

# UK News Release



9th January 2025

Holocaust Memorial Day 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025

**National Holocaust Museum launches new international touring exhibition exploring the recurring delusion behind the anti-Jewish pogrom:**

## ‘THE VICIOUS CIRCLE’

The National Holocaust Museum announces a new international touring exhibition for Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) 2025, with funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. *The Vicious Circle* explores the delusion behind 2000 years of pogroms which not only murder and ethnically cleanse their Jewish target populations, but create lasting damage to the perpetrators.

On Holocaust Memorial Day, it is vital to remember that the Holocaust did not come out of nowhere; and that it was not the end of the story of anti-Jewish racism. *The Vicious Circle* explores the obsessive, recurring delusion that violence against Jews leads to individual and collective liberation – across millennia and continents. Again and again, this delusion is stoked by false prophets who promise redemption, but deliver only destruction.

*The Vicious Circle* will open in Soho, London from Tuesday 21st January 2025 to Tuesday 28th January inclusive. (HMD is on 27th January). It will then tour internationally – initially Tallinn, Berlin and the European Parliament in Brussels.

The exhibition showcases five stories in a striking circular installation, featuring original artefacts, texts and five large video screens. Step inside the circle to explore:

- 5 Jewish communities (Berlin, Baghdad, Kielce in Poland, Aden in Yemen, and Southern Israel).
- 5 beautiful artefacts illustrating the love, creativity and peaceful coexistence of these communities.
- 5 pogroms that led to the ethnic cleansing of these communities (in 1938, 1941, 1946, 1947, and 2023).
- 5 false prophets whose false promise of liberation incited these pogroms.

Five stunning original objects tell the story of harmonious co-existence between Jewish communities and their Christian or Muslim co-citizens across Europe & the Middle East. They celebrate the cross-cultural creativity that can only come from mutual acceptance - from klezmer music to religious objects depicting shared values (see 'Exhibitions Features List').

Five large screens feature video collages about everyday life and love in each community, underscored by an instrumental musical version of 'Oseh Shalom', a universal Jewish prayer for peace. All five stories come together in one violent punctuation moment, illustrating the brutal fate each community suffered and the catastrophic drop in population which ensued — in most cases to (near) zero.

The accompanying wall panels invite the visitor to study the chief inciter of each pogrom. Displaying original quotations from key texts and speeches, visitor will spot recurrent motifs that feed anti-Jewish killing sprees. All inciters deploy conspiracy theories to convince people that they are victims of Jewish 'power'. And all call for performative violence as an act of liberation and spiritual redemption, to be celebrated with joy.

The exhibition ends with a video call to action:

*"Time and again, false prophets have promised that slaughtering Jews will set us free.*

*The pogroms they incite have destroyed thousands of communities by murdering & expelling their Jewish inhabitants... and trapping everyone else in an ongoing delusion.*

*After 2000 years, isn't it time to break the vicious circle?*

*And dare to create a virtuous circle... which lives, lets live, and co-creates?"*

This exhibition invites critical thinking. It asks: can we break this Vicious Circle? In keeping with the pedagogy of our Museum, it urges visitors to go beyond the usual call for empathy by considering the Jewish victims — but to examine the perpetrators, their false prophecies, and the doom-loop they create for their own societies. Maybe what it takes, is for us to realise what we ALL have to lose... or perhaps what we all have to gain? History shows that a philosophy of 'live, let live and co-create' has produced enormously successful communities — from Berlin to Baghdad; from Aden to Aleppo — which have arguably never recovered from the pogroms that killed and expelled their Jewish populations.

80 years after the single worst anti-Jewish atrocity the world has ever seen, the conspiracy theories which caused it are back with a vengeance. This time, they have circulated at internet speeds which Goebbels could only have dreamt of. It is surely an insult to the memory of the 6 million, and to the survivors who have educated and inspired us, if we fail to break the vicious circle of anti-Jewish racism in its 21<sup>st</sup> Century form.

Are these new perpetrators, or simply old ideas viciously recycled?

**Professor Maiken Umbach, the National Holocaust Museum's Chief Academic & Innovation Advisor, and Professor of Modern History at the University of Nottingham said:**

*"On Holocaust Memorial Day, we need to do more than remember history. We also need to confront dangerous ideological delusions still at work today. Why, after the Holocaust ended, were Jewish survivors massacred in Poland in 1946? And why did the perpetrators cite the same 'Blood Libel' myth that was used to justify medieval pogroms? Why do Hamas claim, as Goebbels did before them, that the Jews secretly run the world from a fictitious*

*manual? Why did a founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna, claim, as Hitler did before him, that slaughtering Jews would create a free world? History never repeats itself exactly – but it rhymes. Only when we study ideological delusions across time and space can we break their spell. The exhibition does not preach about how to save the world: it is an invitation to think again.”*

