

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working Session 10

5 October 2009

**Statement by the European Jewish Congress**

Mr Moderator, distinguished representatives, some progress has been made in combating antisemitism during the past year.

Parliamentarians and representatives of governments met in London in February this year to agree the London Declaration on Combating Antisemitism in which they committed themselves, and the institutions they represent, to initiating important practical steps including challenging antisemitism wherever it occurs, upholding international commitments on combating antisemitism, reaffirmation of United Nations, OSCE and European Union commitments, taking necessary legal action against the broadcast of antisemitic material in all forms of media, legislating, establishing parliamentary scrutiny panels, and instituting education and training initiatives for officials of criminal justice agencies and the judiciary.

Second, a number of OSCE Member States have taken the first steps in banning, or otherwise prohibiting the activities of extremist groups and political parties that promote hatred of Jews, and of recent migrants and the Roma and Sinti peoples.

Third, increasing numbers of Member States are committed to Holocaust remembrance, in some cases by joining the International Task Force on Holocaust Remembrance, and in others by instituting educational programmes in order that young people should learn where racism leads to, if unchecked.

But these moves, at the highest level, are still not sufficient. We saw in the first quarter of this year the enormous spill over of tension from the Middle East after Israel moved into Gaza to put an end to the continued rocket bombardment of its southern towns. This resulted in a wave of antisemitic incidents, including arson attacks on synagogues, assaults on Jewish individuals, desecration of cemeteries and the vandalism of Jewish property and Holocaust monuments. Many attacks featured traditional antisemitic motifs, but what really marked the period were the intensive and violent attacks, which showed a high degree of mobilisation and coordination.

Jewish communities and state agencies know that extremist Islamists were the organising force in most cases, but they were joined by other extremists from the far left and the far right as well as so called 'human rights' activists.

Authoritative sources estimate that close to 1000 violent incidents took place in January alone, the highest number ever recorded in such a short space of

time. What characterised many public manifestations was the equation of Israel's reaction and of Zionism, to Nazism and the bestiality of the Hitlerite regime. Law enforcement agencies and Jewish organisations recorded many, many examples of the same slogans being used in different countries. They included 'Death to the Jews', 'Jews to the Gas', and the like. This was no coincidence, Mr Moderator.

Much remains to be done however to combat the rise in antisemitism. Too many Member States still fail to fulfil their liabilities and responsibilities under the OSCE 2003 and 2004 Maastricht agreements, to monitor and record hate crimes, including antisemitism. Without such data it continues to be difficult to analyse properly, and in any scientific manner, the nature of the problem, its true dimensions and the origins of its perpetrators.