



COMMISSIONER VĚRA JOUROVÁ

KEYNOTE SPEECH AT HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

LOCATION: PALAIS DES ACADEMIES, RUE DUCALE 1

DATE AND TIME: 24/01/2017, 17H00

MEETING OBJECTIVE: DELIVER THE KEYNOTE SPEECH ON HOLOCAUST
REMEMBRANCE DAY

MEMBER RESPONSIBLE:

DG CONTACT & TEL NO: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

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STEERING BRIEF

Context

International Holocaust Remembrance Day, 27 January

Based on the initiative of former German President, the 27 January was declared in 2005 International Holocaust Remembrance Day by the United Nations, marking at the time the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi extermination camp in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Every year the European Commission President issues a statement on this occasion. On 26 January, for the third time, a Training Seminar for EU officials with the Memorial of the House of the Wannsee conference is organised by DG Justice. A premiere film-screening of 'Denial' organised together with the European-Jewish Congress and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum will take place on 26 January with First Vice-President Timmermans. On 30 January, you will open an exhibition on Holocaust Remembrance in the Berlaymont.

The Conference – "What man is only history tells, 24 January, AJC- KAS – Israeli Embassy at the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day

You are invited to deliver a keynote speech at the common commemoration ceremony on 24 January 2017 by the American-Jewish Committee, the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation and the Embassy of the State of Israel. The full programme is attached. The other keynote speech will be given by **Rabbi Israel Meir Lau**, former Chief Rabbi of Israel and current Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. Following the keynote speeches you will participate in a panel discussion with **Yohan Benizri**, President of the Belgian Federation of Jewish organisations and **Ester Voet**, Editor-in-Chief of the New Israelite Weekly (NED).

Rabbi Lau will focus his keynote speech on his own life story. He survived the Holocaust in the Concentration camp Buchenwald. Most of his family members perished during the holocaust (see biography attached). He will link the story of the Holocaust to contemporary Antisemitism. The keynote speech of Rabbi Sacks on the occasion of the EP conference "The future of Jewish communities in Europe" can give some hints to Rabbi Lau's keynote speech regarding Antisemitism. (see attached)

Organisations involved

Next to the Israeli Embassy this event is co-organized with the American Jewish Congress and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. A similar event was organized last year at the occasion by the three partners.

American Jewish Committee

The American Jewish Committee (AJC) describes itself as the leading global Jewish advocacy organization for over a century. With offices across the United States and around the globe, and partnerships with Jewish communities worldwide, AJC works to enhance the well-being of the Jewish people and to advance human rights and democratic values for all. You met recently with the AJC Board (November 2016) and its Secretary General David Harris.

Konrad Adenauer Foundation

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung is one of the main political foundations of the Federal Republic of Germany. Through its activities and projects, the Foundation aims to actively and substantially contribute to international cooperation and understanding. KAS is regularly organising events together with the AJC in Brussels on the European Jewish community,

Antisemitism and EU-Israel relations.

Objectives

Objective 1

Remind of the essential importance of the legacy of the Holocaust for the European project and to preserve its memory against historical revisionism, Holocaust denial and Antisemitism.

Objective 2

Stress the dedication of the EU to uproot Antisemitism stemming from the right, the left or religious extremism.

Objective 3

Outline the outcomes of the 10th EU-Israel Seminar to combat Racism, Xenophobia and Antisemitism in December in Jerusalem and announce your foreseen visit to Israel

SPEECH

Sent seperately

DEFENSIVES

What is the EU's position regarding the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement?

In line with my colleague, HRVP Mogherini, I can only stress the **EU's firm rejection of Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS)** attempts to isolate Israel.

In the context of fighting Antisemitism here in Europe we are particularly worried about the negative repercussions activities by the BDS movement may have on Jews and in particular Jewish students across Europe.

Member States take varying positions with regard to BDS which the EU does not influence. This is reflected also in recent court rulings in some Member States of which the European Union has taken note.

