

## Editorial

James Waller\*

# Comments on the Awarding of the 10th Thomas J. Dodd Prize in International Justice and Human Rights

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The University of Connecticut awards the Thomas J. Dodd Prize in International Justice and Human Rights biennially to an individual or group who has made a significant contribution to the advancement of international justice and global human rights. The Prize commemorates the distinguished public service career of Thomas J. Dodd, who served as Executive Trial Counsel at the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, as U.S. Representative from 1953 to 1957 and as Connecticut's Senator from 1959 to 1971. Thomas Dodd dedicated his entire public life to fighting against the violation and suppression of human rights in the United States and abroad.

Notable past recipients include former U.S. President Bill Clinton; the organization Physicians for Human Rights; the former Prime Minister of Ireland, Bertie Ahern; the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair; and U.S. Attorney Bryan Stevenson and his nonprofit organization, the Equal Justice Initiative.

The 2023 Dodd Prize is made possible by the continuing efforts of former U.S. Senator Christopher J. Dodd and members of his family and the generous support of John W. Kluge, which has allowed the University to establish an endowment for purposes of the award.

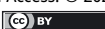
We are honored to award the 2023 Dodd Prize to the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center of Kyiv, Ukraine.

On September 29–30, 1941, German police units and their auxiliaries executed 33,771 Jews at Babyn Yar, a ravine just outside the capital city of Kiev in Ukraine.

Sometimes, the round numbers we recount for mass violence themselves become dangerous abstractions that distance us from the individual lives taken by the perpetrators. 800,000 in Rwanda. 1.5 million in Armenia. 2 million in Cambodia. 6 million in the Holocaust.

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Let's return to those two days at Babyn Yar. 33,771 victims. Let's think of the 1 at the end of that death toll. One person. Who loved someone and was loved by someone. Who sang, who wrote, who laughed, who cried. One person who had a favorite type of music and followed a favorite football team. One person who celebrated birthdays and anniversaries. One person who had hopes, dreams, and aspirations that would never be fulfilled – not because of who they were as an individual – but simply because of a group identity they held. They were Jewish.

Over the next two years, Babyn Yar remained a killing site. It is estimated that the Nazis murdered between 70,000 and 100,000 people, Jews and non-Jews, at Babyn Yar.

I first became aware of the Center's remarkable work when I had the honor of being appointed to the advisory board of their academic journal, *Eastern European Holocaust Studies*. The first issue of the journal, focusing on the Holocaust in Ukraine, has just been published and already is making a significant impact on the field.

When I suggested the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center to the Dodd Prize selection committee as a potential recipient of this year's award, we were struck by three things:

- First, we were struck by their willingness to engage with history in a region that has many contested memories. Rather than stand on the sidelines, the Center recognizes the need for public discourse around Babyn Yar, and the role that this place of destruction plays in the social memory of Ukraine. They know that nations need some kind of agreed upon past. And that the dark silences that have been imposed on some episodes of history – the pages that have been torn out – must be exposed for a nation to develop a true sense of its identity.
- Second, we were struck by the breadth and creativity of the Center's work in thinking about social memory and public discourse. Austrian philosopher Robert Musil said: "There is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument." That statement is a reminder that, when we cement memory in a monument, it's often easy for that memory to become overlooked, passed by, and to recede into the background. The Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center recognizes that reality and their work encompasses a much more innovative way of interacting with social memory and public discourse – including an interactive museum, research institutes, a library, visual archive, 3-D mapping, and an innovative online multimedia platform.
- Third, and finally, we were struck by the Center's ongoing commitment to the work of memory, even during war. While Russia's invasion in February, 2022 brought a halt to much of the physical planning of the Center, it did not bring a halt to the spirit of the work itself. If anything, the invasion only added a sense of urgency to uphold memory as corrective to the historical distortions and cynical lies used by Putin to justify Russia's attack on Ukrainian sovereignty.

With these reasons, and more in mind, the selection committee was unanimous in its belief that there could be no more deserving recipient of the 10th Thomas J. Dodd Prize in International Justice and Human Rights than the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center.

Finally, one of the many new friends I've met here at the University of Connecticut introduced me to a Yiddish saying that one may sometimes hear in Ukraine: "*Zol Zein Shtil Oif Di Velt.*"

Roughly translated, it means "Let there be stillness, let there be quiet in the world."

Remembrance happens in the stillness and the quiet. We thank the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center for helping us to remember the dark silences of history. And we pray for a world – from Ukraine to Israel, to Sudan, to Myanmar, to Peru, to India, to Gaza, to Nigeria, to Yemen – in which we can one day find stillness and quiet.