



Musée Holocauste Montréal  
Montreal Holocaust Museum

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Lessons Learned from Kristallnacht Resonate Today

**Montréal, QC, November 1, 2017** – The Montreal Holocaust Museum will commemorate the November 1938 pogrom known as Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass, on **Thursday, November 9, 2017 at 7:00 pm** at the Museum (5151 Chemin de la Côte-Ste-Catherine). The commemoration will take place together with survivors who rebuilt their lives in Montreal after the Holocaust, and the Honourable Irwin Cotler, Founder and Chair of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, Emeritus Professor of Law at McGill University, and former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

Leo Dortort, a witness of Kristallnacht will light a commemorative candle on November 9 in honour of Holocaust victims. Dortort says he does not need a commemoration to remember the violence. “The dreams that keep popping up unannounced and unexpected don’t let us forget,” said Dortort. “But the world needs commemorations; it has to be reminded of the past in order to make sure that such tragedies will not happen again.” For this reason, the Montreal Holocaust Museum organizes an annual Kristallnacht commemoration.

“Commemorating Kristallnacht gives us the opportunity to reflect on the impact and danger of what we consider today to be ‘alternative facts.’ It is important to remember that German authorities claimed that the Night of Broken Glass was a spontaneous outburst of rage following the assassination of a German embassy official by a young Polish Jewish man,” stated Alice Herscovitch, Executive Director of the Montreal Holocaust Museum. “We are now well aware that the 1938 pogrom was organised in response to statements made by Nazi Propaganda minister, Goebbels, who encouraged the outbreak of antisemitic violence.” The State chose to legitimize, and incite violence against a minority group.

**About Kristallnacht:** Kristallnacht (the Night of Broken Glass) is the name given to the pogrom that took place on November 9 and 10, 1938. During the pogrom, Jewish homes, businesses and synagogues were destroyed throughout Germany, annexed Austria and in areas of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. The Night of Broken Glass marked the intensification of a regime of terror against Jews by the Third Reich. Thirty-thousand Jewish men were rounded up, and sent to concentration camps during the pogrom. The indifference of the local population and international community demonstrated to the Nazis that there would be little resistance to radical measures against the Jews, such as their exclusion from the German economy and social life in the following years. This pogrom became known as Kristallnacht due to the shards of shattered glass that lined the streets in its wake.

**About Leo Dortort:** Leo was born in 1928 in Graz, Austria. Before the German annexation of Austria in March 1938, his 14-year-old sister and three other classmates were jailed for one day at the local police station. Shortly thereafter, the family’s store was looted by the Nazis, and they moved out of their apartment. During Kristallnacht, Leo witnessed the burning of his hometown synagogue. Leo’s father was arrested, and sent to the Dachau concentration camp. He was released two months later on the condition that he leave Germany within three months. Unable to obtain visas for another country, Leo and his family were smuggled through the mountains into Yugoslavia, where they lived until 1941. Leo managed to get himself onto an illegal transport to Palestine. His father was killed in Sabac (today, Serbia). His mother was murdered in the Sajmiste concentration camp in Croatia. Leo’s uncles, aunts and cousins were also murdered in Yugoslavia. Leo lived in Israel until 1950, and arrived in Canada in 1954.

**About the Montreal Holocaust Museum:** The Montreal Holocaust Museum educates people of all ages and backgrounds about the Holocaust, while sensitizing the public to the universal perils of antisemitism, racism, hate and indifference.

-30-

**For additional information or to schedule an interview with a Holocaust survivor, contact:** Audrey Licop, Communications and Events Coordinator | 514-345-2605 ext. 3026 | 514-892-2605(cell.) | [audrey.licop@museeholocauste.ca](mailto:audrey.licop@museeholocauste.ca) OR Sarah Fogg, Communications and Events Assistant | 514-345-2605 ext. 3437 | [sarah.fogg@museeholocauste.ca](mailto:sarah.fogg@museeholocauste.ca)