



2021 no. 2 £6.50 (free to members)

INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



Twinning & Human Rights in Poland Roma & Covid-19 Turkey
Liberal Democrat Spring Conference
Saudi Arabia Senegal Guinée

EVENTS

The 2nd Reading of Alistair Carmichael's Hong Kong Bill was deferred again, with no date fixed as yet for its return to the House of Commons

19th-21st March – Liberal Democrats Spring Conference.

19th April - LIBG Forum on Cameroon (page 7)

6th May - local elections

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InterLib is published by the Liberal International (British Group). Views expressed therein are those of the authors and are not necessarily the views of LI(BG), LI or any of its constituent parties.

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Photographs: Liberal International, LIBG & forum speakers. Cover image: Anil Prabhakar

Anil Prabhakar's photo will remain immortal in history. Taken in Indonesia's forests, the picture shows an Orangutan (an endangered species and close cousin) trying to help a geologist who fell into a pool of mud during his research.

When Anil took the photo, he captioned it: In a time when humanity dies inside humans, animals lead us to the principles of humanity....!

The orangutan is endangered largely through loss of habitat, as its tropical forest home is cut down for palm oil plantations. Palm oil is an ingredient in many cosmetics and foods (chocolate for example). Try not to buy products using palm oil, it doesn't take long to read the ingredients, or watch out for labels like this one.



Human rights are under threat in our twinned towns in Poland: it's time to help

Adrian Hyrylainen-Trett

We're asking local councils twinned with towns in Poland to start active diplomatic engagement to champion equality and human rights in the face of the "LGBT ideology free" zones Poland has created. Local communities in our twinned towns are now under threat, people are discriminated against, and human rights have been attacked.

- ☉ **More than 100 LGBT zones 'free of LGBT ideology' have been locally declared and more of these #HateZones are being lobbied for**
- ☉ **Local councils in Poland decide this through local resolutions**
- ☉ **UK has dozens of twinned town arrangements dating back decades**
- ☉ **We have to look after the communities we're twinned with**
- ☉ **It's time to #ProtectOurTwins**

UK Lib Dems lead a cross-party initiative

The UK party has stepped forwards to lead a cross-party, coordinated response at local level. There are detailed draft motions and guidance for councillors, templated letters to the Mayors of their twinned towns, and a 5-part approach.

These public letters will clarify whether the local resolutions are remaining in place, before the UK



Council considers how to take forward any review of twinning relationships.

The Liberal Democrats value twinning relationships. The spirit of the campaign is focussed on education and preventing discrimination, with UK councils engaging in a period of education and discussion with their Polish twins.

The UK must take a stance: #ProtectOurTwins

"Events in Poland should concern the whole international community", explains campaign leader Layla Moran MP. "Labelling LGBT as an 'ideology' and suppressing LGBT people is outrageous. Many of these towns are twinned with those here in the UK. We cannot stand by; we must Protect Our Twins, and the LGBT communities who live there."

Join the campaign

Adrian Hyrylainen-Trett, Chair of Liberal International British Group (LIBG), said: "We are holding out our hands in support and solidarity with our friends and fellow LGBT+ citizens in Poland whose rights are being negated by the creation of these 'hate zones' which goes against fundamental human rights, both in terms of UN and EU law. Enabling dialogue is key to sharing the recognised values 'Liberals' believe in,

and by engaging in discussion at a local council level, as well as with our sister Liberal Party Nowoczesna, is the way to hopefully reverse these local resolutions and show our solidarity with the people of Poland.”

Find out more about #ProtectOurTwins

Here’s the full campaign site, with details of how to get press releases, letters, motions and support material.

<http://lgbt.libdems.org.uk/protect-our-twins>

see also <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/poland-lgbt-free-zone-twinning-towns-lib-dems-b1815049.html>

Time for Twins?

Around 42 towns in the UK are listed as be twinned with a town in Poland; there are probably more, since some of these relationships can be informal. Of the 26 local authorities controlled by the Liberal Democrats, Bedford is twinned with Włocławek. Where local authorities are involved, twinning can be vulnerable to spending cuts; it is an easy target, Post-Brexit there is an argument for twinning to be part of our toolkit against isolationism; the initiative in support of human rights in Poland is a good start.

LI Bureau urges calm after Senegal protests turn deadly

The Liberal International bureau is saddened to observe the deadly protests that shook one of west Africa’s most stable democracies over the weekend of 6th-7th March. The protests were sparked by the temporary arrest of an opposition leader, Ousmane Sonko, accused of rape and were the most serious seen in several years. They were also fuelled by economic inequalities and concerns over young people's standard of living. Our thoughts are with the victims of the violence and their families and we call for development of the calm and a peaceful dialogue between the opposition groups and the government in Senegal.

