



Romanian
Chairmanship
2016

The Message of the IHRA Chair, Ambassador Mihnea Constantinescu, at the official ceremony commemorating 75 years since the Pogrom in Iași

28 June 2016, Iasi

On behalf of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, I would like to pay sincere respect for the victims of the dreadful historic tragedy that happened 75 years ago in this part of Romania, a tragedy that is known as the Iași Pogrom.

The night of June 28/29, 1941 represents the beginning of one of the most tragic episodes in the history of modern Romania. It is important that we who participate in this commemoration are not only well informed about the human tragedy that happened in Iasi but, most of all, we are aware of the duty to bring to light the criminal acts committed against Jews in Romania in the 1940s.

We respectfully bow our foreheads in remembering the victims and the terrible suffering caused by the Pogrom, thinking of all those who suffered in Europe during the Holocaust as a result of the most brutal acts in the history of mankind.

The memory of the victims must never be lost. We should never cease to know the story of the life of each victim of the Pogrom. We owe this to them, to their families and friends: to learn their names, to cherish and mourn each life that was lost and to recognize the role and place each individual had in the community and society of that time.

The **International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance** who is chaired by Romania in 2016 is at the forefront of international action so that *Holocaust remembrance* becomes a landmark of contemporary education and action.

The Romanian IHRA Chairmanship recommends to all member states of the Alliance to judiciously and actively confront the lessons of the past with the realities and challenges of the present so that such tragic moments never happen again. That is why Holocaust education is one of the main subjects we promote nationally and internationally, benefiting of full political support in attaining this objective.

The meaning of this commemoration is also a plea not to let ourselves get overwhelmed by the threat of hatred. We should be tireless in combating this age-old demon, anti-Semitism and intolerance, which will probably continue to last, making sure it will not infest the mind and the soul of young people as well as the life and progress of our society.

It is our duty not stop in telling the young people the truth about our history so that the young people cannot loose courage in front of the history.

Such tragic events as the Iași Pogrom should not remain mere subjects of historical research or academic considerations. They need to be brought into the light of public knowledge, first via public television, and also via other media or social media channels, as part of a responsible policy, able to protect us against the temptations of ignorance and denial.

Remembering the tragedy of the Holocaust, we ask ourselves what could be more hideous than finding anti-Semitic views mixed among extremist or intolerance messages in the public space, in the media and social media.

Above all, the greatest danger for our society's democratic progress is indifference. Nothing can justify irresponsibility and indifference when they are detrimental to the dignity and the life of any person. History has shown us that individual acts of courage and responsibility in saving the lives of our fellow men and women can make a difference between life and death nowadays.

That is why I am convinced that exposing and combating all forms of extremism, intolerance, anti-Semitism, xenophobia is today a responsibility that belongs to society as a whole.

To conclude, on behalf of the *International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance*, I would like to thank all those who helped organize these commemorative events - the *Prefect* of Iasi, the Iasi County Council, the Iași City Hall, the representatives of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania and, most of all, the "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania.