

Emma Harriet Nicholson, Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne is a British politician, who has been a [life peer](#) since 1997. She was elected as the [Conservative Member of Parliament](#) for [Torrige and West Devon](#) in 1987, before switching to the [Liberal Democrats](#) in 1995. She was also Lib Dem [Member of the European Parliament](#) for [South East England](#) from 1999 to 2009. In 2016, she announced she was re-joining the Conservative Party "with tremendous pleasure" In 2017, Baroness Nicholson was appointed as [Prime Minister's Trade Envoy](#) for Kazakhstan.

Early life

Born in Oxford and a descendant of the family which founded London gin distillers [J&W Nicholson & Co](#), Lady Nicholson is the third of four daughters of [Sir Godfrey Nicholson, Bt](#) and his wife, Lady Katharine (the fifth daughter of the [27th Earl of Crawford](#)).

[Her uncle](#) was [Lord Chancellor](#) in the 1960s, and his daughter, her cousin [Eliza Manningham-Buller](#), became [Director General of MI5](#).

She was diagnosed as deaf at the age of 16. She was educated at [St Mary's School, Wantage](#) and the [Royal Academy of Music](#).

Career

Prior to her political career, she was a [computer programmer](#) and [systems analyst](#) from 1962 to 1974, and a director of the [Save the Children](#) Foundation from 1974 to 1985.

She contested the constituency of [Blyth](#) in [1979](#), but was defeated. She was elected a [Conservative Member of Parliament](#) for [Torrige and West Devon](#) in [1987](#), having acting as [vice-chairman of the Conservative Party](#) between 1983 and 1987. S

he defected to the [Liberal Democrats](#) in 1995, telling [Robin Oakley](#), the BBC's Political Editor: "The Conservative Party has changed so much, while my principles have not changed at all. I would argue that it is not so much a case of my leaving the party, but the party leaving me."

Nicholson fought for the release of Katiza Cebekhulu, the "missing witness" in the case of the death of [Stompie Seipei](#). The South African national had been part of the so-called [Mandela United Football Club](#), the bodyguards of [Winnie Mandela](#).

Cebekhulu later claimed that Nicholson had demanded £50,000 from him to obtain copyright over a book she had [Fred Bridgland](#) write about him; Nicholson denied this, saying her motives were "exclusively humanitarian and honourable".

She was succeeded by [John Burnett, Baron Burnett](#) in 1997, when [Tony Blair](#) won his landslide. That year, Nicholson was made a [life peer](#) as Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne, of Winterbourne, in the Royal County of Berkshire.

European Parliament

Lady Nicholson became a member of the [European Parliament](#) in 1999, joining the [Committee on Foreign Affairs](#) and serving as [the committee](#)'s Vice President from 2004 to 2007. She was President of the Delegation for Relations with Iraq and President of the [Committee on Women's Rights](#) of the [Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly](#).

Lady Nicholson was also a member of [the subcommittee on Human Rights](#), the Delegation for relations with Iran and the Delegation for relations with the [Mashreq countries](#) (i.e. the eastern Arab world). She was Rapporteur for Kashmir, and in 2007 her controversial report on Kashmir was passed by a majority of 522 to 9.

During the [Iraq War](#), Nicholson gave evidence to the United Nations that she claimed showed Iraq had "hidden material used to make [weapons of mass destruction](#)". She described the [draining of the Mesopotamian Marshes](#) as a "genocide".

She has [monitored elections](#) in many countries. In 2006, Lady Nicholson was Chief Observer of the European Union Election Observation Mission to Yemen. She was a member of European Union Election Observation Missions to Palestine (2005), Azerbaijan (2005), Lebanon (2005), Afghanistan (2005), Armenia (2007) and Pakistan (2008). In January and December 2005 she was a member of the United Nations Election Observation Missions to Iraq.

She also generated controversy through her strong opposition to [international adoptions](#), which she believed had become a market and subject to corruption. While the EP's [Special Rapporteur](#) for [Romania's EU accession](#) she and some others in the international community criticised international adoptions.

Due partially to her pressure, the Romanian government in 2005 implemented legislation that de facto banned the practice, in line with practices in some of the EU member states. The measure generated controversy, mainly in the US, Israel, France, Spain and Italy, particularly from prospective parents. International and Romanian media also called attention to poor conditions in [Romanian orphanages](#) and hospitals where [abandoned children](#) remained for prolonged periods, while acknowledging some progress made in reforming child protection.

