

Review into the Invitation Letter issued by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust to the 2025 Holocaust Memorial Day National Commemoration Event

Introduction

1. On 9 December 2024, the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) announced that I had accepted an invitation to conduct an independent governance review into the Trust in the light of the adverse reaction from a number of recipients, and others, to the wording of the Trust's letter of invitation - issued in November 2024 - to the 2025 Holocaust Commemoration Ceremony on 27 January 2025.

2. The agreed terms of reference for my review were as follows:

‘In the light of the events surrounding the invitation letter to the national Ceremony for Holocaust Memorial Day 2025, to review the governance processes and procedures of the Trust with the aim of avoiding in the future a situation in which major communications from the Trust can be issued without full and proper discussion and agreement by its Board of Trustees’.

3. The announcement of the review said that I would aim to report my conclusions and recommendations to the Board of Trustees of HMDT by the end of the first quarter of 2025.

4. In the report that follows I set out my conclusions and recommendations to the Board of Trustees. Appendix 1 lists the current members of the Board of Trustees. I am grateful to them and to others outside of the Trust to whom I spoke during the course of my review, including a number of those who had raised concerns about the letter of invitation to the 2025 Commemoration Ceremony. I also received a number of thoughtful and considered written submissions which have greatly assisted me. I am grateful to everyone for their assistance.

The sequence of events

5. Every year HMDT stages the nation's annual, national commemoration of the Holocaust, other victims of the Nazis, and of what are termed the 'subsequent genocides'. This commemoration takes place each year on (or as near to as possible if the date clashes with the Jewish Shabbat) 27 January, the date in 1945 of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. Typically, invitations to the commemoration event go out in November.
6. The invitation letter to this year's (2025) commemoration was issued in early-November 2024 signed by the HMDT Chief Executive, Olivia Marks-Woldman. The full text of the letter is at [Appendix 2](#). The letter included the following paragraph:

'80 years on from the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, our mission is more vital than ever. We remain horrified by the barbaric attacks in Israel on 7 October, including the ongoing plight of those taken as hostages, and the devastating violence against Palestinian civilians in Gaza. In the UK, the impact of this conflict is felt through an escalating wave of antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred) and anti-Muslim sentiment, and the use of divisive and polarising language.'

7. Although the text of the letter drew on language which had been approved for other purposes by HMDT's External Affairs Board sub-committee, the text of the letter had not been seen or approved by the HMDT Board or by any of its trustees, including any of the Board's Honorary Officers (the Chair, vice-Chair and Treasurer), before being sent out.
8. Almost immediately, a number of recipients expressed unease over the language of the letter. One prominent member of the House of Lords, Baroness Deech, told the Jewish Chronicle:

'In many countries, sadly now including the UK, the Holocaust is being used to tell a nationalist or politically convenient story. It was shocking and insensitive to see how far HMDT has gone along that road. It is time for the Jewish community to reclaim the

memory of our unique tragedy and explain its antisemitic roots our way.’

9. Another Peer, Lord Godson, told the newspaper:

‘What has the HMDT come to when it implicitly seems to place the actions of the IDF [the Israel Defence Forces] on a continuum with those of the SS Einsatzgruppen during the Shoah?’

10. The Jewish Chronicle at this point approached HMDT for comment. After urgent discussion including with the Trust’s Honorary Officers the HMDT Chair, Laura Marks, released an immediate statement to the newspaper which commenced:

‘We apologise unreservedly that in our letter of invitation to the Holocaust Memorial Day National ceremony next January we referred to the Israel/Gaza conflict. This was not appropriate and should not have happened.’

and concluded:

‘Our staff, trustees and volunteers work tirelessly to ensure the memory and the unique place of the Holocaust as one of the darkest periods in human history, and the lessons of the Holocaust, remain at the centre of Holocaust Memorial Day, for everyone of any faith or background, who attends any of the thousands of HMD events.’

11. The full text of the statement made to the Jewish Chronicle by Laura Marks is at [Appendix 3](#).

12. While some who had been critical accepted the unreserved apology from the HMDT Chair, others continued to call for further action to be taken including calling for the resignation of the Chair or Chief Executive or both of HMDT.

13. The Board of Trustees of HMDT met to consider the position on 17 December. 12 of the 13 trustees were present along with, as an observer, the Chair Designate of HMDT, the Rt Hon Sajid Javid, who is due to take over as Chair in July of 2025. There was no call at the meeting from any Board

member for the Chair or Chief Executive's resignation. The Board reiterated its full support for the review which I had been commissioned to undertake.

14. The national Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration took place as scheduled on 27 January at the Guildhall in London attended by, amongst many others, the Prince and Princess of Wales and the Prime Minister. The ceremony was broadcast that evening on BBC1. Numerous other events supported by the Trust took place in the week of the commemoration throughout the UK, including national events supported by the devolved governments and administrations in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh. Thousands of local events also took place, many landmark public buildings were lit up and media coverage was extensive.

What happened and why did it occur?