**Marc Cave, National Holocaust Museum Director said:**

*“The UK’s theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2025 is “For a Better Future”. Well, let’s look at the promise of a better future on offer from some. They promise a world without Jews, and certainly without a Jewish state, is a better world. They have expressed exhilaration at the latest pogrom: October 7. Hmm. In the cultural arts space, there is a real need to educate and encourage dialogue about that. It has become illiberal. It shows a tendency to endorse the false prophets of today’s extreme Left and extreme political Islamism, who recycle the mad delusion of the extreme Right and indeed of the Nazis. Why obsess about a mere 0.2% of the world population, splintered into umpteen pale and dark-skinned groups to whom History has never granted power or ‘white privilege’? ‘For a better future’, which kind of society do we wish to live in? One which destroys or one which builds? One deluded by conspiracy theory or one nurturing hope? One which pins its aspirations on a violent negative? Or one which looks for the positive — growing through the creativity and cohesion of communities which share values across plural identities?”*

**For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:**

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## **Notes to editors**

### **About the National Holocaust Museum**

[www.holocaust.org.uk](http://www.holocaust.org.uk)

Founded in 1995, The National Holocaust Museum in Laxton, Nottinghamshire is a major heritage and visitor attraction in the heart of England. It is Britain's only dedicated Holocaust museum, and the only one in the world founded by Christians - the remarkable Smith family.

The team have produced world-leading interactive experiences including The Forever Project, which enables a Q&A with a Holocaust survivor even when they are no longer alive; The Journey exhibition and app, which immerses the visitor or user in one refugee boy's story of the Kindertransport; The Eye As Witness, a 'mixed reality' exhibition in which visitors use VR goggles to 'step into' an infamous picture of the Warsaw Ghetto; as well as short films including the multi award winning Edek, which tells the harrowing story of survivor Janine Webber through the medium of Hip Hop.

Through age-appropriate exhibitions, memorial gardens, educational programmes, an internationally important collection of artefacts and above all the testimonies of a large number of Holocaust survivors to whom we have been a home-from-home for over 28 years — we communicate the memory of the Holocaust for a contemporary purpose:

To grow a community of critical thinkers right across society, able to question the misinformation, stereotypes and conspiracy theories which drive racist hate.

Critical thinking about the Holocaust and the 2,000 year continuum of anti-Jewish 'othering' at its root, and which persists today, is a transferrable citizenship skill. We believe it can and should be used to deconstruct all types of misinformation-based racism today. To challenge 'othering'. To heal differences. And to encourage the skill of critical thinking in a post-Truth world.

### Exhibition Features list:

5 screens featuring 5 objects each. Please see below for a selection of some of the images with captions we can supply.

#### 1. Chanukah Lamp ('Menorah'), IRAQ



Iraq had one of the oldest Jewish communities in the world. It flourished for nearly 3 millennia. This menorah, for the festival of Chanukah, was made in Baghdad c.1900. It bears symbols borrowed from Islam: the crescent & star, birds and hamsas (hands), embodying the flourishing coexistence of Jews and Muslims, a crisscrossing of symbols & customs enriching both cultures.

#### 2. Tzedakah Box, GERMANY





A tzedakah box is a Jewish charity box. This example, from around 1900, comes from Germany, where Jews were extremely well integrated. The style of the box reflects this integration. The large stones and steep roof characterise typical German architecture. After 1933, many German Jews viewed the Nazis' anti-Jewish policies with incredulity. Many continued to believe it was 'just a phase' – until it was too late.

### **3. Wedding Bracelet, ADEN (YEMEN)**



Jewish life flourished for many centuries in the city of Aden. Under Islamic rule, Jews were treated as “dhimmis”, second-class citizens, forced into professions deemed impure for Muslims. This included metalwork. The Yemenite Jewish silversmiths became famous throughout the Middle East. Our example of their beautiful creations is the wedding bracelet of an Adeni Jewish woman, whose family was forced to flee their home country by anti-Jewish pogroms. She now lives in Israel.

#### 4. Klezmer Clarinet, POLAND



Klezmer is the instrumental folk music of the Jews of Central & Eastern Europe, which developed principally in Poland, Europe's most tolerant kingdom of the early modern era. Klezmer became a popular part of Polish Jewish life for 400 years. The annihilation of Jewish life in Poland all but killed klezmer music in Europe. In 1988, non-Jewish Poles founded the annual Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow, in which klezmer music plays a central role. The festival now attracts some 30,000 participants every year.

#### 5. Butterfly Glasses by Shlomo Mansour, ISRAEL





This pair of 'butterfly glasses' was made by Shlomo Mansour. Shlomo was born in Baghdad. During the Farhud pogrom of 1941, he was 3 years old. The Mansours escaped to Israel, along with over 100,000 other survivors. Shlomo built a new life in the small Kibbutz Kissufim. Its 300 residents invested in peace, building partnerships with Bedouins and Arabs. Shlomo worked as a carpenter, and especially loved making toys for children. He was still working on this butterfly when, on 7 October 2023, Kissufim was attacked by Hamas. Shlomo was beaten, abducted and taken to Gaza. At 86 years of age, Shlomo is the oldest person currently held hostage by Hamas.

### The five perpetrator voices

