

Holocaust Remembrance: Never lose sight of what went wrong, UN memorial event told

31 January 2018 – Describing the Holocaust as the “culmination of hostility towards Jews across the millennia,” a “systematic campaign of extermination,” United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres on Wednesday warned against ignoring signs the hatred, xenophobia and other types of discrimination that exist in today’s world.

“Since hatred and contempt of human lives are rampant in our time, we must stand guard against xenophobia every day and everywhere. Across the world, the state of hate is high,” Mr. Guterres told a UN Holocaust Memorial Ceremony held at the world body’s Headquarters in New York.

Featured speakers included Thomas Buergenthal, a Holocaust survivor and a retired Judge of the International Court of Justice, Professor at George Washington University Law School and Eva Lavi, the youngest survivor on Schindler’s List.

Also delivering remarks were the representatives of Israel, Germany and the United States.

Four days ago, 27 January marked the 73rd anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

“The gargantuan horror of those 12 years, from 1933 to 1945, reverberates to this day,” Mr. Guterres said. “This annual Day of commemoration is about the past, but also the future; it is about Jews but also all others who find themselves scapegoated and vilified solely because of who they are.”

The UN chief said that “genocide does not happen in a vacuum” and “the Holocaust was the culmination of hostility toward Jews across the millennia.”

“We must not lose sight of what went wrong,” he declared, warning against manifestation of resurgent hatred, such as the march of 60,000 people waving signs reading “White Europe” and “Clean Blood” in one capital two months ago.

The ceremony, hosted by Alison Smale, UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, began with a minute of silence in honour of the victims and the survivors of the Holocaust.

For his part, General Assembly President Miroslav Lajčák said: “We are not here today just to remember the Holocaust. We are also here to remind ourselves of our collective failure to prevent it.”

He said that the Holocaust did not happen overnight. “We saw it coming, and we did not stop it.”

And, when it was over, a promise was made not to repeat it, "never again." But, unfortunately, this promise has not always been kept.

"No, we have not had another world war. Nor have we seen anything on the scale of the Holocaust. But we have felt tremors in the ground. We have seen red warning flashes lighting," he said, citing acts of genocide, systematic discrimination, anti-Semitism, racism, intolerance, Islamophobia and hate speech.

"Too often we did not have the courage to call things exactly what they are – and to act accordingly," he said.

"So, we need to reflect on our inaction – and, indeed, our failures. But we must also use this occasion to inspire change."

More to follow...

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