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ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE

Letter dated 9 November 1988 from the Acting Permanent Representative
of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On the instructions of my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you a
statement by the President of Israel.

The statement was made at a ceremony held today (9 November) at Yad Vashem,
the Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, in Jerusalem, commemorating
"Kristallnacht", the infamous "night of broken glass", which took place 50 years
ago today, marking the beginning of the Holocaust, in which 6 million Jewish men,
women and children were exterminated in the greatest genocide in human history.

I would be grateful if this letter and its enclosure would be circulated under
items 91 and 97 of the agenda of the General Assembly.

(Signed) Johanan BEIN
Ambassador
Acting Permanent Representative

Annex

Statement by H.E. Mr. Chaim Herzog, President of Israel,
on the fiftieth anniversary of "Kristallnacht"

Fifty years ago, the world witnessed the unleashing of a new form of barbarism directed against the Jewish people and against human civilization. The pogroms of "Kristallnacht" in 1938 constituted yet another link in a long oppressive history of the persecution of the Jewish people. But these pogroms also launched the Nazi onslaught against the Jewish people and against the basic tenets of human culture.

Synagogues were turned into dilapidated ruins. Sacred scrolls were reduced to scorched embers. The streets of Nazi Germany were carpeted in splinters of broken glass, the remnants of Jewish shops. On that very night the executioner's axe was raised, leading to the terrible tragedy of the Jewish people; a tragedy unparalleled in the annals of human history.

Rivers of Jewish blood flowed through occupied Europe. Entire Jewish communities were led to their death and were wiped off the face of the Earth. Millions of Jews, including 2 million children, were cruelly and mercilessly incinerated in the concentration camps. Even today, 50 years later, the mind and soul of man can not conceive the awful dimensions of the tragedy which befell our people.

The Nazis and their henchmen never concealed their determination to systematically destroy every trace and memory of the entire Jewish people - a nation whose religious heritage has endowed humanity the foundations of human morality, the principles of law and justice and the faith that "God created man in his own image".

At the time, no one could foresee the route along which this barbaric régime was to lead the world. It not only brought about a world war involving indescribable destruction, but almost brought about its appalling aim of annihilating an entire nation. Today, a half century later, we can comprehend the enormity of the tragedy and the terrible dimensions of the nightmare inflicted by the Nazis upon our own people and upon the world. We have paid a horrendous price for this lesson and we are entitled to demand, both of ourselves and of other civilized nations, to protect and enshrine this moral lesson and to ensure that it will never be forgotten.

The reign of Nazi terror eventually fell. But has it disappeared? Can we complacently reassure ourselves that its legacy and consequences have been thoroughly uprooted and eliminated? I say it has not. The blood of our slaughtered nation cries from the Earth, demanding our vigilance against new manifestations of racism and barbarism, and against the phenomena of neo-nazism and anti-Semitism. The last wish of the millions of innocent victims of Nazi barbarism would be that our nation, together with the whole civilized world, must persist in the struggle to defeat the forces of evil. We must not lightly dismiss manifestations which might seem to be secondary and of no consequence. It is impossible to know when and where this monster will rear its ugly head and open its jaws again. We must not bend in the face of anti-democratic forces which are striving to revive the evil doctrines of nazism, couched in new misleading guises.

"Kristallnacht" constitutes a landmark in the history of the Jewish nation as well as of the world at large. If one could extract any consolation out of the sea of suffering and pain inflicted upon our people during the Holocaust, it would be enshrined in the significance of the historical lesson. Even after the passage of 50 years this moral lesson is fully alive. Time will not blur it, nor will it dilute the unconceivable depth of its pain and suffering, nor its relevance. All civilized peoples must work together tirelessly to ensure that such a black period in the history of mankind will never recur. We must ensure that those who have been trying to revive the Nazi heritage in its different abhorrent forms will never be able to achieve their aim.

Unfortunately, the assault upon the people of Israel did not end with the defeat of Hitler and his Nazi régime. Thirty-seven years after "Kristallnacht", on this very day, the enemies of the Jewish people instigated yet another campaign against us in the United Nations General Assembly, when they initiated the infamous resolution equating zionism with racism. I was then privileged, as the Permanent Representative to the United Nations, to defend zionism and the Jewish people in the face of that morbid and criminal outburst. I was a witness to the full dimension of anti-Jewish hatred.

As we reflect upon the debate which took place 13 years ago at the United Nations General Assembly, we can, and should, recall, without any self-illusion, that the distinction between zionism and Judaism was completely blurred.

The verbal assault against zionism unleashed against the National Liberation Movement of the Jewish people quickly degenerated into an unconcealed and fully expressed assault upon the Jewish people as a whole. Indeed, the reprehensible manoeuvres employed at this Assembly 13 years ago in the launching of the hateful attack upon zionism simply served as a wily camouflage for an assault upon Jews wherever they are.

As we stand in this holy place, let us not forget the smoke which rose 50 years ago from the ashes of burnt-out synagogues, or the sight of letters of Holy Scripture ascending heavenwards in flames, of the crystal splinters covering Nazi Germany following the destruction of synagogues, of Jewish shops and residential quarters. All these memories forge together into a symbol of unity: the unity of a people, led to slaughter in extermination camps; a symbol of the annihilation of holy communities.

Let us use the memories of these tragic times to build our courage and faith. Let us continue our march towards national unity in our own land and in our own country.

We must all, without exception, protect and defend our country from those who seek its destruction. We owe this not only to our own historical heritage, but also to the sacred memory of our brothers and sisters who marched in unison to their tragic and terrible death. The eternal value of their memory is enshrined not only in lessons drawn from the past, but also in moral imperatives binding the future.
