



RICHELLE BUDD-CAPLAN addresses participants of the Yad Vashem Holocaust seminar for UN Information officers on Tuesday. (Hillel Solomon/Yad Vashem)

## Yad Vashem hosts UN officials for week-long Holocaust seminar

*Conference to teach about Holocaust's relevance today*

• By ETGAR LEFKOVITS

Yad Vashem is hosting a small group of UN officials from around the world for a week-long Holocaust seminar, Israel's Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Authority announced Tuesday.

The five-day international forum on Holocaust Awareness and Genocide Prevention led by Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies is meant to educate United Nations information officers on the basic history of the Holocaust and its relevance today.

"The United Nations must never forget that it was founded as a reaction to the brutality of the Second World War, or that the horrors of the Holocaust helped to shape its mission," said Kiyo Akasaka, UN Undersecretary General for Communications and Public Information.

"We are grateful to Yad Vashem for this opportunity to examine together the motives that led to the human tragedy of the Holocaust, and to understand how and why its lessons

are so important today," he said.

The first-ever Holocaust seminar exclusively for UN staffers is being attended by 12 UN information officers from a dozen of the 63 UN information offices around the world, including Ankara, Baku, Bangkok, Bucharest, Kiev, Manila, Minsk, Moscow, Pretoria, Tbilisi, Tokyo and Yerevan.

"The Holocaust, while targeting Jews, has universal significance for the community of nations," Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev said.

"It represents a time when the values that underpin our joint civilization collapsed, and forces us to contend with how such an event was possible," he said.

The conference is being held in coordination with the UN's Holocaust Outreach program, which was established in 2006 to warn against the dangers of hatred, bigotry, prejudice and racism, in order to help prevent future acts of genocide.

"The idea is to give these people the tools they need to raise the basic awareness of Holocaust education in the

countries they work in," said UN Holocaust Outreach program director Kimberly Mann.

"Like the general public they [the UN information officers] have general knowledge about the Holocaust," said Richelle Budd-Caplan, director of international relations at Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies, adding that she was "greatly impressed by their willingness to absorb and learn."

A previous Holocaust seminar for UN information officials based in Latin America was held earlier this year in Washington DC, while an additional conference for French-speaking UN information officers is scheduled for next month in Paris, she said.

More Holocaust conferences are planned for the remaining UN information centers around the world next year, including those located in Arab countries. The UN information officer from Teheran has not been invited to any of the Holocaust seminars to date, but is expected to be in the coming year. The venue for that seminar has not been set.