

Many genocides to be commemorated on Holocaust Memorial Day

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Canterbury, England, January 25 (ENInews)--After the Nazi slaughter of six million Jews during World War II, the world cried out "never again." But one of Britain's best-known young rabbis, Jonathan Romain, of Maidenhead Synagogue in Kent, said that although it was a wonderful phrase, "never again" has proved tragically wrong.

"Genocide has happened again and again and again," he said in an interview with ENInews ahead of Holocaust Memorial Day, 27 January. The United Nations declared it an international event in November 2005.

"We only have to think about Biafra, Bosnia, Darfur and there are other examples," said Romain, who is often a spokesman for Reform Judaism in the United Kingdom. "The list is deeply depressing and screams out that Holocaust Memorial Day is needed as much now as ever before."

The Holocaust continues to have a lasting effect, through to the second, third and fourth generations of Jews, said Godfrey Fischer, senior warden of Thanet and District Reform Synagogue in Kent where services involving hundreds of schoolchildren will be held on 27 January.

"But it's not just the Jewish community that has been affected," Fischer said in an interview. "You also have to think about the relatives of Germans who were adults during the war, who have discovered what terrible things their parents or grandparents did."

This year, the day commemorates the 66th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. However, survivors and mourners have been asked by the Holocaust Memorial Trust in London to remember victims of other

mass killings – the Democratic Republic of Congo, where 5.4 million people have been killed since 1998; Cambodia, where an estimated 1.7 million were murdered by the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979; the war in Bosnia in the 1990s which claimed at least 98,000 lives; Burundi, with 50,000 deaths in 1993 and Rwanda, which saw 800,000 deaths in 1994 due to tribal conflict.

The themes of this year's Holocaust day is "untold stories" and Bishop Robert Mercer, bishop of Matabeleland from 1977 to 1987, told ENInews from his home in Worthing, England that what happened in southwest Zimbabwe from 1982 to 1987 is one such "untold" tragedy.

Mercer, 76 and retired, says that President Robert Mugabe released the North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade of the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) against so called "dissidents" in Matabeleland where over 20,000 men, women and children were slaughtered between 1982 and 1987. A BBC News report in 2008 said "many in Matabeleland describe the campaign of murder as genocide." According to Mercer, "What happened in Matabeleland is almost forgotten in Britain and it's almost totally forgotten in Africa."