



NEVER AGAIN FOR ANYONE

By Carol Burns

80 of us gathered on 26 January in the centre of Leeds – Jews, Muslims, Christians, other faiths and none – to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. We held the event independently of any other organisation so we could include reference to Gaza. As well

as recalling the Nazi Holocaust with readings from Primo Levi and Eli Wiesel, we recalled the genocides that took place in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Sudan. We also included poetry from Gaza, including 'If I should die' by Refaat Alareer and 'Oh rascal children of Gaza' by Khaled Juma. There were no flags. No banners. No slogans. Between each reading, we held a minute's silence.



The main address was given by **Robert Cohen**, a member of Leeds Reform Synagogue. It was a powerful speech and we reproduce it below in full:

We are gathered here in Leeds City Square to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.

Tomorrow will be the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in Poland in 1945.

It's estimated that more than a million people perished in Auschwitz during the Second World War. The vast majority were Jews. But there were also Roma and Sinti and Gays, all murdered just for who they were.

In all, it's estimated that six million Jews were killed by the Nazis during the Holocaust including around 1.5 million children.

The Nazi Holocaust destroyed a third of the global Jewish population, with centuries of culture and heritage lost forever.

And the world said: NEVER AGAIN. But genocide did happen again.

Which is why, on Holocaust Memorial Day, we are also encouraged to remember the victims of genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur.

None of these subsequent genocides detract from, or diminish, the magnitude of the Nazi Holocaust. And nor should they. The point of



highlighting other genocides is not to draw equivalence with the Nazi Holocaust. Every genocide has been unique in its form, scale and execution. But they all share some common traits including collective discrimination, dehumanisation and the intent to exterminate (in whole or in part) a distinct people.

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust encourages us to learn from past genocides so that we can, in its own words “take action for a better future”. A future in which “identity-based persecution and discrimination” comes to an end.

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust takes its lead from the UK government in determining if a genocide has taken place. But what happens if our own government is itself implicated in a genocide? How do we then act for a better future?

We cannot always wait until courts and governments have reached a unanimous agreement on whether a genocidal atrocity is taking place. Too often, that only happens long after the horrors have ended and when there is nothing left to be done. And, as has become abundantly clear in these last 15 months, reaching such a consensus is a political decision as much as a legal or moral one.

This year the official organisers of Holocaust Memorial Day events, the HMD Trust, has shown its reluctance to acknowledge even the potential that a genocide has been taking place in Gaza. A genocide perpetrated by the State of Israel against the Palestinian people, but with the finance, weapons and diplomatic cover coming from the United States, and with support from America’s Western European allies, including the United Kingdom.

The Trust has asked event organisers around the country, as well as teachers in schools, not to refer to what has been happening in Gaza since the 7th of October 2023. That includes the Hamas atrocities in Southern Israel which left nearly 1,000 Israeli civilians brutally murdered and 250 men, women and children kidnapped into Gaza.

I know some will want to frame the Hamas attack as anti-colonial resistance. Just as some will say that Israel was simply acting in self-defence when it launched its attacks on Gaza.

But if you are serious about the value of international law and a rules-based global order, then neither ‘anti-colonial resistance’ nor ‘self-defence’ can be used to justify mass atrocities.



Shoes, representing children and adults killed

At least 47,000 people, mostly civilians, including 18,000 children, have been killed by Israel using American-made and paid-for weapons. Independent health and



humanitarian experts put the number of dead much higher than Hamas itself has done. 100s of thousands of Palestinians have been injured. Many of those injuries will be life-changing.

Homes, schools, universities, mosques and churches have been destroyed. Civil infrastructure, including access to water and healthcare, has been deliberately demolished. Agricultural land has been ruined. An already weak economy has been wrecked. There has been mass hunger and the risk of mass starvation caused by Israeli political decisions.

Millions have been displaced. And in this fragile ceasefire, they find they have no home to return to, only rubble and the buried remains of children, mothers, fathers, and grandparents.

But the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust fears that talking about Gaza will politicise commemorations and detract from Holocaust remembrance. We are gathered here today because we profoundly disagree with that thinking.

When the International Court of Justice has recognised that accusations of genocide against Israel are legitimate and must be investigated...

...when the judges at the [International Criminal Court](#) have issued warrants for the arrest of the Prime Minister of Israel...and Hamas leaders...

