# Dueling Homage Paid to Holocaust, Palestinian Victims at UNESCO

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The dueling narrative of Jewish and Palestinian victimhood came to a head on the floor of the World Heritage Committee, as the 21-member states held a moment of silence first for the Holocaust victims and then again for the Palestinians.

The Palestinian Ambassador Elias Sanbar stood in both instances. Israel’s Ambassador Carmel Shama HaCohen objected to the comparison, particularly given his belief that terrorists were included in the designation.

He instructed the Israeli delegation to sit when homage was paid to the Palestinians.

The unexpected drama unfolded after the World Heritage Committee approved a resolution disavowing Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem at its annual meeting, which this year was held in Krakow Poland.

I n attacking the decision Israel’s Ambassador to the UNESCO Carmel Shama HaCohen said the vote was outrageous particularly given that it took place so close to where so many Jews were killed during the Holocaust.

“We are assembled here, next to the largest mass grave of the Jewish people — but it is also the deepest darkest grave into which humanity had ever descended,” Shama HaCohen said.

“The sights, the sounds, the smells, the blood and the horror that occurred here in the German Nazi Auschwitz-Birkenau were not confined to the camp’s electrified fences.

Indeed under the right weather conditions, the smells of the crematorium maybe reached the very place where we are now seated,” Shama HaCohen said.

He then asked for a moment of silence “in solemn memory of the six million murdered Jews, and all those who were killed by the Nazi animals or died fighting against it.”

The ambassadors of the Arab countries and their partners should visit the concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Shama HaCohen suggested.

Throughout the holocaust the Jews never stopped saying, “Next year in Jerusalem. We will never stop staying it!,” he added.

“Just as Hitler, the Nazis, and their partner — [former Jerusalem Mufti] Haj Amin El Husseini — did not succeed, you will not succeed as well as denying the Holocaust or in your efforts to destroy Israel or the Jewish history.

“No politicized decision of UNESCO will ever move one brick from a wall in Jerusalem, nor will it succeed in separating between Jerusalem and the Jewish nation,” Shama HaCohen said.

Most of the room then stood for the moment of silence. After it was ofter, the Cuban representative objected, noting that procedurally only the committee chair can ask for a “moment of silence.”

She accused Shama HaCohen of turning the meeting “into a politicized circus.”

“Let me request that we stand for a moment of silence for all the Palestinians who have died in the region,” she said.

Most of the people in the room again responded. After they had retaken their seats, Sanbar said, “I did stand for one moment of silence in respect of the [Holocaust] victims, because I do not think that victims have either nationality nor religion. They are human beings above or beyond any other thing, that is why they are victims of humanity as a whole.”

“When it comes to standing for a minute of silence for the Palestinian victims, I saw the distinguish delegate of Israel remained seated. That really did summarize the situation,” Sanbar said.

“If there is some legacy from the victims of Nazi barbarism and barbarism everywhere, is that we need to be firmly attached to our freedom. Today we have had an exemplary demonstration of how there are some victims who are respectful and others who are not, some who will stand and others who will remain seated,” Sanbar said.

“I am tired of hearing the same litany of complaints be it here or in other forums. We bear about the politicization of culture. Let us see who is mixing politics with anything else. Here we have an occupying power who has refused to render homage to the victims of barbarism, even in our day and age,” Sanbar said.

After the meeting Shama HaCohen said that he rejected the “horrifying parallel between Holocaust victims to other victims and Palestinian victims.”

Additionally, he said, there was “no distinction between uninvolved children and citizens who were harmed and Palestinians who were terrorists and martyrs.”

In speaking of the vote the Jerusalem resolution, Shama HaCohen said it was the first time that Israel had a “moral majority.” Although the vote passed 10-3, it only had minority approval, given that another eight countries abstained, he said.

The three countries that rejected the resolution were: Burkina Faso, Jamaica and the Philippines. The eight abstaining countries, including Europe, were: Angola, Croatia, Finland, Peru, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea and Tanzania.

Those who supported the measure were: Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Kazakstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Tunisia, Turkey, Vietnam and Zimbabwe.