



24 February 2021

2021 CAM Annual Summit

Keynote address

I would like to express my sincerest thanks to the organizers of this annual summit. The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance – the IHRA – has welcomed the engagement with the Combat Antisemitism Movement over this past year and the fruitful discussions that have resulted.

It has been an honor to serve as the Chair of the IHRA under the 2020/2021 German Presidency and to help it navigate unprecedented challenges during a memorial year. Our work to advance Holocaust education, remembrance and research; to counter antisemitism and anti-Roma racism; to work against Holocaust denial and distortion – all of this is at a critical juncture. Over this past year, we have witnessed important developments in how antisemitism manifests itself and in the fight against it.

Early on, we saw how the pandemic fanned the flames of antisemitism, anti-Roma racism and other forms of discrimination. We saw how Holocaust distortion became a common feature at protests against coronavirus measures, how people would compare their experience under lockdown to that of Sophie Scholl or Anne Frank, or pin yellow stars with the word ‘unvaccinated’ written on them to their shirts. We saw how distortion opened the door to more violent forms of antisemitism and conspiracy myths. We saw how anti-democratic forces were emboldened, with supporters parading proudly in Camp Auschwitz sweatshirts, shoulder to shoulder with others claiming that six million were not enough.

There were many moments of darkness in 2020, and if we didn’t know better, we could easily be driven to hopelessness. But we’ve also seen acts of kindness and solidarity in the face of scapegoating, people lending a helping hand to support their neighbors, governments and organizations making sure Holocaust survivors are not forgotten in the pandemic. We’ve seen remembrance efforts transformed for the digital age, bringing people together from all over the world to commemorate those who suffered in new and innovative ways. We’ve seen social media companies begin to address Holocaust denial on their platforms.

And, above all, this year, we’ve seen people wake up. We’ve seen more people becoming more aware of how combatting antisemitism and Holocaust distortion is fundamental to safeguarding our democracies.



2020 taught us many important lessons. But among the most important is that the forces we are working to counter do not stop at national borders. To address antisemitism and Holocaust distortion, international cooperation is essential. And no one individual or government or organization can do it alone.

We must work to build a broad and strong coalition against these forces. The Combat Antisemitism Movement knows this all too well. And there have been other promising efforts too. The IHRA, together with the European Commission, the United Nations and UNESCO, launched a global campaign last month, #ProtectTheFacts, to raise awareness of Holocaust distortion and the dangers it poses. This campaign works hand-in-hand with the IHRA's Global Task Force Against Holocaust Distortion and its recently published Recommendations on how to recognize and counter it. Distortion remains one of the most worrying gateways to antisemitism. When the facts of the Holocaust are distorted, antisemitism doesn't seem so outrageous anymore. The IHRA, together with its growing number of partners, is working hard to make sure this issue receives the attention it deserves.

What we do over the next months will have a great impact, not only on the fight against antisemitism and Holocaust distortion, but on the world that emerges from these challenging times. We are now more connected than ever before and are in a unique position to work against this persistent scourge. 2020 taught us that we can work together no matter where in the world we are. And that should give us cause for cautious optimism in 2021.