

2015-J378

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps on January 27, 2015

WHEREAS, According to the Simon Wiesenthal Center, early in 1942, the Nazi hierarchy formally decided on the "Final Solution" to the "Jewish problem" -- annihilation; and

WHEREAS, Throughout occupied Europe, genocide began, and by 1945, at the end of World War II, six million Jews and millions of others had been killed; and

WHEREAS, Auschwitz-Birkenau was a huge complex of camps including Auschwitz and Auschwitz II-Birkenau, Auschwitz III-Monowitz and 45 satellite camps, each dedicated variously to killing centers, concentration, and forced-labor camps; and

WHEREAS, 1,000,000 of the civilians who perished at the camp were Jews, along with 100,000 non-Jewish Poles, Roma, and Sinti individuals, Soviet prisoners of war, Jehovah's Witnesses, gay men and women, and other ethnic minorities; and

WHEREAS, These civilians included farmers, tailors, seamstresses, factory hands, accountants, doctors, teachers, small-business owners, clergy, intellectuals, government officials, and political activists; and

WHEREAS, These civilians were subjected to torture, forced labor, starvation, rape, inhumane medical experiments, and being separated from loved ones; and

WHEREAS, The people of New York must never forget the terrible crimes against humanity committed at the Auschwitz extermination camp; and

WHEREAS, The people of New York must educate future generations to promote understanding of the dangers of intolerance in order to prevent similar injustices from happening again; and

WHEREAS, Particularly in light of recent events in Paris, France, the words of Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, who was barely alive in Auschwitz as the camp was liberated by Allied forces, resound louder than ever: "We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must - at that moment - become the center of the universe"; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps on January 27, 2015; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Simon Wiesenthal Center, New York City.