

International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust

80 Years since the Liberation of Auschwitz

Monday, 27 January 2025 at 1 p.m.

Room XVIII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Speech of Ambassador Lotte Knudsen, Head of the EU Delegation to the UN in Geneva

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends, dear Mr Levkovits,

Today, we gather to commemorate a solemn milestone: 80 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Nazi concentration and extermination camp that stands as a harrowing reminder of the Holocaust's horrors. Eight decades later, its echoes still compel us to reflect on the lessons of this dark chapter for Europe and for humanity as a whole, and renew our commitment to ensuring such atrocities never happen again.

Auschwitz is, without a doubt, the most recognisable symbol of the Holocaust. Its story embodies the murder of six million Jews throughout Europe. It is also the story of Sinti and Roma, of people with disabilities, of political dissidents, homosexuals, and countless others who were targeted and systematically murdered by the Nazi regime for who they were, what they thought. The Holocaust was not only a crime against specific communities but a devastating failure of humanity itself—an assault on the values of human dignity, equality, and respect for diversity.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in the wake of the Holocaust, was born out of a shared commitment to ensure such horrors would never recur. It envisions a world where human rights are universally respected and protected. Yet, even 80 years after Auschwitz, the principles enshrined in that Declaration are under threat. Alarming, antisemitism, xenophobia and racism are once again on the rise in Europe and beyond. Where we allow hatred and ideology to spread, all too often violence and human rights violations follow.

Primo Levi, a survivor of Auschwitz, wrote: "What happened can happen again. For this reason, it is everyone's duty to reflect on what happened." His words are a call to action. Holocaust denial, distortion, and trivialisation persist in our societies, often magnified online.

We remain steadfast in our resolve not to accept the trivialisation of Nazism or the Holocaust, upholding the duty to remember and educate future generations about the horrors of these atrocities.

Learning about the Holocaust is a vital part of European education but should be commonplace across the globe. We all have a duty to fight against those who deny these historical facts. Education remains our most powerful tool against hatred. I am pleased to see many young faces here today. Students from various schools in Geneva came to take part in this commemoration and to listen to Holocaust survivor Ivan Levkovits.

And to these young people I want to say: Please ensure that two words will continue to resonate also in your generation and those of your future children, once the generation of survivors is no longer with us: Never Again.

'Never again' must not be mere rhetoric—these words must inspire action, solidarity, and an unwavering commitment to human dignity and human rights. Let us carry this responsibility forward together.

By standing as guardians of memory and champions of the values that unite us, we can honour the past and build a future where such atrocities are truly unthinkable. Never Again is now.

Thank you.