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Dear Friends,

Shalom.

I regret that I cannot be with you today as you commemorate the Holocaust. Instead, please permit me to share some thoughts with you.

As you reflect on the loss of lives and atrocities of the Holocaust, I encourage you to also remember that a week from now we will be celebrating Israel's Independence Day. It is no coincidence that the state of Israel decided to memorialize those who died during the Holocaust and to recognize Israel's independence in the same week. It serves as a reminder that there is a direct link from the Holocaust in Europe to the re-establishment of the state of Israel. It is a direct link comprised of history, bloodshed, and heroism. Our Prime Minister has a photo hanging on the wall in his office that pointedly illustrates this linkage; it is of Israeli fighter planes flying over the Auschwitz death camp with the text, "Forgive us that we were not there in time - but never again." My point is that now we are in our own country with its eternal capital, Jerusalem, and now we are able to defend ourselves, ending the historic persecution and pogroms.

Hopefully these words bring you hope and comfort. As we remember the Holocaust, let us not lose sight that we are about to celebrate Israel's 65th Anniversary of Independence. May Israel continue to stand strong and as a beacon of light for those seeking safety and security.

Sincerely,

Meir Shlomo
Ambassador and Consul General of Israel to the Southwest