

# UK statement on Holocaust Memorial Day

Mr/Madam Chair,

I would like to express my thanks to Ambassador Georges Santer of Luxembourg for his introduction, and for his work as the current Chair of IHRA.

Holocaust Memorial Day is a day when we remember the six million Jewish men, women and children murdered during the Holocaust.

We remember the thousands of Roma, Sinti, and all other victims of Nazi persecution.

We also remember the victims of other genocides.

This year we marked the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, as well as the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica Massacre, a town in the heart of Europe where 8,000 Muslim men and boys were murdered.

Over the past week, there has been a programme of commemoration across the UK, including a number of events with Holocaust survivors.

The personal testimony of survivors rebukes those who attempt to diminish the gravity of what happened, or even try to deny that this systematic attempt to destroy an entire people actually took place.

Their words are a reminder of our duty to confront those who would tell lies about our history.

As the number of survivors sadly diminishes with time, the new UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre will stand as a continuing reminder, next to our Parliament, of the horrifying reality of the Holocaust.

For many British people, Britain's relationship with the Holocaust is seen through the stories of survivors, refugees or children who arrived on the 'Kindertransport', those who have rebuilt their lives in the UK. Theirs is a story of resilience and rebuilding. It is also a story of British armed forces liberating Bergen-Belsen, of heroes like Frank Foley and Sir Nicholas Winton and of ordinary people giving refuge to thousands of Jewish people, many of whom would go on to contribute substantially to British life. This is a story that Britain can be proud of.

But Britain's response to the Holocaust was not wholly positive. From 1933 to 1938, Britain, like most democratic governments in Europe, turned a blind eye to the growing persecution in Germany. Antisemitism was also present on the streets of Britain. It is now clear that, from the summer of 1941, governments in London and elsewhere knew that mass murder was taking place. Yet, despite knowledge of the 'Final Solution' and pleas for help, there was no real effort by the Allies to rescue the Jews of Europe.

Building the UK's national Holocaust memorial next to Parliament will serve as a permanent reminder that political decisions have far-reaching consequences. The learning centre will address the complexities of Britain's ambiguous response to the Holocaust, encouraging visitors to critically reflect on whether more could have been done, both by politicians and by society as a whole. Most importantly, our new national memorial will allow us to continue to confront the immense human calamity caused by the destruction of Europe's Jewish communities during the Holocaust, prompting a sincere commitment to mourn, remember and act.