused entry by the Israeli authorities since 7 October 2023.

**Andrew Mitchell:** UK supplies have been passed on to our partners in the region and the majority are already in Gaza.

The Foreign Secretary's Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is based in the region and is working intensively to address the blockages preventing more aid reaching Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-16/9909>

*The answer referred to above can be read at*

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-10/9028>

### **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

**Richard Burgon (Labour)** [9574] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the potential impact of Israel's dual use policy on getting aid into Gaza.

**Andrew Mitchell:** The Foreign Secretary's Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is based in the region and is working intensively to address the blockages preventing more aid reaching Gaza.

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.

We have trebled our aid commitment for this financial year and are working closely with partners in international agencies and in the region to increase access.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-15/9574>

### **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [9625] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what information his Department holds on restrictions that have been placed by Israel on the types of aid that are permitted to enter Gaza.

**Andrew Mitchell:** 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.

The Foreign Secretary's Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is based in the region and is working intensively to address the blockages preventing more aid reaching Gaza.

We have trebled our aid commitment for this financial year and are working closely with partners in international agencies and in the region to increase access.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-15/9625>

### **Gaza: Humanitarian Aid**

**Stephen Morgan (Labour)** [9623] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches civilians in Gaza.

**Andrew Mitchell:** We are working closely with partners in international agencies and in the region to get aid to where it is desperately needed. Our focus must be on practical solutions that save lives, and we need a humanitarian pause now to allow humanitarian actors and Gazans to operate and move safely, and enable hostages to be released. Israel must also 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. We continue to press Israel to increase the flexibility and visibility on goods allowed into Gaza. It must:

- Ensure effective systems to guarantee the safety of aid convoys, humanitarian operations and IDP returns, and facilitate access.

- Ensure the UN has the people, vehicles, equipment and fuel to distribute aid safely across Gaza. This includes issuing visas.
- Extend the opening hours and capacity of the Nitzana screening facility and Kerem Shalom checkpoint so more trucks, aid and fuel can enter Gaza.
- Open the Kerem Shalom crossing 7 days a week.
- Remove restrictions to ensure greater consistency on the goods allowed in.
- Unencumbered access to aid coming from Jordan.
- Open Ashdod Port as a route for aid to reach Gaza.
- Open the Erez Crossing to allow direct access to the north of Gaza.
- Restore water, fuel and electricity connections.

The Foreign Secretary has also appointed his Representative for Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Mark Bryson-Richardson, who is based in the region and is working intensively to address the blockages preventing more aid reaching Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-15/9623>

### West Bank: Violence

**Seema Malhotra (Labour Co-op)** [10144] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has had recent discussions with his Israeli counterpart on the cost of (a) domestic settler violence to Palestinian property and (b) trends in the level of insurance coverage for Palestinians in the West Bank.

**Andrew Mitchell:** We have urged Israel to take stronger action to stop settler violence and hold the perpetrators accountable; extremist settlers, by targeting and killing Palestinian civilians, are undermining security and stability. Both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have emphasised to Prime Minister Netanyahu that it is critical that Israel acts to reduce tensions in the West Bank.

As the Foreign Secretary said on 14 December, we are preventing those responsible for settler violence from entering the UK.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-17/10144>

*The Foreign Secretary's comments referred to above can be read at*  
[https://twitter.com/David\\_Cameron/status/1735240073505800334](https://twitter.com/David_Cameron/status/1735240073505800334)

## House of Lords Oral Answer

### Military Interventions Overseas

**Lord Pannick (Crossbench):** Following the actions of the Houthis in pursuance of their slogan, "Death to America, death to Israel and a curse on the Jews", and given the recent protest in this country in support of that appalling organisation, is it not high time for the Government to bring before Parliament a Motion to proscribe the organisation as a terrorist group?

**Lord True:** My Lords, as the noble Lord will know, we are sanctioning members of the Houthi organisation. I totally agree with his characterisation of the nature of that organisation, and I assure him that all these matters will continue to be kept under careful and constant review.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-01-25/debates/501F43D9-DD38-4C30-8240-95B9E9D7B2A7/MilitaryInterventionsOverseas#contribution-3A29A366-A593-47AE-A0B1-7BC95EB27FC4>

## House of Lords Written Answers

### Armed Conflict: International Law

**The Lord Bishop of Worcester** [HL1499] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of how the war in Gaza might affect respect for international humanitarian law in other conflicts.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** We recognise that Israel has the right to defend itself against Hamas in accordance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL). As the Foreign Secretary has outlined, we assess that Israel has the capability and commitment to comply with IHL, but we are also deeply concerned about the impact on the civilian population in Gaza. 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/hl1499>

*The following two questions both received the same answer*

#### Gaza: Israel

**The Lord Bishop of Worcester** [HL1497] To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that (1) international humanitarian law is upheld in Gaza, and (2) civilians are protected there.

