

23 (08/2019)



EMORIA

MEMORY • HISTORY • EDUCATION



SPECIAL EDITION

**"AUSCHWITZ
NEVER AGAIN! - REALLY?"**

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OPENING STATEMENT

INAUGURATION PANEL

UNFATHOMABLE EXPERIENCES: TESTIMONIES OF
SURVIVORS AND WITNESSES OF VARIOUS CRIMES

AWARD CEREMONY: IF NOT FOR THOSE TEN

OPEN PANEL: HISTORY IS REPEATING

THREATS TO THE MODERN WORLD

CONFLICTS IN LITERATURE

NON-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL
MEANS TO RAISE AWARENESS

PREVENTION OF CRIMES AND GENOCIDES

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

THE CONFERENCE TOOK PLACE UNDER THE HONORABLE
PATRONAGE OF PROFESSOR PIOTR GLIŃSKI, MINISTER OF
CULTURE AND NATIONAL HERITAGE OF POLAND.

We invite all of you to work closely with us. We would be grateful to receive information about events, projects, publications, exhibitions, conferences or research that we should share with our readers. We also accept proposals for articles.

Please do share information about this magazine with others, particularly via social media.

Paweł Sawicki, Editor-in-Chief

Our e-mail: memoria@auschwitz.org

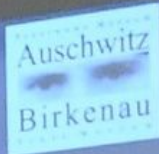
All editions: memoria.auschwitz.org

Imogen Dalziel

AUSCHWITZ NEVER AGAIN! REALLY?

Oświęcim, 1-4 July 2019
Conference Report





International Educational Conference
AUSCHWITZ - "NEVER AGAIN!" - REALLY?
1-4 July, 2019

Organized by the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum



OPENING STATEMENT

"We have failed. We have failed in something." This was the stark message from Dr Piotr M. A. Cywiński's speech that opened the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum's 2019 conference. The title of the conference, which ran from 1 – 4 July, was 'Auschwitz – "Never Again!" – Really?', illustrating a change of theme and direction compared to previous editions of the biennial meeting. The focus was not only on education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust, but also on past and present genocides and crimes against humanity, and the objective of preventing such conflicts in the future.

Museum Director Dr Cywiński explained that this theme was inspired by recent events such as the genocide against the Rohingya in Myanmar. Reports of genocide and 'ethnic cleansing' came out of Myanmar from August 2017, only a month after the Museum's previous conference commemorating the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Auschwitz Museum. 72 years after the Nazi camps were liberated, however, the world remained silent – once again – in the face of contemporary genocide.

Cywiński stated that the UN made a declaration expressing 'deep concern' about reports regarding the violation of the Rohingya's human rights: "not the events themselves, but only the reports," he stressed. Otherwise, nothing else happened. In events hauntingly similar to the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994, the world watched on passively as half a million people fled to neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh, and thousands more were murdered. With the recurrence of genocide and crimes against humanity since the Holocaust, and global

indifference to the victims' plight, Dr Cywiński commented that "there is a huge question mark against everything we have done so far," in terms of education and means of prevention.

Cywiński also emphasised the rapid acceleration of change all over the world during the last few decades. He mentioned advancements and changes in technology; in religion and spirituality; in the relationship between an individual and their community; and in various forms of communication. "We can no longer rely on the [educational] methods created and fostered in the 1980s and 1990s," stated Cywiński, "because the world has changed so much since then." The adaptation of educational activities in such a rapidly changing world, therefore, is the biggest challenge facing educators in this field today.

Referring specifically to the Holocaust, Dr Cywiński questioned whether this subject should be consigned only to History lessons. "Perhaps this history has more to do with lessons in civic attitudes, politics, ethics, media studies and so on – things that relate to contemporary society," he explained. "The concentration camps themselves are a thing of the past, of history, but the rest is not." In addition to cases of genocide and human rights violations, Cywiński stressed the importance of learning about the history of the Holocaust in a world where populist movements continue to grow; where civilians, divided and in fear of the direction in which humanity is going, grasp onto the "catchy words and phrases and easy solutions" peddled by populist politicians. One need only look back at the events of the 20th century to see where such ideologies may lead.







The Museum Director closed his presentation by highlighting the three pillars on which the Auschwitz Museum aims to operate: 'Remembrance,' 'Awareness' and 'Responsibility'. Remembrance and awareness, he suggested, do not seem to be a problem in contemporary society; responsibility, however, is something that is still clearly lacking, hence the world's indifference to the plight of the Rohingya and others. Bearing these three fundamentals in mind, he added, we have to try and "introduce some moral distress" and show people why they should be concerned about what is happening in the world. "If mass murders can occur and people can turn a blind eye, then something is very wrong," Cywiński concluded. "We all have to tackle this issue."



INAUGURATION PANEL

Professor Dan Michman, Head of the International Institute for Holocaust Research and Incumbent of the John Najmann Chair of Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem

Anna Cave, Director, Ben Ferencz International Justice Initiative at the Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide, USHMM

Dr. Jennifer Wells, Chief Executive Officer of Genocide Watch, George Washington University

Moderator: **Dr. Piotr M. A. Cywiński**, Director, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum



To what extent do the tragedies that happened in Auschwitz provide a key to understanding contemporary reality?

Dr. Wells stated that, "it is fundamental to incorporate what happened at Auschwitz into genocide studies," as the term 'genocide' was created by Rafael Lemkin because of the Holocaust. She added that people must understand the legal definitions of words like 'genocide' and 'crimes against humanity', so that they do not become overused or used inappropriately.

Professor Michman also commented on the importance of language regarding the phrase 'Auschwitz and the Holocaust'. He noted the

emergence of Auschwitz as "a symbol of the Holocaust," whilst events such as the Einsatzgruppen killings are largely forgotten. Furthermore, he stated that, because of Lemkin's definition of genocide, the focus is always on mass murder or the attempt to erase nations or groups; but "the essence of the Holocaust was not that it was the Nazi attempt to erase all the Jews." According to Michman, the Holocaust "was the attempt to erase 'the Jewish spirit', and the equality of humankind." Thus, if the message that the Holocaust was a battle against human equality, and not only about murder, is conveyed, it can serve in education as an example for understanding contemporary society.



Ms Cave challenged Dr. Cywiński's notion that remembrance is not an issue in the modern world – "a lot of places in Africa, for example, don't know about the Holocaust" – and commented that more needs to be done to spread education and remembrance. She added that the Holocaust may be used as a starting point for education in Myanmar,

rather than students looking at their own culture and history, which may be too difficult given the current situation. Ms Cave concluded that "we need to find a way to tie in lessons from the Holocaust for contemporary society."




Can one event that took place be compared to other ones, because they touch upon the issue of genocide and mass murder? Or is such a comparison too risky or painful, because there are many different elements? Perhaps it doesn't make sense to compare different fears, traumas and anxieties, but instead the silence of the world should be compared.

