

LONDON TO HOST UK HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2005

London will host the fifth National Holocaust Memorial Day on Thursday 27th January 2005, Home Secretary David Blunkett announced today.

The day will mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the former Nazi extermination camp. It will offer the opportunity to remember those who suffered and died during the Holocaust, as well as those still living with its consequences, and to reflect on the contemporary lessons to be learned.

The national commemoration, organised in association with the BBC, will be the climax of a number of local events in London and throughout the UK.

Mr Blunkett said:

“London has a proven commitment to Holocaust Memorial Day and I am confident that the 2005 commemoration next January will build successfully on the inspiring events of the previous memorial days.

“Holocaust Memorial Day is vitally important for the whole nation, not just so we remember those who were abused and murdered by the Nazis, but to encourage us to take a critical look at the world today and challenge racism and intolerance head on.

“With its theme of ‘survivors, liberation and rebuilding lives’ this event offers an opportunity for us to hear victims recall their experiences, reflect on how our society treated them and listen to what they can tell us that applies equally well to the world today. As many people as possible, especially our young people, need to take this opportunity to listen to these survivors, pay our respects to them and learn from what they have to say.”

The Home Secretary also announced that Wales had been chosen to host Holocaust Memorial Day 2006.

The First Minister for Wales, Rhodri Morgan, said:

"Wales will be honoured to host the annual Holocaust Memorial Day in 2006. We will do everything we can to generate a fuller understanding of the Holocaust and full and proper remembrance for all its victims."

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. For 2005, Holocaust Memorial Day will focus on the theme of survivors, liberation and rebuilding lives. The 60th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps presents one of the greatest opportunities to show our respect for the

survivors of Nazi persecution and mass murder, and to listen to what they can tell us.

2. The purpose of the Holocaust Memorial Day is to ensure that the horrendous crimes against humanity committed during the Holocaust are never forgotten, and its relevance for each new generation is understood.
3. On 27 January 2000, some forty four governments, including the UK, attended the Stockholm Forum on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. The Forum set out to give support, education and research and to better equip governments to combat racism, anti-Semitism and intolerance as they manifest themselves in contemporary society. At the conclusion of the conference the heads of the delegations unanimously agreed to sign the Declaration of the Stockholm Forum. As a part of Holocaust Memorial Day, the principles of the Declaration have been adapted into a seven-point Statement of Commitment as a benchmark for understanding the aims and objectives of the day.
4. The first Holocaust Memorial Day was held on 27 January 2001 with the national commemoration in London. Subsequent national events have been hosted by Manchester, Edinburgh and Belfast. The date is significant as it was on that day in 1945 that the former Nazi extermination camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated. In 2005 it will be the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau.
5. Details of the national event in London on 27 January and associated events across the rest of the UK will be made available on the Holocaust Memorial Day website at www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk. Details of events and press releases will be posted as they are announced, in the lead up to Holocaust Memorial Day in January.