

Statement by Ambassador Christoph Heusgen at the Opening of the Exhibit “Crimes Uncovered: the First Generation of Holocaust Researchers”

28.01.2020 - Speech 🇩🇪

(check against delivery)

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz Birkenau, German Nazi concentration camp, the [UN](#) chose “education and global justice” as the theme for yesterday’s International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Both topics are important to me personally and that is why I am pleased to present to you an exhibition which focuses on both: justice in the way the crimes were documented for accountability; and education in the way that the memory of the Holocaust gives us the opportunity to reflect on our past, critically assess our present and change our future.

The joint exhibition we are opening today—*Crimes Uncovered: the First Generation of Holocaust Researchers*—portrays twenty brave men and women who have dedicated their lives to uncovering and documenting the crimes of the Holocaust and safeguarding evidence.

We are proud to present the life stories of these Jewish historians and academics compiled by the House of the Wannsee Conference Memorial and Educational Site in cooperation with the Berlin branch of Touro College and the Wiener Library in London. On each panel, you can see a pioneer in the field of Holocaust research. Their work has shaped the foundation of our current knowledge about the Holocaust.

The panels display collections by Rachel Auerbach and Emmanuel Ringelblum who gathered and preserved evidence from inside the Warsaw Ghetto and documented the first survivor reports of the Holocaust. They portray Alfred Wiener’s and Eva Reichmann’s efforts to disseminate information about Nazi activities from the onset of the Holocaust. They also pull the viewer into the world of Raphael Lemkin, who laid the foundation for the [UN](#) Genocide Convention.

But it is not only books, memorials, research institutes and court cases that have documented this darkest part in German history. Great efforts such as the Genocide Convention also highlight the importance of justice, international criminal law and the pivotal role that individuals play in uncovering systematic crimes and mass atrocities.

Holding states and individuals accountable for atrocities is part of our work here at the [UN](#). Germany supports the various [UN](#) Independent Investigative Mechanisms, so-called Fact Finding Missions, which collect evidence of mass atrocities in countries like Syria,

Iraq and Myanmar.

But more needs to be done, especially with young people. Our citizens and future generations need to learn about our mistakes of the past to not repeat them. While documentation is the first step, education and raising awareness are the next steps in countering rising anti-Semitism.

Yesterday in my speech in the General Assembly, I repeated the proposal that has been made in Germany: I believe it would be very good to have a general rule that all children attending German schools should go and visit Auschwitz. As I mentioned yesterday during the Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony here at the General Assembly: we Germans understand our responsibility to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive. I am confident that even when the last generation of survivors is no longer with us, the work of the Holocaust researchers here today will help us pass on the learnings from the past.

Eva Reichmann, a prominent German-Jewish historian and one of the researchers featured in this exhibit, shared a quote that gets to heart of the matter: *"We all have a duty to fulfill towards our past."* With this, I want to hand over to our next brilliant speaker, Ms. Ruth Zimler, who will tell us about her past and her work in passing on teachings to the next Generation.