...when [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#) have called Gaza a genocide...

...when scholars of the Holocaust and genocide, including Jewish Israeli academics, have called Gaza a genocide...

...when [Genocide Watch](#), a global organisation recognised as experts in genocide, has called Gaza a genocide...

...then refusing even to acknowledge that a potential genocide has happened, undermines the work and the moral authority of the [Holocaust Memorial Day Trust](#). The Trust's refusal to mark what has happened in Gaza is itself a deeply political act.



To place Gaza off limits when it comes to who we are allowed to grieve in the context of genocidal harm, does not honour those murdered in the Holocaust or subsequent genocides.

Nor does such a decision respect international law or its institutions.

Taking such a stand ignores the testimony of Palestinians in Gaza. It ignores the Palestinian journalists who have risked or lost their lives. It ignores the live-streamed images of indiscriminate, mass destruction we have watched on our phones for months on end.

We should not make decisions about genocides based on where our funding comes from. Or which national allies will be



implicated or shamed. Nor should we create hierarchies of suffering in which the collective trauma of one group is used to suppress the suffering of another. That's not how you address antisemitism or build societies that will fight racism and resist the politics that can lead to genocide.

That's why we feel the need to hold this event today. Because we must say:

NEVER AGAIN FOR ANYONE.

We will spend our time here sharing readings and standing in silent vigil to mark the genocides of the past and the ones which have been taking place today.

We will recall the Nazi Holocaust, Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Sudan and Gaza. And we must also remember the genocidal acts which have been committed in recent years in China against the Uyghur Muslims, in Myanmar against the Rohingya Muslims, in Syria and Iraq against the Yazidi people, and the war crimes against civilians in Yemen and Eritrea. Because there can be no hierarchies of remembrance and no exceptions to acknowledging genocides.

Today we grieve for all who have lost their lives through tribalism, nationalism and racism. And we commit ourselves to ending genocide wherever it takes place and whoever is the perpetrator.

NEVER AGAIN MUST MEAN NEVER AGAIN FOR ANYONE, ANYWHERE.

At the end of the vigil, Robert added:

Thank you for being here.

On behalf of the organisers of today's event, we thank you all for coming and for the respect you have shown for all those lives lost to the horrors of genocide.

We see with heavy hearts how Christians, Muslims, Jews, and people of other faiths and no faith, have been the victims of genocide

and, tragically, also the perpetrators of genocide. No people or nation should consider themselves incapable of committing such atrocities.

We also recognise, that 'starting the clock' of genocide remembrance with the defeat of Hitler has obscured the atrocities committed by Western European nations through imperialism and colonialism in the earlier 20th century and in the centuries before.

Failing to reckon with this past does not help us to build resilience against the politics of dehumanisation today or in the future.

Right now, we must keep our eyes, and our hearts focused on Gaza and on Sudan where genocide has been and still is taking place.

The world's attention may move on. The political attempts at denial and normalisation (especially regarding Gaza) will no doubt continue. And those who dare to say the word 'genocide' about Gaza will go on being ostracised and vilified.

Our task is to keep saying:

NEVER AGAIN FOR ANYONE, ANYWHERE.

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CARE WORKERS & MODERN-DAY SLAVERY IN THE UK

By Sara Forrest, Commission member

Modern-day Slaves are significantly exploited by their employers. A high proportion are sex workers. Women are therefore more likely to be slaves than men. Charities working in this sector estimate that there are about 122,000 people currently living in the UK who are Modern-day Slaves.

The Government established a Care Workers Visa to enable workers from abroad to pay for visas to come here to work in what are often minimum wage jobs. Sadly, some employment agencies saw this as an opportunity to make lots of money and advertised Care Work jobs in the UK. Those



applying did not realise that there could be times when no work would be available. Visa holders cannot claim unemployment benefits or work for other employers. This gives their employers greater power. Significant numbers of these new Care Workers started to call the Modern-day Slavery Advice Lines due to the exploitation they suffered; forced to work long hours, pay for training/accommodation/uniform and to work anywhere.

The Visa rules have been changed each year to reduce the factors contributing to this exploitation. But the exploitation continues. I know of one family where the mother got a Care Worker Visa, her husband and children got Dependent Visas. The family came expecting to be more financially secure than they had been in Africa. With both parents working full-time for the minimum wage the family could just about provide for themselves.