15. It is common ground that a failure of governance occurred within HMDT in regard to the letter of invitation to the 2025 Commemoration Ceremony being issued without it having been seen or approved by the Board of Trustees or the Board's Honorary Officers. The Chief Executive, who signed the letter, has accepted full personal responsibility for the failure and apologised for it to the Board of Trustees at its meeting on 17 December. This does not mean, however, that the Chief Executive alone was or should be held solely responsible for the failure. In my experience where failures occur in organisations - be they in the public, private or third sectors - there are invariably more complex factors at work.
16. Having spoken extensively to the key personnel involved at the Trust, and to a number of others, it is clear that a major contributory factor to the failure which occurred was the very considerable pressure which the Trust was under at the time. The Trust is a small organisation with a staff of only some 15 full-time equivalents. Although its workload has increased dramatically in recent years - in part due to its own success in raising the profile of Holocaust Memorial Day - there has been no corresponding increase in its funding, or staffing, with its government grant, in particular, having remained flat in cash terms over more than a decade.
17. At the time when these events occurred, the Trust was also carrying a number of key vacancies, had just lost its highly experienced Deputy Chief

Executive and its Head of Communications was on sick leave. One result was that the Chief Executive, Olivia Marks-Woldman, was carrying personally a very substantially increased workload. While in her conversations with me she has not sought to use this as an explanation or excuse for not having given greater attention to the wording of the letter of invitation to the 2025 commemoration, I am clear that it was a significant contributory factor.

18. It is also clear from my enquiries that the staff of the Trust had been under very considerable additional pressure since the events of 7 October 2023. There had been numerous calls on the Trust from different quarters for it, alternatively, either to demonstrate greater solidarity with Israel in the face of the Hamas attacks or to denounce at least some of Israel's actions in Gaza as constituting genocide. These voices were not new but they amplified in volume significantly after 7 October. While the Trust was clear, at every level, that it should not be drawn into the conflict, the pressure felt by some of its staff members was intense and unremitting, and added considerably to the workload.
19. It was that, in part, which led to the issue of how to respond to such calls being put to the Trust Board's External Affairs sub-committee. The Trust in this respect operates a widely accepted 'best practice' structure in the not for profit sector in which the work of its Board is supported by a number of sub-committees. The current structure of HMDT's sub-committees - which was also the structure at the time when the events covered by this review took place - is set out at [Appendix 4](#). In accordance with best practice, the minutes of Board sub-committees are routinely included in the papers for full meetings of the Board and the chair of each sub-committee reports back to the full Board on the sub-committee's most recent meeting.
20. The External Affairs sub-committee was originally established in 2017 as the 'Promoting HMD Committee' to oversee all organisational activities that seek to promote HMD across the UK. Amongst its purposes was to 'maintain an overview of external communications, including press, communications, branding and social media.' The original terms of reference for the sub-committee are at [Appendix 5](#). Its current membership is listed in [Appendix 1](#). The sub-committee's name was changed to the External Affairs sub-committee in 2018 though its terms of reference were not updated.

21. Following on from the Hamas attacks on Israel of 7 October 2023, and the subsequent conflict in Gaza, the sub-committee considered on several occasions the wording that the Trust should use in responding to increasingly frequent and vociferous questions about its stance on the conflict, and on how to mark HMD appropriately in the context of the conflict. Text was agreed ahead of HMD 2024, and then reviewed again ahead of HMD 2025. Most recently, at its meeting on 9 October 2024 and finalised by email on 15 October 2024, the sub-committee adopted the following wording for use in responding to these enquiries:

a) General language to use in response to questions/enquiries

‘We remain horrified by the barbaric attacks in Israel on 7 October including the ongoing plight of those taken as hostages. We have profound concerns about the devastating violence against Palestinian civilians in Gaza, and the destruction and suffering that is happening on a large scale, both in Gaza and the wider region. The effects of this will be felt for decades to come.

The situation has led to a significant increase in antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred) and Islamophobia (anti-Muslim hatred) around the world, including in the UK. We are deeply concerned by the use of divisive, violent and polarising language, much of which is embedded in antisemitism or islamophobia, both rooted in hatred.

The central mission of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) is to promote and support Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) as the UK’s national day to commemorate the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust, alongside the millions of people killed under Nazi persecution of other groups, and people murdered in more recent genocides recognised by the UK government.

Criticisms about the Israeli government’s conduct in Gaza are often embedded in human rights and the rule of law. It is legitimate to criticise the policies or actions of any state, but on some occasions, criticisms of Israel either inadvertently or deliberately slip into antisemitism.

We are deeply worried to see some people using language, tropes, allegations, and images to drive forward an antisemitic agenda, some of which is based on Holocaust distortion and Nazi imagery.

Since 7 October leading hate crime monitoring agency on measuring anti-Muslim hate, Tell MAMA, has reported that there has also been an appalling rise in anti-Muslim hate in the UK. Anti-Muslim tropes are also being used to

intimidate the Muslim community, both on the streets and online. It is essential that we strengthen bonds between communities and address the direct impact on social cohesion in the UK.