Professor Michman stressed that we only know of the times when education has failed; many similar situations may have already been prevented. Comparison, however, requires looking at methodologies. Michman noted that historians look at the peculiarities of cases, but lawyers and social scientists do not.







He stated, "Analysing a developing situation involves sifting through the events and ignoring the peculiarities, which means these peculiarities are sometimes missed." He also commented on the fact that states are afraid of conflicts being termed 'genocide' because it means they have to get involved, as was the case with Rwanda. He added that educators "have to tackle self-images of people and societies, and whether these are right or wrong," so they fully realise that genocide can happen anywhere.

In response to Dr Cywiński's question, Ms Cave stated that we must think about the purpose of such comparisons. Looking at past events to judge emerging patterns can be useful, "but it should not be about political point-scoring."

Dr. Wells mentioned the Eight Stages of Genocide created by Gregory Stanton, directly designed for comparisons to be made. Seeing the bigger picture of elements such as classification, dehumanisation, organisation and extermination can be helpful, she argued, and can be seen across many genocides. Wells commented that one of the current challenges in challenging silence is the development of technology; whilst the Western world is benefitting from such elements, places like Asia and Africa are becoming more isolated, and whilst there might be help on an international level, there is none locally.

Compassion is one of the greatest human traits, but is it enough to prevent genocide?

Ms Cave believes that compassion is not enough: that "we need to move to action," and this must be undertaken by groups rather than individuals. Compassion is a good place to start, but this must then translate to engagement and action. She said that, "We shouldn't be so optimistic about

what we know works and doesn't work in terms of stopping genocide," and that the types of intervention we use need to be examined carefully.

Professor Michman used the example of the Righteous Among the Nations to address the idea of compassion. Whilst the sacrifices these people made should be recognised, he highlighted the fact that many of them were antisemites; on the other hand, many liberal people did nothing to save Jews. Michman also discussed the idea that Auschwitz is "an icon for ultimate evil," yet we do not necessarily know what ultimate evil is, and there may yet be "something more ultimate than Auschwitz" in the future of which we must be aware.

Dr Wells commented that there should be "more social safety nets" in society to stop people feeling their only way to feel valued is, for example, by joining far-right, extremist groups. For instance, she stated, many radical Islamists turn to such extremism because they are discriminated against and cannot find employment or social security. Societies need to put more in place to ensure this is not the result.

Questions were then invited from the audience. Topics discussed included the rise in Holocaust denial and antisemitism around the world, often encouraged by governments; the impact of climate change on genocide; and the type of language that should be used when educating young people about genocide and the contemporary world.



'UNFATHOMABLE EXPERIENCES: TESTIMONIES OF SURVIVORS AND WITNESSES OF VARIOUS CRIMES'

Marian Turski, survivor of Auschwitz

Marin R. Yann, survivor of the Khmer Rouge's killing fields in Cambodia

Mevludin Rahmanovic, survivor of the Bosnian conflict and Trnopolje concentration camp

Aline Umugwaneza, survivor of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda

Moderator: **Alicja Biatecka**, Representative for the New Main Exhibition at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

What was your first memory of being persecuted? Did you understand, at that time, why you were persecuted?

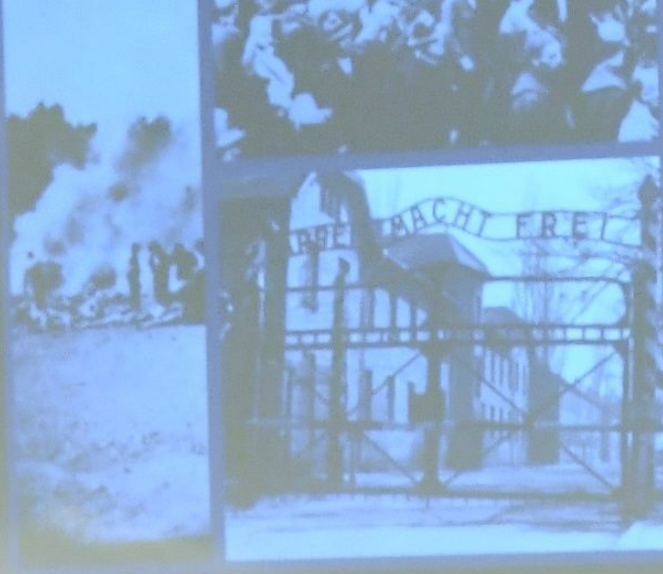
Mr Rahmanovic was 11 when the Bosnian War started; he recalled going down to the basement when the shooting began, and thinking it was "fun". He "grew up in one night," however, after his father – a local imam – was beaten up. Even at that age, he was told his family would be killed as they were Muslims, and would be among the first because of his father's position. Rahmanovic, his mother and his sister left their village and ended up in Trnopolje concentration camp; his father stayed at home, worried that they would all be killed if he escorted them. Rahmanovic described men being killed and women being raped – his mother and sister deliberately made themselves look as unattractive as possible so they would not be targeted. He commented that he has only cried a few times

since the end of the conflict, and is determined "never to let anyone give me the power to make me cry."

Mr Yann explained the background of the genocide in Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge's enforcement of slave labour. Most worked in the rice fields or built water canals. Approximately two million people were killed during the genocide, including Mr Yann's parents and siblings. They either disappeared or died from starvation or disease. Yann spoke very movingly about his experiences, including a time when he was caught by a soldier stealing rice from a warehouse. The soldier dragged him to the nearby water canal, holding his head inches above the water and threatening his life. He eventually let Yann go, claiming he would kill him and his entire family should he steal again. He was only six years old.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION ABOUT AUSCHWITZ AND THE HOLOCAUST
MIĘDZYNARODOWE CENTRUM EDUKACJI O AUSCHWITZ I HOŁOKAUSTCIE





