



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

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See also the House of Lords Second Reading debate on the Holocaust Memorial Bill that is included in the Holocaust section below.

House of Commons Written Answers

Religion: Departmental Responsibilities

John Glen (Conservative) [2290] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether the Prime Minister intends to appoint a Minister for Faith.

Alex Norris: My noble friend Lord Khan of Burnley has been appointed as the Minister for Faith, Communities and Resettlement. Details of ministerial responsibilities for the department are published on gov.uk.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-30/2290>

Radicalism

Kemi Badenoch (Conservative) [2452] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to tackle extremism.

Alex Norris: Countering extremism in all its forms is important for preserving our democratic values and protecting our society and communities. It is a cross-government endeavour and MHCLG will continue tackle the harms it causes to individuals and in communities.

As we saw following the violent incidents in Southport on July 29, extremism poses a threat to community integration and safety. We have been clear that criminal behaviour masked as protest will not be tolerated. Comprehensive multi-agency support is being coordinated for affected families in Southport, focusing on long-term recovery and community cohesion.

The Home Secretary has commissioned a rapid review of extremism policy to understand the threat of extremism and the response required, with a pledge to take urgent action to address any issues.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-30/2452>

Radicalism: Scotland

Blair McDougall (Labour) [900243] To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what steps he is taking with the Secretary of State for the Home Department to help tackle far-right extremism in Scotland.

Kirsty McNeill: The past weeks have been frightening for many of our communities in Scotland, in particular for Muslims. I will never forget hearing from a young woman who has asked to work from home indefinitely because she is so afraid to be in a city centre, in Scotland, in 2024, wearing the hijab. That is intolerable and cannot - and will not - be accepted.

So I do not share the complacency of some that Scotland has no issues around racism and Islamophobia to address.

The UK Government and Scotland Office are determined to play our part in defeating hate. I am grateful to the civil society and voluntary organisations throughout our communities whose efforts are so vital in supporting that endeavour, and to Police Scotland for their work in keeping us safe.

While I am confident that the true values of this country are best reflected by millions of decent, law abiding people who cherish our neighbours and will not be divided, we must acknowledge that mosques, synagogues and other buildings used by a range of faith communities in Scotland have had to take advantage of Home Office funding for security. Their need to do so shames us all and we will not rest until those responsible for violent disorder are brought to justice and everyone, of every faith and background, feels equally safe.

This government will continue to promote unity and solidarity across the diverse communities that so enrich life in Scotland and the United Kingdom and bring to justice all those engaged in thuggery and violent disorder.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-08-27/900243>

Islamophobia

Kemi Badenoch (Conservative) [2454] To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, what steps she is taking to tackle islamophobia.

Alex Norris: Islamophobia, and all forms of religious and racial hatred, have absolutely no place in our society. No one should be targeted because of the colour of their skin, or their faith. This Government is clear that perpetrators of such hate crimes will face the full force of the law.

Sadly, we have seen how Muslim communities and other minorities have been targeted in the deplorable acts of violence following the recent tragic events in Southport. This Government will make sure that criminals intent on causing violence and unrest on our streets will be stopped in their tracks and brought to justice thanks to the new National Violent Disorder Programme. We are also providing rapid additional support to mosques through the Protective Security for Mosques Scheme to protect Muslim communities, which comes on top of the £29.4 million already made available to fund security at mosques and Muslim faith schools this year.

British Muslims are a crucial part of Britain's history and British life today. This Government will not tolerate Islamophobia in any form and has committed to a more cohesive and integrated approach to ensure that all forms of hatred are stamped out of our communities.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-30/2454>

Holocaust

House of Lords Debate

Second Reading, Holocaust Memorial Bill

col 1159 **The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Lord Khan of Burnley):** My Lords, many noble Lords will be familiar with the Bill we are debating today and will remember that it was previously introduced in the previous Parliament. We have reintroduced the Bill for the same purpose that it was first brought forward by the previous Government: to help ensure the victims of the Holocaust will never be forgotten.

This horrendous crime—the murder of 6 million Jewish men, women and children—was an attempt by the Nazi state to eliminate an entire people. If we are to honour those families, communities and individuals, we must constantly ask ourselves: how did it come about? What was the context within which such hatred could grow? How did it happen that people could turn with such violence upon their neighbours? What led a Government to plan and execute the murder of millions?

A new national memorial to the Holocaust, with an integrated learning centre, will enable future generations to ask and answer those questions for decades to come. It will be a focal point for remembering the 6 million Jewish men, women and children, and all other victims of Nazi persecution, including Roma, gay and disabled people. That is why we supported the Bill in Opposition and are promoting it today.

col 1160 I want briefly to explain how we arrived at this moment, and pay credit to all those who supported the project until this point. In particular, I thank those involved in the work of the Holocaust Commission, launched by the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton, when he was Prime Minister. It was the recommendations of that commission, set out in its 2015 report, which called for a “striking and prominent new National Memorial”, which should be “co-located with a world-class Learning Centre”.

In the years since, the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation has done extensive work to find a suitable location. Since Victoria Tower Gardens was identified and the design team of Adjaye Associates, Ron Arad Architects and Gustafson Porter + Bowman was appointed, the project has consistently benefited from strong cross-party support. Since 2018, that support has, of course, been led by the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, and the right honourable Ed Balls through the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, building on the work of the commission, which itself received almost 2,500 responses to its call for evidence.

The design of the Holocaust memorial and learning centre is itself the product of an international competition, with hundreds attending the exhibitions of the short-listed entries and then the winning design. A detailed planning application was then submitted to Westminster City Council at the end of 2018, with around 4,500 comments submitted online. Then, the 2019 call-in by the Minister led to a planning inquiry, chaired by the inspector, which received almost 70 oral representations. Throughout this process, views have been properly considered, and will continue to be properly considered as future decisions are taken.

In this time, the project has benefited from the support of academics, including Michael

Berenbaum and Professor Stuart Foster; teachers and educators such as Ellie Olmer and Martyn Heather, the director of education for the Premier League; religious leaders, including both the Chief Rabbi and the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury; and, of course, the voices of many Holocaust survivors.

I also stress that I accept there will never be universal support, and I want to assure the House that, for those who oppose the project, I will always be available to listen to, engage with and respect any concerns about this Bill. Indeed, I note that the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, has tabled a regret amendment that the Bill does not include certain provisions or deal with particular issues. ...

col 1161 The Bill is before the House to provide parliamentary authority for spend on the project and to address the view of the High Court, which said that Section 8 of the London County Council (Improvements) Act 1900—the Act which saw the creation of Victoria Tower Gardens in more or less its current form—is an obstacle to construction. Clause 1 seeks powers to enable the Secretary of State to provide funding for the construction, maintenance and operation of a Holocaust memorial and learning centre. ...

Clause 2 seeks to address the statutory obstacle inherent in the 1900 Act. I would like to spend a few moments explaining precisely what Clause 2 does and does not aim to achieve. The clause, if enacted, would provide that the 1900 Act should not be a barrier to the construction or operation of the Holocaust memorial and learning centre. The clause does not seek to repeal any part of the 1900 Act. I want to make clear that we are not seeking to overturn the guarantee that Parliament gave 124 years ago that Victoria Tower Gardens should remain protected, “as a garden open to the public”. ...

Clause 3 deals with extent, commencement and the Short Title.

In the previous Parliament, the House of Commons made clear that it wished the Bill and the project to proceed. We now have the opportunity in this House to give the same clear message. ...

It is important to note that this Bill does not provide powers to build the Holocaust memorial and learning centre. Planning consent must be obtained through the separate statutory process, which takes full account of the need to assess in detail all aspects of any development and to hear from both supporters and opponents. ...

col 1162 The proposal for a Holocaust memorial and learning centre at Victoria Tower Gardens will demonstrate the significance of the Holocaust to the decisions we take as a nation. ... Throughout my life and the lives of Members of this House, we have all heard direct, first-hand accounts of the Holocaust from those who were there. They are stories which were often deeply painful to relate but were told by survivors who knew the importance of sharing their testimony. Sadly, the opportunity to hear first-hand testimony will not be available for future generations. Each year, we are losing more and more Holocaust survivors. Last year, Holocaust survivor and staunch supporter of the project Sir Ben Helfgott died, and we know that not seeing the Holocaust memorial and learning centre built in his lifetime was a great sadness to him. Earlier this year we saw the passing of Henry Wuga MBE and Hella Pick CBE, who both escaped Germany on the Kindertransport and made their homes here. For those courageous survivors who fear that attention will fade after their departure, the Holocaust memorial and learning centre provides strong reassurance.

The history of the Holocaust will always be important to Great Britain, and in an age of increased disinformation and misinformation, this memorial and the learning centre will mean that history continues to be told, and respected, long after its witnesses are no longer with us. As the great-grandson of a 100 year-old survivor, Lily Ebert, said “When we no longer have survivors like Lily among us, this memorial will help to ensure that their experience is never forgotten. We can create the next generation of witnesses”.

Amendment to the Motion Moved by

Baroness Deech (Crossbench): At end insert “*but this House regrets that the Bill fails to allow for a full appraisal and consultation on any preferred site for a Holocaust Memorial*”

and Learning Centre; and that in preparing the bill the Government have failed to establish the true cost of the project or deal with issues of security around the Memorial”.

My Lords, we are debating a project that would change the environment of the Palace of Westminster for ever—and for the worse.

Victoria Tower Gardens, the subject of the Bill, were given to the locality by the benefactor WH Smith 150 years ago, with a statute of 1900 prohibiting building on them. These are gardens filled to capacity at each Coronation and each royal funeral—sadly. ...

The gardens are a breathing space for local residents, many of whom live in council flats, and for workers—such as us. The project will take up 20% of the gardens, not 7% as the promoters would have us believe, and the plans and calculations are available to establish this.

col 1163 The Government propose to wreck all of this. The Bill before your Lordships, ostensibly to make a democratic point, is an authoritarian and anti-democratic move that will overrule a century-old law to ride roughshod over the right of local residents to protect their environment, and it belittles the good intentions of donors. ...

The proposed grab of the site has been done without consultation. The Board of Deputies of British Jews, for example, has not voted on it. I do not know what other minorities consider about their inclusion. ... So many millions—I believe £17 million—have already been spent in litigation and combat before a sod has been turned. ...

The choice of location has been criticised by UNESCO, Historic England and the Infrastructure and Projects Authority, which has rated it as “red—undeliverable”, in the same category as HS2. ...

The design is by the once-fashionable designer David Adjaye, now dropped by many clients because of allegations of inappropriate behaviour. Not only that, but the design is third or fourth-hand. A bunch of sticks in the air, it is almost identical to his memorial designs for Niger, Barbados and Ottawa—all ... very different contextually. ... It bears no relevance to the Holocaust, the gardens or the UK. It will block the view of the Palace and has already been christened the “giant toast rack” or, if viewed from the air, a set of false teeth. ...

Supporters will give an emotional account of how important it is that the commemoration of one of the greatest tragedies in history should be in Westminster. They will hint that it is anti-Semitic to oppose it. What they will not tell you is the downside: 11 coaches a day on Millbank; a million or so visitors tramping through the gardens every year; queuing through the children’s playground, which also would have to be reduced by one-third; armed guards who will have to check every visitor to the gardens, whether or not they are going to the memorial; the litter; the crowds; and the insensitivity of having a coke and crisps café and playground on top of a memorial to the starving and the dead.

col 1164 More importantly, the planners have had to abandon the opportunity to fulfil the important recommendation of the Holocaust Commission set up by the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton, which started all this off in 2015. It recommended that there be a large Holocaust education campus with a lecture hall, room for 500 to meet at ceremonies, offices for educators, a professor and an endowment. All those recommendations have gone because there is no space for this in the gardens, and the funds will all be used up in excavation.

We may need a large learning centre and we definitely need a new Jewish museum to replace the one that has closed for lack of funds, but first we need to ask what this project would add to the six Holocaust memorials and 21 learning centres we have already, all of which outclass what is proposed now. ...

The location of a new learning centre is not important so long as it is accessible. Looking around the more than 300 Holocaust memorials in the world, it makes no difference whether they are near parliaments or not. All we know is that the more they go up and the more Holocaust remembrance ceremonies are packed out, the more anti-Semitism is growing. The irony of the Westminster location is that this is the very area where hate-filled

marches have taken place for weeks, the police being unable or unwilling to stop them; where politicians have been unable to protect Jewish students from abuse and do not shy away from undermining protection of the land where the Holocaust survivors took refuge. Westminster: where misinformation in the media spreads hate uncontrolled. A new learning centre here would be a model of complacency; an excuse for those who call themselves non-racists to pose by it; a defence against excessive anti-Israelism. ...

col 1165 Finally, there is security. Threats should not stop such a building, of course, but one has to be prepared. It will be a prime target, from land and from the river. Vandalism and even risk to life and limb will necessitate the strictest patrols. That means armed guards and searches in this little park, affecting every stroller. ...

The Earl of Effingham (Conservative): ... The chair of the Jewish Leadership Council was tasked back in 2013 with assembling a commission, representing our whole society, to research and investigate such a memorial, its feedback several years later being that there should be a striking and prominent new national memorial co-located with a world-class learning centre. During the Victoria Tower Gardens planning consent legal action of 2022, all parties involved in the action supported the principle of a compelling memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, with a separate report evidencing widespread dissatisfaction with the existing national Holocaust monument and available educational resources. The Board of Deputies of British Jews has openly said that it supports the proposed memorial and learning centre.

This Holocaust memorial centre will stand as a testament to the horror of the Holocaust, and the learning centre will educate future generations, so that it may never happen again. It is clear that we must proceed with haste. The memorial that everyone agrees should be created has been 11 years in the offing, and the need for progress on building the memorial and learning centre has never been more urgent. ...

col 1166 We appreciate that noble Lords' concerns lie around the proposed location of the memorial, but we also hear the words of the Chief Rabbi in the UK, who has described the choice of venue as "inspirational", saying that it "is a most wonderful location because it is in a prime place of ... prominence ... at the heart of our democracy".

The most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury suggested: "The proposal for a Holocaust Memorial with a Learning Centre by the Houses of Parliament and across the river from Lambeth Palace provides a symbolic opportunity to present the full story to new generations" ...

That being said, a number of key issues remain and we seek clarification from the Minister. The park is a wonderful open space right next to the Palace of Westminster. ... What guarantees can the Government give the House that the current enjoyment of the park will continue in the same way post construction?

The architects' plans state that there will be "a subtle grass landform with only the tips of the Memorial's fins bristling in the distance", with government estimates of an 8% occupation of the gardens and a 15% reduction in lawn areas. However, other research suggests that it will be more like 21% of the gardens and 31% of the children's play area. Can the Minister please confirm exactly what the loss of space is, and why the Government's calculations are different from others on what should be clear-cut maths? ... Underground, in the learning centre itself, how will the Government ensure that this is actually a world-class learning centre? Who will decide the content within? ...

col 1167 Finally, what assessment have the Government made of the cost to both build the centre and maintain it? ... Assuming that the Bill passes, how soon will the Government commit to kicking off the relevant work to deliver on the memorial and learning centre while at the same time providing value, given that delays will only increase expenditure? ...

The Lord Bishop of St Albans: ... I personally know of nobody who opposes the Bill because they are against the concept of having a prominent Holocaust memorial in this nation's capital. ...

I agree with much of what the Minister said in his assessment of remembering the horrors

of what happened and the need to do everything we can to make sure that a holocaust can never happen again ... especially now, given the ongoing scourge of anti-Semitism. It has been deeply saddening and distressing to read of the increase in anti-Semitic incidents this year, and of some of the hate-filled violence in riots across the country this summer. ... Having said that, I do not support the proposed site of the memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens and the removal of the protections conferred by the 1900 Act ...

col 1168 I underline what the noble Earl, Lord Effingham, said about the need for His Majesty's Government to be absolutely clear about how much of this space will be taken up by the new memorial. ...