We can all listen respectfully and with empathy to others, and play a part in building bridges, not barriers, between people and communities. As the devastating situation continues, the division and hostility within societies both globally and here in the UK affects us all. Many communities are feeling isolated and fearful, with rising community tensions and suspicions. People are increasingly polarised, with fear and vulnerabilities making it harder to make space to listen constructively to others.

In such a time, it is all the more important to maintain the integrity of Holocaust Memorial Day: its focus on commemoration of the Holocaust and its inclusion of remembrance of non-Jewish people murdered by Nazis and their collaborators, and those murdered in recent genocides – and its message to remind us where prejudice can lead if it is normalised.’

b) Language to form responses to questions/criticisms of the above ie language to support front line staff dealing with these enquiries.

‘Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) is a time to remember the 6 million Jews murdered during the Holocaust, and millions more people murdered through the Nazi persecution of other groups. We also mark the more recent genocides recognised by the UK government, as well as the genocide in Darfur. The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT) empathises with all who are targeted for prejudice and persecution, but never makes decisions on which of the sadly many terrible atrocities unfolding in the world constitute genocide.’

22. With the benefit of hindsight, it is possible to see how individual lines within the above guidance can be criticised, particularly if taken out of context. I have no doubt, however, having heard from all of its members, that this was an honest and very carefully considered attempt by the External Affairs sub-committee to support the staff of the Trust in responding to the many questions and enquiries they were receiving. It was agreed that the wording was to be used as the basis of the guidance provided to local HMD organisers and otherwise for reactive purposes (such as replying to emails questioning if Gaza should be included on HMD). What is clear, however, is that this wording was intended to be used purely in response to questions and enquiries, and was not intended to be used proactively.

23. A question which arises nevertheless is whether it was necessary or appropriate for the Trust to engage with the issue of the conflict in Gaza at all, whether reactively or proactively, and to place any wording with regard to the conflict on its website. Some of those outside of the Trust to whom I spoke believe strongly that the Trust could and should simply have declined to enter into this issue at all and should have placed no wording at all in this respect on its website.
24. This question was in fact considered carefully by the EAC. The clear conclusion of the EAC, which was reported to the full Board and discussed at length by the Honorary Officers, was that such guidance was both necessary and inescapable and that for the Trust to provide no such guidance would substantially increase the risk of local HMD event organisers agreeing to demands locally to include recognition of Gaza as genocide, thereby increasing the risk of Holocaust Memorial Day being hijacked and undermined. It was agreed it would also risk undermining the Trust's position as the authority on how to mark Holocaust Memorial Day appropriately. At no point, however, did the sub-committee propose or was the full Board invited to agree that this, or any other specific, language should be included in the letter of invitation to the 2025 Commemoration Ceremony.
25. The wording of the letter of invitation was drafted by the staff of the Trust. I have been made aware of the names of the individual staff members who were involved in this process but I have concluded that it would be unfair to name them in this report. They were relatively junior members of the Trust's staff and I have no doubt that they were acting in good faith and thought they were doing the right thing in including some of the wording that had been agreed by the External Affairs sub-committee in the text of the letter.
26. The draft letter was signed off by the Chief Executive and sent to the Trust's event management company on 29 October 2024, along with other letters of invitation (to survivors, to VIPs etc). The letter was issued to invitees to the Commemoration event on 8 November 2024.
27. At the time of its issue the Trust had no systematic arrangements in place for ensuring that significant external communications were routinely agreed, prior to their being sent out, by its Chair, Honorary Officers or

Board of Trustees. Such clearance was sought on occasions but this was done on an ad-hoc basis with no systematic record kept of when such clearance was given and by whom. Such a system has since been introduced which allocates all such communications to one of three categories which require different levels of authorisation and for all such authorisations to be recorded. The details of these arrangements are set out at Appendix 6. I have little doubt that had they been in place at the time when the events covered by this review took place the drafting of the letter of invitation to the national Commemoration would have been subjected to much more careful scrutiny.

28. As soon as it became clear that the letter of invitation had led to significant controversy it was withdrawn and a revised version substituted as set out in Appendix 7. By this time, however, the damage caused by the wording of the original letter had been done.
29. In my judgement the principal reason why this failure occurred was that, under-resourced and under considerable pressure of time, neither those who drafted the letter nor the Chief Executive in approving it gave sufficient thought to its content, or to how it might be received by recipients, before it was issued. Rather it was simply seen as ‘one more thing that had to be done’ in order to keep up with the very demanding schedule leading up to the unusually complex and multifaceted national Commemoration. The failure was then compounded by the absence of any systematic arrangements requiring the letter to be agreed by the Chair, Honorary Officers or Board before it was issued.
30. Several of those most critical of the letter outside of the Trust to whom I spoke suggested, by contrast, that the failure resulted primarily from a mind-set within the organisation which had, either implicitly or explicitly, accepted criticisms of Israel’s response to the 7 October attacks as justified at least to some extent, and who believed it was thus appropriate to refer to Palestinian suffering as a result of the conflict in the letter of invitation to the Commemoration. As an independent reviewer, I can say only that, while individuals in both the staff team and on the Board no doubt had their own views, I have found no evidence of such a mind-set in the organisation in the documentation I have seen nor in the conversations which I have held with the staff and trustees of the Trust. In particular, I am very clear that neither the Chief Executive nor the Chair share this view. The CEO is clear that including reference to the Gaza

conflict in the letter was simply wrong and an error on her part which she greatly regrets.

