

Speech by Imam Gamal Fouda on International Holocaust Remembrance
27th January 2022

Salamo alaikom

Tēnā koutou

Hello

Nǐ hǎo

Namaste

Guten tag

Bonjour

Shalom in all the languages around the world

NZ Muslims stand with NZ Jews to Commemorate the International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Today, I'd like to make a solemn appeal to everyone in the audience, both here and around the world:

I'm here today as a survivor of New Zealand's greatest terror attack, which occurred on March 15, 2019.

I've witnessed with my own eyes at least 40 people being slaughtered, another 40 being injured, and scores more fleeing AL-Nur Mosque in Deans Ave.

A few hours later, I had to stand with a broken heart in front of my grieving families and announce the names of those who had been murdered or injured.

For all New Zealanders, as well as many others throughout the world, this was a terrible and tragic day.

Dear friends, there are moments in history that bring people of all religions and cultures together, such as the celebration of human achievements, as well as, perhaps most tragically, the consequences of human evil.

In the Holocaust's tragedy, brothers and sisters from the European Jews have found a dedicated friend – NZ Muslim community which is aware of how hate speech can evolve into genocide and crimes against humanity.

Today, I stand with my brothers and sisters from the New Zealand Jewish community in honour of International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Speaking from my own experience, I warn all of us that genocide and hate crimes are not just the result of generations of conflict but can happen faster than we expect.

This requires us to never lower our guard. Today is both a time to honour the victims and survivors, and also to extract lessons that can still be learned to prevent such crimes in the future.

Today's event is not just a commemoration but also for us to reflect on how to prevent such atrocities in the future.

In the last couple of years, we have seen the rising of hate against Jews, Muslims, refugees, and immigrants, and it is our responsibility today to deal with it seriously and urgently.

We must increase public awareness of the rise in hate speech.

We must ask ourselves whether our institutions, societies, and communities are strong enough to withstand the rise of hatred.

Can we keep our promise to "never forget?"

I'd like to emphasise once more the importance of educational programmes in imprinting the memory of such tragedies and preventing future genocides and massacres.

To strengthen our response to the global phenomenon of hate speech, we need a strategy; we need a plan of action that highlights the role of education as a tool for addressing and countering hate speech while protecting genuine freedom of expression and access to information.

This is the first of many steps that must be taken to ensure that atrocity crimes do not happen again.

We shouldn't rest, until we can ensure that no human being is forced to experience hate speech, fear, loss or the denial of rights because of their identity or faith.

Whatever happened once to one minority can happen tomorrow to another minority.

As a result, I propose the development of a "CHCH Muslim Jewish Council" to work together on issues such as Islamophobia, anti-Jews and immigrants, and xenophobia in New Zealand, as well as shared concerns for the Jewish and Muslim communities.

Only by working together and saying no to hate and prejudice will we be able to ensure that these atrocities never happen again.

This cooperation between Muslims and Jews in New Zealand can collaborate with schools, government organisations, and religious institutions to combat hate and discrimination.

In this approach, we pledge to promoting education in order to raise awareness of the causes and repercussions of such acts, as well as to enhance learners' resilience to all forms of discrimination.

Ngā manaakitanga

Ngā mihi

Kia ora