

Washington, DC (April 19, 2012) - Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) released the following statement in observance of Holocaust Remembrance Day :

"Today, we join together to remember the six million European Jews murdered by the Nazi regime during the Holocaust. We stand in solidarity with the people of Israel and around the world to honor Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yom Hashoah.

Six million Jews were killed at the hands of the Nazis as a part of the "Final Solution" to eradicate all of Europe's Jews, and countless others were brutalized, raped, dehumanized, and robbed. It is essential to listen and learn from the stories of the past, and to ensure that the experiences of the Holocaust are preserved as a permanent part of our history.

Too many times in history, people have stood by and allowed the targeting, brutalization, and massacre of an innocent civilian population. The 2012 theme of these Days of Remembrance, Choosing to Act: Stories of Rescue, highlights the actions of several witnesses who risked severe punishment to help Jews to safety. These actions serve to remind us of the amazing power of individual choice to act in the face of injustice. The principle "Never Forget, Never Again." is a commitment to fighting hatred, intolerance, and brutality through education, dialogue, and determination. We can honor those who died in the Holocaust by countering similar atrocities in the future. □ □

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Holocaust remembrance is even more crucial today, given recent events in the Middle East and around the world. In the past year, there has been an increase in statements of holocaust denial throughout Europe, Asia, South America and the Middle East. The world has also witnessed an alarming increase in anti-Semitic attacks, coupled with harsh criticism of Israel that is tinged with anti-Semitism. As tensions escalate in the Middle East, Iranian President Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad has alluded to the goal of the annihilation of Israel. It is continuously important to strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship, and to focus on the goal of achieving lasting peace in the Middle East.

The annual Days of Remembrance are particularly meaningful to my community. My district, the 9th Congressional District of Illinois, is home to one of the largest concentrations of Holocaust survivors in the country. Skokie, located in my district, attracted many Jewish families in the wake of WWII, and remains a vibrant Jewish community today. There are currently 1,000- 2,000 Holocaust survivors living in Skokie, and this community understands the importance of preserving memories and honoring history.

In 2009, the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie opened in Skokie, assisted by active involvement of the community, and welcomes over 250,000 visitors annually. The Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois has been educating school and community groups since 1981, and due largely to these efforts, Illinois was the first state to make Holocaust education mandatory. This center for education and preservation of history was made possible by the hard work and dedication of the community, and its commitment to combating intolerance.

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Later this month, I will have the pleasure to visit with the remarkable students from McCracken Middle School in Skokie, who founded a student group to help prevent child labor around the world, Aiding Children Together, or A.C.T. On March 22, 2012, McCracken students involved in A.C.T had the opportunity to visit the Illinois Holocaust Museum for their Student Leadership Day. The day included discussions, a chance to explore the museum, and then students were able to sit with survivors of the Holocaust at lunch and hear their stories. Students were deeply affected □ by guest speaker Nadja Halibegovich, and her account of living through the Bosnian War and genocide as a child. One student reflected, “Just seeing all of the people who were killed in his horrible time just really made me want to push through, and make sure this would never happen again”. Another student mentioned, “We should never forget what happened. I want to help and change the future; I won't be a bystander!”

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Throughout these days of remembrance, we look back on the atrocities of the Holocaust, and we honor and mourn those who perished. It is equally important to remember the survivors and to learn from their experiences. As we move forward, it is imperative to preserve the past and to continue teaching the history of the Holocaust. We must commit today to fighting hatred and indifference in a world where genocide is an ever-present problem."

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