



Holocaust remembrance ceremony at European Parliament in Brussels

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BRUSSELS - The presidents of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), Ronald S. Lauder, and of the European Jewish Congress (EJC), Moshe Kantor, on Monday said the lessons from the Holocaust were an obligation to overcome indifference and to act against a growing trend of anti-Semitism and racism in Europe and the world.

Speaking on the occasion of International Holocaust Remembrance Day at a commemorative event in Brussels co-hosted by the EJC, Lauder said: "World Holocaust Day is meaningless if we only pay attention to the past and ignore the same problems that threaten us today.

"In 2014, the threats facing the world today are not just against the Jews. Because of our past, we Jews cannot be silent when Christian churches are burned by Islamists in Egypt and throughout the Middle East and when half a million Christians are driven out of war-torn Syria because of their religion," the WJC president declared. Lauder called it alarming to see the rise of far-right, anti-Semitic groups in Europe, e.g. in Hungary and Greece. "We must be willing to see what is right in front of us and we must have the courage to deal with it," Lauder declared at the event which was jointly organized by the European Jewish Congress (EJC) and the president of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz.

EJC President Moshe Kantor also addressed recent anti-Semitic incidents in Europe. "The Holocaust is not a matter for satire. Anti-Semitism is not an opinion, it is a crime. Today, we are witness to the absolute democratization of anti-Semitism." Referring to the 'quenelle' invented by the controversial French comic Dieudonné M'bala M'bala, the EJC president said: "A simple inversed Nazi salute performed with impunity at Auschwitz, at the Berlin Holocaust memorial, at a synagogue and even in front of the Jewish school in Toulouse where Jewish children and a teacher were murdered in broad daylight by a French terrorist.

"A symbol invented by a so-called comedian which allows young people out for a drink, soldiers having a laugh and even a footballer scoring a goal, to have their own unique opportunity for Jew hatred." Kantor added.

In his speech to the 500 dignitaries and guests, including many Jewish community leaders from across Europe and Israel, Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, whose country currently holds the rotating presidency of the EU, spoke about the importance of remembrance and the importance of the lessons learnt from history. "Today, one hundred years after the First World War, when dozens of millions of Europeans lost their lives in battle, and seventy years after the atrocities of the genocide and the Holocaust, we have turned those horrific nightmares into a bright vision; and this vision into a reality: United Europe, our Europe, which has become the world champion of respect for freedom, democratic rights and human dignity," Samaras said.

Kantor praised Samaras and the Greek government for clamping down on Golden Dawn party, saying: "The Greek government's fight against the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party is an example of the defense of democracy which we hope to see replicated across the continent wherever those engrossed in hate, racism and xenophobia seek to utilize the democratic system to further their

dark aims.”

The German president of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, spoke about the importance of holding the event in the European Parliament. "It was my humble duty to host the International Holocaust Remembrance Day event in this Yehudi Menuhin Hall here in the European Parliament. A place of European reconciliation and peace," Schulz said. "Anti-Semitism and racism are a threat to our basic values: those of democracy and respect for diversity and human rights.

He added: "Holding a memorial ceremony cannot undo the atrocities that happened to so many families: but it can serve as a warning, it can serve as a tribute and it can serve as a lesson. The Shoah was the worst tragedy of humankind. Yet, the dangers and demons are regrettably still present in our societies. This evening we remember the victims, we pay tribute to the Righteous Among the Nations and we say: 'Never again!'"

International Holocaust Remembrance Day is a memorial day for the victims of the Holocaust, the genocide that resulted in the annihilation of 6 million Jews and millions of others by the Nazi regime and its collaborators. The largest Nazi death camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau, where 1.1 million Jews were murdered, was liberated on 27 January 1945.

Source: [World Jewish Congress](#), Press release