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# The real lesson of Kristallnacht

*Remarks by the World Jewish Congress president at the WJC Theodor Herzl Award Virtual Gala*

• By RONALD S. LAUDER



UN SECRETARY-GENERAL Antonio Guterres attends a session of the Human Rights Council at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, on February 24. (Denis Balibouse/Reuters)

If you think one man can't change the world, think again. Theodor Herzl started the movement that created the State of Israel, transforming the Jewish people from ghetto Jews to proud, heroic Jews. This is the man whom we name our award after.

Tonight, in the spirit of the great statesmen who have been our past honorees, the 2020 Herzl Award recipient is His Excellency, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres.

It is no accident that we hold the Herzl Award dinner on November 9, the anniversary of Kristallnacht. But the most important lesson we should all remember from Kristallnacht is not the 1,200 synagogues set on fire, or the shattered windows, or even the law-abiding Jewish citizens who were beaten in the streets.

The real lesson of Kristallnacht was the world's reaction. There was none. In a meeting five days after Kristallnacht, Hitler said, "We can do whatever we want with the Jews, because the world doesn't care."

And that's exactly what he did. The Holocaust began on November 9, 1938. It began on Kristallnacht. Eighty-two years later, we still face indifference.

But today, it's a very different form of indifference. It breaks my heart to say this, but it is Jewish indifference, indifference toward other Jews, indifference toward Israel, indifference to the growing antisemitism from the Right and the Left that many Jews pretend is not happening. This indifference is causing many young Jews to walk away from their religion, their traditions and their people.

Perhaps our tremendous success has made us complacent. We came out of the horrors of the Holocaust, and in just 75 years, Jews created the miracle of a strong, prosperous and brilliant Jewish state. Around the world, we have attained financial and political power that past generations could only dream about. But 75 years later, we are divided: secular against religious, religious against secular, Diaspora Jews who don't support Israel, Israelis who ignore the Diaspora.

We in the World Jewish Congress are fighting this indifference and the divisions on every level. We defend Jews in the Diaspora, and we will always defend Israel. Wherever there is antisemitism, the World Jewish Congress confronts it head on.

We are also monitoring anti-Israel and anti-Jewish extremism on college campuses. This is a real and growing threat, and it impacts the lives of our children and grandchildren.

Too many colleges across America and worldwide have allowed a small band of anti-Israel activists and a growing number of anti-Israel professors to sway their narrative against Israel. And because too many Jews are indifferent to this or don't see it, universities too often look the other way as well.

One of my greatest plans to ensure a Jewish future for the next generation is the creation of 100 new Jewish schools across America and Europe, wherever there is a Jewish com-

munity that needs one. I want every Jewish child who wants a Jewish education to have access to one, and we have to make this affordable. This is vital because too many young Jews are walking away from Judaism, and we have to give them the tools to learn it.

Concerning the growing antisemitism that we see throughout the world, let me be clear on this as well: Antisemitism is racism, and it is coming from the Right and the Left. It is fueled by the Internet, where we are seeing some of the oldest antisemitic lies.

Even in the halls of the US Congress, we have heard the most vile antisemitism coming from representatives and their leaders would not even condemn them. Our political leaders must be held accountable. Jews should stop funding colleges that allow anti-Israel professors to teach their hatred. Not one penny of Jewish money should be going to colleges until they stop this.

We are at the forefront of the fight against antisemitism on social media. After our close work with Facebook, the Internet giant is now removing posts with antisemitic stereotypes and Holocaust-denial.

I have a vision for the future of the Jewish people, and I am confident that we can achieve it if we come together as one united Jewish family.

The World Jewish Congress will devote all of its resources to this. Anywhere there is a Jew who needs our help, we will be there. This has been our mission since that group of Jewish leaders came together in Switzerland in 1936.

Please join me in this vital work by joining the World Jewish Congress. If we do this all together, we will not fail.