

As prepared for delivery

**Combating Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region:  
The Responsibility of States, Institutions, and Individuals**

**Rome, Italy  
January 29, 2018**

Mr. Chairman, Foreign Minister Alfano, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen:

I would like to thank the Italian Chairmanship of the OSCE for convening this important conference and for the privilege of addressing this international gathering on behalf of B'nai B'rith and its thousands of members.

As Chief Executive Officer of B'nai B'rith International, an American-based organization with members in dozens of countries around the world, I have viewed the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe in recent years with deep anguish. The obligation of governments, international organizations, and leaders of society to confront this phenomenon is becoming increasingly urgent.

In my 30 years at B'nai B'rith, dating back to the period prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, I have visited Europe regularly to help protect the rights of Jewish communities on this continent. B'nai B'rith has deep roots in Europe, where we first established a presence in 1882. Here in Italy, our organization formally opened lodges in Milan, Rome, and Florence in the 1950s. But B'nai B'rith activity in Italy started in 1920, when the organization held a conference in Venice featuring Prime Minister Luigi Luzzatti, whose background was Jewish. Seven years later, the B'nai B'rith lodge of Rhodes, which was then under Italian control, opened a rabbinical college whose graduates would go on to serve the Sephardic Jewish world. Last week the B'nai B'rith Milan lodge bestowed a Jewish Rescuers Citation upon 98-year-old Enzo Cavaglione, for saving the lives of Jewish refugees in northern Italy during the German occupation.

As B'nai B'rith attempted to reestablish a presence in Europe in the wake of the utter devastation of the Holocaust, we witnessed the persistence of anti-Jewish sentiment in the half century that followed Nazi rule. But today Europe is experiencing a degree of anti-Semitism I have not previously seen in my lifetime, and the reemergence of this ugly historical phenomenon has left European Jewry feeling more vulnerable and disillusioned than at any point since the Holocaust.

- On November 21, a veiled woman in a supermarket near Toulouse, France assaulted, with two younger women, a Jewish woman and her teenage son. The perpetrators saw the victim, a woman in her 40s, as Jewish because she was

wearing a Star of David pendant. The assailants deliberately rammed their shopping cart into that of the Jewish victims and slapped them.

- In August, a Zurich hotel posted signs requiring Jews to bathe before using the swimming pool.
- Police in the Netherlands are investigating vandalism at a synagogue and a hospice for people dying of terminal diseases. The incident at the Immanuel Hospice occurred on January 2; the synagogue incident, three days earlier, at Chabad Central Amsterdam, where an unidentified individual hurled bricks at one of the buildings' windows. These episodes follow the December 7 shattering of glass at a kosher restaurant in Amsterdam by a man who was waving a Palestinian flag as two police officers and passers-by simply watched.

American Jews have watched such events with alarm and exasperation as our European brethren have increasingly come under assault. But in our home country of the United States, our awareness of our own vulnerability is growing.

Five months ago, in Charlottesville, Virginia, hundreds of so-called white nationalists, under the name "Unite the Right," marched and rallied near the University of Virginia campus. Ostensibly a gathering in support of Civil War monuments honoring the South, the rally perversely featured chants and imagery against Jews. Participants chanted: "Jews will not replace us!" and "Blood and soil!" a Nazi slogan. Swastikas and quotes from Adolf Hitler were displayed on shirts, flags, and posters, along with the words "Heil Hitler!" Militant extremists stood outside a synagogue carrying guns.

Here in Europe, where anti-Semitism is something of a cultural virus, extremists are organizing under the banners of political parties, such as the Golden Dawn in Greece, Jobbik in Hungary, and the National Front in France. They have been seeking to gain influence through the ballot box, in addition to their activities in cyberspace and on the streets.

As recently as November in Warsaw, people carrying burning torches shouted "Sieg Heil!" and "Ku Klux Klan!" At that rally, banners touting slogans such as "Pure Blood" and "White Europe" revealed the grass roots animus that has long served as the foundation for anti-Semitism in Poland – a Jew-hatred so virulent that it led in the 1930s to beatings and slashing of Jews in the streets, and to pogroms after the war. The neo-fascists of today are heirs to this legacy of lethal hatred. Some Polish officials were slow to condemn the march, but it is essential that the country's leaders not look away from this continuing problem.

The real test of any democracy is to be able to see itself into the mirror and see the good -- as well as the flaws in its past. Holocaust denial should not be state policy, and that is why those who try to change it, or nuance it, as in the Polish parliamentary legislation of a few days ago, should re-consider this trifling with history.