There are security issues and increased costs, as well as the abandonment of many of the original recommendations for an educational centre, which came from the Prime Minister's Holocaust Commission in 2015, simply due to space constraints. I note that 18 petitions have been submitted to the Lords Select Committee for the Bill ...

Lord Mann (Labour): ... There is only one issue that has not been raised ... I trust that the department has had appropriate discussions with the House authorities about any implications of the refurbishment of the Palace of Westminster ...

... both location and design are important. However, fundamental to tackling discrimination and anti-Semitism in this country is the effectiveness of the content within the centre.

col 1169 I work very closely with the world-leading centre at UCL ... The observation made to me repeatedly by people at the centre is that, in their work with teachers on Holocaust education, they have to answer questions repeatedly about contemporary anti-Semitism and there is a void there. At the heart of the original report was the question of whether the Holocaust education that we have at the moment is working. That question has not been answered, because the external evaluation has not been done. UCL has a lot of research, but it is qualitative not quantitative. ... What is happening in schools and in the country with people's understanding of history and of prejudice to all communities, including the Jewish community? The situation ... has worsened. Therefore, the educational content, and how good it is, is critical to the whole point. ...

Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton (Conservative): ... I announced the Holocaust Commission back in September 2013. It was multifaith, with teams of experts, and one of the biggest ever gatherings of Holocaust survivors. It was also, of course, thoroughly cross-party ... It did not say that the existing memorials are sufficient. It did not say that the current state of Holocaust education was good enough. It did not say that we could put this thing somewhere else in London. It said that there is real power in bringing together the monument and the education, and having it at the heart of our democracy. ...

col 1170 The Holocaust was not just one of the defining moments of the 20th century, when 6 million people lost their lives. It was not just an event. It should be a permanent reminder of where prejudice and hatred lead us, and what it can end in. This is not just some monument to something that happened; it is a permanent reminder. That is why it is so important that it is co-located with our Parliament. ...

I will never forget going to Auschwitz, as Prime Minister, and standing on those railway tracks and looking at the terrible, huge, mechanical industry of murder that was constructed there. It is only when you see it yourself that you fully understand the scale and intent of the slaughter. It is not just that which strikes you: it is only when you go into those little rooms and see the way that every suitcase was stored, the hair that was kept, the teeth, the room with the children's toys and clothes, that you realise the full horror of what was done there and why we need to remember it today. ...

Ben Helfgott has already been mentioned. I will never forget meeting this extraordinary man, who had been in two death camps, who had been on a death march, and who made it miraculously to Britain, with which he had almost no connection. I have never met a prouder British citizen, so proud to represent his country at the Commonwealth Games and the Olympics. He spent a lifetime educating people about the Holocaust. I will never forget Gena Turgel, who was in two camps, ending up in Belsen; she was liberated and

ended up marrying her liberator, a wonderful British soldier. Hers was a lifetime given to explaining what happened during the Holocaust. ...

... I know that many support the concept but not the location. I am afraid that I think that it is not just a good idea in spite of the location but a good idea in part because of the location. We have a problem with anti-Semitism in this country, and it is growing. What better way to deal with this than to have a bold, unapologetic national statement? This is not a Jewish statement or a community statement; it is a national statement about how much we care about this and how we are prepared to put that beyond doubt. ...

col 1171 There are those who raise issues of security, and of course there will be issues of security—there are issues of security with this Parliament. However, the very fact that the issue of security is so great demonstrates why we need to do it so badly, and why locating it somewhere else because of security would be a surrender, really, to those who do not want to commemorate the Holocaust and do not want to learn from it. ...

I end—with apologies to our Bishops —with a simple catechism. Do we have a problem with anti-Semitism and ignorance in our country? Yes, we do: 25% of young people do not think the Holocaust happened. Is it getting worse? Yes, it is. We know it is getting worse; we have seen that tragically in recent years. Do we need to educate people better about the Holocaust and hatred and where it leads? Does that go together with a memorial? Should we be bold and build it here in Westminster? My answer to all those questions is an unreserved yes. Build it, build it here, build it now, and be proud of it.

Lord Carlile of Berriew (Crossbench): ... Particularly as somebody with my background, I admire the motivation and ambition which [Lord Cameron] expressed when he announced the commission. The difference between us is about location. It may be partly because when I went to Auschwitz—as I have once, and frankly I do not have the courage to go there again—I went into the very room where my father’s first wife, my sister’s mother, was murdered after three years as a slave worker in that camp. After that visit, I came back thinking, “How really can we honour the people who died like Tosia?” ...

My belief is that we can honour those people not by choosing a symbolic location about which not everybody agrees, but only by choosing a place which in itself declares honour for those people, where children and adults can go and learn about what happened to those people, where tyranny is laid out for what it is— tyrannical—where there is the academic potential for people to teach and learn in large numbers about what happened during the Holocaust, and where they are going to be secure.

... the location in my view is far too small. It is far too mechanical, and I use the word literally. The architecture is mechanical; that is why it is so repetitious ... it also creates a security issue, not only for the centre itself but for this Parliament. ...

col 1172 Everybody who goes near that centre or enters the garden would see police officers holding machine guns, as we have outside Peers’ Entrance. There would have to be detailed searches. It would take hours to get in and out of the premises. It would be open only by appointment to people who had booked on the internet the previous day; it would not be open to the general public simply to walk around the grounds and see memorials to the Holocaust which had been erected there. ...

The noble Baroness, Lady Golding, is sitting next to me. In the other place, she and I played a significant part in the War Crimes Act. It was very hard opposed at one stage, and we believe that we contributed to something very important in memory of those who died in the Holocaust. There have not been many cases, but its existence is important, and there has been at least one very major case. Equally, what I want for my deceased relatives and my still-living sister is an establishment which is not just symbolic but able to teach everything one can learn about what happened at that terrible time.

col 1173 **The Lord Bishop of Southwark:** ... My concerns are around fulfilling the commission’s original recommendations and the contemporary challenge of Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism, which are growing threats ... It has been clear from the outset that the winning design for the underground learning centre is smaller than that which was

recommended. It will not be a centre for study ... We are told that this is obviated by digitalisation and the strictly optional nature of physical study and in-person meetings that current technology affords us. My own experience ... suggests to me that the learning centre will lose something vital in this regard by not having such space to study and to meet in person.

Such space is available in the now-vacant government and private sector buildings in Westminster, if it should be in Westminster; or adjacent to the site of the Imperial War Museum, which has been considered; or in one of the many remnants of Jewish heritage in the East End of London, where I served throughout the 1990s, which have not yet been considered. A suitable building may then have a striking image, sculpture or other artwork affixed ...

It is important that children—and not just children—should be exposed to the reality of the Holocaust, the reasons for it and the part Britain played at various times in receiving, as well as inhibiting, Jews leaving Germany for Britain and Mandatory Palestine. Indeed, whatever happens to this project, there is an urgent need to ring-fence and deploy funds in a vigorous online campaign against Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism. Both are all too prevalent and are given the means to proliferate via social media—another growing threat—at the agency of very malign influences. There is a failure to match such foul endeavours on the scale that they now exist. Combating this requires greater resources than we currently deploy.

It would be my hope, then, that a striking and prominent Holocaust memorial and a properly funded and well-sited learning centre might be championed equally, thus provisioning a resource against misinformation. But I am yet to be persuaded that the proposals for Victoria Gardens, as opposed to elsewhere, best achieve that. ...

col 1174 **Lord Strathclyde (Conservative):** ... something has gone badly wrong in terms of gaining public support for the memorial and learning centre. The fact that it was initially announced 10 or 11 years ago, and it has taken this long to get to the point where legislation is introduced and required, is proof of that. ...

If passed at Second Reading, the Bill will go to a Private Bill Committee. I hope that it will look carefully at the case for a different location in central London for the memorial and the learning centre to be sited. ... I offer two alternatives. First, the corner of Horse Guards Road and the Mall: a position of national significance regularly visited by heads of state, including our own monarch—I have to say, they never go past Victoria Tower Gardens.

Secondly, I suggest the large space between Green Park underground station and the Bomber Command memorial at Hyde Park Corner. ...

It has been suggested today, and I have read elsewhere, that the memorial and learning centre should not be located in the same place. My noble friend Lord Cameron made a powerful argument against that. However, when the committee reports back, it should give us a view on that. ... if there is only a memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens, it should be consistent in size with the other memorials in the garden ... The learning centre is a substantial building and I understand that other organisations, including the Jewish Museum, have suggested suitable locations or even offered their own space. ...

Lord Lee of Trafford (Liberal Democrat): ... It is very sad that the siting of this memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens should prove so controversial when we are dealing with arguably the greatest ever crime against humanity. But Governments past and present should be ashamed that they are driving this through against the views of residents, Westminster City Council, the Royal Parks, Historic England and UNESCO—and the Jewish community is split on this issue.

There is no direct link between our Parliament and the ghastly Holocaust. There is no architectural link between what is proposed and the Palace of Westminster. ...

col 1175 A new site, or the Imperial War Museum, which already has well-regarded Holocaust galleries, would surely be much more appropriate. ...

Lord Russell of Liverpool (Crossbench): ... My Lords, I have three reasons for speaking at Second Reading today. The first is that one of my great grandfathers, in December 1938, after Kristallnacht, put his name to something called the “Lord Baldwin Fund for Refugees”. In the next eight months it managed to raise the modern-day equivalent of nearly £43 million, which was used directly to bring Kindertransport children to this country. Secondly, the previous holder of the rather long name that I bear, my grandfather, was the Deputy Judge Advocate-General and responsible for the management of all war crimes trials in British-occupied Germany between 1946 and 1951. He and his team had to gather the evidence of the horrors which the Holocaust memorial and any educational centre will try to tell the world about. ...

Thirdly, I am a petitioner, among others, on this Bill. In principle, how can one be against the idea of a national Holocaust memorial? But what a muddle we have got ourselves into ... There is clearly quite a high level of discomfort about this Bill. On the basis of past experience, things are likely to get worse before they get better. At the moment, with the rise in anti-Semitism, the last thing that we should inadvertently do is agree to an already flawed process which runs the risk of continuing as it has done to date. ...

col 1176 This is not just a sculpture, a symbol; it is above all a tool and a way of trying to educate all of us, but particularly the generations after us, to try to inoculate us against the toxicity of anti-Semitism, which is all around us. We cannot be inoculated unless we really understand what that disease is. Once we understand it, we have a chance of being inoculated successfully. ...

Lord Howard of Rising (Conservative): My Lords, I cannot think of any possible or rational reason for objecting to a memorial to something quite so awful as the Holocaust, but I think there are strong reasons for objecting to the proposed monument being located in Victoria Gardens. ...

The shocking act of bulldozing through the protections that surround Victoria Gardens so that it can no longer be used for peaceful enjoyment by the generations to come is distasteful. ...

What will happen when the hordes of visitors are trying to gain access to the memorial and cannot walk through Parliament Square? There are projected to be 11 busloads a day. Where will the buses drop off, and where will they park while they are waiting? When there are demonstrations, spare parking is taken up by police reserves.

col 1177 Some of the main objectors to the memorial are members of the Jewish community. Their objections are not to a Holocaust memorial but to a location where it would cause offence, inconvenience, controversy and general unhappiness. The proposed memorial could also quite possibly act as a beacon to anti-Semitism. I urge the Government to find a more appropriate location for this very worthwhile project and not put it in a place which creates antagonism and thereby fuels the fires of anti-Semitism.

Baroness Noakes (Conservative): ... there is no disagreement about the value of a Holocaust memorial and an associated learning centre, but there are real issues about the chosen solution. ...

The choice of Victoria Tower Gardens remains a mystery. It appeared as if from nowhere, in early 2016, and was not one of the sites originally identified by the Holocaust Commission. It has never been the subject of consultation. It was obvious from the outset that Victoria Tower Gardens is far from ideal as a site ...

Back in 2016, we had not seen the scale of the demonstrations that have blighted central London in the wake of Israel's response to the Hamas terrorist attack. A memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens will be a magnet for malign intent towards Jewish people and the State of Israel. Security is a big issue, not only for the memorial but for the additional risks that it will bring to the Palace of Westminster ...

col 1178 The costs of the project itself are far from certain. The Government originally committed £50 million, but the latest estimate, including a contingency, is nearer to £200

million. ... It sounds insensitive to put a price on something as important as remembering the appalling legacy of Nazi Germany, but times are hard. ... No one knows who will run the memorial and its learning centre or how that will be funded. ...

Baroness Altmann (Non-affiliated) ... My Lords, I declare an interest in that I am the child of Holocaust survivors and I have grown up with stories of how the Holocaust originated. ...

Those stories are that the Holocaust was not initially about war. It was about the rise of anti-Semitism across a country that was considered a democracy and that was perpetrating anti-Semitic murders well before the Second World War. I grew up with the gratitude of a family that was saved by this country, at least in tiny part, believing my whole life that it could not happen again, but I fear that the anti-Semitism that led to the Holocaust, which I never believed I would see in this country, is rising again right now in Britain and elsewhere. ...

col 1179 Of course I respect and understand the concerns that have been expressed about the security of the site, but that would apply wherever it was placed. ...

Lord Blencathra (Conservative): My Lords, I want to make it abundantly clear that I favour an appropriate and uniquely British monument to the Holocaust in the heart of Westminster, and a properly sized learning centre somewhere nearby with the capability of telling the whole story of the Holocaust and of Jews in Britain and the ability to operate online to tackle the resurgence of Jewish hatred we have seen in the last few months. Never before has education about the eradication of 6 million Jews been more essential as we see frightening calls for a new Holocaust.

However, I am afraid this is an appalling little Bill. ...

This memorial fails every recommendation of the Holocaust Commission and instead foists on us a grossly inadequate edifice that does no justice to the past Holocaust nor the threats of a new one ...

The commission wanted something uniquely British. Instead, we get the same inexplicably obscure but uniquely ugly design that Canada rejected. ... Key to the thinking should be educating people on the evil of National Socialism as practised by Hitler and the Nazi regime.

col 1180 When the commission reported way back in 2015, the conventional view was that all education and learning had to be in a physical building. All that has now changed following Covid. The only point of a physical museum is if there are physical objects to display and the learning cannot be imparted in any other way but by a physical presence. Look at the brilliant display at the Imperial War Museum ... Of course it has the usual photos and videos we have all seen, but it has some physical artefacts: the striped suits, some shoes, jewellery, and a good mock-up of the railway wagons used to transport Jews to the extermination camps. But the bunker here will just have copies of the same posters and videos we have all seen before, because all physical artefacts have already been scooped up by physical museums.

DLUHC, as it then was, boasted to the House of Commons Select Committee that the exhibition would be “a powerful audio-visual exhibition that will set out the events of the Holocaust from British perspectives, historically, politically and culturally”.

But why would children and young people—or, indeed, anyone—want to visit a building to see things they can get better on their mobile phones and iPads? How many busloads of children will come from Scotland and Wales, or even the English regions, to look at a video show with nothing new in it? ...

On 27 January 2019, the BBC published a poll showing that 8.5 million Brits—19% of our population—thought that fewer than 2 million Jews had been exterminated. Some 2.2 million people—5% of our population—believed there never was a Holocaust at all. There are frightening, deliberate lies being spread by social media, and that level of Holocaust denial is increasing rapidly. We need not an old-fashioned, analogue bunker in the ground

but a large, modern, high-tech, 24/7, digital educational operation, attached to the Imperial War Museum, which would be keen to house it, pumping out the true facts of the last Holocaust and rebutting the lies on social media about Jews in this country and abroad. I am proud of what Jews have delivered for this country over the past 500 years despite bias and discrimination. Now they are under attack like never before. The Holocaust is being denied, and this failed Adjaye design does nothing to educate millions of people on the horrors of it nor counteract the present threats of a new Holocaust. ...

col 1181 Lord Leigh of Hurley (Conservative): ... I have to be honest that, initially, I struggled to come to terms with any objection. As Sir Mick Davis said in his commission's report, "The Holocaust was also a catastrophe for human civilisation. The very scientific and industrial innovation which had propelled society forward was used on an extreme scale to take humanity into the deepest abyss of moral depravity".

