

# ISRAEL

Statement by:

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**Agenda Item 72: Holocaust Remembrance**

General Assembly  
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Mr. President,

It is an honor for me to address the Assembly, on behalf of the State of Israel, on an item of such importance to my country, my people, and to the victims and survivors of the Holocaust of all faiths and nationalities across the globe. I feel moved and blessed to present this historic resolution today, as an Israeli, a Jew, a human being, and a child of a family of Holocaust victims.

This year, as we mark the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, we also mark the sixtieth year since the end of the Second World War and the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps.

The unique connection between those two events is testimony to the fact that the establishment of the United Nations, its founding principles and its noble mission were the world's answer to the horrors of the Second World War and the tragedy of the Holocaust, as is reflected in the very first clauses of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Holocaust constituted a systematic and barbarous attempt to annihilate an entire people, in a manner and magnitude that have no parallel in human history. Six million Jews, a full third of the Jewish people, together with countless other minorities, were murdered, many of them in death camps, factories of death, designed specifically for that purpose.

And yet, while the Holocaust was a unique tragedy for the Jewish people, its lessons are universal. The Holocaust was carried out at the height of the rational age and it represents a watershed in human history. It brought us face to face with the full extent of man's capacity for inhumanity to his fellow man. It revealed the potential to pervert technology, philosophy, culture, and ideology to commit acts on an unimaginable scale and with an unthinkable degree of cruelty. It showed that while Jews might be the first victims of anti-Semitism, they are rarely the last. It taught, as Elie Wiesel has said, that indifference to human suffering is "not only a sin, it is a punishment," and that by denying the other's humanity we betray our own.

By so shocking the conscience of humankind, the Holocaust served as a critical impetus for the development of human rights, the drafting of landmark international conventions, such as the Genocide Convention, and for the very establishment of this organization.

The United Nations was founded on the ashes of the Holocaust and the commitment to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and uphold and protect the "dignity and worth of the human person." The UN bears a special responsibility to ensure that the Holocaust and its lessons are never forgotten and that this tragedy will forever stand as a warning to all people of the dangers of hatred, bigotry, racism, and prejudice.

Mr. President,

The greatest tribute we, as an Organization, as Member States, and as individuals can pay to the memory of the victims, to the suffering of the survivors, and to the legacy of the liberators, is to vow together: "Never Again."

As Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom has stated, we stand on the brink of the moment when this terrible event changes from memory to history. As the generation of Holocaust survivors and liberators dwindles, the torch of remembrance, of bearing witness, and of education must continue forward. It is our duty to the past and our commitment to future.

In January 2005, Member States of the United Nations convened in this hall for a historic special session of the General Assembly to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps.

At that session, Member States affirmed the important role and responsibility of the United Nations in Holocaust remembrance and education to honor the victims and survivors of the Holocaust and to stand watch against the re-emergence of such evil for the benefit of future generations.

The fulfillment of that responsibility becomes ever more urgent in the face of an alarming increase in global acts of anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial, racism, and religious intolerance. Sadly, today, there is no shortage of human suffering. Oppression, de-legitimization of peoples, and discrimination continue. The horror of the Holocaust has, to our collective shame, not prevented other genocides from occurring. These facts compel us to establish mechanisms that will ensure that future generations will never forget the Holocaust and its lessons.

It is imperative that all states learn the lessons of the Holocaust, for the sanctity of life, for the preservation of humanity, and for the prevention of such atrocities in the future.

Mr. President,

The draft resolution submitted under this agenda item, contained in document A/60/L.12, comes to further advance these objectives. It seeks to give expression to the commitment to Holocaust remembrance and education within the United Nations system. The importance of this resolution is reinforced by the fact that it would represent the first time the United Nations, in its 60-year history, adopts a resolution relating to the Holocaust.

The draft resolution comprises 10 preambular paragraphs and six operative paragraphs, and is the product of consultations with a large number of interested delegations. In its preambular sections, the draft resolution recalls several key provisions from relevant human rights instruments and notes the 'indelible link between the United Nations and the unique tragedy of the Second World War.' It takes note of the fact that the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly is taking place during the sixtieth year of the defeat of the Nazi regime, and reaffirms that the Holocaust will 'forever be a warning to all peoples of the dangers of hatred, bigotry, racism, and prejudice.'

In its operative part, the resolution calls on the United Nations, *inter alia*, to establish January 27 as an annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. It urges Member States to develop educational programmes to inculcate future generations with the lessons of the Holocaust in order to help prevent future acts of genocide. It further rejects any denial of the Holocaust, and condemns without reservation all manifestations of religious intolerance, incitement, harassment, or violence against persons or communities based on ethnic origin or religious belief, wherever they occur.

In addition, the resolution requests the Secretary-General to establish a programme of outreach entitled, "The Holocaust and the United Nations," as well as measures to mobilize civil society for Holocaust remembrance and education, with a mandate to report back to the General Assembly on the establishment and implementation of this United Nations programme.

Mr. President,

The initial sponsors of this resolution, Australia, Canada, the Russian Federation, the United States, and Israel are very appreciative of the overwhelming support the resolution has received. At the time it was submitted the resolution had 90 co-sponsors. In our deliberations with other Member States we have received vast support for this resolution. We urge all States to co-sponsor this important resolution. We would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his public support and commitment to this resolution, and for the issue of Holocaust remembrance and education in general.

We look forward to the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus, so that this Organization and its Member States can, in one voice, demonstrate their commitment to the cause of Holocaust remembrance and education, act to help prevent future acts of genocide, and advance the fulfillment by the United Nations of its core mission and founding principles.

Mr. President,

Let all those who were led to nameless deaths be given an everlasting name here in this Hall. In the words of the Prophet of Israel, Isaiah (56:5):

ונתתי להם בביתי ובחומתי יד ושם...אשר לא ייכרת

"And I will give them in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name...and it shall not be cut off."

Thank you, Mr. President