



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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Home Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answers

Business of the House

Lucy Powell (Labour Co-op): ... I start by expressing our profound regret that the hon. Member for Finchley and Golders Green (Mike Freer) has decided to step down due to fears for his safety and that of his family. The recent attack on his office was horrific. That any Member is forced from office due to intimidation, threats and fear is an attack on all of us and what we represent. It is unacceptable and we must do more to protect our freedoms and democracy. We stand together. ...

Penny Mordaunt: ... I also thank the hon. Lady for her remarks about my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley and Golders Green (Mike Freer), who has said that he is going to stand down because of his safety and the wellbeing of his family. Such attacks on elected Members are attacks on democracy itself. I know that many hon. and right hon. Members and their families are enduring such threats. We condemn such actions and those who encourage, incite and excuse them. I thank the hon. Lady for her cross-party support on that matter. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-01/debates/B6D88569-A288-43F3-BE43-DCB4CB607172/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-8DECB82A-708B-47C0-96DE-A6191A52B9E3>

Business of the House

Ian Paisley (DUP): ... The Leader of the House will be aware of the wonderful gospel singer Harmonie London, who regularly performs on the streets of London, principally on Oxford Street. During a recent performance there, Community Support Officer AW5152 accosted the performer, and said, "You're not allowed to perform church songs outside of church grounds unless you have a special letter." The Leader of the House will know that under article 9 our rights to freedom of religious worship are enshrined in law and protected. That officer was simply wrong, but when that was pointed out to her, her response was to stick her tongue out at the performer. That was just wrong. This performer, unfortunately, has been accosted more than once by police officers about her performance. She is entitled to sing gospel songs on the streets of our nation, as many buskers do, and those freedoms should be protected. I hope the police, after apologising, will train their officers to be aware of the rights of all the citizens of this United Kingdom.

Penny Mordaunt: I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising this matter. He will know that the Metropolitan police have said that they got it wrong. I think there were some other issues relating to busking licences and all that, but in terms of what he has described the officer saying and her justification for acting, the Met have said they got that wrong and my understanding is that they have apologised for doing so. He is right to raise that, and I hope it will have reassured the public about their particular rights to do one thing or another. However, we also need to place on record our support for the police. We have policing by consent; sometimes they make poor decisions, but they are held to account for them and, where they have got it wrong, they apologise. I think that is the hallmark of a good police service.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-01/debates/B6D88569-A288-43F3-BE43-DCB4CB607172/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-721136D9-2B3B-4C58-AE5D-88C42693C1DF>

House of Commons Written Answer

Busking: Religious Freedom

Gregory Campbell (DUP) [11698] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in light of a recent reported incident in London, whether he has issued recent guidance to the police on the rights of people to sing religious songs in a public setting.

Chris Philp: The Government is committed to religious freedom and free speech, and singing religious songs outside a church is not in itself prohibited.

The police are operationally independent and there is a well established process for addressing complaints.

The Home Office will not be issuing guidance on the matter.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-29/11698>

House of Lords Written Answer

Hate Crime: Alternatives to Prison

Lord Laming (Crossbench) [HL1794] To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that non-custodial sentences command public and judicial confidence by ensuring that, when offenders undertake such interventions, they are demanding, well organised, purposeful, and with the clear intention of reducing recidivism.

Lord Bellamy: The Government is committed to the effective delivery of non-custodial sentences, and it is important that both judges and the public have confidence in the delivery of these sentences.

Courts have the power to impose a range of requirements to sentences served in

the community. All community orders must have a compulsory punitive element to ensure that offenders are punished for their crime, and to deter further reoffending. For example, Unpaid Work (UPW) ensures offenders are making visible reparations for their crimes, such as cleaning graffiti. We have invested up to £93m in Community Payback over a three-year period to boost delivery of UPW hours. We have also relaunched the UPW nominations [website](#) on GOV.UK to make it easier and more accessible for the public to have a say in how and where UPW hours should be used.

Electronic monitoring is a well-established tool available to courts and probation staff to strengthen offender management in the community. We are increasing the number of defendants and offenders that can be tagged at any one time to 25,000 by March 2025.

Community Sentence Treatment Requirements (CSTRs) can also be imposed as part of a community sentence for offenders with mental health, drug or alcohol issues, offering a robust alternative to custody which addresses the root causes of offending. We have recruited Health and Justice Partnership Coordinators across all probation regions to ensure strong links between probation and healthcare to support these requirements.

Public confidence is maintained by ensuring our staff are equipped with the right tools so that they can make the most of their expertise and judgement. We have increased funding for the Probation Service by an additional £155m a year to recruit record levels of staff, so that we can bring down caseloads, and deliver better and more consistent supervision of offenders in the community.

We recognise the importance of ensuring the public is properly informed about sentencing as a whole and that the public has access to a range of information to enable this. We are also building and maintaining the confidence of the judiciary by improving arrangements to increase understanding and transparency in probation delivery at national, regional and local levels.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-22/hl1794>

TOP

Holocaust

House of Lords Debate

Holocaust Memorial Day

col 1379 **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (Baroness Scott of Bybrook):** ... Holocaust Memorial Day is all the more poignant this year as we reflect on the Hamas terrorist attack on the people of Israel on 7 October. One of the 1,200 people murdered by Hamas was 91 year-old Moshe Ridler, who escaped from a Nazi camp in Ukraine and was sheltered by shepherds before liberation, and who came to live in Israel in 1951. Moshe was murdered in the Holit kibbutz, just over a mile from the border with Gaza. His bungalow was hit first by a rocket-propelled grenade and then by a hand grenade. ... His death reminds us that the work of organisations such as the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust has never been more important.

Holocaust Memorial Day is intended first and foremost to remind us of what was done to the Jewish people during the Holocaust. An attempt was made to annihilate the Jewish people in their entirety; an attempt to take anti-Semitism to its bitter and horrific conclusion. It is impossible to stand here today and not reflect on 7 October, which saw the deadliest

attack against Israel since the state's establishment in 1948. We witnessed the mass murder of over 1,200 Israelis by Hamas, the mass rape of women and young girls, and the abduction of 240 hostages. It is incumbent on us on Holocaust Memorial Day to speak the truth and to repudiate the attempt to level false charges against Israel. We must remember what was done to the Jewish people in the Holocaust and sound the warning of the threat that a resurgent anti-Semitism poses to them once again today. ...

Tragically, since the [genocide] convention was agreed, there have been other genocides, in Cambodia, Srebrenica, Rwanda and Darfur. This year we mark the 30th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsis. It is very much in the spirit of remembering the Holocaust that, on Holocaust Memorial Day, we remember the victims of those genocides too.

col 1380 Since the 7 October attack by Hamas, countries across the world have experienced a shocking increase in anti-Semitism. The Community Security Trust, which monitors anti-Semitism in the United Kingdom, has recorded over 2,000 anti-Semitic incidents since 7 October. This is the highest total on record, and, sadly, this increase is reflected across Europe, the United States, Canada and Australia.

The theme for 2024 is the fragility of freedom, highlighting that in every genocide that has taken place those who are targeted for persecution have had their freedoms restricted and removed before many of them were murdered. ...

The Nazis aimed to completely exclude Jews and other minorities from everyday life. Between 1933 and 1938, over 400 anti-Semitic laws were enacted. These laws limited every area of Jewish life. By 1935, the Nuremberg laws had changed who could be a German citizen. As a result, Jews and others lost their rights to citizenship, which not only stripped them of the right to vote but made them stateless. This meant that they could not get a valid passport for travel between countries or acquire a visa to leave Germany. With no escape, many met their deaths in Nazi concentration camps.

It is natural to presume that liberation, when it came at the end of the war, brought great joy. But for those Jewish men, women and children who survived, it also brought home the immensity of their loss. An extraordinary effort was needed to pick up the pieces of broken lives and to start over again. Many were lone survivors. Entire generations were murdered—grandparents, parents, children and cousins. Liberation day was the first day survivors were forced to confront reality. Up until then, survivors had expended all their efforts on the struggle to survive from one moment to the next. ...

col 1381 The Government remain committed to the creation of a new national memorial, and we are pleased that MPs overwhelmingly supported the Holocaust Memorial Bill. If enacted, the Bill will remove a statutory obstacle that has prevented the building of a new memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens. Our aim is that the completion of that memorial should be witnessed by Holocaust survivors.

In March, the UK assumes the important mantle of the presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. We will use this opportunity to explore the circumstances that led to the Holocaust and to highlight the nature of a society that allowed mass murder in plain sight. We will also use the opportunity to reflect on the use of artificial intelligence in Holocaust distortion.

I pay tribute to the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and to its CEO, Olivia Marks-Woldman OBE, and her team, which delivers the annual Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony and thousands of local activities across the country. Similarly, I thank the CEO of the Holocaust Educational Trust, Karen Pollock CBE, who works tirelessly to ensure that the next generation learn of the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust and can visit Auschwitz-Birkenau as part of the very successful Lessons from Auschwitz programme. ...

Lord Dubs (Labour): ... It is possibly appropriate to reflect on the film that has come out recently about Nicky Winton, the person who saved 669 Kindertransport children from the Holocaust. It was a film that drove me to tears. ... He was a person who, when there was a serious issue that needed something done about it, decided that he would actually do it.

He did not walk away, having said it was awful; he said he would do it, and he saved a lot of lives. ...

col 1382 I spent the first three days of this week in Berlin because of events to do with Kindertransport and Holocaust Memorial Day. ... There were two features. One was an exhibition in the Bundestag called “Auf Wiedersehen”, which commemorated certain Kindertransport children. It was well documented and very poignant, with some letters written by them to their parents before the war started, and letters written by their parents to them. It was a powerful exhibition ... We should move that exhibition to London and show it here. ...

There was also a memorial event at the Reichstag ... The president of the Reichstag ... made a powerful speech drawing attention to what had happened, the tragedies of the Holocaust and the number of people who were exterminated in the camps.

Germany has come to terms with its past in a most commendable way. For the Reichstag to have such an event and to have speeches—two concentration camp survivors spoke and gave powerful testimony of what had happened to them—was a powerful symbol to me of a country that was determined to understand its past, atone for its past and reflect on its past and the lessons of it for the present time. ...

I join in tributes paid to the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust for the work it does every year ... The Holocaust Educational Trust and the Anne Frank Trust also helped us to remember a very solemn day and make sure that we learn the lessons of the past as best we can. ...

There has been a deplorable, regrettable, appalling outburst of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in this country—indeed, the Germans say that it is the same in their country. We need to work out better ways of commemorating the event and making sure that Islamophobia and anti-Semitism are swept away as best we can. ...

col 1383 Just before the pandemic, I was invited to talk about the Holocaust and the Kindertransport at a school in Tower Hamlets.

It was a maintained school but one which I think was made up pretty much of all Muslim boys. Their project was the Holocaust and the Kindertransport. There were 300 or 400 boys. The first question asked by one of them was, “What do I say to people who deny the Holocaust ever happened? How do I deal with it?” I thought that was a terrific question to come from a Muslim boy in Tower Hamlets. It was terrific to find that the school was doing a good job. If that sort of educational can spread from our schools, it is a sign that we will go quite a long way towards tackling both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

Baroness Ludford (Liberal Democrat): ... The briefings from the Holocaust Education Trust and from an organisation which I admit is new to me, Protection Approaches, have been most valuable. The work of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust in organising the remembrance events on and around 27 January is also much appreciated, as is that of the Antisemitism Policy Trust ... of the Community Security Trust and of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

I want to start by commenting on the appalling and frightening treatment to which Conservative MP Mike Freer has been subjected, such that he intends to quit politics ... Like me, he is not Jewish, but his support for Israel and the fact that he represents Finchley and Golders Green, with its substantial Jewish population, have led at least some of his attackers to assume that he is—and in one case to call him a “Jewish pig”. This is a clear example not only of where hatred of Israel and of Jews as a people morph into one but of the fact that we are all, truly, in this together.

Not for nothing is this year’s chosen, and inspired, theme of Holocaust remembrance the “Fragility of Freedom”. We can see it right there in the experience of Mike Freer and of others ... and in the fact that the horrendous, brutal mass atrocities of 7 October perpetrated by Hamas largely on Jews, celebrated in some quarters as acts of “resistance”, have been followed by an explosion in incidents of anti-Semitism, as well as of Islamophobia, across the globe, including, sadly, in this country.

We think at this time of the 1,200 people murdered on 7 October and of the 136 hostages

still held by Hamas in Gaza. As my colleague Alistair Carmichael MP told the other place, “when I read stories about a restaurant opening in Jordan called ‘October 7’, frankly I despair. It is something that has to be called out and dealt with wherever it happens”.—[\[Official Report, Commons, 25/1/24; col. 464.\]](#) ...

col 1384 Holocaust survivor Lily Ebert has inspired much admiration over the years, and her great-grandson Dov Forman has picked up her mantle. As he tweeted recently, “it has been alarming to see attempts to erase the specific Jewish identity of the Holocaust’s victims. The Holocaust wasn’t just a human tragedy; it was a targeted genocide of 6 million Jews. Families were obliterated solely for being Jewish ... It’s crucial to remember the Holocaust for what it was: a systematic, state-sponsored pursuit to annihilate every Jewish man, woman, and child. This was the racist core of Nazi ideology, a belief in a racial struggle that justified the total destruction of the Jewish people. To honour the victims, we must speak the truth of their identity”. ...

col 1385 Anti-Semitism in Europe has a very long history of routine ingrained intolerance, discrimination and second-class treatment, then growing into persecution, expulsion and pogroms. But the speed and ease of the rise of Adolf Hitler, his thugs and his twisted ideology of hate is of another dimension altogether, and what is deeply frightening and instructive is how all too much of society enabled it, or at least did not resist. ...

Lord Stevens of Birmingham (Crossbench): ... Holocaust remembrance means holding two truths in tension: that the Shoah was a unique rupture in human history, but that the virus of exterminationist racism lives on.

It lives on in the Hamas murderer from Gaza who phoned his proud parents on 7 October to celebrate: “Your son killed Jews! I swear, 10 with my own hands mother! Open WhatsApp on your phone and see the dead!” It lives on when a young Israeli at a music festival that day has to hide in the woods to escape certain death—just as his great-grandfather did eight decades earlier en route to a concentration camp. It lives on in Kfar Aza and Sderot, where I have seen with my own eyes the atrocities and death—the hand grenades and knives—meted out to babies and mothers and grandmas.

col 1386 These crimes pierced the world’s post-Holocaust covenant of a safe national homeland for the Jewish people. In doing so, they confirmed its necessity—because 7 October and its aftermath has brought a terrible clarity: that there are still those who seek the annihilation of Jews. Their threats are not polemic—they are fact. They are not only word, but deed. If they could have murdered more, they would. We have been reminded, in the most brutal way, that appeasing evil does not lead to a just and lasting peace. So taking Holocaust remembrance seriously means seeing the world as it is, and acting to prevent and to stop further genocides. ...

Lord Pickles (Conservative): ... I join in thanks to Karen Pollock for her excellent work with the Holocaust Educational Trust and to Olivia Marks-Woldman of the HMDT for organising so much in a very difficult year: 5,000 different organisations putting together local events, 3,000 buildings lit up, including the Blackpool Tower and the London Eye; thousands of candles in peoples’ windows and 6 million digital candles on billboards across the United Kingdom.

