



**Statement by the Ambassador Aviv Shir-On
Permanent Representative of the State of Israel
on the
939. Meeting of the Permanent Council of the OSCE
Thursday, 31 January 2013**

Thank you Chair

On January 27th, 1945, the world awoke to the fact that 6 million Jews were systematically annihilated. Today, we are the collective voice of those 6 million who perished in the Holocaust, in one of the darkest of times in human history - an episode unprecedented in evil and man's inhumanity to man.

Holocaust Remembrance Day is an important contribution to the global lexicon of memory. It unites us in the universal message of acceptance, in our moral disdain for bigotry, prejudice, religious intolerance, and in our desire to protect the poor and vulnerable among us.

There are still those who deny the Shoah and spread lies about it, some of them are figures of public life, in the media, in universities and even political leaders.

They should all be banned and punished, morally, politically and legally.

We, the Jewish people, cannot and will not forget. God can forgive, but we all have to remember and learn the lesson of the Holocaust, also because those who don't learn from the mistakes in history are doomed to repeat them.

I am proud to make this statement today, despite the Shoah, as the representative of the free and independent State of Israel and I say to you loud and clear: never again!

In commemoration of International Holocaust Remembrance Day marking the 68th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, Israel commends the OSCE Participating States and Partners for their continued commitment to promote remembrance of, and education about the Holocaust, pursuit of peaceful dialogue among nations, and dedication to human rights, pluralism, and tolerance.



We note with great appreciation the words of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Foreign Minister of Ukraine, Leonid Kozhara, in his statement "calling to honor the victims of the Holocaust with renewed efforts to fight intolerance, discrimination and hate crimes", as well as his important reminder of the single massacre at Babi Yar during which more than 34,000 Jews were slaughtered by the Nazis.

We also acknowledge with much gratitude the diligent and timely work undertaken by ODIHR and the International Task Force on Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, and are grateful to those countries for their efforts to fight anti-Semitism.

We also wish to note the important work being carried out by the Personal Representative of the OSCE, Chairperson in Office on Combating anti-Semitism, Rabbi Andrew Baker. Anti-Semitism continues to be a scourge on our societies, ever increasing in its intensity and scope. We appreciate the efforts of the OSCE in its fight against the manifestations of anti-Semitism in all its forms which paved the way, and extolled, the mass murder of European Jewry only a short time ago. Today we mourn and pay tribute to the memory of the 6 million Jews that were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators, but we don't forget the many more millions of people who died in the war or during the siege of Leningrad - that ended in the year before also on 27 January - or were murdered because they were gay, disabled, Sinti and Roma or just political opponents.

Yet even in the darkest of times it is the nature of man never to lose faith that there be some illumination, a flickering light to kindle our hope in Man's capacity for goodness in a world gone mad with hate. A world that knew of the gas chambers at Auschwitz yet chose not to see; of the mass killings at Treblinka yet chose not to hear; and the death by work at Mauthausen, yet chose not to speak. These camps will remain a stark testimony to our collective shame.

The theme of this year's Holocaust Remembrance Day is dedicated to "Rescuers" – to those men and women who risked it all to save Jews from certain death. They were the light which illuminated the dark and restored our hope. They were the conscience of humanity.



Today, while we mourn, we also celebrate the human spirit and its boundless capacity for good. To the "Rescuers" – those living and those dead – the Jewish People are forever in their debt. They sacrificed their own life, and the lives of their families, to save people that they never even met. They chose to do what is right and good when most were indifferent or turned away. And for that their legacy of self-sacrifice and heroism will never be forgotten. More than 22,000 Gentiles who saved Jews all over Europe have been recognized by Yad Vashem as "Righteous Among the Nations".

But remembering is not enough. It is only by teaching the lessons of the Holocaust can we hope to ensure the security and dignity of all people. It is left to us to remain ever vigilant and vigorous in our efforts to stem the tide of hate.

"Only take heed to thyself and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes saw, and lest they depart from thine heart all the days of thy life. But make them known unto thy children and thy children's children."

Thank you Chair.