

**Message from Elie Wiesel,
Chairman of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania**

What is true about individual human beings is also true of communities. Repressed memories are dangerous for, in surfacing, they may destroy what is healthy, cheapen what is noble, undermine what is lofty.

A nation or a person may find various ways to confront their past but none to ignore it. It is this principle that has motivated you, Mr. President, to repair years of forgetfulness and face the demands of History by creating this body of scholars and witnesses, teachers and social activists. It is in their name that I have the honor to speak and present to you, the Romanian people and the entire civilized world, the report the International Presidential Commission has prepared on Romania's ambivalent but not monolithic role in the implacable and tragic events during the Holocaust years.

For my part I am indebted to its members—all eminent scholars, teachers and social activists from various countries and backgrounds—for their extraordinary efforts in analyzing that singular era with skill, talent, sensitivity, sincerity and fairness. Their endeavor, President Iliescu, will constitute an invaluable contribution to and perhaps the understanding of the history of that era, its evil aberrations as well as its heroic martyrs.

Why have so many citizens betrayed humanity, theirs and ours, in choosing to persecute, torment and murder defenseless and innocent men, women and children? Granted, Jews were not the only ones to be singled out; there were others, particularly the Roma. But remember: though not all victims were Jews, all Jews were victims—why? There were good and brave Romanians who risked their own lives and saved the honor of their nation by opposing the oppression and death of their fellow citizens—and they deserve our deepest gratitude—but why were they so few? And also, why has Romania waited so long to come to terms with its past?

All these questions, and many related others, all pertinent and related to the painful subject, have been studied and explored in depth without any particular reservation or complacency. All relevant documents were examined, all available testimonies investigated. When questions were ambiguous or not sufficiently clear, we say so. As we do when a difference of opinion regarding the interpretation of certain events or figures.

For us this was our sacred mission: to honor truth by remembering the dead. For them, it is too late; but not for their children—and ours.

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