

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF COMMEMORATION  
IN MEMORY OF THE VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST**

**27 January 2013**

During the Second World War, millions of people who did not conform to Adolf Hitler's perverted ideology of Aryan perfection – Jews, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, communists, the mentally ill and others – were systematically persecuted, rounded up and transported to death camps. Some were murdered immediately; others cruelly worked to death. Every year on the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau we observe the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust so as never to forget these crimes.

This year's theme – "Rescue During the Holocaust: the Courage to Care" – pays tribute to those who risked their lives and their families to save Jews and others from almost certain death under Nazi rule. The stories of the rescuers vary. Some sheltered the intended victims in their homes; others led families to safety or helped them to obtain the necessary documents to escape. Yet each shares a common thread: courage, compassion and moral leadership.

A number of these accounts have achieved iconic prominence – such as the story of Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat who helped save tens of thousands of Jews in Budapest. But the stories of many of the rescuers are known only to those who benefited from their brave acts. This year's observance is meant to augment the historical record, and give those unsung heroes the regard they deserve.

The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme has produced an educational package on these rescuers. Although acts of genocide illustrate the depths of evil to which individuals and whole societies can descend, the examples of these brave men and women also demonstrate the capacity of humankind for remarkable good, even during the darkest of days.

On this International Day, let us remember all the innocent people who lost their lives during the Holocaust. And let us be inspired by those who had the courage to care – the ordinary people who took extraordinary steps to defend human dignity. Their example can help us build a better world today.