I am also grateful for the commitment given by the Government, the Leader of the Opposition, the Liberal Democrats and Scottish National Party to the building of a memorial to the Holocaust and a learning centre next to Parliament in Victoria Tower Gardens. ...

col 1387 I took over the post of the Holocaust envoy in 2015. In that time, I have visited many death camps in Europe, had the opportunity of listening to very distinguished historians and met many survivors. But there is one thing I have never entirely understood—something I have never been able to get my mind around. Why did we not do something about Hitler, when it was there and it was plain? The nature of what was happening in Nazi Germany and the death camps was known to the authorities in the United Kingdom many years before the liberation—and even at the time when we decided to announce that they were occurring, we underestimated the number of people who had

been killed at that point by 1 million.

However, by midday on 7 October, I knew exactly why we did nothing. Before Israel had an opportunity to get much of a defence and before Israel did anything in Gaza, people were dancing in the streets throughout the world—and, to our eternal shame, in the United Kingdom—celebrating the murder of children. I came to the conclusion that the world is very happy to bow its head once a year in remembrance of long dead Jews, but it is indifferent to the fate of living Jews and hostile to the thought that Jews might defend themselves.

Even when they saw the full extent of the horrors that Hamas committed—many Members will have seen the film and heard testimony this week—many of the #MeToo campaigners and the campaigners against female genital mutilation turned a blind eye to Israeli suffering. We were asked to consider these mutilations “in context”. Have we really become a country in which parents are advised not to send their children to Jewish schools in school uniform; where Jewish students are reluctant to wear a kippah on campus; where travellers are advised not to wear a Star of David on the Tube; where Hebrew-speaking tourists are assaulted on London streets; or where a decent, hard-working MP is hounded out of office for standing up for his Jewish constituents? ...

So I hope we will not hear any statements in future from university vice-chancellors, from police commissioners or politicians, about having a zero tolerance approach to anti-Semitism, because it is clearly not the case. It is a lie. Casual anti-Semitism is widespread in modern Britain: you need only to look, every Saturday, to see those useful idiots marching alongside Jew-hating anti-Semites, giving them credibility and credence and inadvertently encouraging them on to even greater depravity.

Before Israel had a chance to defend itself, even while the crowds in major cities were dancing with glee at the murder of children, the twin pillars of denial and distortion were working to form an alternate reality, a distorted truth. The term “genocide” is habitually misused and distorted. ... The South African attempt to subvert the meaning of genocide at the ICJ and to use it against Israel is a distortion of the truth. For the victims to be guilty of the crimes committed by the perpetrators is a perversion of reality. The Foreign Secretary is correct when he says: “I take the view that Israel is acting in self-defence after the appalling attack of 7 October”, and that the argument that Israel has “the intent to commit genocide, I think ... is nonsense”.

col 1388 Denial is the first stage of genocide. That process was truncated in the October pogrom. I participated in an interview on LBC with an imam from east London who laughingly told me and the listeners, a few days after the massacre, that no children had been murdered by Hamas. Queen’s College Muslim Association went one step further, saying that there was a great deal of video evidence that Hamas deliberately avoided targeting women and children. Denial and distortion are formidable obstacles to the truth when there are plenty of witnesses about; consider their potency when the number of survivors who witnessed the Holocaust is diminishing. That is why the presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, which the UK begins this month, will strengthen the coalition that rebuts denial and distortion. One of the first events will be a gathering of experts to examine the possibility and pitfalls of artificial intelligence on the digital records of the Holocaust. ...

Our presidential year will bring perpetrators of violence and the conditions that caused the Holocaust more into focus. Our theme this year is “In Plain Sight”. It comes from something profound that my friend and Holocaust survivor Ivor Perl said to me on a visit to Auschwitz. ...

col 1389 He firmly gripped my wrist and said, “Listen, Eric, don’t believe all that crap about ‘The birds never sing in Auschwitz’. It was a day like this when we first came here, a warm, sunny day, blue skies with cotton-wool clouds, birds were singing and butterflies were fluttering between the lines. The Holocaust did not happen in dark corners, hidden away; the Holocaust happened in broad daylight, in plain sight, with the whole world watching”. ...

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent (Labour): ... My family arrived in the UK in the 1880s, fleeing the pogroms of tsarist Russia. My ancestors fled state-sanctioned violence and arrived here in the hope of a better and safer life. Little did they realise that their choice of final destination was to guarantee the survival of my family. As far as we know, not one of those who chose to remain in Poland, Ukraine and Belarus survived the Shoah. For my family, anti-Jewish hatred is not an academic exercise; it is formative to my understanding of my place in the world. ...

col 1390 The facts of history are often too easily forgotten. The sheer scale of the Holocaust, and of the genocides that have followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur, enables us to remember facts and statistics but can allow us to ignore or forget the impact on people, families and communities. ...

Your Lordships' House recognised this principle as soon as the first concentration camps were liberated in 1945. Within days of the liberation of Buchenwald, in April 1945 our Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, asked a delegation of parliamentarians from both Houses to travel to the camp to see the horrors at first hand and bear witness on behalf of our Parliament and our country. ...

... my noble friend Lady Golding[*'s*] father, who had been the MP for Caerphilly ... Ness Edwards was one of the 10 members of the delegation to travel to Buchenwald. ... I wish to share the words she used when discussing her father and his experiences ...

"... I was but a child on the day when I opened the door to my father on his return. He stood there, grey and drawn, and said, 'Do not touch me. I am covered with lice. Everyone in the camps is covered with lice. We have been deloused many times, but I am still covered with lice.' He could not sleep for many weeks, and he had nightmares for many years ... My father spoke to me and to my brothers and sisters about what he had seen in the camp. He told us of the hanging gibbets. Human beings were put on hooks and hung from under their chins until they died. He told us that the people in charge of the camp rather liked tattoos, and they skinned people and used their skins to make lampshades. They discovered that, when people die, their skin is given to shrinking too quickly, so they tried skinning them alive. My father showed me photographs of piles of bodies on carts. Three weeks later, the allies had not had time to remove them all. He showed me photographs of men in thin clothes, photographs of skeletons, and photographs of men with haunted eyes. I will always remember the look in those men's eyes—the look of utter bewilderment and incomprehension. They had been starved and beaten, yet their spirit was still there".—[[Official Report, Commons, 12/12/1989; col. 901.](#)] ...

col 1391 The history of the Jewish community has been filled with too many chapters of pain and death. We are a very resilient community, but the human cost we have paid for our very existence is far too high. My generation was meant to read about the persecution of Jews in history books. Pogroms, death, torture, systematic killing and anti-Jewish propaganda were for my grandparents' generation. I was meant to live in an enlightened world where humanity and human rights are protected and cherished. I honestly believed that I would never be speaking about a modern-day pogrom, yet that is what happened on 7 October in southern Israel. ...

In Tel Aviv, the survivors of the massacre at the Nova music festival have claimed a space and filled it with the remnants of the festival. ...

They have recreated the lost property area of the festival. It is reminiscent of visiting Kanada at Auschwitz. Every item left behind in the lost property is now evidence of someone who died and has not been able to return to claim it. On screens throughout the venue, there were recordings of the party taken before the massacre—young people dancing and enjoying themselves before hell was unleashed. The images of their laughter and joy are burned into my memory, because so few of them survived. ...

col 1392 Our guide explained that, in the days that followed, she had to choose which funerals to go to. She had lost 20 friends; her boyfriend had lost 45. There were too many funerals, and she could not attend them all. She could not say goodbye. Her story is one

of thousands that happened on 7 October. Already, however, people are trying to downplay the attacks to distort the facts and claim lies and smears. It is our job to make sure people know what really happened.

To finish, I will touch on the anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim hate that has followed on our streets since 7 October. Not a day has gone past when members of our community are not scared. I am therefore so grateful to CST and its extensive network of volunteers, who are doing everything they can to try to keep us safe when others are trying to hurt us. There cannot be any room for bad faith actors who want to make political gain by exploiting the fear of those touched by 7 October and the awful war that has followed in Gaza. Together, we must resist the efforts to divide us. ...

Lord Austin of Dudley (Non-affiliated): ... I will start by telling your Lordships about a 10 year-old Jewish boy from a town called Ostrava, in what was then Czechoslovakia. One night in March 1939, he was awoken by a noise in the street. He got out of bed, peered out the window and saw the German soldiers march into the town square. It was the night Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia. A few days later he was waved off on a train by his mum and teenage sisters. It was the last time he would see them: they were rounded up and sent first to a ghetto, then to Theresienstadt, and finally to Treblinka, where they were murdered in October 1942.

col 1393 That little boy arrived in the UK a few months before the noble Lord, Lord Dubs. When he arrived, he was able to speak only three words of English: “hot”, “cross” and “bun”. However, he grew up to become the youngest grammar school head teacher in the country, was honoured with an MBE for his work in education and charity, and brought up four children—of whom I am the second. ...

Every year, we have these debates and Holocaust commemorations. Every year, politicians pledge to combat anti-Jewish racism and proclaim “never again”, but look what we have seen over the past year. On 7 October, more Jewish people were killed on a single day than on any day since the Holocaust. This was not resistance or self-defence, as Hamas and its supporters claim. This was mass murder motivated by racial hatred, organised by anti-Semitic fascists committed to destroying the world’s only Jewish state and not just wiping out the Jewish people who live there but causing the genocide of Jewish people worldwide. The Hamas charter makes that absolutely clear. On campuses, on social media and even here in Parliament, we see history distorted with deliberate and offensive false equivalence drawn between what the Nazis did in the Holocaust and a democratic state defending its citizens.

Let us be really clear what we are commemorating today: this debate is to commemorate the Holocaust. It follows Holocaust Memorial Day last Saturday. That date—27 January—was chosen because it is the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, a death camp where 1.1 million people were murdered after being transported from all over Europe in cattle trucks. We are commemorating what happened there and at other death camps: the industrial slaughter of 6 million Jewish men, women and children, and the Nazis’ attempt to wipe out the Jewish people in their entirety. That is what the Holocaust was. It is very specific.

Yet this year, disgracefully, people and organisations have attempted to mark Holocaust Memorial Day without mentioning Jewish people at all. Even the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Scottish First Minister and some local authorities chose instead to waffle meaninglessly about general vague genocides. We have also seen messages from Holocaust charities and even survivors or their families besmirched by comments calling them Nazis or accusing them of supporting genocide, even as they carry out the solemn act of remembrance.

col 1393 I believe—I am sure there is not a person in the House who does not—that the humanitarian disaster in Gaza is dreadful. War always is. The death of innocent people is always devastating, and I want an end to the death and suffering as soon as possible. However dreadful it is, though, and however much pain and suffering there is, it is not

genocide and it is not comparable to the Holocaust. In fact, drawing these comparisons is the latest form of Holocaust denial: not only does it minimise the industrial scale, the planning and the determination of the Nazis' attempt to wipe out the Jewish people in their entirety but it is the latest attempt to accuse the victims of the Holocaust and the victims of genocide of being its perpetrators.

We have seen placards on the streets of London since 7 October at the so-called pro-Palestine demonstrations comparing Israeli policy to the final solution, comparing Israeli leaders to Hitler, and replacing or equating the Star of David with the swastika. On Holocaust Memorial Day itself, "Gaza Holocaust" was trending on social media. The poster advertising a demonstration in Glasgow scheduled for Holocaust Memorial Day said, "This Holocaust Memorial Day, join us as we protest the genocide in Gaza and demand that never again is now". Claiming that Israel is committing genocide, calling Israelis Nazis, comparing the world's only Jewish state to Hitler's Germany or saying that Zionism is racism is not just completely untrue; they are appalling insults. What could be worse than smearing a country that Holocaust survivors helped set up as a safe haven after centuries of pogroms and persecution, and then the systematic attempt to wipe out the Jewish people in their entirety? What could be worse than comparing it to the Nazis?

Think about this: in the Middle East, half a million people have been killed in Syria, almost 400,000 have been killed in Yemen and almost a quarter of a million have been killed a little further away in Afghanistan. The victims of these conflicts are barely spoken about, are not on the news every night, and their deaths are certainly not labelled genocides or compared to the Holocaust. The perpetrators are not called Nazis. The charge of genocide and comparisons to Nazis are reserved for the Israelis because of the pain and grief this specific insult causes them.

As we heard from the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, within hours of the attacks on 7 October—even as people lay dying and before the bodies of the dead had been recovered—people were celebrating on the streets of London. People were justifying or supporting the attacks. We see marches every Saturday and anti-Semitism on the streets of London. I have been down to look at some of those marches for myself. You see lots of signs calling for Israel to be eradicated; you do not see any calling for peace, for Gaza to be freed from Hamas or for the release of the hostages.

There were people chanting about a massacre of Jews by a Muslim army and a mob outside Downing Street calling for Hamas to bomb Tel Aviv. No one is marching in London every Saturday for victims of slaughter in Yemen, Syria, Somalia or Sudan. I am not saying that everyone who joins these marches is a racist, of course, but if the only country you march and protest against just happens to be the only Jewish one, do not tell me you are not an anti-Semite. ...

col 1395 I want to thank the Community Security Trust for its work to protect the Jewish community and fight anti-Semitism. Sadly, since 7 October, that work has never been more important. Last week in north London, a man with a knife attacked a kosher supermarket. What did he say to the visibly Jewish staff? "What's your side? Where do you stand on Israel and Palestine?" Restaurants and synagogues have been vandalised. The noble Lord, Lord Polak, and I met a group of students here in Parliament only yesterday. We heard how they have been subject to racist abuse, been targeted on campus and are scared to show religious symbols on their way to lectures, as are pupils on their way to school. Anti-Semitic incidents referencing the Holocaust have increased by over 100% in 2023. According to the CST, incidents involving Holocaust denial also rose by 268% on the year before. All this tells us why the work of organisations like the CST and the Holocaust Educational Trust is so important. ...

Yes, of course, it was a human tragedy, but people were not herded into the gas chambers because they were human beings; they were human beings who were herded into the gas chambers because they were Jewish.

This is not genocide memorial day; this is Holocaust Memorial Day. It is not too much to

ask to have just one day in a whole year that is reserved for the commemoration of history's greatest crime, and to give us the opportunity to pay our respects to its victims. ...

col 1396 Lord Polak (Conservative): ... The horrors of the past cast long shadows over our present. Although we commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day annually, this year, as has been said, we not only reflect on the enduring scars of the atrocities of the Holocaust, but we mourn and grapple with the anguish caused by Hamas's barbaric massacre on 7 October ... It was an unprecedented anti-Semitic attack marking a dark chapter reminiscent of the Holocaust itself. ...

... as we stand today, we find ourselves struggling to comprehend how, once more, the Jewish people are confronted with ominous signs of history repeating itself.

Our commitment to "never again" feels rather fragile and shallow. ...

In preparation for today's debate, I was shown a short speech delivered by a young pupil from Immanuel College, who spoke at a Holocaust Memorial Day assembly at school. I believe it is instructive and appropriate to share the insights of this young student, Sammy Barnett ...

col 1397 "My name is Sammy Barnett and in November, I went on the Immanuel College Year 12 Poland trip. ...

