Achievements and Challenges

Annual Report 2015, Jerusalem
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Annual Report 2015
Introduction

Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, is the ultimate source for Holocaust education, documentation and research. From the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem, Yad Vashem’s integrated approach incorporates meaningful educational initiatives, groundbreaking research and inspirational exhibits. Its use of innovative technological platforms maximizes accessibility to the vast information in the Yad Vashem archival collections for an expanding global audience. Yad Vashem is at the forefront of unceasing efforts to safeguard and impart the memory of the victims and the events of the Shoah period; to document accurately one of the darkest chapters in the history of humanity; and to grapple effectively with the ongoing challenges of keeping the Holocaust relevant today and for future generations.

"You cannot visit this place too often; you cannot spend enough time looking at the exhibits, seeing those faces, remembering what was lost, thinking about what would be today if not for the horrors of what was carried out."

Ambassador Samantha Power, US Permanent Representative to the UN
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Dear Friends,

My youngest grandchild, Michael, is three years old. I have come to realize that by the time he becomes a young adult, Michael is unlikely to have developed close personal ties with Holocaust survivors. I am concerned that despite this sad yet inevitable prospect, the memory of the Holocaust that Michael and his peers gain for themselves and provide to their children and grandchildren, be meaningful. This means ensuring that Shoah remembrance remains relevant to young people, in the context of their lives and values.

That is why Yad Vashem has been placing an ever-growing emphasis on creating a variety of groundbreaking Holocaust-related frameworks, platforms and tools, and offering them to the world, particularly to the younger generation. During 2015, this process gained further momentum.

We have expanded and enhanced our array of digital databases, and prioritized making them easily accessible. Thanks to our pioneering application of advanced online teaching technologies, tens of thousands of participants worldwide are benefitting from our new Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), which teach the basics of Holocaust history, to anyone, anywhere. Our Holocaust Education Video Toolbox, offering teachers short, practical "how-to" videos on YouTube, is increasingly utilized to instill core Holocaust consciousness among young people. In 2015, we re-designed and upgraded our Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names, thereby significantly increasing its accessibility. The ongoing enlargement of Yad Vashem's Shoah Deportation Database has continued, and it now contains comprehensive information on approximately 1,100 transports. Our Hackathon event with HP Enterprises further exemplified the dynamic "History Meets Innovation" nexus that Yad Vashem has pioneered.

Our recent initiation of a pilot curriculum addressing contemporary antisemitism, particularly as it relates to Shoah denial and distortion, reflects Yad Vashem's ability to adapt our knowhow and experience to effectively face and grapple with emerging and critical realities.

Yad Vashem's awareness of the power of the Holocaust's legacy has always been coupled with our obligation to present that legacy accurately and sensitively within specific historic and cultural contexts. This was again manifested memorably around the world this past year: in Moscow, where Yad Vashem inaugurated a new interactive Learning Center at the Jewish Museum; in Berlin, where we opened our unprecedented exhibition of Holocaust art; and in Washington, DC, where we granted recognition to courageous American Righteous Among the Nations.

The scope and impact of Yad Vashem's far-reaching endeavors, much of which are encapsulated in this Annual Report, are achieved with painstaking dedication by our devoted and skilled staff, and made possible by our exceptionally loyal friends and supporters. I take this opportunity to salute their vital contribution to safeguarding our memory of the past and our faith in the future.

Avner Shalev
Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate
Dear Friends,

Many of the survivors alive today were children during the Holocaust. We, who were burdened with responsibility beyond our years, were surrounded by looming threats that permeated the very air we breathed. Our childhood was lost – our childhood was stolen. Even as the years pass, I find that I am easily transported back in time: Once again I am young Lulek, flooded by memories – of airless boxcars and cramped barracks, of the panic at the morning appel (roll call), of the anxiety of being separated from my parents, my community and all that was familiar to me.

In 1945, I became the youngest survivor of Buchenwald to be liberated by the Americans. I recall the moment of liberation when the American soldiers entered the gates of the camp. Frightened, I quickly hid behind a pile of corpses. Chaplain of the US Third Army, Rabbi Herschel Schacter, was surveying the devastating carnage, when he encountered me staring at him from behind the mound of corpses. Shocked to see a Jewish child alive among the dead, he embraced me warmly, crying tears of sadness and joy. "How old are you my son?" he asked me in Yiddish. I replied suspiciously. "I'm older than you." "Why do you think that you’re older than I am?" a smiling Rabbi Schacter asked. "Because you laugh and cry like a child, and I haven't laughed for a long time, and I can’t even cry anymore. So which one of us is older?" I answered.

One-and-a-half million Jewish children – an unfathomable number – were murdered during the Shoah. Having lived through indescribable atrocities, those of us who survived have developed a heightened sensitivity to intolerance and evil. Yet ironically, we, who bore witness to the depravity of man’s propensity for evil, can also attest to mankind’s potential for greatness. The thousands of Righteous Among the Nations, those who risked their lives to rescue Jews, are proof that no matter how bleak the circumstances, people are capable of rising above oppression, and that their innate sparks of humanity, kindness and empathy can never be fully extinguished.

From the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem, Yad Vashem serves as a beacon to humanity, with a forthright call to hold the world to a higher moral standard. It is incumbent upon us to study the implications of the Holocaust and its legacy and do our utmost to ensure that such atrocities against our fellow human beings, because of their race, religion or gender, are never repeated.

From the Chairman of the Council

Rabbi Israel Meir Lau
Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council
Highlights of
Yad Vashem’s Activities in 2015

Holocaust Education
• 303,000 Israeli students, soldiers and security force members attended educational programs
• 30,000 participants in new Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) on the Holocaust
• 7,300 US teachers trained in “Echoes and Reflections” multimedia program
• 1,200 Israeli educators at National Teachers’ Conference
• 380 seminars at Yad Vashem for 12,700 Israeli educators
• 325 participants in the Virtual School’s online courses
• 110 seminars for 3,100 educators throughout Israel
• 87 long-term seminars for 1,570 educators from abroad

Research and Publications
• 23 international research workshops and symposia
• 20 fellowships and awards to scholars
• 33 new publications
• 5th annual International Holocaust Research Book Prize

Artifacts and Artwork
• New temporary exhibition: “Stars Without a Heaven: Children in the Holocaust"
• The exhibition “Art from the Holocaust: 100 Works from the Yad Vashem Collection” opened at the German Historical Museum, Berlin
• 969 new artifacts; 30,000 total
• 183 new works of art; 9,500 total
• 14 traveling exhibitions available in 13 languages
Righteous Among the Nations

• 424 individuals recognized as Righteous Among the Nations; 26,100 total

Visits and Commemorative Events

• 800,000 visitors
• 750 world leaders, dignitaries and official visitors
• 260 memorial services
• 80 events

Internet Activity

• 18 million visits to the website
• 11 million video views on YouTube channels in 7 languages since their launch
• 15,000 new Facebook members; 116,000 total
• 4,100 new followers on Twitter; 15,600 total
• 4,000 followers on Instagram

Documentation, Photographs, Names, Testimonies and Films

• 10 million new pages of documentation added to the Archives; 190 million pages total
• 11 million pages of documentation digitized
• 4.6 million names now in the Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names
• 27,500 Holocaust-era items donated for safekeeping by 1,280 individuals
• 15,000 photographs added to the Photo Archive; 465,000 images total
• 1,100 new Holocaust survivor testimonies filmed and 1,400 acquired; 127,500 video, audio and written testimonies total
• 28,000 public inquiries for archival information answered
• 157,000 publications in over 50 languages in the Library
• 450 Holocaust-related films acquired; 7,000 total
• 10,000 films now in searchable in the online Film Catalogue
• 10th annual Award for Artistic Achievement in a Holocaust-related Film
The International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem serves as a world center for Holocaust education, attracting students and educators from around the globe. Each year, the International School engages with more than 300,000 Israeli students and soldiers, as well as thousands of educators from Israel and abroad. Guided by its unique pedagogical philosophy, the School continually develops educational materials, cutting-edge online pedagogical tools and teacher-training activities in order to create tailor-made programs suitable for different age groups and cultures. Teachers who graduate from the International School's programs form a network of dedicated educational professionals, who continue to disseminate Yad Vashem's pedagogical methodology throughout the world.
1,200 Educators Gather at Israeli Teachers’ Conference

In July 2015, over 1,200 Israeli educators attended Yad Vashem’s sixth biennial National Teachers’ Conference on Holocaust Education, entitled: "When the Gates Opened: The Effects of the Holocaust on the Individual, Society and Thought." The Conference focused on the questions that arose after liberation, when the dimensions of the unprecedented disaster that had befallen the Jewish people started to become clear and the long and painful journey back to life began. Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett opened the proceedings, which included lectures from experts as well as panels and workshops on the latest pedagogical advances in Holocaust education. Also featured was a special gathering of Holocaust survivors whose lifetime achievements reflect Israeli society as a whole; despite their terrible experiences, these inspirational men and women managed to rebuild their lives and move the world forward in a positive direction.

