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Here I am, for the third time in thirty years, charged with the dreadful honor of speaking on this day that is, for Jews all over the world, a day of grieving and remembrance. And here I am, as before and perhaps now even more so, compelled to explain again why this commemoration is a sacred duty not only for Jews but for the world.

Shouldn't we, some ask, let the dead rest in peace and let forgetfulness, merciful forgetfulness scar over the wounds of the past? Yes, of course, we should. Yes, of course, it is always good to let the dead rest in peace. And I will even say that there is nothing more Jewish, more consistent with the commandments of the Torah, than the religious injunction to bury the dead quickly, once and for all. Except... Yes, except for those dead who haven't been truly buried. Except the dead whose deaths involved no tomb or memorial. Except for the dead whose deaths were engineered to be deaths without a trace, without a remnant, and thus, I maintain, without a grave. So it is up to the living to be the living tombs of these dead. It is the duty of survivors, and the children of survivors, to carry within themselves the memory of these fathers who will forever be only as old as their children. The dead, the poor dead, are in much pain... We are the tombs of our fathers... These are the words of one of the great French poets, Charles Baudelaire. But this is, most of all, the case of those who refuse to wash their hands of all of the Jewish flesh gone up in ashes and smoke.

This crime, they say, was a grave crime to be sure. But how can you say that it was a greater crime than all other crimes? And why do you insist on declaring it an exception in the series of evil deeds that is the very framework of human history? We are not insisting on anything. Nothing is more alien to the Jewish idea of death than establishing any kind of scale or hierarchy of deaths. Except that, here again, something happened in the Shoah that finds itself--and that's just the way it is--without precedent. And this something is a manhunt and a massacre that meant, not only the absence of any trace of a tomb, but also the impossibility for the victims to find a place, any place, to escape their executioners. The Armenians, who were (and this is too often questioned) the victims of the first genocide in History, were only pursued in Turkey. The Tutsis, the Cambodians, the Darfuris (whose genocide should be denounced with the same force) could, at least in theory, should they have found asylum in a neighboring country, escape the murderers' clutches. There was no such escape for the Jews targeted by a Shoah that intended to be their complete destruction. All of Europe--soon thereafter, and in theory, the world--became an immense trap for the Jewish game hunted by the Wehrmacht dogs and the SS. An extermination--it is that which is

excruciatingly singular--that offered no recourse because it wanted to leave no remnant, no remains.

This notion of total extermination is important for yet another very precise and concrete reason: namely, Israel. The Shoah did not cause Israel to come into being. And we must do everything, truly everything, to break the insidious chain that, in linking the two, ends up imputing a providential cause to, and, whether we want it to or not, justifying the Shoah. All the same, there is another inanity heard all over, which consists of the following: "Yes, alright, it was a crime; yes, if absolutely necessary to admit, a singular crime; but as for the survivors of the tragedy, why weren't they moved to Germany? Why a national Jewish homeland in the Arab world--the only part of the world that did not take part in the crime?" And the answer remains that the world itself was a trap for Jews; there wasn't a single part of the world where the evil wind of this death didn't blow; and the Arab world did not recuse itself, any more than the rest of the world, from this plan of total extermination... Today we have very detailed information on the matter. We have the memoirs of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem describing, relentlessly, during the entire duration of the war, his admiration for Hitler. We have the work of historians citing the existence of an Arab SS legion waiting, at the rear guard of Rommel's army, for the order to descend on the Yishuv in order to exterminate the 500,000 Jews who had already settled there. We know, in other words, that Nazism was a global ideology that manifested itself in national versions and, in particular, in an Arab version no less criminal than the European version. This changes nothing - quite the contrary - when it comes to the necessary fight for democracy in the Arab world and, in particular, in the Palestinian State to come. This is simply an argument for honesty, an argument to oppose relentlessly those who, sustained by an ignorance related to an absence of memory, try to delegitimize Israel--and who sometimes, unfortunately, succeed. Commemorating the Shoah is also a matter of honesty. It is also a fight against ignorance.

It is April 20, 2009. We could have, when it was decided fifty years ago, to inscribe this day of commemoration in the calendars of nations, chosen the anniversary of the opening of the death camps. We could have chosen the date of the Wansee Conference. We could have decided on any other day--and they are legion!--commemorating the Jewish martyrdom across the ages. But no. It was the 27th of Nissan of the Hebraic year that was chosen. In other words, this year in particular, the anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising. And, in the lively discussions that presided over this choice, in the debate, notably, between Ben Gurion and the religious adherents of Judaism, this detail surely escaped no one. What was it meant to mean? That we had to put an end to the cliché of a Jewish people going to their deaths like lambs to the slaughter. That we had to celebrate, at the same time as the memory of the crime, this heroic episode in Warsaw that was followed by the revolts of Sobibor, Birkenau, Treblinka. That it mattered, in other words, to commemorate a massacre,

but also a resistance. For me, the son not of a deportee but of a member of the Resistance, this will to act is essential. I invite you to remember that there is always, even in the darkest night, a place for insurgence and for hope. We are here to remind, far beyond ourselves, all the people of the world, that it is always possible, always, to revolt.

A last word. Since we are discussing the calendar, there is quite the coincidence that an international conference against racism opens today just a few steps from here. And there are once again voices who say to us: "What good is there in reviving the racisms of yesterday when it is the racisms of tomorrow that threaten us? And aren't you afraid, in fixating on past genocides, of neglecting those happening here, now, right in front of you?" Of course not, no, I do not fear that. And to be frank, I even believe that that is, on the contrary, another reason to commemorate the Shoah. Because beyond the fact that this conference is beginning to become, as anticipated, a masquerade, I come back to the question: why have so many Jewish organizations mobilized for Darfur? Why did the first who understood what was happening in Rwanda, be they Jews or non-Jews, have the Shoah in their hearts? Why, when the world closed its eyes to the massacre of Muslims in Bosnia, was it up to a handful of men and women, whose only commonality was the "never again" of Auschwitz, to sound the alarm? Nor were they better informed than others. Nor were they better. They had but a compass. A scale of bad and of worse. A kind of radar that signaled, every time, the proximity of the Beast and of his trademark scent. We must commemorate the Shoah because, far from blinding us to the suffering of the moment, it is, on the contrary, the only way to render that suffering intolerable and visible.

I dream, dear friends, of a Conference that could have been a platform for all of the victimized, the voiceless of today's forgotten genocides, instead of serving as a platform for the racist ranting of a psychopathic Iranian President, instead of serving as a moral whitewashing of a handful of dictators whose contribution to the global history of democracy and of human rights has consisted, until now, of hanging homosexuals, of oppressing religions minorities, or of burning alive adulterous women. I dream of a Durban II that would have opened with the testimony of a Dalit Indian. Or of a survivor of Darfur. Or of a Rwandan who had survived the massacres fifteen years ago. Or of a son of one of these dead without a tomb, without a name, without a face, without an inscription in any archive or memoir, sometimes without being counted, who have a fraternal resemblance to the dead without remnant, without remains, of the Shoah, and that are cut down, even today, in Africa, in Asia, or elsewhere, in wars that no one notices. This dream will have to come true one day. And that's why, this evening, from this beautiful city that is, by tradition, a symbol of hospitality and liberty, before you who are, by vocation, natural advocates of all these modern damned, I call for another Conference, truly antiracist, truly faithful to the ideals of the United

Nations, to seal the Great Alliance of "the shaken" of yesterday and today.
Let's forget about Durban II. Let's prepare for Geneva III.

Translated from French by Sara Phenix.