UCCA Marks the 80th Anniversary of the Massacres at Babyn Yar

The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), the representative organization of the nearly two million Americans of Ukrainian descent, recalls with deep sorrow one of the darkest chapters in the history of genocide – the Massacres at Babyn Yar. At the end of a September 80 years ago, during the Nazi occupation of Kyiv, the gruesome slaughter of tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children began at Babyn Yar (which means “old women’s ravine” in Ukrainian). Although this was but one site among many of the Shoah that terrorized all Europe’s Jews, it is a site of particular tragedy for Ukraine.

Within a 36-hour period, more than 30,000 Jews were forced from their homes in Kyiv, brought to the Babyn Yar ravine, and mercilessly massacred by Hitler’s henchmen as part of their Final Solution to rid Europe of the Jewish people. Following this first mass execution, a restricted zone around the Babyn Yar ravine was sealed off with barbed wire. The killings, however, did not end. Over the next several years, the mass grave swelled with tens of thousands of other victims.

During the final years of World War II, and until the German retreat from Kyiv, Babyn Yar became a veritable killing field, where an estimated 170,000 victims – among them Jews, Ukrainians, Poles, Roma, political opponents, clergy, UPA members and Soviet prisoners of war – were ruthlessly murdered.

As the German armies began their retreat from Soviet Ukraine, the Nazis attempted to conceal the evidence of the slaughter. This was further followed by decades of Soviet propaganda that hid the truth about the atrocities committed at the ravine. For
years following this tragedy, the Soviet Union barely acknowledged the massacre at Babyn Yar. Not until Ukraine renewed its independence in 1991, were the few survivors of those first days at Babyn Yar, along with the international Jewish and Ukrainian communities, allowed to openly mourn the innocent victims of Babyn Yar.

During a weeklong commemoration in 1991, a newly independent Ukraine officially recognized this painful page in its history, ending a 50-year long Soviet silence about the mass killings, and beginning a new and positive chapter in Ukrainian-Jewish relations.

UCCA strongly condemns the heinous crimes of genocide committed 80 years ago at Babyn Yar, as well as the inhumane atrocities of the Holocaust that resulted in the deaths of millions of innocent victims. We mourn the loss of the tens of thousands of Jews, Ukrainians and others senselessly murdered at Babyn Yar, and will continue to honor the memory of the victims, to return to them the dignity taken away by Hitler’s criminal orders, and to pray for the repose of their eternal souls.

May the tragedy at Babyn Yar, a dark page in history shared by both the Jewish and Ukrainian people, continue to be taught to the following generations, so that the memory of these terrible events can never be extinguished. May it also remind us of the need to show honor and dignity to our fellow man, regardless of our differences, or perhaps, because of them, as we are all unique and valuable members of the human race.

Never Forget! Вічная пам'ять!

UCCA Statement (PDF)
On September 29-30, the Ukrainian World Congress invites everyone to take part in services to honor the memories of the victims of Babyn Yar. Several commemorative events will take place at the National Historical and Memorial Reserve “Babyn Yar” in Kyiv. Senior state officials, heads of churches, representatives of Jewish, Orthodox and Catholic religious organizations, international organizations, and distinguished foreign guests will participate in these commemorative events. The events will be live-streamed on September 29 via UWC’s Facebook page.

- 10:00 Kyiv time (3:00am EDT / 12:00am PDT) - commemorative events being at the National Historical and Memorial Reserve “Babyn Yar” in Kyiv

- 20:30 Kyiv time (1:30pm EDT / 10:30am PDT) - Interfaith Prayer Service for the victims of Babyn Yar
You can light a virtual candle or place a digital stone at babynyar.memorial

UNA Leadership Positions

In advance of the Ukrainian National Association’s quadrennial convention in May 2022, the UNA is currently
The Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA) is a non-profit, non-partisan community-based organization that has represented the interests of Ukrainians in the United States since 1940.

WHAT IS UCCA?

ЦЮ ТАКЕ УККА?

Український Конгресовий Комітет Америки (УККА) є неприбутковою, безпартійною громадською організацією, яка представляє інтереси українців у Сполучених Штатах Америки з 1940 року.