**The Lord Bishop of Worcester** [HL1498] To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether international humanitarian law is being respected in the war in Gaza.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** 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 terrorism, 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. 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/hl1497>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-10/hl1498>

#### Armenia: Israel

**Lord McInnes of Kilwinning (Conservative)** [HL1449] To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Israel regarding the safety of the Armenian community in Jerusalem.

**Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon:** The UK is actively monitoring the situation, and engaging closely with partners across the region. We are a strong supporter of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and call for places of worship to be respected. Israel has made clear its commitment to freedom of religion, and we encourage the Israel Government to do all that it can to uphold the values of equality for all, enshrined in its laws. Our Embassies in Tel Aviv, and our Consulate General in Jerusalem regularly raise matters relating to religious freedom with the Israeli Governments.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-10/hl1449>

## UK Parliament Early Day Motions

**Richard Burgon (Labour)** [327] **Health workers in Gaza and the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize** – That this House congratulates the more than 250,000 people who have signed a petition to support the nomination of health care workers in Gaza for the 2024 Nobel Peace

Prize; believes that health workers in Gaza have sought to save lives in the most difficult of circumstances and mourns the loss of the more than 300 health workers so far killed in Israel's assault on Gaza; notes that the prize can be awarded to an organisation as well as up to three individuals; and encourages as many of those as possible who qualify to nominate for the Nobel Peace Prize, including parliamentarians, government ministers, professors and members of the Institute of International Law to do so ahead of the 31 January deadline.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61815>

**Chris Law (SNP) [323] Armenian Quarter in Jerusalem** – That this House is deeply alarmed by the attempted take-over of the Cows' Garden in the Armenian Quarter of occupied Jerusalem by illegal Israeli settler organisations; notes that, despite the cancellation of a lease agreement, Israeli settlers have used violence, threats and bulldozers against the Armenians at this site; recognises that settlements in the Old City of Jerusalem are a method of permanent land acquisition and theft of territory, and needs the same robust international response as elsewhere in occupied Palestinian territory; acknowledges the severe and critical threat to the Armenian community of Jerusalem, which has had a presence in the Old City for almost two millennia; further recognises that the destruction within the Cows' Garden in the Armenian Quarter wounds the local fabric and relations between communities; highlights the particular vulnerability of the small yet vibrant Armenian community of Jerusalem; and calls on the Government to take effective measures in response including supporting all legal and accountability mechanisms to resolve this crisis.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61810>

## Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

### **Statement on allegations about UNRWA staff and 7 October attacks**

... The UK is appalled by allegations that UNRWA staff were involved in the 7 October attack against Israel, a heinous act of terrorism that the UK Government has repeatedly condemned.

The UK is temporarily pausing any future funding of UNRWA whilst we review these concerning allegations.

We remain committed to getting humanitarian aid to the people in Gaza who desperately need it.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-on-allegations-about-unrwa-staff-and-7-october-attacks>

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*The following page has been updated. When first published, it read:*

#### **Gaza: what you can do to help**

Donations through established and well-coordinated emergency response appeal mechanisms, such as the appeal by the [UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine \(UNRWA\)](#) and [International Committee of the Red Cross \(ICRC\)](#) are the most effective way to support populations in crisis.

Individuals wishing to help Gazans at this time are recommended to follow this route, or through other trusted aid organisations. If you wish to donate to other trusted organisations, there are some simple steps you can take to ensure your money is safe and being used effectively ...

*The page now reads:*

Donating through established and well-coordinated emergency response appeal

mechanisms is the most effective way to support people during a humanitarian crisis. You can do this through the [British Red Cross](#).

If you wish to help Gazans at this time, the UK government recommends that you donate to this organisation, or through other trusted aid organisations ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/gaza-what-you-can-do-to-help>

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### **Statement on the interim ICJ ruling in South Africa vs Israel**

... We respect the role and independence of the ICJ. However we have stated that we have considerable concerns about this case, which is not helpful in the goal of achieving a sustainable ceasefire.

Israel has the right to defend itself against Hamas in line with IHL, as we have said from the outset. Our view is that Israel's actions in Gaza cannot be described as a genocide, which is why we thought South Africa's decision to bring the case was wrong and provocative.