Protests of this kind are rare in Senegal because Senegalese leaders know that democracies are developed by dialogue not by violence. However, the vulnerability of the citizens, especially young people, due to the pandemic is exacerbated by the accusation of rape by a prominent political figure. Such an accusation must not become a political football that undermines the rule of law or erodes peace and stability in Senegal and the authorities must be allowed to conduct their enquiries without fear or prejudice and the claims independently investigated.



Now is the time for de-escalation.

Differences cannot be settled by attacking homes and businesses of people struggling to live with the consequences of the pandemic and we urge all political groups to refrain from further violence.

We know that all actors will want to work in the interests of Senegal and its people and in this pursuit you have, in Liberal International, a dedicated ally.

COVID-19 and the precarity of Romani lives: a renewed call for a Social Europe.

Nidhi Trehan, Andrew Ryder & Marius Tabă

I am a Sinto, the son of a Holocaust survivor who lost six aunts and uncles in the Holocaust. I know how racism feels and I don't want anyone to endure what my people and I have to endure on a daily basis ... We not only have COVID-19 in Europe, but a pandemic that is older and even more dangerous – RACISM! Are we finally prepared to confront this reality and correct this injustice?" Romeo Franz, MEP from Germany, Greens/EFA, Brussels, 9 July 2020¹

As the COVID-19 pandemic accentuates fundamental structural problems within our globalised society, throwing into sharp relief the dangers of authoritarianism, racism and inequality, it also brutally exposes the fragility and precarity of life at the margins, including for many Romani families across Europe. COVID-19 has exacerbated the marginalisation of Roma: the lockdowns have left those dependent on casual work and the informal economy without an income, with limited access to bank accounts or their savings, and with little or no emergency welfare support coming from the state. A poor health profile, often resulting from a lack of basic infrastructure such as potable water², leads to chronic debilitating pre-existing conditions; this, coupled with substandard living conditions in rural settlements and overcrowded tenement housing, leave many Roma vulnerable to this unpredictable virus.

Moreover, moral panics spearheaded by xenophobic politicians and media hysteria (amplified by social media 'fake news') centred on Romani communities in European countries as diverse as Spain, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, have fuelled claims that they are the principal carriers of the virus.

In this manner, the pandemic highlights the corrosive nature and reach of anti-gypsyism in Europe, as well as how the state and a broad spectrum of political actors can orchestrate anti-Romani sentiments. What makes anti-gypsyism a special form of racism in Europe today is the involvement of the state in the production and co-production of these discriminatory norms, knowledge and politics in relation to Romani communities.

In Bulgaria, for instance, some politicians and media outlets have referred to Roma people as 'a threat to public health' and requested special measures to target them. Local authorities in several EU member states have set up draconian police checkpoints around Roma settlements³ to enforce quarantine measures and, in one place, a fence was erected around a Roma settlement⁴, on the pretext of public health and safety, to better control movements. Such actions were redolent of earlier (often recurring) anti-Roma racist measures in Europe generated by moral panics. For example, during the time of Romani slavery in Romania, enslaved (and semi-itinerant) Roma were forbidden from entering Bucharest during outbreaks of the plague. Then, in the 1940s, eugenicist fears that Roma would contaminate the 'Romanian race' with typhus led to stringent anti-Roma measures⁵. Indeed, the problem of increasing police violence⁶ as another aspect of growing anti-Romani racism during COVID-19 has been discussed by Bernard Rorke of the ERRC who pushes for 'extra vigilance to protect the human rights of racialised minorities when governments adopt emergency powers'.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis it has induced necessitate major acts of economic intervention and stimulus. Public support for transformative change is far greater than some European leaders assume, thus the pandemic presents not only a danger, but an opportunity to transform the societies we live in so that European Roma no longer suffer marginality and demonisation. As Matache & Bhabha (2020)⁵ emphasise:

Like other racialized and marginalized communities, Roma need humane and protective measures. These must recognize their structural inequalities and be tailored to the specificities of their racialized vulnerability—access to water, community facilities, health care assistance, direct cash payments, and income supplements to counterbalance inevitable drop offs in daily wage labor. With 80% of European

Union's Roma living below the poverty line, 30% with no running water, and 46% without an indoor toilet or shower, access to non-discriminatory and high-quality care is critical for their health and well-being.

