

# NEWSLETTER

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Welcome to the ICJW Newsletter for 2021. It is a bit late arriving, but COVID has altered all of our timelines.

We chose Antisemitism as our theme for this newsletter because it is a problem for every country with a Jewish population. We clearly need to educate young

people about this longstanding hatred, as education is the key to understanding and hopefully resolution.

We present fascinating articles describing various aspects of antisemitism, including at the United Nations and online. I hope you will be inspired to read our wonderful interview with Evelyn Askolovitch (or Ascot), a long-standing member of the ICJW Executive and a survivor of the Shoah. She has been recognized by the French government for her energetic work in Holocaust education – an important aspect of fighting antisemitism.

It struck me when reading these articles that there are some clear similarities between COVID and antisemitism. Both are spreading in every country of the world, and both are proving difficult to completely eradicate. Every time you think you are winning the battle, a new variant appears which requires a different treatment!

Perhaps the articles in this newsletter will inspire you to get involved in the battle against antisemitism in some way.

I really hope that we will be able to meet in person in May for our Convention, but only time and COVID will tell!

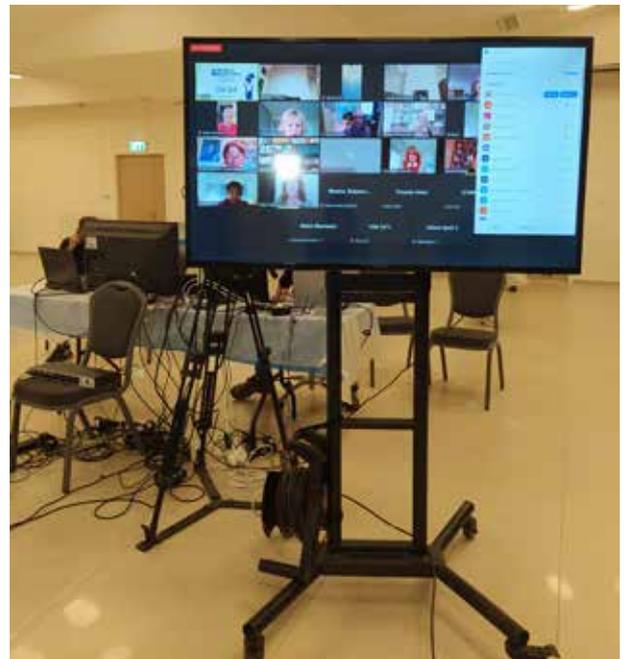
Keep well and stay positive.

Best wishes,

**Penelope Conway**  
 President, ICJW

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*Behind the scenes at the ICJW Herczeg Jerusalem Education Seminar – read about our exciting virtual seminar on pages 14-15*

# Antisemitism and the UN: Yesterday and Today

by Mary Liling

I have represented ICJW at the UN in Geneva, in 1979 and 1980 with Leila Seigel, and with Léonie de Piciotto since 2008. During the hundreds of hours that I attended the three yearly sessions of the Human Rights Council (plenaries and side events) and many NGO Geneva Committees (one being Freedom of Religion or Belief), I have witnessed significant fluctuations in the attitude towards Jews and Israel, Zionism and antisemitism within the UN. Over this time there have been considerable changes on the geopolitical level and within member states.

It is important to clarify the difference between anti-Israeli bias, outright criticism of Israeli government policies, and positions that are anti-Jewish in nature and clearly antisemitic. For example, several UNESCO resolutions and the December 2021 UN General Assembly Resolution 129-11 all disavowed Jewish historical ties with the Temple Mount, calling it solely Al-Haram al-Sharif.

## Looking Back

- November 29, 1947: The adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (the Partition Plan) which foreshadowed the establishment of the State of Israel and Israel's recognition by the UN as a full legitimate member in May 11, 1949.
- November 22, 1967: UN Security Council Resolution 242 was adopted unanimously in the aftermath of the Six-Day War "in an effort to secure a just and lasting peace", with the hope that it would lead to a solution of the conflict. If one reads the resolution carefully, it affirms "a just settlement of the refugee problem" but it does NOT mention Palestinian refugees. Arthur Goldberg, US Ambassador to the UN at the time, also had in mind the Jews who had fled from the Arab countries.
- November 10, 1975: Adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 equating Zionism with Racism, later revoked in December 1991. This period is considered the lowest point in Israel-UN relations. In the name of anti-racism, this obscene antisemitic resolution gave a green light to fighting Zionism. In his historic speech, Israeli Ambassador Chaim Herzog (later to become President of Israel) tore up the written resolution.



*Efti Simha and Mary Liling at the Geneva Rally.*

During this period and ever since, the poison of antisemitism has spread inside and outside the UN. This was the first time in UN history that the UN was forced to repeal a resolution, for credibility's sake but also as a condition set by Israel for its participation in the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991.