"The quality of the lectures, the faultless organization and the expert guidance all allowed me to enrich my knowledge and skills in teaching the Shoah in my classroom."

Sarah R., Participant in National Israeli Teachers’ Conference
New Curriculum Integrated into Israeli Schools

The International School for Holocaust Studies and the Israeli Ministry of Education took steps toward integrating a new national Holocaust education program created in 2014 to help teachers in Israel understand what Holocaust-related themes are most appropriate for each age group, and where they need to express caution when dealing with content of such a sensitive nature. Integration of the program into school curricula will follow special training days and workshops at Yad Vashem geared to the specific needs of teachers and community institutions. The program provides a rare opportunity for in-depth teacher training with an interdisciplinary, balanced and meaningful approach to the field of Holocaust education.
Interactive Learning Center Opens in Moscow

In January 2016, a new interactive Learning Center opened at the Jewish Museum in Moscow, in cooperation with Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies. “The War and the Holocaust: Questions about the Past and the Future” presents ten of the central questions asked in the aftermath of the Shoah – such as “How did people turn into murderers during WWII?” and “What happened to the concepts of good and evil after the war?” – posed at similar centers at Yad Vashem Jerusalem, and in coordination with Yad Vashem in Sydney, Australia and in Block 27 at Auschwitz-Birkenau. In addition, nine further questions relevant to Russia today are included, such as “How can we explain the policy of Holocaust denial in the Soviet period?” and “Does antisemitism exist in modern-day Russia?” Answering all of these questions are Russian experts in the fields of literature, journalism and philosophy, as well as religious leaders.
“Echoes and Reflections”: Training the Professionals

In December 2015, Yad Vashem facilitated a ten-day professional development seminar for trainers of “Echoes and Reflections,” a comprehensive multimedia program that helps secondary-school educators in the United States effectively engage students in Holocaust education. The program trainers attending the seminar were provided with a broader and deeper understanding of the Shoah, as well as tools to deal with teaching the Holocaust in a classroom situation. Combining the resources and expertise of the Anti-Defamation League, the USC Shoah Foundation and Yad Vashem, thousands of educators have been trained in this particularly effective program over the past ten years.

“My experiences at Yad Vashem changed the way I regard my Holocaust Literature course, my role as a teacher, and even the things I take for granted in my everyday life.”

Colin Cook, College Lecturer, Toronto, Canada
Breakthrough Educational Agreements

In December 2015, the Prime Minister of Albania, H. E. Mr. Edi Rama, toured Yad Vashem, taking a special interest in its Righteous Among the Nations Program. Yad Vashem’s traveling exhibition, “BESA: A Code of Honor,” tells the unique story of how Muslim Albanians helped rescue hundreds of Jews during the Holocaust. The Prime Minister was also present at the signing of an historic agreement between the Albanian Ministry of Education and Sport and Yad Vashem, which outlines several projects in the field of teacher training in Holocaust education, including a future seminar for Albanian educators at Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies to be accredited by the Ministry. During 2015, Yad Vashem signed educational agreements with Albania, Austria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland.
"People to People": Joint Project with Jerusalem Bilingual School

A new cooperative project of the International School and the Max Rayne Hand in Hand Bilingual School for Jewish-Arab Education in Jerusalem aims to create a dialogue on the topics of racism and persecution of minorities through the story of the Holocaust. Ninth-grade students recently took part in an initiative tailored to the diverse needs of the Jewish and Arab students at the Bilingual School. The students toured Yad Vashem's Holocaust History Museum and campus, focusing on the radicalization of racist ideology over time and the world of Jewish children before, during and after the Shoah, and discussed how the Holocaust has influenced international society in attempting to prevent other genocides. Many students were inspired to deepen their historical knowledge of the Holocaust. An additional series of meetings is planned for the future to help further discussion of these important topics.

Christian Leaders Enrich Knowledge on the Holocaust

During 2015, two International Christian Leadership Seminars were held at the International School for Holocaust Studies: In April, 30 participants from the US, India, the UK, Serbia, Spain, Kenya, Poland and Canada came to learn about antisemitism, the Holocaust and Israel today; and in November, 27 participants from the US attended an eight-day seminar, during which they had the opportunity to hear expert lecturers as well as moving testimonies from Holocaust survivors. The seminar focused on empowering the leaders to return to share the history of the tragedy of the Shoah and the compassion of the Bible's teachings within their communities.

“We live in a world beset by violence and loss. In these trying times we must look to the past to illuminate the path to a brighter future.”

Danise Peters, Seminar participant, USA
Youth Pledge to Carry the Torch of Remembrance

In February 2015, the Youth Movement Congress met for its tenth annual gathering at Yad Vashem. This year, the Congress focused on the endeavors of different Jewish youth movements at the end of WWII. Some 350 young men and women performing a year of volunteer service before enlisting into the IDF participated in the Congress, including members of Bnei Akiva, Hashomer Hatzair, Beitar, the Israel Scouts and Druze Youth. The day featured a tour of sites and memorials around the Mount of Remembrance, where participants discussed the complex issue of liberation and the postwar activities of the remnants of the youth movements, ultimately creating a bridge between the participants from varying groups in Israeli society.

"We, members of the youth groups, commit to carrying the banner of the memory of the martyrs and heroes of the Shoah in Israeli society. We assume the responsibility to continue leading in the study of the Holocaust, and to act in the spirit of its meanings."

Youth Movement Congress Pledge
Israeli Security Officials Reinforce Commitment to Commemoration

During 2015, Yad Vashem held 15 seminars for senior Israeli security officials, including the IDF General Chief-of-Staff and IDF generals, Israel Security Agency (ISA – Shin Bet) Chief and ISA department heads, and Israeli Police Force Commissioner and top police commanders. The seminars examined the issues of humanity, morality and ethics, reinforced the commitment of the security officials to Holocaust commemoration, and addressed the importance of the Shoah as a consciousness imbedded in both Israeli and Jewish identity. Some of the participants toured the trail connecting Yad Vashem and Mount Herzl, which marks the milestones of the survivors in their attempt to settle in Israel. Along the trail is a monument erected in memory of 144 fallen Israeli soldiers who survived the Holocaust but were the last members of their families.

“Seventy years after we could theoretically be satisfied with a simple memorial ceremony, but the questions persist... Contending with these questions is a powerful way to foster our sense of commitment and tenacity while strengthening our ethical identity.”

IDF Chief Education Officer Brigadier-General Avner Paz
Strengthening Ties with Young Leaders Worldwide

In 2015, the International School for Holocaust Studies led programs for more than 80,000 Jewish and non-Jewish youth, including Birthright participants, youth movement members, youth exchange delegations and various Jewish organizations from the US, Europe, South America and the Former Soviet Union. In particular, the International School deepened its work with the German-Israel student exchange program, highlighted by a special workshop in November marking 60 years of student exchange between the two countries. Two hundred Israeli and German youth participated in the workshop, which focused on the issues of Holocaust and identity as well as maintaining an ongoing dialogue between German and Israeli societies. The program provided an opportunity to hear the various historical perspectives of survivors and the contemporary viewpoints of the participants.

