

## PRESS RELEASE

March 6, 2013, Brussels

### **Jewish, Armenian and Rwandan organisations mark the first European Day for the Commemoration of the Righteous**

CEJI, AGBU, EUJS and IBUKA enthusiastically welcome the first European Day for the Commemoration of the Righteous, on March 6, 2013. The Righteous are those people who chose humanity over hatred. They put their lives at risk to save those people who were targeted by mass murder and genocide, thus they « interrupted, by their unexpected action, the chain of evil ».<sup>1</sup>

On May 10, 2012 the European Parliament adopted a declaration<sup>2</sup> instituting March 6 as the « European Day of Remembrance for the Righteous », in order to « commemorate those who challenged crimes against humanity and totalitarianism, with individual responsibility ».

The declaration makes further reference to those who saved lives during « all genocides and mass murders, including those committed against the Armenians, Tutsis in Rwanda, Muslims in Bosnia and Cambodians » as well as those committed by «Nazi and Communist totalitarianism».

Ceremonies and events to mark this day will be held in a number of European cities (Prague, Warsaw, Bialystok, St-Petersburg, Sarajevo, Rome, Milano) and at the European Parliament in Brussels:

- March 6 11:30: *70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Rescue of the Bulgarian Jews during World War II* with keynote addresses by Rosen Plevneliev, President of Bulgaria and Shimon Peres, President of Israel.
- March 7 11:00: *Remembering in the Future: Policies and Practices of Remembrance to Prevent Mass Atrocities*, at the initiative of the declaration's sponsors: MEPs Niccolo Rinaldi and MEP Ivo Vajgl.

Celebrating those who, in the face of tremendous danger, have placed human dignity above obedience, hatred, greed or ideology is an indispensable part of the quest to build societies that are immune to the temptations of scapegoating and victimizing minorities. Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, German industrialist Oskar Schindler, and US diplomat Henri Morgenthau are some of the best known Righteous, but historical evidence indicates that there have, in fact, been many. The memory of these courageous people must serve as positive models to prevent the escalation of hatred into persecution, violence and genocide.

CEJI, AGBU and EUJS therefore call upon non-governmental organizations, political leaders, opinion leaders and governments in Europe to take part in future European Days of Remembrance for the Righteous, and to promote the value of personal and collective responsibility in fighting hatred and creating a safe environment for all.

We commend those parliamentarians who have sponsored or signed the Declaration instituting the European Day of the Righteous: MEPs Niccolo Rinaldi, Gabriele Albertini, Lena Kolarska-Bobińska and David-Maria Sassoli. We also commend GARIWO, the organization which inspired them to take this step and that has been campaigning for more than 10 years now for the commemoration of the Righteous ([www.gariwo.net](http://www.gariwo.net)).

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<sup>1</sup> Sémelin et al (éd.) *La résistance aux génocides – de la pluralité des actes de sauvetage*. Presses de SciencesPo, Paris, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Written declaration N° 003/2012 on support for the establishment of a European Day of Remembrance for the Righteous.

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**Further information**

**CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe** stands with people of all backgrounds to promote a Europe of diversity and respect. A Jewish voice at European level, our activities include delivering diversity education, enhancing interfaith and intercultural dialogue, while advocating in the EU against antisemitism and discrimination of all kinds. [www.ceji.org](http://www.ceji.org)

Established in 1906, **the Armenian General Benevolent Union** is the world's largest non-profit Armenian organization. AGBU preserves and promotes the Armenian identity and heritage through educational, cultural and humanitarian programs, annually touching the lives of some 400,000 Armenians around the world. AGBU Europe is the European branch of AGBU. [www.agbu.org](http://www.agbu.org)

**The European Union of Jewish Students** is an umbrella organisation for 34 national Jewish student unions in Europe and the former Soviet Union, representing over 200,000 Jewish students. As one of the largest Jewish student organizations in the world, EUJS is a pioneer with cutting edge programs and missions which reflect upon the diversity of its members. EUJS is here to ensure that Jewish youth and students in Europe will be able to fully participate in the life of the Jewish people, and the development of its social, religious, historical, and cultural heritage. [www.eujs.org](http://www.eujs.org)

**IBUKA-Memory and Justice** is a non-profit association founded in Belgium in 1994 by the survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994, the family victims as well as all people concerned with the memory and the plight of the victims of genocide.

[www.ibuka.be](http://www.ibuka.be)



**AGBU** **ARMENIAN GENERAL BENEVOLENT UNION**  
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