It was so depraved and evil that it has taken some many decades to be able to address it and consider how to mark it.

As my noble friend Lord Cameron and the noble Lord, Lord Carlile, said, those of us who have been to a camp, read about the Holocaust or seen documentaries can never forget the images and the stories, often told first-hand, but not for much longer. Those who do not have a personal connection will from time to time be reminded by popular culture. Who will ever forget the sight of Dr Jacob Bronowski in "The Ascent of Man" standing in a pond where the ashes of 4 million people reside or how popular culture reminds us of the bravery of Oskar Schindler and Nicholas Winton or *The Escape Artist: The Man Who Broke Out of Auschwitz to Warn the World*, the story of Rudolf Vrba told by Jonathan Freedland, or even our own noble friend Lord Finkelstein's telling of his family's ordeals at the hands of Hitler? However, these will pass. The world will move on and perhaps fail to believe that a country that was at the very peak of the civilised world, the most sophisticated, mannered, wealthy, cultured country in existence at the time—Austria, as Stefan Zweig described it—could have produced Adolf Hitler? ... We are all of a mind to ensure that the creation of an evil capable of perpetrating the humiliation, depravation and, ultimately, attempted extermination of the Jewish people and others needs to be prevented from ever happening again.

I want to address some of the concerns raised. In all honesty, I find it very painful to have to have a public argument on this debate. I am more than happy to have a ding-dong and set-to with noble Lords about Brexit, the economy or taxation, but this is difficult. It upsets me to know that some Peers are against this proposal, particularly those whom I rate so very highly and respect more than I can say in public without embarrassing them and me, none more so than the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, whose description of her interest in her petition is so moving, starting with the words: "I am a direct descendent of Holocaust victims". Who am I to disagree with someone with that pedigree? ...

col 1182 I agree with her that this must not be just a memorial to British values. It must retain its focus on the 6 million exterminated and the attempt to eradicate one single group of people. We need to ensure that this memorial and learning centre explains that this really was an attempt at a genocide in the true sense of the word, not as currently bandied around in some parts of the Middle East at the moment—to do so is gut-wrenching.

Her concerns that the learning centre is too small when compared to the commission's recommendations are well made, but there can be other learning centres for greater study. This venue will make people, in particular children who come to visit us in Parliament, stop and stare, not just now, not just for decades, but in hundreds of years, and say "Wow! Why did they build that here? ...

We in the Jewish community, and others, have spent too long arguing over this proposal and, as we have done so, survivors such as Zigi Shipper, Sir Ben Helfgott and many others, so keen to see it built, sadly are no longer with us. We can ensure that the memorial and learning centre achieves the spirit of the objectives of the commission, we can address many of the concerns raised by the petitioners against it, but we should not allow the many

nimby and other objectors to overturn a project whose time has come.

Lord Lisvane (Crossbench): My Lords, the Holocaust was a stain upon humanity. It must not be allowed to fade from our memories as the survivors—now a dwindling number—die. ... Alas, so far as the site is concerned, this Bill is an unnecessarily contentious and spectacularly ill-judged attempt to realise that end. ...

col 1183 **Baroness Bottomley of Nettlestone (Conservative):** ... This congested, subterranean shoebox bears no comparison to the first Holocaust memorial I visited. I shall never forget the first time I visited Yad Vashem. I was on an official visit and was totally overcome with emotion as it was so powerful and evocative. I had immersed myself in every sort of reading and study about the Holocaust, but the experience of going to Yad Vashem, which has subsequently been renovated and further improved, was so powerful. I do not believe anybody can visit this proposed unattractive bunch of sticks ... and have anything other than a sense of wretchedness that we could not have done better. ...

col 1184 I do not really understand the parliamentary imperative. ...

I said in the King's Speech debate that I was so pleased that the King did not mention this at all and that the Prime Minister simply referred to a memorial and not a learning centre. This is a most unwise project. ...

I am also incredibly worried about the security. We have just had a very distinguished shadow Cabinet member, Jonathan Ashworth, lose a 22,000 Labour majority to a militant Gaza supporter with a majority of 1,000. We are living in more volatile times on these issues than ever before, and it is asking for trouble to put the Holocaust museum so close to Parliament. It is a folly; the security implications, the danger and the sinister effect are beyond belief. ...

col 1185 **Lord Gold (Conservative):** ... For many people of my generation, born after the war when so many had lived through it and served our country bravely, knowledge of the Nazi atrocities, the murder of 6 million Jews and so many others was known by the majority of us, subscribing to the statement "never again", but now it is different. Few survivors of the war are still living, let alone survivors of the murderous camps. ...

As an example of how little is known, I am shocked that in a 2023 survey over a third of people polled had no idea that Winston Churchill was our wartime Prime Minister. Indeed, in a US survey in 2020, 63% of those polled did not know that 6 million Jews perished in the Holocaust.

In 1994 the film director Steven Spielberg recognised the need to create a permanent record of what had happened, so he launched the Shoah Foundation to interview and record the testimonies of Holocaust survivors ... It gave me considerable comfort that knowledge of the Holocaust would be engrained in our minds and that of our children and grandchildren for ever, but I now have real fears that this may not be the case.

Advances in social media and the creation and dissemination of false news have enabled wicked people to deny the Holocaust and challenge the authenticity of the testimony that has been recorded. The creation of false images provides Holocaust deniers with an excuse to challenge the authenticity of the filmed testimony. As a result, in a 2023 poll a fifth of US citizens between the ages of 18 and 29 believed that the Holocaust was a myth. This confirms my fear that the frightening rise of anti-Semitism, especially since 7 October 2023, shows that the lessons from the Holocaust have been forgotten by many and how the recent history of the Jewish people has been totally ignored. ...

col 1186 It is right next to the mother of Parliaments for the whole world and at the very heart of our democracy, where Winston Churchill's famous speeches against Nazism were made during the war. The symbolism is enormous. This is a statement to our people and the world that we truly remember the Holocaust and recognise its significance. Millions of people from all over the world visit London every year, and many will come to see our Parliament. What a statement it will be to them if they see that we regard a Holocaust memorial and learning centre as so important that we locate it there. As to the logistical

issues and security problems, of course those are serious but we have shown before that we can cope. ...

Viscount Craigavon (Crossbench): ... Like others, I fully support a Holocaust memorial and any learning centre, but not this one and not here. I have visited the Imperial War Museum's impressive current presentation, whose relative space and context could be appreciated. How can anything like that be replicated by spending 45 minutes underground, that or less apparently being the estimated time of a Victoria Tower Gardens Holocaust visit? ...

col 1187 The noble Baroness, Lady Deech, has highlighted that after all this time we still do not know if we are being asked to focus on sharing all this with other holocausts, and maybe subsequent genocides. One might hope not. ...

col 1188 **Lord Griffiths of Burry Port (Labour):** ... We are dealing with a country that, at any odd moment, displays ugly anti-Semitism almost at will. How do we get into the genetic make-up of a whole culture in order to change that? ...

I remember sitting in a room in Hendon with a rabbi who had been a soldier in the Second World War. He was a chaplain, and he was with his unit as it liberated Belsen. The commanding officer said to him, "This one is yours, padre", as all those emaciated people behind those fences just posed—well, did they? Did they paint a picture for us? It is beyond that. I do not even know how to find words to express what comes into my being—not my head, my being, my everything—when you see the capability of humanity to impose, extract and shape that and hand it over to a padre in that sort of way. ...

col 1189 I also had the opportunity to visit the Kinloss synagogue in north London and other synagogues for mid-week meetings with pensioners and the like. ... It was through informal conversations with people ready to show me the numbers engraved on their arms that trust was generated, and those circumstances made me aware of what we somehow have to achieve through whatever it is we call education on these matters in a broader sense. ...

Lord Austin of Dudley (Non-affiliated): ... The most important reason for this memorial is to remember ... the 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered by the Nazis. Many visitors will mourn their own families, like my dad's mum and sisters, who were murdered in Treblinka in 1942 only because they were Jewish, but we must also remember the Holocaust because it matters to us in Britain, now and in the future, for ever. It shows how people can treat their neighbours, how communities can turn against those they consider different, how national leaders can exploit hatred, and how the machinery of the state can be used for terrible evil. This summer shows that there will never come a time when those lessons do not need to be learned.

This memorial will honour those murdered by the Nazis. It will stand for ever to teach why the Holocaust is history's greatest crime. For decades, this has been taught directly and personally by Holocaust survivors. But, as has been said today, the time when we can listen to them directly is drawing to an end. People have asked why this location. ... Victoria Tower Gardens is the right setting precisely because it will be a permanent reminder—to people next door in Parliament, to UK citizens and to visitors of all nationalities to Westminster and central London—of what can happen when politics is poisoned by racism and extremism. If you go to Berlin, you see a Holocaust memorial next door to the parliament, right at the centre of national life. In Paris, you would not even know that it exists.

col 1190 There are serious voices in the Jewish community who do not agree. I respect them, but there is no doubt that the vast majority of Holocaust survivors and refugees, their families, the overwhelming majority of the Jewish community, and its leadership support this project. ...

It is also claimed that the Government's approach to Holocaust commemoration and education is wrong because anti-Semitism is increasing in our country. I have seen

students, in places such as Dudley with no Jewish community at all, learn about the Holocaust, listen to survivors and dedicate their lives to fighting racism. The increase in anti-Semitism is actually an argument for the memorial and for increased spending on Holocaust education and commemoration.

Of all the objections I have heard this afternoon, the one I find least powerful is the claim that it will be a security threat or will attract anti-Semites or even terrorists. First, Westminster is already the most protected and safe place in the country. Secondly, and much more importantly, since when did we make decisions like this on the basis that extremists and racists might object? ...

col 1191 Lord Howell of Guildford (Conservative): My Lords, my concern is whether this project and the Bill fulfil the prime aim—the essential and vital aim—of keeping fresh the memory of the most satanic massacre in recorded history of one of the world's greatest and most brilliant peoples. Some say that Stalin killed many more, but there is no doubt in my mind that it was the systematic, organised and almost enthusiastic slaughter and murder—in the way that was particularly revolting in the gas chambers—that marks out the Holocaust as the worst of all and the most terrible thing that could happen and could be done by man to man and woman to woman. ...

What is wrong with it being in Victoria Tower Gardens, a small park? The answer is that it will be huge, on a Baalbek pillar scale. ... It dominates; the photos present an enormous feature, quite out of keeping with all the features around and with the glorious Palace in which we work at present ...

col 1192 If anyone wants to see where we should be going on this line, they should go to Berlin, to the heart of where the horror was authorised. Go to the memorial—those beautiful granite blocks. It is not too tiring but just right. When the rain falls, they are the tears of those who were slaughtered and of those left behind. It is right next door to the Führerbunker, where the arch-murderer of all lived and, thankfully, died. ...

The 1900 Act said that it had to be a park for ever, and this Act says that it is not going to be a park for ever; it is going to be dominated by a project and a structure which I do not believe does justice to the cause, honour or memory of the Jewish people ...

Viscount Eccles (Conservative): My Lords, I am sure we all agree that the Holocaust should be marked, remembered and studied ... But in thinking about where we are, I am very conscious that we have a new Government. I want to go back to the commission's excellent report and ask the Minister and his department to study carefully how we have got from that report's conclusions to today's position. ...

col 1193 Lord Howarth of Newport (Labour): ... My Lords, the planning committee of Westminster City Council had good reasons for rejecting the then Government's application to site a Holocaust memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens. Among its concerns were the damaging impact on the amenity and beauty of the park ... the implications for congestion and pollution of the additional coach traffic, and the security risks. However, in a dubious proceeding of ministerial legerdemain, the Secretary of State's application was called in, and approved ... That decision was then overthrown by the court. ...

What may have seemed to party leaders a decent and relatively uncontroversial idea in 2016 in the circumstances of 2024 needs complete reconsideration. What is now offered is a memorial too large for the site with a learning centre which is so far from being world-class that it is minimal. Some complain that the project has lost focus on the unique character of the Holocaust. Some contend that other genocides—Rwanda, Yugoslavia—have an equal claim on our moral concern. ... Some scholars argue that the focus on the Holocaust is a Eurocentric view, that the Holocaust does not have a unique status in the history of human depravity, and that in Britain we have been too slow to recognise our own historical guilt. ...

col 1194 ... to establish, at substantial public cost, a high-profile memorial to the Holocaust

in the purlieu of Parliament will be, in our present circumstances, recklessly provocative. Let me be very clear: I abhor anti-Semitism; I consider the Holocaust to be one of the most terrible events in human history; it should never be forgotten; I think people should be educated about it; but this is not the right way to memorialise it or to educate people. ... In the 11 months since Hamas perpetrated the atrocities of 7 October, Israel has prosecuted a war of ferocious destruction in Gaza. In London and across the world, there is passionate feeling about the Israel-Palestine conflict. The police have had great difficulty in managing repeated demonstrations, mainly pro-Palestinian, in central London. The criticism of Israel is intense. Israel is accused by many of practising genocide. Anti-Semitism is rife on university campuses. Additionally, at our general election in July, we saw an upsurge in voting for a party trading in hostility to another racial and cultural minority, the Muslims. Since then, we have experienced extreme anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim violence on the streets of Britain, compounding a long-simmering hatred of asylum seekers. Social media manipulators of the mob are ingenious and ruthless. Issues of race are more volatile and dangerous in our national life than they have been for a long time. In this perilously fraught state of affairs, how can it be sensible to legislate to promote, in a most prominent civic location, a monument which is certain to be a focus for emotion and action on the part of people who are anti-Jew and anti-Israel? ...

Lord Goodman of Wycombe (Conservative): ... First, does Britain need a new Holocaust memorial? Secondly, if it does, is this the right scheme? Thirdly, if it is the right scheme, is it in the right place? ...

col 1195 Does Britain need a new Holocaust memorial? As the Minister correctly said at the start, the present generation of survivors is passing away and I believe we need a new something. It might be a new memorial; it might be a new Jewish Museum; we might prefer to put resources into Holocaust education, which does not seem to be in a particularly good way; we might prefer to build on what we have already got in, say, the Imperial War Museum. ...

Secondly, do we need this particular scheme? ... A learning centre can focus either on the Holocaust in the context of 2,000 years of European anti-Semitism and the story of the Jewish people, with its joys and sorrows, not forgetting the others who also died in the Holocaust, or it can range more widely through racism to ... other genocides, such as the Rwandan one. I would have no objection, myself, to the Rwandan genocide being referenced in the learning centre, but here we run into a problem, which is that the idea of genocide is somewhat contested. ...

Finally, is it in the right place? ... a learning centre does not necessarily have to be in the shadow of the Palace of Westminster, though I understand that other noble Lords feel differently ...

col 1196 **Lord Turnbull (Crossbench):** My Lords, I consider that this Bill is an abuse of power. When the Government take something away from one group of people, who have for 120 years had access to this park, and give it to another group without compensation, we call that confiscation. We could even call it theft. The Bill started with laudable intentions. Given the enormity of the crimes committed by the Third Reich, and its goal to exterminate the Jews in Europe, the Prime Minister was justified in setting up a commission in 2014 to investigate whether a new memorial and learning centre should be established in Britain. ...

At that stage, the proposal enjoyed a good deal of support, though not universal support, and there were divisions in the Jewish community. So far, so good, but then it went off the rails. ...

