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AFTER PARIS AND COPENHAGEN: RESPONDING TO THE RISING TIDE OF ANTI-SEMITISM

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
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Congressional Testimony of Ronald Lauder
President
World Jewish Congress
March 24, 2015

Mr. Chairman, my name is Ronald Lauder.

I live in New York City and I am the President of the World Jewish Congress, the international organization that represents Jewish communities in 100 countries around the world.

Before I begin, I would like to personally thank you for your many years of support to the Jewish community as well as your support for people of all religions, races, genders and age who live in our great country.

This particular topic, at this particular moment in history, ***After Paris and Copenhagen, Responding to the Rising Tide Of Anti-Semitism*** is, sadly, all too timely ... and it is reminiscent of an even darker time that we thought was behind us.

With your permission, I would like to submit my opening statement for the record.

Statement:

Exactly 70 years ago, as American G.I.s advanced into Nazi-Germany in the last days of the most devastating war in history, the world saw its first glimpse of the horror of unbridled anti-Semitism.

The images of the concentration camps that were liberated throughout Europe in the spring of 1945 still cause a universal shudder to this day.

For the first few decades following World War II, we mistakenly believed that anti-Semitism – the age-old hatred of Jews – had finally disappeared from Europe and everywhere else.

That is because in the 1950s and 1960s, no one in their right minds wanted to be associated with Nazis.

It is because we all saw where this kind of hatred leads.

And, perhaps, people who still harbored these beliefs were too embarrassed to express them openly.

I now tell you with the greatest sadness that 70 years later, the age-old virus of anti-Semitism has returned in all its evil and ugliness.

Anti-Semitism has returned to streets of Paris and Toulouse ... to the streets of

Brussels and Copenhagen ... it has even returned to Berlin.

(You will hear the personal accounts from my friend, Roger Cukierman, the head of the Jewish community in Paris, but listen to these frightening facts.)

Jews make up less than one percent of the population of France but they were victims of more than half of all the racist attacks in that country last year.

The number of anti-Jewish attacks in France in 2014 doubled from the year before.

In Great Britain, the number of anti-Semitic attacks doubled from the year before.

In Austria, anti-Semitic attacks doubled from the year before.

In fact, an EU report from nine nations showed that 16 months ago – long before the latest wave of terror – Jews in these countries were already concerned about growing anti-Semitism.

You don't have to be a mathematician to see an obvious trend here.

There is a hatred growing throughout Europe that is causing Jews to wonder if they should leave ... they are asking if there is a future for Jews on that continent.

Last fall, I sat with representatives of the Jewish community in Rome and they told me that although they may stay ... their children and definitely their grandchildren will leave. They told me that the Jewish community in Rome, that has existed since the time of Christ and survived Hitler, would disappear within 25 years.

How could this happen in 2015?

The answer is that a strange confluence of hatred has taken hold across Europe today that comes from very different corners.

There are huge populations of Muslim immigrants throughout Europe. Most are peaceful, but far too many of them have adopted radical Islam.

There are thousands of young European Muslims that have left to fight with Islamic radicals in Iraq and Syria, and there is a real fear that they could return, bringing the bloodshed with them.

Some have already returned and we have seen the consequences.

At the same time, we have seen the rise of smaller right wing Neo-Nazi extremist

groups that have become political forces in Hungary and Greece and have been seen on the streets in Germany and France.

And there is a third force that may appear more benign, but it adds fuel to this fire. I'm talking about an educated, elitist class – from universities to the media – that has a pathological hatred of Israel.

They would never consider themselves anti-Semitic but they are quite open in their opinion that only Israel is the source of all of the problems in the Middle East.

This is intellectually dishonest and devoid of reality. But too many people have accepted their lies as the truth.

And then there is technology.

70 years ago, Josef Goebbels used newspapers, film and marches to infuse hatred of Jews into mainstream society.

Today, the power of the internet sends out a constant stream of anti-Jewish ideas at hyperspeed .. and there are not enough people speaking up to counter these lies.

Do you want to know what it's like to be openly Jewish in Europe today?

Just go to YouTube and watch what happens when a young man simply walks down a European street wearing a yarmulke.

He is insulted ... shoved ... spat on ... and as we saw in France ... Jews who are openly Jewish can also be killed.

Once again, like the 1930s, European Jews live in fear.

Members of the Committee ...

In my travels to all of these communities, I am asked the same question around Europe and the world:

Where is the United States?

Why isn't the United States leading the world in this crisis?

Right after the attacks on Charlie Hebdo and the Kosher grocery store in Paris ... over 1-million people marched in defiance of those murders.

Many of the leaders in Europe linked arms in solidarity in the very front row ...

but there was not one U.S. representative with them in the front row.

I believe that sent a very negative message around the world.

European leaders have stepped up and strongly condemned these attacks on Jews and the rise of anti-Semitism.

The United States must do the same.

The United States must lead.

