



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay,

Director-General of UNESCO,

**on the occasion of International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the
Victims of the Holocaust**

27 January 2018

“Nothing has happened since Auschwitz that could reverse or refute Auschwitz. In my writings, the Holocaust could never be present in the past tense.” These are the terrible words of the great Hungarian writer, awarded with the Nobel Prize for literature, Imre Kertész. More than 70 years after the Nazi horror, the transmission of this history is as relevant as ever.

That is why, in the wake of the Council of Europe, the United Nations established an International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust, on 27 January, the date on which the Soviet soldiers entered the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp in 1945. By this decision, the United Nations affirmed both the specific character of the Shoah, the genocide of the Jewish people, as well as its universal reach. The transmission of this history and the remembrance of all the victims of Nazi crimes are a call to strengthen nations' commitment to peace.

While the Shoah inspires boundless reflection on the human species, recalling the possibility of the worst, it also carries a memory that must be forward-looking. This is the message that Samuel Pisar, survivor of Auschwitz and former UNESCO Special Envoy for Holocaust and Genocide Education, has been defending all his life: *“We have a solemn duty to share with our fellow people the memory of what we endured and learned in body and soul. We must warn our children, Jewish and non-Jewish, that the fanaticism and violence that are spreading in our enflamed world again can destroy their universe as they once destroyed mine”*.

This is the theme of the International Day in 2018: *“Holocaust Remembrance and Education: Our Shared Responsibility”*. We all have a role to play – political actors, experts, historians, artists, the educational community and citizens. We can build up

awareness against forgetting, denial, historical revisionism, relativization of crimes and the return of stereotypes that fuel hatred. We can oppose the manipulation of facts by speaking the truth. Combating antisemitism, in whatever form, is at the heart of this fight. This is the spirit of UNESCO's global programme on education about the Holocaust and genocide, and events organized this year at UNESCO Headquarters: the "*Kristallnacht*" exhibition from the Shoah Memorial; the *#Stolen Memory* exhibition presented by the Bad Arolsen International Tracing Service (ITS); the screening of Claude Lanzmann's film "The Four Sisters"; and several round table events to transmit and draw lessons from history.

Audrey Azoulay