



Embassy
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Accra

**International Holocaust Remembrance Day
Accra, 27 January 2022**

**Speech of H.E. Mr. Daniel Krull,
Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Republic of Ghana**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening and welcome to the German Goethe Institute in Accra on this very special day.

Please allow me to start by reading a poem to you, written by Franta Bass, titled „The Garden“:

The little garden, Fragrant and full of roses. The path is narrow. And a little boy walks along it. A little boy, a sweet boy, Like that growing blossom. When the blossom comes to bloom. The little boy will be no more. When the blossom comes to bloom. The little boy will be no more.

Franta Bass was imprisoned in the concentration camp in the city of Terezin (Theresienstadt) Franta Bass was murdered at Auschwitz at the age of 14.

77 years ago, on January 27th, 1945, soldiers of the soviet red army reached and liberated the Auschwitz extermination camp, where more than 1 million Jews, Roma, Polish nationals, Soviet civilians and prisoners of war, disabled people, gay men and others were murdered by Germans and their collaborators. The 27th of January was designated as the International Holocaust Memorial Day.

Your Excellency Mrs. Shlomit Sufa, Ambassador of the State of Israel in Ghana, I am truly very grateful to you and your government that you have invited us to join you in hosting today's event here at the German Goethe Institute. Grateful that your country has reached out to us Germans, after all the atrocities that were committed, still appears to me to be a miracle.

Your Excellency, I am well aware and I know – including from personal contacts and experience – that not all Jewish people are able or willing to reconcile with Germans regardless of their date of birth. I fully understand and fully respect this. The wounds remain too deep and too painful.

Auschwitz was one of over a thousand camps set up by Germans and their collaborators. Some six million Jews across German occupied Europe were systematically murdered; murdered in pogroms and mass shootings, concentration camps, gas chambers and mobile gas vans, worked, walked and beaten to death.

„The industrial mass murder of six million Jews, the worst crime in the history of humanity, it was committed by my countrymen.“ stressed German President Frank- Walter Steinmeier in his speech at Yad Vashem in 2020, *„The terrible war, which cost far more than 50 million lives, it originated from my country“.*

Germans, including members of German Railways, German Industry, German Armed Forces actively participated in the organization and execution of this industrial mass murder, which was formally decided at the „Wannsee Conference“ on January 20th, 1942, 80 years ago.

In the context of these strategically planned and executed atrocities, against the backdrop of terrible disgrace and shame, despite everything that the Jewish people had to endure at the hands of their German oppressors, it appears to me to be nothing less than a miracle that the German Ambassador is welcome here tonight to speak to you, that I am invited to be here with you, gathering to jointly

- commemorate the victims of the Shoa who perished,
- to express our respect to the survivors and
- to honor the selfless sacrifices of those who defied the Nazis, and sometimes gave their own lives to protect or rescue the Holocaust's victims.

Germany will continue to work hard to justify the trust you put in us.

After the horror of Auschwitz, the nations of the world shaped a new international order, based on the principles of international law and respect for human rights for all. Our international order of today might be far from perfect, however it is still the best we have. We must not allow those to succeed who disrespect our shared common fundamental principles and want to return to an order where the simple rule of might prevails.

Germany stands ready to join you in defending the best we have.

The year 1945 marked the end of the Holocaust, the end of the Second World War, but 1945 did not mark the end to anti-Semitism, xenophobia, ethnic cleansing or genocide. Humanity is still scarred by these evils, as many around the world refuse to learn the right lessons from history, once and for all, and it is with profound disgust that I have to add: also in my home country. I am concerned about the fact that number of anti-Semitic incidents in Germany is rising again:

- Jewish schoolchildren were spat on in the schoolyard,
- a massacre was attempted in the Synagogue in the city of Halle on Yom Kippur, where only a solid wooden door prevented a bloodbath,
- Synagogues and leading representatives of Jewish communities in Germany are under police protection, to defend them against ongoing threats by right-wing radicals,
- and we are concerned to note that the number of those denying the Holocaust is growing and the denials are becoming more vocal through social media.

The Stockholm Declaration clearly stipulates the solemn responsibility of the international community to fight those evils and to uphold the terrible truth of the Holocaust against those who deny it.

In this context it is with great satisfaction that we note that on January 20th, 2022 the General Assembly of the UN in New York adopted by consensus a new resolution which calls on states and non-state actors to take active measures against Holocaust denial. Israel had initiated this resolution. Germany had joined as co-facilitator. 114 states declared to be co-sponsors of the resolution. Adopted on the 80th anniversary of the Wannsee Conference, the resolution is an important signal to condemn and confront disturbing trends of diminishing, distorting or denying the Holocaust.

Antisemitism, xenophobia, genocide, all these evils do not pop up overnight but grow over time. We all need to remain vigilant; we must not allow the seeds to take root - Never again.

„Never again“ is easily said, but, at the same time, it is very complex task indeed. *„Never again“* requires that we stay alert and that we are prepared and willing to take action when ever need be. As Simon Wiesenthal reminded us *„For evil to flourish, it only requires good men to do nothing.“*

Is it an option to stand idly by on the sidelines when minorities are being threatened? Is it an option to stay silent when people send hate speech messages via social media calling openly for stoning, torturing or killing people who do not correspond to their own norms or life style? As history has shown us repeatedly, these people might stalk the one group today - tomorrow they might be stalking you.

After being called upon to form the German government in 1933, Adolf Hitler and the Nazis started with arresting members of the opposition, communist and social democrats in the first place. And when later they started to imprison those liberals who were no longer willing to follow the “Führer”, there was nobody left to protest against the purge. Even the other religious groups – in large part - remained silent on the sidelines, when German Nazis started to boycott Jewish businesses, when their fellow Jewish citizens were deprived of their rights, disenfranchised, dehumanized and murdered.

Never again.

Let us all remember forever the victims of the Shoa who perished. Let them live on in our thoughts and prayers - all the wonderful women and men, girls and boys, including the little boy in the garden in Terezin. Rabbi James Rosenberg wrote about Franta Bass poem: *„Even in the face of death, Franta Bass breathes deeply the fragrance of a little Terezin garden filled with roses. Even in the face of death, he affirms the wonder and the beauty of being alive.“*

And like Rabbi Rosenberg I would love to believe that the „*little boy who will be no more*“ will somehow continue to live in the simple words Franta Bass has left us.

Thank you.