

Remarks by Mrs. Marta Wise

I thank you for the opportunity to address you today. As mentioned, my name is Marta Wise. I was born in Bratislava in what was then Czechoslovakia. In 1944, after 180 members of our family had already been deported by the Nazis for no crime other than being Jews, my parents, in an attempt to save their children, sent me with one of my sisters to a city called Nitra, where we lived as Arian children. On the 8th of October, the day of my tenth birthday, our neighbors, who suspected that we were Jewish, denounced us to the Nazis. We were picked up by 22 fully armed soldiers and deported in cattle trucks- 80-100 people per wagon, without food or water. We were driven around for three days to enable them time to kill off the people in the camp and make room for the next transport. When we arrived at the extermination camp Auschwitz –Birkenau, we were overwhelmed by the smell of burning flesh, a smell which stays with you for a lifetime. The sight that met our eyes was indescribable; Jewish inmates in striped clothing, looking like “skeletons”, a detachment of SS soldiers with guns, whips and clubs in their hands, alsatian killer dogs straining at their leash waiting to tear us apart. We were pushed off the train and told to line up, women and children on one side and men on the other. We were told to start walking towards the "gentleman" at the other end, who we later found out was the infamous “angel of death,” Josef Mengele. He whistled or waived his baton to the left or to the right; to the gas chambers or to work. My sister and I were taken at a later date to his barracks, where experiments were carried out on twins. There is no other description that can be given of Auschwitz other than a hell on earth. We were witness every day to pure indescribable evil.

The holocaust was a period in history when the world witnessed the darkest side of human kind; doctors experimenting on human beings, learned engineers and architects using their knowledge and expertise to design and build gas chambers and crematoria, and scientists who devised the implementation of Eichmann’s final solution.

Today I want to focus on the rising anti-Semitism that has again reared its ugly head in Europe and which is on par with the European antisemitism of the 1930’s in the years preceding the rise of Nazi Germany, culminating in the holocaust.

Today the whole world is aflame and another holocaust can happen again, G-d forbid, if the free world does not listen and take seriously the threats against it from racist and anti-Semitic Jew haters. Not a day goes by without hearing reports of anti-Semitic acts; the desecration of synagogues and graves, hooligans assaulting innocent people for no other reason than they are different from them.

The passive, “could not care less”, attitude of the European community towards anti- Semitism is precisely the same as in the 1930’s. Today we see the emergence of right wing anti-semitic parties in Hungary, France and other countries. We see biased reporting in the media, we hear reports of harassment, verbal abuse, and acts of violence.

World anti-Semitism is even more evident today with the threats of economic and academic boycotts on Israel... a reminder of the steps taken by Nazi Germany with the rise of Hitler. Then,

as now, the world is standing by silently. People often ask where was G-d during the holocaust. My question is where was man?

Today, 71 years ago I was liberated by the Russian army. As a ten year old in Auschwitz, I never dreamed I would survive, let alone have the privilege and joy of living in our ancient land, our country, in the State of Israel with our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Israel is a country, which in its very short existence of 68 years has contributed to the world through its 12 nobel laurettes, extensive research and achievements in the fields of medicine, agriculture, high tech and more. We are a country that is a melting pot of various peoples and cultures from all over the world. Our capital city, Jerusalem is the home of four religions living in cooperation and coexistence.

71 years ago there was no United Nations. Today I ask you to use your extensive resources to put an end to anti-Semitism and the baseless hatred and persecution of innocent people all around the world.