

KADİR HAS UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Mr. CAN HAS' SPEECH FOR

“THE INTERNATIONAL DAY TO COMMEMORATE HOLOCAUST VICTIMS”

Great philosopher and thinker Adorno uttered his historical phrase right after the Holocaust. Humanity was not at first aware of the horror of the event. However, once the war was over and the realities came out and once what man is capable of doing to another turned into an unbelievable reality beyond imagination, Adorno so roughly uttered his awe that he declared the end of history: “To write poetry after Auschwitz is not possible.”

Poetry has always been the means to express oneself since the first day of humanity. It was an instrument to convey not only romantic and supreme emotions and dreams but also sorrow. Adorno, on the other hand, was saying that poetry was over, without any distinction whatsoever. Humanity was not even in a position to eulogize, so awful was what happened.

It is impossible to trace back atrocity in the history of humanity. Wars, blood feuds, massacres are all means of this atrocity. However, no such atrocity can be as comprehensive and startling as the Holocaust as this extermination showed a very different face of humanity. Men could kill his fellows deliberately and willingly; ponderingly and premeditatedly. One of the properties differentiating men from other creatures is to kill his fellows designedly. Nevertheless, this design to turn into such a meaningless and systematic extermination, such systematic eradication of millions of people just because of their race and religion is unique in the history of the mankind.

Apart from this overwhelming reality, holocaust unfortunately thought us other things. For instance, in line with the argument of German-origin philosopher Hannah Arendt, it has shown us how the evil can become mundane and how it can become a part of daily life. For instance, it has proved how people could pay no attention to what was happening for their own sake and interests. For instance, it has shown us how easy it is to forget. Briefly, it has become the record of the worst aspects of humanity.

Nevertheless, humanity managed to resist despite all. In the texts and books written by Primo Levi and Jorge Semprun who managed to survive the concentration camps, the humanity witnesses how it can prevail even in those conditions. There is but one concept providing us with this kind of resilience: human dignity. In fact, it is not humans who make history. It is human dignity because every step taken by humanity from constructing instruments to teaching law is for the purpose of creating a more dignified life.

Commemorating holocaust today is to announce that this dignity still survives. It is a call for this dignity to survive forever.

I commemorate those who lost their lives and suffered in this genocide with all my respect and those who stood out against it even more respectfully.