## Firsthand Observations

Between 1974 and 1991, ICJW and other Jewish NGOs did not attend any meetings on racism at the UN. After Israel and Egypt signed a Peace Treaty in March 1979, at plenaries of the Commission on Human Rights, (since 2006 the Human Rights Council), I witnessed how all the Arab countries walked out each time Egypt took the floor.

After repealing Resolution 3379, the UN was able to publish its first ever Report on Antisemitism in August 1994. Among all the contributions from Jewish NGOs and Israeli universities, the Special Rapporteur chose to quote from ICJW's 5-page report on the topic.

# Antisemitism and the UN: Yesterday and Today



*Rally for Equal Rights in front of the UN Palais des Nations in Geneva in March 2019.*

## Firsthand Observations contd.

In 2008, I was surprised to see positive developments: Israel being called by its name, instead of the “Zionist entity”, Arab delegates calling for a “two-state solution”, and East Jerusalem being claimed as the capital of Palestine instead of “Jerusalem, the eternal capital of the Palestinian people”.

Year after year, ICJW’s representatives have reported on the harsh and sometimes absurd anti-Israel resolutions adopted at the Human Rights Council. Repeatedly we’ve emphasized that Item 7 (“Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab Territories”) is a permanent agenda item and the ONLY “stand alone” country item that singles out Israel.

To quote Abba Eban “Every anti-Israel resolution enjoys an automatic majority”. This was true in the past with automatic votes from the Communist Bloc, and today’s 57 country votes from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. It is still a no-win situation.

## Positive Trends

In recent years we have seen several positive trends. For example, the 2019 Report on Antisemitism by Ahmed Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur of Freedom of Religion or Belief, who regularly consults our Geneva NGO FORB Committee. In his historic report, he urges states to adopt a human rights approach to combatting antisemitism, which he describes as “the canary in the coal mine” of global hatred.

Since 2022, the United States is back on the Human Rights Council. More countries are abstaining and some are voting against anti-Israel resolutions, although they are still passed by a majority. The Abraham Accords led to an unprecedented resolution at the HRC session in September 2021 on “The Role of Women in Peace and Security”, presented jointly by Israel, Bahrain, the UAE and Morocco.

This article was written with the hope that the UN will live up to its own high standards in the future in its treatment of Israel.

*Mary Liling is a Life Member of ICJW and represents us at the United Nations in Geneva, and formerly at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg from 2000 - 2017.*

# Antisemitism at the UN: Fighting back from Inside and Outside

by Dr. Joan Lurie

The United Nations is obsessed with Israel and has been since the Partition vote in 1947, when the Arab states refused the Partition and attacked the infant state. Since then, all attempts to find a peaceful solution have been rejected, with the UN's support for the Palestinians increasing as its condemnation of Israel and the Jews has become more vehement.

I have been at the UN representing ICJW since 2007, and I have seen how the obsession with Israel has grown more negative and more intense, while the scope and scale of the UN organizations dedicated solely to Palestinian causes have grown exponentially during this period.

## Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism

UN Secretary General António Guterres has characterized attempts to delegitimize the right of Israel to exist as a manifestation of antisemitism. Constructive criticism of Israel's government is clearly not antisemitism. However, declarations by Palestinians of their "right of return" to all the land "from the river to the sea", and threats to drive the Jewish population into the sea, are very definitely antisemitism. The constant vilification of Israel and the Jewish people at the UN creates a pervasive background of endemic antisemitism, against which attacks on Israel and Jews are made with impunity. Here are some examples:

- Iran declares almost daily that it will obliterate the State of Israel, and no one seems to object. If antisemitism were not so pervasive, perhaps prominent people and news outlets would condemn a UN member state for constantly preaching the destruction of another member. Today, vilification of Israel is so "acceptable" that Iran gets a pass.
- The latest example of disproportionate focus on Israel is the unprecedented "open-ended Commission of Inquiry into systematic abuses in Israel and the Palestinian territories". This has been described as the most hostile anti-Israel "inquiry" in UN history, headed by the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, known for her direct involvement in the infamous Goldstone Report. This inquiry targets only Israel.



- The UN celebrates November 29 as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and has built an enormous apparatus in support of the Palestinians. UNRWA is the largest single UN agency with 28,000 employees. They play a prominent role in the Palestinian apparatus and prevent peace by vilifying everything Israeli and Jewish in their schools and summer camps. They deprive Palestinian children of the education which would enable them to get good jobs and become useful citizens of a modern state. Other examples include the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and the Division of Palestinian Rights.

