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**Anti-Semitism in Europe**

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The two EUMC reports have shown that anti-Jewish views and stereotypes, and acts of violence against Jews and Jewish institutions, have increased in several European countries during the last few years. In addition, anti-Jewish views and anti-Jewish acts have been disseminated on a near-global scale. This development poses a serious, and very peculiar, challenge to the EU, the European states and European civil society for two reasons. It was in Europe that anti-Semitism led to the Jewish catastrophe. In this socio-political region, anti-Semitism stands in fundamental opposition to the values that both the individual European states and the EU are built on. Anti-Jewish views and acts are not primarily a Jewish problem, even though the victims are Jews, but a problem for civilisation as such. Where anti-Semitism is allowed to spread and acquire significance, it signifies an erosion of civilised codes of conduct. Anti-Semitism and other forms of racism are an attack on the very foundation of civilized societies.

The extensive group of problems that we seek to describe with the terms anti-Semitism or anti-Jewish views and acts in Europe today can be conceived as four relatively distinct issues:

- Firstly, anti-Semitism enters into international relations of power and conflict. The statements that are used within this discursive field to describe anti-Semitism and its dissemination contribute little towards our understanding of the issue.
- Secondly, anti-Semitism is an arena for scientific observation, the gathering of data, interpretation and analysis.
- Thirdly, anti-Semitism results in experiences, namely the Jewish minorities' experience of stigmatisation, harassment and violence.
- Finally, anti-Semitism is a phenomenon that calls for intervention. Anti-Semitism requires the attention of a wide range of players who must seek to establish barriers against anti-Jewish views and acts, and remove some of the foundation for these views and acts. In today's analysis, I will concentrate on this latter aspect.

A number of different groups are currently exposed to harassment and violence in European society. What is specific to the way that the Jewish experience is perceived?

In this connection, there are three aspects that must be emphasised:

- Anti-Semitism is a threat of international dimensions, and thus with existential implications. This threat reaches from anti-Semitic acts in several European countries, via attacks on Israeli tourists in Kenya, to terror attacks by al Quaida against Jewish institutions in Morocco and Istanbul and suicide bombings in Israel.

- The anti-Jewish views, dispositions to act and patterns of behaviour are widely disseminated geographically and in socio-political terms. These views and dispositions flourished in the authoritarian, pre-democratic states in Europe, where. They reflected state doctrines, in the Nazi case, and were fundamental to the acts of the Nazi and Fascist states. The communist states allowed such views to exist, and instrumentalised them politically. Anti-Semitic views and dispositions to act have survived, albeit with restricted leeway, in the democratic Western European and North American states. Today, they are espoused by large segments of the Arab population, and official propaganda in the Arab nations.
- These threatening events are interpreted – if not always, then at least frequently – against the background of the catastrophe the European Jews suffered in the 1930s and 1940s – a catastrophe in which anti-Semitically inspired patterns of action played a pivotal role.

It is the sum of these three aspects that explains the chasm between anti-Jewish views and acts as described and analysed by social scientists, and as they are experienced and perceived by the Jewish minority in Europe.

The four principal sources and forms of anti-Jewish attitudes in Europe today are:

- Stereotypes that live on within certain Christian communities
- Stereotypes and fundamental beliefs associated with extreme right-wing ideologies

- Anti-Jewish attitudes within left-wing groups that are located on the borderline between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism
- Stereotypes and acts to be found in some Muslim communities

Jews who have been exposed to anti-Semitic harassment, particularly in France and Denmark, social scientists, and politicians, are all in agreement that there is a connection between the intensity of the conflict in the Middle East and the high incidence of anti-Jewish violence. This conflict, and how the various European players respond to it, is the dynamic factor in the unfortunate, and potentially tragic, development, namely the relation between Jews and Muslims and between Jews and the majority population in Europe over the last few years.

In the partial report *Perceptions of Anti-Semitism in the European Union*, European Jewish leaders, rightly, complain of criticism that fails to differentiate between the policies of the Sharon government, Israel, and Jews in general. The European Jews are held responsible for the injustices committed by the Israeli government.

