

Address

by

Ronald S. Lauder

**at the commemorative event on the occasion of the 70th
anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau**

27 January 2015

Your Excellencies, honored guests,

I am not a survivor, although I am grateful for the survivors who are here today.

I am not a liberator, although I salute the courage of the veterans who are among us today.

I am here, simply, as a Jew. And, like Jews everywhere, this place, this terrible place called Auschwitz, touches our souls.

I have always wondered if I had been born in Hungary, where my grandparents were from, instead of New York in February of 1944, would I have lived?

The answer is no. I would have been one of the 438,000 Hungarian Jews gassed by the Nazis in 1944, right here in Auschwitz.

What was the reason that over one million Jews were murdered right here? The reason was they were Jewish. Nazi Germany believed Jews had no right to live.

Yes, the Holocaust was designed by the Nazis. But there was complicity from almost every country in Europe.

For 70 years, philosophers, theologians, and historians have tried to explain Auschwitz.

For 70 years, no one has come up with an adequate answer. So Auschwitz never goes away.

This awful place stands as a reminder that propaganda leads to anti-Semitism.

It is a reminder that anti-Semitism will grow if nobody speaks out. And it is a reminder that when whole countries are filled with hate anti-Semitism leads to places like Auschwitz.

I was going to make a very different speech here today.

But after the recent events in Paris, throughout Europe and around the world I cannot ignore what is happening today.

Jews are targeted in Europe once again because they are Jews. Synagogues and Jewish businesses are attacked. There are mass demonstrations with thousands of people shouting death threats to the state of Israel and to Jews.

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Shortly after the end of World War II, after we saw the reality of Auschwitz and the other death camps, no normal person wanted to be associated with the anti-Semitism of the Nazis.

And For a time, we thought that the hatred of Jews had finally been eradicated. But slowly the demonization of Jews started to come back. First in articles and on the internet and in some religious schools and even universities. And From these it made its way into mainstream society.

and it all seemed so unimportant that few people paid any attention.

Until now, when Europe suddenly awoke to find itself surrounded by anti-Semitism once again and it looks more like 1933 than 2015.

Once again, young Jewish boys are afraid to wear yarmulkes on the streets of Paris and Budapest, London and even Berlin.

Once again, Jewish businesses are targeted. And once again, Jewish families are starting to flee Europe.

This past summer, Anna Sjögren, a mother of four, was walking down a street in Uppsala, Sweden when she was suddenly, viciously beaten by a mob. What did she do to deserve this? She was wearing a Star of David around her neck.

How did this happen again? Why, after seven decades and three generations, is this new storm of anti-Semitism sweeping through Europe and targeting Jews once again?

For decades, the world has been fed lies about Israel: that Israel is the cause of everyone's problems, that Israelis are the villains of the 21st century, that Israel has no right to exist.

We all learned that when you tell a lie three times and there is no response, that lie becomes the truth.

This vilification of Israel, the only Jewish state on earth, quickly became an opportunity to attack Jews.

Much of this came from the Middle East, but it found fertile ground throughout the world.

And The targets of this hate are not just Jews, but Christians who are being slaughtered in Africa and in the Middle East. Women and girls are killed in Afghanistan just for wanting to go to school. Journalists are murdered in the Middle East and right here in Europe, an awful wave of hatred has descended on earth once again.

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There are representatives today from 40 countries with us here today and we, the Jewish people, are really so grateful that you've joined us.

You are good, decent people. And But because of what we are and what this place means your governments must stand up to this new wave of hatred. Schools must teach tolerance of all people.

Houses of worship should be places of love, understanding, and healing, they should not be telling their people to kill in the name of god.

All countries must make hate a crime.

Any country that openly brags about the annihilation of another country should be expelled from the family of nations.

Every country must have absolutely zero tolerance for hate of any type.

Because Unless it's checked right now, it will be too late.

We still have a chance to stop this, but if every government does not act quickly, then the tragedy of this terrible place will darken our world again.

World silence led to Auschwitz.

World indifference led to Auschwitz.

World anti-Semitism led to Auschwitz.

Do not let this happen again.

Do not let this happen again.

Thank you.