Particularly the encouragement of boycotts against cultural and academic institutions or artists by BDS within the EU is contradicting the EU's stand on non-discrimination and freedom of expression.

Why is the European Union not better protecting the Jewish communities?

Member States are fully responsible for guaranteeing the security of its citizens. They are aware of the increasing security risks for Jews and Jewish institutions and scaled up on the backdrop of recent

attacks, notably in France, Denmark and Belgium, protection mechanism.

Why is the Commission not more outspoken against Anti-Israel hatred/Antizionism?

The Commission fully acknowledges that **Antisemitism can hide behind Antizionism**. This is the case whenever the right of self-determination of the Jewish people or the right of the existence of the State of Israel is put into question. Whoever negates the diversity of religions, languages and cultures in Israel makes the first step on a slippery slope that may lead to antisemitic prejudices.

On the other side, criticism of the Israel government or its policies, for example with view to the Westbank, cannot be regarded as Antisemitic.

Why is the European Commission not reacting on recent actions by the Polish government to influence Remembrance policies?

Each Member State has its own approach to remember its history but, in the interests of reconciliation, the memory of crimes must be a collective memory, shared and promoted, where possible, by us all.

Together with my commissioner colleagues, I stressed on the Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian

regimes that the **preservation of historical memory** and our commitment to democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law, remains more important than ever.

In this context, I very much welcome the statements made by Polish President Duda on his visit to Israel in which he stresses the importance of comprehensive, unrestricted research about events and processes during the Holocaust period.

EU assistance in Area C

The EU is committed to promoting the economic and social development of Palestinians living in Area C and to catering for their basic human development needs as well as their humanitarian needs.

EU assistance is provided in situations where Israel does not fulfil its duty, as the occupying power, to cater to such basic needs that include the right to adequate housing, family life, private property, education, health and other human rights.

In doing so, the EU acts in accordance with International Law, universally binding norms of Human Rights Law and the Oslo Accords.

Will the interpretative notice be binding for Member States? Will Member States be forced to follow the guidance issued by the Commission?

This notice does not create any new legislative rules, it aims to provide further clarity on the existing rules. While it reflects the Commission's understanding of the relevant EU legislation, enforcement remains the primary responsibility of Member States and the Commission has so far not received any evidence of any issue. The Commission ensures, as guardian of the Treaties, compliance with these obligations of Member States. The Notice is without prejudice to the interpretation which the Court of Justice may provide.

Are these measures discriminatory since Israel is the only country that has been singled out by the EU?

This decision is not discriminatory and it is not against Israel. The EU has a privileged trading relationship with Israel. Products originating in Israel within its internationally recognised borders benefit from preferential tariff treatment and, in some cases, from trade facilitation measures upon their entry into the European Union.

This decision amounts to a boycott, as called for by the BDS movement.

The EU does not support the so-called 'BDS' approach (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) against Israel. The EU's policy on distinguishing between pre-1967 borders and settlements is not a boycott, nor an attempt to limit cooperation with Israel. We have always rejected boycotts towards Israel.

EU funding being used to pay families of terrorists?

Allegations of the EU supporting terror are unfounded and unacceptable. Allocation of the EU financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority (incl. UNRWA) has been subject to stringent and permanent monitoring.

The EU has been a long-term supporter of the Palestinian Authority and a key contributor to the Palestinian state-building efforts. This policy has been in line with European strategic interests related to peace and stability in its neighbourhood.

EU assistance is in full compliance with internationally endorsed and mutually accepted agreements, for instance the Oslo Accords of 1993 or Road map for peace of 2003 (UNSC Res. 1515). The EU does not provide general budget support for the Palestinian Authority but targeted financial support, which does not include any funds for families of Palestinians killed in terrorist acts or indicted for such acts.

Terrorism, incitement to violence and hate speech are key concerns of the EU external policy. The Commission and the EEAS pay constant attention to this problem, including in the context of the Middle East peace process. HRVP Mogherini has repeatedly discussed terrorist acts and incitement with PM Netanyahu and President Abbas. In February this year the Middle East Quartet Principals, including HR/VP, published their Statement after a meeting in Munich, in which they condemned acts of terror and called upon all parties to reject incitement.

