

Speech: PM speech at antisemitism reception: 26 November 2018

Good evening everyone and welcome to Downing Street. As always at events like this it's a real pleasure to share this remarkable house with some truly remarkable people. But I confess that, tonight, my emotions are somewhat mixed.

Throughout 2018, I've had the privilege of taking in part in many celebrations of women and women's rights.

Events marking the centenary of British women winning the vote. The unveiling of the Millicent Fawcett statue. An unprecedented gathering of women MPs from around the world.

But the joy of those occasions has been tempered by the resurgence of two age-old hatreds that many had dared to hope were becoming a thing of the past.

2018 was the year in which Claire Kober, who is here today, stepped down as a council leader after facing a torrent of personal abuse in which, as she said, "the only thing worse than the sexism was the antisemitism".

It was the year in which journalist Karen Glaser felt compelled to write that "When my ... mother came to Britain in the Sixties she stopped feeling scared of being Jewish. But now, 50 years later, she was feeling frightened again."

And it was the year in which Parliament heard women MPs, many of whom are here today, describing the deluge of vile misogynistic and antisemitic threats they receive on a near-daily basis.

The research published at today's conference, showing that Jewish women politicians are more likely to attract the attentions of far-Right hate groups, was deeply disturbing. But I doubt it came as much of a surprise to those who have been on the receiving end.

In both data and anecdote, the evidence is clear: in 2018, in the United Kingdom, Jewish women are increasingly coming under dual attack. Abused for being women and abused for being Jewish.

These attitudes are not limited to the far Right. As is so often the case with antisemitism, bigotry directed at Jewish women also comes from those who would never consider themselves to be racist, including within the women's rights movement itself.

Some Jewish women have been told that they're not "real" feminists unless they publically disavow Israel's right to exist, or been thrown off pride marches for flying rainbow flags that feature the Star of David. And as one British Jew put it earlier this year, "Going on a ... women's rights march can be a tricky affair when you find yourself marching alongside people carrying

banners merging the Israeli flag with a swastika”.

This kind of double-standard is often justified by the old canard that antisemitism isn't really racism, as racism can only “punch down” and Jews are universally wealthy and powerful – an argument that is, in itself, deeply antisemitic.

I have no time for equivocation. Antisemitism is racism – and any “equality” movement that indulges or ignores it is not worthy of the name.

Because hatred and discrimination must be tackled wherever and however it rears its head. And I'm proud to lead a government that is doing so.

We're making sure courts have powers they need to deal with those who peddle hatred, asking the Law Commission to undertake a full review of hate crime legislation.

We're working to stem the rising tide of online bigotry, establishing a new Annual Internet Safety Transparency Report. The report will provide comprehensive data on what offensive content is being reported, what is being removed, and how social media companies are responding to complaints.

We're standing up for women's rights at home and abroad– forcing companies to reveal their gender pay gaps, cracking down on modern slavery, backing the Women's Business Council and more.

We're removing all hiding places for antisemitism, becoming the first government in the world to adopt the IHRA's working definition – and all its examples.

And we're protecting Jewish people from the kind of violent attacks their community has experienced in the United States and Europe, which is why we continue to provide more than £13 million of funding to the Community Security Trust each year.

But tackling the visible symptoms of hatred is only half the battle. To eradicate a noxious weed you must also remove its root, which is why we are also committed to educating people about where bigotry can lead.

Standing in the heart of our democracy on a site right next to Parliament, the National Holocaust Memorial will be accompanied by an education centre that will lead a national effort to fight hatred and prejudice in all its forms. As the Chancellor announced in last month's Budget, we will also provide £1.7 million for school programmes marking the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen.

And we are continuing to support the Holocaust Educational Trust, not just backing its Lessons From Auschwitz programme but extending it to cover universities. The first students and university leaders to take part in the new scheme travelled to Poland just last week.

The HET is just one of many bodies working hard to tackle the kind of prejudices you discussed at today's conference.

John Mann and the APPG on antisemitism have also done so much not just to highlight the scale of the problem but also to explore solutions, particularly with their work around online abuse – so thank you, John, for all your work.

I'd also like to thank Sir Trevor Pears and everyone at the Antisemitism Policy Trust, who made today's world-first conference happen... And the three women who chaired it: Luciana Berger, Theresa Villiers, and Dr Lisa Cameron – a trio that demonstrates how this is an issue that truly transcends party lines.

But most of all, I'd like to thank each and every one of you.

As Claire Kober said when she was bombarded with abuse, "to be tolerant is to be complicit".

So thank you for refusing to tolerate antisemitism and misogyny in any form.

Thank you for refusing to be complicit and look the other way when confronted with bigotry of any kind.

And thank you for lending your voices to the growing chorus that will drown out the sound and fury of the racists and the sexists.

Freedom of thought and freedom of speech have never meant freedom to abuse and freedom to threaten.

Antisemitism and misogyny have no place in this country.

Hatred can be defeated.

Hatred must be defeated.

And, when I look around this room and see so many brave, dedicated men and women, I know that hatred will be defeated.