



Yom Hashoah – Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day

19 April 2012 – 27 Nissan 5772

Letter from the International Committee

“Unto Every Person There Is A Name”

Introduction

As the Shoah recedes further into history, institutions involved in Holocaust commemoration have encountered a fascinating counter-intuitive phenomenon – increased interest in the Holocaust from groups of all backgrounds and ages. New areas of research and interest are constantly coming to the fore. Modern technology has played an important part in making knowledge about the Holocaust more accessible, but has also provided a vehicle for the mainstreaming of new forms of anti-Semitism – some poorly disguised as anti-Zionism. Still, the most fundamental feature of the Shoah is the systematic murder of six million innocent Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators for the sole reason that they had the misfortune to be born Jewish. Each of their deaths was a separate, distinct tragedy that together has caused indelible trauma to the Jewish People.

The worldwide Holocaust memorial project “Unto Every Person There is a Name”, now in its twenty-third consecutive year, is a unique project designed to perpetuate the memory of the six million, among them one-and-a-half million children, while the world remained silent. We seek to remember them not only as a collective, but rather as individuals – one at a time - through the public recitation of their names on Yom Hashoah – Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day and thus help to restore their identity and dignity. By personalizing the individual tragedies of the Jewish victims of Nazi Germany and its collaborators, this project counters persistent efforts by enemies of the State of Israel and the Jewish people to deny the reality of the Holocaust and cast it as history’s seminal hoax. “Unto Every Person” also defies attempts to deny the Holocaust, universalize this genocide and cast off its principal characteristic as a unique calamity of the Jewish people, while also building appreciation of the Shoah’s tragic impact on the Jewish reality until this very day.

A World-Wide Effort

"Unto Every Person There Is A Name" is conducted around the world in hundreds of Jewish communities through the efforts of four major Jewish organizations: B'nai B'rith International, Nativ, the World Jewish Congress and the World Zionist Organization.

The project is coordinated by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, in consultation with the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs and enjoys the official auspices of President of the State of Israel, the Hon. Shimon Peres.

In Israel, "Unto Every Person There Is A Name" has become an integral part of the official Yom Hashoah commemoration ceremonies, with the central events held at the Knesset and at Yad Vashem with the participation of elected officials, as well as events throughout the country.

Personalizing the Holocaust

The International Committee of "Unto Every Person There is A Name" takes pride in the fact that its *raison d'être* – advocating the personalization of the Jewish tragedy – has gained wide recognition in Israel and around the Jewish world as hundreds of Jewish communities now participate in this project. As time passes and fewer witnesses remain, it is of great importance to create a personal link between the Jewish people today and those who perished under the Nazi genocidal regime. Ceremonies in which names of Holocaust victims are recited together with such information as age, place of birth and place of death, personalize the tragedy of the Holocaust. Emphasis is thus put on the millions of individuals – men, women and children who were lost to the Jewish people and not solely on the cold intangibility embodied in the term "The Six Million".

"My Brother's Keeper: Jewish Solidarity During the Holocaust" - Central theme for Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 5772

Documents and testimonies from the *Shoah* indicate that within this impossible reality into which Jews were thrust, mutual help and a commitment to the other were actually quite common, and were manifested in varied and surprising ways: members of larger communities taking in refugees from smaller ones; youth movement members who opened communal kitchens and fed the hungry; educators who clandestinely taught children and youth both secular and Jewish teachings; partisans who opened their bases to women and the elderly and protected them; former townspeople who shared the little they managed to get their hands on in the camps; people who collected and distributed food, clothing and religious articles in the ghettos; families who adopted orphaned children. All of these examples indicate that the individual had little chance of survival without the sense of togetherness, and that this Jewish unity – such as the exhausted concentration camp

inmate who was held up by two strangers on either side during a *selektion* – is what carried people and helped them endure another day.

A Milestone in Holocaust Commemoration

Yad Vashem - Israel's Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority - has succeeded in identifying around two-thirds of the Jews murdered in the Holocaust – over 4 million names. Yad Vashem continues to call upon the public to continue to recover names of victims that have not been recorded both by collecting Pages of Testimony, filled out in memory of the victims by people who remember them, and by digitizing archival lists and documentation for names.

