

## Letters to the Editor



### Isis and genocide

Sir, We are profoundly concerned at what is now clearly best described as "genocide" being perpetrated by Daesh against minority communities including Iraqi and Syrian Christians, Yazidis and other vulnerable groups.

There is now clear evidence that this genocide includes assassinations of church leaders; mass murders; torture; kidnapping for ransom; sexual enslavement and systematic rape of Christian girls and women; forcible conversions to Islam; destruction of churches, monasteries, cemeteries and Christian artefacts; and theft of lands and wealth from Christian clergy and laity alike. Daesh has made its own public statements taking "credit" for mass murder of Christians, and expressing its intent to eliminate Christian communities from its "Islamic state".

Genocide is defined by the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, which makes it quite clear that genocide is not simply the random killing of individuals, but is rather a systematic killing or seriously harming of people because they are part of a recognisable group. That group may be "national, ethnic, racial or religious" and the treaty identifies "acts committed with intent to destroy [that group] in whole or in part".

There is no doubt that the targeting of Christians and other religious minorities by Daesh falls within that definition. We urge the government to use its influence at the United Nations to obtain an agreement that the word "genocide" should be used.

This is not simply a matter of semantics. There would be two main benefits from the acceptance by the UN that genocide is being perpetrated. First, it would send a very clear message to those organising and undertaking this slaughter that at some point in the future they will be held accountable by the international community for their actions; they will be caught, tried and punished. Second, it would encourage the 127 nations that are signatories to the convention to face up to their duty to take the necessary action to "prevent and punish" the perpetrators of these evil acts.

ROB FLELLO, MP  
Catholic Legislators' Network  
LORD ALTON OF LIVERPOOL,  
All-Party Parliamentary Group on  
Freedom of Religion or Belief  
plus 62 further signatories that can be  
seen at [times.co.uk/letters](http://times.co.uk/letters)

### Corrections and clarifications

● The Times2 crossword 6900 (Dec 19) gave "Defoe" as the solution to 19 down, "Gulliver author (5)". Gulliver's Travels was written by Jonathan Swift.

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## Concerns over a new concert hall for London

Sir, I agree with most of Julian Lloyd Webber's points ("£278m concert hall is a classic mistake," Dec 19).

I have noticed from teaching piano for nearly 30 years that there is more indifference towards encouraging children to learn an instrument in this country. There are many other countries where playing and performing music from a young age is the rule rather than the exception and there are numerous studies proving the benefits of music to both children and society in general.

However, I don't believe funding should be diverted away from a new concert hall. In fact, we need more funding in Britain for both new concert halls and for children at primary level to afford their musical instruments. These should be an essential prerequisite for any advanced industrialised nation.

J KOUGHAK  
London SW7

Sir, The new concert hall for London is a "nice to have", not a "need to have" and to further the interests of a musical future for this country the money could be better spent elsewhere. I suspect that the initial

costings will spiral, as I do not believe there are sufficient competent candidates who can keep hold of costs; nor do I believe that a board of trustees these days is prepared to stand up and be counted to hold such an incumbent to account when costings start to go off the rails.

However, what I fear most is the estimated annual running cost of £55 million. How can such a project be viable and sustainable without exorbitant ticket prices? I am aware that concerts by world-class orchestras such as the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics sell out, but I doubt that this will be permanently achievable for the London Symphony Orchestra, even under the esteemed batonship of Sir Simon Rattle.

Someone needs to rein in the fantasists driving this forward.

RACHAEL SWIFT  
Keymer, W Sussex

Sir, Julian Lloyd Webber is right to argue that this money might be better invested in music education than spent on a new London concert hall. Careful thought should be given, however, to the scope and substance of such education. I suggest it be broadened to

encompass school leadership teams. It was disappointing to learn from the head of a local comprehensive that he had abolished the school orchestra, believing it to be an "elitist" construct. Unless we tackle such attitudes, neither augmented funding nor indeed a new concert hall will have an appreciable impact on broadening the base of classical enthusiasts.

DR MILLAN SACHANIA  
Head Master, Streatham & Clapham High School

Sir, As an opera lover, I am very saddened by the travails of the ENO (letter, Dec 19). It seems ridiculous that we are contemplating spending £278 million for a new concert hall in the City of London when ENO is in special measures and looking to make economies to both the excellent orchestra and chorus. It could be put on a sound financial footing for less than a tenth of that money. ENO is a more urgent priority than the luxury of another concert hall. Having said that, a world city of the stature of London generating untold wealth in taxes should be able to afford both.

STEPHANIE HAWTHORNE  
Carshalton, Surrey

### Unregulated Botox

Sir, The British College of Aesthetic Medicine is working with the British Association of Cosmetic Nurses to try to raise standards across the industry ("Patients put at risk over Botox jabs," Dec 19). This is a result of extensive work by Health Education England after the Keogh report. There is a large variation in standards and ethics across the industry. One major issue is that non-clinicians can legally inject botulinum toxin (botox) and dermal fillers. Professionals are already regulated but these groups are not. Unless we are able to regulate non-professionals effectively, all types of dangerous practice will continue.

My concern is more with dermal fillers as these can cause blindness and scarring. They do not require a prescription and are readily available from the internet. This is a potential timebomb which will use up NHS resources treating complications.

PAUL CHARLSON  
President,  
British College of Aesthetic Medicine

### Civil liberties

Sir, When I reached the civil service grade that merited a large leather rather than small plastic briefcase, I had to sign for this on issue and then when I left the department I had to return the case, it being government property and bearing a crest ("Carol makes most from £4.5m Thatcher auction," Dec 18).