The contributors to our policy short *Romani Communities and Transformative Change: A New Social Europe* believe a new Social Europe is a promising path forward especially when evidence suggests that COVID-19 affects the Roma to a greater extent than others. The concept of a Social Europe dates back to the 1970s and is centred on wealth redistribution, social and economic planning and regulation, improved working and living conditions, a guarantee of the right to work, upward harmonisation of European social regimes, and access to social protection for all.

Our challenge is to update the concept of Social Europe and engage in forms of collective action that facilitate inclusive community development, by harnessing the existing resources and skills of those at the margins. We argue that sustainable community organising (centred on constituency-building within Romani communities) and a vibrant civil society for all minorities and interests is a prerequisite to ensuring that macro-level policies are relevant to addressing the needs of local communities. These would in turn form the basis for challenging oppressive forms of ideology and practice by recentring power within European Romani communities.

In July 2020, there was renewed hope for a Social Europe as an EU summit was held to finalise the details of an economic stimulus package to prevent what appeared to be the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The finalised Franco-German deal involves a robust €750 billion package and significant financial transfers from the richest countries to the weakest. For the first time, the European Commission will be allowed to borrow large sums on international money markets. What is also significant is that economically dominant Germany, normally allied with the 'frugals' (who favour austerity), backed the 'primers' this time and opted instead to invest with the aim of stimulating the Eurozone. However, what remains to be seen is to what extent this transfusion of funds will generate the direct cash payments and stimulus packages for those most in need⁵, regardless of ethnicity, as these are determined by EU member states who would then implement their distribution to Romani constituents.

We hope this policy short serves as a toolkit for reflection, training and mobilisation within Romani communities and among their allies. Given the critical challenges Europe faces with the COVID-19 pandemic, a new economic crisis and a widening socio-economic gap for groups like the European Roma, the concept and transformative vision of Social Europe has never been more relevant.

The book is available at [Policy Press | Romani Communities and Transformative Change - A New Social Europe : Edited by Andrew Ryder, Marius Taba and Nidhi Trehan \(bristoluniversitypress.co.uk\)](https://www.policypress.co.uk/romani-communities-and-transformative-change-a-new-social-europe). In addition, a recent European Romani Rights Centre article⁷ by the editors considers the impact of the US presidential election and the unfolding policies of the European Commission which issued a reinforced and reformed EU Roma strategic framework⁸ on 7 October 2020.

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Andrew Ryder is Associate Professor at the Institute of Communication and Sociology, Corvinus University of Budapest and board member of the Roma Education Fund.

Marius Taba is Visiting Lecturer and Fellow at Corvinus University of Budapest and former Grants and Research Manager at the Roma Education Fund.

Romeo Franz is a German MEP of Bündnis90/Die Grünen (Alliance90/The Greens), a musician and human rights activist Between 2003 and 2013, he was a board member of the Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma (Central Council of German Sinti & Roma)

This article and the original blog first appeared in Transforming Society:

<https://www.transformingsociety.co.uk/2020/11/12/covid-19-and-the-precarity-of-romani-lives-a-renewed-call-for-a-social-europe/>

Romani Communities and Transformative Change: A New Social Europe, edited by Andrew Ryder, Marius Taba and Nidhi Trehan is available on the Bristol University Press website, £10.39. .

¹ excerpt from *Romani Communities and Transformative Change: A New Social Europe*.

² Thirsting for Justice, a report of the European Roma Rights Centre [thirsting-for-justice-march-2017.pdf](https://errc.org/thirsting-for-justice-march-2017.pdf) (errc.org)

³ Amnesty International - Europe: COVID-19 lockdowns expose racial bias and discrimination within police. 22.6.2020 [Europe: COVID-19 lockdowns expose racial bias and discrimination within police](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/06/europe-covid-19-lockdowns-expose-racial-bias-and-discrimination-within-police/) | [Amnesty International](https://www.amnesty.org/)

⁴ Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights – Governments must ensure equal protection and care for Roma and Travellers during the COVID-19 crisis. [Governments must ensure equal protection and care for Roma and Travellers during the COVID-19 crisis - View \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/com-hr/communications/governments-must-ensure-equal-protection-and-care-for-roma-and-travellers-during-the-covid-19-crisis)

⁵ Anti-Roma racism spiraling during COVID-19 Pandemic, by Margareta Matache & Jacqueline Bhabha. Health & Human Rights Journal, June 2020 [Anti-Roma Racism is Spiraling during COVID-19 Pandemic \(nih.gov\)](https://www.nih.gov/health-human-rights-journal/anti-roma-racism-is-spiraling-during-covid-19-pandemic)

