



International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

Sir Andrew Burns, IHRA Chair 2014

IHRA Handover Ceremony

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Hungarian Embassy, Berlin

- It has been my great privilege and pleasure to hold the Chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance in 2014 on behalf of the United Kingdom.
- I should like to start my remarks by expressing my warmest thanks to the many IHRA delegates whose invaluable support has made this year such a success. The Heads of Delegation, mostly from Foreign Ministries, have shown deep professionalism and political sensitivity in helping me take forward the work of IHRA in a constructive and sustainable fashion.
- The experts from all over Europe, the Middle East and the Americas have been a delight to work with. Academics, educationalists, curators, administrators and of course survivors have all shown tremendous dedication, wisdom and commitment as they brought fresh insights to a traumatic period in European history.
- I want to say a particular thank you to the Chairmen and office-holders of all our various Working Groups and Committees who have so tirelessly ensured that the commitments of the Stockholm Declaration are reflected in our work.
- And above all I want to thank those who have supported me so well all year. Dr Kathrin Meyer the Executive Secretary of IHRA and her small but brilliant team at the Permanent Office here in Berlin and Mrs Sue Breeze and her team from the Human Rights and Democracy Department at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London.

- Before I hand the baton to the incoming Chair State Secretary Szabolcs Takács, of Hungary, I should like to take a moment to review the year and carry out one last task as Chair.
- I am very pleased to be able to present the results of an IHRA project of which I am very proud.
- IHRA's Multi-Year Work Plan has been a particularly active programme of research, education, archival protection and remembrance; making excellent use of the international network of experts that IHRA offers and carrying out a very content-focused range of activities which have helped raise IHRA's international profile. This has been especially true of the work on Killing Sites.
- Following a very successful conference held in 2014 in Krakow, where previous Canadian Chair Dr. Mario Silva and I had the privilege of addressing the participants, I now have the honour to present the very first book in the new IHRA publication series: "Killing Sites: Research and Remembrance".
- It is one of the principles of the Stockholm Declaration of 2000 that member countries commit themselves to throwing light on the still obscured shadows of the Holocaust.
- Approximately one-third of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust were murdered in mass shootings that largely took place outside towns and villages across Eastern Europe in thousands of forests, quarries, ditches, streets, and homes. In many instances, Nazi perpetrators and their local collaborators eliminated entire communities in a matter of days or even hours.
- And yet these killing sites remain relatively unknown, both in regional histories and in the larger remembrance of the Holocaust.
- IHRA's project on Killing Sites is dedicated to research, commemoration and preservation of places where such mass killings took place. The project aims to raise awareness of this centrally important aspect of the Holocaust and bring together organizations and individuals already grappling with the difficult issues of how to identify, preserve and protect these sites as a memorial to those who died and a constant reminder of what actually happened 70 to 75 years ago.

- As this volume reveals, the ambitious programme brought together an impressive mix of organizations, scholars, and experts who examined a range of subjects, including the state of current research; promising pilot projects; complex national and religious legal issues; developments in forensic archaeology; and regional efforts to integrate killing sites into educational curricula, among others.
- Thanks to this new anthology, which for the first time provides a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of the state of fieldwork and research on the topic of killing sites, the shadows surrounding this piece of history are starting to recede.
- The Killing Sites project is a symbol of what IHRA aspires to do; create an expert network and facilitate the exchange and sharing of best practices. The project has brought together some of the leading actors in the field and we hope that it will mark the beginning of further cooperation.
- I should like to congratulate the IHRA Steering Committee on Killing Sites – and in particular, Dr. Thomas Lutz of Germany, Dr. David Silberklang of Israel, Dr. Piotr Trojański of Poland, and Dr. Juliane Wetzel of Germany– for conceiving and organizing such an outstanding conference and publication. I should also like to thank Dr. Miriam Bistrovic for her organizational help in realizing this project.
- It is my hope that this publication will be only the first in a long line of serious path-breaking volumes; with some of the most renowned experts in the field, IHRA is well placed to contribute to shaping the academic landscape of Holocaust research.
- Let me now turn from the latest IHRA achievement during the UK chairmanship to earlier ones.
- When the UK first agreed to take over the Chairmanship, we outlined four key areas for our Chairmanship:
 - To strengthen and deepen the professional expertise and knowledge of IHRA and thus enhance its reputation and influence.
 - To improve the ways in which the conclusions and concerns of the expert and civil society members are conveyed to, understood by and acted upon by Heads of Delegation and our political leaderships

