



At London Holocaust Memorial event, Jewish community discuss modern-day antisemitism

With rising anti-Semitism, and the surge in radical Islamic groups, “Time to leave? Jews in Britain and Europe” was the question being asked by the more than 500 people from across the Jewish community and beyond convened on St John’s Wood Synagogue in London on Thursday evening, 12th April 2018. They gathered for the Simon Wiesenthal Memorial Lecture delivered by renowned journalist, author, and political commentator Melanie Phillips. In her address, Mrs. Phillips raised strong questions about the long term viability of the Jewish community in Britain and Europe, against a background of rising anti-Semitism.

The event, co-hosted by St John’s Wood Synagogue, British friends of Laniado Hospital, and The Simon Wiesenthal Centre, was held at the conclusion of Yom HaShoah which is marked in Israel and by Jewish communities around the world as Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day. The evening began with words of introduction by St. John’s Wood’s Rabbi Yoni Golker, and a brief address by Director for International Relations of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Dr Shimon Samuels who spoke of the horror at the current trend in anti-Semitic attacks in Europe, and France especially.

Melanie Phillips began her address by telling the audience that there was a threat of anti-Jewish sentiment and activity on both the left and right, and in the Muslim community. She said, “Here in Britain, the Labour Party has convulsed over the realization that it is absolutely riddled with anti-Semitism,” and went on to say, “There is in turn, a refusal to acknowledge the enormous problem of Muslim anti-Semitism, yet this is one of the principle drivers of the Islamic threat – not just to Jews but the West in general. Islamist ideologues and Jihadists believe that modernity is the great threat to Islam, modernity needs to be resisted and destroyed and the Jews are the demonic creators of that modernity.”

On the issue of anti-Zionism as an expression of anti-Semitism, Mrs. Phillips stressed, “‘Anti-Israelism’ has exactly the same characteristics that make traditional anti-Semitism a unique form of derangement. Both are based entirely on falsehoods and malicious distortions; both single out Israel and the Jews for double standards, and treatment afforded to no other nation, people, or cause; both accuse Israel or the Jews of crimes of which they are not only innocent, but are in fact the victims; both dehumanize Israel or the Jewish people; both impute to Israel and the Jewish people demonic, conspiratorial, global, power; both are utterly beyond reason.”

She suggested, “Anti-Semitism is not just a prejudice, a type of bigotry, a type of hatred – it is much more than that. Anti-Semitism represents a kind of moral and spiritual death. Europe lost its soul in the Shoah, a soul that had been created by Jewish Biblical precepts. In turning upon itself, Europe has turned on the Jews.” She argued that today, many thought Europe faced an existential crisis, and warned that the ensuing struggle risked leaving the Jews feeling even more vulnerable.

Mrs. Phillips concluded by saying that the decision to leave the UK would be a personal choice for each and everyone but noted the importance of Israel as the country in which Jews could feel safe, and enjoy self-determination. “Israel is the ultimate, and ultimately the only definitive and triumphant repudiation of anti-Semitism, and the true vindication of the millions of us that perished in the unspeakable events that we memorialize today.”

Chairing the evening, Founder and Executive Director of the Henry Jackson Society, Dr. Alan Mendoza, thanked Mrs. Phillips for her address, and noted the singular importance of speaking out in the face of threats to freedom and democracy, suggesting that “For those of us who intend to stay in



this, our country, standing up and speaking out is required, even when that narrative may prove uncomfortable for others to listen to. We must not be silent and should condemn hatred and anti-Semitism wherever it is found.”.

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