



4th April 2006

DEHUMANISATION OF LANGUAGE IS THE FIRST TRIGGER OF GENOCIDE
"It's neighbours who kill neighbours - genocide is closer than you think"

(If you would like photographs, a copy of the full report or a copy of the conference programme please contact Aideen or Nick on 020 7618 9100 or at hmd@luther.co.uk)

A Holocaust Survivor was joined by survivors from more recent genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda at the first Holocaust Memorial Day Conference. They shared their experiences of how genocide starts with name-calling and the dehumanisation of certain groups of people,

Local community organisers for Holocaust Memorial Day from across the UK came together with academics and survivors of the Holocaust, and Bosnian and Rwandan genocides to discuss the theme for HMD 2007 the Dignity of Difference. They concluded that genocides, starting with the Holocaust, spring from the same roots and the lessons of past events still have a frightening relevance to what is happening in the world today. They agreed that Holocaust Memorial Day must be used as a day of action to avert genocide by putting pressure on the international community to act, and to remind all people of the dangers of exclusion and intolerance of the differences in others.

Prof. David Cesarani of the University of Royal Holloway said:

"One of the key indicators of the threat of genocide is the language that regimes use to talk about their own people: it is the language of dehumanisation. Today, we hear it in Burma about the hill people and in Sudan about the black people"

"Things have improved since 1945. In South Africa, East Timor and Sierra Leone ordinary people and the international community have successfully intervened to prevent genocide. This provides cause for optimism, but things may not look that way if you are in a camp in Darfur waiting for the international community to act."



Susan Pollock, Holocaust Survivor, said:

“The Jews and other groups murdered by the Nazis suffered exclusion long before the Germans came. We speak about our experience with the aim of creating a better society that is more tolerant, inclusive. I’m interested in using Holocaust Memorial Day to educate the minds of all people.”

Survivor of the Rwandan genocide, Beata Uwazaninka-Smith, said:

“Genocide doesn’t come from nowhere. It starts with name calling - Tutsi women are arrogant, don’t marry a Tutsi woman, don’t touch Tutsi women”

Survivor of the Bosnian genocide, Kemal Pervanic, seconded this:

“Most Bosnians learned to regard all Serbs as murderers, killers: they believed something was wrong with them. I don’t think like that.

“It’s OK to be different. We are all different, but on the other hand we are all the same, with the same rights to life, love, dignity. Lots of people aren’t prepared to share these values with others who are less fortunate than them.”

Beata Uwazaninka-Smith continued:

“We cannot compare different sufferings, but survivors of genocide share the same pain and our loss. None of us can choose where or how we are born. We should accept each other the way we are”

Chair of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, Stephen Smith, concluded the conference saying that:

“The survivors here today instruct us, show us and enlighten us. They should never have experienced what they did. In every case of genocide an ideology is at work to exclude, to deny identity and humanity”

“Its neighbours who kill neighbours - genocide is closer than you think”

ENDS



For more information please contact Aideen Lee, Clare Haines, or Nick Faith at Luther Pendragon on 020 7618 9100 or email [**hmd@luther.co.uk**](mailto:hmd@luther.co.uk)

About Holocaust Memorial Day

Holocaust Memorial Day has been an annual event in the UK since 2001. In November 2005, the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution designating 27th January as the annual Holocaust Memorial Day internationally. The date was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The purpose of Holocaust Memorial Day is to remember and learn from the lessons of the past. It provides a way into discussing difficult issues such as racism, xenophobia, discrimination and bigotry across different faiths and diverse communities.

Holocaust Memorial Day provides an opportunity to commemorate all those who were victims of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution, as well as the victims of racism and discrimination in other genocides, and to show that the events of the Holocaust remain relevant to everyone in the UK today.

About The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust

The Home Office has handed day-to-day responsibility for Holocaust Memorial Day to the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust. HM the Queen is patron of the Trust, which is an independent charitable organisation responsible for taking forward the delivery of Holocaust Memorial Day from 2006 onwards. The Trustees are Dr Stephen Smith, Professor David Cesarani, Jane Clements, Paula Cowan, Louise Ellman MP, Jack Gilbert, Henry Grunwald QC, Agnes Grunwald-Spier, Judith Hassan, Ben Helfgott, Fahmia Huda, Rabbi Barry Marcus, Karen Pollock, and David Russell. The day to day activity of the Trust is managed by Chief Executive, Nick Joseph.