Statement: Rise of Global Genocidal Antisemitism

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Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations

http://embassies.gov.il/un/statements/Pages/Israel%E2%80%99s-statement-on-The-Rise-of-Global-Genocidal-Antisemitism-.aspx

Ladies and Gentleman,

I am honored to address you here today as a representative of the State of Israel. As a young girl growing up in Syria, I witnessed anti-Semitism, and experienced it first-hand. My father risked his life and the lives of his wife and children when he decided to escape from Syria and come to Israel. Without the brave actions of my father, I would not be standing here in front of you today.

At that time, the Jews of Syria believed that the only safe place in the world for Jews was in Israel. I believe, thanks to the education and values I got in Israel, that the world must be safe for people of all religions- Jews, Muslims, and Christians, all over the world.

Thank you to all the ambassadors, diplomats and guests who are here with us today. Thank you as well to all the organizations who sponsored this important forum, and to all those who worked to convene this important event.

The topic we are here to discuss today is “The Rise of Global Genocidal Anti-Semitism’, this is not an academic discussion of dark times from our history. Unfortunately, the issue we confront here today is as acute and relevant as ever.

When the chant “death to Jews” can be heard on the streets of Paris,

When synagogues in Europe must be protected by armed guards,

When vile anti-Semitic images can be found in the Palestinian press and in newspapers throughout the Arab world- we must stand up and pay attention.

These signs of renewed hatred of Jews, just because they are Jews, must serve as a wake-up call for the international community and for the United Nations. Anti-Semitism is not a relic from the past, but an ever-present reality for Jews in many places. We must take action now, to eradicate the plague of Jew-hatred from our future.

We must come to grips with the reality that within living memory of the holocaust, the Jews of Europe fear to wear a Kippah in public, and think twice before identifying themselves as Jews. Anti-Semitic graffiti is now a common sight, and Jews around the world face daily insults on the streets. We know all too well, as history tells us over and over, that what starts with hateful and degrading taunts, ends with violence and murder.

In Brussels, a man with a Kalashnikov opened fire and killed four people at the Jewish Museum of Belgium.

In Paris, in the day of horrific bloodshed we all remember vividly, innocent Jews were murdered in a kosher grocery store as they prepared for the Sabbath. For the first time since the Second World War, Synagogue de la Victoire, the Grand Synagogue of Paris, could not hold Sabbath prayer services.

In Toulouse, France, a gunman murdered a rabbi and three young children in front of a Jewish school.

In Copenhagen, at the Great Synagogue, a volunteer guard from the Jewish community, gave his life to prevent a terrorist from breaching the synagogue, where the community was celebrating a bat mitzvah.

Schools, grocery stores, places of worship, educational centers- in the very places where people come together as a community, a basic sense of security has been shaken.

Brave leaders in these countries have spoken out, and we applaud their solidarity with Jews as fellow countrymen, but much more needs to be done.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We must not make the mistake of thinking that anti-Semitism exists because of what Jews do, what Jews say, or what Jews believe.

As Jonathan Sacks, the former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom explained:

“Jews have been hated because they were rich and because they were poor; because they were capitalists and because they were communists; because they believed in tradition and because they were rootless cosmopolitans; because they kept to themselves and because they penetrated everywhere. Antisemitism”, Rabbi Sacks concluded, “is not a belief but a virus.”

A virus cannot be argued with, it must be eradicated. This is why we must never excuse or rationalize anti-Semitism.

Targeting Jewish businesses, places of worship, and Jews themselves is no less anti-Semitic when it is done out of perceived wrongs committed by Israel. Singling out Jews, and only Jews, as powerful, tribal, disloyal, and devious should be seen for what it is- a restatement of classical anti-Semitism.

And- we must state frankly- deligitimization of Israel, the one and only Jewish state, may be nothing more than a pretext for prejudice. It can be a way for those who hate Jews to express their hatred without suffering the shame of being publically identified as an anti-Semite.

We must be careful. Not all criticism of Israel is anti-Semitism. Looking for prejudice where it does not exist only strengthens those who seek to use claims of anti-Semitism as a weapon against supporters of Israel.

However,

When Israel is condemned as an illegitimate state,

When the Jewish state is denounced as racist just for being Jewish,

When the only democracy in the Middle East faces accusations not leveled at the world’s worst dictators

- A clear line has been crossed.

Such outrageous slander of Israel has little to do with Israel’s actions, and a lot to do with the hateful prejudice of those who make them.

As Bernard Henri Levi said,

“Even if Israel were a nation of angels . . .  even then, alas, this old, enigmatic hatred would not dissipate one iota.”

For such people, the real objection is the fact that the Jewish people have returned to their ancient homeland, and the true crime is that Jews- as all other people- now have a thriving state of our own.

I don’t intend to draw a clear line in the sand, where legitimate criticism ends and where anti-Semitism begins.

Rather, to paraphrase Justice Potter Stewart, I know anti-Semitism when I see it.

I know it when, in the halls of the United Nations, some delegations compare Israeli actions to those of Nazi Germany.

As the European Parliament Working Group on Anti-Semitism has recognized, such comparisons are not simply disgraceful, they are manifestations of anti-Semitism.

Ladies and Gentleman,

This past January, for the first time ever, the UN General Assembly met to discuss the age-old problem of anti-Semitism. This important step for the world was made possible by our determined effort, and by the steadfast support of our partners.

In a joint statement, nations declared with one voice that “The United Nations must step forward and play a pivotal role in combating Antisemitism as well as intolerance, discrimination and violence based on religion or belief”

Yet, the work we began in that historic gathering is still unfinished.  Despite the urgency of the threat we are here today to discuss, there is still no UN resolution condemning Anti-Semitism, and calling on UN Member states to fight against it.

We called for the creation of a UN seminar to educate about the hateful causes and the heinous consequences of anti-Semitism. This call has not yet been answered, and should not be ignored.

Ladies and Gentleman,

The lessons of the Holocaust were a guiding light for the founders of the United Nations. Yet anti-Semitism still thrives today, sometime even crossing the threshold of this institution.

So let’s join together to declare that

We will not give up,

We will not be silent,

We will not ignore the minor Antisemitic incidents nor will we ignore grave cases

We will not allow world leaders to  look away from anti-Semitism in their midst

We will speak up,

We will educate,

We will not look away from the suffering of others

And at the end- we will win.

Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen