

**Speech by the Knesset Speaker to Commemorate the 60th
Anniversary of the 'Oslo Children' Tragedy**

Sunday, 22nd November 2009, 4:00 p.m., Moshav Yanuv

(Greetings)

Honoured guests,

From the time I was invited here to the ceremony commemorating sixty years since the tragic plane crash in which twenty seven children lost their lives, I have been profoundly aware of being granted a great privilege. It is fitting that the memories of these children and aircrew be inscribed in our hearts as individuals and as a nation.

The tragedy that befell these children, who were on their way from Tunisia to Israel, is a highly tangible expression of the anguish and love with which the Land of Israel was won.

There are images stamped in each of our personal memories and stored in perpetuity in our national recollection. Such are the images of the small children who lost their lives in the distant North when their aircraft crashed into the Norwegian pine forests; children who, due to poor health and the risk of tuberculosis, were sent to convalesce in the Land of the Fjords on their way to Aliya to Israel.

I ponder the terrible fate visited upon nine year old Uzan who, for the first time in his life, was taken from his parents' embrace and never saw them again.

I look at the picture of thirteen year old Rachel, gaze at her beautiful face and wipe away a tear of bereavement.

I reflect upon the short life of Emile, also nine years old, who had heard tales of the Land of Israel but through whose gates he could never pass. And all these children, whose plane crashed one stormy, rain swept, foggy night, taking with it their dreams.

Twenty seven names, each of them a world cut off, each of them a life abruptly halted.

Children who would no longer bask in the loving embrace of their fathers and mothers, who could no longer gad about nor play children's games. Only one child, eleven year old Yitzhak Allal, was found alive in the wreckage. He came on Aliya to Israel and raised a family but was taken from us at an early age following a serious illness.

Families, relatives and friends, the blow, the tragedy delivered to the Jews of Tunisia was intensely painful. It sent shockwaves throughout Israel and the Diaspora. The pain was shared by the Norwegian people who mourned the children and felt as though a national disaster had befallen it.

Sixty years after the terrible tragedy, we stand before the silent stone monument. We have come to this flourishing place to unite with their precious memory. We have come to remember and to remind others of all the good and innocence in you, children and to tell you: we have never forgotten you.

You were there alone, in the terrifying moments between heaven and earth, in the paralysing moments before the crash. But since then you have never been alone. You no longer belong exclusively to your parents, you belong to us all, to all those who know that it is by virtue of the schoolchildren that we exist.

And to you, their families, I shall say: their memories never fade, not even sixty years later and never leave you. This moment, as we bow our heads to the precious memory of the children, is the time of our identification with you.

I should like to close with the words spoken in their memory at the Knesset in November 1949 by the first Knesset Speaker, Yosef Sprinzak.

'Hebrew children have died, children who were meant to become citizens of the State of Israel', he said. 'The Knesset mourns these children together with their bereaved parents'.

'These are the tortuous paths to redemption. There can be no comfort for the loss of young lives. The only comfort can be that this Land, this Country, gather the other Children of Israel and keep them safe from all harm.'

I can add my hopes and conviction that in the sixty years that have elapsed, we have indeed learned to do this and shall continue to be equal to the task:

of gathering in the Jews of the world and to keep them, to keep us all safe from harm.

Thank you.

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