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Remembering the value of freedom on Holocaust Memorial Day

Fran writes about how Holocaust Memorial Day is an opportunity to commit ourselves to fight for a permanent freedom for people across the globe.

I'm incredibly proud of this union's long-standing track record of taking a stand against racism and fascism. And as with every Holocaust Memorial Day, we are keen for as many PCS members to get involved as possible.

Solidarity with fellow human beings, regardless of race, religion or creed runs through everything we do as trade unionists.

Our work on tackling discrimination is a core principle of trade unionism, from tackling the scourge of outsourcing in the civil service that predominantly affects black people, to fighting this government's disgusting treatment of refugees, to supporting important campaigns such as this one.

Holocaust Memorial Day gives us the chance to reflect on the atrocities that have taken place when these principles we pride ourselves in are defeated by hate and anger. This year's theme is "Fragility of Freedom" and it allows us to consider how the seeds of genocide are planted and freedoms are gradually eroded.

It's 79 years since the Holocaust ended, 49 years since the genocide in Cambodia and, on a significant anniversary, 30 years since the Rwandan genocide. In the decades before the genocide, Rwanda was a country wrought with tension and violence, which came to a bloody head when more one million Tutsis were killed in just 100 days.

If those in positions of power had acted before the bloodshed, many thousands of innocent lives could have been saved.

An important part of the discussions around the Fragility of Freedom is what life looks like after liberation. Those caught up in genocide, once liberated, talk about “being physically free, but not mentally free.” Many are facing the rest of their life with the trauma of what they have faced, possibly without loved ones who were killed.

Others may face further discrimination; on top of the horrors they’ve already faced. Members of the LGBT+ community for example, thousands of whom were killed by the Nazis, faced, and still face, discrimination to this day.

That’s why this year we should remember the value of freedom and how easily it can be taken away. And people’s rights and freedoms are being violated as we speak: Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar; Uyghur Muslims in China and the Sudanese in the Darfur region.

With the freedoms of so many people across the world already trampled on and with millions more under threat, it’s vital that we use Holocaust Memorial Day to reflect on the perilous situation the world is in. As we come together, let’s commit ourselves to fighting for a permanent freedom for people across the globe.