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ENGLISH only

OSCE CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SEMITISM  
19<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2003  
SPEECH BY THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO THE OSCE  
AVRAHAM TOLEDO

WE MEET HERE, IN VIENNA, SIX DECADES AFTER THE MURDEROUS ORGY WHICH ENGULFED EUROPE, SIX DECADES AFTER THE ANIHILATION OF ONE THIRD OF THE JEWISH POPULATION OF THE WORLD, SIX DECADES AFTER THE HEROIC REBELLION OF JEWS IN THE WARSAW GHETTO. WE MEET HERE TO DISCUSS OF ALL THINGS, ANTISEMITISM. AND I ASK, HAS THE WORLD FORGOTTEN EVERYTHING AND LEARNED NOTHING?

IN OUR NATIVE BORN OF OPTIMISM WE THOUGHT THAT THIS GENERATION, STILL IN THE SHADOW OF THE HOLOCAUST WOULD BE DIFFERENT. UNFORTUNATELY THIS HAS NOT BEEN THE CASE, BUT THIS GATHERING COULD BE THE ANCHOR FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE. THAT IS THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US: HOW TO FIGHT ANTISEMITISM, HOW TO MAKE SURE THAT ANTISEMITISM SHOULD BE IN THE GUTTER.

THERE HAS BEEN A HIGHLY ONGOING RISE IN ANTISEMITIC ACTIVITY AS JEWS AND JEWISH INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN THE TARGETS OF HATEFUL ACTS AND VIOLENCE IN EUROPE. ACCORDING TO THE STEVEN ROTH INSTITUTION FOR THE STUDY OF ANTISEMITISM AND RACISM AT TEL-AVIV UNIVERSITY: "MOST ANTISEMITIC VIOLENCE IN 2002 TOOK PLACE IN WESTERN EUROPE, ESPECIALLY IN BELGIUM AND FRANCE"

I HAVE MENTIONED IT NOT TO ACCUSE ANY PARTICULAR STATE BUT RATHER TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THE GRAVITY OF THE PROBLEM, AND THEREBY TO POINT TOWARDS A PLAN OF ACTION.

THE BEST AND MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO COMBAT ANTISEMITISM IS FOR GOVERNMENTS TO DO THEIR DUTY: THAT IS MAINTAIN CIVIL ORDER AND THE PERSONAL SECURITY OF THOSE UNDER THEIR JURISDICTION. THE PROBLEM OF ANTISEMITISM, AND INTOLERANCE IN GENERAL, MUST BE CONFRONTED AS AN ISSUE WHICH INVOLVES THE PRESERVATION OF THE VERY FABRIC OF A FREE AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY. TO THAT END GOVERNMENTS MUST BE PRO-ACTIVE IN CONFRONTING THIS CHALLENGE.

IT WILL NOT DO TO CLASSIFY ASSAULTS ON JEWS, SYNAGOGUES OR JEWISH COMMUNAL INSTITUTIONS AS MERE HOOLIGANISM AND VANDALISM, THEREBY MINIMIZING THE ISSUE AND RELEGATING IT TO THE LEAST OF MATTERS TO BE FOUND ON THE PUBLIC AGENDA. NEITHER WILL IT DO TO EXCUSE ANTISEMITIC RHETORIC AND VIOLENCE UNDER THE GUISE OF THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH.

ANTISEMITISM ISN OT ONLY A PROBLEM FOR THE JEWS, IT IS ULTIMATELY A DANGER TO ANY SOCIETY WHICH COUNTENANCES IT.

SOCIETIES WHICH FOR WHATEVER REASON EXCUSE ANTISEMITISM WILL SOONER, RATHER THAN LATER, BE FORCED TO CONFRONT OTHER PERNICIOUS FORMS OF RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA.

PREJUDICE, OF ANY KIND, IS A CANCER. JUST AS MEDICALLY SPEAKING A PATIENT CANNOT HAVE A "TOUCH" OF CANCER SO TOO SOCIETY CANNOT HAVE A "TOUCH" OF PREJUDICE. JUST AS PHYSICIANS FIGHT CANCER, SO TOO MUST WE FIGHT ANTISEMITISM AND OTHER FORMS OF RACISM AND PREJUDICE.

THEREFORE, IT IS IMPERATIVE FOR THOSE STATES WHICH ARE ASSEMBLED AT THIS CONFERENCE TO BOLSTER LAWS REGARDING HATE SPEECH. HATRED, DIRECTED AT ANY GROUP, CANNOT BE PROTECTED. IT IS TIME TO CONSIDER, IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS, WHETHER ANTISEMITISM SHOULD BE SPECIFICALLY DESIGNATED IN HATE SPEECH LAWS AS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE.

FOR THIS STEP TO BE EFFECTIVE IT REQUIRES THREE KINDS OF EFFORTS. PARLIAMENTS MUST ENACT LEGISLATION, LAW ENFORCEMENT ORGANS MUST INVESTIGATE AND PROSECUTE OFFENDERS AND THE COURTS MUST ADJUDICATE THESE MATTERS EFFECTIVELY AND SENTENCE THE PERPETRATORS SERIOUSLY.

