Introduction

The worldwide Holocaust memorial project “Unto Every Person There is a Name”, now in its twenty-fifth consecutive year, is a unique project designed to perpetuate the memory of the Six Million - among them one-and-a-half million Jewish children – murdered while the world remained silent. The project allows participants the space and time to memorialize them not only as a collective, but 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.

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 were born Jewish. Each of their deaths was a separate, distinct tragedy that together has caused indelible trauma to the Jewish people. By personalizing the individual tragedies of the Jewish victims of Nazi Germany and their collaborators, “Unto Every Person There is a Name” 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 universalize the Holocaust 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.

The “Unto Every Person” project also focuses attention on the urgent need to recover additional names of Holocaust victims, to reflect on this year’s central theme for Yom Hashoah and to focus attention on contemporary forms of antisemitism which continue to plague many countries around the world.
A World-Wide Effort

“Unto Every Person There Is A Name” ceremonies are 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 (see President’s letter, Attachment I).

In Israel, “Unto Every Person There Is A Name” is an integral part of the official Yom Hashoah commemoration ceremonies, with the central events held at the Knesset and Yad Vashem with the participation of elected officials, in addition to local 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 of the Holocaust – 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 their age, place of birth and place of murder - 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”. "Unto Every Person There is a Name" rests on the success of Yad Vashem's Shoah Victims' Names Recovery Project that to date has incontrovertibly identified over four million names of Shoah victims and continues its relentless quest to recover all the six million names.

Jews "On the Edge"
1944: Between Annihilation and Liberation

Central theme for Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 5774

Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 5774 (2014) is marked by the situation of the Jews in 1944 – exactly 70 years ago. The expression "on the edge" is taken from Nathan Alterman's poem Joy of the Poor, which so aptly expresses the feeling which prevailed that year among the Jews of Europe, who were in the throes of a double race on which their very lives depended. On the one hand, cities from east to west, such as Vilna and Minsk, Warsaw and Riga, Belgrade and Sofia, Paris and Rome, were being liberated from the yoke of Nazi Germany; the Red Army was advancing, and the western Allies continued to bombard Germany, their landing in Normandy tipping the scales still further. On the other hand, in the same year, the Jews of Hungary were sent to Auschwitz, the Lodz and Kovno ghettos were liquidated, the last of their former inmates were deported and murdered, and death marches were initiated from the liberated territories to the heart of what remained of the "Third Reich." It was a year in which everything depended on the scales of time, and the Jews remaining in Europe were asking
themselves: will the Red Army from the east and the Allies from the west arrive before the Germans come to murder whoever is still alive? Or, as Alterman wrote, which ending will come first? Events were occurring very swiftly, one after the other, raising serious questions in their wake.

(For further information on this year’s theme and texts that can be used in ceremonies, see Attachment II)

Contemporary Forms of Antisemitism

Taking place on Yom Hashoah – the day marking the most heinous antisemitic outrage in history - “Unto Every Person there is a Name” ceremonies also provide a poignant opportunity to focus attention on contemporary forms of this scourge. Antisemitism - in its numerous forms and emanating from divergent sources - remains a unique and dangerous phenomenon that continues to plague Jews in most countries around the world, including those in which some of the worst atrocities of the Holocaust were perpetrated, the Palestinian Authority, and much of the Arab world.

While the number of violent antisemitic events worldwide did not rise in 2013 compared to 2012 (that saw a jump of 30 percent compared to 2011), and while there were no prominent events that received great global resonance such as the March 19, 2012 antisemitically-motivated terrorist attack by Mohammed Mera on the Ozar HaTorah Jewish school in Toulouse, 2013 stands out as the year in which antisemitism pervaded Jewish life in many countries around the world, particularly in Europe. The trend of rising and worsening antisemitism is reflected in the severity of the verbal and graphic expressions, the insults, the harassment, and the threats encountered by Jews in their everyday lives, which create a gradually more oppressive atmosphere.