⁶ EUObserver – Pandemic: Roma at receiving end of racist policing, by Bernard Rorke 4.5.2020. [Pandemic: Roma at receiving end of racist policing \(euobserver.com\)](https://euobserver.com/2020/04/pandemic-roma-at-receiving-end-of-racist-policing)

⁷ European Romani Rights Centre – Romany Communities and the Promise of a New Social Europe. 21.10.2020. [Romani Communities and the Promise of a New Social Europe - European Roma Rights Centre \(errc.org\)](https://errc.org/romani-communities-and-the-promise-of-a-new-social-europe)

⁸ European Commission – Roma equality, inclusion and participation in the EU. [Roma equality, inclusion and participation in the EU | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/ro/equality)

See also https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/meps-demand-action-to-end-roma-exclusion_N01-PUB-200918-ROMA_ev



LIBG ZOOM FORUM



The World's Most Neglected Conflict: Cameroon

April 19th 6.30 – 8.00pm

Dr Chris Fomunyoh of the National Democratic Institute, Washington DC
Juliette Paauwe, the Global Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect
Billy Burton, Toronto University Database of Atrocities
Maggie Kilo, Ambazonian activist

Joining details will follow

Is Turkey at the centre of geo-politico tectonic plates?

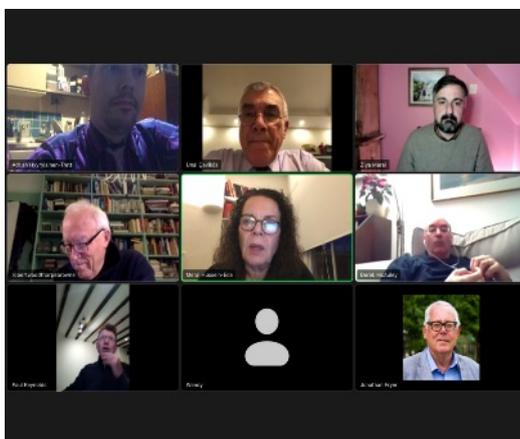
Wendy Kyrle Pope & Adrian Hyyrylainen-Trett

On Tuesday 9th March, LIBG organised our first Forum of 2021, held by the Virtual Zoom method the way we have become so accustomed to since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020. Zoom does have the advantage of allowing both our speakers and participants to join us from all over the world

The two expert guest speakers were Ünal Çeviköz, former Ambassador to the United Kingdom (talking to us from Ankara) and Ziya Meral, Senior Resident Fellow at the Army's think tank, the Centre for Historical Analysis and Conflict Research (from a cottage on the coast of Ireland).



Ünal Çeviköz



Ziya Meral

The debate was chaired brilliantly by Baroness Meral Hussein-Ece, who with her own expert knowledge both from her own background and historical knowledge was able to bring together the issues with an excellent summing up to conclude the discussion.

The title of the debate, carefully created by Chair of LIBG, Adrian Hyyrylainen-Trett, was "Is Turkey at the centre of geo-politico tectonic plates? And if so, what and where is its influence?" Both Ünal and Ziya agreed that Turkey's leader, President Erdoğan, appears to a "zig-zag" logic in his foreign policy decisions as there is no consistent position or pattern which both brought uncertainty and differing expectations both to Turkey's allies and its enemies.

Erdoğan's only one clear objective is the creation of a one party, nationalist, Islamic influenced state. Not as part of a wider, pan national Caliphate, but one which puts religion at the heart of government. The secular democracy created by Atatürk is being eroded. Education, the Judiciary, the Media, the Army are all losing their independent status; censorship abounds. This, combined with the fragmenting, fragile global shift in alliances and the destabilisation of the world order which has been in place since the fall of the Berlin Wall, have pushed Turkey into a unique position, of instability, and at odds with many of its close neighbours.

Politically and geographically, Turkey should hold a key strategic position, not only by its proximity to the EU borders, (and its NATO membership) but to Russia, Syria, Israel and Iran. Further afield, there has been a seismic shift in its relationship with USA and China. Turkey is courting China for its influence and economic clout (and never said a word about China's treatment of the Uighurs, despite their being co-religionists). The new Washington administration is drawing away from Erdoğan's Turkey (at the time of

our meeting, President Biden had not yet spoken to Erdoğan). Its embassies to Israel and Egypt have been withdrawn, and vice versa.

