

Holocaust Memorial Ceremony 1/27/20
75 years after Auschwitz

The United Nations observes Holocaust Memorial on January 27th each year in commemoration of the day that Auschwitz was liberated. This year the event recognized not only Holocaust survivors but included recognition of World War II veterans. The continuing theme of all the speakers was “**Never Again.**”

The program opened with Rabbi Arthur Schneier telling us how he and his parents were sent from Hungary to Germany, and were then liberated. He then led us in kaddish.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres emphasized the hate today, not only of Jews but Muslims and Christians as well. The UN supports human rights, a major subject on its agenda.

His Excellency Danny Danon, Permanent Representative of Israel to the UN reminded us that this is the last generation that will be able to learn from survivors. The world opposed anti-Semitism but did nothing. Now is the time to act. We need to find a cure to vaccinate against hate. Legislation is written but now we must enforce it. Education is key. The days of Jews being defenseless are over.

His Excellency Christopher Norman-Chalet, Permanent Representative of Germany to the UN remarked that he was ashamed of the breakdown of civilization in his country, that he was glad to be standing here today to remember the past and that we must learn from history. Anti-Semitism is a cancer which was in remission and has now metastasized. All education of German students includes a trip to Auschwitz. History must not be forgotten.

The messages from the United States and Russian representatives echoed the same themes. Education! Never Again!

We were treated to a performance by Itzhak Perlman.

Dan Pavel Doghi, Senior Advisor on Roma and Sinti issues said these survivors are not speaking up. We should make an effort to include them in our programs.

Two holocaust survivors told their stories. Both were proud to have survived and have children and grandchildren to prove that Hitler has not won. Interesting that they both wound up in Israel, but via different routes. Irene Shashar escaped the Warsaw ghetto through the sewers and was a “hidden child.” After the war she spent time in Paris and Peru, received a scholarship to study in the US and later moved to Israel to teach. Shraga Milstein was in the camps, was taken to Sweden by the Red Cross after being liberated, and then moved to Israel.

The keynote speaker was Judge Theodor Meron, also a survivor. He has served as a judge on International Criminal Tribunals. Meron reminded us Denmark was the country with the most “righteous gentiles” and hid many of its Jews. He could not understand how Hitler, the personification of evil, was able to rise in such a cultured nation. Anti-Semitism is rife and there is a rise in Genocide. He acknowledged the efforts of the UN with the Nuremburg trials, citing crimes against humanity.

The program closed with Cantor Shulem Lemmer reciting El Maley Rachamim and leading in the singing of Ani Mamim.