

**Discours de la Consule générale à Johannesburg,  
Madame Sonia Doña Pérez  
Journée internationale à la mémoire des victimes de l'Holocauste,**

*Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre  
Dimanche 27 janvier 2019*

Dear Tali NATES, [Director of the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre]

Dear Masimba TAFIRENYIKA, [Director of the United Nations Information Centre]

Heads of Mission and members of the diplomatic corp,

Dear Professor Renée POZNANSKI, [Conférencière invitée par l'IFAS]

Dear Véronique BRIQUET-LAUGIER

The International Holocaust Remembrance Day, on the 27th of January, marks the day when the Nazi death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated.

This year's commemoration will also mark eighty years since the beginning of the Second World War.

Eighty years ago, the world was on the verge of a storm, a storm that was to nearly destroy it.

Whole chapters of our common history were destroyed in the course of an unthinkable and inhuman process.

The mass murder, on an industrial scale, of the European Jews and of the Roma, the killing of civilians, disabled people and homosexuals, deprived our humanity from its future. The Second World War left a civilization forever scarred.

In 1995, the President of France, Jacques Chirac said for the first time that the French authorities, although being coerced by the German forces occupying our country, had at the time, committed an act for which there is no possible reparation: « *La France, patrie des Lumières et des Droits de l'Homme, terre d'accueil et d'asile, la France, ce jour-là, accomplissait l'irréparable.* »

In spite of this, many French citizens, men and women, despised the anti-Semitic policy of the Vichy regime and took an active role in sheltering the Jewish people. What comes to mind is all the Righteous among the Nations (les Justes parmi les Nations) whose names are engraved at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and I am proud to count amongst them, several diplomats ... What comes to mind too are all the French citizens whose names who are still unknown

By making this important admission, President Jacques Chirac was making the duty to remember, part of France's official policy.

Today we are gathered here to remember the victims of the Holocaust during the Second World War.

Let us never forget our common duty as human beings to take action, whenever and wherever it is necessary, to prevent the perpetration of such deadly ideologies, of such crimes.

Let us always keep in mind how, on so many occasions since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January, 1945, we collectively failed.

I would like to pay tribute to the work done by Tali NATES here at the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre. It is an essential function to pass on the memory of what happened to the young generations, and to preserve the voices of the victims of crimes against humanity.

The duty to remember is essential to us, and it is also the first step in order to prevent such crimes being repeated.

I would also like to pay tribute to Madam Myra OSRIN, the founder of the Cape Town Holocaust and Genocide Centre, who could not be here with us today, for building such a powerful weapon against oblivion.

This ceremony today is another step in our partnership, since December 2017 when a tribute to Simone VEIL was organized by Jacques FREDJ, director of the Memorial de la Shoah, at

the Cape Town Holocaust and Genocide Centre, the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre and in France.

Simone VEIL, former French minister for Health, chairperson of the European Council and an activist for women's rights, was a survivor. She was arrested with her family in Nice in March 1944, at the age of sixteen and was liberated from Bergen Belsen in April 1945. She was also the first chairperson of the Foundation for the Remembrance of the Shoah, an institution which played a key role in creating the 'Mémorial de la Shoah' of Paris, where the names of seventy-six thousand people, both foreigners and French citizens, are engraved on the Wall of Names.

In this sense Simone Veil was emblematic of the role of survivors, who were instrumental in safekeeping the memory of the Holocaust. We should not forget this when our time comes to honor the victims.

Professor Renée POZNANSKI, who is here today thanks to the partnership between the French Institute of South Africa and the Johannesburg Holocaust and Genocide Centre, will shortly give us a key note lecture on the theme "Being Jewish in France in World War II"./.