There were criticisms of the design—that it was too showy. ... There were also criticisms that the design was not respectful enough to the site and the memorials already there, that there was too much construction and not enough outreach and education, and that it was a reworking of a failed bid in another architectural competition ...

Most damaging was the belated discovery—after judicial process—of something that should have been found out right at the start: that it was not in the Prime Minister's gift to allocate this site. ...

They are effectively saying, "We don't have the power to give you this site, but we will simply introduce a Bill to make that possible". ...

col 1197 As a final observation, I say that while attention is rightly focused on the Holocaust, we should not allow this to exclude the memory of the Third Reich's other great goal: the pursuit of Lebensraum. The number of Slavs and Russians murdered in the east of Europe in that cause also ran into millions and should also not be forgotten.

Lord Sandhurst (Conservative): My Lords, of course there should be a Holocaust memorial in London; it is absolutely right that in London we mark properly the terrible events of the Holocaust. An appropriate memorial will be a much-needed bulwark against anti-Semitism—but this is not it. The site is inappropriate. The Westminster City Council planning authority was right: the proposed memorial is too large for this site, and the proposed education centre is too small and will not do what is required.

... we already commemorate and research the Holocaust most impressively at the Imperial War Museum just down the road. ...

We have other education centres in this country: Beth Shalom in Nottinghamshire, the Huddersfield centre and the Wiener Holocaust Library in London. It is quite plain that the education centre proposed now is not the education centre of quality which the commission advocated. ...

I will move on to the memorial itself. ...

This one, notwithstanding its semi-sunken state, will dominate this confined site and detract from the other memorials already there. ...

col 1198 Finally, security on this site so close to Parliament must be a serious issue. To ground refusal in part on the basis of security risk is not to give in to the mob but to be grown up and rational. ...

Lord Verdirame (Non-affiliated): ... Holocaust education in this era faces two key challenges. The first, as others have remarked, is that we are going through a period of rising anti-Semitism. This is a fact that should give us all pause to reflect on how effective our education about the Holocaust and anti-Semitism has been. How can anti-Semitism still be on the rise, and how do we explain the fact that it is rising among people who consider themselves progressive, and who may often be genuinely progressive in a lot of ways? If we do not use this occasion to ask ourselves these difficult and uncomfortable questions, we risk building a monument to our failure.

While Cynics may have been wrong to think that virtue cannot be taught, it is true that some virtues are more difficult to teach than others, and freedom from anti-Semitism is one of them. As the Oxford physicist David Deutsch suggested, the reason may be that we too often tend to think of anti-Semitism as another type of racist hatred or xenophobia. Anti-Semitism may cause both those things, but it is fundamentally different. Professor Deutsch argues: "It is a more dangerous moral pathology, centred on the need to preserve the legitimacy of hurting Jews for being Jews".

This moral pathology has emerged over centuries and not just in the Christian West, by the way. The reason why so many of our Jewish friends and colleagues consider certain criticisms of Israel as anti-Semitic is not because they think that it is anti-Semitic to criticise Israeli policies, but because some of those criticisms are so disproportionate, absurd and obsessive that what drives them is precisely the irrational impulse to want to find some justification for violence against Jews. Unless people are made aware of this distinctive and uniquely irrational mode of thinking and acting that is the essence of anti-Semitism, many people, including some of the highly educated, will continue to fall victim to it. ...

col 1199 How will the learning centre teach a new generation about the genocide of European Jewry at a time when the word "genocide" is losing its meaning and being

instrumentalised even in the most august international fora? In fact, it is perversely and cruelly being used to find excuses for—guess what?—violence against Jews. ...

Lord Mancroft (Conservative): ... I believe it is right that we do all we can to make sure that, first, those who suffered in the Holocaust, perhaps the wickedest crime of all time, are remembered through a fitting national memorial, but also that their memory and what happened to them are never forgotten. I therefore share the view that our national memorial should incorporate a comprehensive learning centre. I say that at a time when anti-Semitism has grown among us, in a way that I never thought would happen again in my lifetime—how wrong I was. For that reason, I do not support the proposal to divide the memorial from the proposed learning centre. ...

col 1200 I strolled through the gardens in the sunshine yesterday ... I found it almost impossible to believe that anyone will be able to see what Adjaye Associates have described: “Visitors approaching the Memorial will see a subtle grass landform with only the tips of the Memorial’s fins bristling in the distance”.

I think it unlikely that they will see anything except a confusing muddle between the Buxton memorial and the trees. I simply do not see how it is possible to produce a structure of the quality that this project demands in such a constricted site. ...

In her 2022 ruling, Mrs Justice Thornton said that all those involved in the action “support the principle of a compelling memorial to the victims of the Holocaust”.

I go further than that. As the heir to probably the oldest Jewish community in Britain—Sephardic Jews from Spain, who made their home in the parish of Mancroft in Norwich in 1180 and remained there for more than 800 years, staying hidden throughout the expulsion—I am one of the few people of Jewish heritage who has, as far as I know, no relatives who were victims of the Holocaust. I am not even a practising Jew, as my father was, as I was baptised into the Anglican Church. When I visited Yad Vashem, I found it beautiful, fascinating, horrifying, informative and incredibly moving, and I shall never forget the experience. If we here in Britain were to create a national memorial only partially as impressive, we shall have done a very good job. But I fear that an ugly projection crammed into the far end of Victoria Tower Gardens, with a pokey underground visitor attraction posing as a centre of education, surrounded by traffic, will be simply another over-budget, government-sponsored infrastructure failure that will please no one and serve only to ruin that lovely garden. ...

col 1201 **Lord Kerr of Kinlochard (Crossbench):** ... The case is overwhelming, lest we forget—but why Victoria Tower Gardens? ...

I can see that Victoria Tower Gardens would be quite a good place to have another statue, ideally of the same quality as the Burghers of Calais, and I think I understand the concept of the design, with its—no doubt deliberately—ugly spines and its ramp, underground bunker and gates of Hades. But where I part company completely with the plan is that there is absolutely no way you can site there an education centre of the kind that we need ...

Why do we need it? We need it because it was a horrific event and one in which we were involved. On the wrong side, the Germans rightly commemorate the horror of what they did and teach it in schools; we need to teach the horror of what we failed to do. ...

Our Government’s response to the Nuremberg laws and to Kristallnacht was not to protest, offer sanctuary and amend the Aliens Act. On the contrary, our Government hung back, and went on hanging back ...

Kindertransport was an admirable initiative, but not one backed by government, who insisted that hosts had to guarantee full financial sponsorship. Only in 1946, with the war over, was UK citizenship on offer to the tragic orphans of Kindertransport. In 1938, the *Daily Mail* shouted: “The way stateless Jews and Germans are pouring in through every port in this country is becoming an outrage”. We need to learn about that, and we need to learn from that. ...

col 1202 **Baroness Fookes (Conservative):** ... I have no quarrel whatever with the concept of a learning centre or any kind of memorial. However, I am concerned about the use of this site, particularly because it was dedicated—this is embodied in the law of 1900—as a public garden ...

col 1203 **Lord Black of Brentwood (Conservative):** ... As the Bill centres on the Holocaust—the most appalling series of events in mankind’s long and brutal history—it touches on so many issues of massive importance to our history, our society and to our humanity itself. The building of a memorial to those who perished and those who survived—and an education centre to stand as a warning to those who would seek refuge in the ideology of the far right in future—is something we should all unite around. This Bill, regrettably, simply sows division. ...

As regards the proposed location of the memorial, a botched decision-making process and a lack of consultation got us here. There will be the terrible consequences for the environment, the real security threat not just for Parliament but for the media who work around here, the lack of space for a proper education centre, the dreadful design without meaning or feeling and the funding black hole ...

The right answer is for a memorial and education centre to be housed just a stone’s throw from Parliament at the Imperial War Museum, which has held the national collection for the Holocaust for a quarter of a century. ... The IWM is already the place to which people from across the UK and internationally who want to remember the Holocaust, and those who want to learn from the atrocity, gravitate.

col 1204 The IWM has held the national collection of the Holocaust since 2000, and in November 2021 opened exceptional new Holocaust galleries which are breathtaking in their scope, power and impact. Developed using the most up-to-date research and evaluation, including archive material available only since the end of the Cold War, the horror of the Holocaust is told through individual stories based on over 2,000 photos, books, letters and personal objects—real objects, which would not be available here. It is a stunning experience that makes history come alive. ... The IWM is already the central location to which people, young and old, instinctively go for remembrance and learning. Why on earth would we want to build another memorial and learning centre, which would inevitably be inferior to that offered by the IWM ...

col 1205 **Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-affiliated):** ... Of course we can all support learning, but just repeating the word “learning” does not guarantee learning. Education depends on the content of what is being taught. If this learning centre relativises the Holocaust, you can count me out. But it is difficult to have a serious discussion when we do not know what it is that we are going to be learning. We can all agree on the importance, especially now, of putting the fight against anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial at the heart of our democracy, but to see this as a geographical question rather than a moral one—to think that by placing the learning centre and memorial literally next door to Parliament will solve a problem—seems superficial to say the least, and lacks imagination. ...

This is little more than a grandiose visitor centre, with limited intellectual depth. How do I know that? Because each visit is expected to last only 45 minutes. What an insult. This is a TikTok version of the Holocaust learning experience.

We then emerge from this underground, fully digital exhibit and face the magnificent site of the non-digital Palace of Westminster. I suppose this is where I worry about the motivations around the location. I worry that we are using the Parliamentary Estate as a prop for a narrative; the creation of an optical link between British democracy and “never again”. I find it somewhat unsettling that we would force visitors’ gaze away from the victims of Nazi extermination and shift it to our own Parliament, as though it was a bulwark against anti-Semitism and genocide. ...

If this project wants the public to gaze up at the Palace and celebrate the British Parliament as a saviour of the Jews in the Second World War, I find that problematic. I am sure that

we do not want to be accused of spreading historic misinformation by forgetting to mention the many obstacles that Parliament put in the way of Jews fleeing fascist Germany, or the well-documented virulent and widespread anti-Semitism in the most senior ranks of the Civil Service at the time, and so on and so forth.

Let us imagine today visitors emerging from the learning centre and looking up from Victoria Tower Gardens to Parliament. What would they see, if we were being honest? *col 1206* This week, they would see a betrayal—British politicians attempting to disarm the Jewish nation after it suffered the worst act of anti-Semitic barbarism since the Holocaust. Turn the gaze the other way: I worry that politicians will look out to Victoria Park Gardens at this new memorial and conclude, complacently, “We built that. It proves that we’re fighting anti-Semitism and, what’s more, we’re now stamping down on far-right bigotry”. So dazzled by its own creation, Parliament will turn a blind eye to the tens of thousands of progressives carrying placards featuring swastikas defiling symbols of Israel, or turn a deaf ear to the ugly pro-Jihadist, anti-Semitic chants in the Westminster vicinity. There is a lot more to fighting anti-Semitism than props. ...

Lord Robathan (Conservative): ... you cannot appreciate Auschwitz unless you have been there and seen the mechanics of the railways and so on. I was taken some 15 years ago by the Holocaust Educational Trust to Auschwitz. It was a horrifying and very important experience. I would like to thank the trust and, indeed, the excellent Karen Pollock, who organised the visit. I defy anybody to go there and leave with dry eyes. It is the same at Yad Vashem, which I have visited three or four times and other people have referred to. ... I went to the Holocaust Gallery [at the Imperial War Museum] in the summer, which was really brilliant and, again, very moving. But this site and this learning centre, which I have heard referred to as a squashed shoebox, is frankly an absurd idea. Anti-Semitism, we hear, and I believe it to be the case, is on the rise—and in the 2020s. It makes me want to weep. We have had Holocaust education for many years ... We do not know quite why it is not working, but it seems to me that it is not. ...

At the same time as the Government oppose anti-Semitism—and I am delighted to hear that they do—at a different angle, they are banning some arms sales to Israel. I think Israel is facing an existential threat. The Government are also restoring supplies and aid to UNRWA in Gaza. It is a terrible situation in Gaza, but can we monitor that aid as we give it to UNRWA? Of course we cannot. The Chief Rabbi has been quoted in support of the project today. Well, he said yesterday, I think, that the decision to limit arms sales “beggars belief”. If you are going to quote the Chief Rabbi, you have to him onside, and he is not very much onside with this. I do not accuse the Government of being anti-Semitic, but I do accuse them of bending toward some of the more extreme opinions which are, frankly, anti-Semitic.

col 1207 This learning centre is not about the Holocaust. The Minister referred to “the Holocaust”, but this project, this learning centre, will be about not just Nazi atrocities but, as I understand it—perhaps the Minister can clear this up—any genocide, any massacres and hate. I think that undermines the whole issue, the whole point of the place. It will lose the powerful impact—and it is really powerful—of both Auschwitz and Yad Vashem. ...

col 1208 **Lord Herbert of South Downs (Conservative):** ... I more than understand the need never to forget the evil of the Holocaust. Like many noble Lords, I have visited Holocaust memorials in other countries and learned. Like many noble Lords, I have been to Dachau concentration camp and was haunted. But all of this is beside the point. Surely, we have seen that righteous anger at the most terrible abuses of human rights is not enough to justify any response, including the assumption of arbitrary powers and the sweeping aside of the very rules on which freedom relies. ...

Baroness O’Loan (Crossbench): My Lords, we agree that we should never forget the mass murder and terror of the Holocaust and that we must ensure through all possible processes—whether in Holocaust centres, through school curriculums, through university

research and teaching—that the reality of the Holocaust is made known to present generations. Almost 80 years on from the end of the Second World War, there are multiple very serious conflicts across the globe and we need to shine a very clear light on the scale, extent and the horror of what happened over those years. We must ensure that the tragedy—and that seems too small a word, having visited Auschwitz—of the Holocaust is neither denied nor forgotten. ...

In the Gracious Speech last July, His Majesty said we must do everything we can to ensure that the Holocaust is never forgotten and to fight anti-Semitism and all forms of hatred and prejudice in our society. He was right, but there are multiple problems with the proposed project. ...

There are six Holocaust memorials and some 21 Holocaust centres in the UK. The proposed centre will not focus exclusively on the Second World War Holocaust, in which 6 million Jews and many others—homosexuals, members of the Travelling and Gypsy communities, the learning disabled and Catholics—were exterminated and subjected to indescribable torture, to medical experimentation and other atrocities. It will have a much wider scope and, in so doing, there is a very significant risk that the understanding of the Holocaust which we seek to promote will be lost in these brief 45-minute tours, by the limited number of people who are able to afford even to travel to London to visit it for such a limited time, of the very limited centre that will deal with multiple atrocities. ...

col/ 1209 This centre would become a focus for those who seek to remove the Jewish people from Israel and who protest about the rights of Palestinians. Such protests could result in extensive damage to the centre and gardens and the requirement for an additional focus of police resources in an area where it is challenging to provide an effective policing service currently. ...

On a related matter, there is a plaque that was given to Parliament in appreciation for the 10,000 Jewish children whose lives were saved in the Kindertransport operation. That plaque is of enormous importance, as it commemorates the courage and trust shown by those parents, many of whom died in the Holocaust, who sent their children to this country. It is located in a shabby back corridor. While we determine the best way to remember what happened in the Holocaust, could we possibly clean and reposition this very important plaque to a place where it might be seen? ...

Baroness Harding of Winscombe (Conservative): ... I wholeheartedly support the Bill and the need for a national Holocaust memorial. It is shocking that, in 2024, we do not have one. I wholeheartedly support this memorial and learning centre in this location. ...

col/ 1210 Much has been said with great passion, and no doubt real integrity, about the Imperial War Museum and its outstanding work on the history of the Holocaust. ... This is not being done against the Imperial War Museum; it is being done with it, complementary to it.

