

Testimony of Alfred Munzer  
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, Energy and Environment  
“Resisting Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia in Europe”  
January 29, 2020

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee,

I am a survivor of the Holocaust and a volunteer at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts as you examine the frightening resurgence of antisemitism and xenophobia in Europe and elsewhere.

I was born in the Nazi-occupied Netherlands. I am only able to appear before you today because a Dutch-Indonesian family and their Indonesian Muslim nanny risked their lives to rescue a 9-month-old Jewish baby. Tolé Madna, the Madna family and Mima Saïna cared for me and protected me from the Nazis for three long years. They shared their meager food allowance with me because I did not legally exist and was not entitled to ration coupons. They made sure I did not ever come near a window for fear that passersby might see a very different looking child. I slept in Mima’s bed and she kept a knife under her pillow vowing to kill any Nazi who might come to get me. But what I remember most, is being surrounded by love and laughter.

My sisters, Eva and Leah did not share my good fortune. They had been entrusted to a different family but were betrayed and denounced to the Nazis and killed in Auschwitz. They were 7 and 5, two of 1.5 million children killed in the Holocaust.

My parents too were deported. My father was liberated 75 years ago by the 80<sup>th</sup> US Army but succumbed two months later to the effects of starvation and lies buried in the former Ebensee concentration camp.

My mother survived twelve concentration camps and I was reunited with her in August 1945. In 1958 she and I immigrated to the United States in the hope of leaving behind the painful memories of the Holocaust.

I have remained in close touch with the Madna family. People asked Tolé Madna why he risked the lives of his family to take in a Jewish baby. His response was a simple, “What else was I to do.”

The Holocaust deprived me of the guidance of a father and the companionship of two siblings; but worse, the solemn promise “Never Again” did not spell an end to antisemitism or to prejudice and hate directed to anyone perceived as being “the other.”

I am a physician and the Holocaust has taught me that hate is a communicable disease that can engulf entire nations and continents. We may never eliminate hate from every human soul, but

perhaps we can take measures to prevent its spread. Like the fight against AIDS, the campaign against tuberculosis and the drive to prevent malaria, a campaign against hate requires a global commitment that includes all segments of society, but especially those who occupy any kind of leadership position.

There is a prayer on the monument of a mass grave in Ebensee that reads: "To the faithful companions, the heroes and the comrades of a thousand dead who rest here, and countless others of all nationalities and every faith, brothers and sisters in a common tragic destiny, dedicated by an Italian woman who prays that such an incredible sacrifice might turn the human heart to good". Recent events around the world add urgency to the prayer of that Italian woman, and it falls to all of us to answer her plea, to confront hate, to prevent its spread and to foster a world that celebrates our common humanity.

Thank you.