

Press release: Syria: Foreign Secretary condemns recent violence in Idlib province

The Foreign Secretary has released a statement following a significant surge in military action by Russia and Syria in Idlib, Syria.

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Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

I am deeply concerned by the escalation in military action by Russia and the Syrian regime in Idlib. This has included horrifying reports of attacks on schools, hospitals and first responders as well as the use of barrel bombs for the first time in seven months. Over 57 civilians have been killed and over 150,000 forced from their homes in recent days.

The latest offensive, a flagrant violation of the ceasefire agreement that Russia itself agreed with Turkey, is only compounding what was already a dire humanitarian situation in Idlib.

Russia and the Asad regime must respect their obligations under the Sochi agreement and international humanitarian law. They must also remember that any future use of chemical weapons in Syria would be met with a swift and appropriate response.

Speech: Training peacekeepers at the highest standards

Thank you very much indeed, Madam Minister and thank you for being back in New York. Very nice to see you again. And I join others in welcoming Indonesia for focussing this debate on this really important issue and also pay tribute to your country for your country's role in UN Peacekeeping. And thank you obviously to the General and to Dr Holmberg for their briefings.

Madam President, the United Kingdom is proud to be one of the first Member States to endorse a declaration of shared commitments in support of the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping. Providing peacekeepers with comprehensive and high quality training will help them deliver across all the other pillars of that ambitious – but rightly ambitious – agenda. And as other speakers have said, the better trained the peacekeepers are, the better prepared they would be to perform to the highest standards. And that will also include ensuring their own safety and security. And as you alluded to, many of us attended that moving memorial ceremony yesterday, which was a stark reminder of the dangers that UN peacekeepers face on a daily basis. And of course better training will mean that peacekeepers are better equipped to meet the challenges of unpredictable and complicated, complex, multidimensional mission environments.

I'd like to say a few words about performance. Of course peacekeepers should all meet required standards in basic military or policing skills – the so-called 'green skills.' But we believe that the best performing peacekeepers are those who are also well-versed in 'blue skills' such as protection of civilians, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights' law.

Madam President, the United Kingdom recognises that like all troops and police contributing countries: we bear the responsibility for training and equipping our uniformed personnel. And if we fail to prepare them to perform to the highest standards in the field, we not only failed them but we also failed the civilians who they have been deployed to protect. So if any Member State fails in this respect, we believe it is right that they should be held accountable for failure and should learn all the necessary lessons from it. In this context, my Government reiterates its support for the Secretary-General's development of an integrated performance policy framework. And I'd like to underline the importance of robust pre-deployment verification visits, to ensure that uniformed personnel are fully prepared for their missions.

Lieutenant General Filho's briefing mentioned the important issue of reporting of contingent performance issues to UNHQ by field missions. I'd like to just use this occasion, if I may, to urge the Secretariat to provide this Council with regular updates on such issues and what remedial action is to be taken in the interests of transparency and accountability and as set out in Security Council resolution 2436 from last year.

Madam President, I'd like to say a word about partnerships. Each Member State brings invaluable experience and expertise to peacekeeping so more effective and efficient sharing of insights, lessons learned and best practices helps us all. To that end, we support the Secretary-General's initiative to develop and light coordination mechanism in concert with the UN Strategic Force Generation Cell and a range of Member States, which will match training needs with training offers. And it is why we were very pleased to co-host the preparatory meeting on training and capacity building with Uruguay ahead of 2019's Peacekeeping Ministerial.

For our part, we will continue our efforts to better align our training and capacity building efforts with the needs of our partners. The United Kingdom trains some 11,000 peacekeepers from around the world each year. We were proud to work with Vietnam ahead of their first contingent deployment to South Sudan in 2018. We supported Vietnam's efforts to train and prepare their peacekeepers to take over the Level Two field hospital at Bentiu.

Madam President, to conclude, the men, women and children, who we ask our peacekeepers to protect, should be able to trust that anyone in a blue helmet or a blue beret is ready, willing and able to deliver and necessary defend the mandate set by this Council. And our peacekeepers should be able to trust that before they are sent into some of the world's most difficult conflicts, they will be trained and equipped to the highest possible standard. For the United Kingdom, we remain committed to meeting these standards in our own deployments and to partnering with other Member States to help them achieve these goals.

Press release: Prime Minister leads unprecedented support for Holocaust Memorial as further £25m committed

The Prime Minister Theresa May has led cross-party support for the new Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, planned for Victoria Tower Gardens beside Parliament.

In an unprecedented move, the Prime Minister has been joined by the 4 living former Prime Ministers – Sir John Major, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Cameron – to back the proposal to ensure we never forget one of the darkest chapters in human history.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

By putting our National Holocaust Memorial and Education Centre next to our Parliament, we make a solemn and eternal promise that

Britain will never forget what happened in the Holocaust.

Seeing this through is a sacred, national mission. In the face of despicable Holocaust denial, this Memorial will stand to preserve the truth forever.

And this education centre will ensure that every generation understands the responsibility that we all share – to fight against hatred and prejudice in all its forms, wherever it is found.

A further £25 million has also been committed to the new National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, Communities Secretary the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP confirmed today (7 May 2019).

Speaking this afternoon at the Wiener Library, Communities Secretary, the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said the additional funding will improve the visitor experience and maximise green space on the site, creating an enduring monument to the victims and survivors of the Holocaust and a learning centre that will educate generations to come.

The funding will be matched by a newly established charity headed up by member Gerald Ronson CBE and Lord Andrew Feldman to support the landmark proposal.

