



**Republic of Cyprus  
Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth**

**GREETINGS OF THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, SPORTS AND YOUTH**

**H.E. DR. ATHENA MICHAELIDOU**

**HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATION EVENT**

**MELINA MERCOURI HALL**

**MONDAY, 27 JANUARY 2025**

Your Excellency Ambassador of Israel,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies And Gentlemen,

International Holocaust Remembrance Day provides an opportunity to reflect on the millions who suffered and perished from the unimaginable atrocities that were committed more than 80 years ago. The legacy of the Holocaust and its aftermath is at the forefront of Cyprus's participation with observer status, since 2021, in the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA). The Republic of Cyprus has been implementing relevant policies at national level, including adopting the IHRA definition for Antisemitism and the IHRA definition of Holocaust Denial.

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth is committed to the meaningful commemoration of the Holocaust Remembrance Day in Cyprus, as well as the study of the Holocaust in educational settings through learning activities organized in Cypriot schools. In close cooperation with the Embassy of Israel, the ministry assists with the implementation of these educational activities each year, including seminars, competitions, and exhibitions, like today's opening.

Today's exhibition, the "Shoah: How Is It Humanly Possible" is designed by Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center. The ministry has a long history with Yad Vashem, having forged strong ties since 1994. This cooperation led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2016 and will be renewed this year. In June 2023, 25 secondary school teachers from Cyprus participated in a training seminar on teaching the Holocaust, at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Separately, Holocaust Education and Research is also included as a topic in the bilateral Cooperation Programme signed between the Republic of Cyprus and the State of Israel in June 2023. In February 2024, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed with the Church of

Cyprus, the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports of the Hellenic Republic, the Church of Greece, the Central Jewish Council of Greece and the Jewish Museum of Greece on the preservation of the memory of the Holocaust and the fight against anti-Semitism.

The interest and participation of Cypriot students in these educational activities is encouraging. An interesting project that was recently presented by students at the Vocational and Technical School of Larnaca was inspired by an educational visit that students had back in 2023 to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The personal and collective stories of known and unknown victims of the Holocaust in the largest of the Nazi concentration camps and extermination centers were chosen as the subject matter for the project. Auschwitz serves as a destination to reflect on the horrors carried out on its grounds, a place to mourn the deaths of those murdered, and a center to educate ourselves through the interaction of texts, images, and objects. Similarly, these students invited their audience to think about the many factors and events that contributed to the Holocaust.

The fabric of a democratic, European society was woven from the remnants of World War II. From a continent decimated by war, the European Union was built on the foundation of democratic education and remains the largest and most successful global peace project. In times of populism and rising social division across Europe and beyond, Cyprus, as a Member State of the European Union, attaches great importance to education as a key to fostering sustainable peace and democracy. Access to public education is a fundamental right in the Republic of Cyprus because we know that education, besides acquiring knowledge and skills, is a barrier against prejudice and hatred. To that end, it is an educational imperative of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth to teach the record of history in an accurate and factual way and to provide our youth opportunities to experience it firsthand. The knowledge and experiences gained by our students during their visit to Auschwitz are important to function, as a way to both curb anti-Semitism and to understand how millions of people were annihilated by the Nazis. Education is always the way forward.

In closing, I would like to congratulate the students and teachers, as well as the dedicated officers at the ministry, for their remarkable and tireless efforts to engage in and promote these activities. Additionally, I would also like to express my appreciation for the excellent work carried out by the staff of the Embassy of Israel that is required for important events like today's and especially for the continuous support of His Excellency Ambassador Oren Anolik.

Thank you.