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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
SPOKESPERSON'S DEPARTMENT

**President Isaac Herzog and First Lady Michal Herzog
host Holocaust survivor Ines Nissim at the President's
Residence, as part of a Zikaron BaSalon event, ahead of
Holocaust Remembrance Day 2022**

Monday, 25 April 2022 / 24 Nissan 5782

President Isaac Herzog and First Lady Michal Herzog hosted a special Zikaron BaSalon (“Remembrance in the Living Room”) event tonight at the President’s Residence. This social initiative, which has become an inseparable part of Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day since its establishment in 2011, preserves the memory of the Holocaust and provides the infrastructure for thousands of meaningful and moving personal encounters, taking place simultaneously every year in people’s living rooms.

This year, the President and the First Lady participated in the Zikaron BaSalon initiative together with 25,000 other Israelis who will open their homes over the next month, welcoming Holocaust survivor Ines Nissim to the presidential “living room.” Ines, born to the Jewish community of Thessaloniki, shared her testimony and personal story together with other guests, who took part in an open conversation. Singer Yonatan Razel performed his song “Katonti” and Yehudah Poliker’s song “Dust and Ashes.”

Ines Nissim, who was only 14 when the Germans invaded Greece, told the story of her escape with her family from Thessaloniki through Turkey to the Land of Israel. “When people talk about the Holocaust, they don’t speak about the Holocaust in Greece,” she says, “and sometimes people ask me, ‘Was there a Holocaust in Greece?’” Mrs. Nissim considers it a great calling to tell the story of the destruction of the Jewish community of Thessaloniki.

Ines shared her testimony: “The Jews of Greece were well integrated: they worked in trade, as doctors, and as newspaper proprietors. It was truly a very colorful community because people spoke many languages, including German and French. When the Germans came in 1941, everything changed. The Jewish



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girls could no longer go to school. The Christians who went wouldn't let them study. Moreover, for example, my father had three floors of furniture—they came, cleared it up, and set it to Germany.

“In 1943 they decided that all the Jews must be concentrated in a single big ghetto. Every few days, they started taking some of the Jews, bringing dogs and making them walk to the train station, from which they were sent by railway to Auschwitz. My Ancient Greek teacher at school showed up at our home and told my dad, ‘I don't know what awaits you, but I'm prepared to take Ines home, and if you don't return, I'll save her.’ My father told her, ‘I know that it's dangerous for you, but if you can take the two girls (we were three sisters), I'll be able to move and find a way.’ And that's how she took us. She lived with an old woman who couldn't be told about this, so she put us in a wardrobe. I want to say that for three days, my sister and I didn't utter a peep. She used to come back from work in the evening and take us to be fed and go to the bathroom.”

Ines described how her family crossed the border to the Italian part of Greece on horseback, in an extremely dangerous journey. After the fall of Italy in the war, the Germans took control of southern Greece, including Athens, where the family was staying, and demanded that the Jews register with the authorities, in order to deport them to the extermination camps. Ines's family managed to escape to Turkey, a neutral country, with the help of the partisans. After a tiring journey, with the little money they had left, the family managed to escape south, until they reached Aleppo in Syria and from there the Land of Israel. Ines was moved to describe her family's arrival in the Land of Israel despite the difficult conditions, and her family's journey to Tel Aviv, where she still lives today.

President Herzog began his remarks by telling Ines: “We are very moved that you are with us. The advantage of the Zikaron BaSalon initiative, which is gaining incredible momentum, is that it facilitates Holocaust remembrance in an intimate and private fashion. I would like at this opportunity to recall my father's cousin, Hannah Goldberg, who was only 20 when she was killed in



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Auschwitz: she was captured when she tried to escape from the Nazis in France and was taken to a detention camp, and from there on a cargo train to Auschwitz. She managed to send a letter in pencil, which she threw from the window of the carriage to her mother, our Aunt Esther, writing to her mother: 'Wait for me, I'll be back, thousands like me.' I am invoking her memory here, just as each person recalls his own personal and familial experiences."

The President added: "The Jews of Thessaloniki formed a huge, glorious, and incredible community. We are talking about the Jews of Thessaloniki today because the Holocaust destroyed almost the entire community, some 97 percent of it. In recent days, we have been meeting Holocaust survivors your age, Ines, and older ones, incredible and impressive people. I want to pay tribute to someone who did not have the privilege; I want to recall the late Shmuel Blumenfeld. Shmuel, who passed away a few weeks ago, was supposed to light a torch at the official ceremony at Yad Vashem this week. He dedicated his life to commemorating the victims and used to accompany delegations, an amazing man who of course had his own Holocaust story. In every generation, we must recall those who shared their stories and we must thank them, and of course we must also thank the Zikaron BaSalon initiative."

First Lady Michal Herzog said: "Last January, on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, I held a Zikaron BaSalon event together with the First Lady of Germany. Charles Siegman told his story, as someone who was born in the Netherlands and survived the Holocaust with his siblings. After sharing his testimony, he implored us: 'You must continue the memory. I am a witness today, and you must be my witnesses going ahead.' It was a very moving event for all of us and the many reactions after him showed us how Zikaron BaSalon reaches people, speaks to them, and passes on this memory and this torch from generation to generation. Thank you very much to you, to the organizers and participants. We are moved that you are here with us, and especially that you are here with us, Ines."

Photos: Kobi Gideon/GPO. Footage available from GPO's FTP server.

Video: Avi Kanner/GPO. Sound: Uri Buzaglo/GPO.



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