

## **Yom Hashoah 2009 commemoration ceremony**

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We have gathered to commemorate the unspeakable, to be reminded of the horror that man can inflict on man.

We are together so that our obligation to remember will prevent the massacre of new innocents. Because we know that man is capable of worse and because, we hope, in reminding him incessantly of the atrocities he has committed, it will be possible to prevent him from committing these same crimes again.

At the beginning of Genesis, when only Adam, Eve, and their two children inhabited the earth, Cain killed his brother Abel. One half of the second generation killed, murdered, the other half, in the same family. This tells us how much murder, elimination, and exclusion were present in humanity and how much we must constantly be conscious and do our utmost to prevent being dominated by the forces of death.

The history of humanity begins in the bible and in numerous other traditions with a murder and thereafter it is but a long battle to reduce violence, restore respect and justice. Despite the dramatic failures and the ever-violent return of violence, the history of humanity moves towards the recognition of the immeasurable value of the life of each human being.

Remember: it was not so long ago that war was declared illegal; it was not so long ago that slavery was declared illegal, and yet the death penalty is still not illegal, even if progress has been made these last decades in numerous countries.

We must commit to continuing this age old battle for the respect of life and liberty of each human being and to nourish our belief in the necessity of this battle. We must remind ourselves of the abomination that was the Shoah and of the remarkable progress that we have made since 1945.

The international conference that opens today should have been a step along the way. But we must unequivocally condemn the intolerable statements by the Iranian President this afternoon that form an inadmissible appeal to racial hatred. Let us resolve to, whatever happens, continue the non-violent fight for respect at all times and in all locations of humanity.

The government of the Republic and Canton of Geneva will continue to offer its hospitality to all activists, victims, and to all the actors involved in conflict so that they may find a place of dialogue and peace that can lead to progress and respect for human rights.

Translated from French by David Nachfolger