Whilst Turkey's humanitarian acceptance of at least 3 million Syrian refugees is widely admired, its actual participation in the Syrian conflict is as widely condemned, both at home and abroad, where it is seen as another attempt to silence the Kurds, and Russia is a dangerous ally. Turkey's forays into Africa, notably Somalia, are seen as an attempt to gain the countries of Africa support to enhance Turkey's status in the UN. Initially 51 African countries supported them, but later this dropped to only 20.

This once wonderful country is running out of luck, both in its "zig-zagging" foreign policy and economically. Rampant inflation (18% since the beginning of 2021), foreign investors fleeing, one-fifth of the population living under the poverty line, and the destruction wrought by the continued witch hunt for Gulenists, which has purged the Army, the Civil Service, Educational institutions and even people doing ordinary jobs makes this a very difficult time.

We are indebted to our speakers for their clear and forensic contributions, which have helped us better understand why Turkey is on the edge of an earthquake.

Wendy Kyrle Pope & Adrian Hyyrylainen-Trett

The LIBG Turkey Forum was held on March 9th 2021

LI Vice President Cellou Diallo barred from leaving Guinea by illiberal Alpha Condé

In the latest curbing of freedom in Guinea at the hands of Alpha Condé, former Prime Minister of Guinea and LI Vice President Cellou Dalein Diallo has been prohibited from leaving the country to attend the funeral of Prime Minister Hamed Bakayoko, who died in Germany on 10th March. Bakayoko had seemingly recovered from Covid-19 last year, but it recurred with malaria complications.

As the aircraft that Mr. Diallo had boarded was about to take off to Ivory Coast, police officers entered the aircraft and notified the captain that he was prohibited from taking off with Mr. Diallo on board, despite no known administrative or legal premise to detain Mr Diallo.



LI President, Hakima El Haité condemned the violation of Mr Diallo's liberty and expressed "serious concerns about the treatment that the Guinean authorities are inflicting on LI member party the UFDG – the Union des forces démocratiques de Guinée, our organisation and its leaders."

Guinea's election of last October remain disputed. At least ten people died in post-election violence after Cellou Diallo claimed victory.

Deadly Words

Saudi Arabia exports its Intolerant ideology, while demonising the rest of the Muslim world

Rebecca Tinsley

Mikhail Gorbachev reputedly described the Soviet Union's foreign policy as the most expensive failed marketing campaign in history. Yet, the USSR's propaganda budget is dwarfed by the estimated \$100 billion¹ spent by Saudi Arabia since 1979, spreading its ultra-conservative Wahhabi version of Islam across the globe, including to British institutions.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) recently reported² that Saudi Arabia has revised its school textbooks, removing the most overt anti-Semitism and incitement to kill Christians. This comes a mere twenty-one years after 9/11, when the Kingdom was criticised for the intolerance it propagated worldwide. Saudi rulers repeatedly promised (and failed) to amend their educational materials. Now, many of the problematic passages are gone, but the demonisation of Shia, Sufi and other non-Wahhabi interpretations of Islam persists.

It's not just about school books in Riyadh

Millions of unrevised Saudi books have been distributed around the world for free, and handed out at the Haj. They sit in schools, libraries, madrassas, mosques and Islamic centres from Pakistan to Indonesia to Bradford and Minneapolis. They feed the racism, paranoia and exceptionalism of the Wahhabi faith, reinforcing jihadist messages, and fuelling hatred of "other" Muslims. Will these volumes be recalled and replaced with the sanitized versions?

Will school books currently used by five million Saudi students, and in mosques and madrassas in the Kingdom be removed and replaced? Or will the less offensive version sit in a warehouse? Should we take the word of the Western consultants who are paid to sanitize the Kingdom's reputation?

Why Now?

Analysts believe Saudi Arabia finally acted, fearing President Biden would be more concerned about the blood-curdling anti-Semitism and hatred of Christians than previous US administrations. The revisions may also be due to consultants trying to make the Kingdom palatable for inward investment. The Saudis could have saved their money, since Biden failed to sanction Prince Mohammed Bin Salman whom US intelligence directly implicate³ in the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. The White House stresses the U.S. is "recalibrating" its relationship with Riyadh.

Danielle Saroyan Ashbahian of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom told me, "We are heartened that advocates for international religious freedom -- including within the government itself -- are making progress in Saudi Arabia... Some might say astonishing progress. We are also encouraged that the Kingdom announced earlier this month their intent to reform their judicial system, eventually codifying its law. Of course, Saudi Arabia remains a country without a single non-Muslim house of worship, and where reform is needed throughout the society. Hopefully, we will soon find its textbooks fully expunged of any pretext to violate the human rights of any religious community, atheist or nonbeliever as well as women, members of the LGBTI community, and others".

