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The new Holocaust memorial will remind us where unchecked hatred can lead

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Hate crime in Britain is rising, with figures published last week revealing it has increased by 29 per cent over the past year. This is the largest increase since records began. Let's stop and consider what that means: that growing numbers of people in modern Britain are experiencing hatred simply because of who they are – because of their religion, race, sexual orientation, their disability or the fact that they are transgender.

Globally and nationally, these are uncertain times. With major shifts in the political, social and economic order taking place, with the threat of not only Islamic extremist terrorism but white supremacist extremism, with the rise of “fake news” and the ability of the internet to connect and spread hatred, with genocide continuing to take place around the world, we cannot credibly say that mankind has learned the lessons from the past.

It is against this global backdrop that, today, the UK is doing something truly special.

The UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, of which I am a board member, is poised to announce the winning design concept for a new National Holocaust Memorial and co-located learning centre this week. It will be a moment in our history. Not only because it will show unequivocally that Britain will never forget the Holocaust. Not only because of the beauty, elegance and emotion of the architecture that has been chosen. But because this is a design for a new national landmark that will become an internationally-recognised statement against hatred.

The new memorial will honour the six million Jewish men, women and children who were murdered in the Holocaust, and all other victims of Nazi persecution, including Roma, gay and disabled people. The Nazis demonised and dehumanised people because of religion, race, sexual orientation, disabilities and other types of “different”. It will show the world that we will not forget their suffering.

Its co-located learning centre will explore anti-Semitism, extremism, Islamophobia, homophobia and other forms of hatred and prejudice in society today. It will challenge visitors to think about their role as empathetic, engaged citizens and confront the reality of where hatred can lead. It will tackle these issues through Holocaust testimony and other examples of genocides and hate-fuelled atrocity. Ultimately, it will challenge visitors to identify and confront hatred in everyday life in Britain today.

The Holocaust was characterised by a breakdown of law and order. The courts in Germany were subverted. Professionals like doctors and community leaders like priests all did terrible things, against the tenets of their profession and against the tenets of a civilised society. This industrialised murder relied on the demonisation and dehumanisation of its victims and the breakdown of the ethics, rules and institutions of a democratic civilised society that protects the rights of every citizen.

The new memorial and learning centre will be built in Victoria Tower Gardens, next to the Houses of Parliament. I'm proud to be part of a nation that wants to put this story right in the heart of its own democracy.

What better way to show that we will not tolerate hatred than our new Holocaust Memorial, right next to our parliament. There is no location more fitting to honour the victims of one of humanity's greatest tragedies than side-by-side with one of humanity's oldest democracies. No better way for us to stand up as a nation and say to each other, and to the world, that there is no place for hate in our society. No better way to strengthen education initiatives up and down the country.

There is no better gift we can pass to future generations than the knowledge of where hatred, unchecked, can lead.

Ed Balls is former shadow chancellor and a UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation board member