

In a First, Arab-initiated Event Commemorates the Holocaust



In the wake of the Abraham Accords and in honor of International Holocaust Memorial Day on Jan. 27, individuals from the group Sharaka held an event to memorialize victims of the Holocaust and to promote an action plan for Holocaust awareness and combating antisemitism.

According to Sharaka ("partnership" in Arabic), last week's event was the first-ever initiative to commemorate the Holocaust, bringing together Arab leaders in the Middle East.

Participants from the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Saudi Arabia - some of whom participated in Sharaka's tour of Israel in December, which marked many of their first experiences learning about the Holocaust - were joined by viewers from North America, Europe and Israel.

"While public schools in the western world 'may selectively' study about the Holocaust due to the lack of Holocaust education, in a lot of Arab countries, there are Holocaust deniers, like in Iran and in Saudi Arabia stated Voices For Truth and Humanity President Jack Britvan.

During the online event, Israel's President Reuven Rivlin offered an address, saying it was "very

moving" to see young people of all religions from across the region working together. He also noted that the 50 leaders from Sharaka visited Yad Vashem in Jerusalem during their trip. "We are bringing together Holocaust survivors with young Israeli and Gulf leaders, Jews, Muslims, Christians and Druze, to say 'never again,' he added.

"This pandemic has closed borders and distanced us, but it has also reminded us of our common humanity and the need to work together to meet this challenge," continued Rivlin. "Unfortunately, Coronavirus has given rise to more antisemitic conspiracy theories, and we have continued to see attacks against synagogues and Jewish institutions."

Rivlin called on all countries to "ensure that the promise of never again becomes a shared reality." That can be done in part by adopting the IHRA definition of antisemitism, joining to "defeat the virus of antisemitism and radical hate" and showing "zero tolerance for forms of anti-Semitism, racism and extremism."

The founder of Sharaka, Amit Deri, noted that many of the activists learned only "two or three sentences about the Holocaust, as a part of the history of the Second World War in

school.

"The Holocaust is the untold story in the Middle East," he related.

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Amjad Taha, co-founder of Sharaka, urged countries in the Arab world and Gulf to educate about the Nazi persecution of the Jews in school curriculums. "From a young age to graduation, they should be taught about the Holocaust and ways to counter antisemitism," he related.

Majid Al-Sarrah from the UAE encouraged all people to "see the reality of the Holocaust at Yad Vashem and promised, "We will spread the knowledge about the Holocaust. We will raise peace and love, say never again to antisemitism, hate and discrimination. We are brothers and sisters. We will stand together, and together, we will build a world free of antisemitism and hate."

Mashael Al-Shemeri from Bahrain said, "I would like to say to all Jews and the people of Israel: You are not alone anymore."

Najat Al-Saeed from Saudi Arabia added, "We must educate young generations about the full horrors of the Holocaust, including by ensuring

that the Holocaust is taught in schools in the Abraham Accords countries and that special envoys are appointed for preserving Holocaust remembrance."

At the event, Sharaka presented its five-point plan for combating antisemitism, which includes promoting Holocaust awareness and education, interfaith dialogue, incorporating the IHRA definition of antisemitism and countering antisemitism online, in addition to the BDS movement that seeks to delegitimize Israel.

"This is an opportunity that the Abraham Accords have given us, and I believe there will be more events like this to follow," said Deri, who announced that this April, Sharaka will lead the first-ever Arab delegation of young leaders to Auschwitz-Birkenau as part of Yom Hashoah, Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Day, which will be observed this year on April 8-9.

In the States, activist 501c3 organizations like Voices For Truth and Humanity are bringing likeminded organizations together to educate about The Holocaust and other Genocides." One of Voices efforts is to have both The Yankees and Mets establish a Holocaust Remembrance Day at their home fields in early April 2021," stated