1979 and all that

The current surge in Islamist extremism was a reaction to the socialism and nationalism of a post-colonial generation of Arab leaders like Egypt's Nasser. The intolerant Wahhabi variant was then turbo-charged by the 1979 Iranian revolution. The ayatollahs threatened the Gulf Arabs' legitimacy by challenging the notion that debauched royal families should run Muslim societies or be guardians of Mecca and Medina.

Following the Iranian revolution, Saudi authorities funded a world-wide building programme of mosques, madrassas and Islamic centres to counter Shia Islam. In poor countries, like Pakistan, parents jumped at the chance to send their sons to free schools; according to Mohamed Charfi⁴, the former minister of education in Tunisia, Saudi-backed madrassas in Pakistan and Afghanistan have played significant roles in strengthening radical Islam there.

In “*The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*,” David Commins reports⁵ that Saudi institutions have trained thousands of teachers and preachers in their particularly intolerant and ultra-conservative interpretation of Islam, a view supported by Arabist Gilles Kepel⁶ in “*Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*”.

As Yasmin Alibhai-Brown noted in the *Independent*, King Salman offered to build 200 Wahhabi mosques for Muslim refugees arriving in Germany during the Syrian war, but not a penny to help with their re-settlement or more basic needs. She described it as the “Trojan horse of the secret Saudi crusade.”

In his book, *Hatred’s Kingdom*⁷, Dore Gold estimates that between 1982 and 2005, the Saudis spent an estimated £75 billion globally on 200 Islamic colleges, 210 Islamic centres, 1,500 mosques and 2,000 schools, all teaching an intolerant, fundamentalist version of Islam. In Robert Lacey’s book, *Inside the Kingdom*⁸, he reports that in the 1980s, more than 70 Saudi embassies had officials charged with getting new mosques built to propagate Wahhabism.

In Nigeria, at least 20,000⁹ Christians and Muslims who reject extremism have been killed by Boko Haram and the proxies of the Islamic State in West Africa. A Nigerian journalist (speaking to *interLib* anonymously, for his own safety) says Saudi has sponsored hundreds of fundamentalist imams, including Boko Haram leader Mohammed Yusuf, paying for their study in the Gulf, and bankrolling the intolerant Salafist Islamist movement in Nigeria. The “underpants bomber” Abdul Mutallab, was reputedly operating on behalf of Al Qaeda, supplied with a Saudi-made bomb, says the Nigerian journalist. He points to the deep links, political and economic, between Saudi and the Nigerian government, warning Saudi’s embrace has deadly consequences for those rejecting Boko Haram’s ideology.

What’s the problem with Saudi textbooks?

The Kingdom’s pre-sanitized books teach that those who worship differently from Wahhabism are polytheists heading for hell regardless of their good deeds. Shi’a and Sufi veneration of the gravesites of prophets is “heresy,” while criticism of Islam is “apostasy,” deserving the death penalty. Students must avoid friendship with members of other religions. They also encouraged both violent and non-violent jihad against non-believers. Finally, the passages espouse the death penalty for women who have an affair, and for gay men.

Among several now-expunged passages is a reference¹⁰ to Jews as monkeys and Christians as pigs. In addition, the following has been removed: “The Hour will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews, and the Muslims will kill them until the Jews will hide behind the rocks and the trees. The rocks and the trees will say: O Muslim, O servant of God, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him – except for the gharqad tree which is a tree of the Jews.” (Monotheism (2): 102, quoting a hadith from Bukhari, Muslim, and others).

Yet, HRW claims the website of the Saudi committee issuing fatwas continues to proclaim that “hating infidels is obligatory because they are the enemies of God and His messenger and the enemies of Muslims.” Nina Shea, from the right-leaning Hudson Institute, told me that reforming textbooks is only part of the problem. “Innumerable Sunni Muslim villages and city neighbourhoods in Africa and Asia have been indoctrinated in lessons that direct students to fight and kill the religious other, thanks to Saudi-government-published religious texts and export policies. Two years ago, one of the leaders of Al Azhar, the great centre of Sunni learning in Cairo, told me that his institution still taught some courses from Wahabi textbooks. Saudi schools in major Western capitals long taught from these texts. Saudi Arabia must replace them everywhere and see that the old editions are destroyed. It must replace them on the Internet. Riyadh must stop inciting, through its prior textbook editions, extremism and terror abroad, as well as at home.”

Does Global Britain care?