The International School also facilitated a three-day seminar for a select group of Jewish youth from Scandinavia, who came to study in Israel and serve as ambassadors on behalf of the Jewish communities in the Nordic countries.
Developing Tools to Tackle Contemporary Antisemitism

In recent years, graduates of Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Studies around the world have begun to request tools to help them deal with various forms of antisemitic outbursts and attacks in schools, on campus, and via the Internet and social media, as well as in other contexts of public discourse. Responding to these urgent requests, the International School is currently developing new educational programs to meet the challenges of contemporary antisemitism and Holocaust denial and distortion. Initially, seminars at Yad Vashem for teachers from abroad will include a chapter on the topic, and participants will be provided with material to help them respond to false and inaccurate statements at schools and on campuses back home. Once complete, the new programs will be made available online and will be systematically updated.

Hungarian Graduate Spearheads Commemorative Project

During 2015, the International School approached Anita Lanszki, a graduate of a recent pedagogical seminar at Yad Vashem, with the request that she spearhead a project for the International School’s Hungarian graduates. Lanszki, an assistant lecturer at the Hungarian Dance Academy and teacher at the ELTE University in Budapest, is currently pursuing studies towards a PhD in digital education. She agreed to lead a project involving the creation of "digital stories" (short films), combining research, original survivor testimony, and the student’s personal connection to the topic. More than 40 Hungarian Yad Vashem graduates helped mentor their students in the project, with the aid of Yad Vashem’s methodology, educational philosophy and age-appropriate approach. The winning entry, submitted by Dorottya Kocsis, recounts the wartime experiences of her grandmother, Mária Árvai, who worked in the home of a Jewish family that was eventually deported to Auschwitz. Over 100 graduates attended the screening, and media coverage exceeded the organizers’ expectations.

"I encountered a whole new approach to history at Yad Vashem."

Anita Lanszki, Assistant Lecturer at the Hungarian Dance Academy and teacher at the ELTE University in Budapest
Yad Vashem’s Virtual School stands at the forefront of educational technology, offering advanced online tools and innovative digital materials to help educators appropriately broach the important and serious subject of the Holocaust in their classrooms.

30,000 Attend MOOC on the Holocaust

Millions of people today learn through online courses offered by universities and educational institutions around the world, making knowledge and information available to a wide range of new audiences. This trend has led to the establishment of the MOOC – Massive Open Online Course – including the US-based “Coursera” and the UK-based “FutureLearn” learning platforms. The International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem, in cooperation with its International Institute for Holocaust Research and Tel Aviv University, recently created a new MOOC, entitled: “The Holocaust: An Introduction.” The course, launched in November 2015 on FutureLearn and in January 2016 on Coursera, offers an overview of the Holocaust while delving into the central subjects of Holocaust research and allows participants access to the wealth of information in the Yad Vashem Archives and the unparalleled knowledge of its experts and researchers.

“This course should be required in all schools in all countries in all religions.”

Andrew Gentry, Retired Clergyman, USA
Animated Film Clips: Cutting-Edge Educational Technology

In recent years, the International School for Holocaust Studies has specialized in developing advanced educational technologies for both teachers and students. In an era where the learning habits of students are becoming increasingly digital, the International School has created short, animated films to convey basic concepts of the Holocaust, which will make study relevant and interesting for today’s students. These videos are part of a broader learning environment designed to expose students to the historical context and background of the Shoah, as well as basic concepts related to Holocaust history.

Holocaust Education Video Toolbox Expanded

The Holocaust Education Video Toolbox is a unique video portal designed specifically for Holocaust educators as well others interested in the subject. Offering short, hands-on videos on how to teach the Holocaust, the site was recently updated with several new topics, including: the development of the "Final Solution"; guidelines for using *The Auschwitz Album* in the classroom; videos on the survivors’ return to life; a case study for teaching about the perpetrators; and teaching the Holocaust using art, photographs and testimonies. Each video page includes additional pedagogical considerations as well as an extensive variety of teaching aids on the relevant topic.
REMEMBRANCE

[Quote]
When they came for me, there was no one left to object....

Martin Niemöller, German Pastor
During 2015, some 800,000 people came to the Mount of Remembrance to learn about the cataclysmic events of the Holocaust, commemorate the victims and pay tribute to the survivors. Over one-third of the visitors received guided tours of the campus, including heads of state, participants on more than 750 official visits for dignitaries, and delegations from a variety of cultures and nationalities. This year, Yad Vashem also held approximately 80 events in conjunction with Holocaust survivor and next-generation organizations, as well as over 260 memorial services.
"The Return to Life": The Central Theme for Holocaust Remembrance Day

Every year, Yad Vashem creates a central theme to mark Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day. In 2015, the theme was "Seventy Years since the End of the War: The Anguish of Liberation and the Return to Life." The chosen theme serves as a call for public engagement in a broad, value-oriented discourse on the topic, fostering renewed activity related to Holocaust commemoration. Many groups and organizations in the public sphere in Israel and among Jewish communities around the world have begun to include the designated theme as an integral part of their remembrance ceremonies, public events and educational activities.

Highlights of 2015 Official Visits
Members of the Public Attend Special Event Commemorating 10 Tevet

In December 2015, hundreds of people gathered at Yad Vashem for a special evening symposium marking the Tenth of Tevet. This date on the Jewish calendar has become the general day for mourning those whose exact dates of passing are unknown – which includes numerous Holocaust victims. Israeli journalist Sivan Rahav Meir and educator Rabbi Dr. Benny Lau participated in a panel tackling the culture of memory in Israel.

Public events marking the Kristallnacht pogrom and other landmark tragedies of the Shoah held throughout the year engage the wider community in Yad Vashem’s range of remembrance and cultural activities.

“`Our [Jewish] community knows what private remembrance is... What we are in need of right now is collective memory – a collective memory that affirms the values we wish to carry forth to coming generations.”`

Sivan Rahav Meir, Journalist, Israel
"Behind-the-Scenes" on the Mount of Remembrance

In 2015, for the first time, the thousands of people who visit Yad Vashem during Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day were granted a "behind-the-scenes" look into the everyday work on the Mount of Remembrance. At a number of stations throughout the campus, they heard lectures on a range of unique Yad Vashem projects, including, "From Wartime Journals to Youtube," "Remembering the Righteous" and "Technology in the Service of Memory." They also saw films and viewed documents, artworks and artifacts from the Yad Vashem Collections – all presented by experts in their fields. Many participated in the annual "Unto Every Person there is a Name" public names-reading ceremony, and took advantage of additional staff on call to provide research assistance in the Library Reading Room.

"To those who hold that there is no such thing as evil and that every act of violence can be “understood,” I urge: Walk through the world-class memorial and museum that is Yad Vashem, take in the photos, hear the testimonies, and then reconsider.”

Judy Montagu, in The Jerusalem Post
Marking 70 Years since VE Day

In May 2015, Yad Vashem marked the 70th anniversary of VE (Victory in Europe) Day – the day on which Nazi Germany capitulated and victory was celebrated by the Allied armies and millions of people worldwide. Amongst the Allied forces were some 1.5 million Jewish fighters and military personnel, who served on all fronts in Europe and the Pacific. In cooperation with Yad Vashem, a state ceremony marking the end of the war was held by the Museum of the Jewish Soldier in WWII at the Armored Corps Memorial at Latrun. Israel’s President Reuven Rivlin, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon addressed the 6,000 attendees, who included WWII veterans, survivors, students and youth group members. In addition, Yad Vashem launched an online exhibition, entitled “Fighting for Freedom,” featuring original artifacts, photographs and letters that belonged to Jewish soldiers fighting in the Allied forces, and held a symposium on the subject at Yad Vashem’s International Institute of Holocaust Research.
Concert of Jewish Soul Music Brings Valley to Life

Some 70 musicians from Israel and overseas came to play Jewish soul music at the annual summer "Mashiv Haruach" concert that took place at Yad Vashem in August 2015. The unique event breathes life into Yad Vashem’s Valley of the Communities, on whose walls are carved the names of thousands of communities decimated during the Holocaust. By twilight, the Valley took on a festive appearance, filling up with colors and sounds. The concert attracted hundreds of Holocaust survivors and their families, moved by the ancient Jewish melodies played in memory of the Klezmer artists murdered in the Holocaust, as well as of the unique art form that the Nazi Germans and their collaborators sought to destroy.

