

Lessons of the Holocaust

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Georgia State Capitol
Remarks at the Holocaust Memorial Day
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Survivors and liberators
Members of the courts
Members of the diplomatic corps
Governor Perdue, Lt. Governor Taylor
Elected officials
Commission members
Members of the armed forces
Members of the law enforcement community
Family, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honored by this award.

Awards are associated with achievements in science, arts, and sports. These are human endeavors characterized by effort, perseverance, dedication, and excellence, but also by noble causes and noble reasons, reflecting the desire of the human spirit to achieve and to contribute to the betterment of humanity.

To receive an award associated with the most vile act in human history - that of systematic industrial genocide - triggers the thought that if we could only turn the clock back, this would be one award that its recipients would have gladly given up.

But while we can no longer turn back the clock of what happened, we should do all we can so that awards associated with new holocausts will never have to be established. The reasoning here is self-evident.

I stand before you today, the son of Richard and Renee Friedmann. In 1945 they were a young married couple who survived Auschwitz separated from each other. Liberated by U.S. forces - *for which I am personally grateful* - they tried to find each other, pick up the pieces, and rebuild their lives. My mother recuperated as a refugee in Sweden for a few months. She lost all her family except her sister who managed to immigrate to Palestine in 1941, before it was too late. My father lost his parents, six brothers and all other relatives.

Upon liberation, he assisted U.S. Army forces in capturing Hungarian Nazi collaborators, including Dome Sztojay, the Hungarian pro-Nazi Prime Minister in 1944 who adopted anti-Jewish decrees allowing for the plundering, ghettoization, and deportation of the Jews of Hungary, and eventually the murdering of most of them. He was tried and shot.

Richard and Renee reunited in Cluj, Romania, in April 1946. The Communist government took over - "nationalizing" my father's business. I was born in 1947 but my mother died at birth. She was simply too weak and medicine then was not what it is today. Irene Gero, who also survived Auschwitz, took care of me from that moment on.

Then my father decided to immigrate to Palestine. He was caught by the British, who declared him an illegal immigrant, and he ended up in a Detention Camp in Cyprus - they were no longer called "Concentration Camps" - from November 1947, to May 1948.

As the British Mandate over Palestine ended, my father arrived in Haifa, Israel. A day later he was drafted and found himself fighting in Jerusalem in Israel's War of Independence. Irene and I joined him in Israel in 1950 and they married in 1951. I grew up in Israel, my city of Haifa was bombed by an Egyptian destroyer in 1956 and I served in the Israel Defense Forces during the 1967 Six-Day War.

So you see, the statistical chances of me speaking to you today are less than winning the lottery jackpot. And survival against such unfavorable odds is the sweetest revenge anyone can have against atrocities committed on us. Revenge, Victory, and Hope.

The trauma of the Holocaust will be with us forever. By default, I am a 2-G, second generation to Holocaust survivors. My story is not as unique as it sounds; variations of personal tragedies are abundant, but it is important not to see ourselves merely as victims, but also as those who persevered. Therefore it is imperative that holocaust deniers or revisionists - the like of David Irving or Robert Faurisson - will never succeed in doubly victimizing holocaust victims and survivors by denying these atrocities ever took place.

The horror of the Holocaust is seen in current/old Nazi views. This week SS Staff Sgt. Rochus Misch, Hitler's bodyguard and telephone operator, the only remaining living member of Hitler's personal staff, at 88 makes no excuses for his service to Hitler. He does not talk about guilt or responsibility for the Holocaust, saying only that he joined the SS in the "fight against Bolshevism" and that he knew nothing of the murder of six million Jews. With Hitler, "That was never a topic. Never," he said. Hitler was a "good Boss," very "normal." To him he was charming but no one in my family was fortunate enough to experience that side of him. Yet they certainly were a "TOPIC."

After the War, holocaust Museums sprouted all over. In addition to those most known: Yad Vashem - which last month dedicated a new museum in Jerusalem, and the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, there is one in Argentina, two in Australia, two in Austria, one in Belgium, one in Canada, one in Croatia, two in the Czech Republic, two in France, seven in Germany, two in Holland, one in Hungary, two more in Israel, one in Japan, three in Poland, one in South Africa, three in the United Kingdom, and no less than 22 more in the United States. None, by the way, in Russia. It is perhaps not a coincidence that the perpetrating country and the liberating country have the most museums.

But the atrocity of the Holocaust created some anomalies that we have learned to live with. A Museum is a building in which objects of interest or significance are stored and exhibited. The origin of the term is from the Greek: mouseion, the 'seat of the Muses,' those Greek goddesses who preside over the arts and sciences and inspire those who excel at these pursuits. Thus, for years museums have been associated with enjoyment and pleasure from arts and sciences.

Yet, I assure you there is nothing pleasurable or inspiring in having your history displayed on walls, in cabinets, or archives. These are excruciatingly painful reminders that portray the worst atrocities perpetrated by human beings against fellow human beings whose only crime was being candidates for extinction because of who they were.

However, there is value in archiving, in research, in teaching, and in an award that symbolizes perseverance. After visiting a holocaust Museum I leave with a heavy heart. Yet every year when I take a group of law enforcement leaders from Georgia to Israel, I make a point to visit the Holocaust Museum because it is important for all of us to know our history. And I emphasize that it is OUR common history whether you have lost relatives or have not. The loss suffered during the holocaust impacts all human beings, non-Jew and Jew alike even if in different ways.

