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Holocaust survivors call for action to help those in Aleppo

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FIRST POSTED: WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2016 05:40 PM EST | UPDATED: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2016 06:44 AM EST

When Vera Schiff sees images of Aleppo on the news, it brings back painful memories of surviving the Holocaust as a teenager decades ago.

"After my liberation in 1945, I thought the world would have learned its lesson," the 90-year-old said on Wednesday. "Yet here we are again, watching news from Aleppo, showing graphic scenes of innocent civilians being killed and maimed."

She was one of five survivors of the Holocaust in Toronto who urged the world to not stand by idly as the Syrian crisis continues.

"We thought we would be the last ones to have suffered," Schiff said.

Avi Benlolo, president and CEO of the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, said the Holocaust was "made possible because not enough people cared and not enough states took action.

"We are feeling frankly that people are a little asleep as to the atrocities that are being committed," he said.

"We're hoping that politicians and other leaders will pay attention, not necessarily just here in Canada, globally as well."

Howard Chandler, 88, described being a 10-year-old boy in occupied Poland and watching his family "decimated" right before his eyes.

"My family was stolen from me, my childhood was stolen from me," he recalled. "Life as I knew it was stolen, never to be the same. And the world stood by.

"Today, when I turn on the news, I see once again that the world is standing by as innocent lives are being taken."

The United Nations Security Council recently said "urgent humanitarian evacuations and assistance" are necessary for many residents.