Organizowana przez M
o Auschwitz i Holokaust

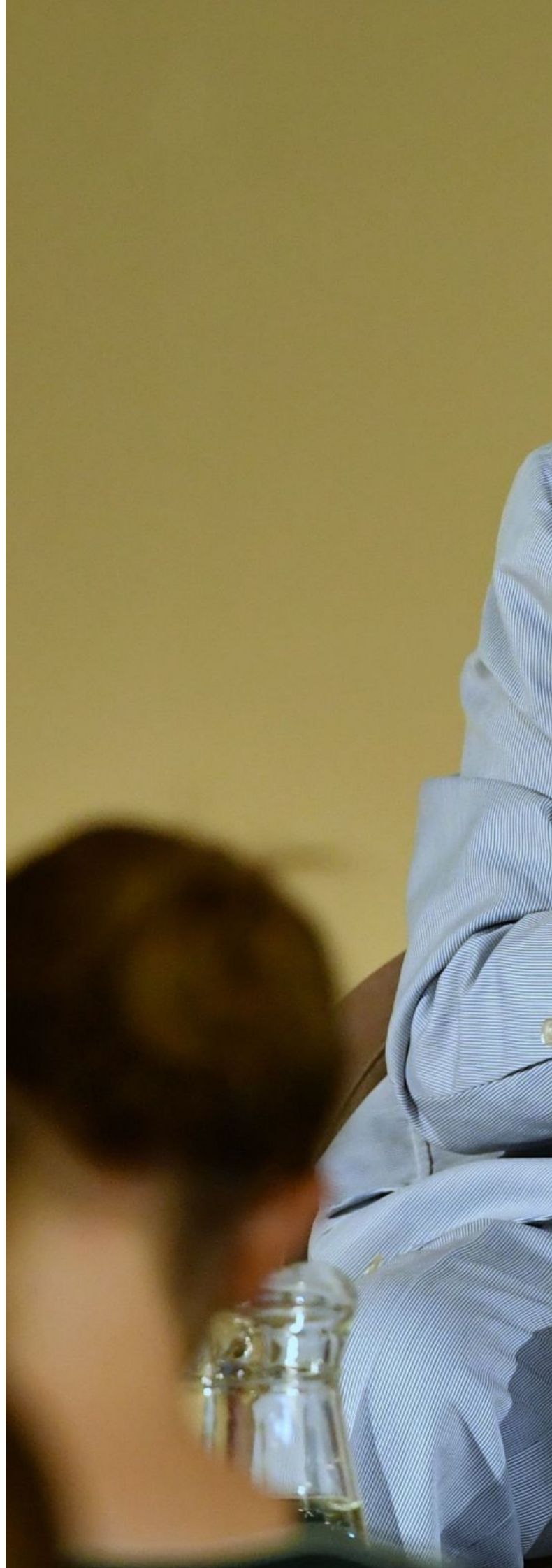


Ms Umugwaneza was eight years old when the genocide started in Rwanda. She also provided background to the conflict, describing the persecution and murder of the Tutsi from 1955. An uncle had fled to Burundi before the 1990s; he decided to return shortly before the genocide began, despite her father's warnings, and he and his family (except for one child) were murdered. Umugwaneza recalled being beaten by her teacher in school, and her father keeping silent for fear that things would worsen. Eventually, the family had to leave their home, but nowhere was safe. Ms Umugwaneza stated that "one morning, you woke up and things had changed": neighbours began killing neighbours, primed and prepared for years by propaganda and the presence of the militia.

Mr Turski commented how "idyllic" his childhood had been compared to his fellow panellists, as he did not arrive in Auschwitz until he was 18. He described growing up in Poland, seeing caricatures of Jewish people in newspapers, and realising that he was "different". Between his house and secondary school was the local branch of a nationalist youth organisation; he quickly learned to avoid walking past, particularly alone, as members would hit Jewish students with clubs. Turski also realised things had changed after Germany invaded Poland and Jews were forced to wear Star of David armbands. He felt that his childhood stopped, however, once the family voluntarily moved to the Łódź Ghetto after the residents of two nearby blocks of flats were all shot dead.

Did you ever see any signs of goodwill, of people not turning a blind eye?

Mr Rahmanovic did not have any personal experiences of others showing goodwill, but recalled meeting a man after the war whose father had been an army officer. He had lost his job and his retirement money as he had refused to follow orders. "Before that," he said, "I thought all Serbs were the same, and that they all wanted us to die. But then I realised we are not all the same, and others suffered too."







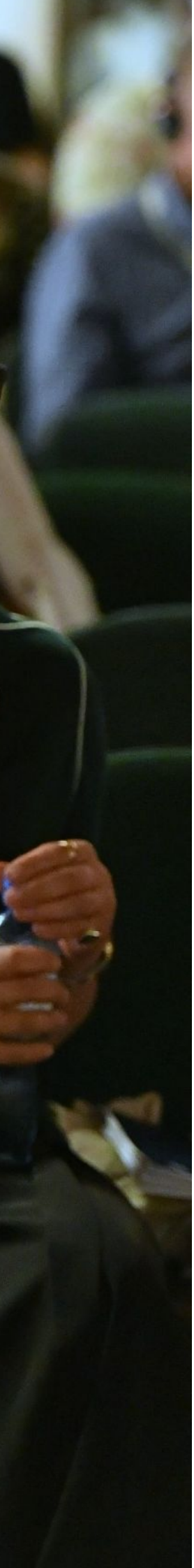


Międzynarodowa Konferencja Edukacji
o AUSCHWITZ - "NIGDY WIĘCEJ!" - CZY N
1-4 lipca 2019

Organizowana przez Międzynarodowe Centrum Edukacji
o Auschwitz i Holokaucie w Państwowym Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau







Mr Yann described being saved by a young Khmer Rouge soldier. The soldier noticed Yann lying unconscious on the ground, close to death, and took him home for his mother to feed and look after him. For Mr Yann, this showed that, "If people have the courage to work against a policy, to know that they are right, to save a person's life, they don't have to follow orders."

Ms Umugwaneza's family were sheltered for a few days by another family. Soon after their arrival, however, the militia learned that Tutsis were being harboured by this family. Although they had to leave, the father of the family gave them food and water for their journey. Ms Umugwaneza stressed the risks involved in hiding Tutsis – if people were found to be hiding those targeted for murder, they too would be killed.

Finally, Mr Turski talked about making contact with a Polish army unit after being sent from Auschwitz to a labour commando. He and nine other inmates wished to join a guerrilla unit, though this never materialised as the risk of taking 10 young, untrained men without their own weapons would have been too great a risk. Turski also stressed the fact that evil acts were not just perpetrated by the SS, but also by foremen, kapos and prisoners.

Do you remember thinking about the conflict coming to an end - that you might actually survive - and then thinking about what would come next?

Mr Rahmanovic stated that, for a long time after the conflict, he wanted revenge. Eventually, however, he realised that "violence is not the answer," and that peace and dialogue are the way forward. He believes that more needs to be done to facilitate these, as "it's actually very easy to persuade people to kill and rape, so

we need to look more into this."

Mr Yann echoed these sentiments. He described people killing Khmer Rouge soldiers after liberation, and as a nine-year-old, he believed this was right. Moving to America allowed him to find peace, but also to stand up for himself. Yann believes that "compassion and education" are the best methods for preventing conflicts, as there are many events taking place in the world that even those considered intelligent do not know about.

Ms Umugwaneza talked about the difficulties facing survivors in Rwanda after the genocide: lives and houses that had to be rebuilt, and the fact that many had to live in the proximity of those who had killed their neighbours and friends. She stated that, "the best revenge wasn't to hate or take revenge on the murderers; it was to decide to live again and overcome everything," for oneself but also for those "whose lives were cut short". Ideas of revenge were soon overtaken by reconciliation.