Why did the EU not encourage member States to vote against the UNESCO proposal on the Holy Sites in Jerusalem?

The EU as a whole is not a party to the UNESCO Executive Board or World Heritage Council.

Jerusalem is a city sacred to three religions. The EU common position is clearly reflected in successive Council conclusions, recalling the special significance of the holy sites and the importance of upholding the status quo for the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. The EU has no intention in any context to deny the connection between the Jewish people and the Temple Mount.

BACKGROUND

Working definition on Antisemitism

Following the adoption by unanimity of a definition of Antisemitism by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in May this year (31 IHRA Member States, 24 are EU members), the German Chairmanship of the OSCE attempted to adopt the same definition by unanimity at the plenary in December. However, Russian opposition prevented the adoption of the definition. Also, you should be aware that some of the examples annexed to the definition, notably regarding Israel, remain controversial for few Member States.

At the occasion of Holocaust Remembrance Day 2017 Commissioner Jourová will mention in her speech: "Antisemitism today appears in many forms and is not always easy to unmask. In May 2016 the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, where 24 EU Member States are member, adopted by unanimity a definition of Antisemitism as a non-legally binding tool. The Commission welcomes any useful tool aiming at preventing and combating Antisemitism. At the occasion of this year's Holocaust Remembrance Day we will make the IHRA definition available on our website dedicated to the fight against Antisemitism."

Awareness-raising about the Holocaust within the Commission

26 January. At the occasion of Holocaust Remembrance day 2017, 26th January, DG JUST will organise like in previous years together with the Memorial of the Wannsee Conference, a one-day training for about 70 civil servants on the role of civil servants in bringing about the Holocaust.

26 January, The European Commission, together with the European Jewish Congress and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, is also organising a premiere screening of the film "Denial" (Release in the UK on 27 January, the rest of Europe in April) that will take place on 26 January, 19:30 in Brussels (Cinema UCG Toison d'Or). After the screening, Deborah Lipstadt will debate with First Vice-President Timmermans, moderated by Sarah J. Bloomfield of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. The Commission is co-funding this event.

30 January. An exhibition and discussion with survivors will take place in the Berlaymont.

10th EU-Israel seminar on racism, xenophobia and Antisemitism

The event took place in a very positive atmosphere with both sides seeing a clear need to address the challenge of rising Antisemitism in Europe and beyond. It was an occasion to take stock of ongoing activities and to discuss further practical ways of cooperation between the EU and Israel. Efforts at improving the efficiency of taking down hate speech from online fora were identified as a priority for joint action.

In detail:

In their introduction **the Israeli side** recalled that the EU and Israel were like-minded in their fight against discrimination, xenophobia and racism and expressed hope that anti-Semitism would feature in the EU-Israel Partnership Priorities. Israel expressed thanks for the EU's joint position on a formal definition of anti-Semitism at the OSCE, while expressing disappointment that a final agreement could not be reached and encouraging the EU to adopt a

formal definition.

Highlighting results achieved since the previous seminar, Israel welcomed the agreement reached by the EU with IT companies but expressed frustration that the latter were not more proactive in addressing the problem of online hate speech. Israel felt more could be done on the IT companies' side through the use of appropriate algorithms, even if this was simple.

The EU side reported about the recent first evaluation of the implementation of Code of Conduct with IT companies. While IT companies have shown their willingness to cooperate by stepping up staff training and supporting NGOs financially, more needs to be done with regards to the amount of take downs (only 28%) and the period of assessment (only 40% reviewed within 24 hours).

The EU is for now allowing this form of self-regulation, but IT companies could become subject to general publication laws, taking away their liability exemption and recognizing the evolution of contextual understanding of content placed by users on these companies' websites. Such options will stay on the table, but must be used carefully so and not to stifle information flow and kill off fledgling industries.