- Since 2006, the Human Rights Council has condemned Israel more times than the rest of the world combined. Israel is the only country which has its own agenda item at the HRC. The world's most egregious human rights violators are given a pass; many are even members of the Council.
- There are annual resolutions against Israel in the General Assembly. In 2021, 14 General Assembly resolutions singled out Israel while only five were directed at the rest of the world. These resolutions passed with overwhelming majorities. Hillel Neuer of UN Watch says: "The UN's assault on Israel with a torrent of one-sided resolutions is surreal. Make no mistake: the purpose of the lopsided condemnations is to demonize the Jewish state." Not only are these resolutions absurd, but the UN neglects to mention real atrocities such as Syria's murder of its own citizens or the violence perpetrated by Hamas.

## Is Anyone Fighting Back?

We are happy to report that there are people and organizations both inside and outside the UN working to expose and challenge this blatant and widespread antisemitism.

- UN Watch is a powerful voice fighting back, including leading the fight against the UN's new anti-Israel Commission of Inquiry at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. The Commission has invited submissions relevant to its mandate and we need to ensure alternative voices reach



*Representatives of Jewish NGOs at the UN in New York protest against UNRWA in November 2021  
(l to r): Lilian Bosboom, Judy Mintz, Sandy Koppel and friend, Renee Albert, Gloria Neimark and Joan Lurie.*

the court of public opinion. This is a rare opportunity for all those committed to combating modern antisemitism to get involved – please contact me for details.

- The American Jewish International Relations Institute (AJIRI)’s mission is to change votes against Israel at the UN, where many like-minded countries support absurd, lopsided votes against Israel despite being otherwise supportive of the Jewish State.
- ICJW’s “UNRWA: Stop Teaching Hate” campaign, together with David Bedein of “Israel Behind the News” and other campaigners, has repeatedly called out the damage being done by UNRWA’s schools and summer camps.
- Occasionally a very rare UN official has the courage to speak out. Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, Special Rapporteur on Religion and Belief, stated in his 2019 report that the UN must counter the antisemitism which is “toxic to democracy”.

- In 2005, January 27 was established as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The UN Holocaust Outreach Program distributes information in many languages, actively refuting Holocaust denial, a pernicious form of antisemitism.

Those of us who represent Jewish organizations at the UN work hard to make people aware of their appalling treatment of Israel, because if it is not exposed it will not stop. Our most important mission, especially in the light of rising antisemitism everywhere, is to raise awareness of what is happening at the UN, and to campaign for governments around the world to challenge it whenever they can.

*Dr. Joan Lurie (drjoan@gmail.com) is one of a team of women who represent ICJW at the United Nations in New York City. She also leads the “UNRWA: Stop Teaching Hate” campaign together with representatives of other Jewish NGOs.*

# It Started in Durban

by Bev Goldman

Many people see the September 2001 UN World Conference against Racism in Durban as the starting point of the explosion of antisemitism in South Africa and around the world - the spark that ignited the BDS movement.

Michael Kransdorff, a young South African student activist who was present at the Conference, shared some of his recollections with me. They left me wondering how this could have happened at a major anti-racism conference, held under the auspices of the most powerful human rights organisation in the world, and hosted by a country supposed to be the paragon of non-racism?

## The New Rainbow Nation

After decades of dwindling numbers, economic and cultural isolation, and alienation under apartheid, the new South Africa in 2001 offered hope of revival. Jews were making beneficial contributions to building the “Rainbow Nation”. After an official visit to Israel, former President Nelson Mandela had publicly defended the Jewish state’s right to live within secure borders.

## A Festival of Hate

Michael told me how he and his fellow university students arrived in Durban to a well organised and funded “festival of hate” targeting Jews and the Jewish state. “Thousands of



people from around the world were wearing t-shirts branding Israel as “the last bastion of apartheid”. Leaflets unashamedly declared that the world would be a better place if Hitler had won the war and solved the Jewish question. The notorious antisemitic forgery, the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion”, was openly on sale, and posters showing hook-nosed Jews controlling the world stared down on us. Jewish delegates were harassed and even the official conference panel on antisemitism was disrupted by anti-Jewish protestors, who claimed we were the real antisemites and shouldn’t be given a forum to express our ‘racist’ views.”



“Faced with this avalanche of hate, we, the Jewish student delegation, decided to fight back. We thought that, with most of the world’s media present, this could be an opportunity to debunk the big lie that the conference sought to perpetuate about Jews, and to expose the true face of our detractors. We printed and distributed thousands of t-shirts with a prominent blue Magen David calling on people to “Fight Racism not Jews!”, and we created pamphlets and posters.

