

UN International Holocaust Remembrance Shabbat

Park East Synagogue

January 21, 2012

66th UN General Assembly President Al-Nasser Remarks



Rabbi Schneier, Mrs. Schneier,
Congregation of the Park East Synagogue,
Holocaust Survivors,
Mr. Secretary-General, Mrs. Ban,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I have the honor today to participate in this Holocaust Remembrance Service.

Allow me first to acknowledge Rabbi Schneier. A Holocaust survivor himself, the Rabbi must be commended for his commitment to building bridges among faiths, and across barriers.

I would also like to acknowledge the Park East Synagogue in its more than one hundred and twenty years of faithful service to the Jewish Community.

As you may know, the International Day of Commemoration of the Victims of the Holocaust was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2005.

This international day ensures that the Holocaust will forever remain, in our time and for future generations, a warning to all people about the dangers of hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice.

It also serves to reinforce the urgent need for the full protection of all human beings' rights and freedoms, without distinction to religion, race or other status.

This year, the focus of this commemoration is "Children and the Holocaust".

We pay tribute to the children who survived, and to their families.

And we remember and honor the children who perished.

Children for whom the basic standards of rights were tragically absent.

Children who experienced the worst of life: separated from their families; exposed to brutal labor; dying from starvation.

We join millions of people around the world to say with one, strong voice:

Never, never again! Never again!

Sisters and brothers:

To cultivate world peace, we must first cultivate peace within ourselves. The United Nations offers a framework in which to build and support this peace.

The UN Charter – born in the immediate aftermath of World War Two and the Holocaust – founded the United Nations “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.”

As part of our efforts to build peace, we focus on what brings us together: our shared humanity. This commitment is rooted in our scripture, the Holy Quran, and I quote: “We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other, not that ye may despise each other.”

Recognizing the critical need for dialogue among different faiths and religions, the General Assembly has declared the first week of February as the annual “World Interfaith Harmony Week”. Many events will take place at the United Nations next month. I hope each of you will join us in celebration.

In today’s world, the need to find peaceful resolutions to disputes has become more relevant and urgent than ever before. Mediation is, therefore, a cornerstone of my Presidency. I firmly believe that we can - and should- employ mediation and other peaceful tools to avert the many human and economic costs of conflict.

But we still need to do more to reach out, to respect and to understand one another. This is an even more compelling obligation today, than it was before global communications and a deeply interconnected world became our destiny.

Initiatives that enhance mutual understanding, harmony and cooperation – that turn words into action - are the way forward.

We in Qatar are proud to be the home of the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue. Established in May 2008, the Centre works to promote a culture of dialogue and peaceful coexistence.

Rabbi Schneier himself also works tirelessly to promote dialogue and understanding among different cultures, religions and peoples.

But let us not pretend that we can ever fully rid the world of hatred or intolerance.

I have seen first-hand the destruction and brutality that continues in this world today.

But I have also seen the hope and anticipation glimmering in the eyes of those who are standing up for freedom and dignity.

Those who are standing up for what they know to be right and true.

And those who are resilient and through their courage are changing the course of our history.

Today we are witnessing these shifts across the globe.

So, let us come together and join hands, deeply aware of our past, yet optimistic for a brighter future. Our shared future and that of our children.

Let us take this opportunity to reaffirm that those who perished in the Holocaust will never be forgotten.

And let their memory inspire us to do our utmost to live according to our scriptures, according to our shared values. And according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in peace and harmony with all members of our human family.

Shabbat Shalom.

Asalam o alaikum.