For 2017, education was highlighted as an important element of a holistic approach to tackling Antisemitism and a key element of addressing prejudice. Limited COM competence in this sphere meant that the initial focus would be on sharing best practice and raising awareness. Regarding migration to the EU, the Commission did not see a direct correlation between the arrival of migrants or refugees and rising anti-Semitism, while expressing awareness that some people may come from regions where Antisemitic stereotypes are prevalent and therefore preventive efforts are needed to address this. On the issue of BDS as raised by Israel, the EU referred to its established position as presented by the HRVP.

Follow-up:

The meeting was summed up in the presence of **Ambassador Rodika Radian**, Deputy Director General for Europe at the MFA. The Israeli side proposed to collaborate further on (a) effective monitoring of social media and discussion sites; (b) to discuss how best to continue the dialogue with IT companies and (c) to look at possible initiatives in the field of education.

Concretely, the EU side proposed that more effective monitoring should be the first target for joint efforts, as work in this area is already quite advanced on both sides. First contacts with the Israeli Ministry of Diaspora Affairs foresee a meeting between relevant Israeli IT companies and NGOs monitoring illegal online hate speech in the context of the Code of conduct in the spring.

Regarding the other two points, dialogue with the IT industry and education, the EU considered that additional internal reflection was necessary before closer cooperation could be envisaged. This notwithstanding, the EU welcomed the support of Israel in keeping up a degree of pressure on IT companies to take further steps to improve their performance on this issue.

Communication on the prevention of violent radicalisation

Among the actions to tackle radicalisation, Erasmus+ plays a key role. As of 2016, priority is given to actions and projects that foster inclusion and promote fundamental values, echoing the objectives of the Paris Declaration of March 2015. As a result, € 400 million is now available to develop new policies and projects supporting these priorities, and an additional €

13 million will be spent on helping to spread and scale up grassroots initiatives. Furthermore, the Commission will propose a Council Recommendation establishing a policy framework on promoting inclusion and fundamental values through education. The objective will be to support Member States in implementing policy reforms and provide guidance to practitioners on the ground. The framework will build on existing knowledge on what works and help disseminate good practices at EU level.

Action Plan on integration of third-state nationals

The Plan includes actions across all the policy areas that are crucial for integration, among them **civic education**. The Commission will: Launch projects to promote intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity and European common values through culture, films and arts (Creative Europe); Launch projects to promote social inclusion through youth and sport (Erasmus+); Propose to give greater priority, within the European Voluntary Service, to activities dedicated to integration of refugees and asylum seekers into their new host communities. In strengthening their integration policies, Member States are encouraged to: Promote exchanges with the host society from the very beginning through volunteering, sport, and culture activities; Increase third country nationals' participation in local democratic structures; Invest in projects and measures aimed at combating prejudice and stereotypes campaigns, education programmes); Fully implement legislation on combating racism and xenophobia and on victims' rights and strictly enforce equal treatment and anti-discrimination legislation; Organise civic orientation programmes for all third country nationals as a way to foster integration into the host society and promote the understanding and respect of EU values.

Challenges to Holocaust Remembrance in Poland

IHRA experts raised serious concerns about existing and proposed legislation in Poland and the negative impact it could have on Holocaust research. A new set of laws imposes prison terms of up to three years on people “who publicly and against the facts, accuse the Polish nation, or the Polish state, [of being] responsible or complicit in Nazi crimes committed by the III. German Reich.”. Yad Vashem as well strongly criticized the proposed legislation.

Main discussion circles around the Jedwabne pogrom in 1941 and the Kielce pogrom in 1946 and the role of Poles in these pogroms.