But the mother's full-time care work soon stopped. Her agency could then provide her with only part-time work. Her sponsor offered her a temporary, full-time job 200 miles away. She had to take it to feed her family. When that job ended they offered part-time work in the same city. The family were desperate.

Her family will not be more secure until she finds a local employer who has a job in their own Care Home and who will pay to sponsor her. It is very difficult to find such jobs. Life in the UK is not what the family imagined. Their livelihood as insecure as it was in Africa.

In Hope, the Pope says

'Every Christian is called upon to be an instrument of God for the liberation of all people and the advancement of the poor. This implies more than a few sporadic acts of generosity. It presumes a new mindset that thinks in terms of community.'

UK Slavery still happens. We know that as a country we do not have enough income to pay for all the services we expect. Poverty is a political choice. The Government are responsible for allocating their income for the good of all. Parties accept that the Care Sector is not working effectively.

Maybe in response to the Pope's plea for a new mindset we should each think about (and talk about) what we consider to be fair share of the costs of our own care?

We must not be distracted by arguments about promises of no tax rises. There must be radical changes if the Care Sector is to become sustainable without the risk of Modern-day Slavery.

FIND OUT MORE / DO MORE

For more information:

[ACAS](#) have a good website that explains employee rights.

The Modern-day Slavery helplines are:

[Unseen](#) 0800 012 1700

[Salvation Army](#) 0800 808 3733

The Medaille Trust is another good source of information & ideas:

<https://www.medaille-trust.org.uk/>

CAFOD FAMILY FAST DAY 14 MARCH

During Lent, CAFOD is inviting you to join Lokho on her journey of survival – of finding hope through devastating drought.

"One day, two of them died," Lokho tells us of her goats. "A day after that, another. A week later, another three. Now I have zero livestock.

At just 28-years-old, Lokho is a survivor of a devastating drought. There was no grass for her goats to eat, just miles of dry, cracked



earth. The goats collapsed and died from dehydration.



With her animals gone, Lokho was left with no way to support her young family. She had no safety net to fall back on. In northern Kenya, the dry seasons are increasingly extreme. Lokho’s community survived 40 months without rain – 40 months of scorching sun. Her neighbours shared all they had. Lokho tells us: “My good neighbours have the habit, the tendency, of helping one another – and that is how they can survive. Finally, thankfully, the rains came. But Lokho’s community had already lost almost everything. They needed a new way to get food. They needed a plan so that when the next drought hit, they would not be left with nothing.

SIMPLE IMPACTFUL SOLUTIONS

Lokho chats as she pushes a wheelbarrow full of water tubs. Her baby sleeps peacefully on her back. She strides toward the community vegetable farm, surrounded by her neighbours. Here, working side by side with local experts, they’ve begun to sow the seeds of their future.

“They entirely depended on livestock for life,” explains Wakera, who works with Lokho’s community. “Now we have introduced poultry and kitchen gardening.”

Local experts like Wakera are teaching Lokho and her neighbours techniques for growing vegetables in the arid climate. Crucially, together, they’ve built innovative shade nets which protect young plants from the sun.

“They provided us with that green net there,” says Lokho, pointing to a large net that covers her whole vegetable patch. “The sunlight still gets to the plant, but it’s not as destructive as before.”

These nets act as an ‘anti-greenhouse’ – they keep the burning sun off the plants whilst still allowing every drop of precious rain through.

Please donate this Lent

Give online at cafod.org.uk and find out how your parish can support people like Lokho,

or call **0303 303 3030**

or send a cheque to: **Freepost CAFOD**
(no address or stamp needed)

EXCAVATING HOPE – THE 2025 ROMERO LECTURE

By Joe Burns, Commission Member



We are delighted that SPARK Social Justice, our project working with younger Catholics, working in partnership with Leeds Trinity University, will support a Leeds presentation of the 2025 Romero Lecture. It will take place at the new city centre campus of the



university, which is on Trevelyan Square, just off Boar Lane in central Leeds, on Thursday 13 March at 7pm.

Luis Orlando Pérez Jiménez is a Mexican Jesuit currently studying for a Phd at University College, London. He has organised seminars on human rights advocacy strategies for sexual torture, extrajudicial executions, and enforced disappearances. He has conducted workshops on victims' rights and legal guidance for the Enlaces Nacionales network, which comprises 72 groups seeking missing persons in 25 states of Mexico. He has also provided assistance to indigenous communities in Chiapas and Oaxaca and peasant communities in Coahuila affected by resource dispossession.

