

## **U.K. Hosts Global Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief**

The U.K. recently hosted around 500 delegates including faith and government leaders from 60 countries around the world at a two-day conference aimed at boosting global efforts to promote Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) internationally. More than 80% of the world's population live in countries where FoRB is under threat.

In her speech, during the opening plenary session, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said, "The freedom to believe, to pray and commit acts of worship... is a fundamental human freedom and has been one since the dawn of time. Societies that allow their people to choose what they believe are better, stronger and ultimately more successful."

Listing historic and current examples of religious persecution, Ms. Truss cited "the appalling persecution of the Jewish community over centuries or Stalin trying to stamp out religion in the Soviet Union," as well as "the extraordinary scale of China's targeting of Uighur Muslims and other ethnic minorities.

"Delegates watched a video statement from HRH The Prince of Wales, in which he said that "Freedom of conscience, of thought and of belief is central to any truly flourishing society." Prince Charles continued, "This essential principle must be embedded in government, education, business, the media, and social media and right across our communities.

"There was a strong Jewish presence at the conference, with Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis speaking during the opening session, and a number of sessions at both the main conference and the fringe events featuring representatives of Jewish organizations, including the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, CST, Board of Deputies, Holocaust Educational Trust and others.

The Coalition for Jewish Values (CJV) representing over 2,000 traditional Orthodox rabbis in matters of public policy, hosted a round-table discussion on the first day of the conference on new paradigms to fight antisemitism as a civil society event. The session held in Portcullis House brought together members of the House of Lords and House of Commons with Rabbanim, academics, leaders of Jewish organizations, and both Jewish and non-Jewish allied groups

"We brought together a truly diverse group," said CJV International Liaison Rabbi Jonathan Guttentag, "and discussed groundbreaking strategies to combat antisemitism that can have a real and significant impact on British and European policies in the months ahead. I was delighted that our first CJV international event was such a rousing success.

"The event was held under the auspices of the All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief, Chaired by MP Jim Shannon. The featured speakers were Rabbi Yaakov Menken, managing director of the CJV; Ivan Lewis, former Member of Parliament who left the Labour Party due to its failure to address antisemitism; and Shi mon Cohen, head of ShechitaUK Others contributing to the conversation included Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center; Bishop Dr. David Walker of Manchester, in his capacity as a member of the House of Lords; and Dr. Daniel Allington, a computational social scientist at King's College London who has led efforts to study and combat antisemitism online.