Hungary takes EU lead in announcing boycott of upcoming Durban conference

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<https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/hungary-is-first-eu-country-to-announce-boycott-of-durban-conference-672173>

Hungary has become the first EU country to announce it will not attend this year’s UN event marking the 20th anniversary of the [World Conference on Racism in Durban](https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/uk-to-boycott-durban-conference-over-antisemitism-671616), which featured antisemitic messages.

“The Hungarian government declared a zero-tolerance policy against antisemitism and is fully committed to guarantee the safety of the Jewish people that we also consistently represent in the international fora,” Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjártó wrote in a letter to Mark Weitzman, director of government affairs at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.

“In this spirit, Hungary does not support the Durban process and voted against the resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 31 December 2020 deciding on the convening of a high-level meeting on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action,” he wrote.

The 2001 [World Conference Against Racism](https://www.jpost.com/opinion/20-years-after-the-uns-durban-event-the-antisemitism-continues-to-grow-671910), is also known as Durban I, after the South African city in which it was held. It was a hotbed of antisemitic and anti-Israel messages and was where the accusation of apartheid against Israel was popularized.

An early draft of the resolution adopted at the Governmental Conference at Durban equated Zionism with racism, leading the US and Israel to withdraw from the conference. The final draft did not condemn Zionism as racist, but the Israel-Palestinian conflict is the only one listed specifically under the section on “victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.”

The NGO Forum at Durban approved a resolution calling Israel a “racist apartheid state” and accusing it of genocide. Antisemitic materials, including The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, were distributed at the event.

Durban conference secretary-general Mary Robinson refused to accept the document over the language, saying that “there was horrible antisemitism present.”

The US did not participate in the Durban II and III follow-up conferences in 2009 and 2011, respectively, because the original conference “became a session through which folks expressed antagonism toward Israel in ways that were oftentimes completely hypocritical and counterproductive,” president Barack Obama said in 2009.

Israel, Canada, Italy, Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Poland also boycotted the conference. In 2011, for Durban III, the number of countries boycotting rose to 14.

Last week, the UK said it was joining the US, Canada and Australia in boycotting Durban IV this September, “following historic concerns regarding antisemitism.”

France is also expected to pull out, a diplomatic source said last month, but it has not yet issued an official statement. A German Foreign Ministry official said Berlin had yet to decide on the matter.

Earlier this month, Ambassador to the UN Gilad Erdan said he plans to hold an alternative event to the Durban conference that will deal with combating racism, including antisemitism.