Polish President Andrzej Duda said on state visit in Israel regarding the pogrom in the city of Kielce in the summer of 1946, during which a mob murdered 42 Holocaust survivors and injured dozens of others: *“The members of my people who took part in the pogrom in Kielce after the end of World War II expelled themselves from the Polish people. That is my deep personal conviction,”* Adding: *“Anyone who expresses anti-Semitic ideas in Poland is like a person who steps on a grave – a despicable act in Polish culture.”*

General developments in Israel (from EEAS)

The political scene in Israel has continued its shift to the right in recent years, and Prime Minister Netanyahu has capitalised on this trend to put together one of the most conservative governments in Israel's history. The ultra-nationalist Yisrael Beitenu party of Avigdor Liberman came into the governing coalition in May, with Liberman (a West Bank settler and one of Israel's most polarizing politicians) appointed as Defence Minister.

The past months have been relatively calm in terms of frequency and intensity of violence,

apart from rockets fired from Gaza on 21 August triggering an unusually tough response from Israel. Gaza cannot afford another war; however there seems to be little interest in escalation on either side. IL appears to have weak interest in the Palestinians and the Middle East peace process (MEPP) at the moment, with its security establishment instead sharply focused on the Hezbollah.

Egypt's FM Shoukry's visit to Israel in July was the first such visit in nine years. It followed President Al-Sissi's offer to help revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. While the US is currently distracted by presidential elections, there are unconfirmed reports that Russia's President Putin plans to host talks between PM Netanyahu and PA President Abbas.

On 12 July the Israeli Knesset passed the so-called "NGO transparency bill", following months of discussions. The law obliges Israeli NGOs that receive more than half of their funding from "foreign public entities" (i.e. governments) to declare this fact in their publications and communications. In practice, the bill applies almost exclusively to human rights NGOs associated with the left of the political spectrum. Israeli legislators rejected the proposal to apply similar reporting requirements to NGOs funded by private foreign sources. The EEAS issued a statement expressing its concern over the new bill, which makes life harder for civil society organisations, going against Israel's liberal democracy and its respect for basic rights.

EU-Israel bilateral cooperation

Israel has excellent cooperation with the EU in various fields but disagrees with the EU policy of making further deepening of relations contingent upon progress in the Middle East peace process (EU has followed a "non-upgrade" policy since 2009, pending such progress). EU considers Israel's settlement policy a real obstacle to peace and has a policy of distinguishing between pre-1967 Israel and the settlements. EU is regularly accused of anti-Israeli bias, as in 2015 when Commission issued interpretative notice on labelling of settlement products. Anti-EU sentiment has grown in recent years as voters shifted to the right allowing PM Netanyahu to assemble one of the most conservative governments in Israel's history.

Overall, good cooperation is continuing between the two sides and Israel is a key partner in the region. The Creative Europe agreement should be ready to sign early next year, and Israel will already be able to participate in this year's call for proposals. EUROPOL agreement is still pending a compromise on the territorial clause. EEAS Deputy Secretary-General Pedro Serrano is travelling to Israel next week for the second EU-Israel Counter Terrorism dialogue (last one was March 2015).

Recent EU-Israel bilateral events were the Sub-Committee on Political Dialogue held in Jerusalem on 5 April (HR issues related to HR in the West Bank and Gaza), the Informal Working Group on Human Rights held in Brussels on 13 April (HR issues inside Israel), the sub-committees on Justice and legal matters (23 May, Brussels) and Social affairs, migration and health (24-25 May, Brussels), Customs Cooperation & Taxation (21 June, Jerusalem) and Energy & Environment (30 June, Brussels).

Israel's President Reuven Rivlin visited Brussels on 20-23 June. He had bilateral meetings with Presidents Tusk (21/06), Schulz (22/06) and Juncker (23/06). He also addressed the EP's plenary session on 22 June.

Area-C / demolitions

IL Minister of Defence Lieberman on 22 August presented a 'carrot and stick' plan for Area C that envisages harsh treatment of Palestinian villages from which terrorists originate and

economic benefits for peaceful villages. The UN has warned it could lead to 'collective punishment'.