Other issues

31. Inevitably, a number of other issues relating to Holocaust Memorial Day have been raised in the light of these events, either publicly or in conversation with me. By far the most significant is the question of whether it is appropriate for Holocaust Memorial Day to continue to commemorate both the Holocaust and subsequent genocides recognised as such by the UK government or whether it should in future commemorate the Holocaust alone.
32. I should make clear that this issue is not within the terms of reference of my review. However, given the frequency with which the issue was raised with me, I think it appropriate that I should examine it at least to the extent of setting out the background to it and the arguments on both sides of the issue.
33. The first point to make in this respect is that, even if the Board of the Trust were to believe that it would be right to make such a change, and it is clear that the great majority of its current trustees would be opposed to such a course of action which was discussed and rejected by the Board of Trustees in 2024, it is simply not within its power to do so.
34. The Trust is a creature of government. Holocaust Memorial Day itself was initiated at the Stockholm Conference in 2000, where the UK was represented by the then Prime Minister. In its early years Holocaust Memorial Day in the UK was organised and led directly by the Home Office. This arrangement was not viewed as ideal, however, and the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust was established by the government in 2005 and funded at that stage in its entirety by the Home Office, before responsibility passed to the newly formed Department of Communities and Local Government in 2007 (now the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government). The original Memorandum and Articles of Association for the Trust - set out in full at [Appendix 8](#) - went considerably further than requiring the Trust to commemorate the Holocaust alone. In particular, its purpose was set down as:

‘The promotion of the mental and moral improvement of mankind by:

(a) commemorating and remembering the victims of the Holocaust (the persecution and mass murder of 6 million Jews by the Nazis and their accomplices during the period 1933-45) and the victims of the persecution and murder that resulted from the targeting of other groups of people by Nazi policies – including Roma, Sinti, black people, mentally and physically disabled people, lesbian and gay people and many of the Slavic peoples – by the promotion organisation and support of the annual Holocaust Memorial Day in accordance with the attached Statement of Purpose (Schedule 1) and Statement of Commitment (Schedule 2);

(b) promoting a public sentiment in favour of the exercise and protection of those fundamental human rights which constitute freedom from genocide, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, slavery and unlawful forced labour, the right to freedom of thought, conscience, expression and religion and the right to asylum from persecution; and

(c) promoting harmony between communities including racial and religious harmony.

35. The Trust was also given a specific responsibility for

‘The promotion of equality and diversity for the public benefit and in particular the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of race, disability, sexual orientation, gender or religion by raising the awareness of the public concerning the causes and effects of racism and prejudice in society including the significant impact of the Holocaust and subsequent acts of systematic discrimination in particular those leading to genocide.’

36. Over the intervening years the Trust’s remit has been made more specific under successive governments; namely to commemorate the ‘Holocaust and subsequent genocides’. Since March 2024, faced with growing controversy over what constitutes genocide and external pressure to include Gaza as such, the Board of the Trust has chosen to commemorate

as ‘subsequent genocides’ only those genocides which have been recognised as such by the UK government; namely those which took place in Bosnia, Cambodia, Rwanda and amongst the Yazidi people. For historical reasons it has also continued to include Darfur in the list of genocides which it recognises.

37. It would be up to the Board of Trustees to propose to the UK government that it should in future recognise only the Holocaust but that would require the government to agree to such a change being made and there is no indication at present that the government would agree to such a change.
38. Those who argue for such a change nevertheless do so on the basis that the Holocaust was an event unique in human history and that to associate its commemoration with other subsequent genocides - no matter how awful those genocides were - is to dilute that commemoration. They also worry, particularly in the current climate of rising anti-semitism, that Holocaust Memorial Day has become a target for those who want to vilify the State of Israel and to downplay or ignore the suffering of the Jewish people. Some figures prominent in the UK’s Jewish community argue that it should be for the Jewish community in the UK to ‘own’ the commemoration of the Holocaust and commemorate it as it sees fit.
39. Those who argue against such a change note that there were numerous non-Jewish victims murdered by the Nazis; Roma and Sinti people, Jehovah’s witnesses, gay and disabled people, trade unionists and people of many faiths and none who had the courage to stand out against the Nazi regime. But more fundamentally, they argue that, far from diminishing or diluting commemoration of the Holocaust, commemoration of subsequent genocides brings home to the current generation in the UK that evil and murder of people on account of who they are did not cease to exist with the defeat of the Nazi regime in 1945. They believe that if commemoration of the unique tragedy of the Holocaust is to remain a vital part of British society and be commemorated across the nation, it must remain relevant to people of all ages, faiths and backgrounds. They argue that by illustrating the stages which lead to genocide, the dangers are more clearly demonstrated.
40. It is not for me as an independent reviewer to pass judgement on this issue which, as noted above, is in any event outside my terms of

reference. I would merely note that any change to the current remit of the Trust along the lines sought by some would be a very major decision with far-reaching implications for British society as a whole and would, in my view, need to be considered very carefully before any such change was made. It would clearly be a change to which the current Board of Trustees, which has considered this issue regularly, would be overwhelmingly opposed.

