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Friends of Simon Wiesenthal speak about holocaust and denial

Jan. 27 is International Holocaust Remembrance Day

Holocaust commemoration

Supplied

Avi Benlolo is president and CEO of Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies. He spoke this week about Holocaust commemoration in an era of Holocaust distortion and denial.

Thornhill Liberal

By [Simone Joseph](#)

It's one word.

A made-up word.

Holo-hoax.

But, to Avi Benlolo, it's a reminder of the ignorance he and the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies face.

"There's so much Holocaust denial ... It is disconcerting," he said Wednesday.

Friday, Jan. 27 is International Holocaust Remembrance Day. This day was proclaimed by the United Nations in 2005 to commemorate the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp by Soviet troops on Jan. 27, 1945.

Benlolo, president and CEO of Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies, was speaking to the media this week about commemorating the Holocaust in an era of Holocaust distortion and denial.

The Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies is a non-profit human rights organization committed to countering racism and anti-Semitism and to promoting the principles of tolerance, social justice and Canadian democratic values through advocacy and education.

Someone posted the word "holo-hoax" on the Facebook page of the Toronto-based Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre.

But Benlolo has an antidote.

"Confront it with truth, fact and as much education as possible," Benlolo said. "More people with education, that's how we confront it."

The centre is not just about helping Jewish people remember an atrocity that happened to Jews, according to him. The centre extends its teaching to include other religions, cultures and countries.

"We believe in human rights. Because of our experience, it gives legitimacy to speak about other atrocities," Benlolo said.

He pointed out that the centre held a news conference on Aleppo at which Holocaust survivors spoke out about the atrocities in that Syrian city.

The Holocaust was also not only a Jewish tragedy, Benlolo said, pointing out that many non-Jewish people were killed. At the other end of the spectrum from denial is the people who become very absorbed in the big questions surrounding the Holocaust, he said.

In September, the centre launched a new [website](#) that includes six testimonies from survivors.

Go to friendsofsimonwiesenthalcenter.com for more information about Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies.