

Speech: Home Secretary's speech to the Community Security Trust

Thank you for your introduction Lloyd [Dorfman].

As Home Secretary, there's a certain expectation that I speak up. That I speak at dinners, speak at Cabinet, speak on Andrew Marr's sofa.

But occasionally, I get invited just to listen.

As part of Holocaust Memorial Week in January, I was invited to hear Hannah Lewis, a Holocaust survivor, tell her story. I'm sure many of you will know it, but for those of you who don't, Hannah's life was turned upside down by the Nazis.

In 1942, the Germans began rounding up the Jews where she lived and Hannah's family were sent to a labour camp in the Polish village of Adampol.

Her father managed to escape to join the Partisans, leaving Hannah and her mother at the camp.

Now, one of the things the Partisans did in the area was to warn the Jews in the labour camps of imminent raids by the German killing squads.

In the last winter of the occupation, Hannah's father managed to reach Adampol to warn Hannah and her mother of a raid the next day.

But Hannah was sick. So sick in fact that her mother knew that if they escaped the camp and went into the cold then Hannah would surely die. So Hannah's mother decided they would stay put.

The next morning, the German police arrived.

Hannah's mother was lined up against the village wall and shot dead while Hannah watched from a hiding place.

Hannah now travels around the country telling her story so that we will not forget what happened to six million Jews. So that we will not forget that nearly seven out of ten Jews in Europe were killed. But also so that we will spot the warning signs. Because as we all know, the Nazi genocide didn't start as genocide. It started as anti-Semitism.

The Community Security Trust has recorded anti-Semitic incidents on behalf of the Jewish community since 1984 and helps to protect Jews from anti-Semitism and related threats.

CST now has 90 staff and thousands of volunteers, some of whom you will have met as you came in this evening.

It's been great to hear from Danielle Schaffer about why she volunteers for

CST.

The Home Office and CST work closely together. The CST manages government funding for security at Jewish buildings across the country and shares expertise about extremism and radicalisation. CST also helps protect other faith communities too.

The size of the audience here this evening shows us quite how valued the Community Security Trust's work is.

Thank you to Gerald Ronson, David Delew and everyone else who has made tonight possible.

I'm lucky enough to be a returning guest.

When I spoke at this dinner last year, I told you about the terror threat to the UK.

I explained that Britain faced a level of terror not seen since the IRA bombings of the 1970s.

I told you that since 2011, the number of terrorist attacks had increased globally and that the most significant threat to the UK and our interests came from Daesh.

What of course I didn't know was that just a few weeks after this very dinner, a terrorist attack would take place at Westminster, striking at the heart of our democracy.

I didn't know that there would be four further terrorist attacks in London and Manchester or that there would be a total of 36 fatalities.

Last year was the most challenging year for the police and security services for decades. As well as the five attacks, police and MI5 intervened to disrupt an unprecedented number of suspected plots.

Plots which came from the far right and Islamist extremists.

As the outgoing Met Police Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley explained last week, four extreme-right terror plots were disrupted last year.

And as Home Secretary, it's my job to keep people safe.

That's why £144m is being provided for a national uplift in UK armed policing capability to respond more quickly and effectively to an attack.

That's why my officials are out providing guidance to the owners and operators of public venues about what measures they need to take to protect the public.

And that's why I've been doing a lot of work in America, encouraging the big internet companies like Google, Facebook, Microsoft and Twitter to work with us and remove more terrorist content more quickly from their platforms.

I also did not hesitate to proscribe the neo-Nazi group, National Action, when the evidence was enough, and I will not hesitate to take further action. More recently I've proscribed National Action's known aliases Scottish Dawn and NS131 as well.

But I know that there are Jewish schools practising lockdown drills so they're prepared should the worst happen. Even nursery age children are rehearsing what they would need to do in the event of an attack. Some of these children are so small that the drill needs to be dressed up as a game of sleeping lions to get them to cooperate.

Surely this can't be right?

But we know that Daesh and Al-Qaida continue to highlight Jews among lists of targets in their propaganda, as well as the public at large, our police and military, and events like Christmas markets.

That's why this Conservative government has provided over £38.5 million since 2015 to provide for protective security measures at Jewish schools, colleges, nurseries and other locations.

And this year, I'm pleased to announce a further £13.4 million to ensure the security of Jewish faith schools, synagogues and communal buildings following concerns raised by the Jewish community.