Contrary to others' views, there is not near-unanimous objection to this memorial; it has been supported by every living Prime Minister and the leader of every faith. We have to be careful not to use hyperbole in this debate and recognise that we are at quite a different place from many other leaders in our society about this. Collocation is very important—collocating with the memorial and collocating with other symbols of the fight for freedom and against tyranny and intolerance.

I have gone on a learning journey in the last 10 years on Holocaust education. Although it is obviously important to empathise and try to understand what it might feel like to be a victim or the relatives of victims, the deeper and more important learning is to look into your soul and wonder how you would avoid being a perpetrator yourself. A learning centre that asks us to understand that Britain did not get this completely right at all, and that it would be very easy to walk down the path of intolerance—as we sadly see across the whole world today—is the learning that we need to prompt.

I know that I am a digital fanatic in this House, but much has been said in the debate about 45 minutes not being long enough. Actually, 45 minutes is a long time in which children

can form a deep impression that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. We should not think that education is through only history; it is also through experience.

... I just ask the Minister to confirm that this Government are similarly committed to making sure that, as we digitise the experience and ask people to look deep in their souls into how they will avoid falling into the trap of intolerance, we do that digitally as well and make sure that schools, particularly, are able to access those materials. ...

col 1211 Lord Balfe (Conservative): My Lords, I have seen a lot of concentration camps. I was in the European Parliament for 25 years, when I saw Bergen-Belsen, Auschwitz and Dachau. We had our own pet one down the road from Strasbourg called Struthof. I went to them several times over those years. They were horrifying and remain horrifying. However often you visit them, the emotions are the same.

My first concern about the idea of the Holocaust is how we teach it. ...

I spent the summer reading through some of the newly released Vatican archives on the Second World War. I am a Roman Catholic so I am not attacking my own Church, but I will say that the record of the Roman Catholic Church in collaborating with the Germans when they occupied Italy and in failing to defend its Jewish population is nothing to be proud of. Nor is its record in defending Jews in Germany, in encouraging its Church, in backing Father Tiso in Slovakia, in backing Austria and in the role of the Church and individuals.

When Austria was applying for EU membership I visited Vienna and was told that Austria was the first victim of the Germans, despite the fact that there were more Nazis in Austria per head of population than in Germany. So my first plea is to make sure the history is accurate. ...

col 1212 Someone said we have the right idea in the wrong place, which is true. If it were me ... I would have a monument in Whitehall. That is where the war memorials are. I would have a learning centre at the top of the Mall. Take the Admiralty Arch and convert some of that. ...

col 1213 Lord Strathcarron (Conservative): ... In the same way that this project has suffered from chronic overspend, it has also suffered from mission creep as the focus has spread from the Holocaust as we know it to the memory of subsequent genocides in general. This brings me to my main objection. These new genocide memorials will be absolutely guaranteed to attract the many hundreds of thousands of demonstrators we have seen regularly marching through London who believe passionately that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza against the Palestinians. The fact that these demonstrators do not follow the dictionary definition of genocide is totally beside the point. They believe it is a genocide and so, for them, that is exactly what it is. To think that they will not descend on the Holocaust memorial in their hundreds of thousands to protest against Israel at what they will see as a series of memorials to other genocides is not only an irony beyond belief but wishful thinking of the most delusional kind. ...

col 1214 Lord Inglewood (Non-affiliated): ... it seems a bit ironic when we are considering something site-specific of universal relevance but of especial significance to the Jewish community that a very celebrated episode in Jewish history is very much to the point. That is 1 Kings, chapter 21: the story of Naboth's vineyard. Your Lordships will remember that King Ahab, or more precisely his wife Jezebel, wanted Naboth's vineyard for purely personal reasons and was punished seriously by God for improperly achieving that. ... in this instance the Government covet this site ... a nice-to-have, not something for which there is an overriding ...

col 1215 Lord Polak (Conservative): ... We cannot have a debate such as this without referring to the words of the late Chief Rabbi, Lord Sacks, of blessed memory, which resonate deeply as we consider this project. He stated in 2007: "Memorials are not just about remembering what happened; they are about teaching future generations why it happened and what must be done to prevent such hatred from taking root again".

These profound words remind us of the necessity of this memorial, not just as a place of remembrance but as a beacon of education and vigilance against prejudice.

Many noble Lords have talked about the survivors. They are dwindling, for obvious reasons. Many are no longer with us. They have voiced strong support. ...

The Bill before us addresses concerns about the legal and environmental impacts with respect and care. It ensures that the construction will occupy a small proportion of Victoria Tower Gardens and that the park's overall appeal will be enhanced, including the protection of the mature trees and improvements to the amenities. The learning centre will provide that space for reflection and education, fostering a deeper understanding of the Holocaust and its lessons. ...

The memorial will stand as a daily reminder to all who visit Westminster of the dangers of hatred and the importance of combating prejudice. It is not merely a physical structure but a promise to future generations that we will remember the past and continue to stand against intolerance. ...

col 1216 Lord Tugendhat (Conservative): My Lords, I stand amazed that this Bill should be brought before the House. By its very nature, a memorial to the dead, let alone to the millions of people who were killed in the Holocaust, should not be an object of controversy. As soon as it became clear that this project as it stands can be carried forward only in an atmosphere of discord and acrimony, it should have been withdrawn. To proceed with it in such circumstances is surely to disrespect the dead and to demean the very horror that the memorial and its accompanying learning centre are commemorating. By withdrawing, I do not mean cancelling; I mean that the memorial should be reconsidered in the light of the debate that has taken place, not just here, but elsewhere, about its location, design and context and its place amongst existing Holocaust memorials and museums and the work that they do. ...

I agree with what the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, wrote recently in the *Jewish Chronicle*. She said that the memorial will become, "a focus for anti-Israel and antisemitic protest".

For as long as, and whenever, the Israeli Government pursue controversial policies towards the Palestinians and their neighbours, the memorial will attract those who oppose those policies just as the United States embassy in Grosvenor Square became the focal point of opposition to the United States at the time of the Vietnam War.

If that would not be bad enough, such demonstrations will conflate criticism of the Israeli Government, which is as legitimate as criticism of any other Government—the United States or anywhere else—with anti-Semitism, which absolutely is not. This conflation of hostility to and criticism of the Israeli Government and Mr Netanyahu on one hand with anti-Semitism on the other is already happening and is something that must be combated in the strongest possible manner, but if a memorial to those who were killed in the Holocaust should become the backdrop for expressions of anti-Semitism, that would surely be nothing short of sacrilege. We must not allow that to happen. ...

Baroness Wolf of Dulwich (Crossbench): ... there is a common belief in this Chamber that it would all be soluble and the project would be easily realised if we could just move everything to another site. I think that is completely wrong.

col 1217 The other thing that I was slightly taken aback by during the debate is the idea that the security problems mean that we should put the memorial somewhere else and that if we put it in another site, there will not be an issue. I think that if we had been having a debate like this nine years ago, we would not have spent as much time on security. The awful 10 months we have just completed have made this an issue in a way that it was not when this was first discussed. After all, this has been a period in which the Wiener Holocaust Library has been vandalised, and the Anne Frank statue in Amsterdam has been vandalised twice, so there is an issue. It is an issue that we must face wherever we think about putting the memorial and learning centre, but it seems to me that, first of all, as Bob Blackman MP said in the other place, the threat to any memorial is not an argument

for why the memorial is not needed, but the opposite. It is an argument for why the memorial is needed. ...

col 1218 Lord Sassoon (Conservative): ... My mother's father and uncle were born in Frankfurt, Germany. They escaped the Holocaust as they had moved earlier to the UK. Other members of my mother's family were not so fortunate. But in 1933, that great-uncle, Otto Schiff, founded the Jewish Refugees Committee in London. That committee took the lead in bringing German Jewish refugees to the UK, including through the Kindertransport. Otto Schiff was honoured by the Government a few years ago as a British Hero of the Holocaust. So I feel as strongly as anyone that there should—must—be an appropriate Holocaust memorial in the UK. But the memorial proposed is the wrong memorial, in the wrong place.

It is the wrong memorial because the design proposed and its location adjacent to Parliament have a wholly inappropriate and unfortunate air of triumphalism. The UK's initial response to the plight of Jews in Germany was far from glorious, letting in only tiny numbers of refugees and under onerous conditions. Having a soaring, gleaming structure at the heart of Westminster, I believe, risks sending out all the wrong messages. ...

It is the wrong memorial because it includes, as we have heard, an inadequate learning centre. ...

It is the wrong memorial because it is becoming dangerously expensive. ...

It is the wrong memorial because we are now told that it will put the Holocaust in the context of subsequent genocides. The Holocaust was uniquely appalling in the history of humanity. To muddy the story in this way raises many questions ... I think it is wrong. ...

col 1219 Baroness Pinnock (Liberal Democrat): ...It is astonishing that it has taken nearly 80 years for our nation to commit to a fitting national memorial to the Holocaust. It is just as surprising that it has taken over 10 years since it was first mooted for a decision to be made. It is thoroughly disappointing that a proposal to commemorate the Holocaust and to learn from its horrors has become so mired in controversy.

The proposal for a memorial and learning centre has overwhelming support. The disagreements have arisen, first, from the way the site in Victoria Tower Gardens was chosen, as it appears to have bypassed normal consultation processes. ...

The second key area of disagreement arises from the practical implementation of the principle of a memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens. ...

It seems that the gardens site was chosen because, although nearly always connected with conflict and war, the Holocaust and other genocides were the consequence of particular decisions made by Governments. ...

col 1220 I accept that putting the memorial and the learning centre together could be very moving and a powerful statement. However, I am not convinced that what is being proposed achieves that noble aim. ...

Finally, I want to question the clarity of thinking around the fundamental purpose of the memorial and learning centre. We have heard during the debate today that many Members believe that the learning centre will focus on the Holocaust against the Jews. I would support that if that were the case, but it is not. As some Members have indicated, what is being proposed is that the Holocaust against the Jews should be seen in the context of other genocides perpetrated at the time against Roma Gypsies, gays in Germany and other parts of western Europe and disabled people, and subsequent genocides such as those in Rwanda and Darfur—we could go on—and sadly many others.

The learning centre apparently aims—and I think the noble Baroness, Lady Harding, pointed to this—to expose the response of democracies and Governments to the challenges of the Holocaust and genocide. I am not convinced that a digital and immersive experience is appealing to schoolchildren, in particular. They respond to seeing things that link with the past. I live near Huddersfield and am a vice-chair of the university where the Holocaust centre is established. I went round and saw the shoes, the labels, the striped suits and the tiny suitcases. They are the moving part of that learning centre. It is not the

photographs so much; relating to human beings who were exterminated is what is moving.
col 1221 That is what a learning centre should achieve if we are to tackle not only anti-Semitism but ... discrimination, racism, intolerance and hate in our society. ...

Baroness Scott of Bybrook (Conservative): ... When the Holocaust memorial was first proposed, my noble friend Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton made a solemn commitment to the survivors of the Holocaust, saying that “the past will never die and your courage will never be forgotten”. We must make good on that promise.

Some 11 years have passed since my noble friend made that promise and had the vision for a Holocaust memorial and learning centre. ...

I know that many noble Lords have concerns about the location, design and the security of the new Holocaust memorial and learning centre, which I will speak to in a moment, but I begin by reminding the House again that it is now over a decade since this was first promised. It should be our goal to deliver on our promise as soon as possible, in particular so that Holocaust survivors who are still with us can be part of this important project. ...

Noble Lords have raised concerns about the decision to build the memorial and learning centre on the Victoria Tower Gardens site and Ministers must listen to these. The Opposition support the Government’s work to establish the memorial here in Westminster, right in the heart of our democracy. I think we should listen to Ed Balls and the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, the co-chairs of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation, when they state: “Victoria Tower Gardens, at the heart of Westminster and alongside the great symbol and heart of our democracy, is absolutely the right place to construct the national Memorial to the Holocaust”.

col 1222 Again, I quote the Chief Rabbi, who said that the venue was “inspirational”, arguing that it was the “most wonderful location because it is in a prime place of ... prominence ... at the heart of our democracy”.

That is why I believe that the gardens are the right location for this project, but it must be delivered in the right way. ...

We have heard concerns about security. ... Will the Minister undertake to provide the House with as much information as possible to those noble Lords who have raised these concerns, so they can be assured that the Government are looking at this and that those security issues are being dealt with? ...

... will the Government commit to continue engaging with noble Lords who have concerns about the plans, not just as a one-off? ... Also, have the Government assessed the expected date of completion of the centre? If we can see an end to this project, it will be an important symbol. ...

The Opposition support the Bill and wish to see our new national Holocaust memorial and learning centre delivered as soon as possible, mainly so that those Holocaust survivors who are still with us can be part of the project. ... This is a landmark project that will stand as testament to our commitment never to forget the Holocaust ...

col 1223 **Lord Khan of Burnley:** ... I first draw attention to the planning inspector’s conclusion that the civic, educational and social public benefits of the proposal “outweigh the identified harms”. ...

As this is a hybrid Bill, there has also been an opportunity for those who are directly and privately affected to petition against it, and for those petitions to be considered by a Select Committee, both in the House of Lords and in the other place. In the Commons, the Select Committee heard eight petitions and decided not to amend the Bill. Eighteen petitions have been received in the Lords and will be referred to a Select Committee for consideration following this debate. Those opposed to the planned Holocaust memorial and learning centre have had every opportunity to make their comments known. ...

The Holocaust memorial and learning centre will have security arrangements similar to many other public buildings in Westminster. We are working with security experts, the National Protective Security Authority and the Metropolitan Police to ensure that the site has the necessary level of security measures.

Based on this expert advice, physical security measures will be incorporated into the memorial and landscaping which will meet the assessed threat. Expert advice has also informed our proposed operational procedures, which will be reviewed and updated routinely in response to current threat assessment.

col 1224 Full security information was submitted as part of the planning process, but in the interest of safety and security it was not included in the public planning information. It would be completely unacceptable to build the Holocaust memorial in a less prominent location simply because of the risk of terrorism ... That would amount to allowing terrorists to dictate how we commemorate the Holocaust ...

A number of noble Lords alluded to the content of the learning centre ... The exhibition will confront the immense human calamity caused by the destruction of Jewish communities and other groups. The learning centre will also address subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. The exhibition will examine the Holocaust through British perspectives, looking at what we did and what more we could have done to tackle the murder and persecution of the Jewish people and other groups. The content for the learning centre is being developed by a leading international curator, Yehudit Shendar, formerly of Yad Vashem, supported by an academic advisory group, to ensure that it is robust, credible and reflects the current state of historical investigation into and interpretation of the Holocaust. ...

Victoria Tower Gardens was identified as a site uniquely capable of meeting the Government's aspiration for the national memorial and learning centre. It is close to buildings and memorials that symbolise our nation and its values. It is the most fitting location in terms of its historical, emotional and political significance, and its ability to offer the greatest potential impact and visibility for the project. The view of Parliament from the memorial will serve as a permanent reminder that political decisions have far-reaching consequences. It will encourage all UK citizens, and visitors of all nationalities, to reflect on the lessons of the past. ...

col 1225 The design is sensitive to the heritage and existing uses of Victoria Tower Gardens. It uses approximately 7.5% of the area of Victoria Tower Gardens, while making enhancements to the remainder of the park that will help all visitors, including better pathways and improved access to existing memorials. ...

col 1226 Updated costs of £138 million were published in June 2023, so that Parliament and all interested parties could have a complete picture ahead of important debates on the Holocaust Memorial Bill. It is deeply regrettable that delays to the programme have led to increased costs. ...

col 1227 Our aim is for the completion of the memorial to be witnessed by Holocaust survivors ... Subject to the Bill passing and planning permission being regained, we aim to begin construction in 2025 and to open in 2029. It is a source of deep regret that delays to the programme will mean that fewer Holocaust survivors will have the experience of seeing the memorial open in their lifetime. ...