There are 30 state-funded Muslim schools in England and Wales, and 180 private ones. The BBC estimated that the old textbooks were used by about 5,000 students¹¹ in the UK. How many religious leaders in British mosques have studied in Saudi, even though the vast majority of British Muslims are not Wahhabi? Will the

British government ensure that poisonous material is not inciting hatred against Sufi, Shia and other non-Wahhabi sects? Will the old textbooks be replaced? What about online material? My attempts to get answers from the Saudi embassy and via written Parliamentary questions (via Fiona Bruce MP) proved fruitless.

Boris Johnson's Global Britain defines its relationship with Saudi as a commercial one, boasting (on the Department of Trade website¹²) that Saudi is the UK's third largest trade partner outside the EU. In 2018, Britain exported £6 billion worth of goods and services to the Kingdom, the same year we were told that Saudi was "exploring up to £65 billion of fresh investment in the UK." Glaxo Smith Kline, Rolls Royce, Unilever, Shell and BAe Systems are the beneficiaries mentioned. BAe claims to have sold £15 billion of services and weapons since 2015. The UK has licensed £6.8 billion to Saudi since the start of the Yemen bombing campaign, while the US has suspended offensive weapons sales. UK weapons are being used to target Yemen's hospitals, vaccination centres and food distribution network. On March 1st, the FCDO cut aid to Yemen from an annual £214 million to £87 million.

Less discussed is London's "money butler" role managing the not terribly hard-earned riches of Saudi royals, as well as the sovereign wealth funds of Gulf nations; or the UK's permanent naval base in Wahhabi Bahrain, a Saudi-aligned country where Shia and democracy activists are jailed and tortured¹³ (including 11-year-old-children), not to mention the mistreatment of Muslim labourers from overseas.

As the West's dependence on Gulf oil declines, our money butler role explains our obsequious approach. Oliver Bullough, the author of *Moneyland*, estimates that 100,000 properties in England and Wales are owned offshore. Meanwhile, sales of British weapons, the training of security forces, and the maintenance of military systems in the Gulf continue to be lucrative. In 2019, at the launch of the UK-Saudi Strategic Partnership Council, the government announced a new UK Export Finance Office in Jeddah (I await a parliamentary answer revealing the cost of this initiative).

In January, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee's report, "*A Brave New Britain*," suggested that trade policy should be coordinated with other UK priorities abroad to avoid the incoherence of British international policy. It urged the FCDO to prioritise "mediation, conflict resolution and atrocity prevention." Given the UK's role supplying Saudi's war in Yemen, and our money-butler activities, it is unlikely our officials will be removing poisonous textbooks from British institutions any time soon.

Rebecca Tinsley

A shorter version of this article appeared in Jewish News.

Rebecca Tinsley's novel about Africa, When the Stars Fall to Earth, is available in English and Arabic.

¹[Last Night's TV: The Qur'an, Channel 4; Banged Up, Five | The Independent | The Independent](#) 23.10.2011

²[HRW slams Saudi textbooks over 'hateful language' against Shia, Sufi practices | Middle East Eye](#) 15.2.2021

³[Text of the U.S. assessment of Saudi government role in Khashoggi killing | Reuters](#) 26.2.2021

⁴[Opinion | Reaching the Next Muslim Generation - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#) 12.3.2002

⁵[The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia - David Commins - Google Books](#)

⁶[Jihad by Gilles Kepel | Waterstones](#)

⁷[Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism by Dore Gold \(goodreads.com\)](#)

⁸[Inside the Kingdom: Kings, Clerics, Modernists, Terrorists and the Struggle for Saudi Arabia by Robert Lacey \(goodreads.com\)](#)

⁹[Nigeria's anti-Boko Haram general Attahiru Ibrahim sacked - BBC News](#) 7.12.2017

¹⁰[BBC NEWS | Education | School edits controversial books](#) 7.2.2007

¹¹[Saudi school lessons in UK concern government - BBC News](#) 22.11.2010

¹²[Saudi Arabia market guide - great.gov.uk](#)

¹³[Rights groups say Bahrain police beat children and threatened them with rape | Reuters](#) 10.3.2021

Now's the time to debate Nukes. Johnson said so...

I know there will be no doubt in the minds of members on the need to remove Trident from the UK's arsenal. However, the aggressive foreign policy announcement from Johnson and Raab seriously ratchet up old Cold War tactics and the treat to almost double the number of nuclear missiles is positively chilling.

The only credible and distinctive position for the Lib Dems is to wholeheartedly oppose the government and this policy. There should be an emergency motion to Spring Conference and Layla Moran needs to publicly support it as FA spokesperson.

