
Remembrance Day: initiatives throughout Italy: "we must never forget"

Also this year, hundreds of events have been planned including exhibitions, meetings, book presentations, events in schools, concerts, plays and film screenings to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27, and to commemorate the millions of Jews killed in the Holocaust and the persecution and murder of the Sinti and Roma people, homosexuals and political opponents. From Rome to Trieste, initiatives were presented a few days ago at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. "The Shoah is not only about the extermination of the Jews - said **Noemi Di Segni**, president of Union of Jewish Communities in Italy, (UCEI) - it involves the two decades of Fascism in Italy. The challenge is not so much that of confronting Holocaust denial, which we have experienced, but the abuse, trivialisation and instrumentalisation of the Shoah, and of being able to set it in its historical context in the most appropriate way." **Senator for Life and Holocaust survivor Liliana Segre, sounded a very strong alarm:** "There is always a risk of oblivion," she said during the presentation of the programme of events planned for January 27 in Milan, together with city's mayor Giuseppe Sala. "I'm afraid that in a few years all that will be left on the Shoah will be a paragraph in history books and after not even that." "I know what people say about Holocaust Remembrance Day", she added.

"People have been saying for years: 'enough with these Jews, what a bore'."

The Senator for Life has been vehemently combating against oblivion for as long as she can remember. It is thanks to her that the Shoah Memorial was established in Milan, beneath the Central Station. The train carriages which deported the Jews to Nazi concentration camps left from there, from Platform 21, (Binario 21), and it was from there that she herself was deported as a child, together with her father, who never returned. Thanks to the Senator, on the occasion of 27 January, Tram No. 9 will be travelling across the city streets, painted with red poppies, a symbol of rebirth, and the inscription "January 27 - Holocaust Remembrance Day" and "Memorial of the Shoah - Platform 21 - Central Station" on the side. "Finally," Segre added, "before I die, I will see my Milan with my tram bearing the words 'Holocaust Remembrance Day' and the red poppies, which I will not be able to board because I have an escort and I cause discomfort. In a short while I will stop causing annoyance." **Liliana Segre's words prompted immediate responses.** "The Senator for Life expressed her concern to awaken our consciences. But we are present", **Milena Santerini**, former National Coordinator for the fight against anti-Semitism, told SIR. Together with her and all the other survivors of the Shoah, we are actively engaged to keep the memory always alive." "It is a grim reflection," Santerini remarked, "because unfortunately we are seeing renewed signs of anti-Semitism, along with watered-down communication on the Shoah among young people. Rather than the denial of the Shoah, what we are seeing is its trivialisation, which is the result of historical distortion. The most conspicuous example is when the Shoah is compared, for example, to the vaccine. I believe these are the reasons for her pessimism. At the same time - added the Coordinator -, Liliana Segre has great civic strength, she continues speaking out and being a witness of the Shoah. Her voice is extremely important, as is that of every survivor.

These voices will resist in time.

Historical research, the facts and the events have all been recorded." In this respect, Santerini mentioned the creation of a National Network connecting six Italian Holocaust Memorial Sites, and added: "We also have a wealth of documentation. Let us remember the power of Primo Levi's testimony. Despite the pessimism and the amnesia that exists in our country, our commitment must

continue. Many young people are involved in this. They will be the candles of memory, as Liliana Segre calls them." The fight against "the danger of forgetting is conducted in many ways", said Santerini. "As national Co-ordinator of the Fight Against Anti-Semitism, I developed a national Strategy encompassing many different aspects, of which the Guidelines for combating anti-Semitism in schools, which the Ministry of Education is in the process of distributing in schools nationwide, is probably the most important example. We are currently reflecting with teachers to identify the best ways to react against prejudices that pupils are often unaware of. We have therefore taken very important steps at the level of public education, the fruits of which we will see in the future."

M. Chiara Biagioni