A number of noble Lords asked why we could not build at the Imperial War Museum. Victoria Tower Gardens was identified as a site uniquely capable of meeting the Government's aspiration for the national memorial. The Imperial War Museum has endorsed our proposal ... We will continue to talk with the Imperial War Museum about our plans. The learning centre's exhibition will serve a different though complementary purpose to the Imperial War Museum's Holocaust gallery. We are confident that the project will add to the excellent existing provision on Holocaust education.

col 1228 The learning centre will provide essential context to the memorial. The Holocaust Commission recommended that a new world-class learning centre should physically accompany the new national memorial. The learning centre will provide the opportunity to learn about the Holocaust close to the memorial, helping people to better understand how the lessons of the Holocaust apply more widely, including to other genocides.

The Government believe that young people should be taught the history of the Holocaust

and the lessons that it teaches today. In recognition of its importance, the Holocaust is the only historic event that is compulsory within the national curriculum for history at key stage 3. Effective teaching about the Holocaust can support pupils to learn about the possible consequences of anti-Semitism and other forms of extremism. It is right that we also build this Holocaust memorial as a focal point for national commemoration and to demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that its lessons are never forgotten.

A number of noble Lords talked about the alarming rates of increasing anti-Semitism since 7 October in particular. Anti-Semitism has absolutely no place in our society, which is why we are taking a strong lead in tackling it in all its forms. Making sure that British Jews not only are safe but feel safe is one of our top priorities. The Government have committed further funding of £54 million to the Community Security Trust to enable it to continue its vital work protecting UK Jewish communities until 2028. That brings total funding for the Jewish community protective security grant to £72 million over the next four years.

Memorials alone cannot prevent anti-Semitism, but this memorial will play a part in reminding everyone where anti-Semitism can lead. It will be a reminder to us all, in Parliament and across the whole nation, of the potential to abuse democratic institutions to murderous consequences, and it will challenge us to stand up and combat racism, hatred and prejudice wherever they are found. ...

col 1229 We will work with leading producers and designers to create a very powerful and informative digital exhibition. ...

The High Court quashed planning consent on the basis that the London County Council (Improvements) Act presented a statutory obstacle to building in Victoria Tower Gardens. This is what we are debating today. The Bill seeks to remove the obstacle by providing that Section 8 of the 1900 Act should not prevent construction or operation of the memorial and learning centre. The aim is to clarify the position before a new decision can be taken by the designated Minister.

The planning application remains current and a new decision on it will be taken. Arrangements are in place within the department, as I said before, so that the designated Minister remains isolated from the project and can make planning decisions in a fair, transparent and unbiased way. ...

Holocaust survivor Susan Pollack said recently: "I am 93 years old. My dream is to see this memorial and learning centre finally built and to see the first coachload of school children arrive and ready to learn. That is what it is all about. And, hopefully, those students will learn what happened to me and become beacons of hope in the fight against contemporary antisemitism".

The Holocaust memorial and learning centre will draw on the history of the Holocaust to stress the importance of tackling intolerance and hatred at all levels. It will be a memorial that delivers this message for all people across the UK and the rest of the world, regardless of faith and background. We must lose no more time in building a Holocaust memorial and learning centre of which we can all be proud. I repeat the words of the noble Baroness, Lady Harding: it is shocking that, in 2024, we do not have a national memorial. ...

Baroness Deech: My Lords, this has been a moral and historic debate. ... One of the things that struck me was that people seem to be ignorant of the existing Holocaust memorials. There is a national Holocaust memorial. There are at least six up and down the country. There are 21 learning centres. Hardly a day goes by, if you Google, when you will not find a seminar or a course on the Holocaust. The country is replete with it and with Holocaust education as taught in schools, but I have to say it has not worked. The young people who march—and there will be another march soon—waving swastikas and calling for intifada and worse, have had Holocaust education at school. It does not seem to have done them any good.

col 1230 As I said, the more these memorials go up, the worse the anti-Semitism, and no one has asked or bothered to find out what impact a visit has, what effect a piece of sculpture has. Just as with, say, discrimination or slavery, would it make any difference to

discrimination against black people to put up another statue about slavery? I doubt it very much. It has to be a question of education. As the late Lord Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi, said, Holocaust education has to be in context. It has to be set within the entire history of the Jewish people. You cannot just take the Holocaust and put it in a package and say, "That was Nazi Germany, that was a long time ago, nothing to do with us today". Nor can we generalise. Apparently, the theme, as far as one can find out, of the learning centre will be, at the end, "Do not be a bystander" or, as the noble Baroness, Lady Harding, said, we must have more introspection. That is insufficient. Introspection does not get us anywhere where anti-Semitism or other forms of racism are concerned. We need a proper history of the Jewish people, we need a Jewish museum and maybe even a Jewish history month. No one has said what the learning centre that is proposed will add to the other 21 that are already in existence; there does not seem to be anything it will add. Remember that there will be only about five rooms, of which one will be a mock-up of the House of Commons Chamber, one will be devoted to people who saved victims and, as we have heard, every single genocide you have ever heard of will be included, which dilutes the unique nature of the Holocaust. Any reading of Jewish scholarship will tell you that we have to study the Jewish Holocaust on its own and not mix it up with the others. ...

As far as Holocaust survivors go, it is a mistake to say that this has to be built in a hurry for them. It is not for them; it is for the future. It would be a mistake to rush it. The Holocaust survivors who I know have actually said, as recorded before the Commons Select Committee, "not in our name". Those who I know do not approve of it. ...

col 1231 I hope that the planning application will start from scratch. It is no good saying that we will put it to the Minister—who is, of course, independent. It is quite unrealistic to suppose that any Minister, after all of this, would turn down the planning application. It needs to go back to Westminster and through a proper inquiry ...

I hope that the House will agree with my amendment, but I have one more word to say about this. This is a moral issue; it calls for a free vote. Noble Lords should use their knowledge and feelings about what they have heard, and vote the way that their conscience tells them. ...

Division on Baroness Deech's amendment

Content: 49

Not Content: 99

Baroness Deech's amendment disagreed

Bill read a second time and committed to a Select Committee.

To read the full transcript see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-09-04/debates/5FC010DB-3032-4DB7-946C-A558233E6D70/HolocaustMemorialBill>

TOP

Israel

See also the House of Lords Second Reading debate on the Holocaust Memorial Bill that is included in the Holocaust section above.

House of Commons Oral Answers

Prime Minister's Questions

Rishi Sunak (Conservative): ... the Government have suspended 30 of the UK's 350 arms export licences to Israel. It is a decision that the Chief Rabbi says "beggars belief" and will "encourage our shared enemies". Can the Prime Minister therefore explain how

his decision will help to secure the release of the 101 hostages still being held by Hamas?

The Prime Minister: May I start by saying that I think the whole House will be shocked by the horrific killing of six hostages in the last few days? I know that I speak for the whole House when I say that. The remaining hostages must be released, and we need a ceasefire to ensure that that can happen, that desperately needed aid can get into the region, and that we can begin the path to a two-state solution.

The right hon. Gentleman asks how we arrived at this decision. He knows very well, because the legal framework is clear. The latest guidance was issued in 2021, under his Government, and that means that licences have to be kept under review, as they were by his Government. I think he probably knows the advice that was given to his Government; he understands the framework. We have carried out the review in the same way and come to a clear legal conclusion, and shared that conclusion and assessment with Parliament.

We will, of course, continue to stand by Israel's right to self-defence, but it is important that we are a country committed to the international rule of law. That gives us the strength of argument in discussion with our allies on important issues. This is a difficult issue—I recognise that—but it is a legal decision, not a policy decision. The Leader of the Opposition knows the framework—*[Interruption.]* The Conservatives shout, but they issued the guidance and they know what the test is. That test has been assessed. We have come to a conclusion, and we have put that before the House for it to consider.

Rishi Sunak: I appreciate the Prime Minister's answer, but he will know that decisions like this also have important and broader geopolitical implications. He mentioned allies. It is essential that we maintain transatlantic unity in the face of terrorist threats and avoid any perception of splits between our two nations. Can he therefore update the House, or tell it what engagement he had with the United States prior to taking this significant decision?

The Prime Minister: I acknowledge the importance of working with our allies on all issues, as we have been doing, as I was able to make very clear at the NATO summit that I attended in the early summer. Of course, as the right hon. Gentleman and the House would expect, we have talked this through with our allies. They understand; they have a different legal system. That is the point they made. *[Interruption.]* The shadow Foreign Secretary chunters. This is a serious issue and it requires serious consideration. The Leader of the Opposition knows the legal framework very well. He also knows that applying the framework—the facts of that framework—and arriving at a decision does not permit me to simply say, "I am not going to implement the legal decision or conclusion that has been reached." I do not think he is really inviting me to do that.

Rishi Sunak: These decisions have not only geopolitical consequences but emotional ones. The Prime Minister took that action on the very same day as the funerals of Israeli hostages murdered by Hamas—something that the Board of Deputies of British Jews described as "a terrible, terrible message to be sending".

I hope the Prime Minister understands the hurt that has been caused. Will he take this opportunity to reassure Israel and the Jewish community that the United Kingdom and this House stand behind Israel and its right to self-defence?

The Prime Minister: Let me be very clear, as I have said before and I say again: we recognise and support Israel's right of self-defence, and we have taken action in support of that right of self-defence. I have made that repeatedly clear in all my engagements with Israel, across the region and with all our allies; I stand by that. In relation to licences, this is not an Israel issue; it is the framework for all licences that must be kept under review. It is the same test for all licences, as the Prime Minister knows, and we have applied the law to the facts and come to a legal conclusion. I do not think the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]* I do not think the

Leader of the Opposition is really inviting me to put that to one side. This is a serious issue; we either comply with international law or we do not. We have strength in our arguments only because we comply with international law. I appreciate that the Conservative party did not think that international law mattered, and that is why we got into the pickle that we did.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-09-04/debates/496C803E-4E87-4EA0-824A-A3EBE33A0279/Engagements#contribution-4871B7FA-39BD-4547-9420-B52612E1C802>

House of Commons Written Answer

Visas: Palestinians

Nadia Whittome (Labour) [2558] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of creating a visa waiver scheme for Palestinians requiring urgent medical treatment.

Seema Malhotra: Currently, those seeking to come to the UK for private medical treatment, along with their family members, can apply for a visitor visa and consideration will be given to compelling, compassionate and exceptional circumstances.

It should be noted that the World Health Organisation (WHO) position is that people who are medically evacuated should stay as close to home as possible, so that they remain amongst those who are more likely to understand their language and culture, and so that their return home, when ready, is easier.

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2024-07-30/2558>

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The parties must end the suffering by agreeing to a ceasefire now: UK statement at the UN Security Council

Last week, we heard the news that the bodies of six Israeli hostages were recovered in Gaza. We condemn their murder by Hamas.

My Prime Minister has conveyed his thoughts and prayers for the families and the Israeli people.

The UK supported Israel's request for this briefing to shine a spotlight on the abhorrent crimes of Hamas and their impact on innocent civilians. It is also entirely right, as Algeria proposed, to focus on recent grave developments in the West Bank and Gaza.

President, of the 253 hostages taken in the horrific October 7th terrorist attacks, 101 hostages remain captive in Gaza and subject to unimaginable horror. We once again condemn Hamas' terrorist acts in the strongest terms. We reiterate our demand for Hamas to release the hostages immediately. There can be no doubt that Hamas pays not the slightest heed to international humanitarian law. We urge all parties to agree a ceasefire deal which would bring an end to the ordeal of these hostages.

Israel continues to face threats, not only from Hamas, but also from Iran and its range of hostile proxies who openly call for Israel's annihilation. Iran should be in no doubt of our commitment to challenge their malign and destabilising activity, and our commitment to Israel's security.

President, the suffering of Palestinians also worsens each day. Over 40,000 Palestinians have been killed, many of whom are women and children. The most basic needs of children and thousands of orphaned children are unmet. A ceasefire deal offers an opportunity to end their suffering.

As we've heard, the humanitarian situation in Gaza is beyond appalling, with dire sanitary

conditions, a serious risk of famine and now polio. We welcome the polio vaccination campaign and urge Israel to continue to cooperate with the WHO and health agencies to ensure that the full 90% of children who need to be are vaccinated.

More generally, as we've heard, humanitarian access remains inadequate with attacks on convoys, evacuation orders undermining operations and aid far below Israel's stated commitment to 'flood Gaza with aid'. We urge Israel to do much more to ensure lifesaving food and medical supplies reach civilians in Gaza.

As my Foreign Secretary said this week, we are also deeply concerned by credible claims of mistreatment of Palestinian detainees, which the International Committee of the Red Cross cannot investigate after being denied access by Israel.

President, concerns on the treatment of detainees and humanitarian access were part of my Government's review into Israel's International Humanitarian Law compliance. As a result, my Foreign Secretary took the decision to suspend certain UK arms export licences to Israel earlier this week. This decision in no way undermines our unwavering commitment to Israel's security.

Whilst we recognise Israel's need to defend itself against security threats, the UK is also deeply worried by the ongoing IDF operations in the West Bank, particularly the reports of civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. Israel must also tackle the accelerating settler violence and end its illegal expansion of settlements which undermine prospects for the realisation of the two-state solution.

President, let me conclude by thanking the US, Qatar and Egypt for their efforts on the ongoing negotiations. The parties have had time to study the deal on the table. The parties must now bridge their differences and end the suffering by agreeing to a deal and immediate ceasefire and rediscover the path to a two-state solution.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-parties-must-end-the-suffering-by-agreeing-to-a-ceasefire-now-uk-statement-at-the-un-security-council>

UK and Kuwait agree new partnership to provide vital aid in Gaza and Yemen

... The UK and Kuwait have ... announced new joint funding plans to help UNICEF deliver lifesaving aid to almost 2.5 million people in Gaza and Yemen.

The funding will go towards UNICEF's efforts to restore water supply and sanitation systems in Gaza, and to sustain primary healthcare services in Yemen ...

The UK and Kuwait will provide £4.5 million of joint support (\$6 million in total - \$3 million to each project), to UNICEF, whose work is expected to benefit approximately 1,000,000 in Gaza and 1,450,000 people in Yemen.

Minister for the Middle East Hamish Falconer said: Conflict has aggravated the humanitarian crises in Gaza and Yemen and the UK is committed to pushing for more lifesaving aid to reach those in desperate need.

The UK and Kuwait's joint funding towards UNICEF's lifesaving work in Gaza and Yemen demonstrates our shared commitment to tackle some of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. ...

Kuwait's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs His Excellency Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said: ... We are pleased to cooperate with the UK to support the essential work of UNICEF in both Palestine and Yemen. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-kuwait-agree-new-partnership-to-provide-vital-aid-in-gaza-and-yemen>

Scottish Parliament FoI Releases

Houthis, Red Sea or Yemen correspondence

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202400412753/>

and

<https://tinyurl.com/5en9erpb>

Contact with foreign Governments

includes a request for "The last time any Scottish Government minister or official made contact with the government in Gaza."

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202400402670/>

and

<https://tinyurl.com/5yf853ef>

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Experts of the Committee on the Rights of the Child Acknowledge Israel's Efforts for Internally Displaced Children since 7 October, Ask about Mental Health Treatment for Children Traumatized by the War and the Protection of Children in Gaza

... The Committee has before it the combined fifth and sixth periodic report of Israel ([CRC/C/ISR/5-6](#)).

Daniel Meron, Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations Office at Geneva and co-head of the delegation, said Israel was engaged in a multifront war, forced upon the country on 7 October with the worst massacre against the Jewish people since the Holocaust. Today, 101 hostages, including two little children, remained in Gaza. It was inconceivable that children were taken and held as hostages. This weekend, the State received devastating news that six hostages who had survived 11 months had been executed by Hamas. The reality for children and youth in Israel had changed completely since 7 October.

