Remembering the Holocaust – Hate Crime

What is the issue?

- Every year on January 27, the UN honours the victims of the Holocaust by reaffirming its commitment to counter anti-Semitism, racism, and other forms of intolerance.
- With Holocaust denial and distortion in the recent days, here is an attempt to relate the contemporary hate culture and the holocaust.

What is the Holocaust?

- The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of 6 million Jews by the Nazi regime and its allies and collaborators.
- The Nazis came to power in Germany in January 1933.
- They believed that the Germans belonged to a race that was "superior" to all others.
- They claimed that the Jews belonged to a race that was "inferior" and a threat to the so-called German racial community.

- The Holocaust was a watershed moment in history as it illuminates the many manifestations of hate and its impact.
- January 27 marks the anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau by Soviet troops in 1945.
- The commemoration calls for a solemn reflection on the real dangers of extreme forms of hatred.

How has hate speech intensified in recent days?

- Hate speech can prompt ordinary people to feed into prejudices and hostilities.
- Currently, the anonymity of the Internet and increased screen time during the COVID-19 pandemic have intensified hate speech.
- Greater exposure to hateful discourses online has allowed anti-Semitism and other variants of racism to fester in societies.
    - Anti-Semitism is hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a religious or racial group.
- The feelings of uncertainty, alienation and dejection brought on by the pandemic have aggravated the above.
- Blame is attributed to the Jewish people and they are being used as a

scapegoat.

What are the global efforts in this regard?

- The UN urges member states to strengthen the resilience of people against hateful ideologies.
- While doing so, the UN emphasises the use of education as a potent tool to inculcate a culture of peace.
- UNESCO takes up programmes on the prevention of violent extremism and Global Citizenship Education.
- Within this framework, it continually works towards advancing activities to prevent and address tacit and overt forms of anti-Semitism.

Are these effective?

- Education must not be viewed as a panacea to cure intolerance.
- Lessons on how racist ideologies and hate speech inform the development of tragedies like the Holocaust must go beyond textbook learning.
- This is because, often times, highly educated people are seen to perpetuate hatred.

How does this relate with the Holocaust?

- Holocaust denial and distortion is flourishing online in the recent period.
- This is defined by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance as a 'virulent expression of contemporary anti-Semitism'.
- According to a previously launched report by the World Jewish Congress, more than 100 posts per day on average denied the Holocaust.
- This brings to light the increasingly growing dangers of online platforms in distorting reality and stoking hatred.

What is UNESCO's initiative in this regard?

- UNESCO has recently launched a campaign called #ProtectTheFacts.
- This was developed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the UN, and the European Commission.
- It provides a unique opportunity this year to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust by promoting sound policies and practices that raise awareness about Holocaust denial and distortion.

What is the way forward?

- In today's polarised world, empowering people is essential to enable them to question and engage in critical reflections about the root causes and repercussions of hate crimes.

- Equipping people to make rational choices helps creating peaceful and sustainable societies.

Source: The Hindu