- To promote the public visibility and greater impact of IHRA through its public diplomacy and participation in discussions in other fora and walks of life, particularly in our Parliamentary and legislative bodies
 - To make a real practical contribution to tackling the outstanding contemporary challenges: rising antisemitism and incidents of Holocaust glorification, trivialisation and denial; justice, respect and support for Holocaust survivors; education of the young; and opening up of the historical record.
- The aforementioned publication is only one element that has contributed towards strengthening and deepening the professional knowledge of IHRA. The Committee on the Genocide of the Roma held a very thoughtful conference in London at the world-renowned Centre for Holocaust Education at University College London before our May Plenary; and before our Manchester plenary, in cooperation with the University of Staffordshire, a conference at Stoke on Trent explored what Britain knew about the Holocaust during WWII.
- I am pleased to see that the suggestion made in the UK White Paper to hold regular conferences is becoming a reality and look forward to the conference on Holocaust imagery and language in public discourse which is planned for 2015. The first conference on the topic of the Genocide of the Roma which was held in London, will also be followed up on with a second conference.
- To try to improve the flow of information between delegates at expert and political levels, IHRA encouraged delegates to brief their Heads of Delegation prior to Plenary meetings and delegation lunches were held in London and Manchester.
- The unique mix of academics, educators, curators, survivors and political representatives is what makes IHRA special. Encouraging cohesion and exchange between these two normally distinct communities is what will facilitate lasting, wide-spread change on an international level.
- Furthermore, in the name of deepening the understanding between experts and the political level, I was in close consultations with the Hungarian delegation throughout my chairmanship on their preparations for their chairmanship and notably the development of the House of Fates project in Budapest.

- As UK Chair I was able to draw upon the expertise of IHRA's experts in advising the Hungarian Government about this major European project.
- As a member of the Troika I hope to continue to stay engaged in this matter. Meanwhile in London the British Prime Minister has announced the commitment of all the leading political parties in the UK to build a new Memorial to the Holocaust and strengthen the educational programmes in the years to come.
- I hope to have contributed to raising the profile of IHRA by attending a number of important and interesting events during my Chairmanship; In January I was asked to address the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna on the topic of Holocaust Remembrance Days and to speak at a Parliamentary Session of the Romanian Parliament last October.
- I was also invited to speak at the Salzburg Global Seminar on Genocide Prevention and Holocaust Education in June last year, at the International Conference on Genocide in Brussels last spring and earlier at the Global Action against Mass Atrocities conference in Costa Rica.
- Such events not only raise IHRA's profile, but they confirm the relevance of IHRA's work to international work on genocide prevention and the UN's Responsibility to Protect programmes. We have worked closely too with our international partners, organisations like the UN, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, (the International Tracing Service, FRA and the Claims Conference) etc.
- Together with the Executive Secretary I carried out country visits to a number of IHRA and non-IHRA countries; I was very pleased to see IHRA joined by three new observer countries, Albania, El Salvador and Moldova and extend a warm welcome to the Ambassadors of our new observer countries who were able to join us today.
- I recently received a letter from Australia expressing their interest in becoming an observer.
- In matters of remembrance, research and education, there is certainly strength in numbers.
- And then let me mention also the Vatican. I had the pleasure of meeting with both Msgr. Antoine Camilleri, the Vatican's Under-Secretary for Relations with States and with Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, Chancellor of the

Pontifical Academy of Sciences during my Chairmanship. We had very open and interesting discussions and I was delighted to welcome a Vatican representative at our meetings in Manchester. I can today announce that the Vatican has appointed Father Norbert Hofmann, Secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism as the future contact point for the IHRA within the Holy See.

- I hope I have been able to provide you with a snapshot of some of what has been achieved over the last year. If this year, 15 years since the signing of the Stockholm Declaration, has shown us anything, it is that we have come a long way- but we have much still to do.
- I was very pleased that in Manchester all delegates pledged to recommit their governments to the commitments made in Stockholm in 2000.
- I am delighted now to pass the Chairmanship into the very capable hands of my Hungarian colleague State Secretary Szabolcs Takács.
- I look forward to working closely with the Troika to continue IHRA's important work in cooperation with the new IHRA Chair, and the appointed Chair for 2016 Romania, and to seeing IHRA go from strength to strength.