



Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister  
Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

3<sup>rd</sup> June 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with us recently and the Government's strong response to the recent rise in antisemitism.

When we met, we mentioned that in September, the UN General Assembly will be hosting a one-day meeting to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. The Declaration was adopted by the UN following the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

The Foreign Secretary has since responded to our letter requesting the UK does not participate in this meeting and said the Government will "consider attendance in the light of developments between now and the commemoration event".

Despite being a conference against racism, the event is remembered by the international Jewish community as a hostile showcase for open antisemitism. Jewish attendees at the conference were subject to intimidation from protesters and antisemitic material, including the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, were distributed within the conference venue. The conference itself saw the revival of the 'Zionism equals racism' trope. The resulting 'Durban Declaration' singled out only Israel for criticism.

The Durban Review Conference, informally known as Durban II, was also the scene of open antisemitism. Nine countries, including the USA, Canada, Australia, Germany and Italy, refused to participate in Durban II in its entirety due to the events of the original Durban conference. The UK did attend but was forced to walk out during the keynote speech by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in which he equated Zionism with racism and claimed Israel was founded on the "pretext of Jewish suffering".

In 2011, the UK joined other countries opposed to the Durban legacy and stayed away from the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference held at the UN General Assembly – informally known as Durban III. Prime Minister David Cameron described the "open-displays" of antisemitism at previous events as his reason.



The event due to take place later this year is the latest in this series of events based on a legacy of open antisemitism. This one-day event is not a serious attempt to defeat racism internationally but a commemoration of a supposedly anti-racism conference which itself was antisemitic.

We recognise the difficulties here. On the one hand, we want the UK to continue to champion anti-racism on the world stage in appropriate forums as there is still much work to be done to address inequality and prejudice in society. Yet, at the same time, tackling antisemitism is a key component of this and events that propagate antisemitism undermine the fight against racism.

The USA, Australia and Canada have recently confirmed that they will refuse to participate in this year's event. The reasons for the UK staying away from Durban III remain true 10 years on and we are seeking confirmation that the UK will not dignify this year's commemoration with its attendance. This will be a signal that the Government takes a firm stand against anti-Jewish racism.

Yours sincerely,

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