



**Address by Ukrainian World Congress President Eugene Czolij
during parliamentary hearings in Ukraine on the topic:
“75th anniversary of the Babyn Yar tragedy: lessons of history and the present”
27 September 2016, Kyiv**

Honourable Deputy Head of the Parliament of Ukraine!

Honourable Members of Parliament!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

On behalf of the 20-million-strong Ukrainian diaspora led by the Ukrainian World Congress and our organizations in over 50 countries, I pay tribute to all of the innocent victims of Babyn Yar on the 75th anniversary of this tragedy.

Ten years ago, during a commemoration in Kyiv in memory of the victims of Babyn Yar, Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, Yisrael Meir Lau, said the following:

“[...] Maybe, Babyn Yar was also a test for Hitler. If on September 29 and 30, 1941 Babi Yar could happen and the world did not react [...] seriously, dramatically, abnormally, maybe this was a good test for him. So, [...] in January 1942, near Berlin in Wannsee, a convention made a decision, a final solution to the Jewish problem. [...] Maybe if the very action had been a serious one, a dramatic one, in September 1941 [...], the Wannsee Conference would have come to a different end...”

We kept silent. This silence helped all the horrors of the world in the last 65 years”.

Today we commemorate the 75th anniversary of Babyn Yar in Ukraine which is now the victim of a new undeclared hybrid war by the Russian Federation designed to weaken, exhaust and destroy Ukraine as a state, and then return it to the orbit of Russian rule.

Unfortunately, despite the great number of victims of this war, there are some high-ranking officials for whom political and economic interests are more important than human lives.

They have, no doubt, forgotten the lessons of the Babyn Yar tragedy and the “appeasement” policy of Nazi Germany with Hitler at the helm that only encouraged further aggressive actions.

As we honor today the memory of the victims of Babyn Yar, we have an obligation to prevent new human tragedies in the world, including in Crimea and Donbas.

In conjunction with this, we must help the Western world fully understand that, in defending its territorial integrity, Ukraine is in fact stopping the advance of the Russian aggressor to the West and protecting European values.

The international community must, therefore, strengthen and extend targeted economic sanctions against the Russian Federation until it de-occupies Crimea and fully complies with the Minsk agreements. In the event of further aggression, it should consider suspending the membership of the Russian Federation in the international payment system, SWIFT.

I believe that this year's remembrance of the victims of Babyn Yar will stimulate the resolve of the international community to prevent crimes against humanity from being repeated, including the continued gross violations of the territorial integrity of Ukraine and human rights in Crimea and Donbas.

May our memory of the victims of the Babyn Yar tragedy remain eternal!