The further £25 million committed to the new National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, is contingent on the securing of £25 million of match funding and on planning permission being obtained.

Communities Secretary, the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

I believe there can be no more powerful symbol of our commitment to remembering the men, women and children who were murdered in the Holocaust and in subsequent genocides than by placing the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, in the shadow of our Parliament at the heart of our democracy.

Education on the Holocaust and subsequent genocides is one of the most powerful tools we have in the fight against prejudice, intolerance and misinformation.

Located beside our Parliament, this Memorial will deliver this message, and stand as a permanent reminder that political decisions have far-reaching consequences.

The United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial is dedicated to the 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered in the Holocaust and all other victims of the Nazis and their collaborators.

The Learning Centre will focus on the Holocaust and subsequent genocides and will educate future generations on the importance of fighting prejudice and

persecution in all its forms.

The proposals have been developed with great sensitivity to the existing context and character of Victoria Tower Gardens. The vast majority of the public space will be retained and views over Parliament and the River Thames will be improved with a range of accessible seating and a new boardwalk along the embankment.

In 2015 the government committed £50 million to the project to kick-start a society-wide fundraising effort.

A time capsule will also be buried at the proposed site to remind future generations that survivors fought long and hard for this memorial.

British Heroes of the Holocaust award

Supportive video messages from Mrs May and her 4 predecessors were also played at a special ceremony held to honour 2 British Heroes of the Holocaust at the Wiener Library.

[PM Holocaust message](#)

The British Heroes of the Holocaust award is a national award given by the UK Government in recognition of British citizens who assisted in rescuing victims of the Holocaust. It was first awarded on 9 March 2010 following a campaign by the Holocaust Educational Trust.

Speaking at the ceremony in the Wiener Library, London, the world's oldest Holocaust archive, the Communities Secretary praised the courage and humanity of the late Joan Stiebel MBE and the late Lady Rose L. Henriques CBE for their service to Britain. They are 40th and 41st recipients of the British Heroes of the Holocaust award.

Mr Brokenshire said:

We can draw real inspiration from the women awarded British Heroes of the Holocaust medals today.

They refused to turn away and leave it to others to do the right thing. Instead they took on personal responsibility and their courage and human compassion saved many lives.

I hope these medals will ensure their legacy is never forgotten and will inspire us all to confront injustice, bigotry and hatred.

Holocaust Educational Trust Chief Executive, Karen Pollock MBE, commented:

As the Holocaust moves further into history, this Memorial and Learning Centre positioned right next to Parliament will send a clear signal for generations to come of the important place that

the Holocaust has in our nation's history and will stand as a warning of what happens when we let hate and prejudice go unchecked.

To hear from 4 former Prime Ministers and Prime Minister Theresa May together, demonstrates their strong commitment to remembering and will mean so much to Holocaust survivors and their families.

Today, as we honour those who took extraordinary steps to save Jewish lives, going above and beyond what others did, we pledge to redouble our efforts to ensure a long-lasting legacy.

Victoria Tower Gardens was chosen as the home for the new Memorial and Learning Centre because, in the shadow of Parliament, it will encourage visitors to learn about the challenging decisions our leaders had to make in the lead up to, during and in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

The additional £25 million will help to provide further funding for the revised entrance pavilion, the Memorial courtyard and surrounding landscaping and to take account of additional VAT incurred on the overall project costs.

Revised designs for the UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre were unveiled, on 1 May 2019. This follows comprehensive consultation and discussion with local residents, Holocaust experts, survivors and other victim groups, Westminster City Council, Historic England, Royal Parks and statutory consultees.

The proposed design changes to the Entrance Pavilion and Memorial Courtyard are considered to enhance the scheme and improve views towards Victoria Tower and the Palace of Westminster, in particular from the southern end of Victoria Tower Gardens where a new view from the playground has been provided.

The proposals involve significant works of landscaping which would act to enhance the wider offer of Victoria Tower Gardens. The proposals will result in almost completely new gardens being provided back to the community with the following significant improvements to Victoria Tower Gardens provided by the proposed development that will deliver better quality open space and enhance the land as public open space.

See the [latest images of the new designs](#)

After an international competition, with 92 entries in total and 10 finalists, Adjaye Associates, Ron Arad Architects and Gustafson Porter + Bowman were selected unanimously as the winning team, by a jury including the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the Mayor of London, the Chief Rabbi, experts from architecture, art and design, and both first and second-generation Holocaust survivors. The [announcement](#) was made on 24 October 2017.

At Budget 2018, the Chancellor announced £1.7 million funding for educational projects in schools to mark the upcoming 75th anniversary of the liberation

of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camps in 2020, as part of our continuing commitment to remember the victims who perished and pay tribute to the survivors of the Holocaust.

The 2 recipients of the British Heroes of the Holocaust award are:

Joan Stiebel MBE (23 April 1911 – 25 January 2007): Joan Stiebel was responsible for making travel arrangements to bring 1,000 underage Jewish Nazi concentration camp orphans to the United Kingdom. The children came to be known in the press as the 'Boys', and her involvement with them continued throughout her lifetime.

Lady Rose L. Henriques CBE, née Loewe, (1889-1972): Henriques was the daughter of James Loewe, a community worker and scholar in the Stoke Newington area of London. The couple worked on a number of joint enterprises together. From 1914 until 1948, they were the joint wardens of the St George's Jewish Settlement in Stepney, later known as the Bernhard Baron St George's Jewish Settlement. When the war ended, Henriques went to Germany where she worked alongside a number of Jewish welfare groups at the former Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and then at the nearby displaced persons camp.

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