

Greek President and European Commission Vice President lead “Never again, Thessaloniki – Auschwitz” march

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79 years ago, the first deportation train with 2,800 Jews left the Greek city of Thessaloniki to the extermination camp of Auschwitz. 80 % of the city’s Jews were killed by the Nazis during WWII.

On Sunday, more than 2,000 people led by Greek President Katerina Sakellaropoulo, European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas, the mayor of Thessaloniki, Greek officials, Jewish Community leaders and the Director of the European March of the Living network, marched down the same road from the Jewish neighborhood to the old train station where the Jews were deported to Auschwitz.

In her address, the Greek President stressed that: “Only if we pass on historical knowledge to the new generations, if we preserve historical memory, if we feel their pain as our own the pain and the suffering of the victims, if we understand that the Holocaust is a universal historical heritage, will we equip ourselves against a new onslaught of evil, possibly in another form, but always threatening and abhorrent.”

EU Commission Vice-President Schinas spoke about the importance of Holocaust remembrance and peaceful coexistence in current times when history is distorted and Europe’s peace is once again challenged. Referring to the justification given by Russian President Vladimir Putin for the invasion of Ukraine, he wrote on Twitter: *“It is unacceptable for those who are fighting for the independence of their country to be called Nazis.”*

A freshly-painted street mural in the western Greek city of Patras was inaugurated and is already drawing renewed attention to the courageous deeds of two “Righteous Among the Nations” heroes who saved Jews during the Holocaust.

The public art display, an initiative of Artists 4 Israel, in partnership with the Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM), honors two Greek citizens, the late Zakynthos Mayor Loukas Karrer and Metropolitan Dimitrios Chrysostomos, who, at great personal peril, protected all the Jews of Zakynthos after the Nazis occupied the island in 1943.

The mural was painted by Kleomenis Kostopoulos, the creative director of Patras-based Art in Progress. He commented, “Murals are one of the most important forms of contemporary expression and communication in public spaces. Today, more than ever, we must revisit our history in Greece by bringing it to the streets, and putting it in their faces.”

CAM CEO Sacha Roytman Dratwa said: “Even as we commemorate the deportations, we must also remember those Righteous Among the Nations who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust. It is vital that we recognize and increase awareness of the actions of those who stood by the Jewish People to incentivize standing against hate and evil today.”