

***Speech Yad Vashem Ceremony
Tuesday April 26th 2022
Museum Het Pakhuis, Ermelo***

Dear Family of the rescuers and the rescued, Mayor Dorine Burmanje, Director Gemma Greving of the Museum Het Pakhuis, our hosts of this afternoon, dear guests,

On behalf of the Embassy of Israel, I thank you all for coming to Ermelo on this very special day. We have gathered here to honor eight extraordinary people whose courage and moral strength are a shining example to all of us.

During the Second World War, the Nazis perpetrated the worst genocide in human history, which resulted in the murder of six

million Jews — one third of the entire Jewish people. Children, women, men, young, old, religious, secular, rich, poor, were all murdered throughout Europe, simply for being Jews. The death industry, that was developed by the Nazis to an unbelievable dimension, had sent its tentacles to every corner in the occupied countries. Also the majority of the Jewish population in the Netherlands perished in the Shoah, and most of the Jewish Communities in this country ceased to exist. There were many in The Netherlands and all over Europe who collaborated with the murderous occupation. Yet, there were also those who refused to do that. They actively resisted the occupiers and the persecution of Jews, while risking their own lives and the lives of their loved ones.

The State of Israel does not give away any decorations to civilians, apart from the medal of the 'Righteous among the Nations' to non-Jews who saved Jews during the Holocaust. After Poland, The Netherlands is the country with the largest number of Righteous among the Nations.

Today, ladies and gentlemen, we are gathered here to pay our tribute and respect to:

Frederik & Sophia Martina Keijzer - Bink

Anton & Bernardina Wilhelmina Rook - Aal and their son Anton

Aalt Johannes van den Berg

Barend & Willempje Aarts - Ravesloot.

They risked their life to save Jewish people, like the Staal family. In 1941 the family moved from Amsterdam to Ermelo, and from 1942 onwards had to go into hiding. A year later the Dutch police raided the hiding place and Louis & Elisabeth, their children Abraham, Elisabeth, and Jacob, as well as Louis' mother Betje Staal were brought to Putten. They were subsequently deported to Westerbork and sent to Sobibor, where all were murdered. Only Abraham — Aby — managed to escape. After running through the forest he arrived in Ermelo at the Aarts family. They, the de Rook family, and many other people helped Aby until he was liberated in Apeldoorn by units of the Canadian army.

As an Israeli diplomat, as a Jew, and as relative of Holocaust survivors, this story touches my heart. In my eyes it is important to tell their story as a source of inspiration — to us, to our children and to the generations to come.

Dear family members, Frederik & Sophia, Anton & Bernardina and their son Anton, Barend & Willempje, and Aalt stood out with their bravery, civil courage and dignity for which they should always be remembered. They were Dutch citizens who decided not to give in and not to abandon the guiding principles of their life, and the values in which they believed.

During the moral darkness of the Holocaust, they were able to keep the small flame of hope burning and by doing so they also saved the conscience of humanity, the honor of Europe and the dignity of The Netherlands and for that, ladies and gentlemen, the Jewish people will be ever grateful to them.

And so, ladies and gentlemen, it is with great pleasure and honor that we present the medal and certificate to their children and family.

Thank you.