THE PRESIDENT
Jerusalem, January 24, 2017

On Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, we remember the six million of our brothers and sisters whose lives were taken from them during the Holocaust. But these were not six million nameless victims, they were men, women and children, each of them a whole world.

When we, in Israel and in hundreds of Jewish communities around the world, gather together to hold the ceremony known as “Unto Every Person There is a Name”, we read out names of those men, women and children, remembering them and in some way restoring their identities.

Each name represents a person whose life was taken away, but each victim was an entire world. The Pages of Testimony, held at Yad Vashem, provide a unique biographical record of individual Shoah victims, serving as a memorial, not to nameless victims, but to individuals. Where possible, these records include their personal history: their place and date of birth, names of parents, siblings, spouse, children, occupation, and sometimes even photographs, ensuring that each name is an identity and it is this identity, this person, this whole world, that we recall when we read out the names at the ceremony.

In the words of Prof. Ben-Zion Dinur, former Chairman of Yad Vashem: “A name is a source of strength, [as in] 'Yad Vashem' [a memorial and a name]. A nation's strength derives from its memory, in the vigor of its memory. This is what sets humankind apart.”

I call upon you to join with me and the citizens of the State of Israel on Yom Hashoah, 28 Nissan, 5767, 24 April, 2017 in holding the ceremony “Unto Every Person There is a Name”.

Reuven (Ruvi) Rivlin
Unto Every Person There Is A Name  
Public Recitation of Names of Holocaust Victims in Israel and Abroad  
on Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day

"Unto every person there is a name, given to him by God and by his parents", wrote the Israeli poet-ess Zelda. Every single victim of the Holocaust had a name. The vast number of Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust – some six million men, women and children - is beyond human comprehension. We are therefore liable to lose sight of the fact that each life that was brutally ended belonged to an individual, a human being endowed with feelings, thoughts, ideas and dreams whose entire world was destroyed, and whose future was erased. The annual recitation of names of victims on Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day is one way of posthumously restoring the victims’ names, of commemorating them as individuals. We seek in this manner to honor the memory of the victims, to grapple with the enormity of the murder, and to combat Holocaust denial and distortion.

This year marks the 28th anniversary of the global Shoah memorial initiative “Unto Every Person There Is A Name”, held annually under the auspices of the President of the State of Israel. In addition to name recitation ceremonies conducted all over Israel, the project aims to reach out to as many overseas communities and institutions as possible. With this in mind, we are sending you the attached materials, in the hope that you will join us in this essential mission, and hold a name-reading ceremony on Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day.

The theme of this year’s observances is:  
Restoring Their Identities: The Fate of the Individual during the Holocaust

“It is not that six million Jews were murdered. Rather there were six million murders, and in each case one Jew was murdered," said Abel Jacob Herzberg, a Dutch survivor of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp who sought to underscore the unique characteristics and shared humanity of every one of those Jews. They were human beings – with names, dreams and loves. Uncovering the identities and worlds of the victims reveals the annals of the Holocaust as a human story, one with which we can identify and from which we can learn.
The attached materials include texts and readings on this year's theme that can be incorporated into your ceremony.

To date close to 4,700,000 names of Holocaust victims have been recorded in Yad Vashem’s online Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names, with more than 2,750,000 names registered on Pages of Testimony.

You can assist in our ongoing names collection campaign by downloading and distributing Pages of Testimony, or by submitting them online through our website: www.yadvashem.org.

Sadly, the generation of survivors is dwindling rapidly. As the bearers of their legacy, we must do everything possible to perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust’s victims. By reciting their names, ages and places of death, we keep their memory alive, and remind ourselves that each man, woman and child was, and is, an entire world.

Sincerely,

Avner Shalev
Chairman