



International Holocaust Remembrance Day 27 January 2026

Speech: Deborah Hart, Chair, Holocaust Centre of New Zealand

Commemorations like this one are being held all over the country. Since 2007, the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand has led these national commemorations — honouring survivors and those murdered. They are not only about what was done to Jews then. They are about what is being done to Jews now — and what we, as a society, will choose to tolerate.

Antisemitism is rising, and it is no longer distant or abstract.

Around the world we have watched Jewish communities come under attack — in the street, in places of worship, in schools, on Bondi Beach. These are not random incidents. They are part of a pattern — and they are fuelled by a climate in which Jew hatred is excused, minimised, and repackaged as something acceptable.

What happens abroad does not stay abroad. Here in Aotearoa New Zealand antisemitism is showing itself in abuse, assaults, vandalism, intimidation, and in the pressure placed on Jewish people to stay quiet, to shrink, to hide. Many Jews are asking questions they should never have to ask: Is it safe to go to synagogue? To wear a kippah? To put a mezuzah on my door? To speak openly about who I am, or what I believe?

We must also name the conditions that enable this. Most Jews share in the fundamental Zionist belief of the Jewish people's right to live peacefully in our ancestral homeland. Yet the word “Zionist” is increasingly used as a slur: as shorthand for something uniquely evil, uniquely dangerous, uniquely powerful. Coupled with inflammatory language, like globalize the intifada, that rhetoric is not harmless. We hear echoes the oldest antisemitic tropes — only now in language that some believe is permissible. When Jews are singled out, demonised, held to a standard that no other people are asked to meet, bereft of rights others have, history tells us where that road can lead.

It is in this chilling context that we gather today for International Holocaust Remembrance.

This year's theme, Bridging the Generations: The Holocaust and its Legacy, could not be more urgent. The responsibility to remember, to tell the truth, and to act is passing to the next generation — and to all of us.