Since 1 July, Israel has advanced plans for over 1,000 housing units in occupied East Jerusalem, and 735 units in other settlements in the West Bank (source: UN). According to the UN data (29/8), Israeli security forces have destroyed or confiscated a total of 91 civilian structures in August, displacing 125 Palestinians in Area C, The number of demolitions in 2016 so far greatly exceeds the total number for 2015, and has displaced some 1,200 Palestinians.

Labelling" / Indication of origin of products from Israeli settlements

The EU has a well-defined policy of distinguishing between pre-1967 Israel and settlements, made explicit in FAC conclusions of May 2012. Israeli settlement products cannot be granted preferential customs treatment under the EU-Israel trade agreement (they enter paying WTO MFN duties). Israel subscribes to the principle of differentiation since 2004, when it signed a Technical Arrangement to use postcodes as a means of indicating the geographical origin of products.

In November 2015 the European Commission published the "Interpretative Notice on the indication of origin of goods from the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967", which recalled existing legislation pertaining to settlement products and the need to clearly indicate the origin of goods entering the European market. Public reaction from Israeli officials was however very harsh, with some calling it an immoral decision or accusing the EU of promoting a boycott of Israel. HRVP Mogherini spoke with PM Netanyahu on several occasions to bring EU-IL relations back on track.

EU funding use for financing of families of Palestinian terrorists

The EU is at times accused of allowing its assistance to the Palestinian Authority to be funnelled into compensation funds for families of deceased Palestinian attackers. The EU strongly disputes this.

Temple Mount / Haram al-Sharif

In the 1994 Israel-Jordan peace agreement (article 9), Israel recognized the special role of Jordan in Muslim Holy shrines in Jerusalem and committed itself to give high priority to the Jordanian historic role in these shrines in future negotiations on final status issues.

In the run-up to the Yom Kippur, Eid al-Adha and Sukkot holidays in 2015, clashes erupted as the Israelis restricted Muslim access to this holy site. The Palestinians accused the Israelis of moving towards a more permanent temporal and spatial division of the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif to the benefit of Jewish presence/worship; which would alter the historic status quo. Israel refuted this; blaming the Islamic Movement, the Muslim Brotherhood and the PA of inciting violence. However, Israel admitted concern over potentially harmed relations with Jordan, an important neighbour.

On 23 October 2015, US SoS Kerry brokered an agreement between Israel and Jordan, which included around-the-clock video monitoring of the site. That part of the deal has been difficult to operationalize, but PM Netanyahu also issued a statement reaffirming the status quo; "Israel will continue to enforce its longstanding policy: Muslims pray on the Temple Mount; non-

Muslims visit the Temple Mount."

Tensions could increase at the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif around Jewish holidays in October 2016, much as they did a year ago.

Council conclusions of January 2016: *'The EU recalls the special significance of the holy sites, and calls for upholding the status quo put in place in 1967 for the Temple Mount/al-Haram al-Sharif in line with previous understandings and with respect to Jordan's special role.'*

Council Conclusions (2014/11): *The EU appeals for full respect of the Holy Sites. Any change of the status quo would have deeply destabilizing effects. The EU fully acknowledges the special role of Jordan in relation to the Muslim Holy Shrines in Jerusalem*

The Middle East Peace Process / Quartet Report

The Middle East Quartet Report, published 1 July 2016, highlighted threats to the two-state solution posed by incitement, settlement expansion and the lack of Palestinian unity, and thereby challenged prevailing narratives. Israel expressed openness to further engagement with the Quartet, while since then contravening its recommendations by advancing plans of settlement expansion and by demolishing Palestinian structures in Area C.

The Palestinians have rejected the report, citing its lack of reference to international law, claiming it 'equalizes the occupier with the occupied'. On 8 July, EU28 endorsed the Report's recommendations in a Declaration as a 'contribution to creating the conditions for the two-state solution'. These also contained some security-related points and emphasized need for coordination with the Arab Peace Initiative (API) and France, which held a Middle east Peace Summit on 15 January 2017.

