



Inter-parliamentary Coalition
for Combating Antisemitism

The London Conference on Combating Antisemitism Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the London Conference?

- An international gathering of over 100 senior parliamentarians from more than 35 countries around the world.
- It represents the first event of its kind to receive government support and such broad international participation. The event is co-hosted by two UK government departments: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, together with the Department for Communities and Local Government.
- The aim is to foster a collaborative response to an international problem. Members of parliament will share experiences of problems and possible solutions with a view to taking positive and effective action.

More information is available on request. See contact details below.

Why is a conference on antisemitism needed?

- The extent and severity of antisemitism is widely regarded as at its worst level since the end of the Second World War.
- The problem is increasingly widespread affecting societies and individuals around the world.
- The recorded levels of antisemitic incidents in the UK are the highest since records began over 25 years ago. Many other countries report similar concerns. This represents a worsening trend over many years rather than a short term 'blip'.

An abbreviated list of recent antisemitic incidents from around the world is included in this briefing pack. Please contact us if any further information is needed.

What is the impact of an increase in antisemitism?

- Increasing numbers of Jewish people – citizens of the countries represented – face mounting anxiety over discrimination, intimidation and violence in their every day lives.
- Decent society is corroded when communities and individuals are unable to live without fear when exercising their fundamental rights to religious worship, education and full participation in society as a whole.
- Left unchallenged, the problem threatens to seep further into the mainstream and re-embed itself in countries where this ancient form of hatred appeared to be in retreat.

Who is responsible for this increase in antisemitism?

- Contemporary antisemitism comes from a wide range of sources, many of which are not traditionally associated with race hatred.



Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism

- Overt and even genocidal antisemitism is primarily and acted-on by violent Islamist groups or the European or North American far right. In the case of Iran, the most extreme forms of antisemitism and Holocaust denial receive state support.
- The use of ancient anti-Jewish stereotyping and libels is more widespread as it appears to have entered mainstream political discourse and often appears under the cover of political debate relating to the State of Israel. Some commentators have referred to this phenomenon as the ‘new antisemitism.’

Is the London Conference and the issue of antisemitism really about supporting the state of Israel?

- No. The issues of antisemitism are essentially human and civil rights issues that affect a large number of individual citizens of countries around the world. The need to defend fundamental freedoms and protect Jewish individuals in the countries where they live is generally not a matter of great political controversy although the level of government and judicial action to protect individuals and enforce laws may be. This is clearly distinct from the complex political controversy that rages over Israel, Gaza and the Palestinian cause.
- Participants are likely to hold strong views on the Middle East but those views are not always known, may be entirely personal and have no bearing on their participation in the conference. Many are likely to be equally sympathetic to the Palestinian cause and concerned about the issue of antisemitism. The issues are not mutually exclusive.
- While recent events in the Middle East may be troubling, the London Conference has no remit to cover the politics of the conflict, although clearly it will note the impact that the conflict has, at times acting as a trigger and possibly even a cover for anti-Jewish expression or action.

Who is participating in the Conference?

- Over 100 members of parliament from around the world will work alongside prominent experts in the field of antisemitism in conjunction with their hosts from the UK government.
- Many of the representatives are from Europe or North America. There is also significant participation from many other parts of the world including Latin America, Central Asia and a number of predominantly Muslim or Arab countries.
- The majority of Parliamentarians participating in the conference are not Jewish.

Are members of parliament – particularly those without a government role – the right people to lead the response against antisemitism?

- In an ideal world, all decent people have a responsibility to oppose racism and discrimination in all its forms and to defend the fundamental freedoms of all citizens.
- Members of parliament have a particular obligation to do so. Defending the rights of the citizens of their country and ensuring that an effective legislative and judicial framework is in place are core responsibilities.



**Inter-parliamentary Coalition
for Combating Antisemitism**

- The UK approach to tackling antisemitism was initiated and supported by backbench MPs. Parliamentarians from other countries may wish to follow the UK approach as a model of best practice.

What is the significance of the Conference taking place in the UK?

- The UK is a pioneer in taking a parliamentary approach to the problem of antisemitism. This took the form of report issued following investigation into the issue by an all-party committee of backbench MPs which has since been accepted by Government and is currently being acted on.
- Like any country the UK has had its fair share of problems with racism and discrimination. Many of the lessons learned and principles established when dealing with other forms of racism – such as the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry – have been applied to the problem of antisemitism.
- The UK approach is now believed to represent best practice with regard to antisemitism. By supporting the London Conference, the UK Government is providing a forum for members of parliament from around the world to learn from the UK experience and – where appropriate – to implement a similar approach.

A short summary of the All-party inquiry into antisemitism and the Government's response is also included within this briefing pack.

If the UK is a model for best practice, does that mean that antisemitism is no longer a problem in the UK?

- Unfortunately antisemitism remains a serious and growing problem in the UK. However Government action has received broad-based support from MPs from all parties, the police and the affected Jewish Communities themselves. There is consensus that a number of important steps have been taken, although these may take time to show a clear improvement.
- There is clearly a limit to the ability of any Government to prevent a societal problem that has existed for centuries, is far more prevalent beyond the UK's borders and is exacerbated by international conflicts.
- There is still much to learn, and hopefully the conference can facilitate new ideas and further initiatives that have proved effective in other parts of the world. The problem is complex and stubborn, underlining the need for a better-coordinated international approach that will hopefully follow the London Conference.

Richard Angell
Parliamentary & Press Officer
All-Party Parliamentary Group against
Antisemitism
T: +44 (0)20 7219 8345
M: +44 (0)7966 161 444
F: +44 (0)20 7219 5965
E: angellr@parliament.uk

Dr Winston Pickett
Media Relations
London Conference on Combating Antisemitism
Inter-parliamentary Coalition Against
Antisemitism
M: +44 (0)7932 075 625
E: winstonp@eisca.eu