I would like to take you to the second day of the trip when we visited the Treblinka extermination camp. I quickly noticed the differences between an extermination camp as opposed to a concentration camp in that the sole purpose of it was to murder all those who were sent there. Over 850,000 Jewish people were murdered there in a span of only 11 months, yet there were no remnants of the camp, except for—stones. Knowing all of this, I quietly walked around Treblinka reflecting on what had taken place here. I looked at all the stones; each one representing a destroyed community. Each one a village, town or city where there was a Jewish community and where the Jewish people were murdered. ... I could not come to terms with the fact that the average stay for a person at Treblinka was 42 minutes. ...

These thoughts weighed heavily on my mind and even more so when we visited Majdanek concentration camp the following day. ... you felt as if it were still almost functioning, as the gas chamber and crematorium are still standing. ...

col 1398 "I was in Israel for the festival of succot and I was trapped for a few days unable to leave. The 7th of October is a day I will simply never forget as long as I live ... Hearing the sirens ... it's one of the scariest and most gutwrenching noises you will experience. Your heart almost feels like it's down to your stomach and you feel sick; as if there is a hole there. The noise of the rockets exploding overhead as they are knocked out of the sky by the Iron Dome sent shivers down my spine. ... It was with this background that only a few weeks later I landed in Warsaw with my Immanuel College teachers and friends.

So how do I feel now? After being in Poland and seeing the depths to which humanity sank and hearing about the barbarism of Hamas, at times my faith has wavered, and I find myself asking how could a benevolent God allow such atrocities to happen? But then, when I really think about it, we, the Jewish people have gone through tragic times and yet we are still here today. When we look back at the history of the Jewish people, in every generation we have been oppressed or persecuted, but we have not just survived, we have flourished. In times like this I believe, there is nothing more important than turning to God ... speaking and praying to Him. ...

col 1400 Lord Bilimoria (Crossbench): ... The Jewish community around the world numbers 16 million, out of 8 billion people on this planet—and look at the contribution it has made and makes every single day in every single field, whether in politics, business, the arts or the professions. ... in spite of this, we have anti-Semitism at its highest level ever since 7 October, with 20,000 incidents, and this is happening around the world. Children are scared to go to school. As chancellor of the University of Birmingham, I know that Jewish students are worried about persecution at university. We have heard about Mike Freer, Minister and MP, standing down out of fear and the horrible persecution

inflicted upon him. What is going on? How can we tolerate and allow all this anti-Semitism and, quite frankly, Jew-hating? ...

Visiting Auschwitz ... is something you never forget. You constantly think, "How can anyone do this to another human being?" When I visited Yad Vashem, both the best and the worst museum I have ever visited in my life, the horrors were revealed and explained. That is why, when you leave Yad Vashem, you say, "Never again". All our children must learn about the Holocaust from a very early age: from primary school all the way until they finish school. ...

col 1401 In May last year I was a member of the House of Lords' delegation to Israel, organised by ELNET. We came away from that visit completely deflated and disappointed with the political situation in Israel. Our visit to the West Bank filled us with disappointment at the situation with Fatah and the Palestinian Authority—no elections, and Fatah not talking to Hamas. We spent a whole day on the Gaza border. We also learned that young Palestinians have no faith in or respect for their leadership. That day on the Gaza border when we visited the Kerem Shalom crossing is one I will never forget. To think that not for one minute were we worried about the security in Israel. Not one of us predicted that just a few months later would come the horrors of 7 October, the pogrom committed by Hamas, the brutal murder, rape and torture—worse than anyone's worst nightmare. It was brutality beyond belief, with 1,200 innocent Israelis killed and thousands more wounded, and over 240 hostages taken, including Holocaust survivors and babies.

Hamas's objective is pure genocide: wiping out the State of Israel. What has happened since 7 October has been tragic: tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children killed and wounded in Gaza. The hostages are still there—over 130 of them. They must be released now. Israel is still trying to remove Hamas and free the people of Gaza from its terror, yet the Hamas leadership have said that what happened on 7 October, it will do again. ...

col 1403 **Baroness Smith of Newnham (Liberal Democrat):** ... I am a Roman Catholic. My co-religionists have not always been as pro-Jewish as they might have been. I had in my Catholic primary school some very good teaching, and I remember what one of my Catholic teachers in my infant school, when I would have been six or seven. She would not have used the word "anti-Semitic" to six year-olds, but she said, "Jesus was a Jew, and we need to remember that". From the age of six, I understood the importance of being—is the word a "Semitophile"? That is, I understood how important it was to treat each and every Jewish person with the same respect as I would anybody else. ...

I learned about Kristallnacht when I was about 10 and was made to read the diary of Anne Frank at secondary school. ...

With all respect to the noble Lord, Lord Austin, I hope that your Lordships will feel it appropriate to mention two other genocides. I note that the Holocaust Educational Trust says that Holocaust Memorial Day encourages us to remember the 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust, but also to remember all those affected by subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. ...

col 1405 **The Lord Bishop of London:** ... Last week, it was my privilege to be at the ceremony for Holocaust Memorial Day at the Guildhall in the City ...

The Chief Rabbi reminded us of the fragility of freedom. He said that with freedom from captivity and death comes freedom to be, and that with freedom to be comes responsibility. As we have heard, the Holocaust did not just happen. Genocide does not just happen. It happens slowly, step and step, and begins with words and polarisation. It can be easy to move from, "This is my view and that is your view", to "I am right and you are wrong. I am good and you are evil". There is a risk that we hunker down with our own and, in consolidating our sense of belonging within our own communities—of whatever kind—we differentiate ourselves from others and set ourselves apart.

We can live on terms that set us apart from others. Dangerously, we can begin to decide

to whom human rights apply and to whom they do not. Hate speech can move to the violent isolation of those who hold different views or are from different ethnicities, races and religions. Discrimination and dehumanisation can move to persecution based on identity and belief. ...

It has been suggested that perhaps one of the most influential texts in modern political history is the *imago dei*. ... This scriptural passage, shared by both Christians and Jews, does not mean that we are carbon copies of God—rather that humans reflect God and are in the image of God in their moral, spiritual and intellectual nature. ... It gives me a responsibility to see them with an inherent value and dignity. ...

Despite the *imago dei* being one of the most important being philosophical legacies in western culture, it is still in western culture that the Holocaust happened and anti-Semitism continues to happen. Freedom remains fragile. It is not enough for us to mark Holocaust Memorial Day; we have a responsibility to challenge prejudice, hatred and the actions that lead to them in our communities, in wider society and, yes, in our parliamentary system. ...

col 1406 **Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale (Labour):** ... This year of all years, as the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, mentioned in his speech, [“never again” has] never sounded so hollow but, at the same time, so important—hollow because the evil of anti-Semitism is creeping out of its hiding places again. As always, it takes many forms, but as a daughter of a Jewish mother, with family in Israel, I can hear, see and smell anti-Semitism whenever it appears. The late former Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, said that: “In the Middle Ages Jews were hated for their religion. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century they were hated for their race. Today they are hated for their nation state, Israel”, and that “anti-Zionism is the new antisemitism”.

I am surprised at the surprise evinced by so many about UNRWA’s close relationship with Hamas. Many have known about it for years. One has only to read the schoolbooks in the UNRWA schools. Israel is rarely mentioned by name; it is called the Jewish Zionist occupier or some such. There have been many Nazi-like caricatures of Jews in these books. Just yesterday, a report went into the UN about 3,000 UNRWA teachers on some chat group who celebrated 7 October. Of course, there are decent and honest people—Palestinians as well as foreigners—working in Gaza health and education ministries, in the hospitals and the schools, with the best of motives. But the iron hand of Hamas is absolute in Gaza. There have been increasing questions about UNRWA’s role in perpetuating rather than resolving the Palestine refugee problem. ...

col 1407 **Lord Davies of Brixton (Labour):** ... The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust’s website sets out: “Holocaust Memorial Day is the day for everyone to remember the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust, under Nazi Persecution, and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur”. ...

Clearly, we have to pay tribute to the work of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust. There is no question but that the Holocaust stands out in human history, when the systematic persecution and extermination of 6 million Jews took place under the Nazi regime during World War II. That is why, as a number of speakers have said, we must ensure that “never again” does not become a matter of ritual and is kept firmly in our minds and passed on to our children and our children’s children, echoing down the ages. For all of us, the Holocaust has to serve as a stark reminder of the consequences of hatred, discrimination and the erosion of basic human rights.

It is essential that, in addition to what other noble Lords have said, as well as spending time remembering victims, we remember the bravery of those who resisted the oppression and sought to protect the values of humanity. I take the opportunity of this debate to mention the courageous role played by trade unionists during those dark times. ... Dachau, one of the first Nazi concentration camps, opened in March 1933 to imprison political opponents, including trade unionists. ...

Trade unionists played a crucial and perhaps overlooked role during the Holocaust. Driven by a commitment to justice and solidarity, they stood against the tyranny of the Nazi

regime. They were aware that the principles of fairness, equality and workers' rights were under direct threat. Despite the dangers they faced, many trade unionists defied the oppressive forces and resisted the erosion of the very fabric of society. They provided shelter, forged documents and facilitated escapes, risking their own lives to defy the Nazi authorities. ... We all have to ask ourselves what we would have done in those circumstances. They provide an inspiration that perhaps we could have joined in the fight—a fight that continues now. ...

col 1408 **Baroness Brinton (Liberal Democrat):** ... I pay my respects to the 6 million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis because of who they were, what they believed, and the community they came from. Voices from the past, such as Anne Frank, can continue to tell their story to new young generations ... We, our children and our grandchildren, must never forget. The voices of survivors have been vital, and this year we heard of the death of Sir Ben Helfgott. He spoke both of his experiences as a child in Buchenwald and Terezin, but also of his life after he arrived in the UK, and how he recovered—but never forgot—and helped others. His life and achievements were extraordinary. ...

Over the night of 2 to 3 August 1944, 2,897 Roma and Sinti people, mostly women and children, were killed at Auschwitz; 2 August is the day that the Gypsy, Roma and Sinti people mark their memorial, but it is important that we remember them too today. ...

col 1409 Hitler murdered 250,000 physically or intellectually disabled people in the T4 programme. ...

This is not just history for disabled people. The fragility of freedom is close to us now. In the pandemic, “do not resuscitate” orders were placed on disabled patients' files without their knowledge or their families' consent. Thankfully, as soon as it was uncovered, the Government and the NHS issued clear instructions to stop. But be in no doubt—certain people, chosen by this grouping, died because they were discarded. Those with underlying conditions were also denied intensive care, and some were even told there was no point in taking them to hospital. Many disabled people, including me, heard from others arguing against lockdown that they were going to die soon anyway, so there was no point in trying to protect them. ...

col 1410 LGBT people were also targeted by Hitler and the Nazis in the Holocaust. ...

The freedom of LGBT people is increasingly fragile today. The level of murder and physical attacks grows year on year, and Uganda last year made being LGBT not just a criminal but a capital offence. ...

Baroness Altmann (Conservative): ... As anti-Semitism once again pervades social discourse, public debate, national or social media, and even supranational organisations, I feel that the threat posed to the freedoms that liberal, western countries have built during my lifetime, and of which I have always been so proud, and perhaps too often taken for granted, is serious.

My family were mostly murdered by the Nazis. My grandparents were fortunate enough to flee Berlin and Vienna in the 1930s.

We have always been proud of the progressive tolerance, mutual respect, interfaith co-operation and human rights legislation that has been built up in our country. The free world committed to ensuring collectively that the virus of anti-Semitism would never again be allowed to flourish. We have this anti-racist legislation, we have Holocaust education and interfaith dialogue, yet anti-Semitism has returned despite it all. “Never again” is an empty slogan without understanding the background and recognising that what is happening right now is a potential rerun of the very hatred that led to the Holocaust. ...

col 1411 Something is happening to western democratic discourse since 7 October. The late Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks, of blessed memory, warned that the appearance of anti-Semitism in a culture is an early warning of collective breakdown. He likened it to a virus, and he explained how, like all viruses, it has mutated. Throughout history, anti-Semitism has been justified in some way by recourse to the highest authority, as he explained it,

within the surrounding society. There was religion in the Middle Ages and in post-Enlightenment Europe, there was science. Today, the dehumanising of Jews seems to be originating in human rights, the very source of our civilised world, so that the only democracy in the Middle East is being accused of breaching human rights, racism, apartheid, ethnic cleansing and even genocide. The ultimate weapon of this new anti-Semitism is quite simple. It goes like this: the Holocaust must never happen again; but Israelis are the new Nazis; the Palestinians are the new Jews; all Jews are Zionists; therefore, the real anti-Semites of our time are none other than the Jews themselves. Sadly, these are widespread views among many communities, and they are infecting the far left, academia, the media and political life. ...

col 1412 **Baroness Merron (Labour):** ... I, too, want to speak today about the power of bearing witness ... I have felt this very strongly in meetings I have been at in Parliament in respect of the atrocities committed on 7 October in Israel by Hamas terrorists, who still hold hostages whose fate is unknown. I, like other noble Lords, have seen footage collected from body cameras and CCTV of the horrific massacre that killed more than 1,200 innocent Israeli citizens and foreign workers, the largest number of Jews killed since the Holocaust. The noble Lord, Lord Stevens, was right to talk about the glee with which the terrorists conducted themselves. It was that that shocked me the most, along with the images I saw, which I do not feel I want to speak about again.

I have heard the pain of families speaking of their loved ones among the 240 Jews who were kidnapped and taken to Gaza and of those who were attacked, murdered, raped or traumatised. The devastation continues to be felt by the Jewish community here, which remains in continuing shock while 130 hostages remain in Gaza. This week, I heard of the sexual violence perpetrated on Jewish women in the disturbing testimonies of those who rescued bodies or conducted forensics and prepared the mutilated bodies for burial. In all of this, I feel helpless, as so many of us do, but there is one thing I know I can do: I can be a witness, I can remember and I can speak up. I can speak up both for those who died and for those who are living. ...

Let us remember that the mass murder of 6 million Jewish men, women and children did not take place only in the darkness of the ghettos and the camps. Hundreds of thousands were murdered in the bright light of forests and woodlands surrounding well-populated towns and villages. Let us also remember that the Nazis also persecuted and murdered those whom they saw as different: the Roma, the Sinti, gay men, political opponents and disabled people.

As we have heard today, the oppression of Jews did not start with the outbreak of war in 1939. In the six preceding years, Jews were persecuted by more than 400 decrees and regulations at every level of government, including by officials, who took the initiative. In every genocide that has taken place, those who are targeted for persecution have had their freedom restricted and removed before many are murdered. Genocide is after all a subtle and slow process ...

col 1413 We all know that anti-Semitism is the world's oldest hatred. As soon as the events of 7 October unfolded, I knew it would unleash a hatred of Jews in our own country and, as sure as night follows day, it did. Within hours of the attack, the atrocities perpetrated by Hamas were lauded on social media as an act of resistance. Since then, the global number of anti-Semitic incidents has gone through the roof. Synagogues have been firebombed, the Star of David has been smeared on the doors of Jewish homes, Jewish cemeteries have been desecrated and there have been verbal and physical attacks on Jews. Week in, week out, we see protests on our streets, with anti-Semitic slogans and signs, including calls to globalise the intifada, destroy the Jewish State of Israel and disrespect the Star of David.

