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In music and in words, UN gives voice to the legacy of Holocaust survivors



Holocaust exhibiton, "Architecture of Murder: The Auschwitz-Birkenau Blueprints"

27 January 2010 – With the help of stirring music from a German-Israeli chorus and solemn speeches, the United Nations tonight paid tribute to the victims of the Holocaust and spotlighted the legacy of the survivors of the Nazi death camps in World War II.

Hundreds of people attended a memorial ceremony and concert at the General Assembly Hall at UN Headquarters in New York, held as part of a series of worldwide events marking the **International Day in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust**.

The Nürnberg Philharmonic Orchestra, the Bayreuth Zamir Choir and the Jerusalem Oratorio Chamber Choir, under the baton of Maestro Isaak Tavior, performed a range of works, including pieces by Beethoven and Brahms.

Nechama Tec, a Holocaust survivor and Professor Emerita of Sociology at the University of Connecticut in the United States, and Andrzej Mirga, Senior Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), also gave speeches reflecting this year's theme for the Day – "The Legacy of Survival."

Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information Kiyo Akasaka told the ceremony that it was vital that the world never forgets the stories of the men, women and children who endured the Holocaust.

"We have much to learn from their experiences and the painful and inspiring legacy they leave to future generations," he said. "And as the number of survivors become smaller and smaller, their testimony becomes more and more precious.

"It is crucial to share their legacy, to ensure that people everywhere understand the universal lessons of the Holocaust, and to instil respect for diversity and human rights in generations to come."

Estimates vary but about 6 million Jews are thought to have been killed in the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis, as well as countless numbers of Roma, Slavs, homosexuals, disabled people, Jehovah's witnesses, Communists and political dissidents.

The UN has observed 27 January as the Day for remembering the victims since the General Assembly made the designation in 2005. Today marks the 65th anniversary to the day of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest and most notorious of all of the camps.

Tonight's ceremony, which was sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Germany, was attended by Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro and by Byrganym Aitimova, the Vice-President of the General Assembly, as well as by dignitaries from many countries.

Peter Wittig, Germany's Permanent Representative to the UN, and Yuli-Yoel Edelstein, Israel's Minister of Information and Diaspora, made statements at the ceremony and Ms. Aitimova delivered a message on behalf of Ali Treki, the General Assembly President.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, en route to London for an international conference on Afghanistan, recorded a video message in which he spoke as well about the legacy of the survivors.

"All of them carry a crucial message for all of us," he said. "A message about the triumph of the human spirit. A living testament that tyranny, though it may rise, will surely not prevail."

Earlier today, the UN's Chef de Cabinet, Vijay Nambiar, participated in an event at the Italian Consulate in New York in which the names of about 8,000 Italian Jews deported during World War II were read out.

Mr. Nambiar was joined by representatives of Italy, Israel and Germany at the event, which was co-organized by the consulate, the Centro Primo Levi, a number of Italian-American authorities and New York City authorities.

Holocaust remembrance events are also being held this week by the UN at its offices in Geneva and Vienna and across its global network of information centres, including in Bucharest and Bogotá. For the first time, observances were held in Myanmar and Namibia.

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