Mr Turski recalled his second death march, thinking of revenge against the German population. Yet he also evoked other events in history, such as the end of the Napoleonic Wars, when innocent victims and civilians would also have thought about "justice after violence" in this form. Ultimately, however, in such cases – as in the aftermath of more recent conflicts – one is required to live in a civilised society with others, even those who have perpetrated crimes.

Questions from the audience included the respective penalties against bystanders if they helped those being persecuted; the panellists' thoughts about the slow (or non-existent) reaction of the global community to their plight; and the language used to describe perpetrators.

AWARD CEREMONY: 'IF NOT FOR THOSE TEN...'

On the 72nd anniversary of the founding of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, another 10 volunteers were presented with an award in recognition of their services. This year's recipients had assisted in projects such as event organisation, conservation, educational visits and transcription. The awards were announced by Monika Pastuszka-Nędza, Head

of the Museum's Volunteers Bureau, and presented by Director Piotr M. A. Cywiński. Volunteer Piotr Kondratowicz – who co-ordinates visits and internships for deaf apprentices at the Museum – movingly thanked the Museum on behalf of the "1 million Poles that speak Polish, but do not hear it."







rkens

Panstwowe
Auschi



Awards 2019

Nura Abdelmohsen – intern at the Archives and volunteer at the Conservation Laboratories;

Gabriel Dittrich – member of Für die Zukunft lernen and employee of Campus Christophorus Jugendwerk in Breisach. He has been coordinating the visits of young people at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum for years;

Piotr Kondratowicz – tutor of a group of deaf apprentices from the Lower Silesian Special School and Educational Centre No. 12 for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired in Wrocław. Students from the school come to the Museum for internships every year and take part in the commemoration of June 14th anniversary as volunteers. In addition, Piotr Kondratowicz organizes trainings for Museum staff and guides on working with deaf people.

Olga Kulinchenko – coordinator of volunteering activity from Russia, from the Oral History Center in Voronezh;

Mateusz Mateja – intern from the Volkswagen internship program;

Kelsey Morgan – intern in the Archives where she made transcripts of interviews with Auschwitz survivors. A volunteer during commemoration events and anniversaries;

Peter Rössl – volunteer at the Conservation Laboratories as well as during conferences, commemoration events and anniversaries, i.e. 74th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz;

Hannah Skrzypczak – intern and volunteer at the Archives and Educational Projects;

Sakura Tohma – trainee and volunteer at the Conservation Laboratories;

Kinga Żelazko – intern at the Research Center as well as volunteer at the Volunteers Bureau, Archives and Library;

OPEN PANEL: 'HISTORY IS REPEATING. FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT, FROM THE PRESENT TO THE PAST'

Marco Gonzalez, Executive Director, Yahad-In Unum

Elizabeth Barna, PhD candidate, Vanderbilt University

Catarina Branco, psychologist

Maciek Zabierowski, Learning and Special Projects Officer, Auschwitz Jewish Center

Alexander KleiB, Mauthausen Memorial

Moderator: **Dr Wanda Witek-Malicka**, Research Centre, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

This panel consisted of five separate presentations from experts in a number of professions and from different countries.

Mr Gonzalez began with his presentation 'The Holocaust Museum in Guatemala'. He discussed the country's own dark past - an internal war between the 1960s and '90s saw more than 200,000 native Mayans killed – and the Holocaust is now being used as an avenue to discuss this history. In 2016, the Guatemalan government passed a law making

Holocaust education compulsory in schools; the Museum was inaugurated in February of that year. It is the first of its kind in Central America and has so far seen 50,000 visitors. As Executive Director of Yahad-In Unum, Gonzalez stressed the importance of teaching the Holocaust as a crime – evidence of this crime, couple with survivor testimonies, are the best tools for educating young people and allowing them to take responsibility for future conflicts that may occur in their lifetime.

organized by the International Center for Education
about Auschwitz and the Holocaust at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum





Ms Barna's presentation was entitled 'What Does it Mean to 'Know' of Atrocities in the Age of Trump?' It was based upon her doctoral research investigating America's relationship with its own history of slavery and genocide, primarily through the lens of museums concerning former plantations and President Andrew Jackson. Jackson – the 7th President of the United States, who was actively involved in the slave trade and genocide of indigenous

people – is famously liked by current President Donald Trump. This has resulted in more visitors at Andrew Jackson's Hermitage, a former cotton plantation near Nashville. Ms Barna discussed the relative absence of slavery history presented at the Hermitage, and considered the ethical implications of using such a site for commercial purposes, such as weddings and family fun days.

Next, Ms Branco presented 'Beyond Obliviousness', a discussion of memory and forgetting in connection to the Holocaust. She discussed screening *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* with students in Portugal, who appeared uninterested in the film as they could not relate to the narrative or its events. She also commented on people viewing sites

of genocide and atrocities as tourist attractions; the importance of connections and commonalities between people; and the anti-gypsy sentiment prevalent in parts of Portugal, symbolised through statues and pictures of frogs displayed in shop windows and doorways (as gypsies consider frogs a bad omen).



Maciek Zabierowski delivered a presentation on the 'Antidiscrimination Education Academy: Professional Development Course for Teachers on Responding to Hatred' at the Auschwitz Jewish Center. The course is organised by Roma organisation Dialog Pheniben, Warsaw's POLIN Museum and Auschwitz Jewish Center. A group of around 26 teachers from both primary and secondary schools in the local area take part in a six-month, intensive weekend course, looking at topics such as antisemitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, hate speech and

Romaphobia. Participants visit the Auschwitz Museum and Jewish Center, undergo psychological training to understand their own perceptions, create lesson plans, are mentored and are taught in thematic sessions. Their lesson plans are then used with a class, so the students are the real beneficiaries. Graduates are also invited to a programme in Berlin, learning more about the Holocaust through visiting relevant sites and how Germany commemorates this past.





Finally, Alexander KleiB gave a paper titled 'So, Why does it Concern Me? Connections to the Everyday Life of Visitors of the Guided Tour at Mauthausen Memorial'. This was in reference to the Memorial's current attempts to connect the past and the present at a grassroots level, in order for visitors to understand how such atrocities were possible to commit. The role and behaviour of bystanders is considered during the guided tour, and visitors are encouraged to consider how close Mauthausen

is to its local surroundings. The railway line to the camp, for example, did not extend into the grounds, so prisoners had to walk uphill to the entrance, watched by civilians. Furthermore, civilians worked in quarries alongside inmates, and SS football matches were attended by the local population. Asking these questions of visitors also allows discussions about current events that are largely ignored and how this can be challenged.

