



The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis today visited Israel's Holocaust memorial, Yad Vashem.

Archbishop Justin and Chief Rabbi Mirvis made the joint visit to remember and lament the tragedy of the Holocaust, and the implications and effects it has subsequently had on so many lives.

Speaking at Yad Vashem, the Archbishop acknowledged the history of anti-Semitism in the Church and restated his commitment to continue



While at Yad Vashem the two leaders were given a tour of the museum, before visiting the memorial to lay a wreath, and then signing the guest book.

Earlier today, in a historic moment, the two leaders prayed for peace at the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

During their time together the Archbishop and Chief Rabbi discussed the effort since the Holocaust to promote the bilateral relationship



Speaking at Yad Vashem, the Archbishop of Canterbury said today:

“Within European culture, the root of all racism, I think, is found in anti-Semitism. It goes back more than a thousand years. Within our Christian tradition there have been century upon century of these terrible, terrible hatreds. One people, who contributed more to our culture as a people than almost any other that one can identify, was also hated more specifically, more violently, more determinedly and more systematically, than any other group.”

“In the last year, we see uncovered even in England afresh that sense of anti-Semitism. Until that is expelled from our culture there will be a root, a tap root, for all racism, all discrimination, all cruelty, because of the nature of the human being in our culture. And so we must dedicate ourselves afresh, as the Chief Rabbi has put so beautifully, to build and maintain bridges of friendship, understanding tolerance and peace.



“There was a commitment by the last British government, which has been renewed by this one, that there will be a learning centre, a memorial, just near the Houses of Parliament, and that commitment has been renewed.

“Coming here today I am reminded how important that is, and particularly when having spoken to members of Parliament over the last few months who are Jewish, they have spoken of the upsurge in attacks on them and the wickedness that they have suffered.

“To build these bridges is an essential, and the bridges must carry us to a place where to attack someone because they are Jewish, in our words, even in our deepest thoughts, is something that is only found mysteriously in old history books, because it is so far behind us. Nothing less is enough.”

Speaking at Yad Vashem, Chief Rabbi Mirvis said:

“Being here right now in Yad Vashem must prompt us to ask the question, how can we best pay tribute to the memory of the 6 million victims of the Shoah. Or better put, what would those Jewish victims be wanting us to be doing? And I'd like to provide three answers. The first is never to forget and to guarantee through our actions that others will never forget, and this we do through effective Holocaust education and as the Archbishop mentioned, we are so proud of the fact that through the United Kingdom Holocaust Memorial Foundation a memorial and a learning centre will be established right at the heart of London during the next few years to the memory of the Shoah so that we as a society will be able to translate the lessons of the Shoah into action in our time.



"Secondly, we need to ensure within our own Jewish circles that we strengthen our Jewish identity to guarantee that *Ams Yisrael Chai*, the Jewish people will live on, despite those efforts to destroy our nation. And thirdly, we need to build bridges, bridges of understanding, of tolerance, of hope, of unity and of peace – and it is in that very context that the Archbishop of Canterbury and I are in Jerusalem today and are standing here in Yah Vashem right now.

"We enjoy a deep and warm friendship. A similar friendship existed between Archbishop William Temple and Chief Rabbi Josef Hertz, in 1942 when the two of them founded the Council of Christians and Jews right at the very time when the Shoah was taking place. And during the last 75 years through CCJ and through other means, our connections, our bond, all the values that we share, have enabled us as communities to grow closer together.

"But it is so critically important that the friendship and the warmth that we have at the top, through church and synagogue leaders, must permeate down to grass roots level in order to guarantee that within our communities there is an equal sense of togetherness, of understanding, of tolerance and of unity.

"So by being here together, the two of us are sending out a very strong message. Today in Jerusalem we prayed together for peace and today in Jerusalem we call on all others, not just to yearn and pray for peace, but to do something proactive to guarantee that we within our fragile and divided world, will indeed achieve peace. That will be the ultimate tribute for us to pay to the victims of the Shoah. May their memory be for an eternal blessing. Amen."

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