UNESCO vote on Holy Sites:

Some resolutions on Jerusalem adopted by the UNESCO Executive Board and the World Heritage Committee (WHC- Treaty body of the World Heritage Convention) have triggered sharp criticism by Israel since they only mention Al Aqsa/Haram al-Sharif without mentioning the Temple Mount. Israel has demarched the EU and several EU MS individually.

The executive board has 58 members, including 11 EU MS. A simple majority is needed for adoption of texts. On 13 October, 24 MS voted yes and the text was passed in a sub-commission. Five EU members on the board (NL, EE, DE, UK and LT) voted no; maintaining their long-standing position, four (SE, ES, SI and FR) moved from yes-vote to abstention, while EL and IT maintained their traditional position; abstention.

The WHC has 21 MS, including four EU MS; FI, PT, PL, SI. Its text was adopted after a procedural battle by a secret ballot (10 for; 2 against) in 26 October.

As initial outreach indicated it would be difficult to reconcile the divergent positions among EU MS behind an EU line flowing from existing EU policy, the EU Delegation to UNESCO has refrained from coordination.

The EU as a whole is not a party to the UNESCO Executive Board or World Heritage Council. Jerusalem is a city sacred to three religions. The EU common position is clearly reflected in successive Council conclusions, recalling the special significance of the holy sites and the importance of upholding the status quo for the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif. The EU has no intention in any context to deny the connection between the Jewish people and the Temple Mount.

CV

Rabbi Israel Meir Lau



Yisrael Meir Lau (ישראל מאיר לאו; born 1 June 1937) is the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, and Chairman of Yad Vashem. He previously served as the **Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel** from 1993 to 2003. Lau was born on 1 June 1937, in the Polish town of Piotrków Trybunalski. His father, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Lau the last Chief Rabbi of the town, was killed in the Treblinka extermination camp. Yisrael Meir is the 38th generation in an unbroken family chain of rabbis. As a seven-year-old, after traumatic separation from his mother, Lau was imprisoned in a Nazi slave labor camp and then in Buchenwald extermination camp. He has attributed his unlikely survival to heroic efforts of his older brother Naphtali Lau-Lavie who concealed him, at constant risk, and enlisted other prisoners in this effort. Yisrael Meir was freed from the Buchenwald concentration camp in 1945. He became a poster child for miraculous survival, and the inhumanity of the Nazi regime, after U.S. Army chaplain Rabbi Herschel Schachter detected him hiding behind a heap of corpses when the camp was liberated. Lau has credited a teen prisoner with protecting him in the camp. His entire family was murdered, with the exception of his older brother, Naphtali Lau-Lavie, his half brother, Yehoshua Lau-Hager, and his uncle already living in Mandate Palestine.

Lau immigrated to Mandate Palestine with his brother Naphtali in July 1945. He was ordained as a rabbi in 1961. Lau is the father of three sons and five daughters. In 2008, Lau was appointed Chairman of Yad Vashem, succeeding Tommy Lapid. In 1988, after the death of his father-in-law, Lau was appointed to serve as chief rabbi of Tel Aviv, a position he held until 1993. When Lau met the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson in 1992, the Rebbe told Lau to finish his work in Tel Aviv, as he would soon be chosen to become the Chief Rabbi of Israel. In 1993, Lau was elected Chief Rabbi of Israel. He served as Chief Rabbi till 2003.

On 9 June 2005, Lau was reinstated as Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv returning to the post he served from 1985 until 1993. Lau has often been characterized as the "**consensus rabbi**", and has close ties to both Haredi and Modern Orthodox Judaism, particularly in regard to his politics, which have been characterized as moderate Zionist.

He is respected internationally by Jews and non-Jews alike, and is one of the few figures in the Haredi world who has managed to gain the trust and admiration of both the Sephardic and Ashkenazic population. Lau has received some negative attention for his stances and remarks on non-Orthodox denominations of Judaism.

In 2005, Lau was awarded the Israel Prize for his lifetime achievements and special contribution to society and the State of Israel. On 14 April 2011, he was awarded the Legion of Honor (France's highest accolade) by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, in recognition of his efforts to promote interfaith dialogue.

