

United Nations Department of Global Communications
2021 Holocaust Remembrance Events
January 27 and 28 2021

An Introduction

The theme guiding Holocaust remembrance and education in 2021 is
“Facing the Aftermath: Recovery and Reconstitution after the Holocaust”.
This year’s events focused on the measures taken in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust to begin the process of recovery and reconstitution of individuals, community, and systems of justice. Integral to the process of reconstitution was accurate recording of the historical account of what happened before and during the Holocaust. Challenging the denial and distortion of the historical events was interwoven in the processes of recovery and reconstitution. The theme examines the contribution of the responses to the victims and survivors and the needs of the contemporary world. There is a global rise of antisemitism and increasing levels of disinformation and hate speech. Holocaust education and remembrance is even more urgent today. Historical literacy is needed to counter repeated attempts to deny and distort the history of the Holocaust.

Memorial Ceremony
Marking the International Day of Commemoration
In memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

Reported by Joan Lurie Goldberg

For the first time this ceremony was online and not in person. Although this increased its reach around the world and the content was good, it was a sad substitute for the in person event. The program was sponsored by the United Nations Outreach Program on the Holocaust and UNESCO with the cooperation of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Brief summaries of the talks follow – there were musical interludes as well.

Ms. Melissa Fleming, Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications was the Master of Ceremonies.

Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary General and H. E. Mr. Volkan Bozkir, of the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly **President** made opening remarks. They reminded the audience that the UN Charter was written in the wake of the Holocaust and that, today, in a world where antisemitism is rising, we must educate and remember.

Ms. Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO. We must fight against amnesia and denial. UNESCO must take on the mission of education. They are launching a campaign against hate speech and education. UNESCO, with Oxford University and World Jewish Congress have launched a global program to map denial and distortion of the Holocaust on social media. Facebook is cooperating.

H. E. Ms. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany delivered the keynote address. What happened in Germany and occupied Europe remains beyond belief; she is deeply ashamed of the Shoah which happened in her country under National Socialism and during which all humanity was forgotten. She thanked the survivors who muster the strength to tell their stories. Germany is working against antisemitism and is the current head of IHRA.

Honorable Irwin Cotler, Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism of Canada. Mr. Cotler deplored the demonization of the Jews which led to the Shoah. Canada is working with UNESCO to educate against distortion and denial. He reminded us to remember the rescuers, e.g. Raoul Wallenberg.

H. E. Mr. Gilad Menashe Erdan, Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations, opened by stating that the dangers of Covid 19 are not the only crisis caused by a virus; the resurgence of antisemitism is a much more dangerous virus. He believes that the safety of Jews all over the world is again in question. Elie Wiesel and other survivors felt it was their duty to tell their stories in order to help stop antisemitism.

Sadly, today, antisemitism has a new face, the demonization of Israel. Iran's Prime Minister talks about the destruction of Israel and asks why is it not okay to deny the Holocaust. Clearly, if they are listening, the nations of the world should not permit Iran to become a nuclear power.

Israel will continue to defend Jews everywhere and he hopes the UN will commit to fighting antisemitism in all its forms, ancient and modern.

H. E. Mr. Richard Mills, Jr., Acting Representative of the United States to the United Nations emphasized the need for education concerning antisemitism and how it leads to more serious crimes. The US will never shrink from fighting antisemitism and other biases.

Memorial Prayers were chanted by **Julia Cadrain, Cantor** at Central Synagogue in New York.

Dr. Irene Butter, a Holocaust Survivor and Her Granddaughter, **Ms. Shireen Nassar** told the family story in a conversation with **Ms. Clarissa Ward**, CNN's Chief International Correspondent. Dr. Butter is 91 years old and incredibly youthful and eloquent. She was born into a wealthy Jewish family in Berlin who escaped to Amsterdam in 1937. The Nazis soon followed and they lived through several internments in concentration camps before finally being part of a prisoner exchange to which they had access because they already were in possession of Ecuadorian passports. She wound up in a refugee camp in Algiers and came to the US in 1945. She herself said her family survived on contacts and hope. I would add extreme good luck as well.