"One cannot deny that there exists a close link between the increase of anti-Semitism and the escalation of the Middle East conflict," says the EUMC's first report.

In an important article – *Globalisierung der Emotionen* –, Ulrich Beck has pointed out that the intensity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict threatens the coexistence of Jewish minorities with the majority communities in Europe. The majority of Europeans do not

appear to accept the fundamental distinction between Jews and Israelis. The same process leads to more and more Israelis tending to overlook the similarly fundamental distinction between anti-Semitism and criticism of the acts of the Israeli government. Beck's depressing prognosis is that the more regressive the conflict between Israel and Palestine becomes in terms of civilisation, the more the Europeans internalise it, the more does this threaten the laboriously acquired multicultural forms of association in Europe – and particularly relations between Jews and non-Jews.

Michael Wieviorka has recently stated that the centre for current anti-Semitism lies in the Middle East. He asserts that anti-Semitism primarily emanates from the socio-structural underdevelopment of Arab countries, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but that it also has substantial sources outside of the region. As we all know, the European societies have an abundance of such sources. The interaction of the conflict and problems in the Middle-East region and a broad variety of national and local conditions in Europe is a characteristic trait of the resurgence of anti-Jewish attitudes and acts in recent years.

When the last report of the *European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia* (EUMC) was published, Pat Cox, president of the European Parliament, concluded: "The evidence presented today indicates that incidents of anti-Semitism in Europe are on the increase and suggests that *events in the Middle East are disturbing the social fabric of European society.*"

The conflict in the Middle East has a dual impact:

- Young Muslims who identify with the Palestinians harass and attack Jews. This results in fear and segregation. In many cases, Jews withdraw from formerly well-functioning multicultural neighbourhood communities.
- The conflict appears to create a fissure between the Jewish minority and the European majority population.

What can we do to counteract these processes with their depressing perspectives?

There are those who hold the view that the situation of the European Jews will only be permanently normalised when a peaceful solution is reached between Israel and the Palestinians. Serge Klarsfeld has recently made this claim. With the current political constellations in Israel and the Palestinian Territory, a permanent peaceful solution acceptable to both parties is inconceivable.

But it must also be possible for the European public – for a broad range of European players – to relate to this conflict in such a way as to reduce the likelihood of its leading to the stigmatisation and harassment of Jews in Europe.

I will not, in this connection, dwell on the very obvious fact that the European states and the EU must, by all legitimate means, prevent that the Middle East conflict being is brought onto European territory. My criticism and my proposals will concentrate on what civil society, and particularly the public, can do to eliminate *some of the foundations for anti-Jewish views and actions* that relate primarily to this conflict.

These are based on the assumption that the European mass media and the European public play an important, even decisive, role in the perception of this conflict. In addition to supplying information, the pattern of the information shapes attitudes, views and responses:

- A representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which is *exclusively, consistently and persistently* limited to criticism of the Sharon government's politics can – and in all likelihood will – incite anti-Jewish views, because such criticism implicitly suggests a shared identity between the Israeli government, Israeli society, and the Jewish people. Unfortunately, this type of representation is typical of large parts of the European public.
- It is therefore of fundamental importance to emphasise that Israeli society – or substantial parts of it – are much more than, and in many regards something quite different from, or even diametrically opposed to, what the Sharon government stands for. In this context it is important to highlight the alternatives posed by parts of the opposition, such as Jossi Beilin and Avraham Burg. The most important instances of such alternative stances are the Geneva protocol, the comprehensive and sharp criticism of the government by vital parts of Israeli civil society, represented by intellectuals of many shades, the civil courage evinced by the 27 pilots when they refused to drop large bombs over densely populated areas, and the many soldiers and officers who have refused to serve in the occupied

territories. It is highly important to convey the vitality of Israeli democracy, even in wartime, and demonstrate the civic values that are being applied in this difficult situation. *Large parts of the European public are failing with regard to this!*

