

Tsai stresses rights at Holocaust event

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A rabbi speaks at a ceremony at the National Central Library in Taipei yesterday hosted by the Israeli and German trade offices to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Photo: Chen Chih-chu, Taipei Times

Taiwan remains committed to building a future based on human rights and justice while removing hatred and discrimination, President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) said yesterday at an event to commemorate the Holocaust.

The event marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day was hosted by the Israel Economic and Cultural Office in Taipei and the German Institute Taipei.

Republic of China diplomat Ho Feng-shan (何鳳山), who served as consul-general in Vienna from 1938 to 1940, and is credited with helping save at least 2,000 Jews seeking to flee Nazi-annexed Austria by issuing them visas to Shanghai, was also commemorated.

Diplomats, dignitaries, artists, religious leaders and others attended the event at the National Central Library in Taipei.

“Numbers don’t tell the whole story. Six million is not just a number. It represents the lives of 6 million people. The victims of the Holocaust were individuals, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, friends and neighbors, who lost their lives in a crime unparalleled in humanity,” Tsai said.

“We must never forget why their lives were cut short. We affirm our responsibility to never

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forget, never again. We must continue to reflect on all that we can do as individuals and together as a nation to ensure that this kind of event can never take place again anywhere in the world," she said.

Memorials and museums across Europe, from Auschwitz to the shores of the Danube River, point to a common responsibility of upholding universal values of human rights, freedom and justice, she said.

"This responsibility exists because of the past. It exists because we want to build a future free from hatred and discrimination," Tsai said.

Taiwan will continue to stand together with the international community to ensure that this message is never lost or distorted, she said.

Over the past two years, Taiwan has worked to establish a human rights museum, which will engage with institutions in Israel, Germany and across Europe to improve human rights education in Taiwan for younger generations, she said.

Israeli Representative Asher Yarden, while commending Taiwan's efforts to commemorate the Holocaust, condemned the continued use of Nazi symbols in Taiwan.

"We are still witnessing the use of Nazi symbols, Nazi flags, Nazi swastika and Nazi gestures in unacceptable ways in the heart of Taipei and other parts of Taiwan," Yarden said. "The main reason for this unacceptable type of incident is lack of knowledge, including insufficient familiarity with the background of the Holocaust, the lesson that needs to be drawn from it, the significance [of the Holocaust] particular to the Jewish people, but also [its] universal [significance]."

In one incidents, Hsinchu Kuang Fu High School students wore Nazi-style uniforms and displayed Nazi symbols during a campus event in December 2016, which drew condemnation from the Israel Economic and Cultural Office.

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However, Taiwan's government and its public are taking steps to educate people about the Holocaust, including an upcoming, Taiwanese-produced animated film about Anne Frank, Yarden said.

The government is to introduce a program to train Taiwanese educators in Israel about teaching the history of the Holocaust, he added, encouraging Taiwan to continue its efforts to educate young people and end the use of Nazi symbols.

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