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Background

Holocaust Memorial Day, established under the [Stockholm Declaration](#), is an international day commemorating the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust, alongside the millions killed under Nazi persecution of other groups including Roma and Sinti people, Slavic people, black people, gay people, disabled people, political and religious minorities.

Jan 27th marks the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp.

In the UK, HMD also commemorates those killed in genocides in Cambodia (1975-1979; 1.7million people), Rwanda (1994; 1million people), Bosnia (Srebrenica, 1995 - >8,000 men and boys) and Darfur (Sudan) (2003-date; 200-400,000 dead, 2.6million people displaced).

Relevance for Genocide Prevention Today

Remembering the Holocaust, and other genocides, is vital in helping prevent future atrocities. **The Holocaust was preventable.** By recognising parallel risk factors, paying attention to early warning signals, and taking early action, other genocides and crimes against humanity can be predicted, and avoided.

Risk factors include racism, hate speech, and other identity-based discrimination and violence; social tension; economic depression/insecurity; global insecurity.

Contemporary Genocide/Crimes Against Humanity Risks

[Genocide Watch](#) (an international organisation monitoring risk of genocide internationally) reports **Genocide Emergencies in 15 countries**. It also reports **Genocide Warnings for 8 countries** ([see Genocide Watch countries at risk for full listings of these countries](#)).

In addition, the [Early Warning Project](#) (an international research centre assessing risk of mass atrocities), reports that there are **15 countries with ongoing mass killings**, with Yemen, Pakistan, and India, being at high risk of new mass killing incidents breaking out.

As well as mass violence around the world, there are **issues of concern in the UK, specifically, a rise in antisemitism and identity-based crime**. From Jan-June 2021, 308 antisemitic incidents were recorded – the highest in any recorded year, and a rise of 49% from 2020 ([see Community Security Trust report here](#)), and UK police crime figures recorded 124,091 incidents of hate crime in 2020/2021, a 9% rise from 2019.

Genocide Prevention

To prevent further atrocities, HMD must be more than just remembering – it must be about learning, critical awareness, and **commitment to actively prevent future genocides**. Without that, words spoken in remembrance fail those who they remember, and contemporary populations around the world.

The UK has the potential to lead the international community on genocide prevention, through its status as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, as a founding member of NATO, and a leading aid donor. This can be deepened. Crucially by:

1. Fulfilling existing obligations to the UN Genocide Convention and the UK International Criminal Court Act.
2. Approaching genocide and crimes against humanity as actionable events, not just consequences of existing conflict and warfare.
3. Creating a national strategy on the prevention of genocide across domestic and foreign policy.
4. Embedding education on the Holocaust and other genocides, including their causes and ongoing effects, to all levels of the school curriculum.

Preventative Actions also include:

- Monitoring at risk countries, and acting swiftly when risk factors are identified ([through trade, defence, foreign and domestic policies](#));
- Resourcing and taking seriously our responsibility to investigate, arrest, and try or extradite genocide suspects living at-large in the UK;
- Integrating existing commitments to international peace efforts (e.g. the UN Security Council, NATO, the International Criminal Court, the Responsibility to Protect) with domestic and foreign policy;
- Embedding atrocity-prevention, in addition to poverty relief, as a core purpose of UK Aid, with an emphasis on strengthening civil society upstream prevention initiatives;
- Ensuring UK personnel overseas are trained in recognising and reporting on early warning signs;

In addition, acknowledging historic genocides would help address impunity and systemic violence globally.

Further information

- Holocaust Memorial Day Trust - <https://www.hmd.org.uk/>
- Aegis Trust - <https://www.aegistrust.org/>
- The Coalition for Genocide Response - <https://genocideresponse.org/>
- Protection Approaches - <https://protectionapproaches.org/>
- European Centre for the Responsibility to Protect - <https://ecr2p.leeds.ac.uk/>
- International Association of Genocide Scholars - <https://genocidescholars.org/>