We welcome the Court's call for the immediate release of hostages and the need to get more aid into Gaza. We are clear that an immediate pause is necessary to get aid in and hostages out, and then we want to build towards a sustainable, permanent ceasefire, without a return to the fighting.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-on-the-interim-icj-ruling-in-south-africa-vs-israel>

*The ICJ interim ruling referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

## **Scottish Government**

**Humza Yousaf** To be clear, @scotgov has not paused or withdrawn aid to @UNRWA We have previously provided as much as we can within our financial constraints. We will always seek to do more where we can & urge others to continue to provide aid to the people of Gaza [plus photo]

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1751539405913813164>

**Humza Yousaf** Important statement from @UNRWA head @UNLazzarini that all allegations will be independently investigated. The people of Gaza are dying in the midst of a humanitarian catastrophe, they cannot be collectively punished. Aid must get to those who are already suffering so badly. [plus link to tweet from Philippe Lazzarini]

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1751361561757728831>

**Humza Yousaf** The #ICJ order is clear. The killing and destruction in Gaza must stop. Urgent humanitarian assistance must be provided to prevent more suffering. Hostages must be released immediately. With such death and destruction, we will continue to call for an immediate ceasefire.

<https://twitter.com/HumzaYousaf/status/1750890990330581146>

## International Court of Justice

### Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel): Request for the Indication of Provisional Measures

A video of President Donoghue's delivery of the Order can be watched at <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1u/k1uwq4cxuv>

#### Press Release

... The State of Israel shall, in accordance with its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts within the scope of Article II of this Convention, in particular: (a) killing members of the group; (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; and (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group ...

The State of Israel shall ensure with immediate effect that its military does not commit any acts described in point 1 above ...

The State of Israel shall take all measures within its power to prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide in relation to members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip ...

The State of Israel shall take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip ...

The State of Israel shall take effective measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to allegations of acts within the scope of Article II and Article III of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide against members of the Palestinian group in the Gaza Strip ...

The State of Israel shall submit a report to the Court on all measures taken to give effect to this Order within one month as from the date of this Order. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-pre-01-00-en.pdf>

#### Order

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

#### Dissenting Opinion of Judge Sebutinde

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-02-en.pdf>

#### Separate Opinion of Judge *Ad Hoc* Barak

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-05-en.pdf>

#### Declaration of Judge Xue

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-01-en.pdf>

#### Declaration of Judge Bhandari

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-03-en.pdf>

#### Declaration of Judge Nolte

<https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-04-en.pdf>



### **Statement by the Secretary-General – on UNRWA**

The United Nations is taking swift action following the extremely serious allegations against several UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) staff members. An investigation by the UN's Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) was immediately activated.

Of the 12 people implicated, nine were immediately identified and terminated by the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Philippe Lazzarini; one is confirmed dead, and the identity of the two others is being clarified.

Any UN employee involved in acts of terror will be held accountable, including through criminal prosecution. The Secretariat is ready to cooperate with a competent authority able to prosecute the individuals in line with the Secretariat's normal procedures for such cooperation.

UNRWA had also previously announced a full, independent review of the organization on 17 January.

Meanwhile, 2 million civilians in Gaza depend on critical aid from UNRWA for daily survival but UNRWA's current funding will not allow it to meet all requirements to support them in February. While I understand their concerns – I was myself horrified by these accusations - I strongly appeal to the governments that have suspended their contributions to, at least, guarantee the continuity of UNRWA's operations.

The abhorrent alleged acts of these staff members must have consequences. But the tens of thousands of men and women who work for UNRWA, many in some of the most dangerous situations for humanitarian workers, should not be penalized. The dire needs of the desperate populations they serve must be met.

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2024-01-28/statement-the-secretary-general-unrwa>

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### **Horrified by Allegations Implicating UN Staff in 7 October Terror Attacks in Israel, Secretary-General Orders Investigation, Termination of Staff Found to Be Involved**

... The Secretary-General has been briefed by the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Philippe Lazzarini, regarding extremely serious allegations which implicate several UNRWA staff members in the terror attacks of 7 October in Israel.

The Secretary-General is horrified by this news and has asked Mr. Lazzarini to investigate this matter swiftly and to ensure that any UNRWA employee shown to have participated or abetted what transpired on 7 October, or in any other criminal activity, be terminated immediately and referred for potential criminal prosecution. ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22115.doc.htm>

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### **Secretary-General Notes Decision by International Court of Justice Ordering Israel to Ensure Palestinians in Gaza Humanitarian Aid, Prevent Commission of Killings**

... The Secretary-General takes note of the Order of the International Court of Justice, indicating provisional measures in the case of South Africa against Israel on the application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip.

