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In Israel, Hungary's Orbán gets praise from Netanyahu and protests at Yad Vashem



Prime Ministers Viktor Orbán, left, of Hungary and Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel meet in Jerusalem, July 19, 2018. (Kobi Gideon/Israeli Govt Press Office)

JTA (19.07.2018) — <https://bit.ly/2uA4mEk> - Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thanked his Hungarian counterpart, Viktor Orbán, for defending Israel in international forums and for being a “good friend” to his country.

Netanyahu made his remarks before the leaders met Thursday in Jerusalem on the second day of Orbán’s two-day visit. Netanyahu went to Hungary a year ago.

Meanwhile, later in the day, dozens of protesters prevented Orbán’s car from moving for several minutes following a visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and Museum. The protesters held signs reading “Never again” in Hungarian and Hebrew and shouted “Shame on you,” The Times of Israel reported.

Netanyahu has been criticized for hosting Orbán, an authoritarian who heads the far-right Fidesz party, with some citing his campaign against the Hungarian-American philanthropist George Soros that many consider obliquely anti-Semitic.

Orbán also angered Jews both in and out of Hungary when he praised Miklos Horthy, who led the country following the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after World War I. Horthy was a Hitler ally who oversaw the murder of more than 500,000 Holocaust victims together with Nazi Germany.

Netanyahu noted that Hungary sponsored a statement in the United Nations Human Rights Council condemning anti-Semitism and inaugurated the renovated synagogue in Subotica after allocating millions of dollars to renovate Jewish houses of worship.

"In Hungary there is no tolerance for anti-Semitism, and all of the Jewish citizens in Hungary are under the protection of the government," Orban told reporters before the start of the meeting. "We are proud that in Hungary, self-identifying Jews who celebrate and preserve Jewish tradition can feel safe."

After meeting with Netanyahu, Orban met with President Reuven Rivlin in Jerusalem.

"I know what you are doing against anti-Semitism. I know the efforts," Rivlin told Orban during the meeting. "But we have to remember, when we say 'Never again' — neo-fascism and neo-fascist groups are a real danger to the very existence of the free world."

Orban is not scheduled to meet with any Palestinian leaders during his visit.

At Yad Vashem, Orban laid a wreath in the Hall of Remembrance. Later, police removed the protesters who had detained the Hungarian leader. The protesters had also chided Yad Vashem for hosting Orban.

Orban was scheduled to have dinner Thursday with the Netanyahus at the prime minister's residence in Jerusalem. On Friday he is scheduled to visit the Western Wall in Jerusalem before returning to Hungary.

Church of Scientology claims victory after Hungarian court rules raid was illegal

VOA (01.03.2018) - <https://www.voanews.com/a/church-of-scientology-claims-victory-after-hungarian-court-rules-raid-was-illegal/4275918.html> - The Church of Scientology is claiming victory after a Hungarian court declared a government raid last year at its Budapest headquarters was illegal and that materials seized must be returned.

"This is also a victory for religious freedom and human rights for our church," the church said in a statement.

The National Investigation Bureau raided the church's headquarters in October, as part of an investigation into possible exploitation of personal information and other criminal acts. The Central Court of Buda ordered the return of "hundreds of boxes of unlawfully seized documents and IT tools", after ruling the raid and seizure were "coercive and restrictive," the church said.

The Hungarian government officially recognizes 32 churches, but the Church of Scientology's state-recognized status was revoked when a controversial law took effect in 2012. As a result, The Church of Scientology, along with numerous other churches, are limited in their ability to seek tax-deductible donations and receive church-related subsidies.

The bureau declined to release more information shortly after the raid occurred because the investigation was still underway, nor has it commented on the court's decision.