'THREATS TO THE MODERN WORLD'

Father Patrick Desbois, President, Yahad-In Unum

Professor Ireneusz C. Kamiński, Associate Professor, Institute of Law Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, and Jagiellonian University

Professor Paweł Śpiewak, Director, Jewish Historical Institute

Moderator: **Paweł Sawicki**, Press Officer, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum



What seem to be the beginnings of the process of mass murder?

Professor Kamiński stressed the dangers of hatred, and considered this from a legal perspective. He commented that whilst we have the term 'hate speech', the law deals more with terms like 'freedom of speech'. It can be challenging to define exactly where hatred starts in such cases, and when speech can become dangerous. Professor Kamiński also highlighted the law's role in ensuring that crimes such as the Holocaust do not happen again, through elements such as international tribunals, but expressed concern that many countries still do not accept the jurisdiction of international courts.

Father Desbois discussed his recent work in Iraq, where he has been working with Yazidi victims of ISIS. Many of the perpetrators, he said, are not native to the Middle East, but come from all over the world. Why would a young Frenchman, for instance, travel to Syria to fight, knowing he will die? Father Desbois believes that it is a result of the ideology of being "Superman", "a real James Bond". These young people buy into an ideology that allows them to feel powerful and recognised. In contrast to Professor Kamiński, Desbois does not believe hatred is the key: rather, "it's about being out of humanity." Once the idea of being "above humanity" has permeated a person, he added, they will do all sorts of things. The same logic can be applied to perpetrators of the Holocaust.







Professor Śpiewak agreed with the importance of the utopian element of mass murder, but stated that it cannot explain the concept of hatred itself. He quoted Aristotle's three characteristics of hatred: that it is a permanent feeling; that it is directed towards a group, rather than an individual; and the pursuit of elimination. Śpiewak also added a fourth element: a fixed belief. Hatred is fixed, he said, and embedded in certain ideologies. These are particularly dangerous when they are left unchallenged, and in contemporary society, people are not being encouraged to think differently. Professor Śpiewak gave the example of Eichmann during his trial in Jerusalem, who stated that he never heard any opinions different to his own.

What about fake news, disinformation and indoctrination, and how people are influenced by them? Are there any ways to prevent the spread of such poison?

Professor Śpiewak replied that "the only principle of security would be what we call the act of thinking itself." People who analyse information, he said, are the ones who can defend the truth, reflect upon the world, and hold people accountable for what they say and think. Ultimately, he added, the real counteraction to the spread of these elements is common sense. It is also important to engage with other people who do not hold the same opinions. Finally, Professor Śpiewak commented upon the development of mass communication tools such as Facebook, where information spreads quickly and is often over-simplified. Ideologies of hatred are more easily disseminated through such media, he said, particularly when such complex phenomena are reduced to basics.

Father Desbois emphasised that there is not always pure ideology or pure hatred in the minds of those who commit atrocities. Many members of ISIS, for instance, are attracted to murder, but they are also lured in by the promise of money and sex. Desbois gave the example of a 16-year-old who had joined ISIS and earned himself a large house, marriage to a slave and a sex slave. He initially stayed in the group because "he was somebody". Therefore, mass murderers need an incentive to continue with their work, and to feel powerful from doing it. Father Desbois says that he stresses to his students at Georgetown University, "It could be you. It could happen to anyone," and one does not need to be a fanatic to take part in such crimes.





Professor Kamiński took a slightly different approach to Professor Śpiewak in his answer. He stated that one of the greatest problems with social media is that ignorant people, who would previously not have been heard, now have a platform where their opinions can be considered equal. The traditional approach towards people when they express controversial or dangerous statements, he said, would be to invite discussion with them and not to shut them down. However, we are now facing many debates regarding freedom of speech and censorship. Professor Kamiński questioned if censorship and exclusion of such statements goes against freedom of speech, but admitted there was no obvious answer.

**Are we able to prevent atrocities from happening at all?
Will common sense and reason save the world?**

Professor Kamiński answered this question from the perspective of the law. He said that most people would agree that law serves "to make and create justice", yet international law seems to be more about finding peace. Peace means that justice is often dismissed, and because of this, many perpetrators of huge crimes have simply gone unpunished. Justice, argued Kamiński, should always prevail so that these types of events do not happen again.

Father Desbois talked about the role of neighbours (rather than bystanders) and the fact that they seem to care only about themselves: "If something doesn't affect their street, their family or neighbourhood, they're sad but that's it." Because of channels like social media, said Desbois, "we are all neighbours". We know what is happening in the world but do nothing about it. He also stated that people are fascinated by death as long as it does not involve them, and gave the examples of people watching the Twin Towers collapse or, more locally, rubbernecking to look at car crashes.

Professor Śpiewak drew attention to the fact that Europe has only just started coming to terms with the genocides of Africans and Indians under colonialism. The continent is "not innocent but conscious of its guilt, which is very important." He added that we are still searching for the best preventative measures, whether that be through international criminal tribunals or other means. Finally, Śpiewak reiterated the dangers of indifference. He stressed that we should not "enshrine ourselves in our guilt," but must be mindful of our feelings and sensitivities towards others.

Questions and comments from the audience were on the topics of the right to the truth via the law and the current threats present in the modern world.





'CONFLICTS IN LITERATURE'

Artur Domosławski, writer (Latin America vs. human rights)

(H)anka Grupińska, writer (The Second World War and the Holocaust)

Celine Uwineza, writer (Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda)

Moderator: **Jadwiga Pinderska-Lech**, Head of Publications, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

Why did you choose to write about your particular subject?

Ms Grupińska started looking at the Holocaust in the early 1980s, as she “knew virtually nothing about it”. It became a subject close to her heart as her own family had something of a dark history. In her early 20s, Grupińska travelled to Łódź to meet Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. He was her “main contact” with learning about the Holocaust, and when he died in 2009, she left the subject as she didn’t want to look further into the topic without him.

Ms Uwineza stated that, as a survivor of the genocide in Rwanda, she did not choose conflict, but “conflict chose me.” She explained that she was 10 years old at the time of the genocide and lost her grandparents, mother, two sisters and brother. At that age, she couldn’t understand the difference between Tutsi and Hutu children. Uwineza feels conflict chose her to write about her experiences

on a personal level, in order to “touch hearts” and evoke change in other people. She also stated that writing can be a form of prevention and healing. Healing is important to her because “if I heal, I won’t hate others and won’t practise vengeance.”

Mr Domosławski replied that a writer is not always aware of why they choose to deal with a certain topic, but he has been drawn to writing about the persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar and, primarily, conflicts in Latin America since the Cold War. More recently, he has written about the indigenous Amazonians and the businesses that are destroying their environment. Mr Domosławski writes about the topic of past violations of human rights as it interests him, and because many people in Poland and the West are not familiar with Latin America’s recent history.