Indeed, at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, there is an inscription by the German pastor Martin Neimuller (one of the very few who dared challenge Hitler as damaging the soul of Germany) that starts with the words:

"First they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew"

and after listing many others who did not speak out he ends with:

"Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me"

We have to learn from our past and we have to understand our present, because if we will not do so - we may not have a future.

Hence, there is an important lesson that we must learn from the Holocaust. That is, if we are willing and capable of learning.

The Nazi genocide model was based on a continuum ranging from hate, vilification, dehumanization, and incitement, to murderous genocidal violence. All with such scientific precision. Present day terrorists, who have hijacked the narrative of Islam, have perfected this model to an extent that may have far worse implications for the very existence of the free world, not only that of Israel and of Jews. This because the terrorists claim to have a holy entitlement: the "right to kill." Even the Nazis did not claim that.

Indeed, Nazi Germany and its Italian-Japanese and other partners in crime were evil regimes that once defeated, the world became a better place. But at what cost? Six million Jews (one third of the Jewish people) and five million non-Jews were murdered; 25 million civilians were killed; 22 million soldiers died in battle; almost 60 million human beings. Not to mention the number of injured and the damage to property.

In retrospect we know that not for appeasement, and had the allies joined forces early on, World War II would not have reached this horrendous scope of human loss. But today's terrorists are not a regime. They are more like cancer that has metastasized and requires radical intervention that includes physically battling them in the field, streets, and buildings, and even more so in the arena of ideas.

Today, it is easier to get one to two million people in the streets of Washington DC, or London, to march against "the war," against the U.S., and against Israel, than have 10,000 or even 1,000 people march against terrorism, against suicide bombers, against the "right to kill," and against the culture of death that is being glorified and deified to an unprecedented and incomprehensible level. And the world is silent. When its voice is heard it is in support of terrorism and in condemnation of the victims. Especially at the UN.

In this theater of absurd, the victim is called the terrorist, even if it is a child being blown to pieces on a bus or a businessman in the Twin Towers, because they may one day serve in the military or support it. The entitlement to murder and the preposterous relativistic claim that "one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter" has to end and be de-legitimized. Murder should be clearly and unconditionally condemned as universally unacceptable, under ANY circumstances. And so should its glorification and the support it receives. The sixth commandment, "you shall not murder," has no qualifiers. It is an unconditional imperative.

On 9 November 1938, Hitler's Nazi thugs burned books, synagogues, and stores in the infamous Kristalnacht (the night of broken glass). Last month AUT, The Association of University Teachers, in England voted to boycott two Israeli universities. They did not vote to boycott terrorism, murder, tyranny, or discrimination against women; not Iran, not North Korea - but to boycott academic institutions in Israel, the single democracy in the Middle East. They started with two and will keep the momentum going until they boycott all of them. This is their way of redefining the *untermensch*, the sub-human, except that now it is not the individual Jew and the Jewish people, they target, but rather - the country he and she built.

This is all part of the modern wave of antisemitism engulfing Europe and Islamists radicals. Unfortunately too many are tolerant or even supportive of this alarming trend.

My father thought that World War II was the last war. I remember, as a child, asking him naively: "If there were two world wars why would not there be a third?" Now we are on the cusp of World War III and it is not a cold one.

In late 1945 my mother watched the opera Carmen in Stockholm. Afterwards she wrote her sister in Palestine that the Nazis were unable to take aesthetics away from her. I see that as the victory of the spirit of free people over tyrannies that want to do us away. Yet freedom, like sports titles,

has to be defended and earned anew. Because if it is not, it will be taken away from us and with it our lives and our very existence.

The Nazi-produced Holocaust was neither the first nor the last, as evident in Armenia, Biafra, Cambodia, Rwanda and Darfur. And that is the true lesson of the Holocaust. Recognizing this is the first step in making a difference for our future. Therefore, fighting terrorism and tyranny is truly the best defense one can provide for human rights: The protection of The basic right to live.

Today's genocidal threat is coming from loosely-tied terrorist organizations and the states that support them. The danger that is threatening to supersede that of World War II atrocities is lurking from two main sources: Iran with its looming nuclear threat, and Saudi Arabia, which for years has been spreading its extremist Wahabi theology world-wide in a relentless effort to turn the rest of the world into Islamic green. Sort of the Arab cultural version of Hitler's lebensraum, or living space. And they are not alone. They enjoy the support of many leaders, people, and governments, and not all are Arab and/or Muslim.

Nazi ideology prescribed the annihilation of Jews and other "inferiors." Jihad is calling for conversion of the "infidels," as Islamists want everyone to be like them. But in the process of Jihad, their narrative as well as past practices is indicative of a pronounced intent to annihilate the infidels - not to lovingly accept and hug them. Thus genocidal massacres will be carried out against those who stand in the way of Islamist domination - even if they would willingly surrender as the Europeans are likely to do. The Islamist genocidal industry may look different but it will still have the same or even worse effect.

This dark age of Islamist radicalism requires a culture war that can be won by moderate Muslims who will fight and overcome radical Muslims from within. Yet there are no signs of such an internal struggle aimed at weeding out the Islamist menace. The problem is that the free world may not have the luxury of waiting for internal changes in the Islamic world, and it will have to vanquish the threat as it did with the Axis countries in World War II.

The writing is on the wall but this time in a different language. It is of the same nature - but of a far more ominous and sinister scope than the one that pervaded Germany between 1933 and 1939, and then impacted the rest of Europe and the world from 1939 to 1945. It is now up to us to read the inscription. And then do something about it if we want to guarantee the very existence, safety, and liberty of our generation and generations to come. Otherwise we have learned nothing from the Holocaust.