Ms. Nassar learned very early about the horrors of the Shoah and still finds it hard to believe; she was raised in Israel and showed great respect for Israel's commemoration of the Shoah especially the fact that the entire country comes to a halt for a moment of silence on Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The conversation with Ms. Ward focused on how Dr. Butter came to talk about her experiences – she said she was inspired by Elie Wiesel who considered it his duty to be a witness. She emphasized that she believes democracy is vulnerable and we must confront hatred and violence in our countries. Never be a bystander!

Following this testimony, nine people from around the world were asked why Holocaust education is important. They varied from the head of the Holocaust Museum in Poland to a filmmaker to a young female student from Zambia. All agreed that we must not forget and also had great admiration for the resilience of the survivors and their commitment to bearing witness.

The event concluded with a performance of “Nigun (Baal Shem)” by Ernest Bloch in front of the “Lest we Forget” exhibition of photographs of Holocaust survivors and other victim of Nazi Persecution. The exhibition, by German photographer Luigi Toscano is at UNESCO HQ in Paris until 12 February.

Panel Discussion:
“Holocaust Denial and Distortion”
Reported by Joan Lurie Goldberg

The panel discussion was moderated by **Ms. Hala Gorani, CNN Journalist.**

Panelists were a distinguished and interesting group:

- Ms. Hella Pick, Journalist and Kindertransport refugee
- Professor Deborah Lipstadt, Historian, Emory University
- Mr. Marian Turski, Survivor and VP of the International Auschwitz Committee
- Mr. Phillippe Sands, Author
- Dr. Robert Williams, Chair of the IHRA Committee on Antisemitism and the Holocaust Denial

Ms. Gorani stated that denial and distortion feed antisemitism, hate speech and violence. Our goal should be to make the truth go viral although right now, on the internet, the haters are more successful at viral spread.

Here are some of the most cogent comments made by panelists in response to Ms. Gorani's questions:

- Denial and distortion are spread very effectively on social media. Perhaps they are more prevalent now than a few years ago or possibly, just more visible because of wider use of social media. Twenty or thirty years ago it

- was hard to find instances of Holocaust denial; now they are everywhere on the internet.
- We need to be better communicators; right now those who preach hate are better at it.
 - A grave danger is the rehabilitation of prominent figures from the Holocaust. (e.g. in Hungary and Poland)
 - Rising nationalism plays into the hands of the deniers in many countries including the US, UK, and others in Europe.
 - Prof. Lipstadt in particular sees “democracy denial” which spreads in ways similar to Holocaust denial. She was frightened by the events of January 6, 2021. The demonstrators were not the dispossessed but rather people filled with hate and well organized.
 - Dr. Williams recommends three actions – protect the facts about history’s greatest crime, work together to recognize efforts to distort history, and build a strong coalition around the world to fight both denial and distortion.
 - There was a lot of discussion about Schwarzenegger’s video about his family which went viral. He criticized his father but never stated that his father was a Nazi. Most panelists agreed that family history is very important in that it is difficult to admit that one’s forebears were responsible. Inconvenient truth is sometimes hard to expose.
 - Criminalizing hate speech is tempting but may be counterproductive as it will simply go underground and be appealing as “forbidden fruit”.
 - Our leaders must understand that the time to act is now – January 6 events could be compared to early Nazi demonstrations.
 - The Holocaust was a civilizational break. It led to a change in the world order including the founding of the United Nations, the UN Charter, Nuremberg trials and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

A Discussion:

Lessons of the Holocaust: A UN Perspective on Global Antisemitism

Reported by Carole Tolkin

The session began with Millie Magid, B’Nai B’rith Chair of UN affairs, speaking of the history and mission of B’Nai B’rith, and the role it plays in the UN. B’Nai B’rith introduced National Holocaust Remembrance Day 15 years ago, to be held on January 27, the day that marked the liberation of Auschwitz. Ms. Magid then introduced Daniel Mariashin, CEO of B’Nai B’rith, who spoke about current global incidents of antisemitism, such as the attack on the US Capitol by people wearing Camp Auschwitz shirts.

