

**Joel Herzog – Chairman of the organizing committee of Yom Hashoah 2009 – 20  
April 2009 – Place des Nations**

Members of the State Council, representing the Government of the Republic and the  
Canton of Geneva

The Attorney General

Members of the Federal Chamber of Deputies

Members of the Federal Council

Mr. Mayor

Mayors of the Geneva and adjoining French Municipalities

Your Excellencies

Representatives of the Religious and post-Secondary Institutions

Presidents of Organizations, Communities, and Associations

Members of the Press Corps and of Civil Society Organizations

Honorable Speakers

Invited Guests

Dear Friends

On behalf of the Organizing Committee of which I have the distinct honor of Chairing, I would like to thank you for coming out in such force and would like to welcome you all here this evening.

The majority of Jewish families possess a direct link to the Shoah and every year, on this day, remember the tragic events from that era.

My own family is no exception. Some perished at Auschwitz, others jumped from the trains and joined the resistance, and still others joined the allied armies.

My father was among the liberators of Bergen Belsen. My grandfather, the Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog, together with Cardinal Roncalli, who later became Pope John XXIII, formed a very special relationship through which they worked to rescue many Jews from

Nazi prisons and, after the war, helped repatriate young Jewish orphans who had been protected by the Church.

In the eloquent words of the President of Yad Vashem –

“The survivors that lived through the horrors of the Shoah are slowly disappearing. In a few years, the deniers will be able to loudly propagate their lies; there will no longer be survivors with the numbers that condemned them to death tattooed on their arms to challenge and silence them.”

It is thus our duty to pass the torch to the young generations so that they can perpetuate the memory so that such a tragedy shall never happen again. Sadly, we were witness today to a scandalous example at the UN – and this only serves to reinforce the relevance of this commemoration, here and now.

The Shoah has an equally universal message. It reminds us that the power of words, the incitement to hatred, and all forms of racism and discrimination can lead to the very worst crimes against humanity.

And so it is essential to proclaim this universal message in front of the United Nations and the flags of the nations of the world and particularly at this moment, and in the company of the representatives of the church and other religions that have joined together with us, in addition to the diplomatic and political representatives and members of civil society.

Before I close I would like to thank the members of the organizing committee made up of the Jewish communities of Geneva who organized this commemoration, the various donors, volunteers, as well as the federal, cantonal, and municipal authorities for their support.

We thank you for your presence that allows us, inspired by the spirit of Geneva, to state with a singular and powerful voice the universal message learned from the Shoah: Never Again.

Translated from French by David Nachfolger