In the 68 days following the Hamas terror attack on Israel, the Community Security Trust recorded at least 2,093 anti-Semitic incidents across the country. That is the highest ever total reported to the CST across a 68-day period, and the CST has been recording anti-

Semitic incidents since 1984.

My Jewish friends feel the pain of explaining to their children that they must stop wearing their blazers which show that they attend a Jewish school. Colleagues are swamped with vile abuse and threats on social media for being Jewish, or for not being Jewish but speaking out against terrorism. It has left me and many others with an underlying anxiety about what might be said or done to us. ...

col 1414 **Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-affiliated):** My Lords, 136: I shall repeat the number 136 because on Wednesday Ashley Waxman Bakshi asked a packed room of parliamentarians to keep reminding the world that there are still 136 hostages in Gaza, including Ashley's cousin Agam Berger.

We are here today for Holocaust Memorial Day to keep the memory of the decades-old Holocaust alive. Yet, shockingly, even the memory of what happened on 7 October last year is already fading. That is why so many of the powerful, moving and insightful speeches that we have all heard today really matter. The largest anti-Jewish pogrom since the Holocaust is actively and wilfully being forgotten, and even denied. Indeed, when some seek to remind the world of the hostages—by, for example, putting up posters of their faces—they are treated with contempt and openly subjected to anti-Semitic abuse. Posters are venomously ripped down. One viral video shows an activist responding to a plea for humane empathy with Jewish suffering. His response was to spit out the question, “Where’s your proof?”

Sadly, such echoes of Holocaust denial are making a comeback. Indeed, the reason why Ashley and the other remarkable Israeli witnesses whom some of us heard this week are forced to tour the world’s capitals to give testimony is that—and this is a real shock—so many in official positions have demanded proof that sexual violence was used on 7 October. Often the very same progressives, NGOs and international women’s organisations that rail against #MeToo incidents and demand support for their violence against women and girls initiatives suddenly become sceptical and mute and look the other way, even with evidence that Jewish women and girls were gang-raped, sexually mutilated and degraded. This casual mood of denial was revealed in the shocking recent *Economist/YouGov* poll showing that more than one-fifth of young Americans agreed that the Holocaust was a myth, while many responded by saying they were not sure whether it was a myth.

Until recently, Holocaust denial was a fringe affair: the racist preoccupation of explicit anti-Semites who called it a hoax, usually associated with the far right. But today a more common form of Holocaust denial is to rip the Holocaust from its concrete and specific context and appropriate it for a range of nefarious ends. This dilution of the meaning of the Holocaust is often espoused by well-intentioned social justice warriors. The Holocaust is anything but absent from political discourse—that is one irony. ...

col 1415 Policies that people do not like are routinely denounced using Nazi analogies. The Rwanda plan has been compared by some campaigners to herding Jews on to cattle trucks destined for the camps. I have heard the Tories’ voter ID scheme being compared to Gestapo checks. Everything from the Brexit vote to anti-ULEZ protests has recently been denounced as proof that society is descending into 1930s-style fascism. Some animal rights activists claim that the meat industry is guilty of a holocaust of lambs, cows and chickens, while abortion fundamentalists brandish literature denouncing a holocaust of unborn babies.

I worry that when the Holocaust, as a metaphor, is so promiscuously and prolifically used that it will mean we render the Holocaust itself mundane, inevitably relativising its gravity and uniqueness. So often, it can also lead to airbrushing Jews from the story. We saw that with a number of politicians ... who put out video messages on Holocaust Memorial Day and failed to mention the Jews. They were just forgotten, deliberately or not.

As many noble Lords have mentioned, we have to admit that the Holocaust has now been weaponised, specifically to attack and delegitimise the world’s only Jewish state. ...

This relativism that now turns the barbarities of the Holocaust into an accusation against the Jewish state considers itself progressive and, worse, is mainstream. One popular progressive commentator, that Dr Shola off the telly, tweeted at the Auschwitz museum: “I unfollowed you after your disgraceful endorsement of Israel’s extermination, ethnic cleansing & genocide of Palestinians. The museum should be ashamed of itself. Never again means never again for anyone. You’re an embarrassment to humanity”.

Think about those words. Inevitably, Dr Shola was never off the TV after she posted that. So how should we tackle such ignorant attitudes? For many, the answer is education. As a former teacher, this makes me nervous, as too many thorny questions are outsourced to schools and colleges. Anyway, it is not that simple. After all, the Holocaust is already a compulsory part of the national curriculum and has been since 1991. One concern is that the Holocaust is rarely explained in educational settings as a specific policy designed to purge society of Jewry. Pupils rarely grasp that this was the first, and so far the only, time in history that a state attempted to murder every single member of a people—the Jews. Instead, such is the enthusiasm to make the Holocaust relatable for today’s pupils that there is a whole list of other victims ... often at the expense of a factual, detailed account of the Nazis’ industrialised final solution for Jews. This was more than just authoritarian rule or human rights abuses; it was an attempt at eradicating the Jews.

This drive to make the Holocaust relevant in schools today for pupils has also led to an embrace of concepts associated with identity politics. In trying to make Holocaust education so relevant as to reflect the diversity of each and every pupil, students are asked to imagine themselves as persecuted by evil Nazis—victims due to their individual identity. In the midst of this *mêlée*, I am afraid that Jews barely get a mention or are known about. ... *col 1416* ... in 2004, a poll carried out in nine European countries by Ipsos found that 35% of people thought the Jews should stop playing the role of Holocaust victims. ...

... identity politics makes it hard to be open in classroom debate about such issues. It can, for example, make it difficult to challenge any young Muslim pupils and students if they express sympathy with Islamist anti-Semitism. A decade ago, when I was giving a lesson on free speech, a vocal group of Muslim sixth-formers told me that 9/11 was a Jewish plot and that the Charlie Hebdo massacre was justified because the cartoonists had insulted the Prophet Muhammad. ...

When I told this story about what had happened in the classroom to a group of teachers, some admitted that such attitudes were one reason they shied away from teaching the Holocaust. They feared that any confrontations if students put forward conspiratorial Holocaust-denial theories would mean that they, as teachers, would be branded Islamophobes—self-censorship to avoid causing offence, or even fear of more aggressive responses. ...

col 1417 **Lord Singh of Wimbledon (Crossbench):** ... My Lords, I have visited Auschwitz, and a small mountain of children’s shoes will be for ever etched in my memory. The shoes were taken from children who went laughing and skipping into showers, on the promise that they would be given new clothes. ...

On Holocaust Memorial Day, we remember the horror of the systematic killing of Jews in the 1940s with the lighting of candles and the words “never again”. The words “never again” have echoed in subsequent commemorations, only to be followed by the horror of future genocides, including the forgotten Indira Gandhi Government’s massacre of Sikhs in 1984 and now, ironically, Israel’s excesses against the people of Gaza, condemned by the United Nations, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other human rights agencies. ...

Religion is designed to give us guidance for responsible living, but all too often, claims of superiority and exclusive relationships with God, and with dated and divisive social and cultural rituals, are seen by many as more important than the uplifting ethical teachings. The Sikh gurus were very concerned about such false divisions in the India of their day. Sikh scriptures, the Guru Granth Sahib, deliberately include verses of Hindu and Muslim

sayings to show that no one religion has a monopoly of truth. ...

col 1418 Lord Parekh (Labour): ... I am greatly puzzled by this whole question of anti-Semitism. I grew up in a country where anti-Semitism was never heard of: India. In Kerala in India, the king, gave refugee Jews who were running away from Iraq a kingdom and said, "You are the kings of this area. You have your Jewish subjects. You are entitled to ride an elephant. You are entitled to collect taxes". There they lived happily ever after. This is the history I was taught of the Jewish people, and it turned out to be true when I checked documents afterwards and was taught by a Jewish professor of English literature at St Xavier's College, Bombay. ...

All through my life, as I was growing up in India, I had Jewish friends—not very many, because the Jewish population was rather small—and after the creation of Israel, many of them moved there. In fact, even now, just outside Jerusalem there is a colony of Indians ... So there was this Jewish community in India, and I grew up among them. Then I landed in England and talked to a lot of people, and I initially began to hear snide remarks. As I interacted, I heard vicious remarks, and I began to ask myself, "Where is this anti-Semitism coming from?" Philo-Semitism is easily understood, but what is anti-Semitism composed of? What is it based on? Why is a particular community singled out and made an object of jokes, hatred and other undesirable treatment? ...

col 1419 Christianity accused Jews of deicide—that is an old story—and another element was added: Jews turned away the offer of accepting Christ as their leader. In the Middle Ages, Jews were asked to dress differently so that they could be easily recognised. The process went on and culminated, as we know, in the Holocaust.

If you deconstruct this process and ask how it was formed and what elements were added to it at what stage, you begin to see a fascinating picture. That picture is in danger of being ignored today if we are not careful. ...

If you look at the Holocaust, it has three characteristics that distinguish it from the normal forms of genocide. First, it is not limited to a particular group, as genocide would be. It can include, as Hitler's camps did, gays, disabled people, Gypsies and others. So the Holocaust includes not just one particular group but simply a large collection of heterogeneous people. Secondly, the Holocaust included the systematic and total annihilation of a people. That was the goal. Thirdly, and just as importantly, is the pseudo-religious orientation. From the time of the Romans, a "holocaust" meant that you eliminated people as a kind of sacrifice to God, purging society of an undesirable element and offering it to God, so holocaust becomes a ritual—there is a theology of holocaust—which is what makes it such a dangerous and frightening thing. That is why the Holocaust happened only once, and you cannot compare it to other elements or say that there are different forms of Holocaust. The Holocaust happened to the Jewish community, which suffered intensely. That is why I would say that the word "Holocaust" should be reserved entirely for what happened to them under the Nazi's.

That brings me to the next issue, about the mass or systematic destruction of a people. Why would anybody want to do that? Killing individuals I can understand, but why kill a whole people? Why do you want to kill a whole people, and how do you kill a whole people? If you do not like them, avoid them or ostracise them—why do you want to kill them? ...

col 1420 You take a community, abstract certain characteristics of that community and refer to them not by their concrete designations but in terms of those abstract characteristics. For example, you say, "I'm not disturbing you—I'm disturbing a Muslim". Or you say, "You don't appear to me as you in your concrete social designation—you appear to me as an abstraction, a Jew". Even here, in our conversation, we talk about "a Jew", and I find it offensive to talk about somebody as "a Jew", or "a Hindu", or whatever. This man is a human being with certain concrete characteristics that distinguish him from others. Why are we abstracting that away and talking about him entirely in terms of those characteristics, which subsume him under others, so he is seen as other Jews? Then you have formed a group, which is now ready to be sent to a camp. ...

They are targets—but why are they targets for killing? Why do you want to kill them? You could avoid them, as the Spanish did to the Muslims—send them away from the country—but why kill them? You kill them because another element comes in: you find them undesirable and devious, so their very presence contaminates your people, and you want to get rid of them. Why do you find their presence undesirable? How do you make that kind of judgment? ...

Hindus have suffered in many ways, in the same way as the Jews have, in being expelled from three countries—Sri Lanka, east Africa and Burma. They were expelled, and the description that was given to them was more or less the same as that given to Jews in certain parts of the world. Happily, they were not killed, but they were thrown out of the country, and lock, stock and barrel they arrived here, or elsewhere. ...

But are all human beings like this? Can you persuade anyone to kill anybody? No: there are sensible people in any society, but how are those sensible people swept off their feet? That happens because of another element, which is “drip, drip, drip”: the kind of prejudice you are attributing to a community, racism, is in these people in small doses and has been permeating for a long time, and they are neutralised by the “drip, drip, drip”, so that a person may not be a downright blatant racist, but nevertheless he will make remarks which will indicate racial discrimination. We draw the distinction in our own language between racial discrimination and racism. So, we have this peculiar scenario of a large body of people which is mildly racist and another layer which is rabidly racist, or dehumanised, and that is where the scene is set for mass murder or whatever. And when that scene is set up, there is nothing we can do. ...

col 1421 **Lord Gold (Conservative):** ... Born a few years after the war, and only understanding in the 1960s the true horrors of the Holocaust from the safe comfort of my suburban life in England, I rather thought that it could never happen here—I still believe that—and that, even if there was a serious rise of anti-Semitism, as we have seen since 7 October, Israel, the Jewish state, was our haven and we could escape there. If our lives were truly threatened, Israel would come to our rescue, just as it did when it gave a home to those Jews who, after 1948, were expelled from the neighbouring Middle Eastern countries and when it rescued hostages from Idi Amin’s Entebbe in 1976 and 14,000 Ethiopian Jews in 1991.

Great Britain was the country where, in 1936, when Mosley’s fascists marched in London, a combination of Jews, Protestants and Catholics, all true East Enders, stopped them in Cable Street and effectively ended fascism in Great Britain. Now, nearly 90 years on, under the guise of stopping the war in Gaza, we have seen marches openly calling for the destruction of the only democracy in the Middle East and renewing anti-Semitic tropes that we have not seen here since the days of Mosley. ...

For me, the frightening lesson from the Holocaust is that, however safe and protective a society appears to be, there is no guarantee that it could not happen again, and in places where it was thought impossible for there to be such hatred. As other noble Lords have said, it is shocking that an excellent constituency MP, Mike Freer, who is not Jewish, is not seeking re-election as he fears for his safety because of his stand against anti-Semitism and his position on Israel.

The Jews in Germany pre 1933 were a thriving community. While accounting for only 1% of the population, they had strong communal organisations, were well integrated into German society, regarded themselves as true German citizens and were strongly represented in all walks of life, including medicine, law, academia and journalism. When Hitler came to power, that ended. Over the six years before the war, as the noble Baroness, Lady Merron, pointed out, more than 400 decrees and regulations stripped the Jewish population of their rights and property. From being citizens, they became outcasts. ...

col 1422 When I was at school in the 1950s, there was no Holocaust education. Today in England it is, of course, part of the national curriculum ... However, it seems to me that

more must be done. Young people in particular are not joining the dots. They learn about the Holocaust—or, perhaps better still, hear about it—but somehow do not realise that calling for the destruction of Israel is anti-Semitism, and that Israel was born out of the Second World War to provide protection for Jews everywhere. Why do they not see that the brutality and wickedness of 7 October is a new form of hatred which cannot be condoned and must not be ignored?

Already the atrocities of 7 October, when at least 1,200 people were slaughtered—many of them children, with many women raped and abused and no sanctity given to the dead—seem to be forgotten or, at least, no longer given prominence in news reports. Just as the BBC religiously reports in each bulletin, as though by rote, that “ Hamas is recognised by the UK Government as a terrorist organisation”, reference to the slaughter of 7 October and the hostages who remain in captivity is largely an afterthought, if mentioned at all. ... As through time we lose the few remaining victims of and witnesses to the Holocaust, it is the duty of each of us to educate those born since. As Jews say every year at Passover, it is our duty to remember the exodus from Egypt as though we were there. Similarly, the more we tell our children what happened less than 100 years ago, the greater the chance that we will learn from history how important it is to treat everyone equally, protect all our citizens and destroy the scourge of anti-Semitism. ...

col 1423 **Lord Young of Norwood Green (Labour):** ... I was born into an Orthodox Jewish family in 1942 ... I am proud of my Jewish roots. ... I am a non-practising secular Jew. My maternal grandmother was born in Odesa. Many of my relatives experienced or died in pogroms and the Holocaust. ...

