

# PESACH MESSAGE

## PRESIDENT MARIE VAN DER ZYL

### NISSAN 5782



Passover is the Jewish festival of freedom and this year's celebration will be an especially poignant one as families will be at liberty to celebrate their seder without any lockdown restrictions for the first time since 2019. More than 1,000 from the UK Jewish community have died from Covid-19 and we will be thinking of them this Pesach. It is my earnest hope that we will be soon able to create a proper memorial to those who died.

We also pray for the freedom and safety of those in danger in Ukraine. This senseless Russian aggression flies in the face of justice and decency. We continue to both be inspired by the resolve of the Ukrainian people, and to pray for peace. I urge all those who are able to donate towards the charities collecting on behalf of the victims of this terrible conflict.

We have had a number of significant achievements this year. The Board has been campaigning long and hard for the proscription of Hamas in its entirety as a terrorist organisation and in 2021 we were very happy that the Government legislated to ban its so-called political wing, meaning it can no longer lobby for support in this country.

Many of you will have been distressed by the BBC actions following the antisemitic attack on teenagers celebrating Chanukah on a bus in central London last November. We supplied forensic evidence which conclusively refuted BBC reports that there had been anti-Muslim abuse coming from the bus. The BBC's Executive Complaints Unit agreed with us that the BBC did not meet standards of due accuracy and impartiality. We are now working to supply evidence to a new Ofcom investigation into BBC handling of the incident.

We have been focusing on the issue of online hate which is the new frontline against antisemitism. Thanks to Board of Deputies campaigning, the Government wrote to social media companies asking for the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism so that so that racists will no longer be able to harass Jewish users with impunity.

The work of the Board of Deputies is so wide and diverse that it is impossible to mention everything in a short message. To give a few examples, we have provided support for Chinese Uyghurs who have been cruelly persecuted in their home country. We are working in the community to facilitate the implementation of the groundbreaking Commission on Racial Inclusivity in the Jewish Community which considered 17 areas of Jewish communal life and made 119 recommendations. And working with our partner organisation EcoSynagogue, we were out in force at the COP26 summit in November.

In addition, we provide official inspection of religious education in Jewish schools through the Pikuach organisation and our team monitors and protects our religious freedoms. Whatever your interests or concerns as a Jew, the Board of Deputies is here for you.

Pesach Sameach to you and your families from everyone at the Board of Deputies

*Marie van der Zyl*

**Marie van der Zyl**  
President, Board of Deputies of British Jews