“Klezmer music has two purposes... to bring us happiness and to bring our hearts closer together.”

Prof. Haim Knobler, Flautist, Participant in the "Mashiv Haruach" concert
Yad Vashem Mission to Poland Strengthens Ties

Yad Vashem Friends from Mexico, Miami, Venezuela and Portugal joined a special mission to Poland entitled "Legacy and Memory" in July 2015. The Mission participants had the unique opportunity to visit places not generally open to the public and gained a deeper understanding of the terrible tragedy that befell the Jewish people and humanity, which served to strengthen their commitment to Holocaust commemoration. In addition to the harsh evidence of the destruction visible in the concentration camps, participants took active roles in uplifting ceremonies together with representatives of the Israeli police and the Israel Defense Forces.
"Designing Memory": Commemorative Poster Competition

Yad Vashem held the sixth annual "Designing Memory" competition to create an official poster to mark Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day, an ongoing Yad Vashem initiative. The winning poster, designed by Anat Sandro Sevilia, was chosen by an esteemed panel of judges, comprising leaders of Israeli design schools and Yad Vashem senior staff and headed by Israel Prize laureate in the field of design David Tartakover. An online lesson plan based on the winning poster was posted on the Yad Vashem website.
Collections and Exhibitions

Yad Vashem’s unique collections of original artifacts and artworks provide the cornerstone for the displays in the Museums Complex – the Holocaust History Museum, the Museum of Holocaust Art and the Synagogue – as well as its temporary and traveling exhibitions. These authentic items are essential tools that help convey the narrative of the Holocaust in a broad, historical context while focusing on individual and personal stories from the period.

“Stars Without a Heaven: Children in the Holocaust”

Of the six million Jews murdered in the Shoah, approximately one-and-a-half million were children. Only relatively few survived, against all the odds. In April 2015, a new exhibition, entitled “Stars Without a Heaven: Children in the Holocaust,” opened at Yad Vashem’s Exhibitions Pavilion. The temporary display presents a collection of anecdotes, narratives and memories of Jewish children caught up in the crucible of the Holocaust. On display are items from Yad Vashem’s Artifacts, Art and Archives Collections, as well as works from glass, porcelain and ceramics designed especially for the exhibition by students from Jerusalem’s Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, and short animated clips, based on survivor testimonies, created by students from the Holon Institute of Technology-HIT. These works help illustrate the personal stories of the children from whom, due to the wartime circumstances of their childhoods, little or no artifacts remained.

“It is so difficult for people who weren’t there to imagine what it was like, but this exhibition will help both adults and young people connect to the emotional world of the children during the Shoah.”

Martha Goren, Child Holocaust Survivor
The Art Collection

Yad Vashem’s Art Collection, the largest of its kind in the world, includes over 9,500 works, most of which were created during the Holocaust. In the ghettos, in the camps and in places of hiding, under the most dire conditions, artists used their tools as instruments of defiance and expression. These works represent a living testimony from the Holocaust, as well as a declaration of the victims’ indomitable human spirit that refused to surrender.

Artist Recreates Special Connection between a Young Prisoner and his Dog

Contemporary Israeli and internationally renowned artist and daughter of Holocaust survivors Sigalit Landau recently donated a unique sculpture entitled, “Father and Tupik 2014” to Yad Vashem’s Art Collection. Created especially for the temporary exhibition "Stars Without a Heaven: Children in the Holocaust," the sculpture depicts the story of the artist’s father, Frederick (Simcha) Landau and the special relationship he developed with a dog while being held prisoner in a concentration camp in Transnistria. Frederik was only a year old when he and his family were deported across the Dniester River to a concentration camp in Mogilev. When Frederik was about three, his parents were horrified to discover that their young son was taking food, which was so scarce in the camp, and secretly feeding a dog named "Tupik." Frederik often recalled and retold the story of his special connection with the dog, with whom he developed a deeply caring relationship.
100 Holocaust-Era Artworks Journey from Jerusalem to Berlin

Marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day, German Chancellor Angela Merkel opened an exhibition of artworks from the Yad Vashem Art Collection at the German Historical Museum in Berlin in January 2016. Jointly curated by Yad Vashem and the Bonn-based Foundation for Art and Culture, "Art from the Holocaust: 100 Works from the Yad Vashem Collection" is the first-ever art exhibition of its size and stature that Yad Vashem has sent abroad. The artworks were created by artists between 1939 and 1945, as events were unfolding and the artists experienced them firsthand. Some of the creations displayed express a tremendous struggle with their horrific reality, while others indicate a desperate flight into the realm of imagination, with depictions of landscapes, skylines, homes and religious faith. The exhibition, which attracted a record number of visitors, was displayed in Hebrew, German and English with a special accompanying catalogue.

"Through art we can feel the power and the suffering of human beings."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel
The Artifacts Collection

Yad Vashem’s Artifacts Collection is comprised of close to 38,000 items connected to the tumultuous events of the Holocaust era. The items have been donated over the years by Holocaust survivors and members of their families, as well as by various organizations in Israel and abroad. The many personal effects in the collection disclose the individual stories of people, families and, at times, entire communities.

A Penknife from Auschwitz

Having survived incarceration in Auschwitz and a death march to Mathausen, after the war Anna Weiss, along with her mother and cousin, returned to the family home in Hungary. The house had been almost completely emptied of contents, but among the few remaining possessions, Anna found two gifts that her older brother Imre had received for his bar mitzvah in 1942: a ring bearing his initials, and a prayer book with a dedication from his Hebrew teacher, Anna Friedman. The dedication reads, “In your life two things will serve as fundamental goals: prayer and work.” Friedman and her family were also murdered in the Holocaust. Anna Weiss recently donated Imre’s ring and prayer book to Yad Vashem, together with a penknife she acquired in exchange for her daily portion of bread at Auschwitz. Imre’s postwar fate remains unknown, yet these mementos help unveil the Weiss family’s personal stories.
Yad Vashem Online

Yad Vashem’s website continues to reach a vast global audience, with close to 18 million visits from around the world during 2015. Comprehensive sites in Hebrew, English, Spanish, German, Russian, Farsi and Arabic are enabling Yad Vashem to meet the ever-growing demand for reliable and accurate Holocaust-related information. Yad Vashem’s dynamic presence in social media – 116,000 members on Facebook, and a growing audience on Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram – offers an unprecedented opportunity for rapidly communicating ideas, sharing relevant content and engaging with and connecting to a broad and diverse public who can immediately share the information with thousands more.

Thousands Join Online Commemoration Initiative

To mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yad Vashem once again launched its “IRemember Wall” on Facebook. By joining the wall, the user’s Facebook profile was randomly linked to the name of a Holocaust victim from Yad Vashem’s Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names and then posted to the wall together with the photo and name of the Holocaust victim. This year, over 2,500 people joined the IRemember Wall, many of whom added personal comments. In addition to the IRemember Wall, educational resources, online exhibitions and materials, and a range of social media were all readily available to help thousands of people around the world commemorate the day in a meaningful way.

“I do this every year; on Remembrance Day I think about that person, how old they were, where they lived, married or not, children or still a child themselves. As heartbreaking as it is I feel close to them on that day and light a candle. It’s a wonderful way for me to get involved, to be able to do this and publicly too.”

Allison Weir, on Facebook
Video-based Exhibition Tells Little-Known Story of Volary Death March

On January 20, 1945, some 1,000 female Jewish prisoners were evacuated from the Schlesiersee (today Sława) camp in Upper Silesia, western Poland, a region annexed to Germany. The women were forced on a death march in a southwesterly direction. On the way, the prisoners passed through other camps, and more women were added to the march. They walked for 106 days through snow and icy winds, hungry, frightened, sick and relentlessly tortured. Of the approximately 1,300 women who marched to Volary, only some 350 survived.

