

Israeli UN Ambassador Gilad Erdan's Speech

Thank you Mr. President,

My grandfather Chaim arrived at Auschwitz with his wife Bracha and their eight children. Within minutes of their arrival, Bracha and seven of their children, my aunts and uncles, were taken away and sent to the gas chambers.

In 1945, as the world was rebuilding from the ruins of the Second World War, my grandfather Chaim and my grandmothers Clari and Rachel, were rebuilding their lives after surviving the horrors of the Holocaust.

As the international community founded the United Nations with the goal of maintaining international peace and security, my grandparents immigrated to Israel with the goal of starting a new, better and safer life for themselves and for the Jewish people.

When I was first elected to the Israeli Knesset in 2003, my grandmother Rachel told me that in the midst of the hell of Auschwitz, she could never have imagined that Jewish sovereignty would one day be renewed in our ancient homeland, let alone that her grandson would serve in the parliament of that sovereign state.

Today, her grandson represents the world's only Jewish state before the



Israeli Amb. to the UN, *Gilad Erdan*, addresses the event. Photo: YouTube.

organization tasked with guaranteeing that never again will anyone have to endure the unimaginable pain and suffering that my grandparents, and millions of others, endured.

I speak before you today, on behalf of the State of Israel and the Jewish people to assure that this institution honors that promise.

The 75th anniversary of the UN is indeed cause for celebration, but it is also a time for introspection.

In its early years, the United Nations was an undeniable force for good in the world. However, over time, this organization has allowed politics to steer it away from the primary goal enshrined in its mandate. While it still plays an important role in eliminating hunger, promoting equality, protecting the environment and much else, it has neglected promoting peace and security.

Just in the last few weeks, the UN

was given the opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to that goal, but once again, squandered it.

Iran remains the biggest threat to peace and security in the Middle East and beyond. Yet, instead of extending the arms embargo on Iran and preventing it from strengthening its capabilities, nearly all members of the Security Council chose inaction and allowed the embargo to expire.

In response to the signing of the Abraham Accords, this organization again chose inaction. Rather than celebrate this historic event and using it as a catalyst for further peace in the region, this organization reacted with indifference, at best. I hope to see a different reaction to the normalization of relations between Israel and Sudan.

Inaction should not be an option for an organization created to guarantee peace and security.

As the world faces an unprecedented health and economic crisis it is more important than ever that the United Nations continue to play a key role in creating a better world for all.

However, in order to remain relevant in the next 75 years, it must also fulfill its primary purpose of promoting peace and security. Thank you.

Remarks by Jacques Grishaver

My name is Jacques Grishaver. I was born in Amsterdam on March 20, 1942. I am Jewish. Because of that simple fact, my grandfather Isaïc had to go into hiding with me. I was barely one year old. Most members of my family were murdered in Auschwitz and Sobibor. When the Nazis and fascists came to power and the first measures against the Jews were announced, many thought that things would probably be okay. And as the deportations gradually began, rumors started circulating about what was happening in those dark German camps, far away to the east. But it couldn't be true, could it? That the Nazis intended to destroy the entire Jewish people was beyond human imagination.

Because it was so unimaginable, many of the 140,000 Dutch Jews complied with the Germans' order to wear a yellow star, and eventually also followed the order to report for transport to Kamp Westerbork.

From there, trains left weekly for Auschwitz and Sobibor. Jews were hunted in the streets. Many went into hiding, finding refuge with brave Dutch families, but just as many were betrayed.

Only a few thousand Dutch Jews returned from the camps. After the liberation, a mere 32,000 of a once vibrant Jewish community were still alive. In relative terms, the Netherlands had the highest murder rate in Western Europe.

While I was in hiding with my grandfather, my other grandparents, together with my parents and two aunts, were locked up in the "Joodse Schouwburg", the Jewish Theatre, where the Amsterdam Jews were rounded up, as a stopover on their way to death.



Jacques Grishaver addresses the Holocaust ceremony. Photo: UN.

The Jewish resistance fighter Jacques van der Kar, a friend of my imprisoned grandparents, offered to smuggle them out of the theatre building, but instead of choosing to save himself, my grandfather said "get my daughter and son-in-law out because they have a little baby". That little baby was me. That is why after the liberation, as one of the few Jewish children, I still had my own parents whom I loved, against whom I rebelled as a teenager, and who molded me into the man I am today. In our family we shared the grief of the Shoah, barely able to comprehend what had happened to us.

The Dutch Auschwitz Committee was founded in 1956 by a number of survivors of the extermination camps. When they returned to the Netherlands they encountered no understanding, they found

no place, no compassion. The atmosphere was cold in the Netherlands - the country from which more than 107,000 Jewish residents were deported and only five-thousand returned. The Auschwitz Committee's task is to tell what had happened and to represent the interests of those who had been murdered. The Auschwitz Committee sees "Auschwitz never again" as a mission to ensure that we never forget and that we continue to warn of where fascism, antisemitism and racial delusions can lead.

In 1998, I became chairman of the Dutch Auschwitz Committee. I made a to the committee's founders to continue their legacy, the fight against anti-Semitism, with every fiber of my being. And that fight is still necessary today. Anti-Semitism is rearing its ugly head all over

the world, even in the Dutch parliament, where xenophobic nationalists are allied with propagators of insidious conspiracy theories.

Resurgent nationalist sentiments form a dangerous breeding ground for the pursuit of ethnic purity: for "us, and not them", for exclusion and division, like a loud echo from the twentieth century. "Auschwitz never again" is a message that bridges the gap between a period in history when things went so horribly wrong and the present, where things can go wrong again.

The Dutch Auschwitz Committee wants to keep the memory alive and educate new generations about the dangers of exclusion and discrimination. In September 2019, we unveiled the National Holocaust Names Memorial in Amsterdam, a project I had been fighting for since 2006. It is a chilling and at the same time beautiful memorial, designed by Daniel Libeskind.

The more than 102,000 murdered Jews and 202 murdered Roma and Sinti have regained their names and their place in the world in the heart of the Dutch capital.

The names of my family members who did not escape from the Jewish Theatre have also been returned to Amsterdam. Saartje, Isaïc, Claartje, Loesje, Jetje and Betje. Their names, along with thousands of others, serve as a warning to those alive today and to generations to come.

As a survivor of the Shoah, I was able to convert my pain and sorrow into energy and commitment to dedicate myself to "Auschwitz never again" and the creation of the National Holocaust Names Memorial.

They have not been forgotten and they will never be forgotten.