



**UNITED  
NATIONS**



**PRESS RELEASE**

## **Secretary-General, Marking International Day, Says Educating Young Generations on Horrors of Holocaust Can Help Prevent New Genocides**

Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks on the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, in New York today:

I am honoured to be with you on this solemn occasion. Today we celebrate the liberation of the infamous Nazi extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, and we reaffirm our commitment to the crucial work of Holocaust remembrance.

For thousands of weakened and exhausted prisoners at Auschwitz-Birkenau, 27 January was a day of freedom, a reprieve from a certain death sentence for simply who they were. From that day forward, survivors have shared their stories of unimaginable atrocities, including haunting ones that I heard when I visited Auschwitz-Birkenau in 2013. They remind us what happens when we allow inhumanity to prevail. They are living testaments of the power of the human spirit and the inherent dignity and worth of every person.

All these years later, we still rely on the survivors to ensure we never forget and to reaffirm our faith in the resilience of humanity. On this day, we come together to amplify these voices across the world. We are also here to pay our respects to the 6 million Jews who were murdered during the Holocaust. And we remember the millions of others — prisoners of war, political dissidents, members of minority groups, such as Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, persons with disabilities, and so many more — who were killed alongside them.

The Holocaust was a colossal crime. The evidence is irrefutable. Those who deny it only perpetuate falsehoods and make a mockery of the pain. Yet today we continue to see hurtful efforts to question the reality and scale of the tragedy. I was profoundly disappointed to learn of another so-called "Holocaust cartoon contest" being planned this year in Iran.

At this time of sectarian tensions, mutual respect must be foremost in our minds. Spreading hatred and toying with historical facts only leads down the dead end of discord and danger. This year, we focus on "the Holocaust and Human Dignity".

We link Holocaust remembrance with the founding principles of the United Nations, as expressed in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As we do, we are reminded of our shared obligation to assure everyone the right to live free from discrimination and with equal protection under the law.

Today, with a rising tide of anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim bigotry and other forms of discrimination, we must do even more to defend these rights for people everywhere. People worldwide — including millions fleeing war, persecution and deprivation — are the targets of discrimination and attacks.

Violent extremism, sectarian tensions and hate-filled ideologies are on the march. Civilians are in the crosshairs. International humanitarian law is being flouted on a global scale. The international community is failing to hold perpetrators to account. Today, we see actions of Da'esh that may amount to grave crimes against minority groups such as the Yazidis.

And the conflict in Syria has generated the worst humanitarian crisis of our time. The village of Madaya has become a scene of shocking suffering. Tragically, Madaya is just one village in an arc of agony that extends throughout the country. Humanitarian conditions there and in other besieged and hard-to-reach areas are dire and getting ever worse.

Yet the parties continue to deliberately deny access. They continue to cynically use food, water and medicine as bargaining chips. And girls and boys, women and men, pay the price. Places that should offer safety — schools, hospitals, houses of worship — are instead targets.

I call on those who have influence over the Syrian parties to press for sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access throughout Syria. And I again remind all parties that starvation as a weapon of war and the deliberate targeting of civilians is a war crime. All those responsible must be held accountable.

On this day, we recognize one of the most effective ways to stand up for human rights, fight xenophobia and prevent new genocides — and that is by educating new generations about the horrors of the Holocaust. The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme reaches out to students and educators across the world, and warns against the consequence of hatred and bigotry of all kinds.

On this day of Holocaust remembrance, I urge everyone to denounce political and religious ideologies that set people against people. Let us rededicate ourselves to promoting the universal values of the United Nations and working together for a world of peace, security, social progress and dignity for all.

Thank you.

**For information media. Not an official record.**

---