Roger Hayes

This press statement was put out by the Lib Dem Press Office:

Trident increase: There should be no return to the nuclear arms race
Responding to the Government's Integrated Review, released today, Liberal Democrat Defence Spokesperson Jamie Stone MP said:

“The Government’s Integrated Review is not strategic, not integrated, and not a proper review. Rather, it is full of retreat and broken promises. "Our Armed forces are being cut back and the Defence budget is in a mess.

“Proposals to increase the number of Trident warheads should not be taken forward. Such a policy would be a breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Increasing our nuclear arsenal now will not strengthen our defence. The world faces many threats to peace and stability. We should not add to those threats by encouraging a return to the nuclear arms race.”

Lib Dem Peer & former chair of LIBG Julie Smith spoke at the CND virtual rally opposing the escalation of the nuclear arms race and breach of the Non-Proliferation Treaty

EMERGENCY MOTION - UN TREATY

Conference notes:

A) That the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entered into force on 22nd January 2021,

B) That the Treaty prohibits signatory states from developing, testing, producing, manufacturing and otherwise acquiring, possessing or stockpiling nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices,

C) That the majority of countries in the world protect their citizens from attack without possessing nuclear weapons,

D) That further delays in the Dreadnought programme to replace the existing fleet of Trident armed submarines have recently been announced adding to the cost of the system.

Conference believes that advances in technology are likely to render submarine based nuclear weapons obsolete and high risk in the not far distant future.

Accordingly, Conference commits Liberal Democrats to campaign for the United Kingdom to sign and ratify the TPNW.

Earlier commentary on the TPNW appeared in interLib 2020-11 pages 15-16

Liberal Democrats Spring Conference – the International Bits

If one allows that the EU is no longer parish council business, the Liberal Democrats have a reasonable international agenda at their Spring Conference, held again at the homely resort of Aether-on-the-Air.

Friday 19 March 16.35-17.40

Foreign Affairs in a post-Brexit, President Biden World - Spokespeople Q&A Sessions

With: Baroness Northover (Lords Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs), Lord Campbell of Pittenweem and Layla Moran MP. Chair: Liz Lynne.

Fringe Friday 21.15-22.15

Interview with Midge Ure, former Ultravox frontman, Live Aid organiser & political activist in conversation with BBC journalist & writer Gavin Esler & LD Peer Paul Strasburger on the impact of Brexit on the Music Industry. *In the Auditorium*.

Saturday 20th March

Fringe Saturday 13.00-14.15

Liberal Democrat European Group

Freedom of movement - a core liberal value? How can we regain it?

Attend LDEG's fringe to hear leading speakers from within the party & abroad discuss how UK nationals can regain the freedom to study, work and live in Europe. Do not miss the opportunity to ask questions of Europe's leaders on how we regain this fundamentalist right.

@LibDemEurope

Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary (LD4SOS)

Refugee Family Reunion: Brexit and Covid-19 double whammy?

(How) have Brexit and Covid-19 impacted refugee family reunion? What can civil society and Parliamentarians do to create pathways to protection? Associate Professor Ruvi Ziegler (LD4SOS Council) in conversation with Enver Solomon (Refugee Council) and Liberal Democrat Baroness Sally Hamwee.

<https://twitter.com/ld4sos>

www.facebook.com/ld4sos

Conference

14.15 The COVID-19 Pandemic.

Fringe Saturday 16.35-17.25

Mark Thompson

Interviewed by Mimi Turner, Liberal Democrat Director of Strategy

As former chief executive of the New York Times and former Director General of the BBC, Mark Thompson has had a stellar career in broadcasting and media on both sides of the Atlantic. Under his leadership, the New York Times became one of the most powerful critics of the Trump administration and successfully navigated the choppy seas of digital disruption. At the BBC his legacy included protecting the licence fee, launching the iPlayer and creating programmes including Blue Planet and the Apprentice. Although avowedly non-political, Mark has made political, cultural and strategic choices affecting millions of people throughout his career.

In the Auditorium

Fringe Saturday 17.40-18.45

Conference

18.45 The EU-UK Trade & Cooperation Agreement and the future of the UK-EU Relationship.

2.05 Acting on the Russia Report

Sunday 21st March

Conference

9.30 Emergency motions

12.10 International Development

Fringe Sunday 16.35-17.40

Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine

Dana Moss will be speaking to us from Israel. She is a Middle East expert currently working for Physicians for Human Rights (PHR).

Conference

19.30 Safe & Legal Routes to Save Lives

Reports of international events at the conference are welcome. Please send them by the end of the month.