At the turn of the last century, this country was a refuge for my grandparents, but anti-Semitism, as we have heard from the noble Lord, Lord Gold, was rife. It took the combined efforts of many to oppose Oswald Mosley in the famous Cable Street riots. ...

col 1424 If noble Lords want to witness the power of propaganda, I recommend a film. As I was going to bed one night, as is my wont I was channel-hopping—I probably should not do it—and a black and white film came on with very strident German voices. I had to see what it was, and it was an astonishing film called “Triumph of the Will”, made by a controversial but brilliant German film director by the name of Leni Riefenstahl. When you see that film of the Nuremberg rallies, you can see the power of propaganda. The amazing speeches by Hitler and the marches are just astonishing. ...

I once went to Israel as part of a delegation from Labour Friends of Israel, in a historic year when Israel withdrew from Gaza. ...

Looking back, probably the most important thing that happened was that we went to Ramallah and met with Palestinian politicians from Fatah. They were very cynical about Israel withdrawing from Gaza. I said to them, “If I was in your position, if I’m honest, I would be pretty cynical about Israel’s motives”. But I said, “Look, it’s what you’ve been campaigning for. It’s what you’ve been asking for. This is a golden opportunity”. I do not know whether people remember what happened, but I will tell noble Lords, in case they have forgotten. Hamas fought with Fatah. They literally fought to the death; they were killing each other. Israel left behind a lot of flourishing industry. It was a great opportunity for Palestinians to do something positive—an opportunity that was squandered, once again.

That was not the first occasion when Palestinians have squandered opportunities. For another lesson from history, cast your mind back to President Clinton and the accords, when Yasser Arafat had the opportunity for most of the West Bank to be given back to Palestinians. He did not have the courage and he walked away. ...

col 1425 I condemn both Islamophobia and, obviously, anti-Semitism. But I have to say—I have many Muslim friends and have pointed this out to them—that when opinion polls are conducted in the Islamic community, there is a very significant number of Holocaust deniers. There is a very significant number who say that 9/11 was a Jewish conspiracy. That ought to be worrying. ...

As we have heard so many times today, support for Palestinians can unfortunately drift into anti-Semitism. ...

col 1426 Lord Sterling of Plaistow (Conservative): ... I am of the second generation born in this country, due to the pogroms that took place in Russia in the 1880s. My grandmother managed to get to this country ... As far as I am concerned, it was an absolute honour that we were allowed to live here in freedom, which we were never allowed before. ...

Something I remember and will never forget is when I went to an exhibition in Israel. Some blind children were being taken round to hear what had happened in the genocide of the Holocaust, and they held out their hands in order to touch the lightshades that were made of human skin. That brought the reality back.

Let us come to what happened on 7 October, which more and more people seem to want to try to forget. I happen to be a human being, I like to think, and I do not want any innocent human beings, woman or child, killed—I will not use the word “unnecessarily”. It just is not right, if it ever can be. Sadly, what is happening is Israel has caused a huge dilemma as to how to proceed. However, we must remember that 7 October was planned. In war ... atrocities sometimes happen. But cold-bloodedly planning four years ahead exactly how you will do it is something totally different from anything else I have ever come across. ...

col 1427 Lord Reid of Cardowan (Labour): ... The magnitude of the horror of the Holocaust is such that we, out of necessity, constrain it within certain limits of place and of time. The place? Germany under the Nazis. The time? The period between 1933 and 1945. I understand why we do this, but it is extremely misleading. In terms of time, we can go back 1,000 years in European history. The Jews were certainly excluded at stages; then, they were ghettoised; then, they were forcibly converted; then they were proscribed. And then, they were annihilated.

The Holocaust was the natural outcome of the seeds of a thousand years of European—dare I say it?—Christian conduct. ... It was a Christian phenomenon, and one which we should face up to. ...

Secondly, the Holocaust was also not confined to concentration camps and death camps. Fewer than half of the people who died, died in concentration camps and death camps. And it was not confined to Germany or Poland. It happened in Hungary, Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, in western Europe and France ... So, yes, the Nazis gave licence, but they did not order each and every execution. It sprung from the history of European civilisation and Christianity, and when it was unleashed by the Nazis, all sorts of people were involved in annihilating the Jews.

col 1428 Why do I mention those two aspects? Because, if we truly want to learn the lessons, we should not confine it mentally to one nation, one area and one epoch, and recognise that even today it is ubiquitous. It is there: we see it in the politics of rabid right-wing nationalism, which will turn on the Jews because they are not of this country, and of the rabid left wing, which equates monopoly capitalism with the Jewish financiers. We have seen how insidiously that can creep into our own party on this side of the House. ...

It is uncomfortable, but we had better recognise the length of anti-Semitism and its ubiquitous nature. That is the task that faces us. ...

Lord Palmer of Childs Hill (Liberal Democrat): ... Let us be clear; all genocides are terrible. Every genocide is terrible. Why is the Holocaust at times singled out? In my view, it is just a genocide, but it was industrial killing. It was not just going off and killing people; it was having people going into chambers in order to be gassed and killed. That is why the Holocaust is so different ...

col 1429 Sadly, I am of an age—an age I do not always admit—where the Holocaust is more personal to me. My late mother and her five brothers were some of the 70,000 refugees from Nazi persecution who came to the UK before the Second World War, in between the wars. Her mother—my maternal grandmother—and her aunt and family, were

alive at the end of the war in 1944, as far as we know. In 1945, they disappeared, completely without trace. It was mentioned earlier that it was not only the people in the camps who were killed; there were people who were alive during the war but who at the end of the war were never seen again. ...

Is it any wonder that Jews like me say ... "Never again"? Never again should that happen. Is it any wonder that Jews in Israel, the only state with a Jewish majority, have built into their psyche that they will not wait and accept that they should stand in line for the gas chambers? To my mind, that explains the Israeli reaction to the horrendous Hamas murders and abductions on 7 October ... and their relationship with the Holocaust. These were peaceful Israelis and their friends, almost all civilians, attacked in their homes by murderers, and murdered and mutilated. There were approximately 1,200 in the kibbutzim, and at a music festival, who were killed and mutilated—actually 1,200 killed. Over 200 hostages were taken—some now dead, some alive and almost forgotten.

A few days ago, I met some families of Holocaust survivors, which is always very sad and worrying. But the one who really affected me was a young woman in her early 20s who was present at the music festival in Israel on 7 October. When the murderous Hamas came and killed these innocent festivalgoers at this music festival, she found herself underneath a whole heap of dead people. She survived only because she was lying underneath this pile of dead people. How traumatising can that be? Can one wonder at Israel's response to these horrors? No country could do nothing.

In my view, when Hamas attacked, it knew that it would get an armed response, and it welcomed that armed response, leading to untold suffering among the people of Gaza. But the people of Gaza were suffering under Hamas control; they still suffer, and will suffer while Hamas is there. Aid and building materials were misappropriated to build miles and miles of sophisticated tunnels. Have noble Lords seen those tunnels? They make the London Underground look antiquated.

What could have happened? All the money spent on underground tunnels could have been spent on making Gaza a sophisticated Singapore of the Middle East. It has a seaboard. It could have water produced from seawater and all sorts of things happening, but the money that went to Gaza was taken to build sophisticated tunnels in order to kill Jews. ...

What worries us ... are the denials that some of these things happened ... fake news. *col 1430* There are many stories, but this one particularly worried me. I saw reposted a picture of Israelis throwing people into a pit and killing them. I looked at it and said, "But they're speaking Arabic and they're not wearing Israeli uniforms". I looked it up and found it was Syrians killing the people in the pit, but it was in the media as Israeli terror. ...

People talk about the future and what could happen in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank. Some years ago, I had coffee in London with a member of Fatah, the ruling party in the Palestinian Authority and the opposition to Hamas. I asked this member of Fatah what I, as someone who has always been known for trying to find a compromise, could encourage the UK Government to provide for Hamas that it wanted in order to be part of a peaceful solution in the Middle East. This member of Fatah said to me, "Lord Palmer, they want only two things". I asked, "What are the two things?" The answer was the killing of Jews and the removal of Israel from the map. How do you deal with that?

I think it was the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, who mentioned the marches and the hate that comes from them. ... there is one thing about the marches that really gets me. Let us say that a number of people go there because they are worried about the Palestinians. I understand that, but then they scream out, "From the river to the sea, Palestine shall be free". They have not got the foggiest idea—or maybe they have—that "from the river to the sea" means ... from the Jordan to the Mediterranean. ...

The point is that, "From the river to the sea", this chant that goes along on the marches, means the complete removal of the State of Israel. ...

1431 Baroness Taylor of Stevenage (Labour): ... Such horrors as we saw in the Nazi massacre of a generation of European Jews, and the genocides that have followed in

Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur, can feel beyond the limited capacity of the only words we have to express them, but the weight of history demands that we do what we can to recognise so many precious lives lost. We remember them and, as others have said, their potential, which was so devastatingly cut short. At the heart of our remembrance is our commitment to strive always to act on the lessons learned. Yet we hear again of the dreadful anti-Semitism after 7 October, and we witness on our streets the horrors of anti-Semitism, including horrible scenes on television, such as the pictures of hostages that were posted by their friends and relatives being torn down from hoardings in London just a few weeks ago. ...

1432 Our parents and grandparents made sure that we understood that, while we could never feel the depth of pain of the Jewish community, we had an absolute duty and responsibility to educate ourselves about what had happened, to learn the lesson from it and pass it on to future generations. ...

On Monday night in Stevenage, our moving and emotional Holocaust Memorial Day event heard extremely powerful testimonies from the charity, Generation 2 Generation. As many of the survivors and witnesses are now reaching an age when the demands of travelling and speaking become too much, Generation 2 Generation is supporting them to pass the baton to their children and grandchildren. ... Our first witness that evening was Anita Peleg, the chair of Generation 2 Generation, on behalf of her mother, Naomi Blake. Anita used her mother's photographs and audio recordings of her mother telling her own story ...

1434 When we contemplate the fragility of freedom, we must be vigilant to the climate in which genocide takes place. It starts with instability and insecurity, whispers and then shouts of blame and hate speech that the fault lies with a particular group or groups. Then come the restrictions on that group's freedoms and rights. It then develops into segregation, separation, violence and the degradation of people ... It is not because of who they are but because of what they are, and it is shaped by a twisted ideology that creates "others" of our fellow humans ...

My noble friend Lord Young mentioned an issue I do not want to shy away from: the stain of anti-Semitism that has so recently infected my party. ... I praise the courage of a number of my noble friends, and friends in the other place, who suffered during this time but also stood up against what they saw, and of my party leader Sir Keir Starmer, who has rooted out the anti-Semitism and its perpetrators and transformed our party to be the home it absolutely should be for our Jewish members. ...

As we watch our fragile world and its freedoms becoming engulfed in tensions and hate, we must have the courage to speak out against that, wherever we see it. The courage comes from learning the lessons, listening to the witness and keeping the memory of dark times so we guard against them. It is ever more important, as so many noble Lords have said, as we reflect on the shocking events of 7 October and the subsequent conflict in Israel and Gaza.

A national Holocaust memorial situated in the heart of our capital city, adjacent to the mother of Parliaments, will be a powerful daily reminder to our decision-makers in this country—and the millions of visitors who come to London every year—that we take that responsibility seriously. ... We must create the means to carry the lessons down from generation to generation. A lasting Holocaust memorial in this place—which is so respected, so valued and so revered as a symbol of democracy and freedom—will be such a powerful symbol of our commitment and intent. ...

1435 More than ever, there is a need to educate our young people about the history of the Holocaust, and about the nature and reality of anti-Semitism and all hate crime. ... With the Community Security Trust recording 2,098 incidents of hate crime in the two months between October and December last year, the highest since records began, and other hate crimes rising as people respond to divisive rhetoric by turning against their neighbours and communities, everyone is starting to feel uncomfortable divisions. ...

1436 **Baroness Scott of Bybrook:** ... a couple of themes came out that I found very

strong. The first was that this did not start with the Holocaust or with World War II; it started with politics and people, and with debates probably like this one, although not going in the right direction. Then there was the propaganda that we heard about at Nuremberg. ...

1437 It is important for the whole world to realise that these things do not start slowly. We must nip them in the bud and catch them because we can see them leading to something dreadful again. ... We have to learn the lessons not just of the Holocaust but of how we got there in the first place. ...

The second theme that came out strongly ... was education. We go back to thanking the Holocaust Educational Trust and others ... for all that they do, but we must support them. We must keep the language and the stories going. ... All the Holocaust survivors who I get so much knowledge from are getting increasingly very old. That is why, as I said, we want to get the Holocaust memorial built: I want some of those survivors to still be there. ...

Lord Austin ... quite rightly challenged us on the fact that Holocaust Memorial Day is now extended to other genocides. The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust did that and wanted that, but some places that commemorate the Holocaust do not use other genocides. It is up to those people what they do, but there is a United Nations International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide on 9 December. Perhaps we in this House should remember that. ...

However, there are some other people in this country who are doing wonderful things, and I do not think they are ever mentioned in these debates. ... We are greatly blessed by these institutions, which are dedicated to broadly similar aims. Holocaust Memorial Day provides a fitting moment to reflect on the work that they do. I mention first the wonderful work done by the Wiener Holocaust Library, founded by Dr Alfred Wiener. He was looking at the roots of the Holocaust well before the Second World War; we can learn from that. It is one of the world's leading and most extensive archives of the Holocaust and the Nazi era. ...

1438 Just before Holocaust Memorial Day, Her Majesty the Queen became the first royal patron of the Anne Frank Trust UK. As we have heard, the trust uses Anne Frank's tragic story to teach about where anti-Semitism and prejudice can lead if it is not challenged. ... The National Holocaust Centre and Museum in Newark, Nottinghamshire, is a genuinely inspirational place ... The centre was the brainchild of Stephen and James Smith, along with their mother Marina, who in 1991 visited Israel's national Holocaust museum and wanted to bring something back.

The Holocaust Centre North in Huddersfield is another valuable and important institution. The success of that centre is testimony to the work of the Holocaust Survivors' Friendship Association, and the late Lilian Black ...

Heading across to the north-west of England, we see the Lake District Holocaust Project. This is an interesting project ... established in 2013 to remember 300 Jewish orphans who were sent to the Lake District to recuperate after the war. In June 1945 the Home Office gave permission for 1,000 Jewish orphans aged from eight to 16 to be brought to the UK for recuperation. In the end, 732 of them made the journey, with 300 arriving in the Lake District. These children had been discovered in notorious ghetto camps near Prague, but many had been used as slave labour in camps across Nazi-occupied Europe for many years. Many of the boys went on to lead really successful lives. The most successful was the late Sir Ben Helfgott—may his memory be a blessing—who was at the forefront of campaigns to introduce Holocaust education and remembrance. ...

Learning from the Righteous, a Holocaust education charity ... promotes dialogue and understanding to tackle racism and discrimination through learning about stories of resistance and rescue during the Holocaust. ...

1439 I want my final words today to focus on Holocaust survivors, and the survivors of subsequent genocides. ...

1440 It is our duty to ensure that their testimony is never forgotten. Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Elie Wiesel said that he believed "firmly and profoundly that

whoever listens to a witness becomes a witness, so those who hear us, those who read us must continue to bear witness for us. Until now, they're doing it with us. At a certain point in time, they will do it for all of us".