In that regard, the Secretary-General notes the Court's decision to order Israel *inter alia*, in accordance with its obligations under the Genocide Convention, "to take all measures within its power" in relation to Palestinians in Gaza to prevent the commission of acts within

the scope of Article II of the Convention, including killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the group's destruction and imposing measures intended to prevent births. He also notes the Court's instruction to Israel to ensure with immediate effect that its military does not commit any of these acts.

Further, the Secretary-General takes special note of the Court's order to Israel to ensure the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in Gaza.

He also notes the emphasis of the Court that "all parties to the conflict in the Gaza Strip are bound by international humanitarian law" and that it calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the hostages abducted during the attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 and held since then by Hamas and other armed groups". ...

**To read the full press release see**

<https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22118.doc.htm>

## UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### **Gaza: 'Nothing short of a catastrophe': Head of the UN Human Rights Office for the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Ajith Sunghay**

Civilians continue to face the brunt of the escalation in Gaza. The situation is nothing short of a catastrophe.

Last Saturday, I was in Khan Younis, where I met with people who were frustrated, angry and understandably wary. And yet they spoke to me, explaining their situation, treating me with warmth and respect in the middle of a brutal, unconscionable situation, explaining how they fled their homes to seek shelter in overcrowded, makeshift camps.

How children have not gone to school in months – and their schools have been destroyed, as have their universities, destroying their hopes for the future. The personal cost to each individual, each family, in addition to the killings of loved ones. Family separation, violence against women, documents destroyed, homes and communities uprooted, health deteriorating.

In Rafah, I saw displaced people who had been ordered by Israeli authorities to leave their homes, with no provision for their accommodation, literally living on the street, with sewage running in the streets and conditions of desperation conducive to a complete breakdown in order.

And even in the midst of it all, human rights and humanitarian NGOs, our counterparts in Gaza, continue their courageous work, trying to make sure human rights violations are properly documented and humanitarian response continues – even as their own lives fall apart.

Over the past few days, these warm, heroic, long-suffering people I met have been caught in the midst of ever intensifying violence, from Israeli airstrikes and street-to-street fighting between Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and Palestinian armed groups. There have been near continuous attacks, including on medical facilities and schools in Khan Younis, UN facilities, as well as residential areas. ...

Attacks on hospitals, schools, and other places of refuge have repeatedly displaced Palestinians into ever smaller areas, with ever decreasing access to the essentials needed to sustain life. Such a failure violates Israel's obligations under international law.

Having personally witnessed and heard the testimonies of those who have endured so much pain and suffering, I am very, very worried. I fear that many more civilians will die. ...

We are also very worried about the impact of the rainy, cold weather in Gaza, which was entirely predictable at this time of the year and risks making an already unsanitary situation completely uninhabitable for the people. Most have no warm clothes or blankets. Northern Gaza, where IDF bombardment continues, is barely accessible even to provide basic

humanitarian aid.

The apparent disregard for international law needs to end. The violence needs to end. Humanitarian aid needs to be delivered without impediment to all those who need it. We urge a ceasefire, immediately, we urge the release of hostages, and we urge a political solution to the causes of this conflict that respects and ensures the rights of all Palestinians and Israelis.

**To read the full press release see**

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2024/01/gaza-nothing-short-catastrophe>

## UNRWA

### **UNRWA's Lifesaving Aid may end due to Funding Suspension: Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA Commissioner General**

"Nine countries have as of today temporarily suspended their funding to UNRWA. These decisions threaten our ongoing humanitarian work across the region including and especially in the Gaza Strip.

"It is shocking to see a suspension of funds to the Agency in reaction to allegations against a small group of staff, especially given the immediate action that UNRWA took by terminating their contracts and asking for a transparent independent investigation. ...

"UNRWA is the primary humanitarian agency in Gaza, with over 2 million people depending on it for their sheer survival. Many are hungry as the clock is ticking towards a looming famine. The Agency runs shelters for over 1 million people and provides food and primary healthcare even at the height of the hostilities.

"In its ruling yesterday, the International Court of Justice ordered that *"Israel must take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip"*. These measures are aimed at preventing irreparable damage to the rights of Palestinians.

"The only way that this can be done is through cooperation with international partners, especially UNRWA as the largest humanitarian actor in Gaza. Some 3,000 core staff out of 13,000 in Gaza continue to report to work, giving their communities a lifeline which can collapse anytime now due to lack of funding.

"It would be immensely irresponsible to sanction an Agency and an entire community it serves because of allegations of criminal acts against some individuals, especially at a time of war, displacement and political crises in the region. ...