“The climax of our campaign was a peace rally where, in a gesture of reconciliation, we even attempted to hand out flowers to our opponents. Again, we were met with the most vile antisemitic abuse, in full view of the press. Images of a handful of Jewish students, singing peace songs, being attacked by a large angry keffiyeh-wearing mob at an anti-racism conference, were broadcast on every major TV news channel and appeared in hundreds of newspapers around the globe.”



## The Aftermath of Durban

The hatred expressed at Durban was the harbinger of what was to come. Anti-Israel campaigners started using international forums like Durban to promote their Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign. Locally, the “new” South Africa became an increasingly hostile political environment for Zionism.’

The high-profile NGO Forum held in Durban alongside the UN Conference is considered the birthplace of the “Israel apartheid” campaign. It also spawned the BDS movement, which today holds sway on campuses and in civil society around the world. According to Dan Diker from the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs: “The Forum provided the seed and the poisonous root of what would become the BDS movement, an overtly antisemitic movement.”

In September 2001, the UN adopted what they call “the international community’s blueprint for action to fight racism”, known as the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. In 2011 and 2021, the United States and many other countries refused to participate in anniversary events to celebrate the Durban Conference and the Durban Declaration, because it unfairly and unacceptably singled out Israel.

## 20 Years After Durban

Michael acknowledges that not all the fallout from Durban has been negative. “For the Jewish world, it spurred widespread Jewish activism in support of Israel, and investment in educating a new generation of leaders to publicly promote Jewish interests in a more hostile world. Moreover, it necessitated the building of new alliances and reengagement with neglected friends.”

Israel today has established very strong relations with emerging powers like India. She was recently granted Observer status at the African Union, despite efforts by the



South African government to condemn Israel as “the worst proponent of apartheid in the world”.

Israel’s enemies at the Durban Conference tried everything they could to demonise, isolate and ultimately eradicate the Jewish State. Now, 20 years later, Israel is stronger than ever. She thrives as the only democratic state in the Middle East; she boasts an enviably strong currency; she has made exceptionally innovative technological advances in medicine, agriculture, cyber-security, environment and water management; and she shares her expertise with innumerable countries and communities around the world.

South Africa stands almost alone on the African continent, harbouring an implacable hatred of Israel and condemning it unceasingly as an apartheid state. Regardless of the relationships Israel has built with many other African countries, the government continues to display hostility and opposition, refusing to use Israeli technology to improve the lives of its own citizens. However, in the immortal words of Martin Luther King: “We shall overcome!”

*Bev Goldman is National President of the Union of Jewish Women South Africa and one of the editors of the ICJW Newsletter.*

*(Photos from 2001 Durban Conference courtesy of Michael Kransdorff)*

# Contemporary Antisemitism and Ways to Counter It

by Julie Nathan

Around the world, we see Jews increasingly under attack - synagogues vandalised, Jewish students ostracised, Jews beaten up in the streets or murdered in their homes, calls for Israel to be destroyed. It has become so pervasive and overwhelming.

What can we do, where to begin? It is good to have a panoramic view of what is occurring across the world. However, to counter antisemitism, we need to break it up into its various components, and develop specific strategies with which to tackle each component.

Every person who so desires can play their role. Everyone has areas of interest, skills and knowledge they can utilise in this campaign. People just need to find where they are best suited and then use their own abilities and skills in that area.

Firstly, let's look at the three main components of the antisemitism machine.

## Sources: The Engine

Today's antisemitism derives from four main sources, each ideologically driven: extremist elements within the political right and political left, and amongst Muslims and Christians. Each of these four sources is composed of various strands of belief, activity and influence.

Left-wing antisemitism tends to dress itself in a cloak of social justice, under an anti-racism mantra; whereas right-wing antisemitism tends to lay itself bare, without any cloak to hide its inherent racism. Within both the Muslim and Christian worlds there are individuals and organisations seeking to harm Jews and/or Israel, often from a supersessionist and supremacist base. For them, at the very least, Jews must be 'put back in their place'.



## Methods Used: The Wheels

The delivery methods used to express antisemitism can be quite diverse, but are roughly divided between discourse and incidents, i.e. what is said and what is done.

Discourse covers bias and misinformation in mainstream society, and vilification and incitement on the extreme margins of society. It is found in politics, the media, universities, social clubs and elsewhere. It proliferates on

the internet and social media - communication channels used by governments and corporations, media and academics, groups and individuals. With the tap of fingers on a keyboard, hate is spread instantaneously across the globe.



Much more serious are antisemitic incidents - Jews being verbally abused and physically assaulted, vandalism of Jewish community property, and threats of mass murder. To thwart physical attacks, Jewish organisations in many countries have security measures in place around Jewish sites, without which there would be many more casualties.