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-02-02/debates/531837EA-BBC6-4A45-BDDD-E66866BFA66F/HolocaustMemorialDay>

The Foreign Secretary's comments referred to above by Lord Pickles, can be read at
<https://news.sky.com/story/nonsense-for-south-africa-to-accuse-israel-of-genocide-says-foreign-secretary-13048098>

The findings of the Economist /YouGov poll referred to above by Baroness Fox of Buckley can be read at

<https://www.economist.com/united-states/2023/12/07/one-in-five-young-americans-thinks-the-holocaust-is-a-myth>

Information about the Ipsos poll referred to above by Baroness Fox of Buckley can be read at

<https://www.haaretz.com/2004-01-27/ty-article/35-of-europeans-say-jews-should-stop-playing-the-victim/0000017f-e7c2-dea7-adff-f7fbb82f0000>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

International Holocaust Remembrance Day: UK statement to the OSCE: Deputy Ambassador Brown marks International Holocaust Remembrance Day and condemns Holocaust denial and distortion.

... Last week we marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day, remembering and honouring the 6 million Jewish people, Roma, disabled, gay men, political opponents and Jehovah's Witnesses who were murdered. All murdered for who they were and what they believed.

The Holocaust was one of the darkest moments in human history. Tragically, recent events have underlined its continued relevance today. Israel was founded in the shadow of the Holocaust as a place of sanctuary for the Jewish people. And as we have seen the ugly face of antisemitism resurface, with an unprecedented surge in hate crime globally since the barbaric attacks on the 7th of October. Shamefully, this was also the case in the United Kingdom.

The UK will succeed Croatia as President of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance later this year, convening meetings in Glasgow in June and in London in December. During our Presidency we will mark the 85th anniversary of the first Kindertransport, the rescue of almost ten thousand Jewish children. Children who became Nobel prize winners, members of our legislatures and - in the UK - include the midwife who first held the future King Charles the Third.

We will soon reach a point where the march of time means that the Holocaust will no longer be part of our living history. With that comes a growing concern about the rise of Holocaust denial and distortion – recasting history to erase the devastating horrors faced by the Jewish people and others.

Our Presidency therefore aims to help children understand that the Holocaust did not happen in secret, hidden away in the dark corner, beyond most citizens' gaze. We want to shine a spotlight on the circumstances that led up to the Holocaust and the nature of society that allowed it to happen in plain sight.

Alongside this, we will prioritise tackling the continued rise of Holocaust distortion. We have a duty to protect the facts, fighting back against attempts to minimise or erase the devastation endured by the Jewish people. As IHRA Presidency and working with the OSCE, the UK will therefore convene AI, social media and other experts to discuss Holocaust distortion, including risks from deep fake technology and online disinformation.

Today is above all a day for remembering. We remember all those who were murdered. And as we remember them, I reiterate the UK's commitment to continuing that remembrance among future generations and to combating antisemitism domestically and across the OSCE region. ...

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/international-holocaust-remembrance-day-uk-statement-to-the-osce>

TOP

Israel

See also the Lords debate “Holocaust Memorial Day” that is included in the Holocaust section above, and the Commons debate “Iran: freedom and Democracy”, and Foreign Affairs Committee evidence session “The UK’s international counter-terrorism policy” that are included in the Foreign Affairs section below.

House of Commons Oral Answers

Business of the House

Lucy Powell (Labour Co-op): ... I will chalk it up as a victory that, after many weeks of asking, Foreign Office Ministers finally came forward with a statement this week on the ongoing conflict in Gaza and Israel. Will the Leader of the House ensure that that happens more often, with the Foreign Secretary himself taking questions? The situation demands it.

The International Court of Justice interim ruling was deeply significant and makes for difficult reading. We are clear that Israel must comply with the orders in the ruling in full, and that Hamas must release all the hostages immediately. International law must be upheld and the independence of international courts respected, with all sides held accountable for their actions. Twenty-five thousand innocent people are dead, including thousands of women and children, and 85% of the population of Gaza have been displaced and millions face the risk of famine. We cannot let innocent Palestinians pay the price. We must redouble our efforts for a sustainable ceasefire and a political process for a two-state solution.

On that, I welcome the Foreign Secretary's willingness to recognise the state of Palestine, which is a policy we have long supported. We hear this morning that Secretary of State Blinken is moving the US in that direction, too. As the Leader of the Opposition said, it is an “inalienable right of the Palestinian people”.

Can the Leader of the House clarify, as there is some confusion, the Government's policy on the recognition of Palestine? ...

Penny Mordaunt: ... This week I met Ashley, the cousin of 19-year-old hostage Agam Berger. She is the girl that many Members will have seen in video footage, playing her violin in happier times. She volunteered with special educational needs children, and was actively involved in working towards a peaceful solution in her region. I thank the shadow Leader of the House for her remarks about the hostages and all Members who are working hard to keep the spotlight on these people and their families. I hope that they will all be home soon. ...

Since the Foreign Secretary was appointed, there have been 41 sitting days, and in that time Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Ministers, including the Foreign Secretary, have made 71 appearances in Parliament, responding to parliamentary questions and in Select Committees. ...

On Gaza, the hon. Lady raised some serious issues. She will know—the Minister

for Armed Forces was just at the Dispatch Box—that the Government take compliance with international humanitarian law extremely seriously. We monitor that with our partners. She will know that, as we can see from previous conflicts, the Israel Defence Forces also produces reports after the event. All of that is subject to a great deal of scrutiny, but I will certainly ensure that the Foreign Secretary has heard her concerns. ...

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-01/debates/B6D88569-A288-43F3-BE43-DCB4CB607172/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-8DECB82A-708B-47C0-96DE-A6191A52B9E3>

Business of the House

Sam Tarry (Labour): ... Last week, the International Court of Justice ruled that claims of genocide in Gaza are plausible. Two days later, during a settler conference in Jerusalem alongside 10 other Government Ministers, Itamar Ben-Gvir, the Israeli Minister of National Security, stated that encouraging emigration from Gaza is a necessity. I am sure that many colleagues across the House would agree that that sounds dangerously like an advocacy of ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Gaza, so will the Leader of the House find time for a debate in Government time so that this House may express its views on whether it is now appropriate to issue targeted sanctions against any individual, organisation or state that is found to have incited or committed war crimes, or incited ethnic cleansing or genocide?

Penny Mordaunt: I understand why the hon. Gentleman raises concerns about that issue. All Members of the House are concerned about what is happening in the middle east. We want to see civilians protected and an end to hostilities. Key to that is ensuring that Israel is safe and secure, and that its citizens who have been kidnapped and are being held hostage are returned. The hon. Gentleman will have heard what the Foreign Secretary has said on those matters. He has been doing a huge amount of work, particularly over the last week, talking to nations in the region, which can particularly help to secure all those aims.

I urge all right hon. and hon. Members to think about what they say on the Floor of the House and whether it helps or hinders that situation. This Chamber is not an international court; accusations about genocide or ethnic cleansing should not be made. It is about ensuring that the right bodies are overseeing matters. I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman asked for a briefing on how the Government are doing that, whether through our partnerships in the Ministry of Defence or at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, he would be very reassured by the oversight that is being provided.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-01/debates/B6D88569-A288-43F3-BE43-DCB4CB607172/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-AE16EFC3-5C3C-4F11-993C-413CC2A613C0>

Business of the House

Richard Burgon (Labour): Recent court documents appear to show that, following an internal Foreign Office review of their legality in the light of what is happening in Gaza, the Foreign Secretary himself recommended that arms sale licences to Israel should be allowed to continue. There are concerns that at a recent Foreign Affairs Committee hearing the Foreign Secretary gave the impression that he had not taken a formal decision. It is important that this is cleared up, so will the Leader of the House allow time for a debate on the legality of our current arms exports to Israel and the FCDO's decision to continue those exports? Will she write to the Foreign Secretary to ask him to place the legal advice he has received on this in the Library?

Penny Mordaunt: This may be news to the hon. Gentleman, but there is a Select Committee of this House that scrutinises arms export controls. It is entitled to look

at anything, and all the policy will be cited there. Much of the material is available for hon. Members to look at. There are very clear criteria for decision takers, and the process has oversight and a legal framework around it. As he knows, we do not grant arms export licences to countries where we think the arms will be misused or might irresponsibly fall into the hands of a third party. I can only conclude that the fact that those criteria have not been met means that we are right to continue our defence partnerships with Israel.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-01/debates/B6D88569-A288-43F3-BE43-DCB4CB607172/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-87E6BB19-E721-4CA7-AA4C-411D44C45706>

House of Commons Written Answers

Arms Trade: Exports

Chris Stephens (SNP) [11367] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the effectiveness of the (a) UK's arms exports licensing process and (b) role of the export control joint unit in the context of arms sent to (i) Israel, (ii) Saudi Arabia and (iii) nations alleged to have breached international humanitarian law.

Andrew Mitchell: The Government takes its strategic export control responsibilities very seriously. Export licence applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis against the Strategic Export Licensing Criteria - a regime that is among the most rigorous and transparent in the world and which provides a thorough risk assessment framework, including in respect of International Humanitarian Law. The Export Control Joint Unit administers our system of export controls and brings together policy and operational expertise from the Department for Business and Trade, FCDO and the Ministry of Defence. All export licences are kept under careful, continuous review and we are able to amend, suspend or revoke extant licences, or refuse new licence applications, where they are inconsistent with the UK's Strategic Export Licensing Criteria.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-24/11367>

The Criteria referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-12-08/hcws449>

Antisemitism

Andrew Percy (Conservative) [12044] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of the International Court of Justice case concerning Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel) on global trends in antisemitism.

Leo Docherty: We respect the role and independence of the International Court of Justice (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 considered South Africa's decision to bring this case was wrong and provocative.

Antisemitism is evil and has absolutely no place in our - or any - society, and we are committed to tackling it in all its forms.

The UK will take on the presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance in March 2024 for one year, which comes ahead of the 80th anniversary of

the liberation of Auschwitz and the 25th anniversary of the Stockholm Declaration on Holocaust remembrance in January 2025.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-30/12044>

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

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

Gaza: Israel

Alison Thewliss (SNP) [12063] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the Israeli government's compliance with the provisional measures set forth by the International Court of Justice in the case concerning Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel).

Leo Docherty: We regularly review advice about Israel's capability and commitment to International Humanitarian Law, and acts in accordance with that advice.

We respect the role and independence of the International Court of Justice (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 International Humanitarian Law, 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. However, 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://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-30/12063>

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

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

Gaza: Israel

Stephen Morgan (Labour) [11232] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has made an assessment of the potential implications for his policies of advice he has received on Israel's compliance with international law.

Andrew Mitchell: We regularly review advice about Israel's capability and commitment to International Humanitarian Law (IHL), and act in accordance with that advice, for example when considering export licenses.

As the Foreign Secretary has said, Israel has the capability and commitment to act within IHL, but we are also deeply concerned about the impact on the civilian population in Gaza. 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/2024-01-23/11232>

Gaza: Israel

Zarah Sultana (Labour) [11448] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, pursuant to the Answer of 24 January 2024 to Question 10673 on Israel: Gaza, whether his Department has logged alleged instances of breaches or violations of International Humanitarian Law by Israel in its military engagement in Gaza since October 2023.

Andrew Mitchell: We regularly review advice about Israel's capability and commitment to International Humanitarian Law (IHL). We act in accordance with

that advice.

As the Foreign Secretary has said, Israel has the capability and commitment to act within IHL. We continue to call for IHL to be respected and civilians to be protected.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-24/11448>

The answer referred to above can be read at

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-19/10673>

Middle East: UN Agencies

Gregory Campbell (DUP) [11959] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make representations to the UN on the potential steps it can take to ensure it has the confidence of donor nations in relation to the operations of its relief and works agencies in the Middle East.

David Rutley: We are appalled by allegations that United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) staff were involved in the 7 October attack against Israel, a heinous act of terrorism that the UK Government has repeatedly condemned. We are pausing any future funding of UNRWA whilst we review these concerning allegations. We are looking to our partners in the UN to carry out a robust and comprehensive investigation. In the meantime, we are getting on with aid delivery through funding multiple implementing partners including other UN agencies and international and UK NGOs. This support is helping people in Gaza get food, water, shelter and medicines.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-30/11959>

The following two questions both received the same answer

UNRWA: Finance

Alison Thewliss (SNP) [12061] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an assessment of the potential impact of some countries pausing funding to the UN relief and works agency for palestine refugees in the near east (UNRWA) on the humanitarian response in Gaza.

Alison Thewliss (SNP) [12062] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has made an assessment of the adequacy of funding for the UN relief and works agency for palestine refugees in the near east (UNRWA) in the context of Israeli military action in Gaza and the West Bank.

Leo Docherty: The UK is appalled by allegations that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (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 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, and our decision to pause future funding to UNRWA has no impact on the UK's contribution to the humanitarian response. Our commitment to trebling aid to Gaza still stands, and we are getting on with aid delivery through funding multiple implementing partners including other UN agencies and international and UK NGOs. This support is helping people in Gaza get food, water, shelter and medicines. The UK is providing £60 million in humanitarian assistance to support partners including the British Red Cross, UNICEF, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and Egyptian Red Crescent Society (ERCS) to respond to critical food, fuel, water, health, shelter and security needs in Gaza.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-30/12061>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-30/12062>

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

Daisy Cooper (Liberal Democrat) [11443] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, if he will make an estimate of the daily volume of aid required to pass through the Rafah crossing to meet the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

David Rutley: 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 beyond Rafah and restoring and sustaining water, fuel and electricity.

We want Israel to extend the opening hours and capacity of the Nitzana screening facility and Kerem Shalom checkpoint so more trucks, aid and fuel can enter Gaza. We also want Israel to open Ashdod Port as a route for aid to reach Gaza, and open the Erez Crossing to allow direct access to the north of Gaza.

The Foreign Secretary discussed the urgency of getting significantly more aid into Gaza to alleviate the desperate situation there with Prime Minister Netanyahu on 24 January.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-24/11443>

Standing Together

Daisy Cooper (Liberal Democrat) [10930] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether (a) he and (b) officials in his Department have met representatives of Standing Together, the Israeli grassroots movement.

Andrew Mitchell: The Foreign Secretary and officials from the FCDO have not met with representatives from 'Standing Together'. We seek to engage with a wide range of partners and stakeholders on issues relating to Israel and the OPTs.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-22/10930>

Red Sea: Piracy

Lyn Brown (Labour) [11287] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the impact of Houthi attacks in the Red Sea on (a) humanitarian supply deliveries and (b) sea-borne trade through Port Sudan.

Andrew Mitchell: The Houthis' unacceptable and illegal actions, which threaten freedom of navigation, are disrupting sea-borne trade through Port Sudan. Existing blockages to the delivery of humanitarian assistance including bureaucratic barriers, looting of supplies and attacks on aid convoys must stop. We continue to call on both sides of the conflict in Sudan to abide by their responsibilities under International Law, protect civilians and to grant immediate and unimpeded humanitarian access, so that aid can reach those who need it.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-24/11287>

Israel: Palestinians

Daisy Cooper (Liberal Democrat) p10932] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, how much aid was given to civil society organisations in Israel and Palestine whose explicit aims include working towards a two-state solution in each of the financial years (a) 2020-21, (b) 2021-22 and (c) 2022-23.