Of the 4 million names currently known, some 2.6 million come from Pages of Testimony and the remainder from various archival sources and postwar commemoration projects. While in Western Europe in particular there were often lists kept of the Jews and deportation, making identification easier, in countries of Eastern Europe and the areas of the former Soviet Union, much information was still lacking. During the last five years, Yad Vashem concentrated its efforts in names recovery in areas where most of the names were unknown, including Eastern Europe, the FSU and Greece and great progress has been made.

The entire online Names Database, where one may access the victims' brief histories and, when available, photographs, and submit additional names, is available in English, Hebrew and Russian. Millions of victims' names are still missing, it is incumbent upon us today, to recover them before the generation that remembers is no longer with us.

"Unto Every Person There is a Name" events provide a unique opportunity to continue the quest to collect the names of all the Jews who perished in the Holocaust, and should be utilized to call upon members of your community to complete a "Page of Testimony" for each unregistered victim, or to volunteer to assist others with this urgent task. (See Attachment III for further details.)

An Opportunity for Reflection

While Yom Hashoah focuses our attention each year on the victims of the Holocaust, it also inherently provides an annual opportunity for us to reflect on contemporary forms of anti-Semitism and recommit ourselves to counter them.

According to two reports released by the government of Israel in January, the high number of anti-Semitic incidents recorded in recent years – including violent events - was maintained in 2011 despite the absence of an Israel/Arab or Israel/Palestinian "trigger". Anti-semitism was expressed in different forms including incitement, propaganda, demonstrations, desecration of sites and physical violence, providing clear evidence that anti-Semitism remains a global problem with dangerous ramifications. Anti-Semitism continues to cross geographic, ideological, political, social and cultural borders and is most prevalent among Moslems, the radical Right and the radical Left – although

according to these reports, anti-Semitism seems to have taken root in 2011 also in the Center. Evidence of this can be found in the statements of public figures such as designer John Galliano and director Lars von Trier in support of Hitler.

Recitation ceremony planning recommendations

1. Outreach: The International Committee urges organizers of "Unto Every Person" ceremonies to invite all Jewish organizations and institutions in their community, including schools, synagogues of the various streams and community centers, and Israeli diplomatic representatives, to take an active part in the name recitation ceremonies and in the Names Recovery Campaign. The Committee specifically requests that the four sponsoring organizations be actively engaged in each ceremony and that all local agencies cooperate to make the ceremony as inclusive and meaningful as possible. The Committee also recommends that non-Jewish groups and leaders in the larger community be invited to participate in the recitation ceremonies, which can be held in an appropriate public setting.

2. Press: Local and national media, especially television, should be encouraged to cover the ceremonies. Any visual products from the ceremony should be sent to Yad Vashem in order to be archived and exhibited in the future.

3. Family names retrieval: We urge you to encourage members of your community to search for names of relatives and friends who were victims of the Holocaust, to compile your own personal and local lists of names and family members for commemoration, and to submit names to Yad Vashem's Database (see above).

4. Names recovery campaign: Should you choose to utilize the ceremony to kick-off a names recovery campaign, please refer to [Yad Vashem's Community Outreach Guide](#) for new resources. Packed with tips and materials, including short movie clips and print-quality files of promotional materials, this resource will enable Jewish communities and educators to plan and implement meaningful programs, names collection events and related activities around Yom Hashoah and throughout the year.

5. Ceremony requirements: The recitation ceremonies require coordination and planning but involve very little expenditure. Basic requirements for the ceremony are: * Poem "Unto Every Person There Is A Name" by Israeli poet Zelda (Attachment V)

* Lists of names (http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/downloads/name_reading_ceremonies.asp) * Pages of Testimony

(http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/downloads/pages_of_testimony.asp) Yizkor and El Maleh Rahamim prayer texts (available in Hebrew http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/education/ceremonies/pdf/diary2_tehilim.pdf)

* Six Yizkor candles

- * A sound system
- * Professional-standard video equipment.
- * A table or podium covered in black
- * Sufficient volunteers to recite names
- * Master of Ceremonies

6. Central Ceremony at Yad Vashem: The central State ceremony marking the beginning of Yom Hashoah will take place at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem on Wednesday, April 18 at 20:00 (8 p.m.) Israel time. The ceremony is broadcast live on Israel's Channel One, accessible via the internet, which might allow you to incorporate it into your own ceremony. Furthermore, the ceremony will be available on-line on the Yad Vashem website within 2 hours after it concludes. The recording could be utilized as an element in your own ceremony.

We are available to answer any questions that might arise and provide additional material as necessary to ensure the success of your event.

Sincerely,

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