

Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day Ceremony in Tirat Carmel

Speech of the mayor of Monheim am Rhein Mr. Daniel Zimmermann, 23.04.2017

Mr. mayor, dear Arie,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

When I was a 17-year-old pupil I had the chance to take part in the school exchange between Tirat Carmel and Monheim. I stayed at the Ben Shushan family and I got to know lovely people whom I had the opportunity to become friends with. The school exchange was an experience that I will keep in my heart for the rest of my life. Beyond the friendships that I've made this is especially for the reason that just as today the exchange's agenda was not simply filled with leisure. It was also marked by the effort of studying together with both the Israeli and the German pupils the Shoah as part of our history - as part of history that at the same time connects and separates Israelis and Germans.

I remember our meetings with survivors of the Holocaust very well. I felt deeply touched by listening to their tellings and for the first time in my life I could directly feel the injustice, cruelty and inhumanity of the Shoah that I had until then only understood from books and films. Although in the near future there will be no more survivors to personally tell their stories, the objective of the exchanges between pupils from Shifman High School and Otto Hahn Gymnasium to find an individual approach to the tremendous horror of Shoa will remain the same. Only by talking about the personal fates of victims, about their names and not about numbers, the Nazi's wanted them to be, one can understand the whole atrocity of Shoah by both mind and heart.

As Germans we are filled with shame in the face of crimes that were committed by our parents, grandparents or great-grandparents. We know that there can be no forgiveness for the insane and incomparable murder of millions of Jews. All the more are we willingly to confront the darkness in German history and promise not to forget the crimes that our people committed.

The remembrance is so important precisely because we want to honor the victims and those who turned against Nazi policy, but also because we have to take history as an admonition to always fight against antisemitism and intolerance. We will always stand up for respect and tolerance, since we know that their opposites led to catastrophe.

To support remembrance the city council of Monheim has recently decided to name two new streets after Hannah Szenes and Henrietta Szold. We want to honor their efforts to rescue Jews from Holocaust. In addition to the already existing Anne Frank Street their names will remind us of our today's responsibility. There will also be a Tirat Carmel Street and two other roads named after Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Rabin. This neighborhood that construction works have already started for shall emphasize the close relationship between Tirat Carmel and Monheim and our solidarity with the state of Israel. I invite you, Mr mayor, dear Arie, and the pupils from Shifman high school to inaugurate the new streets together with us in the beginning of next year.

For now, I want to thank you, Mr mayor, for giving us the opportunity to attend Yom HaShoah's ceremony. It is something that we consider as a sign of friendship and trust towards us that we reciprocally feel for you. We will continue the joint efforts of working for tolerance and respect between the people of both cities. May many young people from Tirat Carmel and Monheim become friends with each other. Where friendship grows, there is no place for hatred. So let us improve the friendship again and yet again. The remembrance of our history will always be the basis for these relations.

Shalom ve toda raba.