As documented in an extensive survey undertaken by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) “Discrimination and Hate Crime Against Jews in EU Member States: Experience and Perceptions of Antisemitism” fully 77 percent of European Jews do not even bother to report the antisemitic bullying, assault and harassment they experience to any agency - governmental or non-governmental - due to their belief that the complaint will be ignored and the culprits will go unidentified. This finding - based on polling of nearly 6,000 Jews in eight EU countries (representing some 90 percent of all EU Jews) - sadly indicates that most Jews are resigned to the fact that the antisemitism they face is a chronic phenomenon they cannot affect. While it can be assumed that a large percentage of severe antisemitic incidents (in which victims can expect to secure outside assistance) are reported, the results of this survey indicate that bodies tracking antisemitic incidents are aware of only a small portion of all antisemitic events. Another phenomenon reinforced in 2013 is the boost gained by antisemitic trends from social networks. The case of the “quenelle” inverted Hitlerian salute popularized by the antisemitic French comedian Dieudonné, and the “knock out the Jew” attacks of Brooklyn Jews, are two examples of this.

(For further information see Attachment III)
**Expanded Global Activity to Recover Names of Shoah Victims**

“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.

Since its inception, one of Yad Vashem's central missions has been the attempt to recover the name and personal story of each and every victim of the Shoah. While the Germans sought not only to destroy the Jews but also to obliterate any memory of them, The Shoah Victims’ Names Recovery Project realizes our moral imperative to remember each victim as a human being, and not merely a number. To learn more about the project click here.

The relentless endeavor has to date identified over four million names of Shoah victims, documented in the Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names online at: www.yadvashem.org. Roughly half of the victims’ names in the database were derived from various archival sources and postwar commemoration projects. The other half are recorded on “Pages of Testimony” submitted by relatives and others who knew of the victims. The outstanding universal value of the Pages of Testimony Memorial Collection has been recognized by UNESCO, which inscribed it this year in its prestigious Memory of the World Register.

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, and it is incumbent upon us today, to recover them before the generation that remembers is no longer with us. “Unto Every Person” ceremonies 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.

(For further information see Attachment IV).

**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
A unique list of names of Holocaust victims from Hungary is available for use in Attachment VI. Other lists are available online.
* Pages of Testimony
* Yizkor and El Maleh Rahamim prayer texts (available in Hebrew)

* 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 commencement of Yom Hashoah will take place at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem on Sunday, April 27 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,

Members of the “Unto Every Person There Is A Name” International Committee: Rachel Barkai, Dr. Alexander Avram (Yad Vashem); Alan Schneider (B’nai B’rith International); World Jewish Congress; Naftaly Levy (World Zionist Organization); Amb. Gideon Behar (Israel Foreign Ministry); Boris Belodubrovsky (Nativ).
Project Initiator: Haim Roet

Referents:
For Yad Vashem
Rachel Barkai, Commemoration and Public Relations;
Ossi Kupfer, Project Coordinator; Dr. Alexander Avram, Hall of Names
POB 3477, Jerusalem 91034, Israel
Tel. (972)-2-6443574; Fax (972)-2-6443569;
general.information@yadvashem.org.il, www.yadvashem.org

For more information about the Shoah Victims' Names Recovery Project
contact:
Cynthia Wroclawski, Manager
The Shoah Victims' Names Recovery Project
Yad Vashem, POB 3477
Jerusalem, 91034 ISRAEL
Tel: 972-2-644-3470
cynthia.wroclawski@yadvashem.org.il

For North America
Rhonda Love
B’nai B’rith International Center for Programming
801 Second Avenue, 14th Floor, New York, NY 10017
Tel: (212)-490-3290; Fax: (212)-687-3429
Rlove@bnaibrith.org

For Eastern Europe
World Jewish Congress
POB 4293, Jerusalem 91042, Israel
Tel: (972)--2-6333006 Fax. (972)-2-633 3011
wjc@wjc.co.il

For Western Europe, Latin America, Australia
Naftaly Levy
WZO Department for Zionist Activities
POB 92, Jerusalem, Israel
Tel: (972)-2-6202262; Fax (972)-2-6204099
naftalil@wzo.org.il

For the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ambassador Gideon Behar, Director, Department for Combating Antisemitism, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem, Israel
Tel: (972)-2-5303696; Fax: (972)-2-5303159
gideon.behar@mfa.gov.il

For the Former Soviet Union
Boris Belodubrovsky
Nativ
8 Hamelacha St., POB 21609
Tel Aviv 67251, Israel
Tel: (972) 3 5639730; Fax: (972) 3 7610918
borisb@nativ.gov.il

###