

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS URGE WORLD TO INTERVENE IN ALEPPO

By *Sheri Shefa, Staff Reporter* - December 22, 2016



Holocaust survivor Vera Schiff speaks to reporters as Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center CEO Avi Benlolo looks on.

Five Holocaust survivors joined [Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies](#) president and CEO Avi Benlolo to call on the international community to put an end to atrocities in Aleppo.

About 500,000 people have been killed since the start of Syria's civil war in 2011 and nearly five

million people were forced to flee the country. Pro-government forces recaptured Syria's largest city from rebel forces earlier this month.

"Even as a truce has been called, and refugees are attempting to depart this war-torn city, they do so with great uncertainty. Many more are trapped in Aleppo and surrounding villages," Benlolo said at a Dec. 21 press conference outside the organization's offices in Toronto.

"During the Holocaust, not enough people spoke out. In fact, most people stood by in silence and let the genocide happen. We often wonder why the railway tracks leading into Auschwitz were not bombed, or why rallies in the West failed to materialize, or groups of people did not come together to simply speak out for humanity. This is why we are pleading today for an immediate cessation of violence and hostility in Syria," he said. Howard Chandler, 88, is the survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Buchenwald and Theresienstadt concentration camps. Although he and his brother survived, his parents and two siblings were murdered.

"As a 10-year-old boy living in occupied Poland, I watched as my family was decimated right before my eyes... Today, when I turn on the evening news, I see once again that the world is standing by as innocent lives are being taken," Chandler said.

"Scenes from Aleppo, Syria, are sickening. No one was there to help us, to bomb the railway tracks. We are asking the international community to please intervene."

Max Eisen, the sole survivor of an extended family of about 60, having lived through the horrors of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Mauthausen, Melk and Ebensee slave labour and death camps, said he witnessed atrocities that no one should experience.

"Yet human atrocities have continued, the violence has not ended. I see the eyes of innocent children once again having their families torn from them and orphaned. I understand the fear and suffering. The humanitarian effort must be accelerated," Eisen said.

Gerda Frieberg, who was 16 when she and her sister were sent to Oberaltstadt, a satellite camp of Gross Rosen in Poland, said she witnessed first hand the cruelty man is capable of.

"We must not become bystanders. We can make a difference. Let our voices be heard," Frieberg said.

Faigie Libman, a child survivor of forced labour camps and Stutthof concentration camp, who lost her entire family, save for her mother, in the war, said she teaches about respecting human life in hopes that no other child will have to endure what she did.

"But it's happening as I stand here and speak with you today. Innocent children are once again witnessing horrific scenes that will change their lives forever. Families [are] being ripped apart and destroyed. Let history show that we have spoken out and condemned these atrocities," Libman said.

Vera Schiff, 90, who survived three years of incarceration at Theresienstadt and lost her entire family of more than 50, said after she was liberated in 1945, she was sure the world would have learned the lessons of the Holocaust.

"Yet here we are watching news from Aleppo showing graphic scenes of innocent civilians being killed and maimed. Bombs and violence explode daily, murdering civilians, causing mayhem. The criminals responsible for these atrocities must be brought to justice. It is the duty of international community," Schiff said.

Benlolo called for the immediate cessation of hostility in Syria and asked that the international community issue indictments and notices to the perpetrators for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

"This will bring perpetrators to justice and give notice to future war criminals that they are not immune," Benlolo said.