41. I do think, however, that there is one change in this respect that could advantageously be made now. A number of those critical of the error made by the Trust in respect of the letter of invitation to the 2025 Commemoration worry that the error was symptomatic of a deeper malaise within the Trust whereby it is lessening its focus on the Holocaust in favour of giving greater prominence to subsequent genocides and to other contemporary issues. As noted above, I have found no evidence to support that view but I do recognise that it is a real concern amongst some of those to whom I spoke.
42. Accordingly, I think it would serve as a significant reassurance if the Trust were formally to amend its Memorandum and Articles of Association at the first available opportunity to make explicit that its role is to commemorate the Holocaust and solely those subsequent genocides recognised as such by the UK government (along with Darfur which it has long recognised as such). In other words, it would be made explicit in its Memorandum and Articles of Association that the Trust will not extend its activities to focus on further supposed or alleged genocides unless and until they had been recognised as such by the UK government. I believe it would also be helpful if that provision was explicitly drawn attention to in future contracts of employment for staff of the Trust so that those joining the organisation should be clear as to its remit.

Conclusion and recommendations

43. In the light of the events described above which allowed an inappropriate letter of invitation to the 2025 Holocaust commemoration event to be issued, I **recommend** that the Board of the Trust takes the following steps to reduce to a minimum the chances of this or a similar event occurring again in the future (I note that the first step has already been taken):

- review and maintain a process for identifying and approving key external communications;
- develop and implement a formal Scheme of Delegation of Authority making explicit, in particular, where the Chief Executive has freedom to act and where approval by the Chair, Honorary Officers or the full Board is required;
- review the membership and Terms of Reference of all of its sub-committees regularly; at least every three years;
- establish an annual, formal meeting between the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Board of Deputies of British Jews; and between the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Jewish Leadership Council, to maintain and strengthen relationships between these organisations;
- consider, in the light of the experience set out in paragraphs 23 and 24 above, whether it should in future further restrict the degree to which it feels obliged to make any reference on its website to the ongoing situation in Israel and Gaza;
- amend the Trust's Memorandum and Articles of Association, and its future contracts of employment, as set out in paragraph 41 above.

44. In conclusion I would, however, like to say that, while the issuing of an inappropriate letter to the 2025 Commemoration event was clearly regrettable, it should not be allowed to over-shadow the work which the Trust has led - as a very small organisation with very limited funds - to lead and to enhance Holocaust commemoration in the UK over recent years. The change which the Trust has helped to bring about in both the depth and scale of such commemoration has been a truly remarkable one in which its trustees and staff, both past and present, can justly take great pride. I have been particularly impressed by the thoughtfulness and effort with which the current leadership of the Trust and the current Board of Trustees has sought to guide and lead the Trust over recent years.

45. That success was well-illustrated by both the national ceremony held at the Guildhall on 27 January this year organised by the Trust and by the thousands of other events supported by the Trust held throughout the UK. The national ceremony attended by, amongst many others, the Prince and

Princess of Wales, the Prime Minister and other faith, political and civil society leaders has been widely praised for its solemnity, dignity and for having had the murder by the Nazis of the six million Jews at its very heart while also recognising the millions of non-Jews also brutally murdered during the Holocaust and subsequent genocides. Due to the efforts of the Trust it also received unprecedented levels of coverage on national media.

The Rt Hon Lord Harrington of Watford
7 April 2025

Appendix 1 – Trustees of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust:

Honorary Officers:

Laura Marks CBE (Chair)

Sir Leigh Lewis KCB (Vice-Chair)

Brian Markeson (Treasurer)

Honorary Vice President

Lord Eric Pickles PC

Trustees:

HE David Ashley

David Austin OBE

Julian Blake

Kate Ferguson

Paul Giannasi OBE

Michael Marx

Phil Rosenberg

Joan Salter MBE

Revd Dr Richard Sudworth OBE

Marie van de Zyl OBE

Membership of the External Affairs Committee

Paul Giannasi OBE (chair)

David Austin OBE

Kate Ferguson

Laura Marks CBE

Appendix 2:

Invitation letter to the Holocaust Memorial Day 2025 UK Ceremony

November 2024

Invitation to the UK Holocaust Memorial Day Ceremony Monday 27 January 2025

Dear Title First Name Last Name Suffix,

I am delighted to invite you, on behalf of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT), to the **UK Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) Ceremony 2025**. The ceremony will take place on **Monday 27 January 2025** in a **central London** location. For security reasons, we will release the venue details in January. The Ceremony will start at **3:30pm** and there will be a reception afterwards from approximately **4:30-6pm**.