In his talk he will relate all these experiences to the life of St Oscar Romero.

ALL are welcome.



Book a place (Free to attend – but voluntary collection) by going to the Eventbrite page for this event:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/excavating-hope-the-2025-romero-lecture-tickets-1226938850129?aff=oddtcreator>

LIVE SIMPLY CARE DEEPLY

By Joe Burns, Commission Member

Last September, in his Pastoral Letter for the Season of Creation, Bishop Marcus







encouraged parishes to think about signing up to work towards the LiveSimply award, which is managed by CAFOD. Having lived in a parish where we worked towards the award, and now being a schools assessor for the award scheme, it is something which I would encourage any parish or school in the diocese to seriously consider. To work for the award, your parish has to consider how everyone can live more simply, more sustainably and how they can show their solidarity with those experiencing poverty. It is a wonderfully positive way of involving all sections of a parish and all ages. Everyone has something that they can contribute and the scheme is flexible enough to allow you to use the strengths and resources within your own church community.



The Commission is supporting a group of 4 parishes in the Leeds area to put on a day event about this scheme. We have a title (as above), a date (**Saturday May 3rd**) and a venue (**Wheeler Hall at Leeds Cathedral**) – but the rest is all a bit fluid at the moment! Within the next few weeks we will have finalised more details and will have an Eventbrite page for people to sign up to come along.... In the meantime, save the date and please mention it to other people at your church. Watch this space!



EVENTS

<p>Tue 25 Feb</p> 	<p>Gather Mini-Summit & Leeds Lent Diary Launch <i>Holy Trinity Church, Boar Lane, Leeds, LS1 6HW 6:30pm – 8:00pm</i> An evening of discussion on how we can impact the city of Leeds. With guest speakers, stalls from Leeds projects (including our own SPARK Social Justice!), and round table discussions. Hear the voices of Leeds and have your say. Follow the link to register (though you could just turn up) https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/gather-leeds-mini-summit-leeds-lent-prayer-diary-launch-tickets-1119057213249?aff=oddtcreator</p>
<p>Thu 27 Feb</p> 	<p>Living Together in Hope <i>Online Zoom event 6:30pm – 8pm</i> An opportunity to reflect on caring for our ‘Common home’ through prayer, poetry & music and a sharing with people from across the North of England about the things that give each of us Hope. Use this link to register and receive the Zoom link. https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/living-together-in-hope-tickets-1150739846859?aff=oddtcreator</p>
<p>Wed 05 Mar</p> 	<p>Ash Wednesday Service of repentance <i>Outside Holy Trinity Church, Boar Lane, Leeds 12:30 – 1:15pm</i> A Liturgy of Repentance in a nuclear age – organised by Pax Christi in the Leeds Diocese. ALL Welcome.</p>
<p>Thu 13 Mar</p> 	<p>Excavating Hope – the 2025 Romero Lecture <i>Leeds Trinity Uni City Centre Campus, 1 Trevelyan Square, Leeds LS1 6AE 7pm</i> Find out more about the Disappeared, victims of torture and the dispossession of indigenous communities in Mexico & S America Use this link to book a place: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/excavating-hope-the-2025-romero-lecture-tickets-1226938850129?aff=oddtcreator</p>
<p>Sat 03 May</p> 	<p>Live Simply Care Deeply. <i>Wheeler Hall, St. Anne’s Street Leeds LS2 8BE 10:30 – 3:30pm</i> A day to inspire your parish to commit to the Live Simply programme and live more simply, more sustainably, and in solidarity with those experiencing poverty. Save the date now and full details will follow in the next couple of weeks – keep an eye on our website (or follow us on Eventbrite). **SAVE THE DATE**</p>
<p>Fri 25th – Sun 27 Jul</p> 	<p>National Justice & Peace Network Annual Conference: Just Peace <i>The Christian Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire</i> A weekend exploring peace with keynote speakers (including Dr Rowan-Williams) and workshops covering a range of aspects of Just Peace. If you are 30 or under then SPARK Social Justice has a limited number of sponsored places. More details to follow.</p>

Please forward this email E-News onto anyone else who you think might be interested. Even better, get them to send us their email address so we can add them to our contact database.