



Human Rights Commission  
*Te Kāhui Tika Tangata*

**United Nations International Holocaust Remembrance Day**

**Righteous among the Nations**

**27<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

**Parliamentary Reception**

This two-hour reception was hosted by Ginny Andersen, MP.

The MC was Deborah Hart.

Paul Hunt – Chief Human Rights Commissioner - *overleaf for some extracts from his remarks.*

## **The following are some extracts from Paul Hunt's remarks**

“Friends, we live in a dangerous world.

In many countries, there's a pushback against human rights, toleration and respect for cultural diversity.

You know the countries. I don't need to name them. They are not few.

This pushback coincides with a time of shocking global inequalities – deep global poverty – and a burning sense of injustice felt by millions of people.

Critically important global accords are being rejected.

Disarmament treaties are being disavowed.

I hesitate to say it – but one senses a fuse is being lit.

I'm not saying this is the same as the 1920s and 1930s which led to global war and the Holocaust.

But we would be foolish if we did not recognise some resonances, parallels and similarities between those calamitous times and today.

So it is imperative we resist the pushback against human rights that we are witnessing in some countries.

We must resist the 'othering' of people and communities -- we must resist seeing other human beings as somehow alien -- because we know from history that societies can slide from 'othering' -- to demonization.

And we also know from history that societies can slide from demonization -- to genocide.

'Othering', demonization, genocide – this is a well-known disastrous trajectory.

So we must vigorously resist the global pushback against human rights, toleration and respect for cultural diversity.

We must advance the human rights of everybody – we must insist on the human rights of all minorities – we must find ways to reinvigorate human rights for these dangerous times.

Here's a mighty role for New Zealand – for all our peoples – to stand up for all human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for everyone -- as mandated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was drafted in the shadow of the Holocaust.

As Chief Commissioner I will do all I can to bring human rights into the everyday realities of everyday lives, with a view to fortifying the dignity, equality and wellbeing of all.

In 1919, WB Yeats, the great Irish poet, wrote an astonishingly prophetic poem.

He seemed to foresee the impending disaster -- and he warned the world: 'Do not lack conviction'.

Exactly one hundred years later, we must heed his words:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Friends, it is imperative we do not lack conviction.”

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