


World Jewish Congress Summary Activities Report

November 2022 – March 2023

Submitted to the WJC Executive Committee by
Maram Stern
WJC Executive Vice President

SEE FINAL PAGES FOR GLOSSARY OF NAMES AND TITLES OF WJC LAY LEADERS, STAFF AND MEMBERS OF WJC JEWISH DIPLOMATIC CORPS (JDS)

WJC mourned the loss of [former WJC Secretary General Michael Schneider](#), who passed away at the age of 83. Schneider served as WJC Secretary General from 2007 to 2011, after a long career as Executive Vice President of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. After his retirement, he served as WJC Secretary General Emeritus until 2018. “Michael is one of the unsung heroes of the Jewish people,” said WJC President LAUDER.

“He was personally responsible for rescuing thousands upon thousands of Jews in countries where they found themselves in great peril, from Iran to Ethiopia to Bosnia and elsewhere. I admired and respected him for his selfless integrity, his sharp intelligence, his modesty and, above all, his total dedication to the welfare of the Jewish people. We at the World Jewish Congress owe him a tremendous debt of gratitude for restoring calm and instituting transparent governance and fiscal stability in our organization after a succession of unfortunate crises. I will miss his friendship and his always-sage advice.”

COMBATING ANTISEMITISM

In his remarks delivered ahead of a [panel discussion](#) organized by WJC together with the Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations and the country’s Consulate General in New York, WJC President Ronald S. LAUDER declared, “There is an urgent need for governments, international organizations, including the UN, to redouble their efforts to fight antisemitism. It is particularly important to create a national action plan.” He added, “I am happy to hear that the Czech Republic is currently drafting one, a critical step in demonstrating its commitment to fighting the world’s oldest hatred.” Amb. Jakub Kulhánek, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the United Nations, and Mr. Arnošt Kareš, Consul General of the Czech Republic in New York, also delivered greetings. Panelists included Ms. Ilze Brands Kehris, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights; Mr. Karel Fracapane, Programme Specialist for Global Citizenship and Peace Education Section at UNESCO; PAPOUŠEK; and Amb. Tomáš Pojar, Czech National Security Advisor and Deputy Prime Minister for Security Affairs. The panel was moderated by Adela Cojab.

A WJC delegation met at the White House to thank the Biden administration for its plans to [develop a national strategy to counter antisemitism](#) the morning after a new interagency task force to combat hate was announced.

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

The Jewish Community of the Republic of Moldova (JCM), represented by Alexander Bilinkis (President), Aliona Grossu (Director) and Alexander Kleinerman (Administrative Director), hosted a WJC delegation consisting of CIMESA SAMOKOVLIJA, JUSE, HERZOG, and members of the WJC JD Corps, the main objective of which was to determine how WJC can best support Moldova and its Jewish community across a range of areas. A highlight of the visit was a meeting with the Prime Minister of Moldova, Natalia Gavrilita. This was the first time the community had been granted an audience with the head of government and it was an invaluable opportunity to raise issues of importance to the Jewish people in the country. See the full report on the delegation's activities [here](#).

WJC President Ronald S. LAUDER discussed his involvement in Jewish life on the [podcast](#) of Rabbi Ammi Hirsch, who hosts conversations unpacking current events through the lens of Jewish wisdom.

NextGen kicked off the second annual Jewish Youth Assembly (JYA) on the first of two successive weekends. The JYA brought together 85 students from over 20 countries. Participants had delegation meetings, in which they met with Jewish community representatives from Canada, Chile, Germany, Lithuania, South Africa, and the United Arab Emirates to gain an understanding of the unique traditions, cultures, and challenges facing Jews around the world. They met with staff experts, including ROSE, to discuss and begin drafting resolutions on contemporary challenges facing Jewish society. Following the meetings, students were divided into six committee groups to address some of the challenges facing the Jewish people such as antisemitism and online hate, the importance of preserving the memory of the Holocaust, and Jewish unity. The student delegates then drafted and adopted resolutions addressing these challenges.

HOLOCAUST LEGACY

#WeRemember Campaign

To mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day (January 27), WJC once again conducted its #WeRemember campaign, which continues to expand its reach from year to year. Below is a summary of the activities that took place around the world in the context of the campaign.

Global: Highlights

In describing the significance of collective acts of remembrance, WJC President LAUDER noted, "Antisemitism around the globe continues to surge as the number of Holocaust survivors, the last living witnesses to the atrocities of World War II, continues to diminish. This is why the [World Jewish Congress' #WeRemember campaign](#) has taken on increased importance. All of us share the responsibility to preserve the memory of the victims and ensure that the past is never forgotten."

- At the Reichstag building in Berlin, the site of Hitler's rise to political prominence, which today houses Germany's parliament, a large display bore the campaign slogan #WeRemember.
- In New York City, home to the largest Jewish community outside Israel, the city hall and other buildings were lit up in yellow. Digital display boards throughout the city showcased facts about the Holocaust, and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey illuminated both the George Washington Bridge and One World Trade Center.
- Additional displays appeared across Canada, Latin America and European capitals that include Athens, Stockholm, Prague, and Zagreb.
- A remembrance ceremony took place at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, together with WJC.
- 40 JDs in 20 countries conducted embassy meetings in 2022 on behalf of WJC to invite their diplomatic contacts to participate in the campaign, leading to several successful outcomes.

NextGen: Highlights

- [Lauder Fellow Ábel Keszler](#) succeeded in motioning the Scottish parliament to recognize and participate in the campaign, as well as gather students from four major universities in Scotland on 27 January for a special International Holocaust Remembrance Day event.

Israel: Highlights

- Images of Holocaust survivors illuminated the walls of Jerusalem's Old City.
- In Tel Aviv, the skyscrapers of the Azrieli Center lit up the skies with the campaign's message.
- El Al shared Holocaust-related resources with its passengers via QR codes in connection with the #WeRemember initiative.

