

## **Righteous Among Nations**

**Speech by Ambassador Jeremy Issacharoff on October 13, 2020**

When confronted by a crime against humanity so hideous and overwhelming – it is virtually impossible to conceive what could be the appropriate punishment for the killing not of one but for the killing of millions.

Even in biblical terms an “eye for an eye” cannot in any moral sense be used or transformed by saying a “people for a people”. A crime of such magnitude can only be perpetrated in the absence of active resistance and occur given a broad level of compliance by the population as a whole.

But in this massive darkness even one voice of dissension and opposition can, as Leonard Cohen said, be a small crack through which the light could come through and ultimately shatter that evil. It is compelling to think what a small element of imperfection or non-conformity could provide the chance for salvation.

We are approaching Kristalnacht on the 9th and 10th November, after which Julius von Jan could no longer remain silent. He spoke out against the plunder of Jewish homes and places of worship and ultimately paid price for this. One can imagine that he never regretted speaking his mind.

When you confront such evil or even view it through an historical perspective, there is a need to adopt an entirely new lexicon and frame of reference. As I already stated there can be no real connection between the crime and punishment. While there may be forgiveness for sins and misdemeanors – can there be forgiveness for the perpetrators of genocide? Can forgiveness be extended to those who stood silent and never spoke against this unprecedented evil? How can the families of the victims or the survivors live with these memories and how can the descendants of the perpetrators live with this burden of history?

All of these questions are difficult to grapple with, but one question can be dignified by an answer and that relates to how we recognize the heroism of those individuals that had the courage to speak against this evil of Nazism. How do we provide the broader recognition that in this sea of darkness there were several drops of light?

Julius von Jan was one of them and it is for this reason that we today recognize him on behalf of Yad Vashem and the State of Israel as a Righteous Among Nations.