Andrew Mitchell: The Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) OPTs-Israel Programme also supports Tech 2 Peace, I'lam - Arab Centre for Media Freedom, Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI) and Project Rozana which work to support engagement and dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians, thereby building stronger constituencies and prospects for peace. We also support local organisations such as COMET-ME, who work to keep Palestinians on their land in Area C of the West Bank.

Through our Empowering Palestinian Institutions and Civil Society (EPICS) programme, we have an accountable grant with AMAN (the Coalition for Integrity and Accountability), which seeks to combat corruption and promote integrity, transparency and accountability in Palestinian society. It incorporates a number of civil society organizations working in the field of democracy, human rights and good governance.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-22/10932>

House of Commons Library Briefing

UK aid to the West Bank and Gaza Strip: FAQs

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9900/CBP-9900.pdf>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office The UK is working hard to support regional security and stability in the Middle East. [plus video]

<https://twitter.com/FCDOGovUK/status/1753458921891614991>

British Embassy Beirut

Foreign Secretary: Lebanon's stability & security are paramount

UK Foreign Secretary, David Cameron, ended a one-day visit to Lebanon ...Thursday 1 February. ...

David Cameron raised his concerns on the rising tensions along Lebanon's boundary with Israel and underlined the UK's commitment to support the de-escalation of violence....

The Foreign Secretary announced UK support for the LAF, which has now surpassed £100 million since 2009. To date, the UK has supported the construction of 78 border towers, the provision of 344 Land Rovers, 3450 sets of PPE to soldiers deployed on border operations, 100 Land Rover armoured patrol vehicles trained and mentored over 26,500 LAF personnel in border operations and internal security.

The Foreign Secretary also announced £7.35 million of new UK aid funding to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Lebanon Humanitarian Fund, which supports UN agencies and NGOs to provide food, water, shelter and other basic support to vulnerable communities across Lebanon. And a £2.6m contribution to support the education of vulnerable children through a network of community centres for out of school children as part of UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's (MEHE) Transition and Resilience Education Fund (TREF). ...

British Ambassador to Lebanon Hamish Cowell said: ... The situation across the Blue Line is fragile and an escalation in violence is not in anyone's interests. In his meetings, the Foreign Secretary stressed the need for a cessation of hostilities and implementation of UNSCR 1701. This is critical if we are to see a long-term solution for peace. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-lebanons-stability-security-are-paramount>

UNSCR 1701, referred to above, can be read at

[https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1701\(2006\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1701(2006))

Department for Business and Trade

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Israel

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ba6d47c75d300012ca1002/israel-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2024-02-02.pdf>

Updated Trade and Investment Factsheet: Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ba7420f51b1000136a7e6f/occupied-palestinian-territories-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2024-02-02.pdf>

Welsh Senedd Statement of Opinion

Rhys ab Owen (Independent Plaid Cymru) [OPIN-2024-0386] Medical Workers in Gaza – This Senedd:

1. Recognises and supports the Early Day Motion 327 tabled in the House of Commons by Richard Burgon MP on 26 January 2024.
2. Supports the nomination of healthcare workers in Gaza for the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize
3. Recognises the pain Welsh healthcare workers have felt at seeing their colleagues killed in the line of work.
4. Calls upon all parties in the Israel-Palestine conflict to respect a duty to medical neutrality in war.
5. Calls upon the UK Government to ensure the safe return of Welsh doctors who have volunteered in the conflict.

<https://record.senedd.wales/StatementOfOpinion/386>

The Early Day Motion referred to above can be read at

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61815/health-workers-in-gaza-and-the-2024-nobel-peace-prize>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

States must reinstate and strengthen support to UNRWA amid unfolding genocide in Gaza: UN experts

UN human rights experts ... expressed grave concern at the recent harmful decision by some 18 states to suspend funding to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Australia, Austria, Canada, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, New Zealand, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States have all announced suspension of funding for UNRWA, the experts said.

“These announcements come at an existential moment for over two million Palestinians in Gaza enduring catastrophic living conditions due to Israel’s large-scale military attack that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) considers a plausible genocide,” the experts said.

The decision follows Israel’s allegations against several UNRWA employees of involvement in the Hamas-led attacks on 7 October 2023.

The experts said: “In response to these allegations, and even before conducting its due process investigation, UNRWA announced its decision to terminate these employees’ contracts ‘in the interest of the agency.’ This response reflects UNRWA’s firm commitment to ensuring organisational neutrality, in line with UN principles and values rejecting incitement and all forms of violence.”

“Even if allegations against individuals are proven, based on an impartial and independent

investigation, UNRWA as a whole, traditionally providing services to 1.7 million Palestinian refugees and offering employment to 13,000 locally recruited staff in Gaza, must not be blamed and punished collectively,” the experts said.

They were dismayed by reports suggesting Israel intends to “remove” UNRWA from Gaza. “We condemn in the strongest possible terms any efforts to delegitimise UNRWA as a whole.” ...

“We recognise UNRWA’s determination to implement its humanitarian mandate under unprecedented and enormous risks,” the experts said. “More than 150 UNRWA staff have been killed in Israeli bombardments since 7 October 2023—the highest number of UN staff killed in any conflict since the UN was founded in 1945.”

“Multiple UNRWA facilities have been targeted, besieged and demolished by the Israeli military, in apparent violation of the principle of the inviolability of UN premises,” they said. The experts request states to rally around the Agency and urge UNRWA’s leading donors to maintain their support, especially in anticipation of the complex humanitarian challenges ahead. “We agree with the Principals of the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee](#) that no other entity has the capacity to deliver the scale and breadth of assistance that 2.2 million people in Gaza urgently need,” the experts said.

“The grossly disproportionate decision to suspend funding by some of the largest donor states defies the basic principle of humanity, and goes against states’ commitment to leave no one behind,” they said. “Denying basic human necessities, life-saving medical care, food, shelter, and antenatal care for pregnant women, is not just indefensible—it is a hindrance to the already complex journey toward peace.” ...

With the ICJ alerting the international community to the risk of genocide in Gaza and ordering immediate and effective action to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance to civilians, states must do more, including to avoid legal consequences for aiding and abetting, or possible complicity in acts of genocide,” they said. “Instead of castigating the agency that provides critical support for millions of Palestinians in Gaza, states must exhaust all efforts to avert serious violations of international law, including genocide—and this necessitates continued international support of UNRWA’s vital humanitarian services.”

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/02/states-must-reinstate-and-strengthen-support-unrwa-amid-unfolding-genocide>

The Vatican

Letter from the Holy Father to my Jewish brothers and sisters in Israel

We are experiencing a moment of great travail. Wars and divisions are increasing all over the world. We are truly, as I said some time ago, in the midst of a sort of "piecemeal world war", with serious consequences on the lives of many populations.

Unfortunately, even the Holy Land has not been spared this pain, and since October 7 it too has been cast into a spiral of unprecedented violence. My heart is torn at the sight of what is happening in the Holy Land, by the power of so much division and so much hatred.

The whole world looks on at what is happening in that land with apprehension and pain. ...

Unfortunately, however, it must be note[d] that this war has also produced divisive attitudes in public opinion worldwide and divisive positions, sometimes taking the form of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism. I can only reiterate what my predecessors have also clearly stated many times: the relationship that binds us to you is particular and singular, without ever obscuring, naturally, the relationship that the Church has with others and the commitment towards them too. The path that the Church has walked with you, the ancient people of the covenant, rejects every form of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, unequivocally condemning manifestations of hatred towards Jews and Judaism as a sin against God. Together with you, we, Catholics, are very concerned about the terrible

increase in attacks against Jews around the world. We had hoped that "never again" would be a refrain heard by the new generations, yet now we see that the path ahead requires ever closer collaboration to eradicate these phenomena.

My heart is close to you, to the Holy Land, to all the peoples who inhabit it, Israelis and Palestinians, and I pray that the desire for peace may prevail in all. ... Words are so difficult to formulate in the face of a tragedy like the one that has occurred in recent months. Together with you, we mourn the dead, the wounded, the traumatized, begging God the Father to intervene and put an end to war and hatred, to these incessant cycles that endanger the entire world. In a special way we pray for the return of the hostages, rejoicing because of those who have already returned home, and praying that all the others will soon join them.

I would also like to add that we must never lose hope for a possible peace and that we must do everything possible to promote it, rejecting every form of defeatism and mistrust. We must look to God, the only source of certain hope. As I said ten years ago: *"History teaches that our own powers do not suffice. More than once we have been on the verge of peace, but the evil one, employing a variety of means, has succeeded in blocking it. That is why we are here, because we know and we believe that we need the help of God. We do not renounce our responsibilities, but we do call upon God in an act of supreme responsibility before our consciences and before our peoples. ..."*

In times of desolation, we have great difficulty seeing a future horizon where light replaces darkness, in which friendship replaces hatred, in which cooperation replaces war. However, we, as Jews and Catholics, are witnesses to precisely such a horizon. And we must act, starting first and foremost from the Holy Land, where together we want to work for peace and justice, doing everything possible to create relationships capable of opening new horizons of light for everyone, Israelis and Palestinians.

Together, Jews and Catholics, we must commit ourselves to this path of friendship, solidarity and cooperation in seeking ways to repair a destroyed world, working together in every part of the world, and especially in the Holy Land, to recover the ability to see in the face of every person the image of God, in which we were created. ...

To read the full letter see

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2024/02/03/0117/00232.html#en>

TOP

Foreign Affairs

House of Commons Debate

Iran: Freedom and Democracy

... col 1079 **Anna Firth (Conservative)**: ... Does [Bob Blackman] agree that that brutal regime is literally on an execution spree at the moment, having executed more than 350 protesters and dissidents since the conflict in Gaza began? That is a rate of execution of not far off 100 protesters per month. ...

col 1080 **Bob Blackman (Conservative)**: ... This debate comes at a time when the world has never been so unsafe. We have a war raging in Europe, attacks by the Houthis in the Red sea, an illegal war in Gaza by the Hamas terror group, Hezbollah in Lebanon and war in Syria, as well as other dangerous militant groups. The one thing that links all those examples is the IRGC, which stands as the head of the snake, funding, training and supplying weaponry to all those organisations. Its outreach and capabilities are frankly frightening. ...

The IRGC ... provided significant direct funding and training to Hamas in the lead-up to the

dreadful 7 October attacks. Most recently, the Houthis in Yemen have targeted shipping lanes in the Red sea. The Houthi militant group was set up by Iran and remains under its influence. Linked to those attacks, Iran announced that it had subsequently launched into low-earth orbit three satellites that the US believes can be used to more accurately target intercontinental ballistic missiles. ...

col 1081 I am aware that we have already sanctioned individuals, but we must go further. Until we start cracking down on the IRGC, it will continue to extort and suppress innocent people. Its military capacity is growing and, even if it does not already possess a nuclear capability—I have my doubts—its nuclear capability will also grow.

The international community must wake up and protect countries such as Israel by killing the initial piece of the chain. Without funding and support from Iran, terrorists like Hamas will not be able to carry out their dreadful attacks. Iran will feel the pinch only if there is full proscription, and I reiterate my plea for the Government to do so. Hezbollah is already proscribed, and it is the birthchild of the IRGC. The IRGC must therefore be proscribed, too. ...

col 1083 Jim Shannon (DUP): ... [Bob Blackman] is right to highlight the danger that Iran poses to peace in the middle east: it supplies the Houthis with aid and finance, supplies Hezbollah in Lebanon with finance and weapons, supplies Hamas in Gaza with aid, arms and finance, and supplies many terrorist groups in Syria in the same way. ...

col 1085 Martyn Day (SNP): ... The level of oppression and human rights abuses by the current regime in Iran is truly appalling and is getting worse. According to Freedom House, Iran has decreased its total global freedom status from a derisory 14 out of 100 in 2022 to 12 out of 100 last year. Freedom House gave Iran zero scores for most areas of fundamental rights including: the individual right to practice or express religion, faith or non-belief in public and private; free and independent media; the Government operating with openness and transparency; safeguards against corruption; the question of whether the freely elected head of Government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the Government; and fair and free elections. ...

col 1086 Last year, at least 864 people were executed, the highest figure since 2017. ...

As we have heard, Iran is the biggest state sponsor of terrorism. This exporting of international terrorism by Iran cannot and will not be tolerated, nor should be its support for Russia in the war with Ukraine, use of cyber-attacks, or hostage-taking diplomacy, and I condemn the involvement of Iranian officials in the killing of US servicemen. ...

Although I welcome the recent announcement of additional sanctions on senior Iranian officials, I wonder why we are not taking an even stronger approach. At a minimum, we should urgently proscribe the IRGC as a terrorist organisation. I have lost count of the number of times that I and others have called for that action.

col 1087 Proscription would be a tangible step in the UK in the furtherance of freedom and democracy in Iran. ...

col 1088 Wayne David (Labour): If the Iranian regime is repressive at home, it is guilty of aggression abroad. In fact, it is among the world's foremost state sponsors of terrorism. Iran, through its so-called proxies, is guilty of helping to initiate violence across much of the middle east. Iran has supplied huge support to Hamas in Gaza. It has supplied and supported Hezbollah in Lebanon and is still doing so. In Iraq—including in Kurdistan—and in Syria, Iranian sponsored militants have attacked US forces. On Sunday, an Iran-backed group was responsible for a drone attack on a US military base in Jordan that resulted in the death of three American soldiers and the injury of many other people. ...

col 1089 Because of those very real threats, I believe that the sanctions introduced, and the further ones announced, should be welcomed. ...

One additional measure ought to be the total proscription of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. I understand that there is ongoing debate in Government about this, but if they do not bring forward appropriate measures that would lead to a total ban of the IRGC

in this country, Labour will do so if it forms a Government. If the Government do that now, Labour will support it...

col 1090 The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (David Rutley): ... Iran has been designated an FCDO human rights priority country. Since October 2022, we have sanctioned 94 individuals and entities for human rights violations, including decision makers responsible for drafting and implementing Iran's mandatory hijab legislation, and political and security officials involved in the crackdown. ...

col 1091 It is very clear that religious minorities face continued abuses of their most basic rights. Religious minorities, including Baha'i, Christian and Sunni Muslim communities, suffer discrimination in law and practice, including in access to education, employment, political office and—the most basic of all —places of worship.

In the international sphere, we have called on Iran to allow every individual the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief in accordance with its obligation under the international covenant on civil and political rights. ...

col 1092 Our priority is the safety and security of the UK and the people who live here. Since January 2022 the UK has identified at least 15 threats ... to the lives of UK-based individuals, including journalists. That is clearly unacceptable. The UK Government, law enforcement agencies and our international partners are working together to ensure that Persian language media can operate without editorial interference and threats from Iran. ...

Several Members have raised the issue of the IRGC, which we have already sanctioned in its entirety. ... We have real concerns about the intent and activities of the IRGC. The separate list of terrorist organisation proscriptions is kept under review, but we do not routinely comment on whether an organisation is under consideration. We are actively disrupting Iranian malign activity by means of a range of tools. This is about using effective measures to curb Iran's destabilising activity ...

