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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**FIRST COMMEMORATION OF HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY**

Over 200 members of the local community, including the Governor, the Chief Justice and several religious leaders gathered in Grand Battery House on Monday morning on the first occasion on which Holocaust Memorial Day has been commemorated in Gibraltar. The Jewish community and the Equality Rights Group were well represented at an event which is celebrated on 27 January because it was on that date that Auschwitz was liberated in 1945.

In his welcome, the Chief Minister reminded everyone that, last year, he promised that Gibraltar would commemorate the Day – not just in 2014 but also in future years. He also explained that, although it was a time to think of some desperately sad events, he was joyful that our community could come together to commemorate the memory of those who had lost their lives and to celebrate the lives of those who had survived those horrific events.

Mr Arek Hersch spoke movingly of the normality of his childhood in a Jewish family in Poland. In a short space of time he had lost everything – his family, his home and his even his name – he became just a number in a concentration camp. Naomi Hassan-Weisfogel then spoke briefly about the charity 'Learning from Auschwitz' which promotes an awareness of the holocaust with young people. She thanked the Government and various sponsors for making it possible for thirty 17 year-olds to visit Auschwitz each year.

Finally, Andrea Simpson sang 'Hallelujah,' with lyrics amended for the occasion, as twelve Middle-school children entered the room carrying signs bearing the message, 'Learning Lessons from the past to create a safer, better future!'

'I have been really moved by today's event,' said the Hon Fabian Picardo. 'It is right that we have now started to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day in Gibraltar. It is long overdue.'