

# Security Minister statement: Hatzola ambulance attack

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## **A statement from the Security Minister on the Hatzola ambulance attack, which took place in Golders Green on Monday 23 March.**

With your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker I will make a statement on the abhorrent arson attack in Golders Green, north London.

I will begin with the facts as they are currently known.

At around 01:45hrs this morning the Metropolitan Police and the London Fire Brigade were called to reports of a fire on Highfield Road, Golders Green.

Officers attended the scene, where four ambulances from Hatzola - a volunteer-led ambulance service run by members of the Jewish community - were on fire.

The attack occurred in the car park of a local synagogue, where Hatzola's vehicles for this area are based.

Now Madam Deputy Speaker I can tell the House, the vital work of this organisation will continue uninterrupted, with its highly trained volunteers responding to calls as steadfastly as ever.

The government is determined to deliver justice for this cowardly attack. Of course, we fully support the police in bringing the perpetrators to account and we are equally committed to ensuring that Hatzola suffers no lasting impact as a consequence.

As the Secretary of State for Health has confirmed, four replacement ambulances will be in place by tomorrow morning, and government will fund permanent replacements to ensure this essential service remains strong and fully equipped.

Nearby houses were evacuated as a precaution, with residents allowed to return quickly to their homes.

Thankfully, no injuries occurred.

Now Madam Deputy Speaker, the House will be aware that police are treating this arson attack as an antisemitic hate crime.

The investigation is now being led by Counter Terrorism Policing, although I should emphasise that this has not been declared a terrorist incident at this stage.

No arrests have been made. I take this opportunity to urge anyone with information about the incident to contact the police.

Officers are aware of an online claim from a group taking responsibility for this attack, and establishing the accuracy of the claim is a priority for the investigation team.

As the Home Secretary has already told the House, support for the Jewish community in London is being stepped up.

The police have the unshakeable backing of this government, and I am sure the whole House, in their effort to find the perpetrators of this awful crime, who should be in no doubt whatsoever that they will be pursued, and made to face the consequences.

I also wish to echo the Home Secretary's words of thanks to the police and fire services for the speed and professionalism of their response, which was vital in averting an even worse outcome.

Shocking though it was to wake to this morning's developments, I know that for many this outrage will not have come as a surprise – occurring as it has at a time of profound distress and vulnerability within our Jewish communities.

Now given the vicious torrent of antisemitism that was unleashed following the October 7 attacks a dreadful manifestation of which we saw, to our horror, in Manchester last year, when Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation Synagogue was the subject of a sickening act of terrorism on Yom Kippur.

Today, as at that profoundly difficult moment, and as in the aftermath of the subsequent atrocity on Bondi Beach in Sydney, we declare once more that we stand with our Jewish friends, colleagues and neighbours. And with the oldest hatred on the rise, we assert our unwavering commitment to defeat it.

The Prime Minister has been clear that his government will lead the way – including through a relentless national security effort – which is being mounted around the clock by MI5 and the police, who have our full backing in their work to detect and disrupt plots against the Jewish community in our country.

While those activities must necessarily take place away from view, our willingness to take strong and decisive action when threats present themselves has been underscored again in recent weeks – with three men jailed over a foiled terrorist plot targeting the Jewish community in Greater Manchester.

And a separate investigation into suspected surveillance of locations and individuals linked to the Jewish community in the London area, which resulted in 2 men being charged last week under the National Security Act.

While the state's national security and law enforcement apparatus retains a relentless focus on this threat, such is its perseverance and potency, that we have a responsibility to do more.

It is a terrible indictment that we should need to do this. But we must and we are.

In fact, the demand for extra measures and precautions – such as those provided so expertly by the Community Security Trust – is only intensifying.

That is why, in the wake of the Manchester attack, we increased funding available via the Jewish Community Protective Security Grant to a record £28 million – a level we are maintaining in the next financial year.

We are also strengthening police powers for dealing with repeat protests, which have been a source of concern for many within the Jewish community.

And the Home Secretary has commissioned Lord Macdonald KC of River Glaven to undertake a review to consider how public order laws can be improved to keep hate and intimidation off our streets.

But we can only prevent the manifestations of this evil if we address the cause, by tackling the very

existence of antisemitism in this country.

That means adopting and enforcing a posture of zero tolerance in every part of society.

The Online Safety Act will compel tech platforms to protect UK users from illegal antisemitic material. Meanwhile, we are acting to drive antisemitism out of the NHS - with stronger mandatory training and an urgent review led by Lord Mann.

In recognition of the critical importance of education in preventing young minds from being polluted, we have committed £7 million to combat antisemitism in schools, colleges and universities - and launched a review led by Sir David Bell into antisemitism in schools and colleges, which is expected to conclude this autumn.

We do all of this, and more, Mr Speaker, because it is right.

Because it is our responsibility.

And because, as the Home Secretary has repeatedly made clear, no one should have to live a smaller Jewish life in this country.

I will finish, Madam Deputy Speaker, by addressing our Jewish community directly.

Whether you live here in London or in any other part of the United Kingdom, please know that we stand with you.

We are here for you, and we will do everything in our power to keep you and your family safe.

Not just today, after this appalling incident, but every day.

I commend this statement to the House.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/security-minister-statement-hatzola-ambulance-attack>