

**OSCE Conference on Combating Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding - Follow-up to the Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance  
Romania, Bucharest, 7 - 8 June 2007  
Plenary Session 1**

STATEMENT  
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Mr. Chairman,

Sincerely, I am really disappointed that in the 21st century we still have to discuss about antisemitism and other similar diseases, at a time we should rather be concerned on environment or planning new opportunities to embellish the social life of the inhabitants of this planet.

I am one of the founders and the vice president of the Quincentennial Foundation established in Turkey in 1989, not just to celebrate the welcoming of the Sephardi Jews into the Ottoman Empire in 1492 but to record the life of the Jews in this country since 1326, a harmonious and uninterrupted co-habitation for seven centuries, with almost no major incidents.

As our PM, Mr Recep Tayyip Erdogan, stated two years ago during a reception in New York in honor of the Turkish Diplomats who saved the lives of of Jews during WWII, "*There is no place for antisemitism in Turkey. It's an alien concept to the Turkish culture.*"

On the other hand, it's a fact that, as almost in all societies, there are antisemites in Turkey too.

Antisemitism, which is nourished by ignorance, lack of knowledge and prejudices in certain circles, starts rising especially at times when the Middle-Eastern conflict intensifies.

Although there is neither desecration of tombstones or holy places nor violence in the streets as in several countries in Europe, antisemitism is manifested in the visual and printed extreme right media as well as their Internet sites and books, in fact sometimes even in central mainstream media.

But as for the attitude of the administration let me remind you our PM's following statement which I quote: *antisemitism is the appearance of a shameful insanity ... the appearance of an illness of deceiving a belief of a nation or seeing them not deserving human values* ". He added that "*antisemitism like racist hostility, ethnic cleansing and terrorism are different faces of an evil coming from the past to the present.*"

A country with predominantly Muslim majority, Turkey continues adopting policies to promote tolerance and non discrimination.

The Penal Code adapted on September 2004 contains provisions which prohibits the crimes against humanity. Art.122 is against civil right violations.Art.176 has been compiled against destruction of religious places, graveyards and objects. Art. 312 punishes the incitement to hatred and dissemination of racist ideas .Different articles of Political Parties Law prohibit racist organizations based on differences of religion and creed.

On the other side, through the Jewish Museum of Turkey established by our Foundation in 2001 ([www.muze500.com](http://www.muze500.com) ) we aim to educate our society on Judaism in general and Turkish Jews in particular by underlining their participation to all aspects of the social life and stressing how peoples of different creeds, roots, faiths, languages and traditions could live together without major problems for seven centuries.

We believe that in every country, such organisations promoting dialogue and education could provide platforms for the monitoring of antisemitism and/or racism at all levels, involving individuals or the media, propose intellectual work and educational programmes for government bodies and supply the media with objective information.

OSCE should coordinate such national activities and programmes at the European level.

Thank you, Mr, Chairman.