Since that date, rockets continued to indiscriminately target the civilian population in Israel from the north and south. Over 100,000 people were still displaced from their homes and communities. The toll that the unwanted war had taken on children in Israel and in Gaza was tragic. It was important to remember that Hamas terrorism was the first and foremost cause of suffering in Gaza. Israel had repeatedly asserted its commitment to uphold international humanitarian law. A polio vaccination campaign began this week in Central Gaza, in full coordination with Israel.

Children could not thrive under the brutal grip of a savage terrorist regime, Hamas. The war against Hamas should not misguide these discussions from the purpose of discussing Israel's implementation of the Convention. Israel worked in the international arena concerning the rights of children, and Israel's civil society was contributing to children's rights globally. Save a Child's Heart, which received the United Nations Population Award in 2018, treated children suffering from heart disease who had little access to care in their own countries. Some 7,000 children from 70 countries had been treated since 1995, half of them Palestinians.

Mr. Meron concluded by stating that Israel maintained that human rights conventions applied only within territories in which a State applied its sovereignty. In the current state of international law, it was Israel's view that the law of armed conflict and human rights law remained distinct and applied in different circumstances. The law of armed conflict was the relevant and specific applicable body of law in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Itamar Donenfeld, Director General of the Ministry of Justice of Israel and co-head of the delegation, said the massacre of 7 October would forever stand as one of the darkest days in history. On that day, thousands of Hamas terrorists invaded Israel and murdered, raped, tortured and took civilians hostage. More than 1,200 people were slaughtered and more than 6,000 were injured. Over 250 people were taken hostage by Hamas that day, including 36 babies and children aged between 9 months and 18 years. No child should ever endure such horrors. Israel was also under a multi-front attack, orchestrated by Iran. One day after Hamas attacked, Hezbollah initiated an indiscriminate attack on Israeli civilians and continued to do so. Twelve young children had been murdered, following a direct hit by Hezbollah missiles on the soccer field where they played.

While Israel did everything in its power to avoid harming children, Hamas and Hezbollah did everything in their power to harm children and use them as human shields. The Committee must clearly condemn these terrorist organizations and support Israel in its military efforts to release all the hostages. The Committee should avoid making factually incorrect statements and ensure all reports were free from political bias. ...

Israel had made efforts to improve children's rights over the past few years. In 2022, a committee on children and youth rights was established. Following the 7 October massacre, a roundtable was established, focused on addressing the issue of children and youth in war. ...

Bragi Gudbrandsson, Committee Expert and Coordinator of the Country Taskforce for Israel, said it was the view of the Committee that international human rights law and international humanitarian law were applicable in the occupied Palestinian territory, namely Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. It followed that Israel should act according to the obligations entailed in the Convention, and refrain from acts contrary to the Convention and its Optional Protocols. It was clearly stated that Israel continued to reject the Committee's legal interpretation regarding its obligations of the Convention. However, in the replies to the list of issues, Israel recognised the State's obligations under international humanitarian law and maintained that the State party applied the rules derived from the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality in carrying out military attacks. ...

The Committee was deeply sorry for Israel's loss on 7 October. At the same time, their hearts went out to the children of Gaza, thousands who had lost their lives, were injured, and had lost their families.

Had the State party taken any steps to revise the Basic Law in line with the recommendations by other treaty bodies? Had any measures been taken to repeal discriminatory laws and policies that disadvantaged non-Jewish children, ensuring that all children in Israel had equal rights and opportunities? ...

The State party had not developed and adopted a comprehensive policy and action plan on children's rights; did such a policy exist? Were there regular assessments and evaluations made on the implementation of policies regarding children?

Had the Israeli Government considered establishing a human rights institution in line with the Paris Principles? What avenues were currently available for children to access justice if their rights were violated? ...

Mr. Gudbrandsson welcomed the many recently introduced multidisciplinary and evidence-based services with the aim of supporting families at risk of separation. Were these services accessible for all Israeli citizens irrespective of their ethnicity and where they lived? What was the availability and access to childcare facilities and afterschool care for Palestinian, Bedouin, asylum-seeking and migrant children?

The Israeli family unification ban denied many children born from parents with mixed identity cards from Israel, East Jerusalem and or the West Bank from their rights to enjoy their childhood and violated their rights to maintain contact with their parents. The Committee, along with other human rights treaty bodies, had called on Israel to repeal this

law. Could data be provided on the total number of children affected by the ban? What measures was the State party taking to address the harmful impacts of the family unification ban on children? ...

Rinchen Chopel, Committee Expert and Member of the Country Taskforce for Israel, said there had been important amendments to Israel's legislation, including to the 2000 law. What steps were being taken to eliminate discrimination against all disadvantaged children. What steps were being taken in relation to the vulnerability of Palestinian girls regarding violence committed by defence forces? What measures were being taken to promote the meaningful participation of children in school settings and in policy making?

It was concerning that marriage at the age of 16 could still be granted by a court in exceptional circumstances. Were there any plans to raise the age limit of marriage to 18, without exception? The Committee remained gravely concerned about reports of torture of Palestinian children in the occupied Palestinian territory, including denial of food, water, electric shocks, and physical and sexual violence, among others. What measures were being taken to end all forms of torture and ill treatment, including against Palestinian children and children in the occupied Palestinian territory? How was it ensured that all branches of the armed security forces did not carry out torture and ill treatment and respected humanitarian law? ...

Luis Pedernera, Committee Expert and Member of the Country Taskforce for Israel, said there had been insufficient information from the State party on how it implemented several recommendations. What had happened regarding the recommendation on removing the prohibition on granting Israeli citizenship to children born to one Israeli and one parent from the occupied Palestinian territory? Could the delegation comment on whether Israel would overturn its decision not to process requests for residence of Palestinian children since 2000? What had been done to address the effects that the arbitrary revocation of residence and identity permits of people living in East Jerusalem had on thousands of unregistered Palestinian children by preventing them from accessing health services, education and any other type of social benefits, and preventing thousands of children from living with their parents?

The Committee had made a recommendation relating to the Israeli practice towards the children of migrants born in the State party, who were given a handwritten note rather than a birth certificate, with the name of the father not indicated. Could an update on the judicial rulings in this regard be provided? What was the status of implementation of the process of computerisation of the registry? What had been done in cases where the notification of birth was denied to migrant families who were unable to pay for hospitalisation costs? What measures were being taken to ensure children had full access to identity? The system of not issuing identity documents and passports or permits prevented access to rights, freedom of movement, and did not guarantee the right to identity of thousands of children. What was the reason behind this system?

The repression of demonstrations and arrests was a matter of concern. What precautions was the State taking to ensure children could uphold their right to expression and peaceful assembly? How many children had been arrested and tried for peacefully protesting? Had sanctions been applied to members of security forces who used disproportionate force in protests? ...

The delegation said the Ministry of Welfare had issued a circular which stated they preferred children to be placed in foster care, as opposed to residential placements. ...

The core principles of the Convention were being incorporated more and more into Israel's legislation. A guideline by the Deputy Attorney General had been issued which stated that information needed to be provided regarding the impact of legislation on the rights of the child. According to the guideline, legislative authorities needed to establish the extent of impact which a Government bill could have on child rights. Any child born in Israel was documented by the hospital. Hospitals provided parents with a document of birth,

including the parents' names. For children born to unmarried parents, where the mother was single, the father needed to identify himself and produce an identity card. Children born to foreigners were issued with a notice of live birth and could receive a replication of an application of live birth upon request. In December 2013, the minimum marital age was raised from 17 to 18. Exceptions only applied if this was in the child's best interest. ...

The principle of equality was a core principle in Israel's justice system, which applied rights equally to all, including minority groups, according to the Basic Law. ...

Israeli citizenship could only be revoked through a court procedure. There had been no cases of children in Israel whose citizenship had been revoked. There was no prohibition in Israel on demonstrations; demonstrations took place daily in the country. Generally, permanent residents received the same rights as citizens, with some exceptions. Every inmate could file a complaint concerning conditions of detention, including to the Prison Ombudsman. Any claim of illegal use of force by a warden was immediately reported and escalated.

The Permanent Mission of Israel had invited the Committee to recognise the horrific crimes of Hamas by reviewing video footage, but the Committee had declined.

A speaker from the delegation then said she was the owner of a video from 7 October, which showed the horror and the massacre of her son and husband, and almost 700 people who were assassinated, raped, tortured and burnt. Her husband and eldest son had been killed and the trauma from this had deeply impacted her three other children. Her youngest child was blind in one eye and had almost died due to the bombs which had gone off.

The speaker said that children in Israel were living with trauma and had been scarred for life. There were many citizens and children in Gaza who were innocent, but so were Israelis. This needed to be understood. Hamas were cruel terrorists. There were two peoples, Palestinian people who were stuck in between and were fed up and wanted to live in peace, as well as Israeli Jews, Muslims, Christians and others who wanted to continue to live in Israel in peace. The south of Israel, 400 metres from Gaza where the speaker lived, had been attacked by rockets since 2001. Their children were traumatised. Persons and children could not go outside as a normal child should be able to do.

The Israeli people had always wanted to live in peace with their neighbours in Gaza and other towns. Jews and Muslims lived together. They did not want the war and the hatred. Hamas and Hezbollah were the problems. An Israeli soldier would never touch Palestinian children and kill them because they were Palestinians and not Jewish. It was important to change the narrative in the dialogue and understand the reality of Israel. ...

A Committee Expert acknowledged what the speaker had shared. Could the delegation comment on the children of hostages who were abducted for a few hours. They had had a lot of visibility in the media. What were the ethical considerations that should be considered concerning these children who were constantly in the media? How did this affect their mental health? ...

An Expert thanked the speaker for her courage. Why was there so much deprivation of liberty in Israel, when this should be the last resort? What prevented Israel from having an independent body in line with the Paris Principles which could visit places of deprivation of liberty?

Another Expert said the Committee was concerned about the situation of all children. They wanted children to be able to live together peacefully. ...

A Committee Expert asked if there were enough medical staff to deal with children who had been traumatised? It seemed that there were several categories of children who benefited from the birth declaration. What happened to children born out of wedlock? Would this harm them in their future life? Why was the birth document handwritten? Could parents then go to the embassy to officially declare the birth of their child?

A Committee Expert expressed sincere condolences to the speaker. ... Unfortunately, she was one of many, many mothers who all had to go through this ...

Bragi Gudbrandsson ... said the general access to health care for the Palestinian/Bedouin population was concerning. In Bedouin communities, infant mortality rates were five to eight times higher than the average Jewish population. How did this group have access to health care, including cancer treatment? By far, the greatest health challenge Israel now had to deal with was mental health. It was estimated that almost 20,000 children were suffering from mental health issues. ...

Israel continued to deny Palestinians access to medical care by restricting freedom of movement through Israel's permit system. According to the World Health Organization, in 2021, 47 per cent of patients from Gaza did not receive a timely medical exit permit to access their treatments in hospitals in East Jerusalem and elsewhere. Why was it not possible to issue long-term permits for patients with diseases, including cancer and kidney failure? Children were dying because of this system. ...

Luis Pedernera ... said nearly 60 per cent of Bedouin families in the Naqab lived in poverty compared to the 20 per cent of Israel's general population. What measures were being taken to address the urgent food insecurity situation of the Bedouin? ...

The climate cost of the first 60 days of Israel's military response was equivalent to burning at least 150,000 tons of coal ... Why had there been a cut in the environmental budget? ...

Ann Skelton ... said that in its 2013 concluding observations, the Committee observed that there was a "segregated" education system with a lower investment in the education of Palestinian children. Since then, how had the budget been reallocated to provide equity in the schooling system? ...

In its 2013 concluding observations, the Committee had expressed its concern about demolitions of schools for Palestinian children living in the West Bank, and it had gotten worse of course since then. How many schools were demolished? What measures had been taken to provide alternative school infrastructure?

The Committee had received reports that there were many incidents of violence being experienced by children on the way to school or even in schools, often by settlers. Was anyone held criminally responsible? ...

The Committee acknowledged the efforts that Israel had made for children who were internally displaced in Israel following the 7 October attacks. Had they been able to return safely to where they were living before? What support had Israel provided for those who had not or could not? Were any children ever granted refugee status? ...

The Committee had repeatedly urged Israel to put a stop to prevent the abductions, arbitrary arrests, and prolonged detention of large numbers of Palestinian adolescents by the Israeli armed and security forces. These detentions occurred in many cases without charge, trial, or legal representation. This situation was worsening. Another concern was the lack of information on the whereabouts of Palestinian adolescents held either in Israel or in the West Bank. What was being done about this?

In previous concluding observations, the Committee expressed concern about impunity regarding the use of Palestinian children as human shields and informants. The Committee knew that this was happening on both sides, but as the Committee was reviewing Israel today, what was Israel doing to effectively enforce the prohibition of using children as human shields and informants? ...

Israel followed a policy of conscription. Did the committee that heard cases of conscientious objectors have any expertise to deal with children? ...

Bragi Gudbrandsson ... said given that children had consistently comprised around 40 per cent of the total fatalities in Gaza since 7 October, now estimated to be at 17,000 child deaths, could the State party elaborate on the measures and policies in place to protect children in densely populated areas during military operations, in accordance with international humanitarian law? The State party maintained that it respected the principles of international humanitarian law, and the principles of distinction, precaution and

proportionality in carrying out military attacks. Yet the application of weapons with wide-area effects in residential buildings and houses, where extended and multigenerational families lived, raised concerns about the protection of civilians. Could the State party detail the steps taken to minimise civilian and child casualties in such areas? ...

The Committee was extremely worried by reports that a large majority of hospitals in Gaza had ceased operation, including the Al Shifa medical complex. What measures ensured the continued operation of the remaining hospitals serving children in Gaza and ensured that the medical evacuation of children was ensured when necessary? ...

Thousands of children had become disabled or were extremely traumatised as a result of the war; did the State party have plans to provide the care, rehabilitation and therapy that these children would need for the rest of their lives? ...

Luis Pedernera ... asked how international law was being applied in situations involving children in regard to arrest procedures and restriction of movement in the West Bank? How were children being protected against the increased militarisation of operations in the West Bank? The Committee was deeply concerned that 1,179 structures in the West Bank had been destroyed, leading to the displacement of more than 1,100 minors. What were the reasons behind such actions? How could this be justified as part of international law?

What measures did the State party intend to implement to prevent and address violence by settlers and to ensure that perpetrators were held accountable? What efforts had the State party made to investigate and hold accountable those responsible for incidents in which restrictions on movement had caused harm or loss of life, such as the murder of a 17-year-old Palestinian-American boy? How did the State party intend to address the consequences of its military actions in the West Bank, including returning the bodies of Palestinian children to their families and ending restrictions on Palestinian funeral rituals?

The delegation said ... Regarding children who had returned from Gaza; this was a sensitive issue. Children's privacy should be protected, and they should not be exposed unnecessarily. However, if a parent agreed for their child to be interviewed, this was their prerogative. The children had taught them a lesson in that they did not need to be coddled after they returned. There were programmes in place to help children, including trauma-based interventions to improve their resilience and help their coping with the traumatic events they were experiencing. A programme was in place which provided a day-care of one day a week for children who required some psychiatric support.

Several sections of the penal law were dedicated to sexual abuse against children. Sexual actions with a child under the age of 14 was considered rape. There was also legislation against trafficking and pornography. ...

Israel acted to make the Convention accessible to children in all languages, including Braille, when required. ... Many efforts had been made to increase the accessibility of early childhood education to Bedouin communities, including through the creation of 24 kindergartens. The Government was considering additional centres for services, and how to further integrate Bedouin pupils into Israeli society.

