

Statement for Submission by Mark Weitzman, Director of Government Affairs, Simon Wiesenthal Center

1945 marked the end of World War II and the Holocaust, the unprecedented mass murder of approximately two thirds of Europe's Jewish population. In the wake of the exposure of the crimes of the Nazis and their local collaborators, it was believed that antisemitism would no longer be acceptable. Unfortunately recent events have shown that assumption to be false. The surviving remnants of Europe's Jewish communities are now facing a number of real and existential threats. These include:

- 1) Violence by mobs in Western European countries and murders in France and Belgium. These raise issues of protection, apprehension and prosecution by law enforcement, political will and efforts to reassure local Jewish communities.
- 2) The rise of antisemitism as an acceptable part of social discourse, particularly amongst elites. This is often justified by referencing events in the Middle East.
- 3) The growing legitimization of political antisemitism, often led by (but not limited to) extremist right wing political parties, such as Jobbik in Hungary and Golden Dawn in Greece, and sometimes expressed by high level political leaders, as in Turkey.
- 4) The direct threats posed by radicalized youth from immigrant communities who take to the streets to intimidate and harm Jews.
- 5) The distortion of the Holocaust for political or propaganda purposes such as reviving old stereotypes (Judeo/Communism), whitewashing the history of local collaboration with the Nazis, equating Jews and Israelis with the Nazis and accusing them of genocidal war crimes.
- 6) The attempts to ban core elements of Jewish religious practice, such as ritual circumcision and kosher slaughter.

In light of the above, we urge a Ministerial Council decision for 2015 that would officially mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World and II and the Holocaust by seriously and substantively addressing these challenges to the current threats to the security and survival of the Jewish community in Europe.

We also urge member states to take note of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's "Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion" as a tool to deal with the challenges posed by Holocaust denial and distortion.

Finally we urge member states to send high level delegations to actively participate in the forthcoming "High Level Commemorative Event and Civil Society Forum to mark the 10th Anniversary of the OSCE's Berlin Conference on Antisemitism" and to vigorously follow up on the recommendations made there by representatives of civil society.