



Speech by Ambassador Benny Dagan at the
Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony in the
Great Synagogue of Stockholm
January 27, 2011

**Minister Ullenhag, Minister Ohlsson, Leader of the opposition Mona Sahlin, chairman of the
Stockholm Jewish Congregation Alf Levi, honorable Holocaust survivors, ladies and
gentlemen.**

President Peres said last year in his historic speech in the German Bundestag that "The Shoah resonates in our hearts, while our actions generate rebirth".

The Nazis came to his town Vishniev, the town he luckily had left as a child to Eretz Israel. They ordered all the Jews to congregate in the synagogue. "My grandfather marched in front, together with his family, the doors were locked from the outside and the wooden structure was torched. There were no survivors". Years after, Peres went back to look at the well that stood in the courtyard of his house. The water had not been touched by the fire. "I raised the bucket, in order to taste the water of my childhood. The water had a charred flavor, the taste of the fire that consumed the victims".

Back home in Jerusalem, as one exits the new Holocaust Memorial at Yad Vashem, one is struck by the contrast between the serene green beauty of the Jerusalem hills and the dark somber reality inside the memorial. It exemplifies the essence of the two contrasting realities of twentieth century Jewish history: destruction and deliverance, fire and water, sometimes inseparable.

Still, the inescapable legacy of the Holocaust is that the Jews were almost alone – only a brave few assisted them. To them we are eternally grateful.

Let us remember today two remarkable Swedish individuals who have died just recently: Mrs. Elena Anger, wife of the late Righteous among the Nations Per Anger. Elena was with Per in Budapest when he and R. Wallenberg saved the life of tens of thousands of Jews. Her memory and that of her husband remain forever an inspiration.

Blessed be the memory of Bengt Andersson, former chairman of the Helsingborg friendship association with Israel. Bengt cared for Jewish survivors of concentration camps who came to Sweden and visited many times those of them who moved to Israel.

The Jewish people were and are determined never to allow a repeat of the history of the Evian Conference, the refugee ship named St. Louis, and the inability to save our brethren.

Therefore, with even greater vigor since 1945 the Jewish People has been determined to make the Zionist dream of the 19th century- come true, the dream of an independent, strong, modern, and humanistic Jewish state in our ancient homeland and the fulfillment of the exiles' prayers of thousands of years to come back to Zion.

Survivors: for the world you are symbols of human endurance, courage, and hope.

For us you are real people – our grandfathers and grandmothers, our fathers and mothers. Many of you have chosen not to tell us your stories in order to shelter us from the horror, but we heard you screaming at nights when there was no escape from the nightmares.

Aharon Appelfeld, survivor and one of the greatest writers of our time, depicts this parallel lives in a minimalistic and restrained language. He describes in his most recent book "The man who never stopped sleeping" how he was struggling to reconnect to his past, to his murdered parents while building a new life and acquiring a new language in Israel.

Appelfeld in his ostensibly simple, yet most beautiful Hebrew reveals in "The story of a Life" his enormous pain:

"בדעוך השפה בי חשתי שאמי מתה עלי שנית".

"When my mother tongue started to die out, it was as if my mother was dying for the second time".

Survivors: your memories have become part of our collective memory, but the question that is haunting us is: When there is no one left from the time of the horrors to bear witness, how far can we trust the evidence of our eyes alone?

For that reason and as a direct consequence of the frightening global increase of manifestations of old and new Anti-Semitism, home grown and imported, explicit or hiding behind hatred to Israel and denying its right to exist, in traditional methods and on the Internet - Israel initiated in 2005 in the General Assembly of the UN the designation of Jan. 27 as the international day of commemoration to honor the victims of the Holocaust, to remember, educate and reject any denial of the Shoah.

As we are gathered now in Stockholm, our brethren in Malmo are also gathered in their synagogue. Former PM Persson is addressing them. The initiator of the Historic Stockholm Declaration of 2000 is the right man in the right time in a place where the City leadership is still lacking the commitment to fight Anti-Semitism and to protect its own citizens.

Prime Minister Harper of Canada said on Nov. 7, 2010 in Ottawa to the Inter-Parliamentary Coalition for Combating Anti-Semitism:

"We have seen all this before. And we have no excuse to be complacent. We have a duty to take action. And for all of us, that starts at home".

In spite of old and new Anti-Semitism, Let us recall the good and wise words of president Obama on April 23, 2009 at the holocaust day of remembrance ceremony, at the United States Capitol, Washington, D.C:

"I believe history gives us cause for hope rather than despair - the hope of a people who have overcome oppression since the days of Exodus and of the nation of Israel rising from the destruction of the Holocaust".

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