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Special interview:

## UK Chief Rabbi 'concerned about Labor, anti-Semitism growing'

'Anti-Semitism on rise, most of all we're worried about Labour Party,' Rabbi Mirvis says. 'We fear government unfriendly to Israel.'

Contact Editor Yoni Kempinski - Antwerp, 14/05/19 17:09



Britain's Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis has been attending the biennial convention of the Conference of European Rabbis in Antwerp, Belgium this week.

In an interview with *Arutz Sheva*, Rabbi Mirvis explains the importance of the conference: "This conference is absolutely brilliant; I've been coming to the conference of European Rabbis since 1986. At that time, we had seventy rabbis, only from western Europe. At this one I think there's close to three hundred rabbis. The





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majority are from eastern Europe. We've seen a miracle in front of our own eyes: It's the development of Judaism on this continent.

"We've come to celebrate what we have in common, there are many lonely rabbis from isolated communities. This conference gives an opportunity to connect with other rabbis, to share dilemmas, to share success stories, and that opportunity for togetherness, bonding, certainly strengthens what we do wherever we are."

***If over the years you heard stories from other rabbis about anti-Semitism, this year has it become more relevant for you in the UK?***

"Unfortunately that is the case. There are two parallel narratives that are happening for us in Europe: The good is getting better and the bad is getting worse. Unfortunately you're right, the bad is getting worse."

***If the voters want the Labour Party they will get in; what can you do and what are you doing regarding the threat of anti-Semitism from this party?***

"History will show that this has been our top priority. That we are doing whatever we can, both in the eyes of the public and behind the scenes in order to ensure that anti-Semitism will be neutralized, and in order to guarantee that whichever government leads our country it will be one that will be friendly towards the Jews and the State of Israel."

***How do you answer those who deny it's anti-Semitism and say it's only criticism of Israel?***

"When one is negating the right of a people to have its own country under its own sovereignty, which at core, anti-Zionism is about, well that is outright anti-Semitism."

***Are we seeing more aliya from England like we saw from France in the wake of all the headlines?***

"The rate of aliya from Britain to Israel has been impressive. We are exceptionally proud of our olim to Israel. It continues to be a very positive feature of Jewish life in the UK.

"At the same time we've noticed that in the last three years, actually, aliya to Israel has dropped slightly. So there is no expression in reality of





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any deep concern. I hope it won't be put to the test, in the event a Labour government will come into power."

***Where are the threats coming from?***

"Well, we feel the walls closing in; it's from the far-Right, the far-Left, radical Islam, so it's from all directions, and it's a trying time.

"We're living in a challenging age. Here at the conference this afternoon I'm giving a speech which is about Millennials. The change of mindset, a new world, and how they are relating and responding to our Torah Judaism in a way that people have never related and responded before. What I find is that while people have less respect for authority, they do want a life of spirituality. They're yearning for an expression of their soul, and if we have strong communities and we teach Torah in an attractive and appealing way, they will go for it."

***As Chief Rabbi, how do you deal with the various streams in Britain?***

"We're working hard on unity among the Jewish People, and for me it's very important that there be unity, that there should be no baseless hatred, but if we're talking about anti-Semitism, there is danger from the outside. Why add danger from within?"

"We need to be proud of what we're about, respect others for what they're saying, and under the baton of cooperation we need to produce Jewish harmony."

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