80 years on from the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, our mission is more vital than ever. We remain horrified by the barbaric attacks in Israel on 7 October, including the ongoing plight of those taken as hostages, and the devastating violence against Palestinian civilians in Gaza. In the UK, the impact of this conflict is felt through an escalating wave of antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred) and anti-Muslim sentiment, and the use of divisive and polarising language.

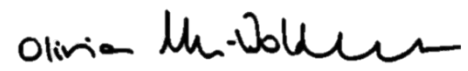
This year, the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, Bosnia, and the ongoing ferocity of violence and displacement in Sudan underscores this urgency, and highlights the continued need for vigilance, education and commemoration. HMD 2025 serves as an opportunity for people to come together, irrespective of their background, to remember the six million Jewish people murdered during the Holocaust, and the millions more murdered through the Nazi persecution of other groups and in the more recent genocides recognised by the UK government, and the genocide in Darfur. Through this, we can honour the memories of survivors and foster a better future, within which hatred and violence have no place.

We are delighted to once again stage a live ceremony, and we warmly invite survivors of the Holocaust, more recent genocides, and the nation's political, civil and faith leadership, to join us as we seek to learn from targeted persecution for a better future. This year particularly, even more people will participate in this important commemoration, spreading awareness and fostering a collective commitment to building a world free from hatred and violence.

Please RSVP to let us know you would like to attend the in-person event by **25 November 2024**, and we will be in touch again soon with the final details about the day, including the

exact location. In the meantime, I very much hope you will be able to join us in January to commemorate HMD 2025.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Olivia Marks-Woldman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Olivia Marks-Woldman OBE

Chief Executive, HMDT

Appendix 3:

Statement from Holocaust Memorial Day Trust Chair of Trustees, Laura Marks CBE

Issued 19 November 2024

“We apologise unreservedly that in our letter of invitation to the Holocaust Memorial Day National ceremony next January we referred to the Israel Gaza conflict. This was not appropriate and should not have happened.

