Press Release
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European leaders accused of silence as Chief Rabbi warns of growing threats to Jewish life

Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama receives the Lord Jakobovits Prize at the European Parliament in Brussels

Brussels, 16 November 2026 – The President of the Conference of European Rabbis (CER), Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, warned that Jewish communities were becoming increasingly isolated across Europe, accusing political leaders of failing to confront rising antisemitism and urging governments to take decisive, practical action against extremism.

Speaking Monday evening at a ceremony in the European Parliament in Brussels, where he presented the prestigious Lord Jakobovits Prize to Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt criticised European leaders' reluctance to defend Jewish communities and Israel amid growing hostility.

"Across Europe, Jewish communities are becoming increasingly isolated. Synagogues need armed protection. Jewish schools resemble fortresses. Jews are advised to conceal the outward signs of their faith," he told the gathering. "Our published manifesto sets out clear and practical steps that must be taken. Higher fences are not the answer. Too many European leaders have remained silent, and others have preferred the applause of the crowd to the responsibility of leadership."

The Lord Jakobovits Prize was awarded to Prime Minister Rama in recognition of his support for Jewish communities, outspoken opposition to antisemitism and defence of Israel's right to security, at a time when relatively few European leaders have taken such positions.

Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt linked Albania's modern friendship with the Jewish people to its remarkable history during the Holocaust. When Nazi Germany occupied Albania in 1943, Muslim and Christian families sheltered Jews at great personal risk, refusing to surrender them to the occupying authorities. Albania emerged from the Second World War with a larger Jewish population than it had before the war. He paid tribute to the Albanian tradition of *besa*, a code of honour requiring promises of protection to be kept, recalling the words of Holocaust rescuer Refik Veseli: "In Albania, there are no foreigners, only friends."

"The rescuers of Albania did not stand idly by," he said. "They did not ask whether the Jews were popular, whether helping them was politically convenient, or whether somebody else might intervene. They opened their doors."

In his acceptance speech, Prime Minister Edi Rama reflected on Albania's remarkable legacy of protecting Jews during the Holocaust, invoking the Albanian saying: "An Albanian house is the house of God and the house of the guest."

"What we did in the Second World War was what we were supposed to do," he said. "Germany had universities and libraries and knew what was right. We Albanians had neither universities nor libraries, but we knew what it is to be righteous."

He emphasised that those who rescued and sheltered Jews never regarded themselves as exceptional; to them, the alternative was simply unthinkable.

Drawing on this example of moral courage, Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt then turned to the wider threats confronting European democracy, condemning the violent demonstrations, attacks on police officers and destruction of businesses and public property seen recently in France, Germany and elsewhere.

"A shopkeeper who has spent thirty years building a business should not see it destroyed in thirty minutes by a mob. Attacking a police officer will not make a people freer. Smashing the institutions of society will not strengthen democracy."

He stressed that the right to peaceful protest remained fundamental, but that governments had an equal responsibility to uphold the rule of law and protect citizens against violence and intimidation.

The Chief Rabbi called on European governments to adopt the CER's seven-point manifesto, *A Call to End the Violent Hatred*, launched in Brussels in September. The programme sets out practical measures to combat extremism, including blocking extremist funding, strengthening oversight of radical institutions, confronting online incitement, preventing the glorification of terrorism and holding religious leaders accountable.

"Extremism cannot be tolerated when it comes from one quarter and condemned when it comes from another. The rule of law cannot depend on the popularity of the cause or the identity of those who break it," he warned.

Chief Rabbi Goldschmidt specifically invited Albania, under Prime Minister Rama's leadership, to become one of the countries leading European efforts to implement the manifesto.

Concluding his address, he invoked the Jewish teaching that calls on leaders to show courage and take responsibility when others fail to act: "Albania's rescuers during the Holocaust understood that duty when Europe descended into its darkest days. Prime Minister Rama, Europe needs leaders who understand it today."

For his part, Prime Minister Rama stressed that the work was far from over: "This prize, though, is not a medal for yesterday. There is much to do. A Europe where a Jew questions his future is Europe's failure."

The Lord Jakobovits Prize, named in honour of the late British Chief Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, has previously been awarded to European leaders including former German Chancellor Angela Merkel, King Felipe VI of Spain, French President Emmanuel Macron and former European Parliament President Antonio Tajani.

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Above (left to right): *Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, President of the Conference of European Rabbis, awarding the Lord Jakobovits Prize to Prime Minister Edi Rama of Albania, in Brussels on Monday, 16 November 2026.* **Photo credit:** Media and Information Agency (MIA)

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About the Conference of European Rabbis

The Conference of European Rabbis (CER) is the primary rabbinical alliance in Europe. It unites more than 900 religious leaders of the mainstream synagogue communities in Europe. The conference is designed to maintain and defend the religious rights of Jews in Europe and has become the voice of Judaism for the European continent.

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