Holocaust Memorial Day 2027

Guidance for activity organisers in the context of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust supports organisations across the UK in marking Holocaust Memorial Day. This guidance has been developed in response to the many questions we've received about organising Holocaust Memorial Day activities in the context of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. This document provides guidance, help and support to Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) activity organisers ahead of HMD 2027.

At a time of heightened tensions and communal division in the UK as a result of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, bringing communities together in recognition of our common humanity is more important than ever, and HMD activity organisers all across the UK play a vital role in making this happen.

HMDT is the charity established and funded by the UK Government to promote and support HMD in the UK, as the nation's day to commemorate the 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered during the Holocaust. The Holocaust has always been, and will always remain, central to Holocaust Memorial Day. HMDT was also founded to support learning and remembrance of where persecution led in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

HMDT is here to help activity organisers, and the guidance below has been created as a result of questions, feedback and queries which we have received from HMD activity organisers across the country.

Frequently Asked Questions

Section A – Q&A on Holocaust Memorial Day event content and speakers

Q1. I am concerned about running an HMD event this year because there is a range of views on the Middle East amongst my audience/community. Should I still mark HMD this year?

Yes. Holocaust Memorial Day is first and foremost about commemorating the 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered in the Holocaust. It also commemorates the millions more people murdered through the Nazi persecution of other communities. We recognise that prejudice continues within our communities. We learn and commemorate where persecution led in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur, and you may wish to recognise these in your HMD event

At a time of increased tensions in the Middle East and its impact in the UK of increased antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred, marking HMD is all the more important as we seek to build a better future together.

Q2. Should I acknowledge the situation in the Middle East in my HMD activity? And if so, how?

Your event should ensure that the Holocaust is central to Holocaust Memorial Day; at the heart of every HMD event is the remembrance of the 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered during the Holocaust and the millions more murdered under Nazi persecution. It is also a day to recognise that prejudice still continues today within our communities and across the UK. Many people choose in addition to learn and commemorate where persecution led in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and in Darfur.

Some people attending may be grieving, worried about loved ones or distressed by the conflict. You can recognise these feelings without discussing the conflict itself and keep the focus on remembrance. We know that many people are grieving or worried at this time. Today we are here to remember, and we ask everyone respect the purpose of the event.

There are many diverse and strongly felt opinions on current conflicts taking place around the world, and it is important to be clear that HMD is neither a time for commenting on current conflicts, nor for divisiveness. Rather, it is a day for people and communities to come together to commemorate and to remember our shared humanity. HMD activities should be respectful of all communities, focusing on commemoration rather than any current conflict.

Q3 What advice would you give on how to handle comments/questions about the current conflict in the Middle East from audience members?

We advise organisers of HMD events:

a) To introduce the event in the terms set out above i.e. to remind your audience at the start that the event is to commemorate the 6 million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, and the millions more murdered under Nazi persecution. It is also a day to recognise that prejudice still exists within our communities, and to learn and commemorate where persecution led in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur.
b) To brief speakers at your event of HMD's purpose (as above in 3a).
c) Should you face any questions from the audience about the conflict in the Middle East, to refer back to HMD's purpose (as above in 3a).
d) While recognising that some HMD participants may feel strongly about the conflict in the Middle East, to stress that the purpose of HMD is to commemorate the 6 million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, the non-Jewish victims of Nazi persecution and those murdered in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and in Darfur.

Q4 Is it a problem to talk about the current conflict in the Middle East in an HMD event?

A: There are many strongly felt and diverse views on the current conflict. However well-intentioned or earnestly felt, opening a discussion or making statements on the conflict at an HMD event is likely to divert attention from commemoration of the Holocaust and may cause distress or division within audiences, whereas HMD seeks to bring people together with a shared purpose. Further, it will take the event further from its central purpose of commemoration of the Holocaust.

It is also important to acknowledge that many other conflicts are taking place around the world, some of which receive little or no attention in mainstream media. Examples of these include the persecution of Uyghur Muslims in China, Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, Ukrainians under attack from Russia. Focusing only on the situation in the Middle East at an HMD event while making no reference to other global conflicts risks appearing one-sided. Broadening the focus to current conflicts risks shifting attention even further away from HMD's central purpose: the commemoration of the Holocaust.

Q5. We have had a speaker(s) withdraw from our HMD activity because of the situation in the Middle East, what should we do?

Firstly, we recommend communicating with your speaker to identify the specific reason that has led to their withdrawal and to ask whether there is anything you can do to reduce any concerns they have. There are likely to be two broad reasons why an individual may withdraw: disagreement with the content of the activity, or because they feel their personal safety is at risk if they attend your activity or event.
In the first potential situation where there is a concern about the content of an activity, every effort should be made to explain the reasons why HMDT does not believe reference to the current conflict in the Middle East is appropriate. If a speaker nevertheless continues to believe that such reference is necessary, then their withdrawal from the event should simply be politely accepted.