When a Neo-Nazi party like Jobik in Hungary or Golden Dawn in Greece wins substantial seats in elections ... the United States must condemn this in the strongest possible terms.

My fear is that muted condemnations or, worse, silence, could lead to what we saw in Europe 70 years ago ... and that led to deaths of 60 million people and the destruction of a continent.

We must insist that European nations better share intelligence on anti-Semitic Islamic hate preachers ... all countries must better monitor radical Islamic recruiting in prisons, on the internet and in mosques ... and without question, we must closely monitor European and U.S. nationals returning from the Middle East and Africa.

The United States can and must speak loudly and clearly to condemn this evil for what it is – the radical Islamic hatred of Jews.

Mr. Chairman, one of the bravest men in history, Sir Winston Churchill, came to Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri in 1946 and warned us that the Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe was complete and an Iron Curtain had descended across the continent.

Churchill was trying to wake up a sleeping world because too many people didn't want to believe him.

We had just fought a war against totalitarianism and we were tired ... we didn't want to fight another one.

Well, today, it's not an Iron Curtain that is descending across Eastern Europe ... it is a white-hot fire and its reach is much greater.

This new, incandescent flame is scorching the entire Middle East from Tehran across Iraq and through Syria, Lebanon, Gaza and now Yemen.

It stretches across parts of Northern Africa.

It destroys everything in its path and leaves nothing alive ... not Jews, not Christians and not Muslims who don't share their exact beliefs.

Unless we act right now, the flame of radical Islam could stretch across all of Europe as well.

After Churchill's speech in Missouri, it took 44 years and billions of dollars to defeat Soviet Communism.

We were focused back then, we were committed, we were united with our allies and we were able to win the Cold War without horrific bloodshed.

But in order to defeat this new flame of radical Islamic terror and survive ... the United States must lead.

I fear that if we do not stand up to this new foe immediately, it will take us much longer than 44 years to defeat it.

I fear it will cost us much more of our treasure and, most tragically of all, I fear it will consume many, many more lives – not just in the Middle East and Europe ... but here as well.

Members of the Committee, we must NOT let this happen again.

Thank you.

Testimony to the House of Representatives

By Roger Cukierman Chairman of CRIF

Jews have lived in France for the last 2.000 years. One thousand years ago, at the time of the crusades, the famous Talmudist Rachi was living in the city of Troyes. He was producing wine, a typical French job, and he was also famous for his expertise in old French language.

In 1791, at the time of the French revolution, French Jews were given the full French citizenship.

And today, in 2015, our synagogues and our Jewish schools have to be protected by the police and even the army with machine guns.

Why ?

Because there is a World War started by middle age barbarian fanatics who are cutting heads, are stoning women, are killing kids, and want to impose to the rest of the world the Sharia, their concept of what Islam should be in their views.

The first victims are the moderate Muslims. This is a war against western modern civilization. And the Jews are seen by these Jihadists as a privileged target. We Jews are the sentinels at the forefront of this war. But we are not the only victims. Military forces, policemen and women, journalists were also targeted and killed.

These Jihadists are acting under different names: Daesh, Al Qaida, Boko Haram, Aqmi, Hamas. It started in the Middle East: Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Gaza... It reached Africa: Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroun, Chad, Tunisia... And now Europe: France, Belgium, Denmark.

In France small children were killed in March 2012 in Toulouse, at blank point at the entrance of a school of Otzar hatorah by Mohamed Merah. In 2014, 4 people were killed in the Jewish museum by Mehdi Nemouche. And then in January 2015, 4 people were killed in the Paris kosher grocery store. And then in front of the Copenhagen synagogue. All victims were targeted because they were Jews. All these killers were Jihadists.

In front of that situation the French government shows a perfect understanding of our situation. Prime Minister Manuel Valls said that anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism. And President Hollande said that "it is not the Jews who should leave the country, it is the anti-Semites".

And immediately after the grocery attack the Government added 7.500 military to the Police forces to protect the Jewish places.

From where are these Jihadists coming ?

They come from the Muslim community which is estimated to five or six million people in France. The number of French Jihadists is estimated at 1.300 people who are combatting in Syria and Iraq. Among them many French ethnics recently converted to Islam.

It seems that they are generally not influenced by the French Imams, or by the press which they don't read, or by the TV that they don't watch.

They were educated to the Jihad in the French jails and by internet.

This is why our organization bought a full page ad in the New York Times on the 2nd of march 2015 which was an appeal to our American friends asking them to put pressure on the Internet providers to set a limit to the swarm of hate which can be found on Internet, to remove anti-Semitic contents as soon as it is flagged. On the internet ways were found to ban child pornography. Likewise anti-Semitism must be banned. The providers of Internet must understand that they bear a responsibility when murders are committed by youngsters who became Jihadists through Internet.

Is there a future for Jews in France ?

An increasing number of French Jews are considering leaving France. The French Jewish population is estimated at half a million people, third Jewish Community in the world after Israel and the US.

