

# Press Release

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## Death camps gave a new meaning to the word Holocaust, says Terry Davis commemorating the liberation of Auschwitz

Strasbourg, 25.01.2005 – "I still remember the day when I was first told about what had happened to people in these camps – how thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions of men, women and children had been abused and killed in horrifying circumstances," Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, said today at a ceremony to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Soviet Army.

He spoke before the unveiling, on the Council of Europe forecourt, of a remembrance stone for all the victims of Auschwitz and the other death camps. The stone was unveiled by Szewach Weiss, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council and former Speaker of the Knesset, and Jean Samuel, Auschwitz survivor.

"There were people of all nationalities and ethnic origins, all religious beliefs, political commitments and sexual orientation – but above all, the victims were Jews – millions of them – and a new meaning was given to the word Holocaust. This stone is erected in memory of all of them," said Mr Davis, paying tribute to members of the Russian delegation to the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly who had suggested this initiative.

The Secretary General read a poem by German Pastor Martin Niemoller, himself a death camp survivor, who wrote:

First they came for the Communists,  
and I did not speak up,  
because I was not a Communist.  
Then they came for the Jews,  
and I did not speak up,  
because I was not a Jew.  
Then they came for the Catholics,  
and I did not speak up,  
because I was a Protestant.  
Then they came for me,  
and by that time there was no one  
left to speak up for me.

"To speak up is an individual responsibility, but speaking up is more effective if it is done jointly with other people," stressed Mr Davis. "That is what the Council of Europe is about."

The unveiling of the stone was preceded by a ceremony in the Parliamentary Assembly, with speeches from Assembly President Rene van der Linden, Mr Weiss and Mr Samuel, followed by a minute's silence.

For more information, see our special file :  
<http://www.coe.int/T/E/Com/Files/events/2005-auschwitz/>

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