In the second potential situation, having appropriate security or safety measures in place to reassure the individual or individual(s) concerned is key. Depending on the

actual circumstances, organisers may want to discuss with their local police force, or with the Community Security Trust (CST), what safety measures may be required.

Q6. Should our HMD activity address antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred or other forms of prejudice seen today and if so, how?

Commemorating and educating about the Holocaust should be at the centre of your event. You may also wish to highlight how the memory of the Holocaust is under attack in the UK today. You may wish to feature the theme 'No Place for Prejudice' and talk about the places where prejudice exists today and feature speakers who have experienced prejudice in the UK and consider how your community or organisation can challenge prejudice today. We strongly recommend that you avoid conversations about the conflict in the Middle East and focus on contemporary prejudice in the UK today.

Q7. What should we do if a speaker departs from the agreed programme?

We encourage you to brief your speakers thoroughly in advance; you may wish to share this Guidance with them. You should make them aware that if they include any personal strong views in their presentation, this may divide and offend the audience. As the activity organiser, you reserve the right to stop any speaker during the event, following what you agreed with them in your briefing.

Q8. Why might some people be offended at reference to the conflict in the Middle East? Why can't I talk about the conflict in the Middle East in my HMD event?

Bringing in current conflicts can detract from the centrality of the Holocaust – this must be central to all HMD events.

Additionally, the facts of the Holocaust are under attack, and its memory is being undermined, distorted, trivialised and weaponised. Whilst some people wish to reference the current conflict in the Middle East from good intentions, others do so with the deliberate intention to invert the Holocaust, and create a false equivalence between the Holocaust and current conflicts. Even when well-intentioned or strongly

felt, such content risks distracting from the memory of the Holocaust and can cause grave upset to audience members.

Q9. How should we respond to audience, media or social media questions about why our event is not addressing the ongoing conflict in the Middle East?

Holocaust Memorial Day is first and foremost a day to remember the 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered during the Holocaust and the millions more murdered under Nazi persecution of other communities. It also supports learning and remembrance of where persecution led in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

We recognise that people hold strongly felt views about conflicts taking place today. HMD is not a forum for debating current conflicts. It is an opportunity to come together in remembrance, learn where prejudice and persecution led when they were normalised and to stand against hatred and division today.

Section B – Q&As on logistics

Q10. Can you offer advice on security for HMD activities?

The risk of disruption varies considerably according to the type of HMD event, venue, publicity, speakers and local circumstances. Key factors to consider include:

- Audience - is the event public or by invitation only? Limiting access, such as sharing event details only with registered participants shortly before the event, can improve security.
- Venue – closed venues (such as schools, private offices) are more secure than open public spaces such as shopping centres, parks.
- Guests – high-profile attendees may require additional security, which may sometimes be a condition of their participation,

Public and widely advertised events with VIPs will clearly need greater and more detailed security. In such cases, we recommend contacting your local police at a senior level as early as possible, and to check for any nearby events or protests that may impact yours. If unsure who to contact, the Community Security Trust (CST) can advise: www.cst.org.uk/contact

Q11. Our HMD event is online – do we need to consider security?

Yes. Unfortunately, online HMD events have in the past been targeted by people wishing to cause disruption or offence. Although this is a rare occurrence, we recommend reading the Community Security Trust's Guidance for secure livestreaming, particularly if your event is public. Use passwords and consider registering attendees in advance to make your event more secure. Other points to consider are:

- Advanced registration for attendees and a waiting room option.
- Monitoring content from attendees in the 'chat' function. Delivering your event as a webinar, instead of an open meeting, can help mitigate risks concerning the chat function by providing a Q&A option regulated by the host.
- Muting all attendees.

We recommend you make sure that a specific individual on the organising team is responsible for monitoring online chat (if it is enabled) and online attendance (e.g. to monitor, mute and, if necessary, remove an attendee). If you are expecting a large or unregistered audience, then we recommend you discuss with the police or CST in advance to check any factors that might affect your event.

Q12. We do not want to advertise our HMD activity or event; can we still add it to the HMDT activity map?

Yes. It is helpful for HMDT to know what activities are taking place across the UK, and we ask everyone to tell us the details of their event or activity by completing a short form at hmd.org.uk/letusknow, (the 'HMDT activity map'). The online form helps us to assess the reach and impact of HMD across the UK and provides the option to mark your activity or event as public, private or unlisted. 'Public' and 'private' will appear on the activity map showing visitors to the page where activities/events are accessible to attend or not. Whereas 'unlisted' will not appear on the map and will only share details with HMDT.

Alternatively, you can tell us about your HMD activity or event by emailing us directly at enquiries@hmd.org.uk.