

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

— —

**REMARKS AT PARK EAST SYNAGOGUE  
MEMORIAL SERVICE  
IN HONOUR OF THE VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST  
New York, 18 January 2014  
11:00**

**I would also like to pay tribute to the courage and sacrifice of the leaders and soldiers of many nations who ultimately defeated the Nazis.**

**My hope is that our generation, and those to come, will summon that same sense of collective purpose to prevent such horror from happening again anywhere, to anyone or any group.**

**He then gave me this beautiful yad – [SG holds up Torah pointer] – as a token of his appreciation. I was very moved to see the staying power of Jewish tradition.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**As we remember those who perished, I would also like to pay tribute to the survivors – including those here today. You bear sorrowful memories, but you have also shown the strength of the human spirit.**

**The passing on of wisdom is crucial. As it is said in Hebrew – L'dor v'dor – “from generation to generation”.**

**My visit to Auschwitz ended with a stop in the nearby town of Oswiecim.**

**At the Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot Synagogue,  
Rabbi Joshua Ellis showed me the sanctuary and led me  
in a short reading of the Torah.**

**Just as you gather in remembrance here today, the United Nations community will come together on January 27<sup>th</sup> for the ninth annual observance of the International Day of Remembrance in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, which marks the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.**

**I am pleased that our featured speaker will be Steven Spielberg, whose Shoah Institute for Visual History and Education was a landmark in preserving survivor testimony.**

**For almost a decade, the “United Nations and the Holocaust Outreach Programme” has been working with teachers and students on all continents to promote tolerance and to warn about the consequences of anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination.**

**The Programme’s newest educational package, produced in partnership with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, will help to introduce Holocaust studies into classrooms in countries ranging from Brazil and Nigeria to Russia and Japan.**

**All those involved in atrocities – whether head of state or head of militia – should be held accountable.**

**We must demand that those in power uphold their responsibilities to protect people. We must enact the laws and build the institutions that will uphold human rights. And at this moment of disturbingly high rates of youth unemployment, we must make special efforts to inculcate universal values in the world's young people. Otherwise, they could prove easy prey for extremists.**

**As we have seen from Cambodia to Rwanda to Srebrenica, we have not eliminated the poison that led to genocide.**

**Today in Syria, South Sudan and the Central African Republic, we see violence taking on dangerous sectarian dimension. In Europe, we see rising bias against migrants, Muslims, Roma and other minorities.**

**Each of us has a role to play in combating intolerance, incitement and the manipulation of ethnic or religious identity that we see in conflicts and political campaigns.**



**I was profoundly saddened by what I saw.**

**I was especially moved by a video showing European Jewish life in the 1930s – scenes of family meals and visits to the beach, musical and theatre performances, weddings and other rituals -- all of it savagely extinguished.**

**Even today, the Holocaust is hard to grasp.**

**The cruelty was so profound; the scale so large; the camps spread so far and wide. The Nazi worldview was so warped and extreme – yet attracted so many followers.**

**I saw the “Book of Names” – a list identifying more than 4 million Jewish victims – which filled one of the exhibition rooms yet contained just a fraction of the war’s toll.**

**I stood on the ramp where the transport trains unloaded their human cargo, where the awful moment of selection took place – where the quick flick of an SS commander’s index finger meant the difference between being killed immediately in the gas chambers and being kept alive only to be worked to death.**

**It was a chilly day. I had an overcoat -- but my thoughts went to the Jews and other prisoners who were forced to stand naked for hours in the middle of winter, awaiting the gas chambers.**

**I walked through the infamous “Arbeit Macht Frei” gate, and stared with disbelief at rooms filled with the shoes, dolls, suitcases and other belongings of those who were killed.**

**Like all of my predecessors as Secretary-General,  
I am determined to prevent any other such catastrophes  
and grave violations of human rights.**

**I have visited Yad Vashem twice. I have been  
to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C.  
I have heard anguished accounts from many survivors.**

**But nothing could have prepared me for what I saw  
at the camp.**

**So when I was planning my visit to the Nazi concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau last November, I called him.**

**What he said made a deep impression. He told me that many of his relatives had died at Auschwitz.**

**And he continued: If I want to pay my respects at my grandparents' grave, I have no place to go but there.**

**The horror at Auschwitz played a formative role in defining the ideals and objectives of the United Nations.**

**Today, without the aid of a microphone, I must practice what I preach.**

**Rabbi Schneier, thank you for raising your voice.**

**Rabbi Schneier is more than a strong supporter of the United Nations – he is a personal friend.**

**As a Holocaust survivor, Rabbi Schneier knows the importance of UN action against racism, hatred and extremist ideologies.**

**Rabbi Schneier,  
Distinguished members of the diplomatic corps,  
Honorable survivors of the Holocaust,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Shabat shalom. It is a pleasure to join you again  
for this annual service. I always enjoy coming here  
for good company and inspiration.**

**But there is another reason I like this gathering.  
It is good practice for me to exercise my voice!  
I tell people around the world: raise your voice, be heard.**

**This year's commemoration is being held under the theme of "journeys through the Holocaust".**

**I look forward to working with you in our shared destination of a world of equality for all.**

**[END]**