

**Secretary-General's remarks at ceremony marking the International Day of
Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust**

New York, 28 January 2015

I would like to extend a special welcome to His Excellency Mr. Reuven Rivlin, President of the State of Israel. He is a vital – and sometimes lonely -- voice for tolerance in troubled times. We are honoured to have him with us. Welcome, Mr. President. Shalom.

Seventy years ago yesterday, the Soviet Army liberated the Auschwitz Birkenau death camp, ending the nightmare within.

I visited the camp in November 2013.

I saw the full machinery of murder: the railway platform where the infamous selections were made; the barracks that held Jews, Roma, Sinti, non-Jewish Poles, Soviet prisoners of war, dissidents, disabled persons and homosexuals; and finally the ovens where human beings were turned to ashes.

I was especially moved by the displays of photographs and films of European Jewish life before tyranny took hold – family meals, weddings and other rituals, performances by the singers and actors who enlivened the cities in which they lived. We can still feel the pain of all that was lost and destroyed in a frenzy of cruelty.

The scale of the crime remains shocking to this day.

Another set of images -- of emaciated camp survivors and piles of dead bodies – emerged after the liberation to startle the world. Knowledge of the horror was prominent in the minds of those who gathered to establish the United Nations. A determination to uphold human dignity was written into this Organization's founding Charter 70 years ago -- and has defined our work ever since.

Yet even today, after all we have witnessed, all that we know, all we have pledged and all we have done, we face widespread challenges to our common humanity.

Anti-semitism remains a violent reality; Jews continue to be killed solely because they are Jews. Extremism and dehumanization are present across the world, exploited through social media and abetted by sensationalist press coverage. The targets are as diverse as humankind itself.

In Europe and elsewhere, Muslims are under attack, the victims of bigotry at the hands of political opportunists and ultra-nationalists. Vulnerable communities continue to bury their dead while living in fear of further violence.

I take heart from counter-demonstrations, rallies and interfaith dialogue. We must all remain on our guard. We must uphold human rights, democratic freedoms and our responsibility to protect people at risk. And we must respond to terrorism and provocation in ways that resolve – instead of multiply -- the problem.

We also need to rely on future generations to improve on our record. The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme works with teachers and young people on all continents to warn about the consequences of prejudice and to promote universal values. At a time of rising intolerance, the Programme, now in its 10th year, is part of the UN's wide-ranging work to answer discord with mutual understanding.

We have not yet found the antidote to the poison that led to genocide 70 years ago. As we remember what was lost in the past, and as we recognize the perils of the present, we know what we must do – and we know we must do it together. I look forward to working with you to build a future of equality for all.

Thank you.

ENDS