

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE TO CEREMONY AND INTERNATIONAL FORUM  
COMMEMORATING THE 65<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE TRAGEDY OF BABYN YAR

Kyiv, 27 September 2006

*Delivered by Mr. Francis O'Donnell, UN Resident Coordinator in Ukraine*

The massacre of many thousands of Jews, Soviet prisoners of war, Ukrainian nationalists, Roma and others at Babyn Yar was one of the worst horrors of the Second World War. If we are to have any chance of sparing future generations from similar tragedies, we must keep memory alive.

I recall vividly my own visit to the site four years ago. I felt the truth of the line in Yevtushenko's famous poem, "Here all things scream silently".

I wanted to go to Babyn Yar to express my solidarity with all victims of anti-Semitism and intolerance, and as a sign of my resolve to do everything in my power to fight the hatred and evil that continue to disfigure our world. Indeed, even today, after the Holocaust and other horrors of the last century, we see people around the world targeted for brutality and violence simply because of their ethnic, religious, national or other identity. We see Jews in many places, including in Europe, living in fear for their safety and freedoms. We see Muslims and others facing attacks and discrimination. Politicians in several countries have found anti-immigrant appeals a path to electoral success. In the past few years especially, there has been an increase in extremism and intolerance.

Such threats, whether large-scale genocide to the indignities of day-to-day bigotry, should trouble all of us. We must each strive to uphold the principles of tolerance, pluralism, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. Communities under assault must not be left alone to defend themselves. We must reject the false claims of those who say the Holocaust never happened or has been exaggerated. Everyone must speak out. The United Nations, for its part, in addition to its wide-ranging, long-standing work to promote and protect human rights, has launched an "Alliance of Civilizations", aimed at bridging divides, and at overcoming prejudices and polarizations that potentially threaten world peace.

Remembering the unspeakable acts that took place at Babyn Yar is an essential part of that work. I commend President Yushchenko for his leadership in convening this important commemoration, and I thank all the participants for their commitment. Please accept my best wishes for a moving and memorable ceremony.