



Ministry of Culture
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The Secretariat of
the Swedish IHRA Presidency

**Address by IHRA Chair Ann Bernes at an event at the Swiss Embassy
on November 9**

Anförande: Ann Bernes vid event på Schweiz ambassad
Konferensens fokus: Hågkomst av Förintelsen, Kristallnatten
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Excellencies, dear friends, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking you for this opportunity to address you in my capacity as Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the IHRA.

Today's date is forever connected to the November pogrom of 1938 – a pogrom that lasted for a very long and terrible week during which the Nazis destroyed and burned down synagogues, Jewish-owned businesses and private houses. And this was only the beginning of what would end in an unprecedented genocide.

60 years after the November pogrom, in 1998, the Swedish Prime Minister of the time, Göran Persson, organized an initiative that would develop into the IHRA. The reason was that a study showed that Swedish high school students didn't know about the Holocaust.

This needed to be addressed, and here we are, more than 20 years later – and still hard at work safeguarding education, remembrance and research on the Holocaust. But now we are so many more actors and stakeholders involved. The IHRA now gathers 35 Member Countries, ten Observer countries and several Permanent

International Partners, like the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

Working internationally on Holocaust remembrance is truly essential and is so very well illustrated and emphasized thanks to this evening and the exhibition “The Last Swiss Holocaust Survivors.” It is, after all, crucial to show that people from *different* countries became victims, refugees and survivors, and that – in many cases – each individual and family had ties to several different countries. Among the last Swiss survivors there are also Swedish connections and a shared history as we see in the cases of Werner Guter och Mordechai Sterling.

I am very proud that Sweden from now on has a national Holocaust Museum where we can remember and learn. This is a manifestation of how important the survivors are for Sweden and of the fact that their history is also part of Sweden’s history.

I am particularly happy to see the museum in place – and in action – at this particular time since Holocaust remembrance is under pressure from distortion, disinformation and denial – phenomena that form a pattern that is becoming more and more prevalent across the ideological spectrum and in all kinds of contexts. This means that promoting historically correct Holocaust remembrance – like the museum and the IHRA do – has never been more crucial.

The museum was one of Sweden’s pledges to the Malmö Forum, Remember – ReAct that Sweden hosted a year ago. Many of the pledges presented at the Forum were on the topic of remembrance and the Swedish IHRA Presidency is now promoting the momentum created by the Malmö Forum, by following up on the pledges, and by communicating good and inspiring examples.

I very much look forward to this evening as an occasion to remember and honor the victims and survivors of the Holocaust, but also to gain an even deeper understanding of these pressing issues and thereby improve our chances to tackle them, Together – for impact.