

# **Aegis Trust ceremony at the House of Lords as Ambassador Kenneth Quinn is given an Aegis Award for Combating Genocide in Cambodia**

MARCH 5, 2019 / DAVID ALTON

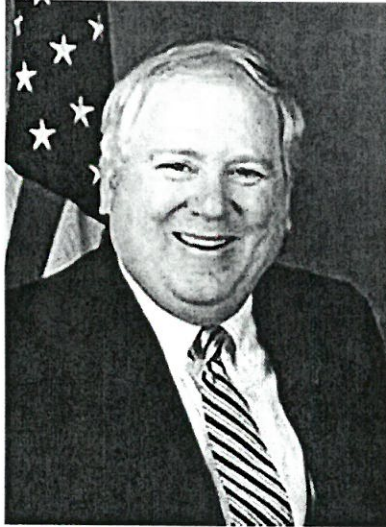
**Aegis Trust ceremony at the House of Lords as Ambassador Kenneth Quinn is given an Aegis Award For Combating Genocide in Cambodia**



*Remarks by David Alton who hosted the event:*



**I would like to warmly welcome you all to this event recognising Ambassador Quinn for his work on the issue of genocide.**



**Welcome to the Hume Room. It is named for Alec Douglas Home – Lord Home of the Hirsell – who, in 1963, following the resignation of Harold Macmillan, as Prime Minister, emerged as a compromise candidate and replaced him as Prime Minister but narrowly failed to win the subsequent 1964 General Election.**

**A former Foreign Secretary he often appeared to be a grey figure but those who knew him say he was often modestly self-deprecating, kind and capable of wit. In 1940, he had been diagnosed with spinal tuberculosis and was immobilised for two years. Afterwards, he said that it was the first time in medical history that they had succeeded in inserting a backbone into a politician: not something that can be said of the formidable politicians and diplomats gathered here today.**

**It's a pleasure to be hosting an event here for the Aegis Trust, founded in the Millennium Year – and which, in 2004, following my visit to Darfur, did so much to encourage me.**

**Genocide has been referred to as the crime of crimes, and rightly so. What could be worse than a crime that seeks the annihilation of protected groups in whole or**



**in part, whether on grounds of ethnicity, religion, orientation, disability or some other characteristic that signifies difference.**

**Yet, despite its position as the crime of crimes, many turn a blind eye to such atrocities.**

**Perhaps this is in part because atrocities like genocide often happen far from home – in the killing fields of Bosnia, Cambodia, Rwanda, Darfur, Syria, Iraq or Burma.**

**Out of sight can all too easily morph into out of mind – especially if the genocide dies not affect us personally.**

**And it is not always easy to engage parliaments, governments and international institutions and get them to act. Many of you know that by now.**

**Indeed, even here in the Lords, Parliamentarians have been trying to ensure that the UK Government takes a stronger approach to genocidal atrocities whenever and wherever they occur.**

**Sadly, thus far, the UK Government continues to resist even making a preliminary determination of genocide to inform its response – and to fulfil its duty under the 1948 Genocide Convention, to protect, to prevent and to punish.**

**Therefore, it is important to recognise those people who do take a stand against crimes like genocide and ensure that silence is not an option.**

**We will hear a great deal more about Ambassador Kenneth M. Quinn and his wife Le Son whom I warmly welcome here today.**

**I would also like to welcome many distinguished guests, including...**

**Friends from the United States, among whom are the representative of the US Ambassador, Steven Noah, Chair of the Steven Krulis Champion of Humanity Award organising committee.**

**Sir Trevor Pears who is founding patron of Aegis and honorary chair of the Aegis Champions of Humanity leaders circle;**

**Dr James Smith and Aegis Trust that have been supporting the APPG on genocide in Parliament for many years.**

I would also like to welcome Sokphal, a survivor of the Cambodian genocide, and many other distinguished guests, that I cannot name within these brief remarks. However, it is a great honour to have you joined us here today.

After standing down from the Commons, and on becoming a member of this place, I chose as my motto for the coat of arms which is given to new members, two words from the Hebrew bible: the words, 'choose Life'. In many respects that is exactly what the award presented today to Ambassador Quinn represents. Those who have chosen pathways of life, through confronting and countering genocide, provide a role model and inspiration to others. We need more people like Ambassador Quinn to be able to deliver on the oft repeated promise that genocides should happen "never again."

Choosing Life also means focusing on ref flag genocide prevention and preventing mass atrocities from occurring – a challenge which the international community has not mastered yet. That is why a group of us have proposed that the house of lords establishes an *ad hoc* committee to examine the Government's response to genocide and tomorrow we will learn whether the proposal will be agreed.

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce Tom Tugendhat MP, a former officer in our armed forces and Chair of the house of Commons foreign affairs select committee who will introduce the recipient of the 2019 award: Ambassador Kenneth Quinn.

