

Introduction

1. This submission is on behalf of the Jewish Leadership Council (JLC), a charity and umbrella body representing 35 of the largest UK Jewish organisations. The JLC regularly engages with the Foreign Office in order to raise topics of relevance and concern to the Jewish community.
2. This submission focusses on Iran's record of antisemitism, its support for terrorism, its threat to Israel and the UK's position on the JCPOA. All of these issues affect the global and UK Jewish community.
3. Any relationship the UK has with Iran must be used to call it to account for its antisemitism while taking the necessary steps to block its support for international terrorism and to reduce the threat it poses to our international partners such as Israel.
4. Ongoing Iranian violations of the JCPOA must be taken seriously by the UK. It is also important that the desire to preserve the JCPOA does not act as a barrier to the UK holding Iran to account for its destabilising activity.

Iranian Antisemitism

5. The Iranian Regime has a long history of propagating antisemitism often including Holocaust denial.
6. In recent years there have been at least two high profile "International Holocaust Cartoon Competitions" held in Iran with Government support. The most recent competition was held in 2016 and, according to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, included 150 entries.¹
7. Despite denial from Iran's Foreign Minister that the Holocaust cartoon competition is linked to the regime,² this was contradicted by the Ministry of Culture.³ The conflicting statements are a recurring theme in the regime as they use different messages for domestic and overseas consumption.
8. In a speech on 22 March 2020, in response to the Coronavirus outbreak, Ayatollah Khamenei in an attempt to blame the USA, claimed "the Jews are experts at sorcery and at creating relationships with demons".⁴ He has also previously called the Holocaust a "myth".⁵

¹ <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Iran-aftermath-paper.pdf>

² <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/irans-javad-zarif-on-the-fraying-nuclear-deal-u-s-relations-and-holocaust-cartoons>

³ <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/holocaust-museum-iran-gov-t-backs-holocaust-cartoon-contest-1.5378608>

⁴ <https://www.memri.org/reports/irgc-cyber-division-confirms-supreme-leader-khameneis-assertion-demons-are-assisting-enemies>

9. In 2018, President Rouhani said that “there is a cancerous growth in the region called the Zionist regime”.⁶
10. A US State Department report in March said “Members of the Iranian Jewish community are reportedly subject to government restrictions and discrimination. Government officials continued to question the history of the Holocaust, and antisemitism remained a pervasive problem. In May, President Rouhani implied Jewish control over various Western interests, saying that speeches by foreign officials criticizing Iran were “written by Zionists word for word.” Cartoons in state-run media outlets repeatedly depicted foreign officials as puppets of Jewish control.”⁷
- 11. Any UK relationship with Iran should be used to robustly challenge all examples of antisemitism linked to the government of Iran. The UK should use its influence within international bodies to hold Iran to account for its propagation of antisemitism.**

Iranian Threat to Israel

12. As part of Iran’s antisemitism, it has repeatedly called for the destruction of Israel. In 2018, Ayatollah Khamenei tweeted his own quote from 1991 calling Israel a “malignant cancerous tumour ... that has to be removed and eradicated”.⁸ This is not just rhetoric but an ideology backed up by action.
13. Jews around the world hold strong connections to Israel including having family members there. Wars in the region also have a direct impact on the UK Jewish community with spikes in antisemitic incidents at the time of conflicts as reported by the Community Security Trust (CST).⁹
14. Through its proxy Hizballah (proscribed by the UK in its entirety last year to include the political as well as military wing), Iran has had a presence on Israel’s northern border with Lebanon for decades. Since the last war on this border in 2006, Iran has been resupplying Hizballah with improved weapons. These weapons will not only be longer range than those used in the last conflict – with the ability to target the entirety of Central Israel – but will also be far superior in precision.¹⁰ In 2018, Israel discovered that Hizballah had also been digging tunnels along the border. This was condemned by the then Middle East Minister, Alistair Burt, for “threatening Israel and Lebanon’s stability”.¹¹

⁵ <https://www.memri.org/reports/iranian-supreme-leader-khamenei-denied-holocaust-%E2%80%93-memri-disproves-iranian-fm-zarifs-claim>

⁶ <https://www.memri.org/reports/rohani-calls-muslims-to-unite-against-us-and-cancerous-zionist-regime>

⁷ <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/IRAN-2019-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>

⁸ https://twitter.com/khamenei_ir/status/1003332853525110784

⁹ <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/5/5/Incidents-Report-2014.1425053165.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.bicom.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Precision-Project-Paper-Oct-2019-FINAL.pdf>

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/AlistairBurtUK/status/1070419400363307008?s=20>

15. The civil war in Syria has also given opportunity for Iran to operate directly near the border with Israel. This increases the risk of direct clashes between Iran and Israel with the prospect of any future conflict taking place on Israel's northern border.
- 16. The UK should continue to uphold Israel's right to defend itself including against Iran and its proxy Hizballah. The UK should use its influence within international bodies to hold Iran to account for its continued destabilising activity in the region.**