OR EDUCATION ABOUT AUSCHWITZ AND THE HOLOCAUST
CENTRUM EDUKACJI O AUSCHWITZ I HOLOKAUSCIE



AUSCHWITZ - "NEVER AGAIN"

1-4 July, 2019

Organized by the International Center for Education
about Auschwitz and the Holocaust at the Auschwitz-Birkenau







Does going so deep into one topic open perspectives onto other topics as well?

The main theme of one of Mr Domostawski's books, *Death in the Amazon*, relates to the crimes committed by businesses extracting materials from Latin America. Domostawski began looking into the murder of two environmentalists living in Panama. What started as a story of politics and crime led him to the theme of "the food chain of the contemporary world." Large parts of the Amazon are affected by timber traders, steel companies and cattle farmers, which raises questions about the crimes involved in making these goods of which most consumers are unaware.

Ms Pinderska-Lech asked Mr Domostawski how he gained the trust of those who felt threatened. He replied that he had no insight into particular skills to gain people's trust, but that it is important to be reliable and pay attention to what people are saying. He devotes much time to talk to witnesses, so that if they don't feel like talking one day, they might do the next.

Ms Uwineza's writing came from her therapy notes. When she was 30, her father fell into a coma; the trauma took her back to the genocide, and she started to experience nightmares and other mental disturbances. She went into therapy for two years and wrote notes, including letters to her deceased mother. Uwineza talked through her experiences with her husband and family and realised she needed to start writing about what happened before the genocide, to recall good memories with her family which had started to fade. She emphasised the importance of survivors writing and sharing their stories, particularly as there are now perpetrators who deny the genocide.

Ms Grupińska reflected on her transition from writing about the Holocaust to travelling to India and encountering the Tibetans. She described to the audience the "extermination in Tibet", which relates more to cultural genocide after the Chinese invasion in the 1950s. Nowadays, the Tibetan language is banned; the official religion, Buddhism, is prohibited; Tibetan peasants are deprived of their property and forcibly moved to Chinese towns and villages. Yet, as Grupińska highlighted, very little is known about this in the Western world, and we should be bothered by such cases.

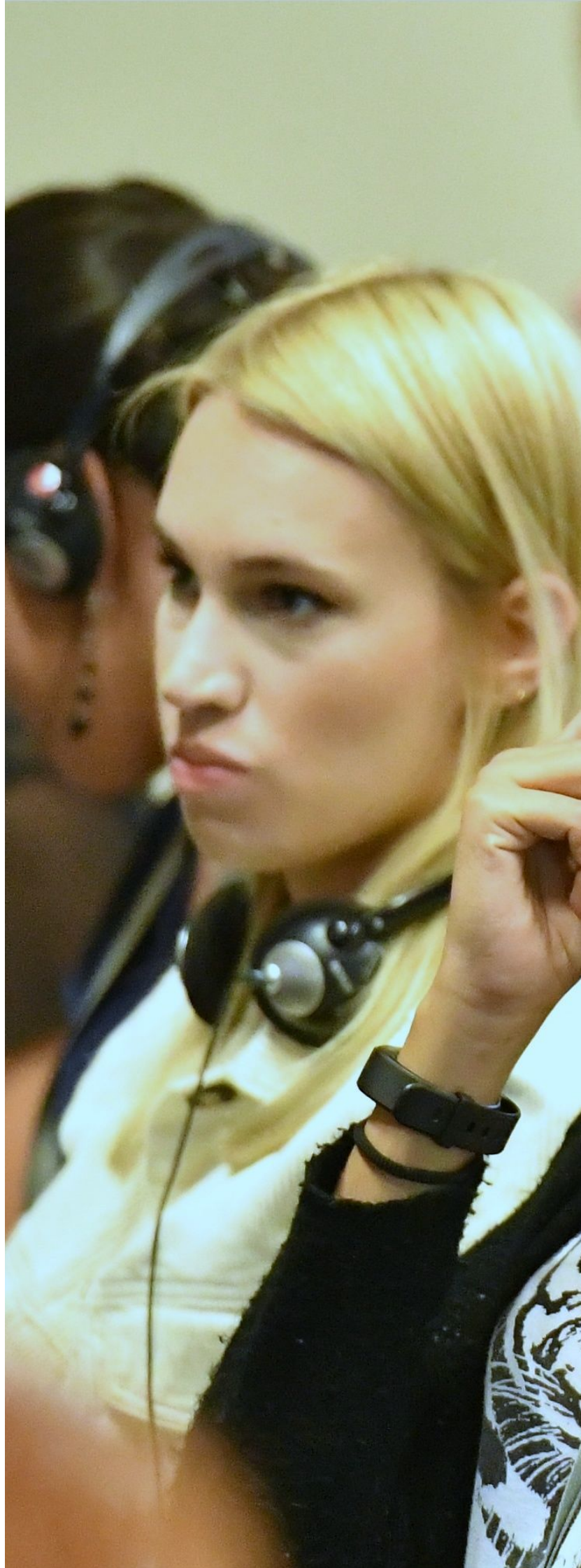
How do you approach the writing of your books? How do you go about presenting the facts and interesting your readers?

Ms Uwineza said the most important element was being “authentic to the truth.” Half of her book is written from her experiences as 10-year-old, so the reader can try and understand how she saw the genocide whilst it was happening. She also appreciates that writing from the perspective of a child means that it can be better used in educational settings. Furthermore, Uwineza was determined to be clear that the genocide involved Rwandans killing Rwandans, and that everyone has both good and bad inside them. She has also tried to start talking about PTSD and depression and the importance of mental health.

Mr Domosławski discussed the multi-layered elements of his writing: “it has elements of news, which is journalism, but also essay, story and sometimes drama.” Most of his writing encompasses human stories, which means that “an entire world” needs to be created for the reader to understand the context and narrative. It is also important, however, to keep to the facts and allow people to understand how serious many of these cases are.

Finally, Ms Grupińska stated that, when writing about the Holocaust, she had one rule: “I was the ear and the hand.” She was determined to use the language of those she talked to, even though this often meant differing accounts of the same events. On the other hand, she is still trying to work out the best way to write about the Tibetans, particularly as she comes from a totally different part of the world.

The audience’s questions touched upon topics such as writing in native languages; the idea of forgiveness; and journalists reporting on the genocide in Rwanda.





'NON-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL MEANS TO RAISE AWARENESS'

Luis Ferreiro, Director, Musealia

Cécile Allegra, French filmmaker, including documentary 'Under the Skin'

Elena Zhemkova, Executive Director, Memorial

Todd Bernstein, President and Founder, Global Citizen

Moderator: **Tomasz Michaldo**, Methodology of Guiding Department, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum



Why did you choose your particular method to educate and discuss things, and why do you think your method enables you to raise awareness?