A new video-based online exhibition sheds light on this relatively unknown chapter of the Holocaust. The exhibition is based on the most updated research on the death march, testimonies of survivors and US Army veteran liberators, and documentation from the trial of death-march commander, Alois Dorr.

"My heart is breaking at the suffering and pain and many deaths of these precious, brave and courageous Jewish women, may their memory be a blessing to all Israel. They will never be forgotten, for in our hearts they shall remain. May their light shine throughout eternity."

Virginia Narvaezon, on Facebook
Online Exhibitions Illustrate Jewish Life Before, During and After the Holocaust

Online exhibitions on Yad Vashem’s website make use of testimonies, artifacts and photos from Yad Vashem’s collections in order to offer visitors a glimpse into Jewish life before, during and immediately after the Holocaust. In 2015, expanded online exhibitions marking the Jewish New Year and Hannukah were rebuilt in responsive and user-friendly formats offering a vastly improved experience for visitors to the website.

“It is a wonderful thing to see these pictures. What a testament to the Jewish people that so much life shines from these images.”

John Whitbread, on Facebook
A Glimpse at the World of Children during the Holocaust

A new online exhibition, "Don't Forget Me," features the personal albums belonging to eight Jewish children during the war, as well as their fate and that of some of those who wrote dedications within the precious mementos. The albums offer a window into the world of these children, who suffered relentless persecution under living conditions that defy the imagination. Nevertheless, they also show that in spite of everything, children remain children: penning dedications to their friends and embellishing them with happy illustrations; and writing of everlasting friendship, even though in many cases their lives were brutally cut short. The albums, which miraculously remained intact, were created in ghettos, concentration and labor camps and while on the run or in hiding, in different countries throughout Europe and in Asia.
Stories of Six New Communities Now Accessible

Six new communities have been added to the online series "Here Their Stories Will be Told: The Valley of the Communities at Yad Vashem." The stories of Nieśwież, Nadwórna, Győr, Liepāja, Regensburg and Dąbrowa Górnica, have been added to the stories of other Jewish communities across Europe featured on the mini-site, which encourages visitors to explore the history and discover the rich tapestry of Jewish life that existed in a particular community before WWII, as well as its fate during the Holocaust. Each community was unique, flourishing with creativity and culture, religion and tradition, social life and politics. In most cases, very little of that world remained at the war’s end. The online project enhances the understanding of the history and culture of the Jewish people and strengthens Jewish continuity, forming a link to the next generations.

“[The mini-site] is remarkable, moving and professional... built exceptionally well and with great insight.”

Adv. Mordechai Bas, Chairman of the Committee for Aid to Holocaust Survivors and Commemoration
Righteous Among the Nations

Since Yad Vashem first embarked upon the worldwide project to recognize non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust, more than 26,000 individuals have been granted the title of Righteous Among the Nations. The honor is a unique and unprecedented attempt by the Jewish people to pay tribute to those who stood by their side at a time of fierce persecution and untenable tragedy.

President Obama Attends Ceremony to Honor Righteous US Serviceman

During 2015, the late Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds, of the 422nd Infantry Regiment in the United States Armed Forces, was recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations for rescuing Jewish servicemen at the Stalag IXA POW Camp in Germany. In January 1945, the Germans announced that all Jewish POWs in Stalag IXA were to report the following morning. Edmonds, the highest-ranking POW in the American section of the camp, ordered all his men to fall out the following morning. When the German officer, Major Siegmann, saw that all the camp's inmates were standing in front of their barracks, he turned to Edmonds and exclaimed: "They cannot all be Jews!" To this, Edmonds replied: "We are all Jews." Siegmann took out his pistol and threatened Edmonds, but the Master Sergeant did not waver and retorted: "If you shoot me, you will have to shoot all of us, and after the war you will be tried for war crimes." The officer turned around and left the scene.

In January 2016, US President Barack Obama attended an historic event held at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, DC, hosted jointly by the Israeli Embassy, Yad Vashem and the American Society for Yad Vashem. Four Righteous Among the Nations, Americans Roddie Edmonds and Lois Gunden and Polish citizens Walery and Maryla Zbijewski, were posthumously awarded the medal and certificate of honor after being recognized by the Commission for the Designation for the Righteous Among the Nations for risking their lives to rescue Jews during the Holocaust.

President Obama, Israel’s Ambassador to the US H.E. Mr. Ron Dermer, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, and Chairman of the American Society for Yad Vashem Leonard Wilf spoke at the event.
“The four lives we honor tonight make a claim on our conscience, as well as our moral imagination. We hear their stories, and we are forced to ask ourselves, under the same circumstances, how would we act? When any Jew anywhere is targeted just for being Jewish, we all have to respond as Roddie Edmonds did – ‘We are all Jews.’”

US President Barack Obama

Righteous Online Database Completed

In October 2015, Yad Vashem completed the process of updating the Online Database of the Righteous Among the Nations. The Database contains information about the more than 26,000 Righteous recognized since the program’s establishment, as well as photos and rescue stories. The user-friendly database enables searches according to country, rescue site, form of rescue, organization, rescuers’ profession, religion and name of rescuer or survivor, as well as the opportunity to explore and analyze the rescue stories according to different parameters such as gender and occupation. The database thus provides the research community in Israel and worldwide with an exceptional tool that enables expedient and methodical research, encouraging educators, students and the public to explore and be inspired by the stories of the Righteous Among the Nations.
The Yad Vashem Archives house the most comprehensive collection of Holocaust-era documentation in the world. Ongoing efforts, including the yearly scanning of some 11 million pages of documentation, have made much of the archival collections accessible to the public – thus exposing the wealth of information gathered by Yad Vashem to an ever-growing worldwide audience. Recent agreements facilitating the sharing of information with various international archives have further propelled the growth of the Archives’ holdings, which now include some 190 million pages of documentation.
Investigative Work Uncovers Identities in Rare Prewar Footage

On Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day 2015, Ita Glicksburg’s film *Children of Hope* was screened on Israeli TV. Created in collaboration with Yad Vashem’s Archives, the film presents rare footage of the 1933 wedding of the daughter of the Rabbi of Munkács, the largest and most important Jewish community in Subcarpathian Rus’, Czechoslovakia. The film also showcases staged scenes of local Jewish life in Munkács, such as students of the Hebrew high school singing "Hatikvah" and dancing the Hora. In addition, the footage includes interviews of survivors who studied in the high school, as well as with Rabbi Meir Yosef (Steve) Frankel, who assisted in identifying the individuals that appear in it. To date, Yad Vashem has succeeded in naming more than thirty people in the film through painstakingly comparing photos from a variety of sources, as well as with the help of the Israeli Police Forensic Science Department.
Fostering an Open Exchange of Information

Around 80 directors of state archives and researchers from countries of the Former Soviet Union, the US, Germany, Belgium, Poland and Israel gathered at Yad Vashem in October 2015 to discuss the issue of locating Holocaust-related documentation housed in archives across the FSU. Participants toured the Yad Vashem campus and took part in a behind-the-scenes visit to its vast Archives, learning about its digitization and conservation activities. Many archives were keen to explore ongoing joint initiatives with Yad Vashem in sharing documentation, fostering future cooperation in gathering documentation on the Holocaust and increasing its availability to the wider public.