"I urge countries who have suspended their funding to re-consider their decisions before UNRWA is forced to suspend its humanitarian response. The lives of people in Gaza depend on this support and so does regional stability".

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa's-lifesaving-aid-may-end-due-funding-suspension>

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### **Serious Allegations against UNRWA Staff in the Gaza Strip: Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA Commissioner-General**

"The Israeli Authorities have provided UNRWA with information about the alleged involvement of several UNRWA employees in the horrific attacks on Israel on 7 October.

"To protect the Agency's ability to deliver humanitarian assistance, I have taken the decision to immediately terminate the contracts of these staff members and launch an investigation in order to establish the truth without delay. Any UNRWA employee who was involved in acts of terror will be held accountable, including through criminal prosecution.

“UNRWA reiterates its condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the abhorrent attacks of 7 October and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all Israeli hostages and their safe return to their families.

“These shocking allegations come as more than 2 million people in Gaza depend on lifesaving assistance that the Agency has been providing since the war began. Anyone who betrays the fundamental values of the United Nations also betrays those whom we serve in Gaza, across the region and elsewhere around the world”.

<https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/serious-allegations-against-unrwa-staff-gaza-strip>

TOP

## Foreign Affairs

### House of Commons Debate

#### **Second Reading: International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill**

*col 564* **Fiona Bruce (Conservative):** ... I am the Prime Minister’s special envoy for freedom of religion or belief. However, the purpose of the Bill is for the sake of my successors, to ensure that the role and office is placed on a statutory footing. Why? ...

In 2019 the noble Lord Bishop, then of Truro, was asked to review what more the then Foreign and Commonwealth Office could do to address the persecution of Christians around the world. The Truro review made practical recommendations for an enhanced response to the plight of persecuted Christians. I emphasise that those recommendations also covered people persecuted for holding other religions or beliefs, or no religious beliefs at all, as does my envoy role.

In particular, recommendation 6 was to specifically establish “permanently, and in perpetuity, the role of Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief with appropriate resources and authority to work across FCO departments”.

That recommendation, along with the other 21 recommendations, was fully accepted by the Government, not least because it was—and remains—this Government’s manifesto commitment to fully implement the Truro review. ...

The independent review of the progress made in implementing the Truro review’s recommendations, which took place in 2022—three years into the implementation of the Truro review, which was published in 2019—stated that recommendation 6 “appears to contemplate a permanent Special Envoy position established by law rather than appointed by the Prime Minister... The establishment of such a permanent position has not occurred, and so ‘no substantial action has been taken, to date’ with respect to delivering this aspect of the Recommendation.”

I am honoured to be the special envoy, but I am very conscious that I hold that office at the discretion of the Prime Minister of the day. It has been my privilege to serve under three Prime Ministers, but there is no guarantee that such an appointment will be made under any future Prime Minister.

*col 565* The Bill is an important measure to solidify the position and work of the special envoy. ...

I ... come on to discuss how important it is to challenge the perception that this is somehow a niche interest, perhaps for those who have strong religious beliefs. It cannot become a niche interest, because hundreds of millions of men, women and children around the world suffer persecution and discrimination, whether under the hard arm of authoritarian regimes or at the ruthless whim of militant mobs, and they need not just our voices but our partnership; not just our words, but our actions; and not just our good will, but our good deeds. ...

col 566 Enacting this Bill would ... provide in law the authority that is consistent with the importance of this issue and the leading global role that the UK plays ... in championing that foundational human right. ...

Passing the Bill would show that we are serious about advocating that fundamental human right for the long term. ...

Without the freedom to believe or not to believe, it is hard to see how other human rights can make sense. Freedom of speech, assembly, movement and expression, and the right to equality before the law, to education, to privacy, to family life and to marriage—all those things and more are predicated and contingent on the right to thought, conscience and religion. Citizens cannot be truly free if they are not able to live according to their beliefs. Without the existence and expression of what has long been considered a sacred inner liberty, those other external rights lack grounding and legitimacy.

col 567 Political social and economic freedoms cannot co-exist alongside major limitations on freedom of religion or belief. Freedom of religion or belief can exist without democracy, but it is hard to see how democracy can exist without freedom of religion or belief. ...

col 570 **Jack Brereton (Conservative):** ... Freedom of religion or belief should be a fundamental human right, but all too often, and increasingly so around the world today, we see people's freedoms challenged and worrying increases in the persecution of minority groups due to their faith. ... The Pew Research Centre has found that of 198 countries surveyed, Government or societal harassment was present in 155 against Christians, in 145 against Muslims and in 94 against Jews. In recent months, here in the UK we have seen a worrying number of incidents of antisemitic and Islamophobic hate. ...

