



The
**Anglosphere
Society**

Ronald S. Lauder remarks
The Crisis for Christians in the Middle East
Sheen Center for Thought and Culture, New York
Dec. 5, 2016

It is truly an honor to be part of a group that includes Cardinal Dolan, General Odierno, Nina Shea, and all of you here today.

What brings us together is a serious subject that should be on front pages of every newspaper in the world.

Strangely, you can't find it anywhere in mainstream media. No headlines. No stories. We don't hear the pundits discussing it on MSNBC, or CNN. One of the greatest crimes of our time is taking place, and no one seems to know about it. Why is that?

Two summers ago, after watching the slaughter of Christians in the Middle East, and seeing absolutely no response from world leaders, I wrote an Op Ed in the New York Times titled: "Who Will Speak Up for the Christians?"

I have to tell you that of all the pieces I have written over the years, not one attracted the same attention or reaction. It seems to me that people really want to do something about this, but prime ministers and presidents around the world are silent.

By the way, the irony that it took someone Jewish to speak up for Christians was not lost on many of the readers. But that actually made perfect sense because Jews know what happens when the world is silent to mass slaughter. We learned that lesson the hard way.

One month ago, on November 9th, we passed the 78th anniversary of Kristallnacht.

That was the night in 1938 when Hitler began a 2-day attack against Jews throughout Germany and Austria. Jewish homes and businesses were ransacked. Jews were beaten and killed in the streets. Over 1,000 synagogues were burned to the ground. One thousand synagogues!

Police and firemen stood by and were ordered not to put out the flames. But that wasn't even the worst part of Kristallnacht. The worst part was the world's reaction. The leaders of the Western democracies said almost nothing and they did even less. This was in the face of one of the worst pogroms of all time. The silence was deafening.

And Hitler was watching. He was always measuring the world's response to everything he did – that's what dictators do. They're not stupid. They're bullies. And they will only go as far as they are allowed.

So when Hitler saw that the world didn't care, he knew that he had a free hand to do whatever he wanted with the Jews of Germany and Austria, and eventually all of Europe.

The world responded to Kristallnacht with silence. And world silence led to the Holocaust.

I was once walking through Auschwitz with Nobel Laureate and Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, and Elie told me something I have never forgotten. He said everyone thinks that the opposite of love is hate. It's not. The opposite of love is indifference.

Today, we are witnessing the world's complete indifference to the slaughter and displacement of Christians throughout the Middle East and parts of Africa and I don't understand this.

There is a phrase that has come out of the Holocaust. You've all heard it. It's a phrase I don't like and one that I wish would just go away. "Never Again."

We've heard it said at rallies, in print, in conversations. The fact is that since 1945, genocide has occurred again and again. It's happened throughout the decades and now it is happening to Christians throughout the Middle East and Africa. So, for me, the phrase "Never Again" has become hollow. They are meaningless words.

I am very glad that Secretary of State John Kerry has formally called the crimes of ISIS correctly. He's called it genocide. But you can't just declare a crime to be genocide and think the job is done. Words must be backed up by actions. We saw that 75 years ago. If there is nothing behind the words, they are meaningless and they will accomplish nothing.

I know that Nina Shea will go into detail about the U.N. refugee camps that have been targeted, that the aid that is promised has never been delivered. But my focus and the reason that I am here today is to remind all of you of what silence brings. It brings more suffering. It brings more death. And it brings more shame on the rest of the world.

And for anyone who says "The issue is just too complicated", I really see nothing complicated about it at all. There are no moral ambiguities here. We are talking about good and evil. And that cannot be more clear.

My deepest hope is that this conference energizes all of us to actually do something to stop this mass murder. And when I say "do something" what I am really saying is do something beyond just spouting words.

We have a new president coming into office in less than two months, and a new secretary of state, and I think all of us should contact them before January 20th. Contact your Congressman. Contact your Senator. Contact anyone you think can help.

We should tell them that we are not just requesting a new policy of involvement from the United States to stop the slaughter of Christians, we are demanding it!

Trust me. If the State Department would have been more assertive in 1941, then millions of people would not have perished in the Holocaust.

Remember, dictators are bullies. And bullies are cowards. That is why it is up to all of us to summon the courage to do something about the slaughter of Christians, and do it now.

As president of the World Jewish Congress, I know how important it is to have an organization with the access to leaders around the world and to discuss matters like these. This is what I would like to do. I would like the World Jewish Congress to partner with Catholic organizations, because together, we can do so much more.

Years from now, our children and grandchildren will ask why this was allowed to happen. I want all of us to be able to tell them that we did everything we could and that is how this crime was finally stopped. And that could be one of the most valuable lessons we will ever teach them.

I want to thank the organizers for putting this program together today. I want to thank all of you for being here.

God bless all of you. And God bless the work that you are doing.

Thank you.