

**Speech Delivered During the Memorial for the Victims of Bondi  
Beach Antisemitic Terrorist Attack at Congregation Beth Shalom,  
Modesto, CA, December 17, 2025.**

Good evening.

Matilda was ten years-old and had gone to celebrate the first night of Hanukkah with her parents, her six-year-old sister and friends. The family, who are originally from Ukraine, had moved to Australia. She was named Matilda as she was their first child born in Australia, and they couldn't think of a more Australian name for their first-born daughter. Described by her teacher as "a bright, joyful, and spirited child who brought light to everyone around her," Matilda became the youngest victim of the cowardly antisemitic attack last Sunday in Sydney, Australia.

Alexander Kleytman, a Holocaust survivor who came to Australia from Ukraine, jumped on top of his wife and shielded her from the bullets. He was among the victims of this terrorist attack. He left behind his wife of more than fifty years, two children and eleven grandchildren. Matilda and Alexander cowardly murdered for being Jewish.

Among the victims were Rabbi Eli Schlanger, Dan Elkayam, Boris and Sofia Gurman, Peter Meagher, Reuven Morrison, Rabbi Yaakov Levitan, Tibor Weitzen, Marika Pogany, and Edith Brutman.

For more than two years, the Jewish community in Australia has been under siege. Time and time again they asked the government to act and do something about it. But Prime Minister Albanese and his administration decided to ignore the calls.

When two days after the Hamas massacre in October 2023, way before Israel's response, dozens of Hamas supporters gathered at Sydney Opera House chanting "kill the Jews" and "Globalize the Intifada," Albanese's government ignored the calls. When in December 2024 a synagogue in Melbourne was torched, Albanese's government ignored the calls. And now, Matilda and Alexander, together with at least thirteen others have been cowardly murdered as a direct result of ignoring the writings on the wall.

Antisemitism has been on the rise for more than a decade, and it has taken a more radical turn in the last two years. And yet, over and over, the problem is brush to the side as if it doesn't matter or it will just go away.

When in 2016, right-wing, white supremacists marched through the streets of Charlottesville chanting “Jews will not replace us,” it was said, and I quote, “there are good people marching there too.” And in 2018, a gunman attacked the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh killing eleven congregants. When you ignore and even justify the antisemitic chants, it ends with the murder of Matilda.

When on October 7, 2023, immediately after the vicious massacre perpetrated by Hamas in Israel, which included the rape of young women, the kidnapping of hundreds of people, and the murder of whole families, pseudo-intellectuals in elite and not so-elite institutions openly declare to “feel exhilarated” by the massacre and when they depicted this as an act of resistance, it ends with the murder of Matilda.

When the legitimate criticism of Israel’s government actions and the condemnation of Israel’s policies cross the line and is transformed into the denial of the right of Israel to exist and the right of the Jewish people to their homeland, and it becomes a call for the destruction of Israel from “the river to the Sea,” it ends with the murder of Matilda.

When institutions and organizations, particularly those on the left, which have historically been influenced by the activism and hard work of Jewish people, and have historically been a safe ground for Jews, begin to foster antisemitism, it ends with the murder of Matilda.

When members of these institutions and organizations feel embolden to express antisemitic views without any consequence and wrapped their venom in pseudo-academic and fancy rhetoric, it ends with the murder of Matilda.

When we allow the fight against antisemitism to be weaponized for political gains, to be used to encroach on our civil rights, while ignoring that many of those who say to care, have been feeding antisemitic tropes and antisemitic conspiracies, and have surrounded themselves with xenophobic individuals, it ends with the murder of Matilda.

When we are wrongly portrayed as a religious community rather than a people, and we are denied our peoplehood, even by fellow Jews who claim to be a voice for peace, it ends with the murder of Matilda.

When so-called academics deploy their intellectual poverty and apply a narrow US racial categorization that equate Jews with [quote on quote] “white people,” and therefore, [quote on quote] “privileged and oppressors” that do not deserve protection, it ends with the murder of Matilda.

This hate speech may be protected by law in this country, but it should never be protected from active social condemnation. Those expressing these views, while they may be protected by law, they should not be protected from being openly ostracized and condemned. Because when they are not, it ends with the murder of Matilda.

Antisemitism spreads like wildfire, particularly in times of political and social crises. And it seldom remains as just a discourse or hate speech. If we have learned something in our history, is that the path from “globalize the Intifada,” “from the river to the sea,” or “Jews will not replace us,” to murderous actions, is a very short one.

When antisemitism is ignored in our institutions, when it is ignored in our streets and public domains, when it is ignored in our schools and in our colleges, when antisemitism does not exist in our curricula, or when Holocaust education is at best an appendix in the school programs, or practically wiped out from college general education programs, the path towards the murder of Matilda shortens.

And for all of you who feel safe at home because this does not affect you directly, antisemitism is the canary in the coal mine. Hannah Arendt powerfully connected modern antisemitism, imperialism, and totalitarianism as interconnected “subterranean streams” in our history. The rise of antisemitism generally signals that storm clouds are gathering. It has been the prelude to tragic times. And it should put all of us on alert.

The two individuals who committed the terrorist attack were not monsters or aliens; they were humans like you and I. Embedded and emboldened in a murderous ideology; they carried out their heinous and cowardly act. In the same way that the Pittsburgh gunman took to heart the message that “Jews will not replace us;” these murderous cowards feasted on the rising antisemitism, they globalized the Intifada, and they took advantage of the blindness and moral weakness of our leaders.

And yet, among the dark clouds a light shone. Ahmed al Ahmed, a forty-three-years-old, Syrian born immigrant, father of two daughters, risked his life, disarmed one of the terrorists and saved lives. “KI MATZIL NEFESH, MATZIL OLAM KULO;” “whoever saves one life, saves the world entire.” This is what the Talmud teaches us, and it is repeated in the Quran. A righteous among nations, Ahmed al Ahmed saved the world. But the path towards righteousness cannot wait for these heroic moments.

To save the world we need to stop the wildfire of antisemitism. Those who spread it, may be protected by law, but they should not be protected from ostracism and social condemnation. We need to reduce the terrain in which this wildfire spreads. We cannot be indifferent to hate, to xenophobia, racism, or antisemitism. We cannot allow our educational systems at all levels, school and college, to keep ignoring this, to keep having Holocaust education and antisemitism as an appendix in the curricula at best or simply ignore it. We need to hold the educational authorities accountable. We need to address the underlying social and political conditions that allow for hate to spread. We cannot accept the moral weakness and blindness of our leaders, who refuse to act, or weaponize antisemitism for their narrow political benefits. Antisemitism is the canary in the coal mine. And the canary is dead.

Thank you very much.