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Europe's young Jews stand up for the Uighurs

Bini Guttmann

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On Monday we remembered the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz on International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Thousands of people, including politicians and celebrities, declared “Never again” and affirmed that the biggest crime in human history should never be allowed to be forgotten lest it occur again. But for us, the young Jews of Europe, remembrance must be more than an empty statement declared at vigils for our ancestors.

We act on this promise every day in the fight against rising antisemitism across Europe. And it's why we believe we need to act now in solidarity with the [Uighurs](#) in China threatened by cultural genocide.

The writer and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel teaches us: “We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim.” When it comes to the plight of the Uighurs, our history teaches us we have no choice but to take sides and be as loud as we can in the face of genocide.

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One million to three million Uighur Muslims are being held behind several layers of fences, barriers and recording devices, in vast, industrial-scale “re-education camps” in the province of Xinjiang. Testimonies from survivors recount torture, medical experiments, rape and constant surveillance. The government is persecuting China’s Muslim minority population through a ruthless campaign of brainwashing, torture and dehumanisation.

The machinery of the Chinese state, actively [aided by corporations](#) in Xinjiang and propped up by the indifference of the rest of the world, is being used silently to strip the Uighurs of their human rights. While China commits cultural genocide, the world’s silence on the issue, punctuated by the odd headline, has been deafening.

As Jews, a people who have endured genocide and statelessness, we often ask why the world was silent during our suffering. Our daily fight against rising prejudice and populism demands that we look beyond our horizons and stand up when genocide is happening. There is no excuse for silence. Declarations of “never again” are not enough; the world must act.

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Human dignity, freedom and democracy, the very values that were ingrained in our postwar constitutions, are threatened by our complicity. As Europeans we must remember our historical responsibility and stand up for those who are under attack. We still have the opportunity to shape how a world with China as a global super-power will look.

That's why the European Union of Jewish Students is calling on Europe's decision-makers to take action, put people over profit, and learn from our history. Through raising awareness and putting pressure on governments, we will be campaigning to expose China's crimes and Europe's hypocrisy.

The fight for human rights and Jewish rights is one fight, and in that spirit we say: it's time to stand up, be counted, and act to stop the Uighur cultural genocide. Never again is right now.

Bini Guttman is the president of the European Union of Jewish Students

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