

Holocaust and Genocide Review (HGR) Information Resources

New Initiatives in Genocide Studies and Prevention

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Featured Organization in this Issue of GPN:

United Nations

The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme

<http://www.un.org/holocaustremembrance/index.shtml>

Description

The Holocaust and the United Nations outreach programme seeks to remind the world of the lessons to be learned from the Holocaust in order to help to prevent future acts of genocide.

The outreach programme was created at the request of the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 60/7, adopted on 1 November 2005. The United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI) has taken the lead in creating a broad initiative, designed to encourage the development by United Nations Member States of educational curricula on the subject of the Holocaust, and to mobilize civil society for education and awareness.

On 1 November 2005, designating 27 January as an annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. The Day is observed in the General Assembly Hall with a memorial ceremony and an annual lecture.

The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to establish a programme of outreach on the subject of the "Holocaust and the United Nations" to mobilize civil society for Holocaust remembrance and education, to help prevent

future acts of genocide. Its theme "Remembrance and Beyond," serves to highlight and connect the main two elements of the Programme - remembering the victims of the Holocaust and helping to prevent future acts of genocide.

Since its establishment in January 2006, the Outreach Programme has developed an international network of civil society groups, collaborated with world-renowned institutions and garnered the support of experts in the field of Holocaust and genocide studies to develop a multi-faceted programme that includes: seminars for United Nations Information Officers, discussion papers drafted by distinguished scholars from around the world, briefings, film screenings and innovative on-line information products for educators. The Outreach Programme is also a permanent observer to the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, which was commended by the United Nations General Assembly for its work.

Activities

Development of educational curricula by Member States on the lessons of the Holocaust: including the development of the "Electronic Notes for Speakers" project, together with Yad Vashem, The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation for Visual History and Education, Le Mémorial de la Shoah, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). This online pedagogical tool, available in English, French and Spanish provides concise, detailed information on the history and human experience of the Holocaust and has been praised by educators. In addition, the Outreach Programme disseminates educational materials to United Nations information centres, for use in their libraries and to share with educators and civil society groups in their countries.

Panel discussions: In the past the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme has organized five panel discussions to date on the topic of Holocaust awareness and genocide prevention. Held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, the seminars are attended by Member States, non-governmental organizations, students, educators and United Nations staff members.

UNICS Training Seminars: In 2007 and 2008, the Outreach Programme partnered with Holocaust institutions to organize four, week-long regional

seminars, designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of local level staff at the United Nations information centres worldwide in the areas of Holocaust remembrance, human rights and the prevention of genocide.

Permanent exhibit: In 2008, the Outreach Programme unveiled a permanent exhibit on the "Holocaust and the United Nations" at United Nations Headquarters. The exhibit, developed with the assistance Holocaust scholars from leading institutions, presents an overview of the tragedy in the context of World War II and the founding of the United Nations. It will be seen by the 400,000 visitors who visit United Nations Headquarters annually.

Daniel Pearl Music Days: The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme also collaborates with local partners to identify ways to engage contemporary society in learning from the lessons of the Holocaust. In October 2008, the Outreach Programme collaborated with the Museum of Jewish Heritage- A Living Memorial to the Holocaust for the second year, to co-sponsor a concert during Daniel Pearl Music Days. This event unites thousands of musicians from over 60 countries to use the universal language of music to help spread a message of respect for diversity and solidarity.

Looking forward: the Outreach Programme will publish a journal of its discussion papers in English and French this year.

Film Series: The aim of the film series is to provide a forum for discussion by Member States and civil society partners, and to raise awareness of the Holocaust and the dangers of hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice.

Future activities

Memory serves as a channel through which the victims of the Holocaust can be honoured and as a vehicle for educating future generations on the importance of protecting the dignity and worth of each individual, regardless of race or religious belief. In developing a meaningful programme of outreach, the Department of Public Information will continue to consult broadly with Holocaust and genocide experts around the world. Through its many presentations to civil society groups

and institutions, the programme will continue to forge partnerships that help to increase its outreach potential.

The programme will also continue to provide educational materials on combating anti-Semitism to the global network of United Nations information centres. Developed by its partners Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights/OSCE and the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, a three-module set of guidelines for educators will help youth better understand the life and experience of the Jewish people, how the Holocaust came about and the ongoing threat of hatred today. Module 1 is on the history of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust; module 2 covers contemporary forms of anti-Semitism; and module 3 looks at anti-Semitism as one of many forms of discrimination. The materials also deal with the workings of prejudice in general, showing students the impact that bias can have both on individuals and on whole societies.

The Department will also partner with the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre and Museum to provide age-appropriate educational materials on the Holocaust for primary schoolchildren to the United Nations information centres in English and French.