

Holocaust and Genocide Review (HGR) Information Resources  
New Initiatives in Genocide Studies and Prevention  
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**Featured Organization Dedicated to  
Genocide Awareness and Prevention**

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*In each issue of GPN we profile a unique organization that contributes to a further development in our field. In this inaugural issue, we are proud to profile the Committee for the Gardens of the Righteous Worldwide, whose motto is: "There is a tree for every person that opted for good over evil."*



**Committee for the Gardens of the Righteous Worldwide**

"There is a tree for every person that opted for good over evil. "

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The *Committee for the Gardens of the Righteous Worldwide* first started in Milan in 1999 and was officially formed in 2001. It is chaired by Gabriele Nissim, a historian and author of several books on the subject (*Ebrei Invisibili, L'uomo che fermò Hitler, Il Tribunale del Bene, Una bambina contro Stalin*) and includes among its founding members Pietro Kuciukian, chairman of the *International Committee of the Righteous for the Armenians*, a member of the Union of Armenians in Italy, the author of books on the Armenian genocide and on the *Righteous for the Armenians* (*Le terre di Nairi, Dispersi, Voci nel deserto*) and honorary consul of Armenia in Italy. Sarajevo witnessed the formation of *Gariwosa*, the section of the Committee for Bosnia-Herzegovina (*Gardens of the Righteous Worldwide Sarajevo*), chaired by Svetlana Broz, the author of *Good People in an Evil Time*.

The Committee's aim is to heighten awareness and understanding of the *Righteous* through:

1. creating places of remembrance (small "gardens" in parts of the world that witnessed genocides, mass extermination and crimes against humanity in the 20th century). These gardens are to be planted with trees symbolically representing the *Righteous*, following the example of the Yad Vashem *Garden of the Righteous* in Jerusalem ;
2. setting up prizes to be awarded to those who have distinguished themselves on the issue of the *Righteous* (either with

specific action or by taking a stand to safeguard memory);

3. reflecting on the experience of the *Righteous* in the genocides of the 20th century - both in historical, philosophical and legal terms - by means of a series of cultural activities: conferences with leading international experts, debates, book presentations, essays, research, documentaries, discussions in schools, publications;
4. involving local, national and international institutions;
5. developing an Internet site with a collection of documentation, papers and links with other sites.

### Activities

After planting *Gardens for the Righteous* in certain symbolic places, such as Yerevan, in Armenia, and proposing one for Sarajevo, the *Committee* involved Milan's City Hall in the creation of a *Garden of the Righteous* in memory of those who have opposed genocides in every corner of the world and who still oppose crimes against humanity wherever they are committed today. The very first *Garden of the Righteous* in the world thus came into being on 24 January 2003, at Monte Stella in Milan. In November 2008 an association was formed to manage the garden, consisting of the *Committee* itself along with Milan's City Hall and the Union of Italian Jewish Communities.

In the meantime, gardens and other spaces dedicated to the *Righteous* have sprung up all over Italy, including those in Palermo, Padua, Turin, Linguaglossa and Levico Terme.

In December 2000, in Padua, we organized our first international conference on the subject of the *Righteous*, in cooperation with Padua City Hall's Department of Culture and with Padua University. Entitled *There is always an option to say "yes" or "no". The Righteous against the genocides of Armenians and Jews*, the conference compared the events connected with the extermination of the Armenian population in Turkey in 1915-16, with the only consultation conducted on the issue so far, namely that of the *Yad Vashem Commission for the Righteous*, linked to the Holocaust.

In December 2003, in Milan, we organized the international conference *The Righteous in the Gulag. The value of moral resistance to Soviet totalitarianism*. One section was entirely devoted to the Italian victims and it saw the participation of some of the leading dissidents of that time in the USSR, and of key exponents of the debate in Italy. Following that conference, a tree in the *Garden of the Righteous Worldwide* was dedicated to Andrei Sakharov and, in November 2005, the *Parco Valsesia* was dedicated to the Italian victims of Stalinism. In June 2008 a delegation of the *Committee*, led by Gabriele Nissim, went to St. Petersburg, to the *Levashovo Memorial Cemetery* - which commemorates the victims of Soviet persecution - to inaugurate a stele dedicated to the Italians, in the presence of the highest authorities of the two countries.

Over the years, we have organized debates, book presentations and seminars with students, such as a cycle of meetings at Milan's Casa Armena with certain exemplary figures on their experience of moral resistance: the consul Antonio Costa in Rwanda, professor Jurij Malcev in the *GULag*, the publisher Ragip Zarakolu in Turkey, the lawyer Mehrangiz Kar in Iran.

At the Casa della Cultura we have presented, among others, Pietro Kuciukian's book *Voci nel deserto* and invited Khaled Fouad Allam to speak about relations between Islam and the West. Svetlana Broz from Sarajevo came to Milan's Bicocca University to talk about her struggle for remembrance and reconciliation in Bosnia. Every year, in Bologna, a final conference is held on the work done by the schools belonging to the "Storia e memoria" network; this is an educational project on the *Righteous* in the history of the 20th century, to which our *Committee* provides scientific and logistic support.

All over Italy we organize presentations of Gabriele Nissim's books on the subject of the Righteous, and for this we were received in Rome by the President of the Republic and by the Chamber of Deputies, and in Strasbourg by the European Parliament.

**The Gariwo website**  
**URL: [www.gariwo.net](http://www.gariwo.net)**

The Gariwo website is the Committee's main instrument for publicizing the subject of the Righteous and the exemplary figures whose names have often remained unknown. The website takes the acronym of the English version of the Committee (*Gardens of the Righteous Worldwide*) and includes an Italian version and a shorter English version, which refers to the events, initiatives and material of greatest interest to international readers.

Our website provides references about all our activities, in the Events section, as well as a collection of documentary material, biographies, articles, reports, exhibitions, book and film reviews, videos, links, educational programmes, reflections and further insight into relevant issues.