

**UNITED NATIONS HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL CEREMONY
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL**

MONDAY, 27 JANUARY 2020

**AMBASSADOR DANNY DANON
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ISRAEL
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

UNGA President Muhammad-Bande, Secretary-General Antonia Guterres thank you for your important words and for your moral clarity in the fight against antisemitism, her excellency ambassador Norman-Chalet, deputy permanent representative of the United States, his excellency ambassador Nebenzia, permanent representative of the Russian federation – it was an honor last week to co-sponsor the opening of the exhibition on the liberation of Auschwitz here at the UN, his excellency ambassador Heusgen permanent representative of Germany – thank you for your strong commitment to the remembrance of the holocaust ,Ladies and Gentlemen, Honored Guests, veterans, distinguished survivors.

On this International Holocaust Remembrance Day – seventy five years after the liberation of Auschwitz – we are honored to have Shraga Milstein and Irene Shashar share their testimonies with us. Thank you for coming.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the decades go by it becomes harder for us to remember the atrocities that took place and what the victims had to endure. We are the last generation to have the privilege of learning about the Holocaust from those who had to endure its

atrocities. And when memory starts to fade, so does the ability to believe that an event like the Holocaust really occurred.

It becomes harder to believe that being a Jew under the Nazi regime was enough of a reason to rip infants from their mother's arms; to force communities in ghettos, starve them, murder them in the most cruel ways and then burn their bodies in an attempt to destroy the evidence and erase them from memory.

It becomes harder to believe that people stood by as their Jewish neighbors were stripped of their rights and dignity.

It becomes harder to believe that governments watched the Nazis legislate away Jewish rights and their reaction was to ban Jewish refugees from reaching their shores.

It is hard to believe that the human race is capable of such evil.

Because it is hard to believe, this day of International Holocaust Remembrance must truly be that – international. It cannot be an Israeli day of remembrance or even a Jewish day of remembrance. It must be a day in which the entire world remembers what can happen when antisemitism festers. A day in which the entire world remembers that words are not enough.

When the Nazi regime came into power in 1933 with an antisemitic platform, no one spoke up. When the Nuremberg laws came into effect in 1935, they were condemned by some, but no real action was taken. Finally in 1938, the international community convened the Evian conference, in which the outcome was more hollow words.

The leaders of the world may have opposed antisemitism. They may have even denounced it, but that is all they did. And as we know, that wasn't enough.

Last week, Israel hosted the World Holocaust Forum where the leaders of the world vowed – never again. It was an inspiring event and we truly thank the leaders for their strong words against antisemitism. But now is the time not just for words. Now it is time to act against antisemitism.

Antisemitism is a deadly disease that must be eradicated. It is a disease that feeds off hate, ignorance and intolerance. It manifests itself in different ways, such as xenophobia and racism.

Like with any disease, the international community must work together to eradicate antisemitism. It is not enough to say that we want to eradicate it. We must find a cure for those affected by it today, and we must vaccinate our populations so that no one will have to suffer its fatal consequences in the future.

In order to cure those affected today, each state must fight antisemitism in its society by punishing those who spread it. Talking is not enough. Zero tolerance policies must be implemented through three steps.

First, legislation. New laws against hate crimes and incitement must be passed.

Second, enforcement. It is not enough to have laws banning hate crimes, they must be enforced.

And finally, awareness. Leaders must learn about the holocaust to understand what antisemitism can lead to. We are taking important steps here at the UN. I have led close to one hundred

ambassadors on missions to Poland and Israel to learn about the holocaust and become witnesses. In April we will go together to march in March of the living.

Additionally, Special rapporteur on freedom of religion Ahmed Shaheed's report on anti-Semitism, which was presented in this room to the General Assembly a few months ago, makes important recommendations in this regard. I urge all countries to embrace the report's recommendations and implement them; including adopting a definition of antisemitism that defines denying the right of the Jewish people to a state in Israel as antisemitic.

In order to rid the world of the disease, we must also vaccinate our societies. The only vaccine against antisemitism is education; education to ideas such as compassion, understanding and tolerance.

We must educate that "other" does not mean inferior. We must educate that to generalize is dangerous. We must educate that disagreements are never an excuse for violence. We must educate that regardless of a person's religion, ethnicity or skin color he or she are still worthy of human dignity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We will have the honor of hearing from brave survivors today. Their testimony makes it is clear that words are not enough. When strong action isn't taken against antisemitism, the disease can take the lives of millions of innocent people.

Today I say to the survivors and to the whole world, despite the rising voices of antisemitism, today the reality is different.

Today we have the state of Israel. Today we have the Israeli Defense Forces who keep us safe. Today, we are able to protect ourselves. The days of the Jewish people being defenseless are over.

On this important day, we thank you for condemning antisemitism. But we also say it is not enough. It is time to join us in taking action. We must never forget what happened. And we must ensure that it never happens again.

עם ישראל חי!

Thank you.