



Republic of Serbia

STATE PROGRAM
FOR THE OBSERVANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST
VICTIMS' REMEMBRANCE DAY
(2011)

Belgrade, SERBIA



(1.) Official Statement of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of the Republic of Serbia

(January 26th 2011)

On the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Mrs. Nevena Petrušić, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of the Republic of Serbia, paid respects to the Holocaust victims of the Nazi regime and said that our duty is to remember innocent Holocaust victims in order to prevent similar atrocities in the future.

The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of the Republic of Serbia concluded that discrimination leads to violence and that the Holocaust represent the worst exaple of it in the human history.



GOVERNMENT

(2.) Memorial classes and activities in all Serbian primary and secondary schools

(January 27th 2011)

Upon the initiative of the Ministry of Education, all primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Serbia (cca 1800 schools) organized memorial classes and activities devoted entirely to the Holocaust, concentration camps, mass executions of civilians, intolerance, anti-Semitism and xenophobia.



GOVERNMENT

(3.) Central State Commemoration Marking the Holocaust Remembrance Day

(January 27th 2011)

On the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, wreaths were laid and homage paid at the "Staro Sajmište" Memorial in Belgrade for the victims of Holocaust during World War II.

Wreaths were laid by representatives from the Government of the Republic of Serbia Israeli, German and Dutch Ambassadors to Serbia, City of Belgrade, Federation of the Jewish Communities in Serbia, Museum of Genocide Victims and many others.



H.E. Minister of Labour and Social Policy Mr. Rasim Ljajić paying respect to the Holocaust victims

During this commemorative ceremony, H.E. Minister of Labour and Social Policy Mr. Rasim Ljajić said:

``Dear Holocaust survivors,

Victims' children and descendants,

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Citizens of the Republic of Serbia,

***Justice, Truth and Remembrance*, although, perhaps only “imaginary” concepts for those who perceive history as an endless conundrum of the events and different characters, actually, represent the adamant and steadfast principles we follow when contemplating one of the most tragic phenomenon in the history of human kind – the Holocaust.**

This anniversary of liberation of the largest death camp in the Europe in the Second World War – Auschwitz-Birkenau – is the occasion for all of us, together, as citizens of the democratic Serbia, to send a clear message from this place today, as a strong statement of our determination to instill into young generations the spirit of non-violence, understanding, love for justice, tolerance for diversity and difference, and common living and cooperation.

We have the obligation, on behalf of all the innocently fallen, in the name of our past and future, to ensure that the horrors of the holocaust shall not be repeated ever again, anywhere, anymore.

As every crime bears two names – a name of the victim and a name of the evil-doer, today, we express our true compassion and empathy with the inconceivable suffering of six million

children, women and men, the Jews who were brutally killed in the Second World War, which represents the greatest defeat of the mankind in the whole history.

In particular, it is beyond comprehension that these horrid crimes were *acts of the state*, that it was about *violation of its sovereignty*. Every citizen in the Nazi –Germany had the obligation to submit to and respect legal and political system, whereby the phenomena of the “obedient citizen” was formed.

The criminal Nazi-system was based upon perfidious methods of prosecution, deprivation of liberty, torture and liquidation. With such criminal intention, the nazis reduced their victims to a state of mind in which the tortured victim let without any protest, to have a noose put around its neck, to succumb and to forget oneself to the point where its identity is lost, shattered completely... And it was not by accident... The Nazis wanted the defeat of their victims without a cause, out of bare sadism ... They knew that a system that effectively destroys the victim before it steps to the place of execution is the one that is effective to keep the whole nation enslaved.. in subservience... There is nothing more frightening than the endless lines of these human beings who went to death in silence, without resistance....

The killing methods were numerous, but, in the eyes of the world, the gas chambers and crematoria have never ceased to be remembered for their horrifying consequences.

And as the code of ethics in a civilized state rests upon the conscience telling to every individual that “Thou shall not kill!”, the essence in the nazi – system was to demand of every individual to the contrary, although the perpetrators of the crime were completely conscious that murder is contrary to the nature of most of people... The evil in the Third Reich, the evil lost its well – know trait – that of temptation... Great number of Germans resisted the temptation and thus once again showed that humanity and need to help those whose life is in danger is unalienable trait of human kind.

Citizens of Serbia,

During four years of war and occupation of our motherland, horrible crimes were committed in Serbia. Our country was not spared from the horrors of the Holocaust.