The second speaker was Miguel Moratinos, the United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilization and former ambassador to Israel. Ambassador Moratinos has been appointed as UN focal point to combat antisemitism. He, to, stressed that there has been a resurgence of anti-semitism and that this is not a thing of the past. He had spoken with the chief rabbi of Russia, who told him that

20% of holocaust victims came from Russia. He also stated that there has been a huge increase in antisemitism throughout the world and that neo-Nazi activity is on the rise. However, he is encouraged by the steps many countries have taken in this area. Ambassador Moriatinos spoke about his role in changing the perception. His mandate is to:

1. Combat hate speech.
2. Present resolutions in the UN against Holocaust denial and encourage members to hold Holocaust Remembrance ceremonies.
3. To hold a special session of the General Assembly to speak about anti-Semitism. The agenda is as follows:

Developing a working definition of antisemitism

Educating global citizens, especially in Asia and Africa

Collaborating with social media

Encouraging governments to take a robust approach to hate speech.

Combating antisemitism within UN system itself

A question was raised about the extent of awareness of current problems. It was stated that in 2020, 17,000 Holocaust survivors died. As survivors die, it is more important than ever to encourage countries that have not adopted Remembrance Day.

A question and answer period followed, led by David Michaels, director of UN and Intercommunal Affairs.

Question: What is the IHRA definition of antisemitism and which countries are very critical of Israel.

Answer: The goal is to increase the amount of countries that accept this definition. It was stated that countries in Africa and Asia probably never hear of the IHRA and the definition.

Question: What should be done with countries, which have problems with the definition?

Answer: Some countries may not be ready to join and that education is the key.

Question from Thailand: People have been seen wearing Nazi regalia. What should be done?

Answer: Educate them. In the past, people didn't know the history, but now we are all connected. We must raise awareness.

Question: What do you bring to your current role in view of Spain's history?

Answer: I served as Spain's Prime Minister. We had a rich history of acceptance. Then came the Dark Ages. In modern times Juan Carlos made his speech in the Knesset in the spirit of reconciliation. I am in very close contact with the Jewish community in Spain.

Question: The UN is a place where much antisemitism is found. What can be done to combat this?

Answer: This is the main area of my mandate. Secretary General Guterres introduced a code of conduct around gender issues. I will use a similar code of conduct for all employees. I can't force member states to abide by this, but I will certainly encourage them to do so.

Question: Regarding the Abraham Accords - are we using them effectively to combat anti-Israel and antisemitic sentiment?

Answer: We are working for normalization of contact between Arabs and Israelis.

Question: What can the UN do to combat discrimination against Israelis and Jews entering other countries?

Answer: This is difficult to change before the normalization process.

Question: What is the relationship between the Alliance of Civilizations and other UN divisions to combat antisemitism?

Answer: We share programs with staff and member nations. (ex: UNESCO) and try not to duplicate efforts.

Question: About Holocaust Denial. How can Holocaust Denial be countered?

Answer: We have to be brutal. There is no way to allow or accept this. We need international law enforcement. There is no freedom of expression when it comes to this.

Question: Why is it that at the Durban Conference only Israel was cited as racist?

Answer: This is unacceptable. Times are changing. The conference should be remembered.

“Nazi Rise to Power and the Weimar Constitution”
Presented In Partnership
With the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists
and Co-Sponsored by
The Permanent Missions of Germany and Israel
Reported by Fran Butensky

Moderator: Melissa Fleming, Assistant Attorney General for Global Communications at the United Nations

The Weimar Republic is sometimes overshadowed by the horrors of the Holocaust. It is necessary to consider the context that led to the rise of Nazi power.

Opening Remarks:

Meir Linzen, President of the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists (IJL) which was established in 1969 to fight antisemitism, racism, xenophobia and Holocaust denial. He gave an overview of the association. Mr. Meir is the son of survivors and has devoted much of his life to these causes.

H.E. Christoph Heusgen, Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, said that Germany bears a responsibility which will never end and that Germany is committed to the fight which includes looking back as well as to the future. We cannot take democracy for granted and it must be kept strong.