HOWEVER, AN APPROPRIATE STRATEGY TO COMBAT ANTISEMITISM AND FORMS OF INTOLERANCE CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT RELY SOLELY ON THE LEGAL AND JUDICIAL SYSTEM.

OUR GOAL SHOULD BE TO ERADICATE THE BREEDING GROUNDS OF SUCH ABERATIONS. WE NEED TO FOCUS ON THE NEXT GENERATION. WE NEED TO MAKE SURE THAT A CONCERTED AND CONSTANT EFFORT IS MADE BY THE EDUCATION SYSTEMS OF THE VARIOUS STATES TO TEACH TOLERANCE AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE OTHER.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE NEXT GENERATION BE EXPOSED TO THE RESULTS OF ANTISEMITISM AND INTOLERANCE ON THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT DURING THE YEARS 1939-1945, THE PERIOD OF THE HOLOCAUST, AS WELL AS DURING OTHER PERIODS.

I AM PLEASED TO KNOW THAT MANY EUROPEAN STATES ARE MOVING IN THIS DIRECTION. THESE EFFORTS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED, THEIR EFFORTS SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED AND THOSE THAT HAVE NOT AS YET DONE SO SHOULD JOIN THEM.

WE ARE DISTURBED, HOWEVER, THAT EVEN AS WE CAN AGREE UPON THE NEED TO LEARN FROM THE CATASTROPHE THAT BEFELL THE JEWS OF EUROPE DURING THE SHOAH, WE STILL ENCOUNTER VARIOUS FORMS OF HOLOCAUST DENIAL.

A NUMBER OF STATES HAVE TAKEN DECISIVE LEGISLATIVE STEPS TO THWART THE HOLOCAUST DENIERS. IN OTHER COUNTRIES COURT CASES HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY PROSECUTED AGAINST THEM. THEREFORE YOU CAN READILY UNDERSTAND MY GOVERNMENT DEEP DISMAY AT THE STATEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF ROMANIA THAT “THERE WAS NO HOLOCAUST INSIDE ROMANIAN BORDERS BETWEEN THE YEARS 1940-1945”.

I BEGAN MY REMARKS BY STATING THAT ISRAEL IS THE ANCIENT AND RENEWED HOMELAND OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE. THIS BRINGS ME TO MY FINAL AND PERHAPS MOST PAINFUL POINT. IT HAS UNFORTUNATELY BECOME IN VOGUE, AMONG THE “CHATTERING CLASSES”, TO SPEAK ABOUT, EXCUSE AND EVEN UNDERSTAND “ANTIZIONISM”, AS IF THIS PHENOMENA IS SOMEHOW DIVORCED FROM THE ISSUE AT HAND. LET ME MAKE THIS CLEAR – TO JUSTIFY ANTISEMITIC PHENOMENA BY PRESENTING THEM AS ANTIZIONISM IS THE SAME UGLY IDEOLOGY WITH FRESH MAKEUP.

CLASSICAL ANTISEMITISM SOUGHT TO DEPRIVE THE JEW, AS AN INDIVIDUAL, OF HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE IN SOCIETY. THE CURRENT RECOURSE TO ANTIZIONISM IS AN ATTEMPT TO DENY THE JEWISH

PEOPLE ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE AMONG THE FAMILY OF NATIONS.

AS SUCH IT IS MERELY AN AMPLIFICATION AND DARE I SAY, A REINCARNATION OF THE MOST ANCIENT AND MOST PERSISTENT FORM OF HATRED IN HISTORY, THE ONE DIRECTED AT THE JEWISH PEOPLE.

ALLOW ME TO OBSERVE THAT ANTISEMITISM, AS ODIOS AS IT MAY BE, IS NOT A MYSTICAL OR METAPHYSICAL PHENOMENON. IT IS A PRACTICAL UGLY PROBLEM AND AS SUCH IT MUST BE CONFRONTED IN A PRACTICAL MANNER, AS I HAVE OUTLINED.

THE OSCE CONFERENCE ON ANTISEMITISM IS A MILESTONE AND A CALL TO ARMS. LET US REMEMBER THAT IMMORTAL WORDS OF EDMUND BURKE: "THE ONLY THING NECESSARY FOR EVIL TO TRIUMPH IS FOR GOOD MEN TO DO NOTHING!"

LET US DO WHAT IS NEEDED, BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.

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THIS CONFERENCE SHOULD ESTABLISH A MONITORING FORUM THAT WILL MEET ON A REGULAR BASIS TO FOLLOW UP ON THE CONFERENCE AND TO PREPARE PLANS OF ACTIVITIES. IT SHOULD ENCOURAGE THAT STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN BY THE STATES AND ORGANISATIONS: OUR COUNTRY WILL READILY PARTICIPATE IN SUCH A FORUM. LET THE CONFERENCE BE A BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA OF PERSISTENT AND DETERMINED FIGHT AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM.

THANK YOU  
AVRAHAM TOLEDO