

## **Combating Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region**

**Eric Fusfield**  
**Director of Legislative Affairs**  
**B'nai B'rith International**  
**October 3, 2012**

Mr. Moderator, distinguished delegates:

It has been 12 years since the outbreak of the second intifada in the Middle East and, subsequently, the start of a new wave of anti-Semitism throughout the OSCE region and around the world. This spread of hatred has resulted not only in a corrosion of the public discourse with respect to Jews and Israel, but in widespread physical attacks against Jewish communities throughout Europe. These horrifying events have left European Jewry fearful for their safety and security.

The rise of anti-Jewish hatred has also resulted in a proliferation of anti-Semitic propaganda, much of which is directed against the State of Israel. Tragically, the demonization and delegitimization of the Jewish state has become a daily occurrence, as Israel's enemies repeatedly accuse it of being a Nazi-like occupier and an apartheid state that disenfranchises the Palestinians. Falsehoods about Israel are repeated so often that they become widely accepted in the popular culture and sometimes impact government policy. The effort by Israel's relentless critics to denigrate the Jewish state is not only evidence that anti-Semitism is alive and well 67 years after the Holocaust – this new variation of the world's oldest social illness actually poses a security threat to the Jewish state by intensifying its international isolation. This phenomenon was in full view at the United Nations last week when Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad – who has repeatedly denied the Holocaust, threatened to wipe Israel off the map, and affirmed his regime's intention to acquire nuclear capability – denounced “the continued threat by the uncivilized Zionists to resort to military action.”

Over the past decade, the OSCE has taken up the urgent struggle against rising anti-Semitism. High-level conferences in Vienna in 2003 and Berlin in 2004, as well as later conferences in Cordoba, Bucharest, Astana, and Prague have focused a needed spotlight on this and other forms of intolerance.

The historic 2004 Berlin Declaration, which provided a series of important recommendations for governments to follow in combating anti-Semitism, specifically addressed the growing problem of anti-Semitic attacks being committed by opponents of Israel's policies. The passage stating that “international developments or political issues, including those in Israel or elsewhere in the Middle East, never justify anti-Semitism” stands as an important rebuke to those who try to justify hate crimes with politics.

Permanent Council Decision No. 607, which preceded the Berlin Conference, and Ministerial Decisions Nos. 12-04 and 10-05, which followed it, represent vital

affirmations of the OSCE's commitment to fight anti-Semitism and related forms of racism and xenophobia. That pact has been bolstered by the creation of ODIHR's indispensable tolerance and non-discrimination unit, which carries out this important work each day and which includes an expert advisor on anti-Semitism, and by the appointment of the Chairman-in-Office's three personal representatives on combating intolerance.

While much has been done to fight anti-Semitism in the past decade, much work remains. The need for practical and effective strategies to combat and defeat this pathology is still crucial. To this end,

- The Ministerial Council should endorse the idea of a 10-year Berlin Review Conference in 2014, a gathering that would affirm commitments made at the landmark 2004 conference and assess the implementation of those commitments.
- We should widely promote, within the OSCE, the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency's comprehensive working definition of anti-Semitism.
- We must enhance funding for ODIHR's Tolerance and Non-Discrimination unit, which has now become a fixed and integral part of the OSCE's work. We must enable the TND unit to sustain and expand its critical activities, which include educational programs on anti-Semitism in more than a dozen countries.
- We must extend, for the foreseeable future, the terms of the three personal representatives on intolerance.
- Member-states must fulfill their reporting requirements with respect to hate crimes data. Far too few governments have done so until now.
- Finally, we must strongly reinforce the crucial principle declared at the Berlin Conference – That no political position, cause or grievance can ever justify anti-Semitism – and make clear that the demonization and delegitimization of the Jewish state is often none other than a pretext for the hatred of Jews themselves.