In the last 3 years 12.000 left to Israel. Other chose the US, Canada, Australia. Many people refuse to see the future of their kids if they have to study in schools or to go to synagogues which appear as fortresses protected by military and heavy gun machines. The atmosphere is tense. One cannot travel in the subway with a yarmulke. Anti-Semitism is active in many suburbs and in public schools.

Nevertheless I believe that a big proportion of the French Jews will remain in France were their roots, their culture incite them to confront adversity as their parents or ancestors did at difficult periods like the Dreyfus Affair or the Vichy period.

March 2015

Testimony to House of Representatives

By Dan Asmussen

Chairman Jewish Community of Denmark

Dear Mr. Chairman, Dear members of Congress

It's an great honor for me to testify before the United States Congress. I would like to thank the honorable Congressmen and the World Jewish Congress for allowing me to share a few remarks with you.

You probably think of Denmark as a small and peaceful country. And it is basically also the way, we think ourselves.

In October 2013, the entire Danish society came together in order to celebrate the 70th commemoration of the saving of Danish Jewry from the Nazi onslaught. It was an amazing achievement of the Danish society to stand up, come together and to save its Jewish minority. The Danish population believed that its Jewish neighbors and friends were an integral of the their own society, making Denmark *a* country that could rightfully be defined at Righteous Among the Nations.

On February 15th, the Danish society once again came together. This time to mourn the loss of Dan Uzan, a 37-year-old Jewish man, who was murdered while protecting the guests at a Bat Mitzah party in the Jewish Community Center. Thousands of Danes came together order to speak out against terror, hatred and indifference.

While the community was in shock and despair, Danes once again showed how much they care for their Jewish citizens. In the days following the attack, thousands of people showed their respect. They laid flowers in front of Copenhagen's Synagogue.

On February 15th, the Jewish Community and the whole Danish society was brutally awoken to a new reality. We had warned the authorities for years that one day such an attack could happen on Danish soil. We had urged them to take the warning signs seriously, while we in parallel took it upon ourselves to safeguard our community's security.

The terror attack against the Jewish community in Denmark did not occur in a vacuum. It did not happen in Copenhagen just by chance. It was the culmination of years of growing anti-Semitism. It happened in a country where it has become widely acceptable

to criticize and question both Israel and Jews with a carelessness that we did not expect or imagine just a few years ago.

During the Gaza War last summer, a few hundred people were evacuated by police as the latter could not guarantee for their safety during a demonstration calling for peace.

A few days earlier, almost 4,000 people signed a petition urging Danish media outlets not to use journalists with Jewish heritage for coverage of the Middle East conflict.

Yet it was not before the Jewish school in Copenhagen was vandalized with graffiti that politicians decided to react and speak out against these incidents.

It is however, important to understand that the Danish society itself is not has never been anti-Semitic and that many of the threats facing Danish Jewry, like in the rest of Europe, come from marginalized and radicalized Muslims – and these form a small minority of all Muslims in Denmark.

The terrorist who committed the two murders was born and raised in Denmark and used his religion and affiliation to Islam to justify the crime. Unfortunately, he is not alone there with his views. That was demonstrated when more than 700 people participated in his funeral.

On the other end of the specter we have witnessed how Muslims organizations spoke out against hatred and prejudices against their fellow Jewish citizens. We truly appreciate that expression of support and we welcome any such initiatives. It is important for me to emphasize that we have good relations with moderate Muslim organizations. We work together on issues of common religious rights.

However, we still need for the Muslim community to do more, to become more outspoken against violence and hatred. To confront hate and prejudices toward Jews.

The Danish society can only do so much. The real long-term solution needs to be found inside the Muslim community, and we need them to take more responsibility in speaking out against anti-Semitism, and against terror committed in the name of Allah.

In recent weeks, the Jewish community received strong support from the Danish politicians and media. We believe it served as a wake-up call, and we expect that our problems will now be taken more seriously now than in the past.

Last week, I met with Ira Forman, the US Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism. He made it clear to us that the Danish government is not doing enough compared with other European countries, to combat Anti-Semitism.

And he said that it could never be justified that the Jewish community, or any other minority group for that matter, should have to prioritize security over education, or ultimately prioritize security over the future of the community.

Mr. Forman is right.

If we spend all our resources on security, our children won't have a future.

Yet if we fail to protect our children, Danish Jewry doesn't have a future either.

We need a long-term governmental plan that will keep our community safe as much as possible. The Danish Justice Department has said that such a plan is in the making.

And we need the Muslim community to speak out and help in building a democratic, tolerant and peaceful society. This is the only viable and long-term solution, so we one day will not need to risk the lives of children in order for them to protect the community.

I feel truly grateful towards the Danish society for standing up for their Jewish minority in these difficult times. I just wish they had done so when we asked for help after the incidents in Toulouse and Brussels.

Thank you Mr. Chairman,