Most important, given that abuse of these vital freedoms is increasing around the world, the Bill sends a clear and strong message to countries where serious abuses are taking place ... that we in the UK stand with all those minority groups and individual members of minority religions who are being persecuted. It demonstrates to the world the UK's full support and commitment to stand by those who are being oppressed and whose religious freedom is being restricted, right around the world. The Bill is crucial to promoting and protecting freedom of religion or belief, and the UK Government have stated that that is high priority for them.

col It is vital that the UK, with its leading role in the UN Security Council, also takes a leading role both at home and abroad in promoting freedom of religion and belief right around the world. ... We will not cease raising these concerns and highlighting them internationally. We will continue to stand by those religious minorities and oppressed groups right around the world, and continue to support them. ...

**Catherine West (Labour):** ... Freedom of religion or belief is a core tenet of fundamental human rights and will always be at the heart of Labour's outlook on the world, and at the centre of the shaping of our foreign policy. ...

We know that article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has historically not received the same precedence as other human rights, is reflected in recommendation 6 of the review that the Bishop of Truro carried out in 2019. We know that this is something that we need to be aware of, perhaps elevating some rights above others. ...

col 572 Although it is undeniable that, in many countries including the UK, religious freedom is something that we take for granted, and people can worship or choose not to worship ... we know that, in vast swathes of the world, there is not that level of tolerance. There is a growing trend in recent years of religious minorities being persecuted simply because of the beliefs that they hold and cherish so dearly. ...

The Opposition will not stand in the way of this Bill today. That said, there are a few considerations that we would like to put before the Public Bill Committee. How would we balance the other rights that may occasionally collide with this question of a special envoy for freedom of religion or belief? For example, there are sincere concerns about backsliding in any area relating to women and girls in any part of the world, with particular

reference to their reproductive rights. Similarly, there are concerns about the message it may send to the global LGBT+ community. It will be important for the Committee to balance all those elements in any future consideration of the Bill. Although freedom of religion or belief does not necessarily conflict with either of these issues, concerns will be raised and it would be wrong to give the impression that we are putting rights in a hierarchy.

On a technical level, I also have reservations about appointing a special envoy on a statutory basis, as it might weaken the Government's flexibility and responsiveness in appointing special envoys, as and when required, to deal with the ever-changing global situation. We have seen that demonstrated in recent weeks with the Minister's appointment of a representative for humanitarian affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories ...

col 573 It is very fitting that we are having this debate on the Friday before Holocaust Memorial Day ... The Community Security Trust ... as well as Tell MAMA and other organisations dealing with Islamophobia, do important work. It is important that we do not allow any of these matters to divide our communities here at home. ...

**The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Mr Andrew Mitchell):** ... Freedom of religion or belief remains a human rights priority for the British Government. The work of the special envoy, especially through the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance, and the efforts across the Foreign Office network are making a difference around the world. ...

The Government's commitment to the role of special envoy is clear. Indeed, we have had three special envoys to date. I make it clear that the Bill does not establish a precedent for other similar roles. Uniquely, legislating for this post follows an independent report recommendation and a most important manifesto commitment. Today the Government deliver on that commitment ...

col 574 The Bill underlines our commitment to FORB, and, importantly, supports the implementation of recommendation 6 of the Bishop of Truro's 2019 review ... Implementation of the bishop's recommendations was, as I have said, a manifesto commitment ...

col 574 Let me end by reiterating the Government's support for the role of special envoy for FORB and our support for the Bill ...

*Bill accordingly read a Second time; to stand committed to a Public Bill Committee ...*

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-01-26/debates/7075D340-A666-4091-9FEE-B6AA24494FA4/InternationalFreedomOfReligionOrBeliefBill>

*The Bishop of Truro's report, referred to above, can be read at*

<https://christianpersecutionreview.org.uk/report/>

*The independent review of the Bishop of Truro's report, referred to above, can be read at*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62b478a4e90e0765cdf62e0c/Assessment\\_of\\_the\\_implementation\\_of\\_recommendations\\_of\\_Bishop\\_of\\_Truro\\_s\\_independent\\_review\\_of\\_FCDO\\_support\\_for\\_persecuted\\_Christians.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62b478a4e90e0765cdf62e0c/Assessment_of_the_implementation_of_recommendations_of_Bishop_of_Truro_s_independent_review_of_FCDO_support_for_persecuted_Christians.pdf)

*The Pew Research Centre findings referred to above can be read at*

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/11/29/physical-harassment-related-to-religion-occurred-in-more-than-two-thirds-of-countries-in-2020/>

## Westminster Hall Debate

### Religious Persecution and the World Watch List

col 188WH **Fiona Bruce (Conservative):** ... For more than 30 years, Open Doors has produced its annual world watch list ... to portray Christian persecution globally. ...

