

Building tolerant and compassionate societies honours the dead and gives hope for the future, OSCE says on International Holocaust Remembrance Day

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A pile of shoes from the victims of the Holocaust at Auschwitz Birkenau, a Nazi concentration and extermination camp in Poland. 4 February 2018. (Brais Seara/Shutterstock)

WARSAW, 27 January 2020 – As we mark 75 years since the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, the OSCE calls for greater efforts to counter anti-Semitic prejudice and build tolerant societies free from hatred.

“This is a day to remember the unimaginable suffering of Europe’s Jews and all victims of Nazism,” said Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). “But solemn words are not enough to honour their memory – it is action we need. By building more tolerant and inclusive societies, we help to ensure the horrors of the past never return, and at the same time give the younger generation hope for a future without hate.”

To mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day, ODIHR is today publishing its sixth [overview of Holocaust remembrance and education in the OSCE region](#). This provides an update on activities across the OSCE region to commemorate and teach about the Holocaust and the Roma and Sinti genocide, as well as the fate of other victims of Nazi persecution.

Stepping up teaching on the Holocaust and forging coalitions with civil society and community organizations is becoming ever more important following the recent spate of anti-Semitic attacks in a number of countries across the OSCE region. At the same time, political and religious leaders need to confront the causes of anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance, acknowledging that those who commit hate crimes feel emboldened by policies and a political discourse that sow division.

Education provides an effective antidote to prejudice and ignorance by ensuring that young people understand how such atrocities were committed in a Europe that

believed itself to be civilized. Teaching about the Holocaust equips students with the knowledge to challenge any attempts to deny or trivialize the crimes of National Socialism.

“The Holocaust is a reminder of how easy it was for words to become deeds to become genocide, of how anti-Semitism left unchecked nearly eradicated Jewish life in Europe,” said Rabbi Andrew Baker, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism. “Yet in this darkest of times there were also acts of courage and heroism by victims and those who helped them that remain a continuing source of hope.”

A conference on combating anti-Semitism in the OSCE region will take place in Tirana on 4 and 5 February under the auspices of the 2020 Albanian Chairmanship of the OSCE, in which both ODIHR’s Director and Rabbi Baker will participate.

ODIHR works actively to promote remembrance and study of the Holocaust and the Roma and Sinti genocide, including a set of practical [teaching aids](#) to increase knowledge about Jews and Judaism and break down anti-Semitic prejudice both off- and [online](#).

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