It is absolutely essential that we all feel safe where we live, where we work, where we worship and where we meet our friends.

But let me be frank.

I hope that one day there will be no need for CST – sorry Lloyd and Gerald!

But until that day comes, CST is an important partner in ensuring that Jewish life continues unfettered in our country.

Of course, CST isn't just concerned about terrorists. As you know, they also commit significant resources to monitoring and combating anti-Semitism.

And across the globe it seems that history's oldest hatred is on the march. From far-right demonstrators in Virginia chanting 'Jews will not replace us', to arson attacks on kosher restaurants in France, to attacks on Swedish synagogues, anti-Semitism has shown that it is depressingly adaptable.

CST recorded 1,382 anti-Semitic incidents in the UK last year, the highest total they ever recorded for a calendar year.

I welcome their findings that the rise in reported incidents partly reflects the improving response to these horrendous attacks as well as better information sharing between the CST and police. And although CST has found no obvious single cause behind the trend, one of the contributing reasons flagged was publicity surrounding alleged anti-Semitism in the Labour party.

John Mann has spoken out about the anti-Semitic abuse he's received, even

though he isn't Jewish! By his own admission, the vast majority of these attacks have come from self-identified "left-wing" activists or Labour party supporters.

My plea to all political parties represented here this evening, is to take this problem extremely seriously as it must not be left unchallenged.

Because one anti-Semitic incident is one too many.

And that's why this government is taking action:

- our Cross-Government Working Group on anti-Semitism ensures we are alive to any issues and concerns of the Jewish community and can respond quickly
- we were also the first country to adopt the International Holocaust Memorial Alliance working definition of anti-Semitism, which is an effective tool in identifying what constitutes anti-Semitism in the 21st century
- and the hate crime victim's guide which includes advice to victims of anti-Semitic hate crime has recently been published

We're also in the process of refreshing our 2016 Hate Crime Action Plan.

And I know that Anti-Semitism on university campuses remains a concern. That's why the Holocaust Education Trust lessons from Auschwitz project in collaboration with the Union of Jewish students is being expanded.

But I can't talk about anti-Semitism without also talking about the internet.

Social media is changing where and how hate happens.

18 percent of all anti-Semitic incidents recorded by CST last year involved social media and CST say this figure understates the scale of the problem.

We made progress when we worked with the EU Commission and agreed with internet service providers including Google, Facebook and Twitter that they would remove illegal content within 24 hours of it being posted, meaning people are better protected online.

I've also announced funding for a new national hub to tackle the threat of online hate crime which started work in January.

But I know that there is more work to be done and I will not tolerate this sort of terrible abuse.

What is illegal offline is illegal online, and those who commit these cowardly crimes should be met with the full force of the law.

I recently heard an interesting argument that the anti-Semitism we are seeing across the world is an ancient and deeply embedded hostility towards the Jews that is re-emerging as the barbarous events of World War II recede from our collective memory.

If that's the case, then we should take every opportunity to be reminded of the horrors of the 1930s and 40s.

With this in mind, I'm pleased that the new Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre will be a stone's throw away from Parliament. A reminder of where prejudice and intolerance can lead.

Gerald – you helped turn this idea into a reality and your continued support as a member of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation is appreciated.

Now, I'm aware that the CST run a tight ship when it comes to events, so let me bring what I have to say to a close.

I want to end on a more positive note.

You would be forgiven for thinking that a speech about the Holocaust, terrorism and anti-Semitism paints a rather negative picture.

But actually the message I want to leave you all with tonight is that I DO think that this is a good time to be a British Jew.

This year it's the 70th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel. And can I just say how wonderful it is that the Duke of Cambridge will be visiting Israel – the first official visit by a member of the royal family. It's also the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which Rene Cassin, a French Jew, helped to draft. This year was also a good one for Jewish talent at the Oscars, with several contenders in some of the big categories.

And Great Britain simply would not be Great Britain without our Jewish community.

It's nice how Jewish traditions incorporate British elements. For instance, every Shabbat morning prayer, a prayer is said for the royal family and the Queen.

Britain is so much richer for its diversity and if you're Jewish you should be able to go about your daily life and express your religion without fear of hatred or anti-Semitism.

And let me promise you this.

If you feel victimised, I will be there for you. And if you need my support, I will give it to you.

Thank you.