



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

**Announcement by Secretary Thomas J. Vilsack
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Commemorating the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Days of Remembrance April 19 – April 26, 2009
“Never Again: What You Do Matters”**

To All Dedicated USDA Employees:

This year, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum will again lead our Nation in the annual Days of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust. This year’s observances will take place from Sunday, April 19, through Sunday, April 26.

The Day of Remembrance, *Yom Hashoah*, is Tuesday, April 21. The theme for the 2009 Days of Remembrance is **“Never Again: What You Do Matters.”**

One of our greatest lessons from the Holocaust is about individual responsibility – the choice we each have to act or not to act, and the consequences of our decisions.

When I first arrived in Washington, D.C., on my first weekend after the inauguration, I visited the National Holocaust Memorial Museum. Last year I visited a similar museum in Rwanda. I will never forget either experience.

Nothing more powerfully illustrates the extraordinary difference each of us can make in creating a more just and humane world than the example of Raphael Lemkin. 2009 marks 50 years since the death of this Polish-Jewish lawyer, who watched from the United States as family members were among the millions of Jews persecuted and exterminated by the Nazis on the sole basis of their identity. Winston Churchill called this a “crime without a name.” In 1944, Lemkin coined the word “genocide” as a first step in a relentless personal drive to help prevent its repetition. Lemkin next conceived and wrote the first draft of the Genocide Convention. In the shadow of the Holocaust, and in no small part due to the tireless efforts of Lemkin himself, the United Nations approved the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948.

As you contemplate this year’s Days of Remembrance, I urge you to not only show tolerance and respect for all people, but to encourage others to help our country overcome intolerance and indifference through learning and remembrance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack", written in a cursive style.

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture