

## **Genocide-Holocaust Joint Commemoration – AUA 2017**

We are gathered today to commemorate, to remember together, two egregious crimes against humanity. As children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, relatives and concerned citizens of the world, we remember because there are things that human beings should not do to one another. There are things that so deform our humanity that we condemn them as unacceptable; they are out of bounds. Genocide and crimes against humanity are such things, acts that are inconsistent with being human.

Yet, they are more often than not committed by ordinary people in altered states of mind, calculating minds frenzied by fear, greed, self-righteousness, induced by fake news and false narratives, acting under the color of authority with the sanction of the very state institutions that we have entrusted and empowered to protect us from each other.

We must remember and remind each other of this ever-present threat, since vigilance is the first step in prevention. Groups can and do become malignant and metastasize and induce one part of the population to kill, destroy and devour the other, leaving future generations, the descendants of perpetrators, victims, bystanders, and the rest of humanity with wounds and scars, that are extremely hard to overcome. Without memory and atonement, the sins of the perpetrators are visited on not only their progeny, but also on all humanity.

The burden of covering up for forebears who have committed unspeakable crimes, puts their children and grandchildren in an untenable position, haunted by skeletons in the closet, repressed, aggressive and unstable. They become a menace to peace with their neighbors and undermine peace in the world. Yet there are countries that choose not to remember with us, countries that are failing in their basic obligation to future generations of humanity.

Moreover, they are not doing any favors to themselves, their children or the children of the perpetrators, instead condemning them to a fate of permanent insecurity, and most perniciously, lowering the bar on barbarity for all humanity. We all become the collateral damage of their myopic greed and petty geopolitical ambitions.

That is why it is important to remember together, to transcend this humanity predicament. Ceremonies such as this give us the opportunity to reflect, to step out of business as usual, and articulate what we stand for and what we stand against, and who we stand with, in solidarity, as children of the same Creator, with the duty to respect and care for one another, especially when the norms of humanity are being violated. This year is a special year, when Holocaust and Genocide memorial days coincide. Remembering is not just about the past. It is as fresh as this morning's news.

This evening as we commemorate, it is an opportunity to pause and consider how to stop and prevent crimes against humanity, not as victim peoples, but as part of the community of nations.