Filming the Life Stories of Hearing-Impaired Holocaust Survivors

To date, tens of thousands of survivors have recounted their personal experiences during the Holocaust to Yad Vashem’s Testimony Section. Recently, the Section has been operating a unique new initiative – documenting the stories of hearing-impaired survivors in coordination with Israel’s Association for the Deaf. The survivors filmed were deaf or hearing-impaired since birth or early childhood; in their fascinating testimonies, they share how they managed to survive the horrors of the Holocaust despite their handicap. During 2015, the Section also upgraded its filming and digitization methods to provide the public with improved accessibility to all of its testimonies.
History Meets Innovation

In October 2015, Yad Vashem and HP Enterprises held a "Hackathon" – a competition for HP employees to leverage HP’s big data analytics in order to present Yad Vashem’s vast collection of more than 127,500 written, audio and video testimonies in new and compelling ways to future generations. Out of some 200 applicants, 17 teams were chosen to present their ideas to an esteemed panel of judges. The teams spent two weeks analyzing thousands of hours of audio and video content, as well as text and images, in order to identify methods of displaying the information in a social media-friendly manner. The event was part of Yad Vashem’s ongoing efforts to engage with younger generations and to harness the language of technology in order to continue to piece together the stories of the Shoah and make them accessible and relevant to as wide an audience as possible.
Wartime Letters tell the Story of Two Brothers

As part of Yad Vashem’s "Gathering the Fragments" campaign to collect Holocaust-era personal artifacts, Holocaust survivor Henry (Heinz) Stern decided to donate a collection of emotional letters that his brother Menni (Hermann) wrote to him immediately following WWII. These letters document the brothers’ reunion after being separated when 14-year-old Henry fled Germany as part of a kindertransport – the organized rescue of some 10,000 Jewish children, mostly from Germany, who were sent to Britain between December 1938 and the outbreak of war in September 1939. The Sterns were unable to send Henry’s younger brother Menni due to visa quotas, and in December 1941 they were deported eastward, ultimately ending up in the Jungfernhof concentration camp near Riga. A few months later, Menni and Henry’s parents and sister were taken to the nearby Bikernieki Forest, where they were shot to death and buried in mass graves. Menni was kept behind along with a few hundred others. After being forced to destroy all traces of the Jungerhof camp, he was sent from one camp to another, escaping death repeatedly. These letters document the power of the brothers’ reunion, which gave Menni strength, after the terrible years of war, to rise from the ashes and look forward with hope.

Since the "Gathering the Fragments" campaign’s inception in 2011, over 8,240 people have donated more than 171,000 Holocaust-related personal items, including documents, photographs, artifacts, works of art and original films.

"September 10, 1945: To my dear Heinz, from his brother, who has been reborn and looks out at the world smiling!"

From a letter from Menni Stern to his brother Henry in London
Restoration of Diary Reveals Life in the Warsaw Ghetto

Włodek Tabaczynski and his daughter Zosia recently visited Yad Vashem to see the incredible restoration work carried out on the wartime diary of Włodek’s father, Stefan (né Alfred Zielony). The diary, which had been severely damaged by fire and water during wartime battles, was donated to Yad Vashem for safekeeping in 2006. Arriving as little more than a pile of worn-out and crumbling pages, the diary was restored after years of painstaking labor by Yad Vashem’s Paper Conservation Laboratory. Włodek was very moved to see the journal and, familiar with his father’s handwriting, was able to help experts decipher some of the excerpts in the diary. The journal sheds light on daily life in the ghetto, and the inhumane conditions under which the Jews were placed. Włodek ended his visit by pledging to devote his time to deciphering as much of the diary as he can – bringing Yad Vashem closer than ever to untangling the content of this rare piece of documentary testimony about life in the Warsaw ghetto.
Teacher from Moscow Discovers Family in Israel

Two cousins who discovered each other thanks to Yad Vashem’s online Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names met for the first time at Yad Vashem in March 2015. Tatiana Zuckerman from Moscow was attending an educators’ seminar at the International School for Holocaust Studies; she believed that she had almost no extended family, and that apart from her mother, Rachel Perelman (Milenki), a survivor of the Minsk ghetto and Auschwitz, as well as a very small number of distant cousins, no family members had survived the Holocaust. During her visit, Tatiana asked for assistance searching Yad Vashem’s databases, and to her surprise found a Page of Testimony commemorating Tzeril Milennki, her grandmother, who was murdered in the Minsk ghetto. The Page of Testimony was submitted in 2011 by Shalhevet Ziv (of Kfar Saba, Israel), a granddaughter of Tzeril. Yad Vashem staff helped Tatiana locate Shalhevet and the two participated in a hastily organized and emotional encounter on the Mount of Remembrance before Tatiana’s return to Russia.

“My mother will be deeply moved to know that others survived. All these years we believed we were the only ones.”

Tatiana Zuckerman, Educator, Moscow
New User-Friendly and Innovative Platform for Names Database

When Yad Vashem’s Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names was uploaded to the Internet in 2004, this pioneering innovation marked a groundbreaking use of technology in the service of memory. After more than a decade online, the Database currently lists the names and biographical details of some 4.6 million victims. To continue to meet the needs of an expanding worldwide audience, Yad Vashem recently upgraded and re-designed the Database, making use of a technologically superior platform that allows the accessibility to online information in a faster and more user-friendly format. Yad Vashem welcomes feedback and new data from the public, and remains committed to responding to requests from users to maximize the functionality of the Database in order to galvanize efforts towards remembering the victims of the Shoah.
Yad Vashem Co-Chairs International Commission

Located in Bad Arolsen, Germany, the International Tracing Service (ITS) is a center for documentation, information and research on Nazi persecution, forced labor and the Holocaust. The ITS is governed by an International Committee comprised of the representatives of 11 countries. As part of the Committee’s 2015 Israeli chairmanship, during 2015 Yad Vashem led a workshop for experts in reference services from Member State institutions at Bad Arolsen, and assisted the ITS in digitally scanning some 2.4 million pages of documentation, contained in 1,200 microfilm reels. Meetings were also held with ITS administration and German government ministries to map strategic goals and discuss challenges facing the organization.
Visual Arts Build a Historical Narrative

In February 2015, Yad Vashem organized an international workshop on Holocaust Art under the framework of EHRI – the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure, a trans-national project to support improving access to Holocaust documentation. Art curators, art historians and researchers from eight countries gathered on the Mount of Remembrance to explore the role of the visual arts in the attempt to build a historical narrative of the Shoah. Discussion topics included the language of art; hidden testimonies; artists as recorders of history; and the integration of Holocaust Art in the narrative of museums. The final day focused on the topic of looted art, addressing the Nazi art confiscation apparatus, as well as resources for research regarding the origins of plundered pieces. In addition, the workshop stressed the necessity to acknowledge Holocaust Art as a mainstream subject in the field of Art History.

A special event took place in Berlin in March 2015 launching the portal of EHRI. This online resource contains information on more than 1,800 Holocaust-related archival institutions in 51 countries, as well as descriptions of the archival materials they hold – allowing researchers of the period to locate original documentation within their fields of investigation scattered across the continent.
International Jewish Genealogy Conference

In July 2015, Yad Vashem played an active partnering role in the 35th annual International Conference on Jewish Genealogy, held in Jerusalem. The keynote address at the opening plenary session was delivered by Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Council. Explaining how the suffix to Jewish surnames taken from biblical sources changed when Jews wandered from place to place in the Diaspora (for example, Jacob became Jacobson), Lau spoke passionately about the importance of roots to memory. The rich conference program, attended by some 800 researchers and Jewish genealogy enthusiasts from around the world, included presentations by Yad Vashem speakers, guided assistance and access to Yad Vashem’s databases and an information booth at the conference venue. An optional day at Yad Vashem offered a special menu of activities, including assistance in searching documents, tours of the Museums Complex, a behind-the-scenes tour of the Archives, and lectures on a variety of Shoah-related topics.
The Library

The Yad Vashem Library seeks to collect all material written about the Holocaust and to make it available to the reading public. To date, the Library contains some 157,000 titles in 54 languages of published Holocaust-related material – a wealth of information about the Shoah as well as humanity’s attempt to grapple with one of the most traumatic events in human history.

“In Yad Vashem there are books and documents, bound and partly written by hand, which can be found at the Library and nowhere else. Research is also made much easier due to the outstanding software for advanced searches found in the Library’s catalogue.”