Attacks against Jews do not come out of nowhere. They are built upon foundations of hate, often centuries in the making, and inspired by antisemitic discourse; from libels and teachings of contempt, creating an atmosphere that poisons how Jews are perceived, through

to overt propaganda that demonises Jews. This leads to attacks on Jews, ranging from verbal abuse on the streets to mass shootings. The methods used to attack Jews, whether through discourse or incidents, are as much a legal and police issue as a political or social issue.

## Power Structures: The Fuel

In any given society, the power structures and those with influence have the ability to increase or decrease the levels and intensity of antisemitism. There are also international power structures such as the United Nations, the European Union, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, that act as a major source of anti-Zionism, by targeting Israel for unfair and discriminatory treatment, with a hugely unbalanced focus on the Jewish state. In addition, dozens of NGOs such as the BDS movement, operate internationally; their anti-Zionism intensifies the demonisation of Jews.

It is these institutions, through the authority they hold, that draw the line between what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour towards the Jewish people and the Jewish state.

## How Can We Counter Antisemitism?

The following are some ideas for where you may like to focus your attention:

- Joining a political party or engaging in interfaith dialogue and working from within.
- Monitoring social media, to report the haters and to campaign for more accountability from platform providers.
- Holding mainstream media to standards of honesty, accuracy and balanced reporting.
- Campaigning for law reform to outlaw vilification and incitement to violence.
- Ensuring that universities are places of robust learning but not discrimination against Jewish students.

If we each choose one particular area and focus on countering antisemitism there, then it all contributes to the campaign.

<b>WE STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE JEWISH PEOPLE</b>	<b>WE STAND AGAINST HATE AND ANTISEMITISM</b>	<b>STAND UP TO HATE AND ANTISEMITISM</b>	<b>WE ARE NOT AFRAID!</b>
<b>THE JEWISH PEOPLE WILL NOT BE BULLIED BY ANTISEMITES</b>	<b>I STAND AGAINST HATE AND ANTISEMITISM</b>	<b>FIGHT ANTI-JEWISH RACISM</b>	<b>STOP SUPPORTING EXTREMISM START SUPPORTING PEACE</b>
<b>ANTISEMITISM IS RACISM</b>	<b>ANTI-ZIONISM IS RACISM</b>	<b>LEFT &amp; RIGHT UNITE AGAINST ANTISEMITES</b>	<b>ANTISEMITISM PROMOTES WHITE SUPREMACY</b>
<b>YOU CAN'T FIGHT WHITE SUPREMACY WITHOUT FIGHTING ANTISEMITISM</b>	<b>HATING ISRAEL = HATING MILLIONS OF JEWS</b>	<b>STOP USING JEWISH PAIN FOR PARTISAN POLITICS</b>	<b>STOP USING JEWISH PAIN TO PROMOTE ANTI-ISRAEL HATE</b>

Wherever you are, in your country and in your life, and whatever your particular interests and expertise (eg. law, media, social media, your local environmental or women's group), choose where you are most suited and feel most comfortable, and work from there. Seek comrades and allies, and do what you can, whenever you can.

We are not alone. We are not incapable. There are many people who provide excellent role models in countering antisemitism. There is plenty of scope to find where one can contribute to countering antisemitism, and defending Jews against hatred. In summary – get involved, educate others, demand accountability, expose hate, report incidents, and let's fight this plague together!

*Julie Nathan is the Chair of the Antisemitism and Racism Committee of the International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW). She is the Research Director at the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) and author of the annual ECAJ Report on Antisemitism in Australia.*

*(Images courtesy of StandWithUs.com)*

# The Digitization of Antisemitism

by Lilian Bosboom

There has been an alarming increase in online antisemitic incidents across the globe as social media posts cross international borders. It is a sad fact that most governments do not regulate them.

Several social media companies have been unable to take effective action against antisemitic posts or to fully address this threatening trend. As a result, hate speech and incitement have been spreading across the internet. A new report from the Center to Counter Digital Hate (CCDH) found that Facebook and Twitter took no action to remove 84% of antisemitic posts.

The “digitization of antisemitism” is an expression first revealed in the 2020 report “The State of Antisemitism in America” by the American Jewish Committee (AJC).



focused on educating non-Jews about the war. We visited almost two dozen colleges and non-Jewish religious institutions around Brazil to spread our message and announced every event on social media.

In the constantly evolving digital world, exploiters of hate are making use of the newest communications technologies to threaten Jews and others. Technology has become a misinformation tool to incite violence with an army of “bots” and unending fake news.

The use of algorithms by social media giants delivers these stories to like-minded groups, feeding them even more of the same disinformation. Even if we had an army of activists, it would not be enough to fight this wave of digital antisemitism.