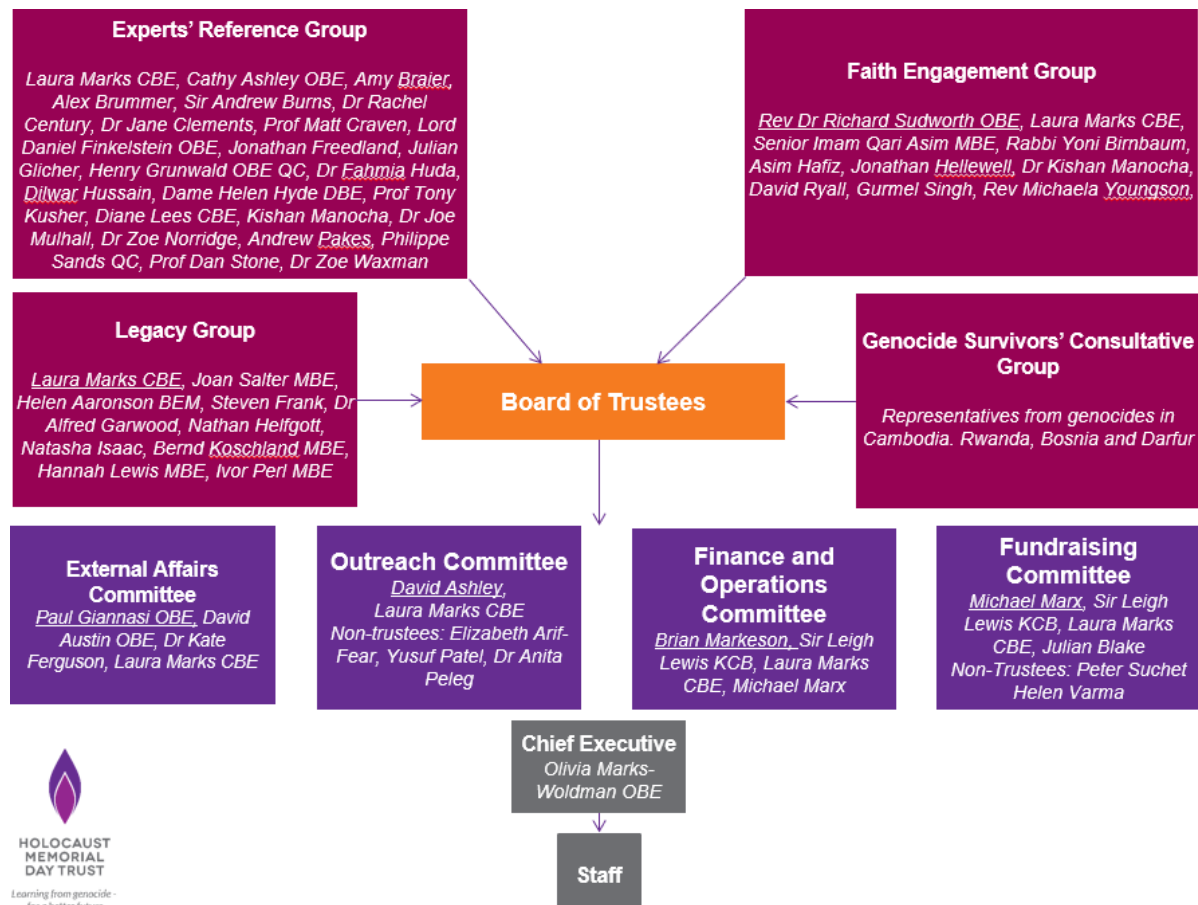
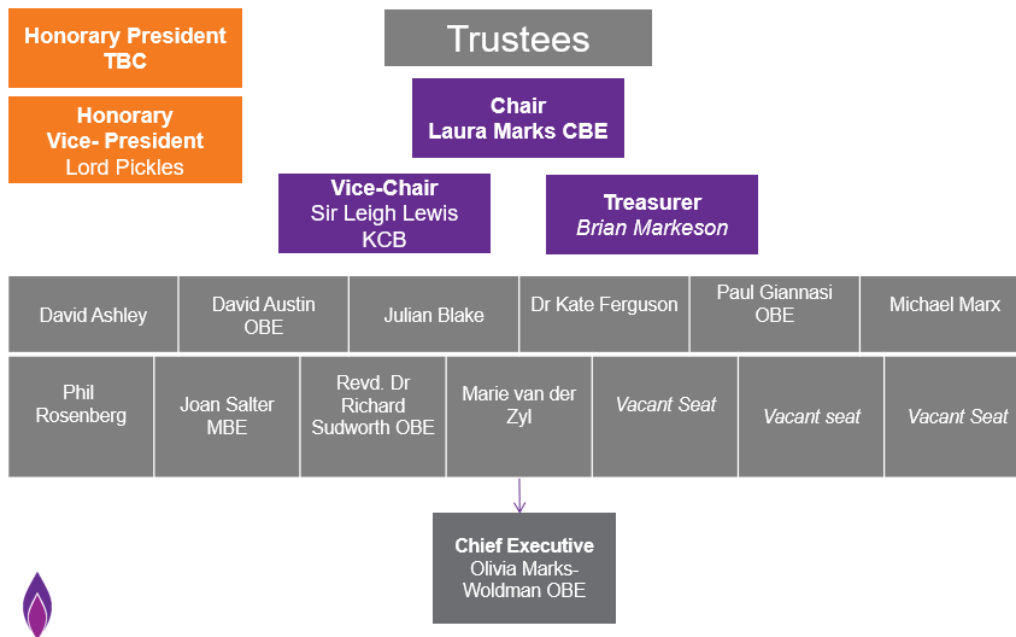
Holocaust Memorial Day 2025 will mark the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz – the last such major milestone where we will welcome Holocaust survivors with memories of what they witnessed as children.

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust was established by the UK government with the remit to commemorate the Holocaust and also the more recent genocides recognised by the UK government. We engage as broadly as possible with the whole of society in the UK, so that people of all ages and backgrounds can learn where hatred can lead, and what can happen when it is normalised and encouraged. This is particularly important now in increasingly polarised times and with the significant increase in hate crime against Jews, Muslims and other faith communities.

Our staff, trustees and volunteers work tirelessly to ensure the memory and the unique place of the Holocaust as one of the darkest periods in human history, and the lessons of the Holocaust, remain at the centre of Holocaust Memorial Day, for everyone of any faith or background, who attends any of the thousands of HMD events.

Our commitment to commemorating the Holocaust remains absolute and at the very heart of what we do, and that will be the case at the very special Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration in January 2025.”

Appendix 4 Governance structure of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust



Appendix 5: Terms of Reference for the External Affairs Committee

1 Purpose

The Promoting HMD Committee is a standing committee, which oversees all organisational activities that seek to promote HMD across the UK. Its purpose is to:

- 1.1 Maintain an overview of external communications, including press, communications, branding and social media;
- 1.2 Maintain an overview of the UK Ceremony and ensure that the Holocaust Memorial Day UK commemorative event meets its purpose, as set out in schedule 1 of the Memorandum of Association incorporated on 6 April 2005 as amended by special resolution dated 30 June 2008.
- 1.3 Maintain an overview of the development of annual themes;
- 1.4 Advise on the profile of the charity with relevant stakeholder groups, including the media, government departments, parliamentarians, business, schools and other charities
- 1.5 Review HMDT's external communication and report to the Board on matters relating to external communications and make recommendations as appropriate;
- 1.6 Advise on minimising any reputational risk to HMDT, including from problems arising as a result of activities planned by local organisations.

