

PERES, KISSINGER SHARE THEIR WISDOM AT SPIRIT OF HOPE FUNDRAISER

By [Sheri Shefa, Staff Reporter](#) - May 27, 2016



Henry Kissinger, left, Shimon Peres, centre, and Michael Oren at the Spirit of Hope fundraiser in Toronto

TORONTO – Former Israeli prime minister and president Shimon Peres sat with former U.S. secretary of state Henry Kissinger to share their wisdom about global affairs, the U.S.-Israel relationship, and the challenges of adapting to a changing world.

Almost 2,500 people gathered at the Metro Toronto Convention Center on May 26 for the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies' annual Spirit of Hope fundraiser that pulled in more than \$3.75 million for the organization.

Before delving into the hard questions, Peres took a moment to send Kissinger, whom he first met in 1961, good wishes on the occasion of his 93rd birthday, which he celebrated May 27.

“Wisdom never ages and I have a living example sitting on my right,” Peres said, adding that Kissinger is the “greatest statesman of our time and the greatest contributor to the establishment of Israel.”

Addressing what moderator Michael Oren – former Israeli ambassador to the United States and current MK – called the unraveling of the Oslo Accords and the Pax Americana, the optimistic Peres said, “it was said that Jewish and Arabs could not live together... Arafat said he’ll destroy us. King Hussein said he would not talk to Golda Meir about peace. And then what happened? We made peace with Egypt and it holds water. We made peace with Jordan and it’s still very much alive. We started to make peace with the Palestinians, but they couldn’t unite... so we have a split peace. Most Arabs are pro-peace and a minority are still terrorists... we still have work to do and we shall do it.”

Kissinger said that when he was appointed secretary of state in September 1973, in the middle of Israel’s Yom Kippur War, “there were many who wanted peace, and other’s who wanted no peace at all,” but he felt that a final peace had to come “step by step.”

“I would doubt that we could reach a final peace in one step and it may even be dangerous to pretend to do this,” he said. “I think it is important to have a peace process but it is also important to conduct it in a way that takes into account the intangibles of concerns.”

Speaking about the relationship between the U.S. and Israel, Kissinger said, “as conditions change, the leaders of each generation have to adapt... In order to maintain a long-term relationship, of course, they have to believe in a community of values, but also have to develop a community of interests... We have to understand that the world into which we are moving is radically different from the world in which we are leaving behind.”

Peres added that “there is no future of the United States. There is no future of Israel. There is a future of the entire world. Don’t you forget this.”

He said in the past, to expand a country and obtain more land, "you couldn't achieve practically nothing without armies and war... Now we are changing with the times. We are making our life, not from the land, but from science. Science does not require wars. We can become a great scientific country without taking anything from anybody. We don't need a war.

"I think today the world is at a crossroads. Some have already entered the new age. Some, not yet. And some are paying the double price – the cost of the past, of the war machine, and the cost of the future, the education of the future."

Before Peres and Kissinger took to the stage, Fred Waks, who co-chaired the event with his wife, Linda, spoke about Kissinger's role in liberating the Ahlem concentration camp in Germany.

"Not many people are aware of this, but long before Dr. Henry Kissinger was the U.S. secretary of state, he was a member of the 84th Infantry Division of the U.S. Army in World War II. In that capacity, he helped liberate the concentration camp near Hannover, Germany called Ahlem. Of the 850 Jews who had been sent to Ahlem, only 35 survived and were liberated by Dr. Kissinger's division. One of those prisoners was my father," he said, becoming emotional. "Tonight, we have the chance to thank him for saving my father's life."

Actress Emmanuelle Chriqui was MC for the evening and reggae artist Matisyahu entertained.



Matisyahu performs at the Spirit of Hope fundraiser SIGALE GOLDSTEIN PHOTO