Latin America: Highlights

LAJC carried out the #WeRemember campaign with the participation of hundreds of institutions, authorities, and politicians, as well as diplomats from the Israeli embassies in Argentina, Chile, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Peru and from the German embassies in Buenos Aires and Santo Domingo.

- [Leading](#) influencers from Argentina and Uruguay told stories of survivors and Righteous Among the Nations [to share](#) on LAJC's social media and [invited](#) people to participate in the campaign.
- [Holocaust survivors](#) participated in the campaign, urging others to remember the past in order to protect the future.
- The #WeRemember slogan was displayed on several screens on the main streets and buildings of Panama and Uruguay.
- The major football teams of Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay participated in the campaign.

- LAJC published 10 op-eds in major newspapers in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

Sweden: Highlights

- The WJC Nordic Office, in cooperation with the Raoul Wallenberg Academy, the Swedish History Museum, and the Swedish Holocaust Museum participated in the #WeRemember campaign by projecting “Heroes,” a video and sound production, on the façade of the Swedish History Museum in advance of International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

ROSENSAFT, along with former Lauder Fellow COMITE, the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, and EHRENBURG joined Manhattan Borough President Levine at a press conference at which he called for the [removal of two plaques](#) honoring World War II war criminals Philippe Petain and Pierre Laval from the streets of New York City, something for which WJC had been advocating since 2017, when EHRENBURG, MEYERS, and SOMMER initiated the campaign. The two plaques, installed in 2004, commemorate tickertape parades held for both men in 1931 as, respectively, the commander of French forces during World War I and Prime Minister of France. However, later, both men headed the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy regime in France and were responsible for sending tens of thousands of Jews to their deaths.

WJC organized [training sessions](#) for UNESCO and UN Geneva ambassadors and diplomats, respectively, on the topics of combating antisemitism and safeguarding the memory of the Holocaust. The first session, which took place soon after International Holocaust Remembrance Day, brought together some 40 people, including ambassadors and diplomats from 15 delegations, as well as UNESCO experts and Jewish community leaders in Paris. The seminar was organized at the Memorial de la Shoah in Paris together with the UNESCO delegations of the EU, France, and Germany; UNESCO; and CRIF. The second event was organized in cooperation with the UN missions in Geneva of the EU, France, Germany, and Israel. The day-long seminar took place at the Maison d’Izieu, a house that serves as a memorial honoring the memory of 44 Jewish children and 7 adults who were arrested there and deported to Auschwitz in April 1944. Some 40 ambassadors and diplomats from 26 delegations participated in a very moving tour of the house as well as the permanent exhibit. They heard from Samuel Pintel, a Holocaust survivor who spent time in the house between late 1943 and early 1944. The visit concluded with a presentation of contemporary forms of antisemitism and the educational methods used at the Maison d’Izieu.

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

Upon learning of the passing of [Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI](#), WJC President LAUDER extended condolences on behalf of WJC and noted: “I was honored to meet with Pope Benedict three times at the Vatican, and each time was deeply moved by his affection and friendship for the Jewish people, his commitment to remembrance of the Shoah, and his unambiguous condemnation of Holocaust denial in any form.”

ISRAEL ENGAGEMENT

WJC-Israel and the WJC JD Corps brought together important representatives of Israeli society to discuss and promote [equality in leadership in Israel](#). Participants explored where Israel stands today and examined ways in which the younger generation in particular can advance the cause of equality in Israeli workplaces and elsewhere. The speakers included AVITAL, who shared with the audience her own experiences and discussed the presence of women in political life. Israeli JDs NOVERSHTERN, RODAL-SPIELER, and ROITMAN were among the speakers and ROSENBERG moderated.

WJC hosted a dinner in Brussels in honor of Israeli President Isaac Herzog, in cooperation with H.E. Idit Rosenzweig-Abu, Ambassador of Israel to Belgium and Luxembourg, and H.E. Mark Regev, Head of the Mission of the State of Israel to the EU and NATO. The dinner was organized in the context of President Herzog's official trip to Brussels, during which he addressed the European Parliament at its plenary session and met with high-level EU officials.

JEWS FROM MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

WJC North America, together with the Foreign Ministry of Israel, the American Sephardi Federation (ASF), Bar-Ilan University, and the Center for Jewish History, cosponsored a conference on the Jewish refugees from Arab lands called "From MENA Jewish Refugees to Israeli Cultural Renaissance" to raise awareness of this aspect of Jewish history and to mark the annual day that is commemorated in Israel. Featured speakers included H.E. Gilad Erdan, Ambassador of Israel to the UN, and David Dangoor, President of the ASF. Topics of discussion included the plight of Syrian, Yemeni, and Iraqi Jewry, as well as discovering Jewish roots in Islamic countries.

GLOSSARY OF NAMES AND TERMS

LAUDER - WJC President Ronald S. Lauder

COMITE - Alison Comite, Former Lauder Fellow (US)

EHRENBERG – Betty Ehrenberg, Executive Director, WJC USA & WJC North America

HERZOG – Ernest Herzog, Executive Director, WJC Operations

JUSE – Viktorija Juse, Director, WJC Eastern & Central Europe

PAPOUŠEK – Petr Papoušek, President of Federation of the Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic and WJC Vice President

ROSENSAFT – Menachem Rosensaft, WJC Associate Executive Vice President & General Counsel

SAMOKOVLJA – Maya Cimeša Samokovlija, Executive Director, WJC Community Relations

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The full monthly reports previously submitted to the Executive Committee can be found here:

- [November 2022](#)
- [December 2022](#)
- [January 2023](#)
- [February 2023](#)