

## Romania - In solemn atmosphere the Holocaust Memorial was inaugurated in Bucharest

8th October, 2009, the eve of the Holocaust Memorial Day, will always remain in the memory of the Jews from Romania as well as other people. Finally, we were able to view the accomplishment of an old, justified wish: to have a monument dedicated to the memory of the hundreds of thousands of Romanian Jews who lost their lives during the Second World War, when they were deported to concentration camps and killed in gas chambers or simply murdered in Transnistria or Auschwitz, for the sole reason of being Jews.

They were sentenced by a pro-fascist and pro-Nazi regime which had a policy of discrimination against Jews. The ultimate purpose of their measures was ethnic cleansing by destroying the Jewish community.

The Memorial is also a token of the first steps taken by Romania in order to reconsider its history, an acknowledgement of the fact that the Romanian Holocaust is not only a Jewish problem, but part of a chapter of Romanian and European history.

The Romanian authorities assumed their past and Ion Iliescu, Emil Constantinescu and Traian Basescu, three presidents of Romania after 1989 acknowledged it in the conclusions and recommendations of the "Elie Wiesel" International Committee for the Study of the Romanian Holocaust. The creation of a monument to remind of the tragedy of the Romanian Jews was one of the recommendations.

The inauguration ceremony of the Holocaust Memorial took place, in the presence of the President of Romania, H.E. Mr. Traian Basescu, ministers of the Romanian Government, representatives from the Diplomatic Staff, Chief Rabbi Menachem Hacohen, Director Rabbi Andrew Baker of the American Jewish Committee, President of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Romania Dr. Aurel Vainer, President of B'nai B'rith Romania Jose Iacobescu, Honorary president of B'nai B'rith Romania Adrian Barbu and many other guests from our country and abroad.

This monument, which is extremely impressive, represents the tragedy of the Jews in Romania during the Holocaust. The monument is located in the centre of Bucharest.

The ceremony was opened with the depositioning of 12 Torah scrolls that came from Israel, followed by the Romania's president speech, H.E. Traian Basescu, the Chief Rabbi Menachem Hocoohen's speech and the address by Liviu Beris, a survivor of the Transnistrian camps.

There was also a Kadish, after which we visited the Memorial.

In the evening of the same day at the Cotroceni Presidential Palace, in the presence of H.E. Traian Basescu, the members of the Wiesel Community, the Federation of the Jewish Communities' president Dr. Aurel Vainer, the president of B'nai B'rith Romania Jose Iacobescu and over 40 members of the Federation, B'nai B'rith Romania and "the Association of the Jews in Romania, victims of the Holocaust" were awarded medals from the Romanian state.

Following this ceremony, in the Great Hall of the Presidential Palace a reception, dedicated to this event, was held. The President of Romania, together with numerous guests, members of the Diplomatic Staff and many participants from the Jewish organizations mentioned above, participated.

During his speech, at both of the ceremonies, the President of Romania underlined the ill-fated role of the then Romanian Government led by Marshall Ion Antonescu concerning this tragedy and mentioned that all efforts are necessary to make racism, anti-Semitism and denial disappear from the present generations' conception from all over the world. This could only be possible through a sustained education and firm actions to prevent such a phenomenon.

The President of Romania, H.E. Traian Basescu also emphasized that the Romanian schools now have textbooks on the Holocaust tragedy as well as lessons on this tragic event.