

Official remarks by Ronald S. Lauder, President of World Jewish Congress
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We come together at a difficult hour for the Jewish People. It's not 1936, Nazi Germany is not on the rise. And we have a strong, resilient Jewish homeland, now in its 74th year. But this year, 2021, has given us some real Tsourus.

On top of the Pandemic, we have seen a frightening rise of antisemitic hatred throughout the world. No country is immune, Great Britain, France, Germany, Argentina, even in Israel, and right here in the United States. You have all seen this where you live, and right now, I am speaking to you in 106 different communities on 6 continents.

I know antisemitism has been around for thousands of years, but today, it's different. Here in America, antisemites are now members of Congress and they are so brazen, that they speak their hatred of Jews and Israel without any shame, what-so-ever. They are in Parliaments in Europe and throughout the diaspora saying the same things and not enough politicians are fighting them.

For far too long, Jews have been the nice, quiet citizens in their countries. Jews don't like to make waves. That's our nature. And that ends today!! The silence ends today!! We are no longer the timid, ghetto Jews of the past.

Now when we see antisemitism, when Jews are beaten in the streets, when Jews are killed, we will fight! When Jews are targeted on the streets of New York, Los Angeles and London and beaten by antiemitic radicals with Palestinian flags, when an elderly Jewish woman in France is tortured and murdered by a crazed Muslim immigrant and the court lets him go without any jail time. When Israelis are

targeted with over 4,000 rockets, and Israel is condemned for "dis-proportionate" response and not Hamas, this is unacceptable!

Any government leader that does not stand up with a strong voice against antisemitism in their country will know that the World Jewish Congress will be there.

In a recent poll I commissioned in the Jewish communities in 6 countries: Israel, Great Britain, France, Argentina, Russia and the United States, upwards of 80 percent of Jewish people are afraid of being attacked, and they are reluctant to wear anything that will identify them as Jews. I say it is time for Jews to stand up and fight. In fact, it is long past time because silence leads to fear, and I want to remind you: We do not come from fearful people.

But today, we face a different problem that is even more upsetting. Now we see our own people supporting this hatred. There are Jews who vote for these antisemites. There are Jews who join protests against the State of Israel. You've seen the signs they hold up: "Another Jew Against The Apartheid State." I do not blame young Jews who might be against Israel because they have only heard the lies. It is up to us to invite them to see Israel for themselves and learn the truth.

In poll after poll, we see a weakening of support for Israel. In America, it's prevalent in the Democratic party and, again, it is based on a dishonest political campaign against the Jewish State on social media. This is having a huge impact on non-Jews and, unfortunately, on Jews as well. It's turning too many young Jews against Israel and away from Judaism.

This has happened here in America and throughout the Diaspora, because too many young Jews were never taught the beauty of Judaism and the importance of having a Jewish State. They don't know the gift they were given at birth, being

born Jewish. They don't understand why it's important to raise their children to be proud Jews. We have to teach them.

Here is a promise: The World Jewish Congress will work on the political issues with world leaders. We will work on public relations to improve social media and Jewish education. We will fight any government, any organization, anyone who won't fight against the hatred of Jews. But we must do this as one, united people. Thank you for the honor of leading the World Jewish Congress for the past 14 years. Thank you, again, for allowing me to lead for another four years. But in this next term, let me tell you I intend to fix these problems.

First, through education. I want to see 100 new Jewish schools in America and 100 new Jewish schools throughout the world. In the past, parents taught their children how to be Jews, but today, too many parents don't know it themselves. We need Jewish schools to teach our children, but there are too many parents who cannot afford to this.

We have to give scholarships because no Jewish child should ever be turned away from an education for lack of money. That means we have to raise hundreds of millions, even billions of dollars perhaps. But think about it, is there any place more worthwhile to spend our money than educating our children?

I have seen the difference that my Jewish schools have made with my own eyes. The Jewish children who graduate from my schools go on as proud Jews and they stay Jewish and they stand behind Israel.

Today, Reform and Conservative Judaism have a tremendous opportunity to influence our young people like never before. And it's never been more important.

What they say in synagogues and in their Jewish schools should give young people great pride in Judaism and in Israel. However, too many synagogues teach more

about Tikkun Olam than Judaism. Tikkun Olam means "healing the entire world." May I suggest that before we fix the world, we should repair our own house.

Every synagogue must raise money to make their schools bigger and better. Right now, too many 13-year-olds leave after their Bar and Bat mitzvahs. This should be the start of their education, not the end.