The AJC tells us that online antisemitism is not only a threat to Jews, but also a threat to the very fabric of democratic societies. The impact of the hate that Jews are experiencing online mirrors our experience with more traditional forms of antisemitism. In a recent survey, the AJC found that 24% of those who are active on social media avoid posting content that may identify them as Jewish.

Holly Huffnagle, AJC’s Director for Combating Online Antisemitism says: “Major tech companies’ business models rely on increased engagement and, as we know, lies, fear, and anger generate the most engagement. After all, lies spread six times faster than truth.”

Two years ago, she told the Inter-parliamentary Task Force on Online Antisemitism: “We all need to send the message that antisemitism in any form is unacceptable on or offline.” To help change this factual reality she suggests the following:

- Follow a universal standard of what antisemitism is. Platforms should map the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism onto their policies.
- Demand transparency. Tech platforms should be transparent in the drafting of policies, algorithms, and



My personal involvement goes back to 2014, during the ‘Protective Edge’ Israel-Gaza war, when the media disproportionately held Israel solely responsible for the war without telling the full story. As president of Liga Brazil, I became very involved posting on Facebook and also created a blog entitled “Time 4 Peace”. A young graduate in Diplomacy and Government Studies from IDC Herzliya, who today is the Executive Director of “Stand with Us” in Brazil, came to my rescue. This was when I learned about his work in Hasbara (explaining in Hebrew). Based on his knowledge from serving in the IDF, he created a communication strategy



moderation systems and abide by a set of core principles that will earn public trust.

- Establish an interparliamentary system to gather and share new data quickly. The task force should convene an international group of data scientists, tech experts and scholars who can research and assess various platforms' algorithms.
- Focus on non-mainstream platforms. Today antisemitic radicalization is more prevalent on fringe platforms.

As New York Attorney-General Letitia James said: "Freedom of speech must never be confused with freedom to incite violence and hatred."

The ICJW opened its Facebook page and Twitter account in February 2018. As an international NGO, we can mobilize our 33 affiliates to create a task force to address hate and intolerance on the internet. Platforms might change but social media is here to stay. We can't shy away from it. ICJW

needs to act globally and locally through education, advocacy and orchestrate both short-term and long-term responses to antisemitic incidents.

**Here are some ideas:**

- Creating a Social Media Task Force to serve as volunteers for protecting all minority groups from online hate.
- Raising awareness about antisemitism by investing in a paid campaign on social media platforms.
- Being inclusive, advocating for other minorities affected by hate speech and joining forces with other groups that fight racial discrimination.
- Writing frequently to our parliaments and legislatures, lobbying them to hold social media platforms, including Twitter, TikTok, Facebook, and Google, to account.



ICJW's presence on social media is relatively modest and new, but on-line activism is real and has the potential to be constructive and educational. Every affiliate can easily contribute by sharing ICJW content on antisemitism. We can respond more quickly to many crises because representation in 33 different countries is a powerful tool. By engaging our members, we can promote global initiatives and encourage other young women to become online activists. We have many women working independently but ICJW is a global network that can coordinate a joint strategy and take a bolder stance against digital antisemitism. We can achieve more together!

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*Lilian Bosboom from ICJW Liga Brazil is ICJW Chair of Communication and PR.*



# Bearing Witness

*An interview with Evelyn Askolovitch by her friend Léonie de Picciotto.*

**M**y dear friend Evelyn, we have known each other practically forever! Your parents, like mine, young German Jews, had fled Nazi Germany in the mid-1930s and were living in Amsterdam, where we were both born. This was supposedly a safe haven, a neutral country. However, Nazi Germany violated Holland's neutrality in May 1940 and submitted the country to a brutal Occupation.

In the spring of 1943, in the wake of mass arrests of Jewish citizens, we were taken forcefully out of our homes, to be assembled in the Hollandse Schouwburg Theater prior to deportation. With my parents' consent, I was smuggled out of the crèche by the Dutch resistance (an existing crèche, across the street from the Theater, where the Germans "parked" all small children before deportation). I was hidden in the countryside with a caring Dutch family up to May 1945, Holland's liberation. While Evelyn and her parents, like my family, were deported, first to the sinister Camps in Holland, Vught and Westerbork, and from there to Germany, to the Concentration Camp Bergen-Belsen. Our parents had much suffering in common, in various degrees, but luckily survived the ordeal, with you, Evelyn, who just barely made it.

This short introduction highlights Evelyn's commitment to tell her story in front of different audiences, but mainly in schools all over France, testifying to the terrifying history of the Second World War, the horrors of the Camps, the willful, organized Crimes against Humanity, the extermination of European Jewry: 6 million men, women, children and babies.

Evelyn, when you stand in front of a school class of teenagers, what is your main message? Illustrating that "Those who ignore history, are doomed to live it again"?

