Holocaust Remembrance Day Address 28 January 2026 Christchurch

Bridging the Generations: The Holocaust and Its Legacy

New Zealand Holocaust Centre

Honourable Alfred Ngaro

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā iwi, tēnā koutou katoa.
Shalom and thank you for the honour of allowing me to make some solemn remarks at **Holocaust Remembrance Day in Christchurch**.

To the leaders of the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand, to Holocaust survivors and their descendants, to the Jewish community, to our civic, faith, and community leaders, and to all New Zealanders gathered, **todah rabah**.

This year, **2026**, marks the **81st anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps**.
The theme for this year's International Holocaust Remembrance Day is **"Bridging the Generations: The Holocaust and Its Legacy."**

That theme could not be more urgent.

Because remembrance is not only about looking back, it is about ensuring that what was learned is not lost between generations.

On this day, we remember and honour the estimated **11 million civilian victims** murdered under the Nazi Third Reich, including **six million Jewish men, women, and children**.

Each life mattered.

Each name mattered.

Each absence still speaks.

In Hebrew, remembrance is **zikaron**

an active remembering.

Not nostalgia.

Not symbolism.

But responsibility.

That responsibility is embodied in the very existence of the **Holocaust Centre of New Zealand**.

As its Founding Chair, Steven Sedley MNZM, himself a survivor of the Budapest Ghetto, said, the Centre was established:

"To honour the survivors who came here, cherish the memories of those who were murdered, and teach the relevance of the Holocaust to New Zealand society."

This Centre was founded by survivors and their families, people who understood that memory, if not intentionally passed on, can fade.
And when memory fades, lies rush in.

From a small display created by **Hanka and George Pressburg**, to a national institution opened in 2007 by the Governor-General, this Centre has always focused on one sacred task:
bridging generations through truth.

Here, young New Zealanders encounter the reality of the Holocaust not as distant history, but as human story.

They see **1.5 million buttons**, each one representing a murdered child.
They study maps of Europe marked by absence.
They learn of Polish children saved through the Deckston Orphanage children who lived in New Zealand while almost every family member they left behind was murdered.
They see two suitcases, one sister survived in New Zealand; one died in Europe but not before saving her children.

This is how legacy is carried not through slogans, but through stories.

The Centre itself was born amid warning signs, after the **2004 desecration of Jewish cemeteries in Wellington**, when nearly 100 headstones were vandalised and a chapel burned.

A reminder that antisemitism does not begin with camps.
It begins when memory is disrespected, and hatred is tolerated.

That is why this theme, *Bridging the Generations*, matters so deeply today.

Because we are now witnessing a generational test.

After the Christchurch mosque attacks, the Jewish community in New Zealand stood with compassion.
They mourned.
They raised funds.
They stood with Muslim families.

Yet in that same city, in recent years, we have seen the **Bridge of Remembrance**, a place sacred to those who sacrificed their lives, used as a platform for protests that demonise Jews and distort history.

Let us be clear:
The Bridge of Remembrance exists to honour sacrifice, not to weaponize grief.
It is a place of solemn unity, not selective outrage.

When sacred spaces of remembrance are used to justify hatred, we are not bridging generations, we are breaking faith with them.

After the barbaric terrorist attacks of **October 7, 2023**, when Hamas murdered, raped, and abducted innocent civilians, Jewish communities here were not met with solidarity, but hostility.

Instead of unequivocal condemnation of terror, there were protests against Jews.
Instead of moral clarity, there was silence.

We must say this plainly, for the sake of truth:
Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Iranian regime are terrorist forces.
They glorify death.
They murder the innocent, Jews, Muslims, and Christians alike, and then hide behind false narratives.

Now, as ceasefires come, as evidence of atrocities mounts, as the brutal reality of these regimes is exposed, we must ask:

Where are the protests now?

Where is the pressure on Iran?

Where is the moral outrage?

The answer is uncomfortable: ***no Jews, no news.***

This is why the work of the **Indigenous Embassy Jerusalem** is so important. They challenge narratives that erase Jewish indigeneity and distort history for ideological ends.

As an indigenous man, I say this with conviction:
When one people's ancestral story is erased, all indigenous truth is threatened.

Dr Martin Luther King Jr understood this deeply.
When Jewish leaders once said, *"It's okay, we don't need your help,"* he replied:

"I stand against antisemitism because it is a stand against evil itself."

That is what bridging generations looks like moral clarity passed forward.

New Zealand has known such clarity before.

Our soldiers, Māori, Pākehā, Pacific rode at **Beersheba and Ayun Kara**.
Our nation voted at the **League of Nations** for Jewish statehood.
We chose principle over pressure.

Holocaust Remembrance Day asks whether we will do so again.

As Inge Woolf, Founding Director of this Centre, said:

"We who survived have a duty to those who did not, to make sure that every single person is taught what can happen when intolerance is allowed to flourish."

Never again, **lo od pa'am**, is not a phrase for the past.
It is a charge for the future.

May this Centre continue to bridge generations.
May New Zealand continue to stand.
And may we be found faithful to memory, truth, and humanity.

Am Yisrael Chai.
Shalom, and tēnā koutou katoa.