

Translation

**Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the
Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day**

April 15, 2007

The Honorable Acting President and Speaker of the Knesset,
Government Ministers,
President of the Supreme Court,
Honorable Chief Rabbis,
Members of the Diplomatic Corp,
Chairman of the Board of Yad Vashem,
Veterans of World War II,
Survivors of the Camps and their Guests,
(Commanders, Soldiers of the IDF, Members of the Israel Police,)
Distinguished Guests,

Sixty-two years have passed since the end of the bloodiest and most horrifying military campaign in the history of the human race. The world was delivered from an unprecedented threat, that of the dark Nazi regime, which strove to enslave the peoples of the planet under the predatory boot of “the master race”.

On the day of victory, masses of people danced in the squares of London, Paris and New York, and in all the cities of the liberated and free nations. The Jewish people, the primary victims of the Nazi monster, were also on the winning side, but were not counted among the celebrants. Their rescue came too late, after one-third of their number – the vast majority of Jews in enlightened Europe – were destroyed, annihilated under the ruins of the World War.

In eight days, the State of Israel will celebrate its 59th Independence Day. The renaissance of the Jewish people, its casting off of the ashes of the Holocaust and new life and national rebirth in its historic homeland, are the pinnacle of its victory. The independence and prosperity of the Jewish state are the ultimate answer to the enemy's plot. This is a fitting reason to celebrate.

Sixty-two years have passed, and it seems that the remembrance of the Holocaust and its lessons have not faded with the years, rather they have only grown stronger. The date of the liberation of the death camp, Auschwitz, has become the international day of remembrance for the Holocaust. Museums, monuments, extensive literature, documentary films, educational plans and numerous sites of commemoration place before the enlightened world chilling testimonies and a firm warning which cannot be ignored. The incredible historic enterprise of Yad Vashem, first and foremost in the educational and moral struggle to preserve the memories and in its campaign against forgetting and denial, has been an incredibly invaluable success.

However, ladies and gentlemen, let us not delude ourselves. All those honest people who internalized consciousness of the Holocaust, its memory and lessons, are but a small portion of the good, enlightened and moral of the human race. Generally, they also support the State of Israel and wish for its well-being and security. However, other than them, there are many, including members of distinguished academic institutions, whose hatred of Israel blinds them and hardens their hearts. They deny the essential right of the Jewish people to a national, sovereign existence. They are the first to find justification for all the acts of horror perpetrated against citizens of Israel and strongly condemn any defensive action by the State of Israel. We must not forget that the vast majority of the world's population remains ignorant of any information regarding the Holocaust, cut off and alienated from the fate of the Jewish people, exposed to false propaganda and the hatred of the Holocaust deniers, those who deny and underrate it.

Distinguished Guests,

This year's theme of the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day is "Bearing Witness". In the year between one Remembrance Day and the next, the number of living witnesses grows smaller. Every witness who stayed silent until his final day and took his testimony to the grave, left a void in the fabric of memory, which cannot be mended. Therefore, the order of the hour is to track down every woman and man who was there, in the inferno of horror and survived, and make sure they speak. Their personal, private stories are a valuable gem in the mosaic. Each shred of information, each document, each picture and each testimony is an important layer in the wall of remembrance, stemming the loss to the abyss of oblivion.

We, the Jewish people, are obligated to impart the memory from generation to generation, and with two resolute conclusions. The first is that the Jew must never again be helpless and homeless, and that he never drop his sword of defense. And the second, that here in the State of Israel, a living culture has been built, which is the complete opposite of the rule of evil which sought to destroy us. We will uproot from our midst every expression of discrimination, each stain of racism, every vestige of fanaticism and xenophobia. Our flag must be the flag of freedom and justice; the flag of harmony, tolerance and mutual respect between religions and nations; the flag of peace and friendship which crosses borders and spaces on all sides.

On this Remembrance Day, we will mourn our slaughtered sisters and brothers and extol the heroism of the fighters in the ghettos and forests, and the few, precious glimmers of light which shone through the heavy darkness in the noble figures of the righteous among nations.

We will remember and never forget. We will remember and remind – ourselves, those who follow us and all of humanity. This is our historic duty and it is the decree of our conscience and the vow of the State of Israel forever and ever.