

**Speech by  
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at the OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism**

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This afternoon, we are talking about anti-Semitism. I remember not very long ago a meeting in Stockholm of all the countries that had been involved in the Holocaust. Country after country's president or prime minister stood up, decried what the Nazis had done and described efforts of atonement in his own bailiwick. That was less than ten years ago, and here we are of necessity, speaking again about this oldest of hatreds. Right now, we are not speaking of something that happened yesterday, but of something that is staining our mutual history all over again.

The history of anti-Semitism is long and ugly. Jews who once had their own country, and thank the Lord do again, were scattered throughout the face of the earth, persecuted by the Catholic Church, scratching out a living as best they could, with countless trades and professions denied them. Still, they clung tenaciously to their beliefs, despite unthinkable cruelty on the part of their neighbours, led, let's face it squarely, by the Church of Rome.

Our Torah commands us to love the stranger as ourselves, and Jesus, a good Jew amongst his other attributes, preached loving kindness. Yet crusaders practised their swordsmanship on Jewish men, women and children, going to and from their destination, and anti-Semitic fervour again reached a new peak in the days of the Inquisition. Wearing a yellow star on their outer garments was not a new thing done to the Jews by Adolf Hitler. It had previously been done by the successor of St. Peter, the Pope in Rome.

Europeans have been taught to hate Jews for centuries, and now, something new has been added to the mix, a large influx of Moslems from North Africa and Turkey to do the work most Europeans shun. They brought with them the anti-Semitism of their own societies, coupled with a new excuse: Israel and the conflict between the Jews and the Palestinians.

Anti-Semitism is quite extreme in the countries of Europe, partially out of an old habit, and partially out of a lack of understanding. Europe, for the most part, has sided with the Palestinians. Let me remind this audience that Israel, under the leadership of Prime Minister Ehud Barak, tried to give almost everything back to Yasser Arafat at Camp David in 1999, and was answered with the second *intifada*.

Suicide bombings have terrorized Israeli citizens, and it is difficult to comprehend living one's life under such gruesome conditions. But Israel is strong, and only seeks a partner to achieve a peaceful settlement, as it did with President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and King Hussein of Jordan.

I could talk about the corruption of the Arafat regime, and the living expenses of his wife and child in Paris, but I won't. The purpose of this conference and of my remarks is to find a solution to the renewed sickness of European anti-Semitism. One might have thought that the Holocaust was a lesson no-one would ever forget,

teaching mankind the inevitable result of bias and hatred. But hundreds of thousands were slaughtered in Cambodia, in Rwanda and in the Balkans, and ethnic cleansing is happening in Sudan despite the fact that ethnic cleansing reminds us so starkly of Hitlerism.

Need I remind you that it was the United States of America which had to lead its European allies to crush a regime which threatened to murder thousands of Europeans? My country isn't perfect, but the Democratic Party nominated a Jew as its vice-presidential candidate. Jews are not isolated in my country, nor does anyone do violence to them, or their property. It is safe to wear yarmulkes, it is safe to go to synagogue and pray, and it is safe to gather anywhere at anytime, just as it should be. I wish the same held true for Europe.

Perhaps it is well that this meeting is taking place in Berlin. Following the unspeakable era of the Holocaust, West Germany made strong laws against anti-Semitism, and taught the Holocaust - today, the German Federal Republic still teaches the lessons of the Holocaust to its youth. No government should tolerate any violent attacks by haters on any persons whatever. If laws are not strict enough, tougher laws must be enacted, or the spiral of hatred will continue.

But more than react, I must insist that European nations, together with the Roman Catholic, the Orthodox and all the Protestant Churches, initiate teaching mutual respect. That's the goal of all civilizations, and it must be done with immediacy. Nationalism was the disease of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, bringing with it hatred, xenophobia and anti-Semitism of Holocaust proportions, and then Europe and America were faced with the Cold War.

Now our emphasis must focus on mutual respect, learning to live positively with diversity. Just as Europe has embraced unity and mutuality, so must it now embrace mutual respect of all nationalities, all religions, and indeed, all peoples.

It has been said that democracy is the rule of the majority. But the essence of democracy is more properly the protection of minority rights. And it is against this standard that all nations shall be judged in the United Nations General Assembly. At the last session of the UN General Assembly, Ireland introduced just such a resolution and the world will be watching to see if it can be adopted later this year. The campaign to secure its adoption is already underway, and we view this conference of the OSCE as one important step in that effort.

In *Nostra Aetate*, Pope John XXIII proclaimed an end to Roman Catholic anti-Semitism, and Pope John Paul II has ushered in a new respect for Judaism, and has shown us graciousness. His trip to Israel was historic as he acknowledged the Jewish state and its symbolism at Yad Vashem.

Pope John Paul II has also stated on many occasions that anti-Semitism is a sin before God. The Orthodox Church has stated without equivocation that mutual respect is part of its doctrine, and that anti-Semitism is a sin. So must all churches, and all religions. I have met with both the Pope and the Patriarch, who have iterated their strong stands on anti-Semitism.

Now is the time - it has to be the time - for every school system in Europe to teach the basic ethics of mutual respect. Now is the time, and has to be the time, for every priest and clergyman on the continent, to constantly preach against the sin of xenophobia, against the sin of anti-Semitism, and must follow the dictates of his or her religion, be it Islam, Judaism or Christianity, and must insist on the Godliness of mutual respect and love of one's fellow man.

Let me suggest that France, which has set aside funds as a result of the pilfering of art owned by Jews and stolen during the Holocaust period, use some of those funds to develop the curricula necessary to teach this doctrine of mutual respect. I am sure that the chair of the commission, Mme. Simone Weil, would be the perfect person to start this initiative. I am sure that the superb educator and Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, would add his wisdom and experience to the exercise. Every country in Europe must follow suit. The stakes are too high to do otherwise.

Thank you.