Year on year the world watch list now reports increasing numbers of Christians persecuted.

According to the report, this year more than 365 million Christians around the world faced high levels of persecution or discrimination ...

... this is happening not only to Christians but to those of many other faiths, and indeed those of no faith at all—humanists, atheists. The watch list highlights a number of reasons. First, there is a shrinking space for civil society. That means a shrinking space for people to speak publicly about their religious beliefs. ...

*col 189WH* Persecution is also increasing due to the rise in the use of technology by regimes. ... A handful of people can now keep tabs on millions, and then arrest and incarcerate at scale. ...

There has also been an increase in gender-based violence: violence against women and girls, who suffer doubly if they are a member of a religious minority. This discrimination, often justified on religious grounds, exacerbates lawless mob violence—with no legal action taken. ...

Another reason for the increase in persecution worldwide is what Open Doors describes as the collapse of Government institutions—the collapse of the rule of law in the face of widespread lawlessness. ...

*col 190WH* Another cause of the rise in persecution is religious nationalism. It is often accompanied by hate speech, which drives persecution of religious minorities and often incites mob violence. Criminality is overlooked. ...

*col 191WH* As I say, the increase in persecution is happening all over the world, much of it due to autocratic regimes. ...

I now turn to the recommendations in the Open Doors report. ...

One of the recommendations says that the UK Government should “Promote and protect FoRB as a leading priority in foreign policy and diplomatic engagement”.

The UK Government frequently pronounce that promoting and protecting freedom of religion or belief is a priority in their international human rights work. It is true that it is much more of a priority than it was just a few years ago. Defending FORB has risen up the political agenda. ...

*col 192WH* We have come a long way in the last few years, and there has been improvement in addressing FORB, but there is much more to be done. Three years after the Truro review’s work, experts carried out an independent review of it. Rather politely—they are academics, so this may be the language they use—the review concluded that “there remains scope for further developments in order to ensure that the protection of FoRB for all becomes firmly embedded in the operational approach of the FCDO as a whole.” ...

*col 193WH* ... a lot of work has been done on producing religious literacy materials, including a FORB toolkit, to help our officials and diplomats in embassies across the world to understand what FORB is and the importance of protecting it, promoting it and understanding the principal areas of different faiths and beliefs. However, it is really important that the material is read and used. The problem is that, although its roll-out should be mandatory, as Truro recommended, it is not—it is just recommended. We need a review of how often and to what degree the materials are being taken up ...

Engagement by the diplomats who work in our embassies and diplomatic posts around the world needs to be ramped up, acknowledging that in the context of peacebuilding, supporting democratisation and the development of inclusivity, FORB needs to be included with other human rights. ...

Although religion can be a cause of conflict, it can also be a force for good. Is peace not a core value of most religions? In the context of our trying to prevent conflict and deter wars, the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief is vital. ...

In October, we had a 24-hour global conference—a virtual conference—which young people across the world could join using open space technology. ... More than 500 young people from more than 70 countries across six continents joined the conference. If we could inspire young people to be global ambassadors for FORB in the same way as they

have been global ambassadors for climate change, we could really see change in the next generation. ...

We should be bolder when we work with countries where persecution is high or where there is risk of persecution. We should not underestimate the UK's influence. ...

*col 199WH Patricia Gibson (SNP):* ... Persecuting people for their faith is completely unacceptable. As we have heard, nations that persecute people for their faith also have very poor human rights records across the board. ...

*col 200WH* Article 18 of the UN declaration of human rights states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

That article is almost identical to article 9 of the European convention on human rights. ... It is important that we do not politicise human rights in any part of the world, including the UK. ...

The UK and all democratic nations must be unequivocal. The freedom to worship is a fundamental human right. We cannot tiptoe around so-called cultural, religious or other sensitivities. All nations that believe in and value freedom must stand up for it. That is our duty. ...

*col 201WH* Whatever approaches western democracies have already taken to address the matter have not brought about the necessary change. The problem is getting worse, the repression is getting worse and the violence is getting worse. Other approaches should be considered. We cannot pass by on the other side. ...

*col 204WH The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (David Rutley):* ... It is obvious ... there is a lasting and mutual commitment across the House to protect freedom of religion or belief. The Government, and my noble Friend Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, who has responsibility for freedom of religion or belief and human rights in the FCDO, share that commitment.