H.E. Gilad Erdan, Permanent Representative of the Israeli Mission to the United Nations lost most of his family in the Holocaust and said that we must always be reminded that such a horrifying offense is possible. We need to identify deep-rooted hatred and bigotry. Understanding the Nazi rise to power is so

important. Denying the Jewish State's very right to exist is a clear manifestation of antisemitism.

Panelists

Professor Sherri Berman, Department of Political Science, Barnard College and Columbia College University

Dr. Douglas G. Morris, J.D., Attorney and Legal Historian

Professor Benjamin Hett, Department of History, Hunter College

Herlinda Pauer Studen, Professor, University of Vienna

The following are remarks during the discussion by the panelists that reflect the panelists' interpretation of how and why the Nazis were able to rise to power:

- Extremism is a symptom of democratic failure. Mr. Trump and the attack on the Capitol set off United States' understanding of the rise of fascism by looking back to the Weimar Republic and the rise of the Nazi Party and Hitler. To understand the rise of Nazi power, focus attention on the context in which it developed.
- Fascists Movements in Germany were directly opposed to democracy. WW1 didn't bring any relief and was unable to overthrow the Weimar Government.
- 1928, the Nazi party was not popular
- When the Depression hit, the Weimar Republic wasn't strong enough to deal with the suffering and hardships as FDR was in addressing it in the US.
- This opened up a steady gain in Nazi popularity when enough disillusioned people got behind them.
- If the Weimar Government had been stronger, the Nazis might not have been able to rise to power. They could have done much more to prevent Hitler's rise to power. The Republic bears a lot of responsibility. The German law allowed for "who decides, not what is decided". Hitler gained sweeping powers to override decisions.
- Hitler ordered killings of his political opponents. No trials, just murdering them.
- 1936. The Gestapo believed they could rule over any laws and took control of the legal system and over all police.
- They Nazified the legal system.
- The Weimar Republic had a weakness in their Constitution and was never received with enthusiasm.
- They never became strong or a guide for Germany's political culture.
- This lent itself to the rise of authoritarianism.

The Nazis destroyed the opposition through fear, legal moves, intimidation, propaganda and social control. The result was under Hitler, the Nazis tried to take total control of Germany.

This, unfortunately, sounds very familiar.

United Nations Department of Global Communications
2021 Holocaust Remembrance

Panel Discussion: "Women and Genocide"
Thursday, 21 January

Reported by Judy Mintz, ICJW UN representative

Beginning today and continuing thru February 11th 2021, a full calendar of events dedicated to Holocaust remembrance and education is planned. This panel discussion focused on the experience of women and the place gender had in the Holocaust and in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. It was episode 4 in the series *Beyond the Long Shadow: Engaging with Difficult Histories*. Some of today's participants who posed many chat questions were from Geneva, India, Greece, Israel, Ukraine, and the US (from Texas, New York, and New Jersey) and described themselves as researchers, genocide survivors and scholars.

Ms. Simona Cruciani, Political Affairs Officer, UN Office on Genocide Prevention & the Responsibility to Protect

Ms. Cruciani began by stating that there is a strong connection between atrocity crimes and the impact on women's rights, gender equality, gender justice, and poverty. The Pandemic has exasperated the lives of girls and women and any global progress to reach victims and to improve conditions has been eliminated. More than ever they have been exposed to domestic violence, economic pressures, trafficking, slavery, prostitution, early marriage, rape and kidnapping. It is the responsibility of UN member states to prevent and protect. Women's voices must be heard and encouraged to play a role on all levels-locally, nationally, and globally.

Dr. Sarah Cushman, Director, Holocaust Education Foundation, Northwestern University

Dr. Cushman's field of expertise focuses on the Holocaust with an emphasis on women who offered resistance or were victims, witnesses, and rescuers. She mentioned killing fields, mass murders, exploitation, and sexualized violence. She explained that women responded differently than men during the Holocaust. Women focused more on typical gender roles such as mutual aid for each other, protection of themselves and their families, ways to be thrifty and to earn extra dollars. She felt that men lamented more over their loss of status, ways to escape and the use of violence.