In December 2005 and July 2006, the EP passed measures requesting Romania deal with outstanding pipeline cases, despite Romania having dismissed these formally through legislation after consultation with an Independent Panel of EU Experts on Family Law. Critics claimed that this panel was stacked with opponents of international adoptions. The [U.S. Congress](#) also passed repeated measures and held hearings opposing the ban.

Lady Nicholson stood down from the European Parliament at [the 2009 elections](#).

House of Lords

In 2009, Lady Nicholson returned to London and resumed her political work at the House of Lords. In February 2010, she founded the [All-Party Parliamentary Group](#) (APPG) for Business Development in Iraq and the Regions and has served as its Chair. She is also a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Human Trafficking, chairs the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Foreign Affairs and speaks regularly on health care and education in the Middle East and Eastern Europe and business development in Iraq and its wider neighbourhood.

In 2013 she argued that the Iraq War was "resoundingly" worth it, and claiming Liberal Democrat party members who took an opposing stance were "guilty of hypocrisy". She was appointed as Prime Minister's Trade Envoy for Iraq on 30 January 2014.

She resigned the Liberal Democrat whip in July 2016, to sit as a non-affiliated member. However, on 10 September 2016, she announced she was re-joining the Conservative Party "with tremendous pleasure" and would sit on the Conservative benches in the House of Lords.

Listing her reasons for rejoining the Tories, she highlighted Theresa May's education speech on 9 September as evidence that the prime minister "leads a party with a real commitment to delivering for the next generation and building a country that works for everyone".

She left the Liberal Democrats to rejoin the Conservatives in 2016 quoting the position of [Theresa May](#) on [grammar schools](#) as the reason for the defection. However, the Liberal Democrats claimed that she had said her reason for leaving the party was her [position on Europe](#).

Baroness Nicholson visited Kazakhstan as Prime Minister's Trade Envoy on 28 April 2019. The six-day visit was focused on expanding trade relations with the Central Asian country.

Other work

Lady Nicholson is the Executive Chairman of the AMAR Foundation, which works to rebuild and improve the lives of disadvantaged communities in war-torn areas.

She is Executive Chairman of the Iraq Britain Business Council an organisation which facilitates business, trade investment, human resources, training and transfer of technology and know-how into the Republic of Iraq.

Lady Nicholson is Executive Chairman of the Association Children's High Level Group. She co-founded its English counterpart, the Children's High Level Group (now the charity [Lumos](#), "working to end the harm of institutionalisation & help children worldwide be reunited with family") with novelist and philanthropist [J. K. Rowling](#).

Lady Nicholson is the co-chairman with the [Prime Minister of Romania](#) of the High Level Group for Romania's Children and the co-chairman with the [Prime Minister of Moldova](#) of the High Level Group for Moldovan Children.

Lady Nicholson is also a member of the [American Bar Association](#)'s Middle East North Africa Council, the Arab Gulf Programme for [United Nations Development Organisations](#) Prize Committee and [Freedom House](#) International Solidarity Committee. She is a board member of the [Foundation for Dialogue Among Civilisations](#), the [American Islamic Congress](#), [climate change denialist think-tank](#), The [Global Warming Policy Foundation](#), and a member of the Board of Advisors for the [New York University](#) Center for Dialogues, Islamic World. She is Vice President of [The Little Foundation](#), and is Honorary Advisor to the Prime Minister and [Government of Iraq](#) on Public Health and related issues.

Personal life

On 9 May 1987, Nicholson married Sir [Michael Harris Caine](#), with whom she had a foster son Amar Kanim, who was rescued from Iraq after surviving a [napalm](#) attack in March 1991. She set up the Amar Foundation to support projects in Iraq. She was widowed in 1999. She is President of the Council of the [Caine Prize](#) for African Writing, which was named after her late husband.

Awards and honours

In 2017, Lady Nicholson received an [honorary doctorate](#) in International Leadership and Humanitarian Service from [Brigham Young University](#) in the United States for her charity and humanitarian work across the Middle East.

She was also honorary Vice President of the [Man Booker Prize](#) Foundation, with which her husband was long associated, until the Foundation announced on 24 June 2020 the abolition of such honorary roles and titles.