How is Margaret Thatcher's dispatch box private rather than public property? I expect some special dispensation could have been made for the last user to take it away with them, but then it would have been a taxable benefit unless perhaps some nominal payment was agreed?

MIKE APPLETON  
Stockport

### Sexy science

Sir, The new president of the Royal Society, Sir Venki Ramakrishnan, says scientists should be treated like rock stars (report, Dec 19). Dream on. In

the new UK, scientists are not "cool".

There is always a long queue for the Natural History Museum, but hardly ever a queue for the Science Museum next door. One of the greatest men of the 19th century was Brunel, yet his museum in Rotherhithe, London, is no larger than a big living room, and clearly desperate for funds. The man built ships, railways, tunnels, bridges and much more. Contrast this with the £280 million extension to the Tate Modern to house art that only the art world considers to have merit.

That so many people qualified in the arts actually govern the country speaks volumes.

BILL PARISH  
Bromley, Kent

Sir, In the United States the astrophysicist Dr Neil deGrasse Tyson can sell out the same theatres which the likes of Pink Floyd and Madonna have performed in. Let's see if we can do the same when Major Tim returns from the ISS.

GEORGE B ANDERSON  
Holt, Norfolk

## 1914 THE FIRST WORLD WAR 1918

ON THIS DAY DECEMBER 22, 1915

### SLEEP OF THE WOUNDED

Surgeon-General Sir Anthony Bowlby, consulting surgeon to the British Expeditionary Force in France, who also served in the South African war, gave the Bradshaw Lecture on "Wounds in War" at the Royal College of Surgeons yesterday. Describing the character of the wounds in this war, Sir Anthony said that they were as various as the projectiles themselves. The so-called "normal" bullet wound, common in

the South African war, was quite rare, as even if the entry was small the exit was almost always ragged and large. When a large bone was struck the part looked as though it had been struck by a large fragment of shell. This was due to the fact that the bullet, travelling at the height of its momentum, not only smashed the bone, but also imparted its momentum to the shattered fragments and drove them in every direction, so that the injury to the soft tissues was inflicted in great part by the bone fragments themselves. All shell fragments, being rough and jagged, tore away parts of the clothing and carried them into the extreme depths of the wound. Nothing was more striking than the immense amount of destruction wrought by even quite small pieces of a shell burst by a large charge of a high explosive, as the wound in the tissues might be 10 times as large as the missile.

He went on to speak of the condition of the wounded men after a big fight. The most remarkable thing to be observed, he said, in a

room filled with recently wounded men, would be the fact that nearly all of them were asleep, in spite of wounds which one might suppose would banish sleep. But as the surgeons worked their way from man to man it was only too evident that some of those who were asleep were also suffering from profound collapse, and with hundreds of such men the best chance of life was for them to be kept warm and left absolutely quiet for a period.

It was practically true that every gunshot wound of this war in France and Belgium was more or less infected at the moment of its infliction. A school of thought had arisen which asserted that antiseptics were useless, but with this he did not agree. Practically all men who had had slight wounds, as well as many who had had serious wounds, had done exceedingly well.

SIGN UP FOR A WEEKLY EMAIL  
WITH EXTRACTS FROM  
THE TIMES HISTORY OF THE WAR  
[WWW.THETIMES.CO.UK](http://WWW.THETIMES.CO.UK)

### Hard lessons

Sir, Changes in the rules for those who are taking driving lessons ("Learner drivers allowed to practise on motorways," Dec 21) go only part of the way to getting novice drivers accustomed to the hazards of modern-day roads. Training on motorways as a learner driver is necessary but is only scratching the surface; perhaps those who have recently passed their tests should also have to have one year's driving on ordinary roads before tackling the far different conditions of motorways. Also, novice drivers should not be allowed to drive unaccompanied by an experienced driver for the same period of time, especially in darkness and when under the age of 25.

Twenty per cent of young drivers have an accident within six months of passing their test. The threat of losing one's licence does not appear to be having the intended result. Clearly modifications are called for.

DAVID STUART  
Gateshead, Tyne and Wear

### Band of gold

Sir, In an effort to treat a sty, I went down to the pharmacist to obtain that time-honoured remedy, Golden Eye ointment. The assistant suggested that warm compresses and stroking it with a gold ring would be more effective. I thought she was joking until the pharmacist leaned out from behind his screen and nodded confirmation. Only one gold ring required, not five — but still, very seasonal.

JULIAN RYDER RICHARDSON  
Wadhurst, E Sussex

### Black and white

Sir, Matt Ridley writes, "Only badgers can open a hedgehog after it rolls up in defence. Foxes and dogs cannot" (Dec 21). It is clear that Mr Ridley has never encountered a plumper terrier — much less a pair of them.

BARBARA SELF  
Sutton-in-the-Isle, Cambs

### Grapes of wrath

Sir, While soberly contemplating your article ("All hungover? Perhaps you need a shot of Wooster sauce," Dec 21), I was reminded of the recommended cure in Istanbul — tripe soup for breakfast.

WENDY PERROTT  
Hundleton, Pembrokeshire

### Smalltalk

Sir, Laura Morton reveals that "after you have spent 96 days in a rowing boat with the same person, there isn't any new conversation to be had" ("Atlantic tempts back reality TV star," Dec 21). Perhaps Ms Morton should take heart from the fact that, despite more than 35 years together in the same house, my wife and I still manage to contrive the occasional new conversation.

KEVIN COOPER  
Wargrave, Berks

### Early bird

Sir, In order to provide me with the "best possible service" Royal Mail recently brought forward the last collection time at my local pillar box from 4pm to 9am (7am on Saturdays). Is that what it now means by "Post early for Christmas"?

RICHARD ILEY  
Birmingham