Dr. Sara E. Brown, Executive Director, Center for Holocaust, Human Rights and Genocide Education, Brookdale Community College

Dr. Brown shared her expertise about the Rwanda Genocide where for 100 days in 1994 there was a civil war with 800,000 victims. Extremists massacred the Tutsi

minority and the moderate HUTU. Many were women who were attacked and victims of genital mutilation. Rapes were often used as a weapon and a way to attack and punish by exposing them to the HIV virus. After the war many perpetrators blended back into society and some of the rescuers were still being targeted with violence.

Dr. Brown also included information about the Hutu Ten Commandments that promoted extremism against Tutsi women and men. Tutsi women were singled out as unfit as wives and their children as undesirable.

During the Q&A the panelists were asked, “what can we do to address these issues”. The following advice was given:

- research the issues
- ask questions and expand what you know about these narratives, educate yourself
- inform the next generation
- think globally, act locally
- legislate and advocate to lift women up
- encourage more women to become politicians and hold office
- fight hate speech
- implement policy documents from the UN

Commemorating International Holocaust Remembrance Day
By Touro College Institute (NYC) on Human Rights and the Holocaust
January 28, 2021
With Alan Moskin, Concentration Camp Liberator

Reported by Judy Mintz for ICJW

Patricia Salkin, Provost of the Graduate and Professional Divisions of Touro College, introduced the program. In her opening remarks about the Holocaust, she reminded us that this period of history can still be described by survivors and eyewitnesses. She stressed the obligation and responsibility we all share to remember and preserve memories.

Alan Moskin was the featured speaker and concentration camp liberator and US Army veteran. I’ve tried to retell his story by using his own words and including his many thoughts. He divided his hour and a half-long talk into his background, his war experiences and his life after. He began by sharing his amazing recollections as a Jewish boy from Englewood, New Jersey. He was born in 1926 and grew up in a diverse ethnic area always thinking that people were more alike than different. At 17 he started at Syracuse University until drafted into the army at 18. His nickname then became “college boy”. During his basic training in Florida he learned “to kill or be killed”, “how to survive” and about prejudice. He became an infantry combat

soldier and part of General George Patton's 3rd Army in France, Germany and Austria. Soon he killed his first German. He was driven by his desire "to win the war" not by *hate* as so many Nazis were.

Alan then told of his experiences as a liberator, when on May 4, 1945, his company entered Gunskirchen Concentration Camp, a sub-camp of Mauthausen. The first thing that struck the soldiers was the stench-something they had never smelled before. The first "poor souls" they met were RAF POWs and then so many others who were Jewish. At that time most of the soldiers had never heard about the "camps for Jews". Alan's lieutenant asked him to identify himself as Jewish to the victims and even though he didn't speak German he somehow got it across that he was. One of the men fell to the ground and started to kiss his muddy boots ...and even though he was covered with lice and dirt, Alan lifted him up to hear the words "thank you Americans". Another memory was watching some of inmates eat the innards of a dead horse. He now understood "what starvation does to people". To him it was a miracle that anyone could have survived.

After the fighting ended, Alan became a member of the US Army of Occupation in Germany. He described his war experiences like a tattoo-a permanent reminder. It was so hard for him to comprehend the brutality of the Nazis to anyone who did not conform to the ideal of the pure Aryan Race.

When he returned home, he went back to Syracuse University, completed his undergraduate degree and then went to law school. He married and has two daughters and grandchildren.

Like so many other witnesses he did not share his experiences for 50 years. He was plagued by nightmares and survivors' guilt. He suffered from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) before there was an official recognition of the condition. However, when he finally was convinced to speak, it was like a catharsis with the words just "spilling out of him". Just this past week alone, he had six engagements. He went on to explain that he always wears his army hat as a tribute to his fallen buddies. He has addressed 120,000 people of all ages. Thank G-d that at 94 he is still going strong!

Even on zoom this hour and a half account was beyond moving and impactful for all of us as expressed during the Q&A. I want to add some more of his personal thoughts that are just too important to exclude.