Prof. Goetz Aly, Historian, Germany
The Visual Center

Yad Vashem’s Visual Center – the world’s digital film library for Holocaust-related films – acquires films of all genres and in all languages concerning Jewish life between the two world wars, the Holocaust period, postwar antisemitism, genocide and other associated topics. Among the many films attained in 2015 are Israeli feature films, award-winning documentaries, television programs, short films and amateur movies distributed worldwide.
"Schindler's List" Oscar Donated to Yad Vashem

In July 2015, Croatian film producer and Holocaust survivor Branko Lustig donated to Yad Vashem the Oscar® statuette awarded to him by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for Schindler’s List. The Oscar is being displayed in Yad Vashem’s Visual Center. The event took place during the official visit to Yad Vashem by Croatian President H.E. Ms. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, during which a joint declaration on Holocaust commemoration and education between Yad Vashem and Croatia was signed. An emotional Lustig explained how, as a young survivor, he used the medium of film to try to tell what he had witnessed.

"This Oscar is for all the victims and the survivors – all that they went through. It represents all the people who were killed and asked us to tell their stories."

Branko Lustig, Holocaust Survivor and Oscar Award-Winner
Cultural Events and Screenings Engage the Public

The Visual Center held a number of cinema screenings and cultural events for the public during 2015, including an event at the Tel Aviv Cinematheque on Holocaust Heroes’ and Martyrs’ Remembrance Day. The event included a special lecture and screening of film clips from the film *Holocaust in Cinema and the Oeuvre of David Perlov*, as well as a short film made especially for the event presenting the unique story of survival of Mira Perlov (b. Krakow, 1933) and her family.

Additional screenings included a special event marking the 75th anniversary of the *Kristallnacht* pogrom (November 1938). The event featured a lecture on Holocaust remembrance in Germany, as well as a screening of the film *Labyrinth of Lies*. Directed by Giulio Ricciarelli, *Labyrinth of Lies* was Germany’s entry for Best Foreign Language Film at the 2016 Academy Awards, and reached the shortlist of ten finalists.

Eight films competed for the 10th annual Avner Shalev Yad Vashem Chairman’s Award for Artistic Achievement in a Holocaust-related Film at the 2015 International Film Festival in Jerusalem. The winner was *A Nazi Legacy: What Our Fathers Did* – a film that deals with the complexity of the second generation’s confrontation with history – by renowned British director David Evans.

The Visual Center Film Library: 10 Years, 10,000 Titles

The Visual Center of Yad Vashem recently marked its tenth anniversary. When the Center first opened, there were only 1,000 films available for viewing. By the end of 2015, the Visual Center had become a digital viewing library for almost 8,000 films, and its Online Film Database includes 10,000 titles. The evolution of Holocaust cinema reveals innovative attempts at making the subject more relevant for today’s young filmgoers around the globe, as the generation of survivors and eyewitnesses dwindles.
Yad Vashem's International Institute for Holocaust Research stands at the forefront of scholarly study on the Holocaust, providing the basic infrastructure for further investigation into this calamitous period in human history. The Research Institute is dedicated to advancing international research and fostering cooperative projects among academic institutions, as well as encouraging young scholars in their studies.
"Transports to Extinction": Reconstructing Mass Deportations

During 2015, Yad Vashem’s International Institute for Holocaust Research continued its comprehensive study of the transports of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe, concentrating on transports dispatched from the Netherlands and Belgium that began in 1942. Most of the deportation trains departed from the central transit camps of Westerbork and Mechelen, and arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The addition of these transports to the website’s "Transports to Extinction – Shoah (Holocaust) Deportation Database" marked the completion of recording the majority of transports that originated from western European countries during the Holocaust, including those sent from the Greater German Reich (Germany, Austria and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia), France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Greece. To date, detailed and analytical descriptions of approximately 1,100 transports are presented on the database, as well as reconstructed maps of deportation routes, video testimonies and scanned archival records. As the multiyear project progresses, the full scale of deportations during the Holocaust becomes increasingly clear.

"The availability of such a wide range of documents on so many specific topics is unsurpassed and indispensable to my research."

Prof. Jan Grabowski, University of Ottawa, Canada
Measured, Photographed, Murdered: The Last Photographs of Polish Jews

During 2015, Dr. Margit Berner, an anthropologist at the Natural History Museum in Vienna, came to Yad Vashem as a Research Fellow to study the fate of Jewish families who were photographed as part of a racial study in Tarnow (Poland) in 1942. During her stay, Berner investigated the families’ names in Yad Vashem’s archival records, Photo Archive and oral history records, including the records of the Visual History Archive of the USC Shoah Foundation and the ITS (International Tracing Service) files at Yad Vashem. In addition, she made use of the resources in the Yad Vashem Library for further background information on the camps and the history of the Tarnow ghetto.
Fate and Identity: "Non-Jewish Jews" during the Shoah

In July 2015, the Research Institute held its annual summer workshop for scholars, traditionally dedicated to emerging and relatively under-researched issues. This year’s unique workshop dealt with persons who did not fall into the regular Nazi definition of "full Jews": Mischlinge ("half" and "quarter" Jews); Geltungsjuden (those deemed Jewish but not falling into any category of the original Nuremberg Laws); converts; those who tried to prove that they were not "racially" Jews; and more. These were people who became defined as Jews even against their own identity, revealing the irrational and deadly racism espoused by the Germans. Participants at the workshop hailed from Austria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Israel, the Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, the UK and the US. Discussions were animated and thought-provoking, shedding new light on the multifaceted layers of identity during the Holocaust period.
The Initial Turmoil: The First Months of Nazi German Occupation in Poland

While the study of the Holocaust in general, and that of Polish Jewry in particular, has been the focus of research in Israel and abroad for years, most studies deal with the later years, when the persecution and murder of the Jews reached their apex. Yet, the early months of the occupation constituted the first encounter with the German occupier for the vast majority of the Jews living in Poland, and the first rupture in their lives as they had lived them until then.

In June 2015, researchers from Israel and abroad gathered at Yad Vashem to discuss various aspects of the first few months of German occupation during WWII. Among the topics presented and discussed at the groundbreaking workshop, conducted by the Center for Research on the Holocaust in Poland at Yad Vashem’s International Institute for Holocaust Research, were Jewish-Polish relations in the beginning of the occupation; fleeing eastward and the Jewish waves of refugees that came in its wake; the plunder and fate of artistic assets of Jews; the beginning of the policy of forced labor and its significance for the Jewish population; and the early death marches.
Focusing on the USSR during the Holocaust

In October 2015, the International Institute’s Center for Research on the History of Soviet Jews during the Holocaust organized an international workshop on regional characteristics of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union. Among the topics discussed, researchers from Germany, the US, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova and Israel debated whether to address the Holocaust in the USSR within the borders of all its territories, including those annexed from Poland, Romania and the Baltic States from 1939-1940. Prof. Christoph Dieckmann from the Fritz-Bauer-Institute from Frankfurt am Main opined that reflecting on the entirety of the Soviet territories was futile due to the unique influence of local conditions, and therefore it would be preferable to settle for considering the larger regions.

In January 2016, the Center coordinated an international conference, entitled: “More Soviet or More Jewish? Jewish Identities in the USSR during World War II,” for researchers from the US, Canada, Russia and Israel. The conference included discussions on the topic on the basis of letters and diaries written in the Red Army and on the Soviet home front, and addressed how these issues of identity during wartime and the Holocaust were expressed in folklore, including while under German occupation, as well as in Soviet literature.
International Book Prize Awarded to Prof. Johann Chapoutot

The 2015 Yad Vashem International Book Prize for Holocaust Research was awarded to Prof. Johann Chapoutot, Full Professor of Contemporary History at the Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris III, for his book, *La loi du sang: Penser et agir en nazi* (The Law of Blood: Thinking and Acting the Nazi Way) – published by NRF Gallimard in Paris. The judges praised the book for its attempt to decipher the underlying behavioral codes and norms of National Socialism. Prof. Chapoutot delivered the main address, entitled "The Jews and ‘Nature’ in the National-Socialist Weltanschauung." Describing the historic tradition of antisemitism in Europe inherited by the Nazi regime, Prof. Chapoutot spoke about how ideology is a way to "view the past, project into future and organize the present." The ideology of "nature" adopted by the Nazis was translated into policy, and led to the need to destroy anything considered against or dangerous to nature – i.e., the Jewish people.
Yad Vashem Publications

As part of the International Institute for Holocaust Research, Yad Vashem Publications disseminates new and innovative research in the field of the Holocaust that influences Shoah remembrance and academic investigations. Each year, Yad Vashem Publications releases dozens of new titles in a variety of genres and languages, including archival materials, memoirs of Holocaust survivors, conference proceedings, encyclopedias, catalogues and albums.

