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## **VOICE OF VICTIM SILENCED AT 'ANTI-RACISM' CONFERENCE**

**Durban, South Africa (September 3, 2001)** – Willy Weisz, a leading Austrian member of B'nai B'rith International, was invited to the United Nations Conference Against Racism in Durban in order to explain to delegates what it means to be the victim of antisemitism in his country of Austria.

He did not expect he would be the subject of a succession of vicious antisemitic assaults within the very compound of the United Nations itself and under the indifferent gaze of U.N. officials. When Weisz tried to explain his experiences in Nazi-controlled Austria to Palestinian Arab delegates, they shouted him down.

Weisz, along with 100 other Jewish delegates, was confronted with hundreds of screaming Palestinian and other Arab-Islamic delegates who used Nazi-style propaganda and hate literature to vilify Jewish and Israeli delegates to the Conference Against Racism.

“It was as though I had been transported back to Vienna in 1938,” said Weisz. “I have been mortified by the growth of right-wing politics and neo-Nazism in Europe, and was looking forward to this conference as a way of explaining the true effects of antisemitism. I never believed that the United Nations would allow antisemitism and neo-Nazism to take place within its own conference against racism,” he continued.

Weisz was to be part of the Voices of Victims discussion, called by the United Nations in order for the victims of racism, discrimination, hatred and persecution to be heard. The concept was to enable real people to speak with their own voices about bigotry they have faced in their homelands.

“I came from a nation – Austria – that has seen a massive upsurge in antisemitism, in neo-Nazism, in hatred of refugees and in xenophobia. I believed that by coming to this conference, I would be able to explain to others in an atmosphere of mutual empathy what I have experienced. I believed that my voice would be heard.

“Yet before I even had a chance to begin, the voices of hatred and contempt have drowned out any prospect of rational debate. This conference against racism has turned into a racist conference,” he said.

B'nai B'rith International – with members in 58 countries including the United States, Israel, and South Africa – is an official U.N. non-governmental organization (NGO). Its delegation, with the other Jewish NGOs, walked out of the Durban meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 4.