

# Trudeau honours survivor at Ottawa Yom HaShoah event

Monday, May 9, 2016

Cantor Moshe Kraus, a Holocaust survivor who helped maintain the spirit of fellow prisoners in Bergen-Belsen by singing “happy songs” and who has had a notable cantorial career spanning seven decades, has been honoured by the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem with an award created in his name.

Fran Sonshine, national chair of the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem and MC of the 2016 National Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony held May 5 at the Canadian War Museum, introduced a video of Kraus’ life and thanked him for his 12th consecutive year of taking part in the annual ceremony.

More than 800 people, including 50 MPs, representatives of 55 diplomatic missions, survivors and their families, students from 10 schools in Ontario and Quebec, as well as representatives of the Zachor Coalition and members of the public attended the event.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau presented the award to Kraus. “I might point out that I have the extraordinary privilege of being the second Prime Minister Trudeau to have known Cantor Kraus,” he said.



Justin Trudeau presents award to Cantor Kraus.

Trudeau also praised the work of the society. "The work that you do to educate people in Canada and around the world is critically important," he said. "May we never forget those we lost and always honour those who survived."

Trudeau and Kraus jointly presented the Cantor Kraus Catalyst for Change Award to three individuals who have shown their dedication to Holocaust education: educators Patrick Mascoe of Ottawa and Larry Mikulcik of Strasbourg, Sask., and Toronto high school student Erin Sade.

Israeli Ambassador Rafael Barak reminded those present that Yom HaShoah is about remembering the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust as people, not as numbers, but it's also about remembering the survivors. He related a story of a Dutch Christian family named Makkinje who risked their lives to save the Veffer, a Jewish family of eight, by hiding them for three years. He and the Dutch ambassador to Canada had jointly hosted members of both families the previous evening, and Barak said that "the Veffer family of eight is today a family of more than 100 proud and accomplished Jewish Canadians."

Interim Conservative Leader Rona Ambrose received applause as she reaffirmed her party's commitment to defend Israel's right to exist as a homeland for the Jewish People. "We rededicate ourselves to the values that Canada has always stood for... for a world free from terror, persecution and genocide," she said.

Speaking on behalf of the NDP, Helene Laverdiere, MP for Laurier-Sainte-Marie, mentioned the financial hardship that many Holocaust survivors are still enduring and encouraged restitution efforts to enable them to live more comfortably and in dignity. "Most of all, we must never forget that love is stronger than hate," she said.

Green Leader Elizabeth May, participating for the sixth time in the annual ceremony, quoted Viktor Frankl as she spoke about the resilience of the survivors and the triumph of the human spirit over unimaginable evil.

In his dvar Torah, Rabbi Reuven Bulka noted that the holiday of Passover is the only festival that has no obligation or biblical mandate to rejoice, because Jews do not rejoice about becoming free through the death of other people.

"It is a waste of human energy to spend time on negativity... the survivors are people who built on the negativity to make the world a better place."

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