"I explain to the youngsters that, within a few war years, millions were being murdered, and no one cared... no government intervened! Though realizing fully what was happening to the deported Jewish citizens, the Allies - Canadians, Australians, Americans, the British, the French and others - were focused on ending the war militarily, and to "deal afterwards" with the "Jewish problem". As we all know, "afterwards" was too late. Continental Europe was under powerful Nazi Occupation, and its governments, with very few exceptions, not only obeyed orders but collaborated in deporting their Jewish citizens to the Death Camps.

"I always insist on the fact that my country, Holland, has the worst record of all Western European countries. Between 1942 and 1945, 75% (102,000 men, women and children) of the 140,000 members of the Jewish community, perished in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Sobibor and Treblinka."



Your personal story, souvenirs, the very bad and the unusual ones?

"I tell my personal story, the story of a little girl, 4½ years old, who barely survived the horrors of the war - two years in three different Concentration Camps - for the sole reason that we were Jews! The story of my family, brutally hauled out of our home, and immediately separated for two weeks, me in a creche, my parents in the Schouwburg, before being pushed into a cattle wagon to end up in the first Dutch Concentration Camp, Vught, in the south of Holland. There, for three long months, I was in the children's barracks, separated from my mother and father. All I can remember from these months is illnesses and hunger and such an utmost misery, which I combatted certainly by a will to live - a physician had told my mother that I would not survive the next week - by shutting the door of my mind, my memory.

"I have no recollection of the second Dutch Deportation Camp, Westerbork. However, I do remember the third camp, a Concentration Camp in the north of Germany, Bergen-Belsen. I remember the fear of loneliness, my parents were working during the day, but at night I slept next to my mother on the "ground floor" of 3-story beds. I remember the bombing of the Camp by the Americans - a mistake apparently - and my fear that my parents might have been killed. I remember my 6th birthday with three presents, a piece of bread surrounded by oatmeal and "decorated" with a '6' in oatmeal, and a little

wooden bed and a wooden doll made by a man in the Camp.

“I was living in fear that my father would die, he was suffering from the beatings he had undergone. While we were on a list of persons with Latin American passports, scheduled to leave the camp on 21 January 1945, we had to attend the last Appel to prove we were alive and well. My father unable to get up for the Appel, I remember my mother screaming at him. Luckily for all of us, she managed to get him out of his bed and the next day we left the camp on a Red Cross train!! On our way to freedom!

“I remember the arrival at a station near the Swiss border and my father falling in the snow, which haunted me until his death in 1982. I remember going to a class in the Displaced Persons’ Camp under the auspices of the UNWRA, the British and Germans, learning to write, read, calculate; slowly returning to childhood.”

*How did you cope with the trauma?*

“We, the children in Concentration Camps, in a cloud of misery during the Deportation, somehow bounced back: playing again, studying, singing, shouting at the Germans when they left the Camp at the end of the war.

“I think perhaps it is in my genes, that I had the will and wish to live, to be happy, to see the sunny side of the street, to hope for a better world. Having experienced in my childhood real horrors, gives me the strength to see unfolding events in their true perspective. As the saying goes “What does not kill you makes you stronger!” or, better said, it creates a sort of resilience that pervades our lives. Comparing the COVID of today to war-time amounts to ignorance of what war truly is about.”

*The “Never Again” as the leitmotiv of your commitment to tell your story, your advocacy? Combatting fake news and negationists?*

“It is not only the “Never Again” that is my aim when I speak to the new generations. When my generation will no longer be around, the historians will take over. That is why, as long as I can, I want to transmit my personal experience, to bear witness for all those who perished. Obviously the “never again” is underlying this effort; in all honesty and humility, I want Humanity to learn from its history, as told by an eye-witness, a Survivor.”

*In light of the above, just like antisemitism, all forms of hate, exclusion and discrimination need to be eradicated; how do you differentiate between the past and the present?!*

“You ask me a question which is central to my discourse. I always insist that today we are witnessing again terrible wars,

awful persecutions. However, I refuse to compare anything of what is happening in the world today to the Shoah, for one simple and unique reason: The Shoah was decided in cold blood, in two hours, at the Wannsee Conference, on the outskirts of Berlin, in January 1942, by Hitler and Heydrich and their thugs. It was called the “Final Solution to the Jewish Problem”! No Jews were to survive in Europe and for that purpose all available means should be used: military, chemical, financial and economical, so that all of European Jewry would be wiped out, and Europe would be “Judenrein” - purified of its Jews. It is this aspect, this unprecedented historical fact, that makes the Shoah a stand-alone phenomenon.”