- he wonders where all the *hate* comes from...this was said over and over
- he warns that we must not forget or the sins will be repeated
- he described himself as a messenger
- we are the last generation who will personally hear from those who were witnesses
- the world is so full of *hate*, bigotry & prejudice as witnessed at the US Capitol
- he fears the KKK, white supremacists, and the Proud Boys for their *hate*
- he encourages all of us to not be bystanders but upstanders

-he is part of the USC Shoah Foundation's Dimensions in Testimony

The only recognition that Alan wants to receive as a soldier, veteran and liberator is a "thank you for your service". It was a privilege to be part of this audience and then to thank him.

Childhood after Atrocity Crimes: Hope for Peace, Dignity and Equality

Reported by Sara Winkowski, ICJW delegate to the UN in New York

As part of the commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, the United Nations Outreach Program on the Holocaust and the Civil Society Unit organized an event on February 4 "Childhood After Atrocity Crimes: Hope for Peace, Dignity and Equality". The panel spoke about programs to approach and support children who survived the Holocaust, and how these approaches contributed to help other children today, as for example the children abducted to serve in the army in Sierra Leone, or the children after the genocide in Rwanda.

Ms. Hawa Diallo, Chief of the Civil Society Unit in the Department of Global Communications of the United States, in her opening remarks said with reference to the Holocaust "the Injustice done to millions will be never forgotten". She then mentioned that after the Holocaust, the world focused in achieving equality, justice and dignity for all. Children were especially vulnerable to the atrocity of the Nazis. One and half million children died in the Holocaust, many were tortured, witnessed death and destruction. Children carried scars that took many years to heal, or might not have healed at all. Many faced the fact that they were alone, nobody else had survived. She also mentioned Mr. Antonio Guterrez, Executive Director of the United Nations, when he said: "This year has to be a year of healing of the pandemic, and healing from a broken society in which hatred has taken roots".

The first speaker was **Dr. Beth Cohen**, who recently wrote the book "Child Survivors of the Holocaust: The youngest reminiscent and the American Experience", which investigates the complex and particular identity of this group in the United States.

As soon as the war was over, the principal organization of the Jewish world sent people to Europe to evaluate the situation and look for the children who needed immediate attention. Those who were hidden with non-Jewish families, or in convents or even hiding in the forest or elsewhere. They created homes for the children to stay during a transition period before they were taken elsewhere. It was monitored by EJCA (European Jewish Children Agency).

Arriving to the United States was not easy, new language, new culture, new foster homes, some were reunited with relatives a few years later. They were depressed and not really encouraged to speak about their past. In fact, sometimes they were told to forget or to

stop fabricating stories. For almost all of them education was very important. Either because they had heard about the importance of education at home or because they wanted to honor their parents. She referred to a special program, a summer camp organized by the local affiliate of EJCA in Boston and in Maine to help these children face their future.

The next speaker was **Dr. Theresa Betancourt**, Director of the Research Program on Children and Adversity, Boston College of Social Studies. She has done intense research with children after the war in Chechnya, developing high quality and effective policies programs, many of them based in the experience with children from the Holocaust.

She has been working with the child soldier in Sierra Leone, and more recently with the children in Rwanda. She mentioned that in 2019 there were 79 million forcibly displaced persons, 47 million internally displaced persons, 26 million refugees, and about 40% are under 18 years old. According to UNICEF the number of children living in conflict area rose to 75% in the last decade.

The average age of abduction of the child soldiers was a little over 10 years, and the average length of time in the war was about 4 years. They suffered of depression and anxiety, and post conflict factors stigma for poor schooling or education. They used programs formulated for the Jewish children in the aftermath of the Holocaust, and had very good results, the children were willing to move on. In post-genocide Rwanda they used intergeneration programs to promote early childhood development.

The last speaker was **Ms Divina Maloum**, a young activist, founder of the Children for Peace, a girls movement working in Cameroon and other African countries. She received the 2019 International Children for Peace Award.

She referred again to the practice of child soldier, a worldwide phenomenon more widely expanded in Africa and in her own country, Cameroon. where many children were abducted by groups like Select, Anti Balaka and Boca Haram. There are about 300.000 child soldiers in the world, and Africa has the greatest number.

One of the reasons of using child soldiers is that they are viewed as expendable and replaceable and they are cheap to maintain. Children are usually more vulnerable psychologically. They lack a sense of fear, and therefore accept more risk tasks.