*col 205WH* Today, the importance of championing freedom of religion or belief is laid bare in the alarming facts and figures regarding Christian persecution described in the Open Doors world watch list for 2024 ... We are clear that no one should be persecuted, abused or intimidated because of their religion or belief. The Government have long been committed to promoting and protecting freedom of religion for all, but sadly, as the world watch list sets out, many Christians are targeted daily purely for their faith, despite the protections of international law. History has shown us that where freedom of religion or belief is under threat, other human rights are also at risk. We must continue to call out human rights violations and abuses. ...

The report identifies that one in seven Christians are persecuted worldwide. It is in the most oppressive societies that Christians face the harshest persecution. ...

The UK is deeply concerned about the scale and severity of the violations of FORB, whatever the faith or belief. Religious intolerance and persecution, whether targeted at Christians, Muslims, Jews or Buddhists ... are often at the heart of foreign and development policy challenges. No one should be excluded because of their religion, belief or conscience. Discrimination not only damages societies, but holds back economies by reducing opportunities for all.

Countries cannot fully develop while they oppress members of religious or belief minorities. Communities are stronger when they are fully inclusive—a point that is particularly poignant as we approach Holocaust Memorial Day. My mother was raised in occupied Denmark, and she taught me at a very early age the importance of never forgetting the horrors of the holocaust and the bravery of those who fought against it.

We demonstrated the depth of our commitment to FORB in July 2022 by hosting the international ministerial conference in London, bringing together 800 faith and belief leaders, human rights activists and 100 Government delegations to agree action to promote and protect those fundamental rights. ...



col 206WH As a result of the conference, 47 Governments, international organisations and other entities made pledges to take action in support of FORB. ...

Since the conference, we have built on that momentum in a number of ways. First, we have been working through international bodies to strengthen coalitions of support and to protect freedom of religion or belief for all within the multilateral framework. Secondly, we have been using the strength of our global diplomatic network to encourage states to uphold their human rights and FORB obligations. Thirdly, we have been working to embed FORB considerations across the work of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. ...

col 208WH We continue to ensure that the changes we made following the Bishop of Truro's review of the work the Department has done on FORB are embedded, and we look for opportunities to ensure that FORB is central to our wider human rights work. In that regard, I am pleased to say that our work on FORB is included in the international development White Paper ...

Let me end by saying that the issues outlined in the Open Doors world watch list are of the highest importance to the Government. We continue to work through all available methods to call out persecution and defend the right of freedom of religion for all ...

**To read the full transcript see**

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-01-25/debates/6860BA31-C322-40C9-B68C-5AA0077E3C05/ReligiousPersecutionAndTheWorldWatchList>

*The World Watch List 2024, referred to above, can be read at*

<https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/>

*The Bishop of Truro's report, referred to above, can be read at*

<https://christianpersecutionreview.org.uk/report/>

*The independent review of the Bishop of Truro's report, referred to above, can be read at*

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62b478a4e90e0765cdf62e0c/Assessment\\_of\\_the\\_implementation\\_of\\_recommendations\\_of\\_Bishop\\_of\\_Truro\\_s\\_independent\\_review\\_of\\_FCDO\\_support\\_for\\_persecuted\\_Christians.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62b478a4e90e0765cdf62e0c/Assessment_of_the_implementation_of_recommendations_of_Bishop_of_Truro_s_independent_review_of_FCDO_support_for_persecuted_Christians.pdf)

*The International Development White Paper, referred to above, can be read at*

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6576f37e48d7b7001357ca5b/international-development-in-a-contested-world-ending-extreme-poverty-and-tackling-climate-change.pdf>

## House of Commons Written Answer

### Australia: Antisemitism

**Fleur Anderson (Labour)** [10555] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the implications for his policies of changes in the level of antisemitism in Australia since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas conflict.

**Anne-Marie Trevelyan:** We strongly condemn antisemitism and are concerned by the rising levels since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas conflict, in the UK and abroad. We welcome that the Australian government has similarly condemned this globally rising antisemitism. We will continue to monitor the situation in Australia, and elsewhere, and update our policies as appropriate. The UK is committed to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) globally.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-18/10555>

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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>

Holocaust Memorial Bill Committee: Petitions against the Bill: 24 January 2024

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14139/html/>

and

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14140/html/>

#### **\*\* International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill**

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

Second Reading, House of Commons

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-01-26/debates/7075D340-A666-4091-9FEE-B6AA24494FA4/InternationalFreedomOfReligionOrBeliefBill>

#### **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