At the same time, Orthodox Jews must accept the Jews who don't wear yarmulkas. In Israel, Reform and Conservative Jews should be accepted and have the same status as the ultra-orthodox. There should be a proper place at the Western Wall for all Jews.

Conversions by non-Orthodox rabbis should be recognized. If someone wants to be Jewish, we should not turn our backs on them. The Lubavitcher Rebbe once said the only difference between him and a Reform Jew was the number of times he went to synagogue. That is the openness I want to see among all Jews.

If I have said anything in my time as the leader of this organization, it is that we are one people, from the most secular to the most orthodox. None of us is more Jewish than the other. And we need to hold on to every single Jewish person there is. We also desperately need new, young Jewish leaders. But we can't expect this to just happen, we have to make it happen.

Without trained future leaders, we have no future. I am so proud of the members of the JDCorps, who are engaging every day on the global stage and in support of their communities worldwide. We now have 350 young Jewish Diplomats, and that's a good start, but I want 500 and then we must double that to 1,000. I intend to start a Jewish leadership school in Europe, where we will train the next generation of leaders for our people. And perhaps Jewish leadership schools in the U.S. and Latin America.

Finally, let me talk about our Jewish homeland and the trauma that Israel just experienced. Today, Hamas has used its propaganda and lies to influence the world's media. We expect the lies from Hamas, but now we see those lies in major newspapers, broadcast channels, and all over social media. This is what we face.

Can you even imagine if 4,000 rockets were launched against Washington, London, Moscow, or Beijing? You don't have to guess, you know what would happen. So why is Israel the only country that is condemned for defending itself? Why does Israel constantly have to defend its right to exist in places like the U.N.? This is what we are up against, and I am sick and tired of this double standard applied to the Jewish people.

I know I speak for all of the 100 Jewish communities represented in the World Jewish Congress when I say: We stand by our brothers and sisters in Israel! After all the death and loss and suffering that Jews went through to win back our homeland, we cannot allow it to be lost again. We must stand up and fight for it. We must be loud and relentless.

We must hold all politicians accountable who either supported Hamas or stood silent. At the same time, I want to thank President Biden and his administration and all world leaders who understood the difference between a sovereign, democratic country and a terrorist group aimed at killing Jews. We are grateful for their honesty and their support.

Just before this war started with Hamas, Israel was about to form a unity government. All sides, far-right, far-left, religious and secular were about to come together. Israel needs to be the beacon of unity for all the Jewish people. Israel must help bring us together. If the Israelis can stand together in war, they must stand together in peace as well. Let something good come from this war, something positive.

Here are my 6 points of unity for the Jewish people.

Number 1: Israel should form a stable, unified government that will include all sides. This will be a symbol to all Reform and secular young people that they are included in their homeland as well. And it will show us all the way back to unity.

Number 2: When the entire world turns against Israel for defending itself from terrorists, we must admit that we have failed to define our side of the story. Israel and the Diaspora must put together a strong public relations effort, particularly in social media, that will bring back the true image of what Israel is and not let our enemies define who we are. Israel's enemies are spending billions of dollars on public relations and in the media. We must tell our side of the story.

Number 3: Education. We must make Jewish education our top priority. Learning has always been the hallmark of our people. We must focus on it once again.

Number 4: We will have to raise billions of dollars, and this won't be easy. Yes, there are many Jewish billionaires, and in the past, wealthy Jews always supported schools, synagogues and their people. Today, too many wealthy Jews give to anything but Jewish causes, and they don't want to be particularly Jewish. We must get them involved, once again.

Number 5: The Diaspora and Israel must come together. We must work together, and we must care about each other like family, because that is exactly what we are, mishpacha, family.

Number 6: There must be stricter laws on hate crime, and antisemitism must be a worldwide issue. These laws have to be tougher and they have to be enforced.

This past week, we lost a wonderful man, Roman Kent, who was a survivor of the Shoa and offered one of its most eloquent epitaphs on the 70th anniversary of the



liberation of Auschwitz. He said, “We must not let our past become our children’s futures.” Let me repeat that, “We must not let our past become our children’s futures.” Roman Kent’s directive is now our responsibility.

This is the time for us to stand up for our people. And this is the time for us to stand up and fight for what we believe in. This won’t be easy. But the people who came before us faced even greater challenges, and they never wavered.

Always remember, we come from a long, long line of Jewish heroes who faced terrible hatred, but always held fast to their faith.

I promise you: This miraculous story will not end with us. With our faith in G-d, we will win. Our people will endure.

Have courage. Be strong. And don’t be afraid to fight for what you believe in. God bless you all. Am Yisrael Chai. Thank you.

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