

Israel News Desk

with BPF Secretary
Steve Lloyd

February 2020

It is only right to begin this news desk by remembering the Holocaust. Monday, 27th January is the date designated in 2005 by the UN to be the International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the day that marks the liberation of Auschwitz.

In the biggest event since the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel, world leaders and royalty descended on Israel to mark the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp in Poland.

One after the other, kings, presidents, prime ministers and other leaders of 46 countries arrived at Tel Aviv's Ben-Gurion airport. Among the dignitaries were Prince Charles and American vice-president Mike Pence, Russia's President Vladimir Putin, France's President Emmanuel Macron and the Kings of Spain, Belgium and Holland.

A special ceremony took place at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, hosted by Israel's President Reuven Rivlin. Rivlin told Prince Charles that he was happy to see him make his first official visit to Israel, he then added "We are still expecting your mother to come". The Queen has never made an official tip to Israel during her 67-year reign.

When addressing those gathered at Yad Vashem Prince Charles said "The magnitude of the genocide that was visited upon the Jewish people defies comprehension and can make those who live in the shadow of those indescribable events feel hopelessly inadequate. The scale of the evil was so great, the impact so profound, that it threatens to obscure the countless individual, human stories of tragedy, loss and suffering of which it was comprised. That is why places like Yad Vashem and events like this are so important."

Prince Charles went on to tell of his grandmother who is buried in the Mount of Olives and has a tree in her name at Yad Vashem.

Charles went on: "We must never forget that every human is *b'tselem Elohim* – in the image of God – and even a single human life is *ke olam maley* (like an entire universe)."

More than 14,800 Holocaust Survivors died in Israel last year, bringing the total number living in Israel down to about 192,000. Of the remaining survivors living in Israel 64% were born in Europe, 36% were from the former Soviet Union, 18% from Romania and 6% from Poland. The Holocaust Survivors' Rights Authority distributes in excess of £886.5 million in benefits and grants each year to around 59,000 Israelis.

Ukraine – Ukraine's parliament for the first time commemorated the holocaust ahead of the international day. The Verkhovna Rada in Kiev held a memorial service where the MP Daniel Gatmanzov stated "The holocaust was a disaster not only for the Jewish people but for the whole world and specifically the Ukrainian people."

France – President Macron who was attending the Holocaust Memorial ceremony in Jerusalem, launched a furious attack on Israeli security guards for following him into a French Church in Jerusalem.

Macron erupted in anger after officers broke diplomatic protocol by walking into Saint Anne's in the Old City. "Everybody knows the rules" he shouted "I don't like what you did in front of me. Go outside". A spokesman for the Elysee palace said, "Saint Anne belongs to France The Israeli security service wanted to enter while security was being provided by the French security services."

Italy – Italy has decided to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

Honduras – Honduras president Juan Orlando Hernandez said that his government will transfer its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem...once Israel opens an embassy in Tegucigalpa. He was speaking as Honduras took possession of a \$50 million warship bought from Israel.

Serbia – A yellow flag reminiscent of the badges Jews were forced to wear during the Holocaust was flown in Serbia as a ‘badge of honour’ to mark the Holocaust Remembrance Day.

The flag featuring a Magen David and the word ‘Jude’ was flown above the entrance to the Novi Dvor (New Palace) in Belgrade which is the official seat of the president of Serbia, alongside the country’s national flag.

Russia – Russian President Vladimir Putin is believed to have agreed to free 26-year-old Israeli backpacker Naama Issachar from a Moscow prison. Naama is serving a 7-year sentence for alleged possession of 9.5 grams of cannabis which Russian authorities say was found in her luggage when she was on a stopover in Moscow en route from India to Israel.

Israel – The land of milk and honey has been short of the most commonly used dairy products: Butter. Since early 2019, butter has become such a scarce commodity that Israelis have taken to sharing rare sightings of it on social media.

A spokesman for the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture has said that the shortage of local butter will continue in 2020.

The IDF is facing a real problem with a high percentage of Israeli youth either not starting or not finishing their military service, with at least a third of males getting exemptions for mental health reasons.

New figures show that 32.9% of men will receive an exemption from the army. With an average of 15% dropping out during their service, 47.9% do not complete their military service. The trend is even more severe for women, with 44.3% being exempt from military service.

Please continue to pray, especially for the IDF and the IAF, and for the peace of Jerusalem.

Every blessing

Maranatha

Steve