Points have also been made about Iran's nuclear programme, which has never been more advanced than it is today and which threatens international peace and security. Iran's behaviour since those negotiations has made progress much more difficult, and we are working with our international partners to co-ordinate our response. We are clear about the fact that Iran poses an unacceptable threat to Israel, for instance through its long-term support for Hamas. In December, designations were made under our new Iran sanctions regime, targeting the head of the IRGC Quds Force, IRGC individuals, and an entity linked to Iran's relationship with proxy groups such as Hamas. ...

col 1093 In conclusion, it is clear that Iranian authorities are imposing policies at odds with the values of freedom and democracy. ... For as long as that remains the case, we will continue to work across government, and with the international community, to hold Iran to account for its unacceptable behaviour. ... We will continue to work with international partners to make it clear to Iran that we will not stand for destabilising activity that threatens our values and our security, and indeed the security of the region.

col 1094 Bob Blackman: ... I find it difficult to understand why we do not take the ultimate step and proscribe the IRGC in its entirety. ... We have proscribed Hamas, Hezbollah and, recently, Hizb ut-Tahrir, so surely the head of the snake must be proscribed.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-01/debates/3C9440F2-72AB-49DB-9D78-45D024C67A34/IranFreedomAndDemocracy>

House of Commons Written Answers

South Africa: Antisemitism and Crime

Michael Ellis (Conservative) [11777] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign,

Commonwealth and Development Office, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of his Department's travel advice for South Africa, in the context of (a) recent trends in levels of crime in South Africa and (b) the case of cricketer David Teeger.

Andrew Mitchell: We are aware of the high levels of crime in South Africa and have reflected this in our Travel Advice. FCDO's Travel Advice is constantly under review and regularly updated to ensure the safety of British Nationals travelling to and living in South Africa.

We are also aware of the case involving David Teeger and the concerns that have been raised about this case.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-29/11777>

FCDO travel advice for South Africa, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/south-africa>

Information about the case of David Teeger, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.bbc.com/sport/africa/67957459>

The following two questions both received the same answer

South Africa: Antisemitism

Andrew Percy (Conservative) [12022] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of his Department's travel advice on the safety of South Africa for British Jews.

Andrew Percy (Conservative) [12023] To ask the Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of updating his Department's travel advice for British Jewish travellers to South Africa, in the context of recent trends in levels of antisemitism in that country.

Andrew Mitchell: Antisemitism has no place in our or any society and we strongly condemn it.

FCDO's travel advice is constantly under review and regularly updated to ensure the safety of British Nationals travelling to and living in South Africa.

The 'safety and security' page of our South Africa travel advice currently includes a section on the conflict in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-30/12022>

and

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-01-30/12023>

FCDO travel advice for South Africa, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/south-africa>

Foreign Affairs Committee

The UK's international counter-terrorism policy

Q94 Chair (Royston Smith, Conservative): Why, after more than two decades of counter-terrorism operations in the Middle East and North Africa, does terrorism emanating from the region remain a consistent threat to the UK?

Dr Inga Trauthig (Visiting Fellow, Institute for Middle Eastern Studies, KCL): What we have seen in terms of trends in transnational Salafi jihadism is, on the one hand, definitely a lowering of the threat level. ... However, Islamic State still remains a threat because they are interested in Governments, they are interested in creating more space, they are interested in the mid to long term also in attracting again more foreign fighters and probably directing resources towards attacking the West. ...

Jerome Drevon (Jihad and Modern Conflict Senior Analyst, International Crisis Group): ... There was a phase, from 2014 onwards, when we had a group, Islamic State, that was controlling territory. It managed to get a lot of European citizens sent from abroad

and so on to train them, initially to fight locally, and then some of them went back to their countries of origin, where they knew people, they were well-connected and so on and could launch armed activities. ... When Baghuz fell and Islamic State lost its territory in Syria, it lost its ability to both gather foreign fighters and train them. So now the threat is mostly people that could be potentially inspired by the ideas of the group, but nothing well organised and structured, the way it was before. ...

Dr Lina Khatib (Director, SOAS Middle East Institute): ... You asked, “Why are we still dealing with this threat to our interests in the region after 20 years?” It is because we have not been addressing the root causes as well as we should. For as long as the drivers are there, the threat will continue. ...

Edmund Fitton-Brown (Former Co-ordinator, UN Sanctions Monitoring Team): I think the threat endures because the groups that threaten us endure. And I think that is because of enduring conflict in the region. The conflict has not been addressed, and poor governance in the region has not been addressed. ...

Q95 ... Dr Lina Khatib: I was looking at our Integrated Review Refresh. ... The Middle East is barely mentioned anyway. ... the Middle East is not seen as very important, and that means that the resources dedicated to the Middle East will be minimal. ...

Q96 ... Dr Lina Khatib: ... There is no denying that the invasion of Iraq is something we are living with until today, in terms of consequences. Without the invasion of Iraq, would we have seen al-Qaeda in Iraq rise the way it did? Probably not. Would we have later on seen ISIS and the way it rose ... as a result of the domino effect of bad governance, corruption, sectarianism and all that ...

Q98 ... Edmund Fitton-Brown: I think the prognosis in Syria is grim. ... The problem is that, essentially, the old pax Assad that used to exist has broken down, but Assad is still there. What you have is this small minority of Alawites with their foreign backers—the Iranians, Hezbollah and Russia—holding on, but the majority of the population in Syria is Sunni Arab, and they never envisage that they will make peace with Assad. ... It means that people like Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, or al-Qaeda in Syria—the Hurras al-Din—or ISIS are going to hold on in Syria, because they anticipate that their time will come again. ...

Q100 Brendan O'Hara (SNP): How wary should we be of a renewed, refreshed and resurgent ISIS? This morning, I spoke with Alex Crawford from Sky News about this; she has recently done a report. She was in the al-Hol camp, which is essentially an incubator for Daesh and ISIS. She said that the camp was huge, and that there is an active presence inside the camp. There is a section of the camp that is so dangerous that the guards call it the mini-caliphate. The people they spoke to talked of strong ISIS supporters, and a prevalence of ISIS ideology. The children were hostile, throwing stones and chanting anti-Western slogans. The residents have no lives, no jobs, and little hope of getting out, and are too dangerous for Governments to deal with. She said that there is a whole generation growing up like this, who have known nothing but the camp. She said it is a ticking timebomb of growing radicalism, hatred and hopelessness. ...

Dr Lina Khatib: I would say very accurate. My brother is a humanitarian, and he worked partly on that camp for a while. He verified exactly that kind of dynamic ... Absolutely, it is an incubator. ...

Our approach is to pretend that these camps exist in a bubble, far away from us. In a way, we are perhaps waiting for the prisoners to eventually die out. Maybe that is our approach: “We’ll just wait until they vanish.” I think that is a big mistake. We are not dealing with the issue of al-Hol, or the catastrophe that might happen if we don’t take ownership of the situation. These people need to be tried in courts of justice. The children need to be rehabilitated. ...

Q104 Henry Smith (Conservative): Last week, we saw the US, the UK and other forces strike against Houthi targets as a result of the drone attacks against shipping in the Red Sea. Do you see al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula further working with the Houthis

to ratchet up and increase attacks, either on shipping or against other Western interests?

Edmund Fitton-Brown: I do not see the relationship between the Houthis and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula as being operationally collaborative in that way. ...

Q105 ... Dr Inga Trauthig: ... Interestingly, al-Qaeda is trying much more to exploit the Hamas attack on Israel in its propaganda by really piggy-backing on the “success” of Hamas. For instance, it eulogised al-Arouri, the Hamas leader who was killed in Lebanon. It is proving far more flexible. It is not aligning with Hamas, because ideologically they are an enemy, but it is kind of piggy-backing on them. ...

This anecdote is not mine; it is from Elisabeth Kendall, a researcher of Yemen. She told me that al-Qaeda’s media, and particularly its propaganda, is so much better. It takes the bigger causes: for instance, it has piggy-backed on Hamas and injustice against Muslims, and has translated those into the Yemeni context. ...

Q106 Henry Smith: ... what would be the advantages and disadvantages of the UK proscribing the Houthis as a terror group?

Jerome Drevon: The value of terrorist listing in general is not always only operational; a lot of it is about stigmatisation. Some of the direct issues would be about the population living directly under the Houthis. ... first, it would have a humanitarian impact on the population, but then, what is the purpose? Ultimately, we have a group that is controlling a state. ...

So what is the objective beyond stigmatisation? Maybe we can achieve some constraints on their financial resources and so on, but the issue of terrorist listing goes beyond the Houthis. The issue of terrorist listing is that once you are listed, it is much more difficult to be delisted. What if at some point we need to have a political process or some type of negotiation with the Houthis? To what extent will that even be possible? Will it simply be prevented, both by the stigma associated with it and by some of the conditions and requirements that are associated with terrorist listing? There would be public pressure, and domestically it could be much more difficult to justify the delisting of a group that ultimately is behaving the same way. I think we should go beyond just the idea of securitisation of the threat and think politically about the Houthis. That cannot be solved only through listing armed groups like them.

Q107 Henry Smith: ... the Houthis declared that US and British ships, even if they are not heading to Israel, will be considered legitimate targets. Do you think that constitutes an act of terror? ...

Dr Lina Khatib: I consider it an act of terror. ... In terms of whether I regard the Houthis as a terrorist group, personally, yes, I do. I do not think that you need a designation for a group to be seen as conducting terrorist activities. ...

Q108 Chair: ... when you speak to the UN special envoy and the US special envoy to Yemen, they both think that the Houthis will be part of the peace road map—the road map has to include the Houthis, of course, but within government, in the way that Hezbollah are in Lebanon. You are suggesting that we should proscribe the Houthis as terrorists, and that they should be nothing to do with the solution. How would that work if they were part of the future governance arrangements?

Dr Lina Khatib: This is the thing. We have designated Hezbollah as a terrorist group. What have we achieved with that, in terms of changing the political status quo in Lebanon? Frankly, nothing. That is why, for me, the issue is not the designation. When I talk about dealing with them decisively, it means holding them accountable not in a tit-for-tat retaliatory way as we have been doing, but through this comprehensive strategy I am proposing, which actually links up the Yemen file with the Lebanon file with the glaring elephant in the room, which is the Iran regional intervention file—something that neither the UK nor the US has really wanted to address. ... Let us not forget who is also training the Houthis—Hezbollah from Lebanon. ...

If we really want to solve the problem with the Houthis, they do need to be part of the

solution, because they are a reality on the ground. It is clear that we cannot eradicate them militarily, and neither can we eradicate Hezbollah militarily. ...

Q109 ... Edmund Fitton-Brown: ... I see what is happening in the Red Sea as a distinct challenge ... This is not anything to do with the Middle East; this is not anything to do with Gaza. This is a threat to international shipping and international trade, and it has to be faced down. ...

Q111 ... Edmund Fitton-Brown: ... What I worry a little still is that there is still a lot of private donor money that goes from Arabian Peninsula countries to terrorist groups. That has always been the case; it was true that money was going to al-Qaeda, ISIS and the Taliban from the peninsula. Whether those Governments are strong enough in facing that down or whether they are too quick to accommodate the proclivities of their individual citizens and wealthy donors with strong Islamist sympathies—I think there is a problem there. One of the things that 7 October highlighted is that there is a problem of Qatari tolerance of Hamas. ...

Q118 Edmund Fitton-Brown: ... you can ask why Daesh Sinai became a concern in the first place. It shouldn't really have been much of a concern. It is not as if the Sinai particularly leads anywhere; it is something of a cul-de-sac. What that reflects is that the relationship between the Government in Cairo and the people of Sinai was not good. That meant that there was a lot of natural hostility to Egyptian authority and sympathy for Daesh. There was an interesting point there, in that there appeared to be some Daesh control of some tunnels into Gaza. Obviously, Gaza is under Hamas control; Hamas is not sympathetic to Daesh. But there is some presence of Daesh within Gaza. It was concerning that you had a potential link there across into Palestine.

The Egyptians have had a very long-running domestic extremism problem—the longest of all ... They have a way of dealing with it, which is that they know best and they don't really want to contract it out to partners or allies. ...

I think the Americans have been working that hard as well. They have a very strong relationship with the Egyptians, but it is not an easy one. They have had to work hard with them over managing the Gaza issue, and of course the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea are highly relevant to the Egyptian economy, because of the Suez canal. Egypt is a critical partner and ally in the region, but not an easy one.

Q121 Fabian Hamilton (Labour): ... what do you think is the overlap between terrorism and organised crime in North Africa? Does it have an impact on the UK and its security interests, regionally and here at home?

Dr Lina Khatib: ... There is this separation between dealing with armed groups in the Middle East and North Africa and dealing with organised crime, when very often it is the same actors—armed groups that are terrorists—that are engaged in organised crime. Hezbollah is one example and Daesh/ISIS is another. Of course, some organised crime is carried out by actors who are not armed, but Syria, with the captagon trade, is a huge example of that. We need to formulate policies that allow us to link those two dimensions together, because that is the reality on the ground.

Edmund Fitton-Brown: I would echo that. There is a worry about siloing between people dealing with organised crime and people dealing with terrorism, and they need to be better integrated. There shouldn't be a sense that terrorism is a bigger deal than organised crime. ...

Q123 Graham Stringer (Labour): ... you said Iran was the elephant in the room. I understand why you said that, but it is not really, is it? It is the main motivator of anti-Western armed activity in the Middle East. ... has the policy of the United States, the European Union and the United Kingdom, under Obama and different European regimes, been too soft on Iran? ...

Edmund Fitton-Brown: You make a fair point. We talk a lot about this so-called axis of resistance—the Houthis, Hezbollah, Hamas, these Iraqi Shi'a militias. Iran, of course, is

the co-ordinator of all that. Iran, for many years, has pursued these extremely aggressive, asymmetric policies. It is just more comfortable with conflict than we are, or than Saudi Arabia or the Gulf states are, so it has gained a lot of advantage.

There has been a perception in the region that Iran has advanced on a number of fronts and grown stronger. Maybe the main fault in the way we responded was that we separated out the nuclear issue from the axis of resistance issue, and prioritised the nuclear issue. ...

Q125 ... **Dr Lina Khatib:** ... We ally ourselves with Washington—I think that is important—but are we trying to also influence Washington? I am not sure that we are, and I think we should. The issue of Israel and Palestine is another one where I think we could secure some benefit ... because of our historical relationships in that region. ...

To read the full transcript see

<https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/14208/html/>

The Integrated Review Refresh, referred to above, can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/641d72f45155a2000c6ad5d5/11857435_NS_IR_Refresh_2023_Supply_AllPages_Revision_7_WEB_PDF.pdf

The International Relations Committee report referred to above can be read at

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201617/ldselect/ldintrel/159/159.pdf>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Gregory Campbell (DUP) [352] Persecution of Christians – That this House notes reports of continuing and increasing instances of intimidation, persecution and murder of Christians in many countries across the world; and expresses the demand that the UK takes the lead in highlighting these cases, continuing to raise with the relevant nation states and international bodies the need to act to prevent such attacks and where they occur to take robust action against the perpetrators.

<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/61787>

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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>

International Freedom of Religion or Belief Bill

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

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill

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

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

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

Scottish Parliament

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

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

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Consultations

** new or updated today

**** closes in 7 days**

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