- It is extremely important that the European public take a determined and unreserved stand against the suicide bombers' destructive and barbaric activities, and equally those environments and structures that provide them with support, shelter, and legitimacy. The suicide bombers must be deprived of all political and moral legitimacy. It is important to take a stand, primarily on moral grounds. Mass murder of civilians with a political objective transgresses the most basic norms of civilisation. But it is also important to take a stand against the suicide bombings on political grounds. As long as they continue, it will not be possible to obtain backing for a different political stance, a position based on negotiations, compromise and reconciliation, as signalled by the Geneva protocol. In regard to this, *large parts of the European public suffer from a lack of clarity and of evasiveness.*
  
- The partial report from EUMC indicates that Jewish leaders in Europe often have a tendency to perceive criticism of the policies of the Sharon government as an expression of anti-Semitism. Serge Klarsfeld goes even further than this. In an article in *Le Monde* he asserts that the new anti-Semitism at the end of the twentieth century is primarily expressed in the rejection of the Israeli State. Criticism of the Israeli government's policies towards the Palestinian population



*is not anti-Semitic* provided that the criticism is being made on the basis of international law and human rights. A perception of a shared identity between criticism of the Sharon government and anti-Semitic views entails that this government's actions are being shielded from legitimate and necessary criticism. The Sharon government *should indeed be criticised* for its massive violation of human rights and international law. The interviews of European Jewish leaders show that many object to being held responsible for the Israeli government's policies, and that they are being subjected to stigmatisation and harassment because they are blamed for the actions of the Israeli government. What we observe here are two processes with an infernal logic that *mutually re-enforce one other*. On the one hand, we have the one-sided representation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the European media with their emphasis on the policies of the Sharon-government, and overlooking the political alternatives in Israel. This representation works to erase the distinction between the Israeli government and society, and Jews in general. In addition, the European media hold a confused view on the suicide bombings and the environment and structures they originate in. On the other hand, there is the tendency for criticism of the Israeli government to be perceived as anti-Semitism, and criticism of this government thus being perceived in such a way as also to affect European Jews.

- In his great work, *Das Jahrhundert verstehen. Eine universalhistorische Deutung*, Dan Diner has pointed out that there has been a devaluation of universal values after the breakdown of the bipolar world order around 1990, and greater emphasis

has been place on the particularistic values associated with religion, ethnicity and territory. Both the views of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the rise of anti-Jewish stereotypes and actions confirm the validity of this thesis. The limited parameters of identification that are formed on the basis of religion, ethnicity and territory have a tendency to exclude the suffering and tragedies of other groups. Most of those who quite legitimately associate with the Palestinians' suffering ignore the suicide bombings. The same groups also have a tendency to overlook anti-Jewish views and acts in Europe. Here, the European public has failed to be sufficiently watchful, and European civil society has largely failed to take action. Why this lack of ability to act against stigmatisation and harassment of a Jewish minority in Europe? This failure to act stands in marked contrast to the ability to mobilise opinion against the racism of the extreme right. Is the explanation to be found in latent anti-Jewish views, or are these acts being overlooked because the European Jews are associated with the policies of the Israeli government? In either case, we are faced with the necessity of transforming attitudes on a tremendous scale. The fundamental challenge is to *re-emphasise our obligation towards universal human rights and values, and to free these obligations from the narrow parameters of identification based on religion, ethnicity, territories, and particularistic political projects*. There are a number of significant examples or models. The one I would like to focus on is the appeal of the 21 prominent French-Jewish intellectuals in *Le Monde* 6 April 2002. They took a clear stand on universal grounds, both against anti-Jewish views and acts in Europe, the Sharon government's politics against Palestinians, and the suicide bombings in Israel.

This intervention is an expression of the finest traditions within universal humanism. The anti-Jewish attitudes and acts in Europe are a reality, and they represent a challenge with huge implications. They can only be fought on the basis of wide, inclusive horizons of identification, of universal values and with an imperative requirement to comply in relation to general codes of civilised conduct.