

Presentation to the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
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This gathering provides an annual opportunity to examine the state of anti-Semitism in the OSCE region. Typically we draw on data supplied by governments and civil society monitors. We assess whether conditions have improved or worsened and try to determine if new steps should be taken and what they might be. But few would doubt that today we confront an alarming situation even without seeking statistical confirmation, although the most current data reported certainly confirms this dire assessment.

We witnessed a surge in anti-Semitic incidents this summer in the heart of Europe, coinciding with the conflict between Israel and Hamas. In various countries, anti-Israel demonstrations turned anti-Semitic and violent. Synagogues and individual Jews became targets of physical attacks. In some cases police were unable or slow to provide essential protection. When some Jewish organizations organized their own demonstrations police confined them to closed areas or stopped them altogether. They acted out of concern for their safety, but in the process challenged long-standing principles of freedom of speech and assembly.

To their credit we heard very strong words from European leaders, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls and German Chancellor Angela Merkel being the most prominent among them. They said what we all believe, that a Europe without Jews would be unthinkable. And yet, in saying this we are really acknowledging that in fact it has become something to ponder. The release of FRA's survey a year ago revealed that a disturbingly high number of Jews from several EU countries have contemplated emigration. And then to bring the point home to a more popular audience we saw *Newsweek* magazine's cover story in late July titled, *Exodus: Why Europe's Jews Are Fleeing Once Again*.

In November under the Swiss Chairmanship the OSCE will mark the tenth anniversary of the Berlin Declaration on Anti-Semitism with a high level gathering in Berlin. While this began as a commemoration, we know now how very present the challenges still remain.

The first order of concern must be the protection and physical security of our Jewish communities. This was addressed in last year's high level expert conference organized by ODIHR and the OSCE Chair. While some participating States have stepped forward to do more, there are still serious gaps. This spring we witnessed the murder of four Jews at the Jewish Museum in Brussels. The assailant in this case appears to be an Islamic extremist who had returned from fighting with the Jihadists in Syria. These returning "foreign fighters" which number several thousand are mostly European citizens with the ability to travel freely within the EU. Governments are now recognizing the dangers they pose for launching terror attacks on European soil, but Jews and Jewish institutions are high on the target list. And this comes on top of other attacks and increasing incidents of physical and verbal harassment.

Yet, not all governments recognize the full extent of the threats or are acting accordingly. During an OSCE country visit to Denmark earlier this month, Jewish community leaders reported that anti-Semitic incidents this past summer exceeded the total recorded in all of 2013. The vandalizing of the Jewish school in Copenhagen—with smashed windows and anti-Semitic graffiti—left students and parents nervous. Adding to this is the government’s own acknowledgment that there are one hundred foreign fighters now back in Denmark. But so far the community’s request for a physical police presence at the school when parents are taking their children to class or in front of the synagogue on Shabbat morning when two or three hundred worshipers are present has been rebuffed. Authorities informed us that Denmark has traditionally maintained a “relaxed approach” to security. They are concerned that Danish citizens would be unnerved by the presence of armed police, so they limit their measures to occasional patrol car drive-bys.

Traditional right wing movements have not diminished. Extremist parties which espouse openly anti-Semitic themes in Hungary and Greece have made gains in this year’s European Parliamentary elections. Declining economies and skepticism over European integration continue to feed nationalist and populist parties for whom anti-Semitism is usually one essential element in a larger racist and xenophobic tapestry.

Much attention has rightly focused on France, which is home to the largest Jewish community in Europe. This summer anti-Israel demonstrators laid siege to one synagogue and its worshipers, and police initially were unable to protect it. Anti-Semitic incidents, which have been steadily increasing, skyrocketed during the Gaza conflict, and *aliyah* (emigration from France to Israel) has risen significantly as a result. French law which prohibits collecting data based on race, religion or ethnicity has made it difficult to prove that most of these anti-Semitic incidents are coming from elements in the country’s Arab and Muslim community, although this is the widely-held belief. Even Prime Minister Valls signaled as much when he spoke of the special problem of anti-Semitism in the “suburbs” (*banlieues*).

We need to acknowledge the sources of the problem, and we need all available data to help us, if we are to effectively address the problem of anti-Semitism.

Physical security is essential, but it is not a solution. We must find ways to change attitudes and to educate those who will otherwise harbor anti-Semitic and intolerant views. In order to succeed we should challenge the conventional wisdom and old approaches. Programs that are designed to promote tolerance in general, that are predicated on sensitizing a majority population to the minorities within its midst, may not succeed in addressing the prejudice that exists between and among those minority groups themselves.

More and more participating States are engaged in Holocaust education, which should be commended. But the assumption that Holocaust education is itself an antidote to anti-Semitism may not always prove true. In some cases the universal lessons of the Holocaust—the broad warnings against racism and genocide and well-intentioned efforts to seek other analogies—eclipse the basic message that left unchecked anti-Semitism can lead to mass murder.

Additionally, a curriculum based on confronting students with the past deeds of their own countrymen may fail to connect with today's immigrant students and may also lose its impact as the Holocaust itself recedes into history. ODIHR has done important work in developing educational materials and placing them in the national curricula of a score of countries. But they too should be reviewed and reassessed to see if they are successful in the current situation.

Ten years ago the EUMC was finalizing the text of its working definition of anti-Semitism which it released in early 2005. Its goal was to provide a clear and comprehensive definition of anti-Semitism for its own monitors and for others. It pointed out that anti-Semitism was not only prejudice or discrimination against Jews. It could also manifest itself through the spread of conspiracy theories or Holocaust denial. It could be present even where Jews were absent. It also sought to describe anti-Semitism as it related to the State of Israel. Among the examples cited were drawing comparisons of Israeli policies to the Nazis or holding Jews collectively responsible for the actions of the State of Israel. A growing number of monitoring organizations, government agencies and departments within the OSCE region have adopted the definition and demonstrated its usefulness. By now its value should be evident. And as the OSCE takes note of the commitment of participating States to monitor anti-Semitism, it is worth recommending the working definition as an essential tool for this work.

We should also recognize that there are other threats confronting Jewish communities in Europe even if they are not physical in nature. Campaigns to ban ritual circumcision are gaining impetus, particularly in Western and Northern Europe. This age-old practice, an elemental religious obligation for both Jews and Muslims, is under attack. Those efforts may be initiated by children's rights activists, but the accompanying public discourse has frequently turned anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim, with little regard for principles of religious freedom as well. This is an obvious area for Jewish-Muslim cooperation, and we should do what we can to foster this. The Swiss Chairmanship has focused special attention this year on seeking cooperative linkages with ECRI and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and this topic was well noted in our meetings in Geneva and Strasbourg. Let me suggest that we make it the basis for a joint initiative in the coming months and thereby make something tangible of this cooperative approach.

In closing, I want to draw attention to plans for marking the tenth anniversary of the Berlin Declaration on Anti-Semitism. Under the joint sponsorship of the Swiss Chairperson-in-Office, the German Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Director of ODIHR, there will be a day-long civil society forum on November 12, followed by a high level gathering on November 13, hosted by the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin. It will give us the opportunity to review the commitments that were made a decade ago, to take stock of the very real challenges that we especially face today, and hopefully to spur us to redouble our efforts to combat and one day conquer the scourge of anti-Semitism that still remains. We look forward to the robust participation of civil society, particularly with the involvement of young leaders, as well as to participating States attending at an appropriate high level as they did ten years ago.