Albania’s response to the plight of Jewish people during the Holocaust remains a powerful example of personal and national courage and integrity in the face of Nazi brutality. By the end of the war, there were more Jewish people alive in Albania than had resided in Albania before the war. Recognising Albania’s response as an example of moral courage is an important aspect of Holocaust education and commemoration. The Albanian response embodies the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that “every human being has the inalienable right to be treated with dignity and afforded the right to a life that is peaceful and just.” Today’s briefing considers how the historical example of the humanity expressed by the ordinary Albanians during the Holocaust, might illuminate factors that can encourage civil society to stand up for the inalienable right of all to be treated with dignity.

Programme

- Film clip from The Albanian Code (directed by Professor Yael Katzir)

- Welcome remarks by Ms. Alison Smale, Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications. Ms. Smale will serve as moderator of the programme.

- H.E. Ms. Besiana Kadare, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Albania to the United Nations

- Mr. Ronald Lauder, President of the World Jewish Congress

- Film clip from The Albanian Code (directed by Professor Yael Katzir)

- Ms. Majlinda Myrto, Executive Director of the “Eye Contact Foundation”, whose family is recognized as Righteous Among the Nations for their rescue of a Jewish family in Albania during the Holocaust.

- Dr. Anna Kohen, child of family who survived the Holocaust being hidden in Albania

- Mr. David Estrin, Founder of youth organization “Together We Remember”

- Mr. Robert Singer, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Vice President of the World Jewish Congress

Question and Answer Session
H.E. Ms. Besiana Kadare  @besiana_kadare

H.E. Ms. Besiana Kadare has served as the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Albania to the United Nations since June 2016. Appointed to serve concurrently as Ambassador to Cuba, Ms. Kadare was previously Albania’s Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris between 2011 and 2016. In 2008, Ms. Kadare served in her country’s Embassy in France. Her previous overseas assignment was First Secretary at her country’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York. She worked with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2005. Ms. Kadare holds a master’s degree in modern and comparative literature and a specialized high studies diploma in modern specialized literature from the Sorbonne Paris-IV University in Paris.

Ronald S. Lauder  @WorldJewishCong

Ronald Lauder is the President of the World Jewish Congress, the leading umbrella organization of Jewish communities around the world. From 1983 to 1986, Mr. Lauder served as United States Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for European and NATO Affairs. In 1986, he served as the United States Ambassador to Austria. After this appointment, he sought to revitalize Jewish life across central and eastern Europe in communities that had been devastated by the Holocaust and established the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation. The Foundation supports 37 Jewish schools, camps and community centres in 10 countries in Europe.

Majlinda Myrto

Majlinda Myrto is the Executive Director of the “Eye Contact Foundation,” an organization that promotes religious, political, cultural and economic understanding and tolerance among people worldwide through the use of portrait photography and the film. Part of her work is dedicated to establishing school curricula for teaching tolerance through the Albanian code of honour called BESA. Ms. Myrto’s family are honoured by Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, as Righteous Among Nations for their rescue of a Jewish family during the Holocaust.

Anna Kohen

Anna Kohen was born in Vlora, Albania after the Second World War. During the Holocaust, local villagers gave shelter to her family and saved them from the Nazis. Dr. Kohen has greatly contributed to the Albanian community and has held the title of “Honored Citizen” of Vlora bestowed on her. Dr. Kohen has been instrumental in highlighting Jewish heritage in Albania and is the President of the Albanian American Women’s Organization Florida Chapter.

David Estrin  @TgthrWeRemember

David Estrin is the Founder and CEO of “Together We Remember,” a youth-driven organisation. He is the grandson of four Holocaust survivors. His organisation leverages social media and other emerging technologies to transform the memory of genocide and atrocity crimes. He holds a degree in public policy from Duke University. Mr. Estrin also serves on the External Advisory Committee of the USC Shoah Foundation, the Institute for Visual History and Education.

Robert Singer  @WorldJewishCong

Robert Singer is the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Vice President of the World Jewish Congress. Prior to joining the World Jewish Congress, Mr. Singer served for 14 years as the Director General and CEO of World ORT, one of the world’s largest non-governmental education and training providers. Born in Ukraine, Mr. Singer emigrated to Israel as a teenager. Mr. Singer spent twelve years with the Office of the Prime Minister in Israel in several senior posts.