To address the horrible situation faced by children she founded Children for Peace, a grassroots teenager-led movement. whose strategy is to engage making documentaries on peace building; they create and distribute Children Peace Cartoons, create awareness campaigns, and do studies on the ground. She then described the two projects they are working on now: Silence the Guns, and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Technology for the ex-child soldier, with the involvement of religious, traditional and government authorities.

“The Windermere Children” Screening
Organized by United Nations Department of Global Affairs
Outreach Program on the Holocaust
February 11, 2021

Reported by Fran Butensky, ICJW Representative to the UN, NY
In attendance: Judy Mintz

This moving program is the last of the scheduled events on the United Nation’s Holocaust calendar. It was divided into two parts: a viewing of the film “The Windermere Children” and a panel discussion by the filmmakers and one of the survivors.

Moderator, Maher Nassar, Director of Outreach Division in the UN Department of Global Affairs began by explaining that in August of 1945, 300 Jewish orphans recently liberated from Nazi concentration camps were brought to the English Lake District to recuperate from their ordeal. The philanthropist Leonard Montifiore had persuaded the British government to take them in and also helped fund the project. They were mostly teenage boys. Most of them had lost their families and their childhood. It was important to find a way to help them live through their extreme anxieties.

Panelists:

MR. Michael Samuels, Director told us that the film deals with the four month that the young survivors spent recuperating at Camp Windermere and how they dealt with the affects of the concentration camps, losing their parents and a level of trauma never seen before. As director, one aim was to get inside their heads but still make the film uplifting because they do have a future and they do have hope. An added benefit is that the film resonates with what is happening all over the world today.

One challenge occurred when the kids first arrive and had to take off their clothes and be disinfected. They would naturally relate this to their experiences at “the camps”.

Before this film and all the research involved, very little was known about the Windermere Children; the Kinder Transport, yes, but not Windermere.

Ms.Nancy Bornat, Producer got involved in the film when she started to collect information and met with the Windermere survivors. They held frank, open conversations and she heard everything about their experiences. Some were in their late 80’s and 90’s and had found each other and a “new family” One of the survivors had written a wonderful memoir and they met with her. The meetings were powerful, a story of hope, compassion and survival.

Ms. Joanna Millan, Survivor and author of the memoir, began by stating that her memories of Camp Windermere are very sketchy because she was only 3 years old when she arrived but she remembers that everyone was very scared when they arrived and upset about being split up. They had all been together at the camps and afterwards. She was only there 2 months and then moved to a more suitable facility for younger children. She was adopted at age 5 1/2 by Jewish parents and told that her parents were killed. She was also instructed to never talk about any of it. It was very difficult not to be allowed to be in contact with other survivors and to be in hiding. She needed to share what happened. It was very lonely. Later in life, she researched her roots, found family photos of her parents and many relatives. She also found living relatives with whom she has been in contact. She has been in touch with many Windermere survivors.

Mr. Trevor Avery, Historian and Director, Lake District Holocaust Project has been doing work about the Windermere Children for 16 years. In 2005, he came across some facts about Windermere but not as much as he needed and went in search of more information. He walked the area and met locals who remembered the camp. He met with survivors and learned all about them. They became very close with him. He said "They came from Hell to Paradise". He was very moved. He met and worked alongside the film's producer, Nancy Bornat and director, Michael Samuels and played an important role in the making of the film.

The film, *The Windermere Children* is a biographical drama and tells the little known story of the 300 Jewish refugee children who began new lives in England's Lake District. It is based on all the accounts of the survivors exactly as they described them, thereby assuring its accuracy and the authenticity of the pioneering project to rehabilitate them. After the end of the four-month stay, every child was assured a place to go.

Many of the camp survivors' offspring were watching this program and expressed their gratitude. They learned, they cried, they were filled with emotion.

One cannot watch this film and not be touched to the core. It is beautiful, sad, important and powerful. You will fall in love with the children, cheer their progress and meet some of them as adults living happy, productive lives. Scattered all over the world, a group of them still meet on a regular basis and all of them stay in touch.

This film was commissioned by the BBC and ZDF Germany.