Remembering the Kristallnacht at the UN: Statement of Ambassador Danon

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Permanent Mission of Israel to the UN

http://embassies.gov.il/un/statements/Pages/Kristallnacht-speech.aspx

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This week, Jewish people around the world come together in synagogues, community centers and schools to commemorate the Kristallnacht – the night of broken glass.

We do this to remember what happened on those fateful nights, which mark the beginning of what would become known as the Shoah; the Holocaust.

In Hebrew, the word for “remember” is “Zachor”.

But Zachor doesn’t ju​st mean to recall the events of the past.

Zachor means to learn the lessons of the past.

Zachor means putting those lessons into practice.

And, Zachor means honoring those who live on in our memory.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On Wednesday November 9, 1938, the Nazi SS paramilitary forces, aided by German civilians, unleashed a pogrom against the Jews of Berlin, Vienna, Prague, and cities across the heart of Europe.

They dragged Torah scrolls through the streets; torched over one thousand synagogues; vandalized Jewish homes, businesses and cemeteries; and murdered nearly one hundred Jews. During those two nights, as many as 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and deported to concentration camps.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What occurred on those nights in November marked a warning sign for all that was yet to come.

The day after Kristallnacht, the New York Times declared, “No man can look on the scenes witnessed yesterday without shame for the degradation of his species”.

Time Magazine proclaimed, “The civilized world stands revolted by a bloody pogrom against a defenseless people”.

And yet, the rest of the world did heartbreakingly little to stop what was already unfolding for European Jewry.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the 70 years since the end of World War II and the liberation of the concentration camps, racial prejudice and violence still live on.

Within living memory of the murder of 6 million European Jews, antisemitism has returned to the streets of Europe – the violence is new but the targets are the same:

Just this year, in January, four Jewish men were killed in an attack on a Kosher supermarket in Paris.

In April, vandals in Copenhagen smashed the window of a Kosher deli and wrote the words “Jewish Pig” on the wall.

And in June, antisemitic profanities were painted on the gates of a London Jewish primary school.

In light of the ongoing violence we must ask ourselves:

Have we truly followed the principle of Zachor? Have we remembered the lessons of the past?

Remembering Kristallnacht means understanding that the demonization of a people leads to the dehumanization of a people, and finally, to the destruction of a people.

Remembering Kristallnacht means deciding whether we will be remembered by our descendants as protectors of peace and human rights or as bystanders to the most grievous crimes against our humanity.

We must all ask ourselves whether we are doing enough to raise our voices and take action against the increasing violence around the world that is fueled by hatred.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This stone that you see here is a remnant from the Great Synagogue in Munich which was set aflame the night of Kristallnacht.

This stone represents one of the darkest times in human history, and the history of the Jewish people.

If you look closely, you will see there are burn marks from that fateful night. These markings of hatred and antisemitism are, in a very real sense, the cornerstone of this institution, which was established to “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”.

The state of Israel was founded with the same promise, to ensure that never again will the survival of the Jewish people be threatened.

It is our hope, and the assurance of our future for generations to come.

Am Yisrael Chai. Long live the people of Israel.