

**International Conference: Costa Rica: The Prevention of Genocides
Preventing Atrocities: From the Holocaust to Genocide Prevention
Summary of Contribution**

IHRA

- **The Stockholm Declaration of 2000, endorsed by 46 Governments, commits governments to promote Holocaust education, remembrance and research and to fight Holocaust denial and antisemitism. Out of that Declaration has grown the 31-state International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) of which I have just last week taken over the Chairmanship from Canada.**
- **There are lessons to be drawn from the Holocaust experience which will help our societies grapple with a phenomenon which is far too prevalent and which seems to grow with the size of our populations and the technological sophistication of our societies.**
- **Three conclusions and four lessons.**
- **The first conclusion is that the strongest barrier against prejudice is the ethical strength of a society. Values of tolerance and mutual understanding need to be inculcated into the young and reinforced throughout life. And they have to be based on a profound sense of history.**
- **Research provides an ever sounder basis for understanding the Holocaust. Remembrance reminds us that good intentions are no guarantee that darker instincts will not prevail. Education should and must give our societies the confidence to move forward in a humane and enlightened way.**
- **Material progress does not guarantee ethical progress. For IHRA education is the key. We have supported hundreds of projects all over the world. Our experts have developed comprehensive guidelines for teaching about the Holocaust.**

- The **second conclusion** is that we have to pay attention to what is happening and recognise evil when we see it.
 - And the **third conclusion** is that we must watch the trends and the polls within our own societies, honestly and with a practical determination to take action against antisemitism, Holocaust denial, historical revisionism or other worrisome trends sooner rather than later.
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- The four lessons.
 - **First** all societies should recognise the imperative need to combat hate speech and hate crimes in all their forms at the earliest possible stage before racial, religious and ethnic abuse becomes so frequent, loud and mainstream that it coarsens political discourse and threatens the safety and well-being of a country's inhabitants, whether citizens or not. This imperative need becomes an urgent obligation when hate speech and hate crimes threaten to turn into incitement to violence.
 - **Second** societies must understand, protect and promote the central importance of the rule of law and the duty of judges to uphold the law against populist pressures. Citizens and non-citizens alike must be able to trust the legal system, and those empowered to enforce the laws, to stand up for the democratic and constitutional rights of all citizens and all those within the protection of the state.
 - **Thirdly** a heavy responsibility rests on the press and media to report impartially, fearlessly and frankly, neither fanning the flames of prejudice nor buckling under to threats from political or societal forces intent on whipping up prejudice.
 - **Fourthly** it is vital to remember. In all genocides the perpetrators try to hide the evidence. The Holocaust of the Jews was unprecedented in its cold-blooded single-mindedness . It is the paradigm. It is the most extreme version of genocide ever known. It must be remembered not forgotten.

- **The Holocaust is essential to our understanding about genocide and mass violence. The Holocaust is the most extensively documented, best researched and well understood example of genocide in the long history of man's inhumanity to man. It offers us important insights into why and how societies can descend into mass violence.**
- **Studying the Holocaust reveals the full range of human behaviour – from the most appalling acts of violence, to behaviour of extraordinary resilience, courage and altruism; from the moral complexities of collaboration, collusion and complicity to the dangers of bowing to peer pressure or apathy, The profound questions it raises about the human condition makes Holocaust education ideal for stimulating independent enquiry in our schools, across a wide range of key ages and subjects.**
- **By comparing the Holocaust to other genocides we can more sharply understand the differences and the similarities and what leads some societies to enter into orgies of destruction.**

Sir Andrew Burns

UK Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

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