Views

As a survivor, Rabbi Lau intensely deals with Holocaust memory and commemoration through his worldwide speeches and appearances, as well as in his writings, including his best-selling autobiography *Do Not Harm the Child*. During his tenure as Chief Rabbi of Israel he worked to establish closer ties with the Catholic Church, ties that he still continues to strengthen. Rabbi Israel Meir Lau is the Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council.

In 1993, Rav Lau had an hour-long meeting with John Paul II at the Pope's summer residence of Castel Gandolfo near Rome sought to offer the Vatican's moral support to the latest peace moves in the Middle East. The visit was the first between a Pope and one of Israel's chief rabbis since the founding of the Jewish state in 1948.

"Let's sit down together and let's live together. We always knew how to die together. The time has come for us to know also how to live together, said Lau, calling for co-operation and dialogue between all Jews (Jerusalem, 14 February 1999). At the 2006 commemoration of the massacre of Babi Yar, Lau pointed out that if the world had reacted, perhaps the Holocaust might never have happened. Implying that Hitler was emboldened by this impunity, Lau speculated:

"Maybe, say, this Babi Yar was also a test for Hitler. If on 29 September and 30 September 1941 Babi Yar may happen and the world did not react seriously, dramatically, abnormally, maybe this was a good test for him. So a few weeks later in January 1942, near Berlin in Wannsee, a convention can be held with a decision, a final solution to the Jewish problem. Maybe if the very action had been a serious one, a dramatic one, in September 1941 here in Ukraine, the Wannsee Conference would have come to a different end, maybe".

Please find [here](#) his speech on the occasion of the March of the Living 2015 at Auschwitz Birkenau and [here](#) from 2016.

Yohan benizri



Yohan Benizri was elected on 13 October 2016 as President of the Coordination Committee of the Jewish organisations of Belgium (présidence du Comité de Coordination des Organisations juives de Belgique (CCOJB).)

Ester Voet



Esther Hilah Voet is a Dutch journalist and editor. She worked as a journalist for the newspaper De Telegraaf, the gossip magazine Story, and the media company RTL Nederland. In 2009 she became the editor in chief for the Jewish weekly Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad where she worked until 2011. From 2009 to 2015 she was director of the Centrum Informatie

en Documentatie Israël, an organization which aims to secure the peace and prosperity of the Jewish people anywhere in the world.

By the end of the 1980s she was a reporter for Story, a weekly tabloid dedicated to celebrity news and gossip. She left because she was tired of the superficial nature of her work, and afterward apologized to people she felt she had hurt in her articles. She spent two years, from 2009 to 2011, working for the Jewish weekly Nieuw Israëlitisch Weekblad, and then became director of the Centrum Informatie en Documentatie Israël, or CIDI, a position that requires her to comment publicly on such matters as Holocaust education, Nazi literature (the ongoing debate over the accessibility of Mein Kampf), and Antisemitism. She caused some uproar in the Dutch Jewish community when she disinvited Geert Wilders from signing a petition condemning Antisemitism. During a speech to the Knesset she warned about the growing Antisemitism she saw among the Dutch.

Programme



“ *What man is,
only history tells* ”

George Mosse

24.1.2017

International Holocaust
Remembrance Day

keynote speakers:

Rabbi Israel Meir Lau

former Chief Rabbi of Israel

Commissioner Věra Jourová

Commissioner for Justice,
Consumers and Gender Equality

followed by a panel discussion

with

Yohan BENIZRI, President, Belgian Federation of Jewish
Organizations (CCOJB)

Esther Voet, Editor-in-chief of the New Israelite Weekly,
The Netherlands

MEP - TBC

Palais des Académies , Rue Ducale 1, 1000

16:30-17:00 | Registration

17:00-18:45 | Keynote speeches & panel discussion

18:45-19:30 | Light dinner

please RSVP to: Assistent1.Bruessel@kas.de by January 19