

Wiesenthal Centre to FIA President: "Adopt IHRA Definition to Protect Motorsports from Antisemitism and Hate"

Paris, 6 December 2022

In a letter to Paris-based International Automobile Federation (FIA) President, Mohammed Ahmad Sultan Ben Sulayem, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre Director for International Relations, Dr Shimon Samuels, noted: "Since its birth, the automobile world has not been free of hate rhetoric and antisemitism."

"As a matter of fact, one of the first pioneers in the car industry sector, Henry Ford, is also infamously known for his violently antisemitic book 'The International Jew' – that is still a reference among Jew-haters worldwide. The Centre's annual monitoring of Book Fairs in Arab countries and in Europe has revealed on several occasions the presence on the shelves of this book together with other antisemitic classics, such as Hitler's 'Mein Kampf' and the Tsarist secret police forgery 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion'."

In more recent years, the former head of F1, Bernie Ecclestone, had shocked many by praising the leader of Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler, "for getting things done"... a comment that raised even more eyebrows when he added that former FIA President, Max Mosley "would have made a super Prime Minister." When questioned whether this had to do with him being the son of the British Union of Fascists founder, Oswald Mosley, Ecclestone's answer was reportedly ambiguous.

More recently, controversies have sparked around F1 pilot Kimi Raikkonen's apparent association with a fashion outlet that plays with the so-called "outlaw biker culture", thus banalizing the use of symbols that strongly resemble those of Nazism, with iron crosses, imperial eagles and lightning bolts...

Samuels continued, "Mr. President, the FIA oversees 246 national organizations, ranging from F1 to rally to touring cars... It is therefore capable of influencing the behaviour within the world of motorsport, from the leadership to the practitioners and fans."

"In order to quell antisemitism and other expressions of hate within this sizeable portion of society, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre suggests that FIA adopt the IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) Definition of Antisemitism. To date, about 40 countries worldwide have adopted this 'non-legally binding working Definition'. Furthermore, local administrations and major cities (including Paris, Frankfurt or New York...), sport clubs and federations (including, among others, British, German and Italian football leagues), universities and other institutions have endorsed the IHRA Definition. It is likewise supported by the UN, the EU, the OAS and the Council of Europe."

"The adoption of the Definition of Antisemitism by FIA, especially under your guidance, would not only be exemplary for the Federation and its members, but would also represent a significant step in the spirit of the Abraham Accords, that have the merit of normalizing relations between Israel and several Arab countries, in particular your homeland, the United Arab Emirates," concluded Samuels.

More information on the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism can be found at:

<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us> (<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us>)

<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism/adoption-endorsement> (<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism/adoption-endorsement>)

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