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SPEECH DELIVERED BY ANKARA UNIVERSITY RECTOR PROF. DR. ERKAN İBİŞ ON INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Prof. Dr. Erkan İBİŞ

Blog No: 11
27.01.2017

January 27, 2017

Dear Minister, Dear Ambassadors, Dear Head of the Turkish Jewish Community, Dear Guests, Ladies and Gentleman.

The 27th of January, by a decision taken in 2005 at the United Nations General Assembly, has been designated as the Remembrance Day for the victims of the Holocaust.

During the years of the Second World War, millions of people from different countries, majority of whom were Jewish, were massacred or left to die in concentration camps.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp, which was saved from the Nazis in January 27th 1945, was a disgrace in human history, as well as others like Dachau and Ravensbrück.

This camp, where millions were subjected to torture and ruthless experiments, is used today as a museum to exhibit the pain and the tragedy of the Holocaust.

It should be our duty as human beings to ask ourselves and others what the Holocaust is.

What is the Holocaust? It is one of the darkest pages of human history, an unparalleled violence and a disgrace, hijacking the future of humanity.

What is the Holocaust? It is the ugly proof of how people can oppress other people and commit limitless atrocities if bogged down by racism and discrimination.

What is the Holocaust? It is a merciless massacre of not only specific ethnicities or

political tendencies but humanity as a whole, as well as human dignity.

What is the Holocaust? It is the annihilation of humanity by humans, eradication of all ethical values, innocence and compassion.

So, what is humanity**?**

Humanity; is being neutral to different languages, religions, colors and origins. Accepting equality of identities, not seeing any one superior to the other and reaching the level of consciousness of being a citizen of the world.

Humanity; is rejecting all kinds of intolerance, hate speech and violence.

Humanity; is understanding, feeling and internalizing the pain suffered.

Here today, we speak of humanity.

Here today, we remember the millions who lost their lives during this genocide.

Here today, we are remembering the Holocaust so that similar events never happen again.

Here today, we discuss how to mend the human values and honor that was heavily damaged.

Here today, we talk about deservedly being a Citizen of the World, feeling the pain of every soul that has suffered and still suffering and the importance of the necessity and protection of peace and calm today.

Here today, we talk about the things to do, to research, to question, to read and write, in order to prevent such crimes from reoccurring ever again.

Primo Levi, in his books The Drowned and The Saved and The Truce, mentions that he has written them in order for humanity to remember the pain suffered and for human honor not to be tarnished again. Wieslaw Kielar & Anne Frank also wrote about their memories about the concentration camps which are also well known and touching examples.

Dear Guests,

The aim of the Holocaust was not only to kill innocent people, but also to tarnish human honor which is indispensable for our survival, and thus it was the self-trivialization of mankind. Therefore, no one should forget the people who suffered during the Holocaust, who lost their lives and the struggles of those who still bear the pain of their suffering in their hearts. These sufferings should be remembered as lessons for future generations.

The decision of the UN to designate an International Holocaust Remembrance Day is an

important contribution to the objective of all nations living in peace.

Living in a peaceful world is our common responsibility today. Mankind by birth, is inclined to do good, the important thing is to reach for the good and act with human dignity.

In Ankara University, we today believe as we did in the past, in friendship, peace, reconciliation and unity for humanity. We stand against racism, xenophobia, hate speech, discrimination and all acts threatening human lives, like terrorism and war. We consign to perdition the killers of humanity, the culprits of the Holocaust.

On the 72nd Anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, we remember all the victims of the Holocaust with respect and we wish for peace and friendship for all nations of the world.

About the author:

To cite this article: Prof. Dr. Erkan İBİŞ. 2026. "SPEECH DELIVERED BY ANKARA UNIVERSITY RECTOR PROF. DR. ERKAN İBİŞ ON INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY ." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Blog No.2017 / 11. January 27. Accessed November 22, 2026. https://www.avim.org.tr/public/index.php/Blog/SPEECH-DELIVERED-BY-ANKARA-UNIVERSITY-RECTOR-PROF-DR-ERKAN-IBIS-ON-INTERNATIONAL-HOLOCAUST-REMEMBRANCE-DAY

Süleyman Nazif Sok. No: 12/B Daire 3-4 06550 Çankaya-ANKARA / TÜRKİYE
Tel: +90 (312) 438 50 23-24 • **Fax**: +90 (312) 438 50 26
@avimorgtr
https://www.facebook.com/avrasyaincelemelerimerkezi
E-Posta: info@avim.org.tr
http://avim.org.tr

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