We gathered here at one of the largest places where killings were committed in the Second World War in Serbia. At this place where we are standing today, in the period between 8 December 1941 and May 1942, there was a camp for the Jews in which 6320 Jews were killed in unimaginably horrible way, mostly women and children.

So many times, from this place towards Jajinci, the ominous movable gas chamber – the truck with compartment in which executions were committed - started its way... In those months, the vehicle moved in the streets, and people of Belgrade could hear cries and screams of the innocent victims the corpses of which were soon to be thrown into mass graves in Jajinci.

The tragic balance of the Holocaust in Serbia indicates that of around 15.000 Jews who lived in our country before 1 April 1941, about 90 per cent of them did not survive the Second World War. The goal of the Nazis was to fully “implement the Final Solution” in every occupied country in as short period as possible. “The final solution” in Serbia was achieved in August 1942 when from the occupied Belgrade a report was sent to Berlin in which it was stated that “ Serbia is a country in which Jewish and the Gipsy problem are addressed.” Thus, the occupied Serbia, after Estonia, was the second occupied territory that was declared “cleansed from the Jews” by the Nazis.

The most responsible for this horrible crime were the German commander in Serbia, General Franz Böhme, commander of the security police Emanuel Schäfer (responsible for murdering with gas 6.320 Jewish children and women) and state advisor Harald Turner.

General Franz Böhme avoided to be on trial after the War by committing suicide. Emanuel Schäfer was convicted by the German criminal court, while Harald Turner was sentenced to death by the Yugoslav court.

Few Serbian Jews who survived war horrors succeeded in avoiding frightening destiny by joining the partisans, as well as thanks to courageous deeds of their citizens, non-Jews, who risked their lives to save their neighbours from certain death.

We are proud of the fact that more than 130 our citizens were awarded by the Righteous Among the Nations medal that the State of Israel awards the individuals who in full conscious put their lives in danger to save their compatriots Jews.

Citizens of Serbia,

I would like to note that the Republic of Serbia is actively engaged in the activities of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research in which it participates in the capacity of the observer and expects to become full member of this international organization in this year. The Republic of Serbia is proud of its antifascist tradition, contribution to destruction of Fascism and Nazism in the WWII and rejects any possibility of historical revisionism and relativisation of the committed crimes.

The memory to the innocent victims of the Holocaust, protection of the places of death, and acquisition of new understanding and knowledge of that frightful fall of human kind is not only our obligation to every single victim, but one of the fundamental preconditions for creation of society founded upon respect for an individual, its rights, freedoms and diversity.

Thank you``



GOVERNMENT

(4) Commemorative Gathering in the ``Topovske šupe`` Extermination Site (January 27th , 2011)

Representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, City of Belgrade, Municipality of Voždovac, Israeli Embassy to the Republic of Serbia and the Federation of the Jewish Communities of Serbia paid homage to the Holocaust victims and laid wreaths within the ``Topovske šupe`` Memorial in Belgrade (transit concentration camp for Jews and Roma who were deported from there to Auschwitz, and a considerable number of them were killed there in retaliation).



(5) Lecture ``Holocaust in the Territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija`` (January 27th , 2011)

Historian Nenad Antonijević of the Genocide Victims` Museum (Belgrade) gave a lecture devoted to the Holocaust in the Serbian Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija during WWII. Lecture was organized by the Federation of the Jewish Communities of Serbia.



(6) Documentary ``Testimony of Nisim Navonović``
(January 27th , 2011)

Presentation of the documentary film was organized by the Federation of the Jewish Communities of Serbia. Nisim Navonović had been a Holocaust survivor from Serbia and his testimony represents a valuable insight into the Holocaust in his native country.



GOVERNMENT

(7) Seminar ``Holocaust Education – Prevention of the Crimes Against Humanity``
(January 30th , 2011)

Ministry of Education, in cooperation with ``Yad Vashem`s`` International School for Holocaust Study, organizes a one day follow-up Seminar for Serbian teachers that had attended the basic Seminar in ``Yad Vashem``.



GOVERNMENT

(8) Seminar ``Holocaust Education – Preservation of Killing Sites``
(February 1st , 2011)

Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in cooperation with ``Yad Vashem`s`` International School for Holocaust Study, organizes a one day Seminar for Serbian restoration and conservation experts.