Mr Bernstein started his non-profit, Global Citizen, 25 years ago, after a career in politics and government. He is frustrated by many elements in society, such as the answer to the criminal justice system being more prisons rather than more jobs or better housing. He spoke of America as "a divided nation, living in strange times" and described how his organisation tries to bring people together to combat racism, sexism, homophobia and other issues. Global Citizen engages people from all walks of life in different activities with the aim of encouraging reflection and a sustainable community impact.

In addition to being a filmmaker, Ms Allegra is the founder of a small NGO, Limbo, that assists torture camp survivors. She told the audience about the torture camps that are currently set up in the Sinai Peninsula, which she herself only learned about in recent years. Limbo was established to help survivors, particularly children, many of whom are travelling to Europe after being released. Ms Allegra spoke passionately about her native France's lack of support and treatment for these victims, many of whom have been repeatedly raped, beaten and starved. Allegra says she is trying to raise awareness through her activism and films, but there is still a long way to go.



Mr Ferreiro's father founded Musealia, an exhibition producer, in 2000. He was a radio journalist, used to working with a microphone, and Ferreiro says he also sees exhibitions like a big microphone; objects can be shown and stories can be told to many people. After reading Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* in 2009, Ferreiro began working on a travelling exhibition about Auschwitz, the very first of its kind. Because of its mobile nature, the exhibition can be taken to people that may never visit Auschwitz, and elements such as pre-war Oświęcim are touched upon in the exhibition. The exhibition is in collaboration with the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, and 20 other museums and organisations have loaned items for the exhibition. Ferreiro does not want visitors to become "experts on Auschwitz," but rather to reflect and be moved.

Ms Zhemkova works for Memorial, a Russian organisation that is over 30 years old. The society is part of a network of NGOs that confront difficult Soviet and/or Russian history in order to prevent its repetition. Their work involves the collection of facts and testimonies, but also hosting exhibitions, documentaries, competitions and so on. Over the last 20 years, over 50,000 students have entered their competitions; Zhemkova played an example of an animation created by students based on archival testimonies. She stressed the importance of finding a way "to people's hearts" that will sustain their interest in this history.

Cecile talked about unwillingness from officials to help the people who went through the Sinai

camps. In *Under the Skin* one of the boys said, "No one will believe us anyway." That is key to understanding this. They are so broken, and they think if they tell our stories, no one will want to listen.

Ms Allegra admitted that "when you come across this kind of thing, you doubt it," because the reality and scale is so unbelievable. Her last documentary, addressing male rape used as a war weapon in Libya, received hardly any attention for at least six months, because no one wanted to hear about it. In contrast to Ms Zhemkova, Allegra stated that she has to collect information as quickly as possible, as the camps are often dismantled and the only evidence left is survivor testimony. She also advocated that 'survivor' should be a legal term alongside 'refugee' or 'migrant', as the people her NGO helps are survivors yet are not seen as or treated as such.

Mr Bernstein added that America also has a problem in dealing with the aftermath of horrific events. He gave the examples of mass shootings, the grassroots appeals to change gun laws and the influence of businesses and corporations in leaving them unchanged. He talked about four "branches" of American government: judicial, executive, congressional and, now, the media. This fourth pillar is now being undermined by President Donald Trump and his use of the phrase 'fake news'. Ultimately, Bernstein said, formal education in terms of being a citizen and celebrating differences between people needs to be taught to children as early as possible.














Ms Zhemkova echoed the sentiment of there being no universal means and methods to raise awareness, but stated that the only universal element is that "we should listen to one another". It is important, she emphasised, that people are taught that "we are all people of history," and we should be learning from that history through whatever power is in our means. She added that we must be aware of the complexities of history; in the Soviet Union, for example, some people began as perpetrators and ended up as victims.

Ms Allegra responded to this point by questioning how we should measure current atrocities that are not perpetrated under the auspices of, for example, Stalinism or Nazism. She stated that 12,000 people have died in Middle Eastern torture camps, and over a million people trapped in Libya, destined for human trafficking and exploitation.

Mr Bernstein applauded Ms Allegra for taking responsibility for sharing these stories, and emphasised that this should happen more often. He also commented on the presence of denial, not just of the Holocaust but of both past and present conflicts, and how America's current troubles on the border with Latin America are "fitting into the stages of genocide."

Mr Ferreiro added that "museums should be places that lay down the facts, but also help with making decisions in the present." He pointed out that many students come to the travelling exhibition with History teachers, but also those teaching subjects such as Citizenship and Human Rights.

What sort of problems do you encounter in your work on a daily basis?

Ms Allegra highlighted the criteria that

must be met to be granted asylum in France, which many refugees do not currently meet. She also stated that many European governments don't recognise Eritrea as a dictatorship, even though "it's the North Korea of Africa," and so those who flee are not granted asylum. Finally, Allegra commented on the criminalisation of rescue of those trying to get across the Mediterranean Sea. She said that "this is dangerous for history" and "we are punishing human goodwill" whilst people remain largely ignorant about the terrible things which are happening.

Mr Bernstein raised concerns about the constant competition in the media, regarding who can publish news first without having sources properly verified. This, in turn, seems to give credence to the idea of 'fake news', and "30% of [America] believe things are fake news because one person told them that."

Mr Ferreiro commented that encouraging people to reflect on issues is the most important thing. Documentaries such as Allegra's *Under the Skin* should allow people to think about what is happening in the world, and be moved to act upon it.

Ms Zhemkova made two final points. The first was that she worries about all those stories that remain untold, as those who lived through them are now dead. Secondly, she said that young people need optimism, but this is not something that is particularly easy to find in the world today.

Members of the audience thanked the panel for their efforts in raising awareness of certain conflicts; highlighted troubles in countries such as Colombia; and asked how awareness of atrocities can be communicated to countries that don't necessarily learn about them.

'PREVENTION OF CRIMES AND GENOCIDES'

Paul Ruksha, Digital Content Development Team Leader, Kigali Genocide Memorial

Małgorzata Wosińska, Representative of the Director, Jewish Historical Institute for International Co-operation

Céline Bardet, International jurist (specialising in war crimes, international crimes, justice and security issues); founder and President, We are NOT Weapons of War

Moderator: **Bartosz Bartyzel**, Head of Press Office, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

What is your personal perspective on the matter of prevention?

Ms Wosińska began by commenting on the progress that has taken place, both at the Auschwitz Museum and in Rwanda, over the last decade. She emphasised the fact that genocide is a process, not an event, no matter how many stages may be involved. Wosińska said that prevention can be helped by "listening to the survivors, listening to their language, and being mindful of your own language."

