

**Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Eviatar Manor,
Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations in Geneva,
on the occasion of the opening of the Exhibition “The Terezín Family Camp At Birkenau”**

Organized by the EU Delegation, the Czech and Polish Permanent Missions
Palais des Nations, Salle des Pas Perdus
Geneva, 27 January 2016

Dear Mr. Director-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

The story of the Terezin Ghetto is a particular one, as Ambassador Sorensen has just highlighted in his remarks. I would like to share with you my thoughts on the artistic expression that existed side-by-side with the terrible living conditions in this *Transit Camp*.

Indeed, Terezin was not only a Ghetto. It was the ante-chamber of Auschwitz and Treblinka through which the one hundred and twenty thousands (120'000) Jews from Czechoslovakia passed on their way to the camps. In total, 155'000 Jews were deported to Terezin: 35'000 died there, 88'000 in the death camps. Simple arithmetic will show that few survived.

Yet, throughout the war, the Terezin inmates embroiled themselves in creative artistic activity. Music pieces, poems, theatre plays, paintings and drawings survived their authors and artists and are testimonies to their vital spirit in the face of their tormentors' efforts to exterminate them. This was their way to preserve their human dignity. To the end, the Nazis failed to destroy the Jewish spirit and soul. In the midst of destruction, the Jewish inmates of Terezin created. Their human spirit soared above their captors' barbarism. This, to me, is the embodiment of courage.

The exhibition we inaugurate today displays some of these works. I would like to quote part of a text written in Terezin by the young Petr Fischl. It encapsulates both aspects, that of artistic prose and that of the terrible living conditions in the Ghetto. And I quote:

“We got used to sleeping without a bed, to saluting every uniform, not to walk on the sidewalks and then again to walk on the sidewalk. We got used to underserved slaps, blows, and executions. We got accustomed to seeing people die in their own excrement, to seeing piled-up coffins full of corpses, to seeing the sick amid dirt and filth and to seeing the helpless doctors. We got used to it that from time to time, and thousand unhappy souls would come here and that, from time to time, another thousand unhappy souls would go away [...]”

Petr was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944. He was 15.

Dear Friends,

The victims of the Holocaust were obsessed with ensuring that future generations will know what they went through. This exhibition fulfills their wishes, hence its importance. I would like to particularly thank the EU delegation, the Czech and Polish Permanent Missions, and the United Nations Office for bringing this exhibition to the Palais, on this International Day for the Memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

Thank you.