

'Stand Up: Jew Hatred – Never Again!'

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Address by Ronald S. Lauder, WJC President

For the last 70 years, Jews and Germans have lived together in peace.

Jews have prospered as Germany has prospered. Jews have become part of German society again.

We are your neighbors and your friends. We all share the same values, we hold the same beliefs.

Part of my family originally came from Mainz, over 600 years ago.

I remember as a young boy in the early 1960s, going to the synagogue to lay flowers on the front door in memory of the Jewish people who died in the Holocaust.

I remember also seeing non-Jewish Germans coming there to do the same thing... to lay flowers as a way to say they also remember, as a way to say this should never happen again.

Since 1945, Germany has been one of the most responsible countries on earth. The world looks to Germany for political, for economic and for moral leadership.

But something has changed. This summer, all of the progress of the last 70 years has been darkened by a rising tide of anti-Semitism. There are some places I might expect to see this - but not here in Germany.

There are places where Jews cannot live openly as Jews - but not here in Germany.

There are places where governments actually promote the hatred of Jews - but that is definitely not here in Germany.

Since the end of the war, Germany has strongly supported a Jewish rebirth, and since Konrad Adenauer, Germany has been Israel's ally and friend. So why has all this good work been darkened by the medieval stain of anti-Semitism?

I believe there are three reasons:

First, when the economy declines, people become fearful and often they look for a scapegoat. Throughout history, that scapegoat has been the Jews.

Second, we have seen some of the vilest anti-Jewish propaganda coming out of the Middle East and it has spread across the Internet and it is now coming into mainstream thought.

And third, there are political agitators determined to spread misinformation and lies for the sole purpose of instilling anti-Semitism.

Let us not allow this group of agitators to tear down 70 years of good work. We all know too well that a group that instills fear and hatred may start small but can grow into a large and dangerous tidal wave.

In the end, these people don't want to just hurt Jews – they intend to hurt every free, democratic country in the world.

Let us all stand together. Let us stand strong and united. Let us make it very clear that this intolerance has no place in Germany, or anywhere else.

The very fact that you, President Gauck, Chancellor Merkel, Mayor Wowereit and the heads of the churches are here today, tells the world that we stand together as one.

And this is our message: We will never accept anti-Semitism, here in Germany, or anywhere else.

We will never allow our children to live in fear because of their religion.

Let this be the story that comes from this day: That all of us, Jews and non-Jews, stand together as one people.

We stand together and say no to intolerance, no to bigotry and no to anti-Semitism.

Thank you all for coming here today!