

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE & PUBLIC MEMMORIALS

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On November 2, 2016, the United Nations Outreach Programme, in partnership with the Permanent Missions of Israel and the Ukraine presented “Holocaust Remembrance and Public Memorials.” Experts from Brazil, Israel, Japan, South Africa, United States, and Ukraine, presented the complexities and challenges of facing the past.

Dr. Igor Shchupak, director for the Ukrainian Institute for Holocaust Studies, said it has taken time but the Ukraine is now memorializing the 75th anniversary of the massacre at Babi Yar. The Ukraine has had Holocaust Museums since the 1990s with the newest opened in 2012. It was the first country in the Russian block to begin educating their country about what happened there.

Dr. Eyal Kaminka, Chair of Holocaust Education and the Director of the International School for Holocaust Education at Yad Veashem, talked of the documentation, research, education and commemoration work being done there. There is ongoing research regarding what happened; commemoration gives a face to those no longer with us. Education has put to use modern technologies and they have developed an international youth education program.

Mr. Carlos Reiss, Director of the Holocaust Museum in Curitiba, Brazil, offered a brief history of the Jews in Brazil. The Jews who escaped Northern and Central Europe began coming in the early 1900s. They are at work educating their educators through the unique stories of victims and survivors.

Ms. Tali Nates, Founding Director of the Johannesburg Holocaust & Genocide Center, part of the South African Holocaust & Genocide Foundation, opened this new center in 2016, offering workshops for teachers and a curriculum with which they train other African nations. It is relevant as they also talk about the Rwandan genocide. They emphasize moral choices. She talked about bystanders and up standers, with reflections of the up standers. Her father was a survivor on Shindler’s list.

Ms. Fumilo Ishioka has been the Executive Director of the privately funded Tokyo Holocaust Education Resource Centre since 1998. She has traveled to more than 1,000 schools teaching the Holocaust and lessons in tolerance, respect and compassion. She showed us a picture of Hanna’s Suitcase, which the Centre owns. Hanna was an orphan killed in Auschwitz. Her brother, who is now in Canada, came to speak there and tell her story. Again, by putting a face on the holocaust, it is much more compelling.

These are the people who came from far and wide to be present at this program. It is so impressive that the time and money was put into this gathering of people worldwide.

We also heard from Professor Emeritus James Young, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. His concern is that memorials may be a substitute for action and not a spur to action. Germany has recently changed its laws to be able to send its military where genocide is happening. Mr. Michael Abramowitz, Director of the Levine Institute for Holocaust Education at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, indicated that their collection is rapidly increasing. They, too, emphasize teaching, training educators and holding leadership training programs. They are working on a new exhibit geared to high school students and teachers.

In January, there will be a Holocaust Memorial Day, to which all are invited, as well as many other programs at that time, put on by various NGOs at the UN.

Women's League NGO team: Sandy Koppell, Lucy Becker and Florence Wolpoff