State Sponsor of Terror

17. Iran has been designated as a state sponsor of terrorism since 1984 by the US State Department¹² which as recently as last November described Iran as the "world's worst state sponsor of terrorism".¹³ We support the submission by our member CST, detailing Iran's state sponsorship of terrorism including the global threat this poses to Jewish communities.
18. As well as the threat Iran poses to Israel, its support for terrorism is a global threat, particularly for the Jewish community which it has targeted repeatedly. The most notable example is the 1994 Hizballah bombing of the AMIA building (Jewish community centre) in Buenos Aires killing 85 and injuring hundreds. This continued threat is a major reason that Jewish communities around the world, including the UK, require security at schools, synagogues, community centres and at events. In 2012, Iran or Hizballah were connected to incidents targeting Jewish communities or Israeli interests in India, Georgia, Thailand, Singapore, Cyprus, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria and Kenya.¹⁴
19. Last year, *The Sunday Telegraph* reported a 2015 raid by UK security services on four properties in North West London used to store explosive materials.¹⁵ The plot was believed to be linked to Iran and serves as a warning of Iran's willingness to sponsor terrorism within the UK. The plot also supports the belief that Iranian backed sleeper cells are in operation around the world.
20. The USA designated the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a "Foreign Terrorist Organisation" in April 2019.¹⁶ Earlier this year, the Tony Blair Institute in a report recommended other countries and supranational organisations designate the IRGC as a terrorist organisation for its "expansionist ambitions" and extreme ideology.¹⁷ UK proscription of the IRGC should therefore be carefully considered.

¹² <https://www.state.gov/state-sponsors-of-terrorism/>

¹³ <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Country-Reports-on-Terrorism-2018-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/7/0/FINAL%20Hizbollah%20and%20Iran%20in%20the%20UK%20WEB.1563275831.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/06/09/iran-linked-terrorists-caught-stockpiling-explosives-north-west/>

¹⁶ <https://www.state.gov/designation-of-the-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps/>

¹⁷ <https://institute.global/policy/beyond-borders-expansionist-ideology-irans-islamic-revolutionary-guard-corps>

21. A vigil was held in London by the Islamic Centre of England (a registered charity)¹⁸ following the assassination of IRGC Quds Force leader Qasem Soleimani prompting investigation from the Charity Commission. Seyed Moosavi, director of the Islamic Centre of England also serves as the UK representative of Ayatollah Khamenei.¹⁹ Charities receive taxpayers' money and they should be held to account for the promotion of anti-British values such as the commemoration of someone responsible for the deaths of scores of people, including British soldiers.
- 22. The UK should continue to monitor the global and domestic threat of Iranian backed terrorism and take action to limit its ability to operate. The Government should be commended for its support towards the security of the UK Jewish community against this threat. Following the Government's decision to proscribe Hizballah in its entirety, the UK should encourage allies, including the EU, to take similar measures.**

JCPOA

23. The JLC shares the international community's concerns of a nuclear Iran, not least because of Iran's repeated threats to destroy Israel. We also share the concerns of many that the JCPOA's focus solely on the nuclear issue and not Iran's other destabilising activities risks it benefitting from sanctions relief while still posing a serious international threat. The sunset clauses also risk Iran continuing towards nuclear capabilities once restrictions expire having already benefitted from sanctions relief.
24. Since the signing of the JCPOA, the UK has been limited in the action it can take against Iran for other destabilising activities for fear of jeopardising the agreement. For example, in December 2018, the then Foreign Secretary gave a full condemnation of Iranian ballistic missile testing²⁰ while at the same time the Government was encouraging trade with Iran as part of the JCPOA.
25. Despite our overall concerns with the JCPOA, we recognised the need to ensure Iran's compliance with the deal once it was in place. Since the summer of 2019, Iran has begun to publically acknowledge that it is no longer in compliance as confirmed by the E3 when they triggered the dispute mechanism in January 2020.²¹ Despite the time limits on the

¹⁸ <https://beta.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?subid=0®id=1058998>

¹⁹ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/inquiry-into-charity-islamic-centre-of-england-that-called-irans-soleimani-a-martyr-zp2513lpc>

²⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-statement-on-iranian-ballistic-missile-launch>

²¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/e3-foreign-ministers-statement-on-the-jcpoa-14-january-2020>

disputes resolution mechanism, there are yet to be signs of Iran returning to compliance with the JCPOA but there has been no further comment by the Government.

26. We welcome the decision to trigger the dispute resolution mechanism but the UK must take decisive action if this does not bring Iran back into compliance with the JCPOA. The UK should support and take a leading role in any efforts to form an improved deal with Iran which is not limited to the nuclear issue.

Conclusion

27. Any future UK relationship with Iran must take into account all of its destabilising activity including support for terrorism, antisemitic, regional activity non-compliance with the JCPOA.