



# UN Holocaust commemoration

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## **General Assembly ceremony marking the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.**

25 January 2013 – Those who risked their lives to save Jews and others from mass extermination in the Second World War are inspiration for the courage to fight for a better world, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and other United Nations officials said today.

“Let us be inspired by those who had the courage to care – the ordinary people who took extraordinary steps to defend human dignity,” Mr. Ban said in a video message aired this morning at a General Assembly ceremony to mark the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.

This year’s observance of the International Day is built around the theme “Rescue during the Holocaust: The Courage to Care,” profiling individual rescuers – who not only defied the Nazis, but often also multiple governments – through exhibits, film, educational activities and today’s ceremony.

“Acts of genocide illustrate the depths of evil to which individuals and whole societies can descend, but the examples of the brave men and women we celebrate today also demonstrate the capacity of humankind for good, even during the darkest of days,” Mr. Ban said.

He noted that this year marked the 50th anniversary of the Righteous Among Nations Programme at the Yad Vashem memorial in Israel, which is devoted to identifying and rewarding such heroes.

Following the airing of Mr. Ban’s remarks, profiles of rescuers punctuated the proceedings, ranging from Irene Sendler, a Polish woman who smuggled children out of the Warsaw Ghetto, to the Veseli family, Albanian Muslims that hid a Jewish family on their farm, to an unknown platform guard that saved a Dutch Romani boy.

Helping to open the ceremony, Raymond Serge Bale, Vice-President of the General Assembly, said it was fitting that the Assembly resolution that established the commemoration called not only for the remembrance of the suffering of Holocaust victims but also evoked a moral obligation to warn against the horrors of hatred and prejudice, to prevent further acts of genocide.

“The values demonstrated by those who rose above evil to save others serve as guiding principles to protect the human rights of future generations – courage, compassion, moral leadership, self-sacrifice, social responsibility, integrity and righteousness,” Mr. Bale said.

Meanwhile, in Geneva today, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay, in a statement to mark the Day, said that each and every person bore the responsibility to make sure that such monumental crimes as those that occurred during the Holocaust never happen again.

“This responsibility goes beyond words and good intentions,” she said, adding: “It requires us to maintain our ability to stand firm in our fight against discrimination and related hatred at all times.”

The annual International Day was designated by a General Assembly resolution as 27 January each year, on the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp.

In a separate message for the Day, Mr. Ban urged the world to follow the example of those who had “the courage to care,” and affirmed that: “Their example can help us build a better world today.”