Ms Bardet admitted to being "sceptical" about the idea of prevention, and totally dismissed the notion of "never again" given the atrocities that have occurred since the Holocaust. She stated, however, that "justice is a tool of prevention," not just in prosecuting perpetrators but also in archiving and documenting crimes. She also commented on the impact that globalisation and the Internet have had on the world – despite the benefits of worldwide communication, Bardet believes such factors

"have made us less aware of reality and social links." She agreed with Ms Wosińska, saying that it is important to listen to survivors to aid prevention. Ms Bardet works with survivors of sexual violence, who deliver testimonies, but feels migrants and refugees should also be able to speak out.

Mr Ruksha said, "you can't prevent genocide, because it's not something like a package that can be thrown at you and hit your head." He stated, however, that the processes that lead to genocide can be, and acknowledged the importance of identifying elements involved in the process. Ruksha then spoke about the work of the Kigali Memorial, including collecting testimonies from survivors of the genocide in Rwanda, showing students round the Memorial and speaking to policymakers and stakeholders. He added that a digital platform is currently being worked on in Kinyarwanda to reach more Rwandans.











How can we measure where prevention may have helped to save a situation?

Ms Wosińska replied that she understands prevention “as a verb, not as a subject.” She stated the importance of observing a situation from a grassroots level, understanding local determinants and potential signs of violence. If there is concern, there should be both local public outreach and communication with the outside world. Wosińska also commented on the recording of genocide and conflict by the victims: diaries written during the Holocaust; used notebooks left behind after the genocide in Rwanda; and, more recently, people videoing atrocities on their phones in Syria. She stressed the need for people to read and listen to these, and that survivors of conflicts should be given a voice alongside politicians and others.

Ms Bardet highlighted the absence of discussion of governmental responsibility during the conference. Failures to act by organisations such as the UN come from states and governments. Bardet argued that prevention may work better if there was “a level of consciousness in everybody”, and that the key to this is through dialogue. She spoke of the divisions in the world and the eagerness with which people decide what is good and bad without considering others’ opinions. Ms Bardet disagreed with Father Desbois’ concept of people joining ISIS simply for the power, but stated the need to try and better understand why people commit such crimes. Discussion, she believes, will help nurture more positive outcomes, which is so needed when so many countries and people have already been failed.

Mr Rukeshia talked about the importance of humanity: people should be encouraged to work together and identify humanity in everyone. He described some of the Kigali Memorial’s projects, such as perpetrators’ children working alongside survivors’ children and children born from rape; all students, irrespective of their background, collaborate positively with each other. Rukeshia also highlighted the success of the local Gacaca courts in Rwanda; \$38 million has been spent on resolving over one million cases, compared to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, where \$2 billion has been spent on 55 cases “with no real impact.” Such cases show the need for action on a grassroots level.

Is there a way of teaching History that isn't just about dates and data? Can we teach History as a way of looking towards the future as well?

"The way that the Holocaust is being taught is changing," said Ms Wosińska, in terms of "looking more at material aspects." More should be done, however, to invite those outside Holocaust Studies to participate in its study and discussion. She also stated that we should "step away from the Anglo-American discourse on which we currently rely" and focus on testimonies relating to different genocides in different languages, such as Cambodian, Ukrainian, Polish, Kinyarwanda and so on. This should not be limited to audio or video testimony, but also "letters in Yiddish; children's drawings from Cambodia; books in Rwanda." Wosińska said she believes people must step further out of their country and culture and explore other histories, but also confront their country's difficult pasts. She added that the Jewish Historical Institute is now starting to look into more "taboo topics" such as Jewish violence against other Jews and the Sonderkommando.

Ms Bardet discussed the concern that young people don't know about the Holocaust or other genocides, and so better methods of communication must be found to both move and educate them. She also disagreed with the idea that people don't care anymore, describing the young people working in her NGO on sexual violence in conflict and the frequent messages from people asking her to speak at events. Ms Bardet also highlighted the fact that many of the conference's

discussions had been "quite Westernised", and that societies in places such as Africa and the Middle East are "eager to learn to share" but do not have the same opportunities as the Western world. She advocated for exhibitions such as Musealia's travelling Auschwitz exhibition to be brought to these places. Finally, Bardet criticised the phrase "the people": "It's you, it's me, it's us. Talk about 'we'." She emphasised the importance of understanding context, and ensuring that context does not allow violence, as no one is born violent.

Mr Ruksha responded by stating that critical thinking should be an integral part of History education, particularly as "what is lacking in all conflicts and mass atrocities is critical thinking." Being equipped with this skill means people can analyse what they are told by their government, particularly if it is propagandistic, and will not be willing to kill others. He also praised the use of interactive tools in education: for example, playing students a testimony then asking them questions about it to better understand their comprehension and decision-making.

Questions from the audience covered topics such as the right time to teach young people about genocide; the importance of remembering all groups of genocide and persecution; and Ms Bardet's NGO's forthcoming mobile app, Back Up, allowing reporting of crimes by victims of sexual violence and the co-ordination of relevant professionals (<https://www.notaweaponofwar.org/en/actions-en/back-up-en/>).





CONFERENCE SUMMARY





Professor Marek Kucia, President of the International Center for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust (ICEAH) Council, shared his reflections on the conference. He thanked the initiators, organisers, speakers and attendees, and in particular commented on the powerful survivors' testimonies from the previous day. He described the Auschwitz Memorial as "a measure of genocide", the place that "built the notion", but recognised that each manifestation of genocide, war crime or human rights violation is unique. Professor Kucia stated that it is "reasonable to compare" such events, to understand patterns and potential developing issues. He also touched upon the themes of the conference. "We started and ended with Auschwitz" and all victim groups imprisoned there: Poles, Jews, Roma, Soviet POWs and so on. There were also conversations about the Holocaust, genocides in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, against Native Americans and during colonialism, and slavery. Kucia commented that crimes against humanity

will always be around, but there are a few things that can be done to combat this. Firstly, "we can remember," both the things that have come before us and those who were affected by them, "otherwise we cannot understand the contemporary world." The other remedy is to educate; not only using dates and facts, but to enable people to ask the question "Why?" He concluded by stating that educators have the task of developing thinking, or critical thinking, and "never to stop asking the question why."

Finally, Andrzej Kacorzyk, Director of the ICEAH, took to the stage. He highlighted the ICEAH's 15th year, explaining that it was written into being on 27th January 2004 by around 200 survivors, including the late Professor Władysław Bartoszewski. Mr Kacorzyk praised Professor Bartoszewski's work and his encouragement for the Museum's work, yet said he is still haunted by his words: "We have done a lot, but not enough."



MEMORIA

MEMORY • HISTORY • EDUCATION

memoria.auschwitz.org

PUBLISHER

Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Paweł Sawicki

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Agnieszka Juskowiak-Sawicka

EDITED BY

Bartosz Bartyzel
Imogen Dalziel
Marek Lach
Łukasz Lipiński

CONTACT

memoria@auschwitz.org