There was no separation or segregation of pupils of Ethiopian descent within Israeli education. A programme had been introduced which helped Ethiopian pupils integrate and reach the national average in Israeli schools. Education for peace programmes included developing positive communication skills and getting to know different cultures. This approach helped reduce tensions and impart values of tolerance and mutual respect. These programmes were conducted in both Jewish and Arab communities. There were also training courses which dealt with practices of diverse cultural competence, providing tools for cultural discourse.

The Israeli health system had faced great challenges since 7 October, taking in a huge number of casualties while still treating the general population. Israel did not have a separate military health system, and so all soldiers, including Arab, Jews and Palestinians, were treated in civilian hospitals. There had been a multi-layered approach to address the

mental health issues being faced by children, with the first being resilience centres, located near the border line. These provided on the spot services to adults and children. Over 17,000 children had been provided with mental and social support since 7 October. Hundreds of mental health professionals had been trained in issues of cultural sensitivity and trauma awareness.

Ten intensive care units had been established to avoid suspension in treatment for major crisis cases. Israel prioritised addressing mental health cases of children in a timely manner. ...

A new hospital was being built in the south of Israel which would be a strong academic facility and aid the Bedouin villages nearby. The State was aware of the need for health promotion activities for this population. ...

The population in Jerusalem was entitled to receive health care as part of the law. There were seven Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem and three centres in West Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, there were psychiatric hospitals and many community-based services to address mental health. Most parts of Jerusalem were serviced by the national ambulance services, and some by the Palestinian Red Crescent. ...

It was hoped that in the coming years, the birth registration system would be fully digitalised. From the beginning of the war, more than 50,000 permits were provided for the West Bank for Palestinians to enter East Jerusalem for treatment. The State was providing more than 120,000 permits from the West Bank. Many Gazan children with cancer were treated in Israeli hospitals. This was also true for children undergoing treatment through the Save the Heart Association. ...

Pursuant to the interim agreement between Israel and Palestinians, the responsibility of education regarding Palestinians living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had been transferred to the Palestinian Authority. This meant that Israel was not charged with building new schools, hiring teachers and higher education. All these aspects were controlled and administered by the Palestinian Authority. The Gaza Strip had not been under Israeli control since 2005, following the implementation of Israel's disengagement initiative. Even after the recent war, Israel was still not occupying Gaza as the conditions for belligerent occupation had not been met. As the armed forces of other democratic States had been experiencing, civilian deaths were a harsh fact of modern, urban warfare. In Gaza, these deaths were deliberately sought by Hamas to further its objective. Hamas had spent the last 17 years systemically embedding its operations throughout Gaza, viewing Palestinian civilians as expendable human shields.

Hamas purposely sought to drag fighting into the civilian domain, as part of their strategy to ensure the international community condemned Israel. They had built an extensive network of tunnels, bringing fighting to the heart of the civilians. The Israeli Defence Forces had discovered a tunnel shaft near and under schools which passed under the headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinians in the Near East. Some of the missiles fired by Hamas at Israel had landed within Gaza, exploding in hospitals and schools and causing civilian harm. The likelihood that many of these rockets had landed in dense urban areas suggested they were a significant cause of civilian casualties.

Israel was committed to bringing home the hostages in Gaza and defending its citizens and territory in a manner consistent with international law, despite the fact that other parties to the conflict violated these laws. Israel's military operations were committed to the fundamental principles of the law of armed conflict, including distinction, proportionality and precaution. Israel was operating against Hamas, not against the civilian population. ...

Bragi Gudbrandsson ... said information had been received that said 75 per cent of children who were out of home were in residential care; what were the correct figures? ...

Luis Pedernera ... said the Committee believed that Israel had effective control of the occupied Palestinian territories. This had been stated in reviews by treaty bodies and in

recommendations by the United Nations. He disagreed on the issue of proportionality, when the targets were children who were not a threat and were shot in the head by snipers or drones. When a child was playing outside or looking for food, how was the threat assessed? Could a sniper shoot the child in the head? According to the data available, 5,500 children were born a month. The hospitals in Gaza had been wiped out. This meant birth registration could not be guaranteed. How did the State intend to help these children to ensure they had access to an identity?

A Committee Expert asked if there were Jewish children in Israel who were also poor, or was it mainly other minorities? How did the Israeli State ensure children from different communities had access to their rights?

Another Expert asked if kafala, the equivalent of adoption, was regulated for Muslims? Was the care provided by foster families appropriately regulated? ...

An Expert said it could be assumed that the bodies of many children were still under the rubble in Gaza. When would Israel remove the debris so bodies could be recovered and identified? ...

A Committee Expert said the Committee was concerned about all children wherever they were. Every single child in Gaza was living in incredibly stressful and violent conditions and would be traumatised for their entire lives. What were the plans of the State party to support the treatment of these children. At the end of April, Israel had dropped more bombs in Gaza than bombs were dropped in the Second World War - 70,000 tonnes of bombs and explosive devices. ...

The delegation said Israel was sorry for the loss of life in the war, including children. This was terrible and no one wanted to see it. The allegations that Israel targeted children was preposterous and could not be accepted. Israel had a clear set of laws which instructed soldiers on opening fire. The State's Defence Forces were conducting themselves in line with international law. They were making the clear distinction between civilians and combatants. Unfortunately, Hamas was embedded underneath the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinians in the Near East and in Palestinian schools and in Al-Shifa hospital, to drag the military into these situations.

Israel was not limiting humanitarian aid in Gaza; there were hundreds of thousands of trucks entering Gaza by various entrances. The war was being paused to allow the polio vaccination campaign to take place. The future of the children in Gaza was of concern. Israel prayed that they would not be under the control of Hamas in the future, and they would have a better life in the future.

For years, Israel had engaged with the representative of the Secretary-General on the issue of children in armed conflict ... Israel had been critical of the reporting, which had not reported a single recruitment of Palestinian youth in fighting. ... Israel being listed in the blacklist equated a law-abiding State with murderous organizations responsible for atrocities against children. It was the Secretary-General's decision to list Israel in this shameful blacklist. This was a watershed moment in an otherwise positive history of cooperation with the United Nations mandate. ...

A guideline had been developed which clearly listed what could not justify underage marriage, including cultural beliefs and pregnancy. Birth certificates held no details on the marital status of the parents. There was no distinction if a child was born to married or unmarried parents. Regarding children born to foreigners, the birth document was not handwritten. ...

The Government aimed to provide the Bedouin with residence in alternative areas in the case of unauthorised villages. A large majority of those residing in unauthorised areas would be able to continue to reside there, without relocating elsewhere. ...

Kafala was the Muslim equivalent of fostering, as issued by the Sharia courts. Foster care arrangements could be extended until the age of 21 and even beyond. Special permits were given to children under the age of eight to go to a non-foster care placement, but only if this was the last resort. The setting up of an institution for children under six was an

unfortunate move, due to the shortage of foster families within the Arab population. The State was making efforts to break down confusion regarding fostering as opposed to adoption and encourage people within the Arab population to take children into their homes. ...

Hamas and its governing organs still had the power to exercise control over the health care system in Gaza. Due to the intense fighting in Gaza, the Israeli Defence Forces did not have control over Gaza's health system, including birth registration. Every civilian death was a tragedy, especially the death of children. In the context of armed conflict, death to civilians did not necessarily indicate criminal conduct. So far, more than 1,000 incidents had been identified as incidents which required further investigation. In addition, 76 criminal investigations against Israeli Defence Force soldiers had been opened since the start of the hostilities, which were still ongoing. Israel utterly rejected the insinuated equivalence between Hamas' use of civilians as human shields and the Israeli Defence Forces.

Israel and its forces were committed to facilitating the improvement of the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Before 7 October, there were only two crossings going from Israel to Gaza. Israel had opened three new land crossings and facilitated the delivery of airdrops of aid directly into Gaza. All aid going into Gaza was documented in a comprehensive list, which was available online. There were many challenges, particularly in the ability of the United Nations and other agencies to collect the aid and reach all intended areas.

Throughout the war, Israel had invested considerable efforts in monitoring the medical care in the Gaza Strip, and there were no restrictions on medical supplies entering this area. Despite the risks, Israel had permitted the delivery of equipment such as generators and had facilitated the construction of seven field hospitals for the benefit of the civilians in Gaza. Israel also facilitated the evacuation of thousands of sick and wounded persons for medical treatment abroad. ...

Bragi Gudbrandsson ... was disappointed that Israel had not replied to questions relating to the Convention in Palestine, including Gaza. Israel's responses on respect of international humanitarian laws, and to the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality when carrying out military attacks, were noted. In light of the over 40,000 civilian deaths in Gaza, including more than 17,000 children, he was sorry to say that he had difficulties in comprehending this statement. The horrific Hamas terrorist attack of 7 October 2023, and the totally disproportionate response on behalf of Israel that followed in Gaza and the West Bank, was probably the darkest moment of modern history. It had fuelled a vicious cycle of violence in the region, and the future was unfortunately grim. The Committee called for the war in Gaza to end and the hostages to be returned.

Itamar Donenfeld [said] The State would carefully consider non-political and unbiased recommendations concerning the protection of children in Israel. The massacre of 7 October and the war forced on Israel had deeply affected Israel's children and youth. The Committee needed to address the well-documented atrocities and clearly condemn Hamas and Hezbollah. The Committee should also support Israeli efforts to release all hostages, including children. Children's rights should remain free from political agendas. Israel stood ready to work constructively with the Committee to advance the rights of children.

Daniel Meron ... [said] Israel took issues of children's rights very seriously. In Judaism, children's vulnerability obliged greater responsibility to be taken towards them. The delegation took note with regard to the Committee's question concerning the implementation of the Convention and invited the Committee to view the footage from 7 October; 7 October was the darkest moment for the people of Israel since the Holocaust. Israel was forced into the war and wanted a cease-fire. Hamas had been rejecting this. Israel remained committed to its international obligations under the Convention.

Ann Skelton ... said the Committee had repeatedly called for the release of hostages, as

well as the facilitation of humanitarian aid access into Gaza. The Convention recognised that children should grow up in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. Children in Gaza and Israel were suffering unspeakable horrors and ending the war was the only way to allow them to grow up in an atmosphere of peace.

To read the full press release see

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2024/09/examen-disrael-au-crc-la-situation-des-minorites-non-juives-notamment-celle-des>

Meta Oversight Board

New decision highlights why standalone use of “From the River to the Sea” should not lead to content removal

In reviewing three cases involving different pieces of Facebook content containing the phrase “From the River to the Sea,” the Board finds they did not break Meta’s rules on Hate Speech, Violence and Incitement or Dangerous Organizations and Individuals. Specifically, the three pieces of content contain contextual signs of solidarity with Palestinians – but no language calling for violence or exclusion. They also do not glorify or even refer to Hamas, an organization designated as dangerous by Meta. In upholding Meta’s decisions to keep up the content, the majority of the Board notes the phrase has multiple meanings and is used by people in various ways and with different intentions. A minority, however, believes that because the phrase appears in the 2017 Hamas charter and given the October 7 attacks, its use in a post should be presumed to constitute glorification of a designated entity, unless there are clear signals to the contrary.

These three cases highlight tensions between Meta’s value of voice and the need to protect freedom of expression, particularly political speech during conflict, and Meta’s values of safety and dignity to protect people against intimidation, exclusion and violence. The current and ongoing conflict that followed the Hamas terrorist attack in October 2023 and Israel’s subsequent military operations has led to protests globally and accusations against both sides for violating international law. Equally relevant is the surge in antisemitism and Islamophobia not only to these cases but also general use of “From the River to the Sea” on Meta’s platforms. ...

In the first case, a Facebook user commented on a video posted by a different user. The video’s caption encourages others to “speak up” and includes hashtags such as “#ceasefire” and “#freepalestine.” The user’s comment includes the phrase “FromTheRiverToTheSea” in hashtag form, additional hashtags such as “#DefundIsrael” and heart emojis in the colors of the Palestinian flag. Viewed about 3,000 times, the comment was reported by four users but these reports were automatically closed because Meta’s automated systems did not prioritize them for human review.

The Facebook user in the second case posted what is likely to be a generated image of floating watermelon slices that form the words from the phrase, alongside “Palestine will be free.” Viewed about 8 million times, this post was reported by 937 users. Some of these reports were assessed by human moderators who found the post did not break Meta’s rules.

For the third case, an administrator of a Facebook page reshared a post by a Canadian community organization, in which the founding members declared support for the Palestinian people, condemned their “senseless slaughter” and “Zionist Israeli occupiers.” With less than 1,000 views, this post was reported by one user but the report was automatically closed. ...

The Board finds there is no indication that the comment or the two posts broke Meta’s Hate Speech rules because they do not attack Jewish or Israeli people with calls for violence or exclusion, nor do they attack a concept or institution associated with a protected characteristic that could lead to imminent violence. Instead, the three pieces of content

contain contextual signals of solidarity with Palestinians, in the hashtags, visual representation or statements of support. On other policies, they do not break the Violence and Incitement rules nor do they violate Meta's Dangerous Organizations and Individuals policy as they do not contain threats of violence or other physical harm, nor do they glorify Hamas or its actions.

In coming to its decision, the majority of the Board notes that the phrase "From the River to the Sea" has multiple meanings. While it can be understood by some as encouraging and legitimizing antisemitism and the violent elimination of Israel and its people, it is also often used as a political call for solidarity, equal rights and self-determination of the Palestinian people, and to end the war in Gaza. ... The phrase's use by [Hamas] with explicit violent eliminationist intent and actions, does not make the phrase inherently hateful or violent ... Because the phrase does not have a single meaning, a blanket ban on content that includes the phrase, a default rule towards removal of such content, or even using it as a signal to trigger enforcement or review, would hinder protected political speech in unacceptable ways.

In contrast, a minority of the Board finds that Meta should adopt a default rule presuming the phrase constitutes glorification of a designated organization, unless there are clear signals the user does not endorse Hamas or the October 7 attacks. ...

Finally, the Board recognizes that even with research tools, there is limited ability to effectively assess the extent of the surge in antisemitic, Islamophobic, and racist and hateful content on Meta's platforms. The Board urges Meta to fully implement a recommendation previously issued by the BSR Human Rights Due Diligence [report](#) to address this. ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.oversightboard.com/news/new-decision-highlights-why-standalone-use-of-from-the-river-to-the-sea-should-not-lead-to-content-removal/>

To read the full decision see

<https://www.oversightboard.com/decision/bun-86tj0rk5/>

Oxfam UK and Save the Children UK

Oxfam @KeirStarmer @David Lammy, stronger action is needed NOW: The UK must suspend ALL arms exports to the Government of Israel & close loopholes for components in F-35 fighter jets. [plus video with Save the Children UK]

<https://x.com/oxfamgb/status/1831251819848221027>

Save the Children UK Over 14,000 children have been killed in Gaza. Homes, schools and hospitals destroyed. @keir_starmer @davidlammy, now is not the time for half measures. The UK must suspend ALL arms to the Government of Israel. [plus video with Oxfam]

<https://x.com/savechildreuk/status/1831244180267438203>

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Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults Bill

<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3741>

**** Holocaust Memorial Bill**

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

Second Reading, House of Lords

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2024-09-04/debates/5FC010DB-3032-4DB7-946C-A558233E6D70/HolocaustMemorialBill>

House of Lords Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee Report

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5901/ldselect/lddelreg/6/6.pdf>

Scottish Parliament

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill

<https://www.parliament.scot/bills-and-laws/bills/assisted-dying-for-terminally-ill-adults-scotland-bill>

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 tomorrow**

Gaps in Equality Legislation [Northern Ireland] (closing date 6 September 2024)

<https://consult.nia-yourassembly.org.uk/committee-for-the-executive-office/gaps-in-equality-legislation-inquiry>

Equality and Human Rights Commission Strategic Plan 2025-2028 (closing date 3 October 2024)

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/our-work/our-strategic-plan-consultation-2025-2028>

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