



Joint Statement by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights

OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism, Berlin, 28-29 April, 2004

As international human rights nongovernmental organizations, we would like to begin by reiterating our firm recognition expressed at last June's OSCE conference on anti-Semitism of anti-Semitism as a serious human rights violation, and, flowing from this recognition, our conviction of the need to monitor and report on anti-Semitism, and engage in efforts to combat it, as part of our work. As we made clear in Vienna, it should not be left to Jewish groups alone to highlight this issue and to appeal to the international community to address it. We are here today to demonstrate our firm commitment to contribute to their ongoing efforts and to help bring the issue of anti-Semitism to the mainstream human rights discourse.

We welcome the OSCE's holding a second conference specifically devoted to this important issue. But like in Vienna, we want to once again emphasize the importance of ensuring that these meetings have a concrete and lasting outcome. It is ultimately the extent to which participating states, the OSCE, and the international community as a whole leave this conference with a firm commitment to undertake specific measures to address the problems discussed here that will determine the degree to which this event goes down in history as making a meaningful contribution to the fight against anti-Semitism.

To borrow the words of European Commission President Romano Prodi, speaking at a seminar convened by the European Union on anti-Semitism in Brussels in February this year, "there is no place for anti-Semitism in a Union of diversity," and "it is indispensable for Europe to be able to count on an effective and credible system of monitoring anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia, both at national and Union level."

We therefore call on participating states to take effective measures to combat anti-Semitism by, *inter alia*, condemning unequivocally all manifestations of anti-Semitism; ensuring that their legal systems provide effective protection against all forms of anti-Semitism, including adequate sanctions and remedies; ensuring swift and thorough investigations into incidents of anti-Semitic attacks and discrimination and effective systems for monitoring and recording anti-Semitic incidents in conformity with international human rights standards; and developing awareness-raising campaigns and educational programs on anti-Semitism and the binding nature of international human rights and anti-discrimination norms for the general public and specific target groups such as young people, law enforcement, teachers and media professionals.

We also hope that this conference marks the beginning of a long-term effort on the part of the OSCE and its participating states to ensure that the OSCE as an institution has adequate capacity and resources to monitor, report, and investigate anti-Semitic attacks and other incidents targeting the Jewish community throughout the OSCE region.

A number of ongoing and upcoming initiatives relating to the fight against anti-Semitism, both within and outside the OSCE, are already underway. Among them we note the recent report by the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) on Manifestations of anti-Semitism in the EU member states, and the newly-announced initiative by the Council of Europe European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) to prepare a General Policy Recommendation on the fight against anti-Semitism.

We believe that our discussions today should place a strong emphasis on states' implementation of commitments that they have undertaken in the field of combating anti-Semitism and other forms of racism, discrimination and intolerance. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. If we recognize anti-Semitism as a serious human rights problem, we must also acknowledge that numerous obligations and commitments relevant to combating anti-Semitism, voluntarily undertaken by OSCE participating states, already exist, as do detailed, targeted recommendations formulated by international and national monitoring bodies tasked with assessing and reviewing states' compliance with these obligations and commitments.

In the context of focusing on implementation, we would like to reaffirm our suggestion put forward at the OSCE meeting on racism, xenophobia and discrimination held in Vienna last September, that the OSCE take the lead in convening an inter-agency meeting, bringing together relevant actors at the national and international levels to set up a process to review – and identify gaps and shortcomings regarding – states' implementation of their commitments pertaining to combating anti-Semitism.

As part of this process, a thorough review should be undertaken regarding states' compliance with recommendations relevant to this issue made by expert bodies such as ECRI, the EUMC, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), and other UN bodies, as well as the OSCE's own institutions, including the Office of the High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM), the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief. The shortcomings identified with respect to each state's performance in meeting its commitments – as well as best practices, if any – should be made public, as they would clearly form a crucial basis for determining and articulating what follow-up measures are necessary to bridge the gap between promises and the reality on the ground.

We are confident that such an initiative would form a valuable contribution toward efforts to highlight anti-Semitism as a serious human rights problem, and to identify key measures that all states should undertake to effectively combat it.