

Holocaust Remembrance Day is a time to learn from the past and work together towards a more peaceful future, OSCE says

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VALLETTA/WARSAW/WASHINGTON, 27 January 2024 – On today's International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the OSCE honours the victims of Nazi persecution, reflecting on the painful lessons from one of the darkest chapters of human history and seeking to learn from them, both for the present and future. The immense suffering and anguish endured by six million Jews, as well as millions of other innocent people, cannot be overstated or much worse forgotten.

“On Holocaust Remembrance Day, we honour the resilience of those who survived the unimaginable horrors of the Holocaust and remember those who perished, with the unwavering pledge to ensure that such atrocities are never repeated,” said OSCE Chair-in-Office, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta Ian Borg. “As we strive to learn from the past, let us forge a path towards a world where tolerance triumphs over hatred, and where these lessons guide us in building a future marked by compassion, unity, and the shared pursuit of peace.

As we pay tribute to the victims and survivors, we also recognize the ongoing need to stand against hatred, discrimination, and acts that threaten the principles of humanity. Across the OSCE region, we continue to witness instances of violence, ranging from online and offline anti-Semitic hate speech, through damage to property and threats, that test our commitment to these principles. This adds to other major challenges, with social media algorithms playing a key role in amplifying malicious content, including posts containing anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, as well as content that denies or distorts the Holocaust.

The recent attacks by Hamas in Israel on October 7th and human suffering in the ensuing violent conflict in the Middle East serve as a stark reminder that the echoes of

history's atrocities remain with us. Chair-in-Office Borg added that “as we continue to bear witness to conflicts that inflict immeasurable suffering on countless innocent lives, the pervasive threat of discrimination and intolerance persist, casting shadows of insecurity across our world. It is against this backdrop that we are reminded of the profound importance of never allowing the tragic lessons of the Holocaust to fade from our collective memory.”

The Holocaust is a historical truth, and it is our duty to honour the memory of those who perished by educating future generations about the consequences of hatred, discrimination, and prejudice.

Also for this reason, ODIHR joined other international organizations including the United Nations and the European Commission in [#ProtectTheFacts](#), a global awareness-raising campaign created by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance that focuses on countering Holocaust distortion.

“Anti-Semitism is an age-old and insidious prejudice that has no justification and no place in our societies,” said Matteo Mecacci, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). “Young people’s awareness of the Holocaust is declining, while their exposure to Holocaust denial and distortion online continues to grow. With ever fewer survivors left to provide eye-witness accounts, our societies must all work harder to ensure the memory of this terrible tragedy remains alive.”

Especially on this day, we commit ourselves to promoting tolerance, empathy, and understanding, fostering a world where diversity is celebrated, and the inherent dignity of every individual is recognized and respected. Governments have a particular responsibility for combating intolerance and preventing anti-Semitism while ensuring the safety of all citizens.

“This day of remembrance is not only about looking back but also a warning to be alert to present dangers,” said Rabbi Andrew Baker, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism. “In recent months we have witnessed the most lethal attack on Jews since the Holocaust and an explosion of antisemitic incidents around the world. There is still much for us to do to combat this age-old hatred.”

Today ODIHR publishes the eighth edition of *Holocaust Memorial Days: An overview of remembrance and education in the OSCE region*. With this regular overview of the commemoration and study of the Holocaust and the genocide of Roma and Sinti, ODIHR seeks to encourage governments to further develop their activities to combating anti-Semitism, discrimination, and all forms of hatred.

All OSCE countries have unequivocally condemned intolerance and anti-Semitism. This year also marks the twentieth anniversary of the Berlin Declaration, when OSCE states acknowledged that anti-Semitism has assumed new forms and poses a threat to security and stability across the region, and pledged to develop targeted and practical measures to combat the phenomenon. Through its hate crime database, ODIHR collects data on anti-Semitism and other crimes of bias that are published each year on a [dedicated website](#).

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