Israel's President Receives Unique Memoirs

In January 2016, Yad Vashem Chairman Avner Shalev, accompanied by 98-year-old Holocaust survivor Mirjam Bolle, presented Israel's President Reuven Rivlin with the book *Letters Never Sent*. The book comprises a series of unique and moving letters written by Mirjam in Amsterdam, Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen. The letters were intended for her beloved fiancé and future husband Leo Bolle, who was living in *Eretz Israel*, and they present a unique, personal source that sheds light on the controversial workings of the *Joodsche Raad* (Jewish Council) in Amsterdam. Mirjam was able to hide the letters, bringing them with her when she finally immigrated to Israel.

"The descriptions in the book are both astonishing and heartrending. They take us back to that period in history and give us the most human of proportions. I am delighted to receive the book – Holocaust commemoration and works like these are extremely important to us all."

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin
Examining Waves of Escape and Deportation

Between 1939 and 1942, Poland became the testing ground for the Third Reich’s policy of racial imperialism. The dismemberment of Poland, the annexation of its territory by Germany and the USSR, and the establishment of the Generalgouvernement triggered the displacement and flight of hundreds of thousands of people in all directions. This vast wave of refugees, that included Poles, Jews and ethnic Germans, resulted from the Nazi’s plans to “cleanse” the area of those it deemed subversive or alien, and to resettle ethnic Germans in their stead. The massive population transfers that the Germans carried out in order to change the entire ethnic structure of the annexed territories had drastic consequences for the Jewish population.

Dr. Lea Prais’ new book Displaced Persons at Home: Refugees in the Fabric of Jewish Life in Warsaw, September 1939–July 1942 sheds light on the unique features of the waves of escape and deportation of Jews to Warsaw. The book documents the available data, the Jewish refugees’ places of origin, and the responses of the public and the community leadership in the periphery to impending deportations and the migration.

"Early Voices" Series Offers Powerful First-Hand Accounts

Yad Vashem Publications recently launched a new series, entitled "Early Voices" – memoirs written by Holocaust survivors during the immediate postwar years. Imbued with the recognition that they were documenting the destruction of their family members, acquaintances and communities, survivors conveyed their memories with precise observation and without the interpretation that comes with the passage of time.

The first book published in the series is the testimony of Ben-Zion Redner: A Jewish Policeman in Lwów: An Early Account, 1941–1943. While incarcerated in the Lwów ghetto, Redner was employed as a Jewish policeman – a position that offered some privileges. The cap and band enabled Redner to walk the streets in relative safety, giving him the opportunity to witness the events that were taking place. Redner paints a detailed picture of the roundups, the search for food, the crowded housing and the jobs people were able to secure. This book is Redner’s own adaptation of his diary, written while his memories were still fresh, making it a rare first-hand, powerful account of life in the Lwów ghetto.
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Calanit Ben Haim
Deputy Director, International School for Holocaust Studies

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Director, International Institute for Holocaust Research
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Dr. Susanna Kokkonen, Christian Friends of Yad Vashem, Italy and Scandinavia Desk
Searle Brajtman, English Language Desk
Arik Rav-On, German-Speaking Countries and German Swiss Desk
Adv. Arie Zuckerman, Diaspora Affairs Desk and Special Advisor to the Chairman of the Directorate
Financial Highlights 2015

Revenues

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Source</th>
<th>NIS (000)</th>
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<td>Funds &amp; Donations</td>
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<td>Department Activities</td>
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Expenditures

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<td>Technological Infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Yad Vashem is deeply grateful for the dedicated work and fundraising efforts of its Friends Societies. The activities, events and awareness-raising endeavors of our partners are crucial to our shared mission of spreading Holocaust remembrance and education worldwide.

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Invest in Your Heritage
Join Yad Vashem’s Legacy Circle

Let your estate plans ensure that the memory of the Shoah is passed on to future generations. By including Yad Vashem in your estate plans, you guarantee a future that confronts denial and indifference. To learn more about legacy giving please visit: www.yadvashem.org/legacy or e-mail: international.relations@yadvashem.org.il
New Benefactors

"It is with utmost pleasure that we join Yad Vashem in welcoming this year’s new Benefactors. Their dedicated partnership manifests the true importance of the Yad Vashem enterprise, underscoring the significance of its sacred mission of Holocaust education, remembrance, documentation and research, and enabling these vital endeavors to continue. With the passing of time, the critical nature of securing and shaping a better future becomes ever clearer, and we encourage others to enlist in the support of this crucial effort."

Dr. Miriam and Sheldon G. Adelson

Eric and Sheila Samson

Eric and Sheila Samson recently became Yad Vashem Benefactors in recognition of their generous support for Yad Vashem’s Holocaust History Museum. The couple reside in Israel after making Aliya in 2009, where they are lauded for their constant charitable work. Born and raised in Cape Town, Eric Samson turned a small family steel-trading business into a global leader; today, Macsteel is the largest distributor of steel in Africa, operating in 31 countries across the globe. Deeply committed to his Jewish heritage, Eric’s philanthropic work has affected virtually every Jewish communal organisation in South Africa, ensuring their continuity and sustainability, and spreads across the globe to efforts in Israel and the USA. He has significantly impacted countless causes and communities throughout the world and profoundly changed the lives and destinies of numerous individuals. Sheila Samson has been a true partner in her husband’s global efforts and has always been at his side for the past five decades of dedicated giving and support to both Jewish and non-Jewish causes. The couple has received numerous accolades for their significant charitable work. Eric and Sheila are devoted to their three children, Jeffrey, Dorothy and Franki, and their families all share the same commitment to philanthropy, the Jewish people and the State of Israel.
Stanley and Bea Tollman

Stanley and Bea Tollman joined Yad Vashem’s Circle of Benefactors in 2015. Stanley is the Founder and Chairman of The Travel Corporation, an international travel group with over 25 award-winning brands. Born in South Africa in 1930, he began his career within the family’s hotel business in Johannesburg, and from the age of 19 he set about building his own portfolio of hospitality businesses. In 1952 Stanley met Bea, his future wife, and in 1954, as newlyweds of modest beginnings, they began opening a number of hotels in South Africa. In 1975, Stanley, Bea and their four children immigrated to the UK where, due to their entrepreneurial vision, passion and drive, they began building The Travel Corporation into one of the most successful privately owned, family-run travel businesses. Ever since the Tollmans began building their family businesses, they have believed in the importance of helping to support the community around them. When disasters strike, when charities need support, and when the Tollmans see valuable community-building support being carried out, they embrace the opportunity to provide a helping hand wherever and whenever they can. Now in their ninth decade (and seventh decade of marriage), they both still take a very active interest in their businesses and philanthropic efforts.

Gerald Schwartz and Heather Reisman

Gerald Schwartz and Heather Reisman joined Yad Vashem’s Circle of Benefactors in 2015. Gerald is the founder, Chairman and CEO of Onex Corporation, Canada’s largest private equity firm, and Heather is the founder, Chair and CEO of Indigo Books and Music, Canada’s leading book retailer. The couple is actively involved in many philanthropic efforts, and is well known for their generosity and involvement in their community. Gerald and Heather’s partnership with Yad Vashem will make it possible to bring more soldiers and youth to the International School for Holocaust Studies, train additional educators to teach about the Shoah, and expose Yad Vashem’s millions of visitors to new exhibitions and displays. The ceremony honoring their donation was attended by IDF soldiers and members of the HESEG Foundation, which was created by Gerald and Heather to provide full academic scholarships and living expenses to qualified applicants. Yad Vashem warmly welcomes Gerald Schwartz and Heather Reisman to its honored community of dedicated and generous supporters in fulfilling its vital mission of Holocaust education and commemoration.
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