



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Organización
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para la Educación,
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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
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联合国教育、
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Message from

**Ms Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO,**

**on the occasion of the International Day of Commemoration
in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust**

27 January 2012

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was founded on the idea that lasting peace can only be built on mutual understanding. Transmitting the memory of the Holocaust is a vital part of the struggle to combat ignorance and prejudice through education in humanist values, the sharing of cultures and knowledge of history.

In our troubled times, we must remember that unprecedented disaster that took the lives of six million men, women and children, simply because they were Jewish. The murderous folly of the Nazis and their collaborators, the outcome of racist and anti-Semitic ideology, also cost the lives of millions of other people, including minorities such as the Roma and Sinti, political dissidents, prisoners of war, people with disabilities and homosexuals.

The Holocaust has shaken the foundations of humanity forever. As the last survivors pass away, a struggle has begun to preserve traces of past Jewish life and the memory of the persecutions and massacres. On this day, UNESCO reaffirms its determination to combat all forms of Holocaust denial. Education is a key front in this struggle and also UNESCO's unique contribution, through our work for youth, training of teachers and curriculum design. This task, to which I am personally committed, lies at the heart of the resolution on Holocaust remembrance adopted by the Organization in 2007.

The history of the genocide perpetrated during the Second World War does not belong to the past only. It is a "living history" that concerns us all, regardless of our

background, culture or religion. Other genocides have occurred after the Holocaust, on several continents. How can we draw better lessons from the past? Everyone must help to build bulwarks against hatred and new forms of racism, negationism and anti-Semitism, over which we must keep watch. No one can feign ignorance of the extreme results that they produce or claim to be unaffected. I call on all Member States and Associate Members to rally round so that this universal history receives the attention that it deserves in schools and in the media throughout the world.

The 2012 *International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust* is dedicated to the remembrance of children. The murder of children, which amounts to eradicating the future, is surely the most drastic sign of the attempt to annihilate a people. The vast majority of Jewish children in Europe, nearly one and a half million, were killed during the Holocaust. All of those children, whether they perished or were saved, carried within them the essence of the whole of humanity. Let us pay tribute to them.

Irina Bokova