

DPI/NGO Briefing
In observance of the
International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust
26 January 2006
Summary

The DPI/NGO Section held its regular weekly NGO briefing on 26 January 2006 in observance of the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust under the overall theme of “Remembrance and Beyond”. On 1 November 2005, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution 60/7 designating 27 January as the annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

H.E. Dan Gillerman, Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations; and Judea Pearl, President, Board of Directors, The Daniel Pearl Foundation, talked about the importance of tolerance and cross-cultural understanding to help prevent future acts of genocide. Raymond Sommereyans, Director, Outreach Division, department of Public Information, moderated the event.

Ambassador Gillerman started by expressing gratitude to the United Nations General Assembly for adopting the first ever Israeli-initiated resolution, which designated 27 January as the annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. He furthermore applauded the Organization for its real awakening to recognize the Holocaust and teach its lessons. Calling the observance three-fold, the Ambassador drew attention to the importance of: 1) remembering the horrors of the Holocaust and its victims; 2) saluting the courage and bravery of the survivors; and 3) making sure that this horror never ever happened again. He concluded with the belief that the United Nations, an Organization born out of the ashes of the Holocaust would rise to the occasion under the leadership of the Secretary-General.

After his presentation, Ambassador Gillerman took some questions from the floor.

In response to a question about the implementation of the resolution in the future, Ambassador Gillerman said that the real importance of the resolution was the annual observance of the Day. Every year, on 27 January, Holocaust, would be remembered forever all over the world, not just at the United Nations. He again applauded the Organization for allocating a budget to develop a special outreach programme to teach the lessons of the Holocaust around the world.

Judea Pearl began by honouring the memory of his grandparents, who perished in Auschwitz in 1942, and his son, Daniel Pearl, a Wall Street Journalist, who was killed by terrorists in Pakistan 60 years later. Victims of people of different faiths and languages, they lost their lives under different circumstances but for the same reason of being different. Daniel Pearl’s last words “I am Jewish” symbolized the freedom of every individual to assert their faith, heritage and identity. Dr. Pearl called for understanding of those that are different, for tolerance and respect for one another. He described the work

of the Daniel Pearl Foundation which seeks to promote cross-cultural understanding through journalism, music and dialogue.

After his presentation, Dr. Pearl was asked to cite some examples of his work with Muslim groups or individuals through the Daniel Pearl Foundation. One of the examples he mentioned was townhall style meetings he conducted together with the American University Islamic Studies professor. Dr. Pearl explained that two rules were observed during these meetings: 1) there were no taboo issues, and 2) different opinions were voiced side by side.

Joan Kirby, Chair, NGO/DPI Executive Committee, then shared information about upcoming events of interest to DPI/NGO community.

UN-produced video entitled “A Promise to Remember” was screened at the end of the briefing.

The briefing was well attended by about 100 representatives of non-governmental organizations, UN and Permanent Mission staff. It was webcast live and is archived for future reference at ww.un.org/dpi/ngosection, where Dr. Pearl’s speech is also available.

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