

EXCLUSIVE

Addressing WJC, Axel Springer CEO Mathias Döpfner declares: ‘Europe must become more Jewish’

The publisher doubled down on his support for Israel and Jews, declaring himself a Zionist and lamenting rise in antisemitism

By [Judah Ari Gross](#) May 11, 2026



Axel Springer CEO Mathias Döpfner addresses the World Jewish Congress Governing Board meeting in Geneva on May 11, 2026.

GENEVA — Mathias Döpfner, CEO of global publishing firm Axel Springer, doubled down on his and his company’s commitments to the Jewish People and the State of Israel on Monday morning in an address to the World Jewish Congress, condemning the rise of anti-Zionism and Jew hatred around the world.

Laying out a five-part plan to address antisemitism, Döpfner called for “zero tolerance” to antisemitism and expelling those who espouse it “wherever legally possible.” He demanded that social media companies firmly address the issue, and condemned the so-called “woke” ideology of splitting the world into victims and perpetrators, calling it a “Trojan horse for antisemitism and Islamism.” The Bonn-born publisher also stressed the need to commemorate and educate about the Holocaust.

Perhaps most curiously, Döpfner called for European countries to encourage and facilitate Jewish immigration to the continent, noting that the Jewish population by capita is 10 times smaller than that of the United States.

“Europe should introduce preferential immigration and naturalization for Jewish families. It is in Europe’s own best interests to change that,” he said.

“It is more than a gesture. If the idea of a multicultural society is to be taken seriously, there is an urgent need for greater diversity in Europe’s Christian and increasingly Muslim-influenced societies today. To put claims of tolerance to the test, it is important to make Jewish culture more visible,” Döpfner said. “Europe must become more Jewish. Again: This would not only be a moral gesture — it would be a wise, forward-looking investment in education, creativity, value creation and social stability.”

Döpfner’s remarks in favor of Jewish immigration to Europe come amid rising emigration from Israel and as many Jews around the world consider relocation in light of rising antisemitism in their communities.

Döpfner served as the guest of honor at the World Jewish Congress’ three-day gathering this week, which [kicked off](#) on Sunday. The organization, which is celebrating its 90th anniversary, is holding its annual Governing Board meeting, focused primarily on coordinating the collective Jewish communal response to rising antisemitism across the globe.

Döpfner lamented the tolerance of antisemitism among cultural elites, accusing them of hypocrisy.

“This new-old antisemitism is particularly insidious at places where one would least expect it: at elite universities, in theaters, in museums, in supposedly cultured circles. Of all people, artists, musicians, painters, writers, actors, and intellectuals — who are supposedly so finely attuned in the fight against authoritarianism and intolerance — have, not all but far too many, become cold-blooded opportunists and enablers of historical amnesia,” he said.

“Perhaps that is what strikes me as most disconcerting about the reactions and statements of so many friends in the cultural sector: the coldness and heartlessness with which these aesthetes pander to the Islamist-influenced zeitgeist,” he said.

Döpfner noted that this extended to journalism as well and called for publishers to “take more responsibility” in addressing it and ensuring a diversity of opinion, noting the near uniformity of anti-Israel bias among media outlets. “We should make sure there is more balance, make sure there is more plurality, that there is more fairness,” he said.

Döpfner added that Axel Springer hopes to expand *The Daily Telegraph*’s coverage to the United States in light of what he described as a dearth of non-left-wing outlets there, save for those owned by News Corps.

“We see potential for geographical expansion, particularly to the United States, where exactly this value set, in the form center-right quality journalism, seems to be almost non-existent,” he said. “We have *The Wall Street Journal*, but that’s it. Everything else is on the other side of the spectrum and with other values.”

Döpfner, who acquired *Politico* in 2021 and is in the process of purchasing the British *Daily Telegraph*, has emerged as one of the most vocal and strident supporters in the publishing world of the Jewish community and Israel. This has continued the longstanding commitments of Axel Springer and its founder of the same name, who served as a key ally and supporter of Israel in its early years.

Answering questions about the international media landscape after his speech, Döpfner noted that Axel Springer’s “super transparent” value of supporting the State of Israel has rankled some employees of *Politico*, who have raised concerns that this constitutes a form of bias, a claim that Döpfner firmly rejected.

When these issues were raised, Döpfner recalled, “We said, ‘OK, look for another company to work for.’” In a recording of his call with *Politico* employees, which was [shared](#) with *Jewish Insider* last week, Döpfner indeed told staff that “if the essentials are not attractive, if the essentials are not a magnet, if the essentials are not a reason why to work for this company, I can only recommend to work for other companies.”

Döpfner was also dismissive of governmental efforts to combat antisemitism throughout Europe, including in his native Germany.

“I never want to give or hear another ‘Never Again’ speech. ‘Never Again’ has become lip service. If it were true, there would have been no Hamas terror on Oct. 7[, 2023]. If it were true, there would be no ‘Death to the Jews’ chants on European streets. If it were true, there

would be no fear among Jewish parents of sending their children to school wearing a *kippah*,” he said.

“In Germany alone, there are now 17 antisemitism commissioners, at the national and state levels, with legions of staff. An entire bureaucracy is dedicated full-time to soothing consciences. ‘Look at how much we’re doing!’” he said. “In theory, this works splendidly; in practice, it falls short.”

In his remarks, which were well received, the dozens of international Jewish communal leaders in attendance at the conference, Döpfner repeatedly referred to himself as a “Zionist,” which he stressed is “not a dirty word.”

“Why should Zionism be an idea and a goal that only Jews can embrace? I am a *goy*. And I am a Zionist. With all my heart, out of conviction, and with passion. Israel is the only imperfect democracy in a region dominated by fairly perfect — that is, very brutal — dictatorships. Israel is a bridgehead of Western values in the Middle East. Israel is a land of knowledge and science. Despite everything, a land of freedom and tolerance,” he said.

Döpfner added that this does not mean that Israel is perfect or beyond reproach. “Has Israel’s government made mistakes? Yes, certainly. Many,” he said, but adding that this does not negate its right to exist.

“A people’s right to live in safety. The right to defend oneself. The right not to be dependent on the mercy of others again. Anyone who questions these rights is not only questioning Israel but the principles upon which free societies are founded,” Döpfner said. “That is why I am a Zionist. And also because — as a child of the post-war German generation — I want Jews to never again have to fear for their lives simply because they are Jewish. I want Jews, just like Christians and Muslims and Buddhists and Hindus, to be fundamentally safe and free. Everywhere in the world. And above all, always in Israel. That is why I am a Zionist.” After his 33-minute speech, Döpfner received a standing ovation from the crowd, and WJC Board Chair Chella Safra presented him with a silver *yad*, a ritual pointer for reading from the Torah, saying: “You are a man of letters, and you know the power of words.”