



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on International Holocaust Remembrance Day

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Gary Robbins
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 30, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day was Monday, January 27. The date marks the anniversary of the 1945 liberation by Soviet forces of the largest German Nazi death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, where the Nazis killed over one million Jews, Poles, Roma, Sinti, LGBT persons, and others who suffered intolerance and discrimination at the hands of the Third Reich.

On this date we sadly reflect on the barbarous level to which humankind can sink and on the ferocious cruelty that results when human beings are regarded as subhuman and undeserving of dignity and of life. We have witnessed the triumph of evil when good people do nothing and how silence abetted the most contemptible crime in history.

And yet, alongside humankind's capacity for evil, we are also reminded of our capacity for good. The rescuers who refused to be bystanders remind us that people are never powerless; that we always have choices. We can choose to be indifferent to the suffering of others, or we can choose to recognize and act on our common humanity. We have the choice to acquiesce to evil or make real our solemn vow -- "never again." We must strive to understand the roots of humankind's capacity for malevolence toward one another and act to prevent this from ever happening again.

We are reminded of the work the OSCE has done to promote tolerance and non-discrimination, but also of the work we have yet to do. This year, 2014, is the ten-year anniversary of the Berlin Declaration against anti-Semitism, and we call on the OSCE and all participating States to commemorate this landmark document this year.

We urge governments, civil society leaders, clerics, and all people of conscience in all nations to speak out against hatred, intolerance, and discrimination. The U.S. will continue to work with those who are committed to a world free of anti-Semitism, who combat all forms of ethnic or religious intolerance, and who work to end all forms of discrimination.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.