

Ladies and gentlemen,

I got to know Gabriel Bach here in Israel in 2009.  
I was very impressed by him.  
And we soon developed a close personal relationship.

He told me back then about his experiences with the Nazis.  
I was accompanied by personal security officers on my trip.  
They listened to us from a few metres away, and kept moving closer  
so they could hear him better. “We could have done with something like that  
during our training,” they told me afterwards.

Gabriel Bach and I stayed in touch from then on.  
We developed a tradition that he called me every year  
at exactly 4 o’clock in the afternoon on New Year’s Eve, and we talked to each  
other about things we had experienced – in politics and in our lives.

Gabriel Bach was born in Germany in 1927, in Halberstadt.  
I saw him there, but in other towns and cities as well.  
He sought out opportunities to talk to young people, for example in schools.  
And he offered them an authentic first-hand account, of the kind that soon no  
one will be able to provide, of how Jewish people were persecuted, imprisoned  
and murdered by German fascists. That was always very important to him.

2011 marked the 50th anniversary of the Eichmann trial. Gabriel Bach came to  
the Federal Republic of Germany and gave speeches, including at the  
Topography of Terror in Berlin and the Fritz Bauer Institute in Frankfurt am  
Main. He called for continued efforts to fully confront the Nazis’ crimes and  
bring the perpetrators to justice.

I received him and his wife at the German Bundestag and showed them around  
the buildings; in particular, we visited the memorials which offer a reminder of  
the era of German fascism. There are a great many of them.  
For example, books containing the names of all Members of Parliament who  
were hunted and murdered by the Nazis. Not only Communists, but members of  
all democratic parties. I am told that a photo of our tour hung in Gabriel Bach’s  
home from then on.

Naturally, he also told me about Fritz Bauer, with whom he worked closely in  
confronting Nazi injustice. It was thanks in no small part to Bauer that  
Eichmann, a leading Nazi and murderer of Jews, was captured in South America

in his post-war exile and brought to Jerusalem to stand trial. Gabriel Bach was one of the prosecutors.

In the German Bundestag, I specialise in internal affairs.  
I work in support of civil rights and democracy  
and against right-wing extremism, racism and antisemitism.

I regularly ask the German government how many antisemitic crimes and acts of violence it has recorded. In the fourth quarter of 2022, 506 were recorded, or on average 5 and a half each day, and the trend is upwards.

Hannah Arendt once warned, with regard to the era of fascism and the Holocaust: The seemingly impossible has happened, and what has happened can happen again.  
Gabriel Bach worked to ensure it would not, and he reinforced my determination to do so as well.

Hatred of Jewish people is rife in day-to-day life – across Europe as a whole. Antisemitism must not be an issue that is discussed only on days of remembrance. Better education is also needed to raise awareness, for example for police officers, lawyers, journalists and teachers.

Moreover: most children in Germany first learn something about Jewish people when they are already adolescents and covering the Holocaust in their history lessons. That is too late, and too one-dimensional. For it means that Jewish people are portrayed only as a group of victims. That is not enough, and it doesn't do justice to Jewish culture and Jewish life.

In Gabriel Bach's eyes, remembrance, democracy and justice were intertwined, especially as they must be continuously revitalised and defended, even today.

In this spirit, and with this aspiration in mind, I wish to pay tribute to Gabriel Bach.  
Thank you.

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