2 Membership

- 2.1 The Promoting HMD Committee consists of four trustees. The Chief Executive and Communications Manager will be in attendance.
- 2.2 The Board of HMDT shall appoint the members of the Committee at the first Board meeting following Holocaust Memorial Day.
- 2.3 The Chair of the Committee shall be nominated at the first meeting of the Committee to promote HMD after the adoption of the terms of reference.
- 2.4 Appointments to the Committee shall be for a period of up to three years, which may be extended for a further three-year period.
- 2.5 The Board, from among their members, shall fill any casual vacancies that arise within the Committee.

3 Quorum

The quorum necessary for the transaction of business shall be two.

4 Frequency of meetings

The Committee shall normally meet at least four times a year.

5 Voting

Questions arising at any meeting shall be determined by a majority of votes of the members present and in the case of an equality of vote, the chairman has a second or casting vote.

6 Reporting

The minutes of the Promoting HMD Committee will be presented to HMDT's Board as soon as is reasonably practicable.

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Approved by HMDT's Board on [11 December 2017].

Appendix 6: New process for trustee sign-off of key external communications

Content sign-off procedure – External - Jan 2025

Background:

Following the challenges with the HMD 2025 invite wording HMDT decided to immediately implement an Honorary Officer/Trustee sign-off process for all relevant external communications. The purpose of this document is to define an implementable and reliable structure for the sign-off process moving forward.

This process has been developed in consultation with the staff and trustees.

Considerations:

1. Process must be reliable and practically implementable
2. Process must provide clear communication and time-expectation for both the content creators and the signee's
3. We will have different tiers of content with different levels of sign-off
4. We will minimize overhead whilst maintaining appropriate functional level
5. The purpose of the review is not to debate the elegance of wording, rather to ensure the wording is appropriate for HMDT.

Process: Internal sign-off request

We are utilising Microsoft Planner (in Teams) to create and monitor sign-off requests.

Process: External sign-off process

All requests will come to OMW and PLS to triage based on the following category definitions:

Category 1 - Communications which carry no risky content (eg purely administrative communications, social media posts based solely on historical content)

Sign off authority: OMW or PLS

Category 2 - Communications with some potentially risky or sensitive content - e.g. related to a specific event or opportunity.

Sign off authority: recorded sign-off by any one of the Honorary Officers

Category 3 - Major communications with sensitive or risky content, and to all or many of our supporters/stakeholders.

Sign off authority: recorded sign-off by all of the Honorary Officers - with the option of the Chair deciding to consult the full Board before release

For all Category 2 and 3 sign-offs OMW or PLS will email the Honorary Officers using the following structure:

Subject – eg HNW Dinner 2nd Chaser – for review by 7th Jan

We may use 'CONFIDENTIAL' at the beginning or 'URGENT' at the end of the title as appropriate.

The email will either contain the text or attach the relevant documentation.

The reply should say 'reviewed by xxxxx with no amendments' or 'reviewed by xxxxx with some amendments.'

November 2024

**Invitation to the UK Holocaust Memorial Day Ceremony
Monday 27 January 2025**

Dear Title First Name Last Name Suffix,

I am delighted to invite you, on behalf of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT), to the **UK Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) Ceremony 2025**. The ceremony will take place on **Monday 27 January 2025** in a **central London** location. For security reasons, we will release the venue details in January. The Ceremony will start at **3:30pm** and there will be a reception afterwards from approximately **4:30-6pm**.

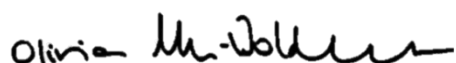
80 years on from the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, our mission is more vital than ever. The tragic impact of the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas is felt here in the UK through an escalating wave of both antisemitism (anti-Jewish hatred) and anti-Muslim hatred. The use of divisive and polarising language and community tensions affect us all.

This year, the 30th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, Bosnia, and the ongoing ferocity of violence and displacement in Sudan underscores this urgency, and highlights the continued need for vigilance, education and commemoration. HMD 2025 serves as an opportunity for people to come together, irrespective of their background, to remember the six million Jewish people murdered during the Holocaust, and the millions more murdered through the Nazi persecution of other groups and in the more recent genocides recognised by the UK government, and the genocide in Darfur. Through this, we can honour the memories of survivors and foster a better future, within which hatred and violence have no place.

We are delighted to once again stage a live ceremony, and we warmly invite survivors of the Holocaust, more recent genocides, and the nation's political, civil and faith leadership, to join us as we seek to learn from targeted persecution for a better future. This year particularly, even more people will participate in this important commemoration, spreading awareness and fostering a collective commitment to building a world free from hatred and violence.

Please RSVP to let us know you would like to attend the in-person event by **25 November 2024**, and we will be in touch again soon with the final details about the day, including the exact location. In the meantime, I very much hope you will be able to join us in January to commemorate HMD 2025.

Yours sincerely



Olivia Marks-Woldman OBE
Chief Executive, HMDT