*You were honored twice by the French authorities: You received the Palmes Académiques on 2 September 2017, and you were awarded the Ordre National de la Légion d’Honneur on 2 July 2021. Please tell us about those events.*

“I have indeed been honored by the French Republic, first in 2017, when I received the highest grade of the Palmes Académiques because of my commitment to tell my story in schools. The Legion d’Honneur, extended to me on 1 January 2021, I actually received it at a ceremony in July, from Dr. Boris Cyrulnik, a neuro-psychiatrist whose research has contributed tremendously to the understanding of how children develop resilience to cope with trauma. He is also a Survivor, a hidden child whose parents were deported and never came back! I was touched and honored!

“This recognition from the French Republic was a revenge. I was not supposed to live, I was supposed to have died in Vught during the Kindertransport, or in Bergen-Belsen, and here I was, surrounded by my wonderful family, my son and daughter, seven grandchildren and one great grandson, and you Léonie, being officially and publicly honored, with the distinction of Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur!

“I continue going to schools, taking part in a number of projects, such as this interview for ICJW’s newsletter! I want to thank you, Léonie, for your well-formulated questions, and Lilian Bosboom, for taking the initiative to include my story in this newsletter on Antisemitism!”

*(Photos courtesy of Evelyn and Léonie)*



# The Virtual Herczeg Jerusalem Seminar, November 2021

*by Gila Oshrat, Chair of the Seminar*

The ICJW Rosita and Esteban de Herczeg Jerusalem Seminar for Jewish Education takes place every four years in Israel and has always been an exciting learning experience for all. It is an opportunity to create dialogue and discussion on issues related to gender equality, to strengthen Jewish identity, to provide a toolbox for Jewish leaders in ICJW affiliates, and to strengthen the connections and partnerships between their communities.

The Herczeg Seminar held in November 2021 was different from all previous seminars because it was held in digital format and broadcast via Zoom and YouTube to 35 countries.

The theme of the seminar was: Resilience & Opportunities: Feminine Leadership in Uncertain Times. The issue of feminine leadership has come up on the world agenda again during the Covid-19 pandemic because of the success of many female heads of governments, which sparked a debate as to whether or not feminine leadership has distinct and clear characteristics.

The seminar dealt with issues of resilience, Jewish identity and belonging, and the characteristics and challenges of feminine leadership in general and during Covid 19 in particular.

The Seminar opened with greetings from the President of the State of Israel, his Excellency Yitzhak Herzog, and all the other speakers were leading women from various fields in Israel and around the world, including: MK Meirav Cohen – Minister of Social Equality and Retirees in Israel; Irina Nevzlin – Chair of ANU – the Jewish People Museum; Leah Aharonov – former ICJW President; Naomi Di Signi –



President of the Jewish Communities in Italy; Prof. Zehavit Gross from Bar Ilan University; Fleur Hassan Nahum – Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem, Ronit Lev Ari – Criminologist and Victimologist; Entrepreneur Tal Kaufman; Shelly Keidar from the Jewish Agency; and Shira Ruderman – CEO of the Ruderman Foundation.

The seminar was produced by a team from the Council of Women's Organizations in Israel and ICJW, accompanied by our President Penelope Conway. You can watch the full Seminar on the ICJW YouTube Channel.

Gila Oshrat, the chair of the seminar concluded: "The seminar was a great success, focusing our attention on the important role of women leaders in taking responsibility. It encouraged us to see every crisis as an opportunity to work together to promote a better world and influence the spread of equality and social justice."



*The Seminar Organizing Committee.  
(See next page for more pictures of the Seminar)*

# Save these Dates

## International Women's Day

The 2022 theme for International Women's Day on **March 8, 2022** is "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow". Events will take place all over the world – find your local celebration of #IWD2022

## ICJW Convention

Every four years the leadership and members of ICJW come together for our Quadrennial Convention. If the COVID restrictions allow, we hope to meet in May 2022 in Jerusalem. The tentative dates for your calendar are **May 22-26, 2022**. Further information will be shared nearer the time, or you can email [seminar@icjw.org](mailto:seminar@icjw.org).



## 66th UN Commission on the Status of Women

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women 2022 will probably take place online from **March 14 to 25, 2022**. The priority theme will be: Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes. The review theme will be: Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work. Members of ECOSOC-accredited NGOs like ICJW will be able to register. We will share information when we receive it, or registration details can be found here: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/ngo-participation/registration>.



## More Pictures from the Jerusalem Seminar



Keynote speaker  
Leah Ahronov.



Gila Oshrat  
with Aviva Kohlmann,  
who introduced the  
speakers.



Prof. Zehavit Gross  
with Gila Oshrat  
and Irina Nevzlin.



Panel discussion with Tal Kaufman,  
Fleur Hassan Nahum & Ronit Lev Ari.