

Yom Hashoah Marked In Washington, Jerusalem And New York

WASHINGTON (WNS) — The rotunda of the capitol was packed as members of Congress, Holocaust survivors and hundreds of others observed the annual ceremony marking Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Some 800 participants stood silently under the Capitol dome as Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, awarded the first Eisenhower Liberation Medal to American soldiers and officers who liberated the concentration camps in 1945. The medal was established to recognize "outstanding contributions to human rights and freedom."

Wiesel presented the medal to U.S. Army Chief of Staff John Wickham and to Gen. Lawton Collins and Lt. Gen. William Quinn, officers who played roles in the liberation of the camps, as well as to Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (R. Kans.), who was twice

decorated for heroic achievement as a soldier in World War II.

Addressing the ceremony for the third time since they were instituted in 1979, Vice President George Bush stressed, as did all the speakers, the imperative of remembrance.

"Forty-one years have passed" since the allies liberated Europe. "The youngest of the liberators is in his 60's now," Bush observed. "For four decades these men have served -- as have the survivors of the camps -- as the bearers of witness. They have testified to the full truth of the Holocaust. We must make sure that their memory survives them."

The commitment to remember drew into the ceremony themes of atrocities perpetrated in the present that Wiesel said "may very well be a consequence of what happened then." The tragedy of the Holocaust occurred, Wiesel noted, "because people did not feel responsible for one another." They did not

understand, he said, "that evil is contagious, that cruelty, if unchecked, grows and spreads indiscriminately. What happens to one community affects all communities."

This year's ceremony was also somewhat marred by expressions of bitterness from the Gypsies, who lost some 500,000 in the Holocaust, and are said to number about 250,000 in the U.S. today. They have been campaigning for representation on the Memorial Council. It was also announced at the ceremony that a day in September will be set aside to commemorate the victims of the Gypsy genocide.

In another address at the ceremony, Miles Lerman, co-chairman of the Council, who fought as a resistance leader in Poland during the war, stressed the important role of the resistance fighters. Also speaking at the ceremony were Holocaust survivors Benjamin Meed and Sigmund Strochlitz, co-chairmen of the Council.

Twelve members of Congress participated in the lighting of memorial candles for the

Holocaust victims as Cantor Isaac Goodfriend chanted Ani Maamin, (I Believe). Concluding the ceremony was ceremonial music by the U.S. Army Band and U.S. Army Chorus. They displayed the flags of the 10 army divisions that liberated the camps.

In a speech officially opening the annual

Memorial Day for the heroes and martyrs of the Holocaust at the Yad Vashem, President of Israel Chaim Herzog declared: "Israel must be the absolute denial of the theories of discrimination and racism" and "the loss of human dignity which was the handiwork of our enemy."

It is Israel's obligation, he said, to stand firm against "even the smallest taint of darkness, evil, racism and wickedness." Many other speakers referred pointedly to the Presidential elections in Austria. Yitzhak Arad, chairman of the Yad Vashem noted that half

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