

AVIATION SECURITY INTERNATIONAL

www.asi-mag.com



THE GLOBAL JOURNAL OF AIRPORT & AIRLINE SECURITY

Screening Technologies: from A to Z

ALSO:
X-RAY TRAINING
CYBERTERRORISM
DISCRIMINATION
SECURITY THEATRE

MAIN MEDIA SPONSORS TO:



CHO
HYUN-AH:
MACADAMIA
NUTS
SEE PAGE 12



ADELAIDE
AIRPORT:
FRONT OF
HOUSE
SEE PAGE 18



HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY: reminding us not to become bystanders

by Philip Baum

On 27th January, the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau - the largest of the Nazi death camps, I attended a service which was one of many events taking place as part of Holocaust Memorial Day. This date was selected to commemorate that history on 27th January 2000, when representatives from 46 governments met in Stockholm to discuss Holocaust education, remembrance and research. All the attendees signed a declaration, now known by many as the Stockholm Declaration, committing to preserving the memory of those who had been murdered in the Holocaust.

Television programmes aired during the same week as Holocaust Memorial Day reminded viewers of the horrors of Nazi Germany and how an advanced, supposedly civilised state, could transform itself into a barbaric regime capable of murder on an industrial scale. Much of the footage I had seen before yet, as with the attacks in the United States in 2001, no matter how many times one views the evidence, it remains incomprehensible that human beings can foster such hatred and loathing of those who do not share their own beliefs, that they can commit acts of such depravity.

Whilst much of the focus of Holocaust Memorial Day is on the attempted annihilation of Europe's Jewish population, a speaker at the service I attended gave an interesting alternative perspective. Prof. Philip Spencer, Emeritus Professor in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Kingston University, reminded the audience that we tend to view the Holocaust in terms of 'perpetrators', being the Nazis, and 'victims', being the Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, physically or mentally challenged individuals and brave members of the various resistance movements. Spencer reminded us, however, of a third group: those who knew what was happening but did nothing to prevent it - the 'bystanders'. If Holocaust Memorial Day was going to have any real significance, then it was to teach us the lesson that we cannot allow industrialised murder to happen again and that we all have a duty to challenge our governments to intervene when members of the human race are being slaughtered for no other reason than that of belonging to a different faith or ethnicity.

Around a decade ago, I visited Rwanda in order to deliver a training course. Whilst there I took the opportunity to visit the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre. It had a profound impact on me as I realised that the 1994 act of genocide, in which approximately 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus had been massacred, had taken place in my lifetime and I, a young adult at the time, had been aware of the atrocities taking place but had never even thought to take any action. It was an African problem; what could I possibly do? I had been a bystander to an act which the United Nations Security Council, in 2000, accepted responsibility for failing to prevent. As Canada's Foreign Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, pointed out at the time, "The unchecked brutality of the genocidaires made a mockery, once again, of the [post-Holocaust] pledge 'never again'".

"...scarred by genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia..."

Acts of genocide have not been purely Nazi or Hutu phenomena. We can think too of Cambodia, Bosnia and Darfur...and many of us have witnessed, on the television news, other such atrocities that cannot be explained away as simply 'military excess' or 'acts of war'.

Auschwitz-Birkenau is a sobering reminder that mass murder can take place in the western world and is a 'must see' for anybody visiting nearby Krakow. The Stockholm Declaration reminds us that, "With humanity still scarred by genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, the international community shares a solemn responsibility to fight those evils."

But have we learned the lessons? I fear not. I am sure all readers were appalled by the vicious attacks perpetrated in Paris on 7th and 9th January this year against the staff of Charlie Hebdo, the Police and the shoppers at the kosher supermarket; there was, after all, wall-to-wall media coverage. We have a thirst for information...but only if it affects 'us' and only if we feel 'our' values are being threatened.

That said, in the same week that those 17 innocents lost their lives in France, around 2,000 Nigerians were slaughtered by Boko Haram in the northern town of Baga; nearly 11,000 people were killed by the group in 2014. Yet, whilst world leaders travelled to Paris to demonstrate their solidarity with the French, events in Nigeria were all but overlooked.

Whilst the Civil War in Syria is covered by the media, few people are demanding military intervention by foreign powers despite the fact that up to 300,000 people have been killed there since the current conflict began in 2011. In 2014 alone, more than 5,000 people were killed in conflicts in each of Central African Republic, Pakistan, Ukraine, South Sudan, Yemen and Mexico (in the latter's case, according to infobae, over 150,000 people may have died in the drugs war since 2006).

So, in terms of aviation security, we must remember that our planet faces many challenges. The sickening acts of Islamic State, as illustrated by the recent beheading of Japanese prisoners and the burning alive of the Jordanian pilot, show that the human race still, despite its history, has the propensity to turn savage and perpetrate atrocities which, as during the Holocaust, beggar belief.

The question remains, however, are our measures addressing the multitude of threats of today, or are we simply bystanders to legislation and processes that safeguard nobody? ■