In some cases, European nationalists glorify and resuscitate World War II-era fascists. They call for registries of Jews, minimize or even deny the Holocaust, and rant about Jewish power and influence.

While the Jewish state has been a preferred target of anti-Semites in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Jewish *religion* also appears to be coming increasingly under assault. Hostile rhetoric from the media and politicians in some parts of Europe has intensified the stigma against circumcision. The practice of kosher ritual slaughter, or shechita, is banned in four European countries; attempts to lift the prohibition in Switzerland resulted in an anti-Semitic backlash. During a similar debate in Norway, a parliamentarian declared that if the Jews didn't like the ban, "Let them go somewhere else."

While the growing anti-Semitism and bigotry of the far right is deeply troubling, the role that anti-Israel hatred plays on the political left cannot be overstated. It is important to understand that this hatred consists not merely of criticism of this policy or that, but the use of traditional anti-Semitic motifs to support a purportedly political message. The image of an Israeli, who is frequently portrayed as an aggressive and racist violator of human rights, is quickly conflated with that of the Jew. Political cartoons often depict Israeli leaders using the same ghoulish, satanic caricatures with which *Der Sturmer* drew its Jewish villains. Furthermore, public demonstrations in support of the Palestinians often feature placards equating Israel or Zionism with Nazism. Even shouts of "Death to the Jews" have become all too commonplace. In this environment, even the secular and assimilated Jew is singled out and threatened.

Meanwhile, a contemporary version of Holocaust denial has emerged, as Israel's detractors claim that Jews are worse than Nazis and that Israel is perpetrating a "Holocaust" upon the Palestinians. Rhetorical attacks on Israel often feature phrases such as "ethnic cleansing," "forced transfers," and "human rights violations" and "racism." Claims that Jews are exploiting the Holocaust to collect reparations money or that they have used the Holocaust to justify the creation of an "apartheid" state also serve as troubling examples of the misuse of the Holocaust for political purposes.

Such manifestations of blatant anti-Israel sentiment demonstrate a willingness to vilify the Jewish state and apply double standards to it – to condemn Israel for actions for which no other country in the world would receive similar criticism. Demonization, de-legitimization, and a double standard – what Natan Sharansky called the "3 D's" of anti-Israel criticism – are in evidence in many parts of the world. While for many centuries Jews have been singled out by anti-Semites for discriminatory treatment, Israel is now regarded as the Jew among nations and is similarly singled out as a pariah nation by the international community, a country targeted for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions.

In 2014 we honored the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OSCE Berlin Conference on Anti-Semitism and the historic declaration that emerged from that gathering. But the review conference that took place in Berlin that fall underscored that many collective obligations remains unfulfilled. The past several years have seen a wave of anti-Israel demonstrations throughout the OSCE region; these gatherings have typically featured blatantly anti-Semitic themes and have often turned violent. Attacks and threats against Jewish individuals and institutions, such as the march in Charlottesville, have increased in frequency and intensity, as the landscape across the length and breadth of Europe has witnessed heightened incendiary rhetoric and in some cases violence against Jewish targets. This spread of hatred has been accompanied by a corrosion of the public discourse with respect to Jews and Israel.

As a result of anti-Semitic attacks and rhetoric, thousands of Jews have emigrated from Western Europe to Israel in each of the past several years. Furthermore, a survey of European Jews released just 10 days ago indicated that 27 percent of respondents said they feel unsafe.

For more than a decade, the OSCE has taken up the urgent struggle against rising anti-Semitism. 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 rebuff to those who use politics to justify hate crimes.

In 2016 the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopted a working definition of anti-Semitism that clearly illustrates the dimensions of the problem. The time has come for the OSCE to follow suit. The Milan Ministerial Council this December should approve a working definition of anti-Semitism based on the IHRA model, one that should then be widely promoted within the OSCE to educate public officials, journalists, teachers, and others about the contemporary manifestations of anti-Semitism.

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

- We must continue to affirm commitments made at the landmark 2004 conference and reiterated at subsequent conferences and assess the implementation of those commitments.
- 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 2004 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.

To be sure, governments bear the primary responsibility for ensuring the safety, security, and equal rights of all their citizens. Jewish communities deserve no less than their neighbors. Together with NGOs and civic leaders, governments can mobilize the public to reject anti-Semitic hatred, whether it comes from hate groups or political parties, and to encourage the use of instruments and best practices for fighting discrimination and promoting pluralism. This means that governments must use their bully pulpits to condemn and marginalize anti-Semitic activities and those who perpetrate them. This kind of public rejection of anti-Semitism adds greatly to the sense of security that Jewish communities seek.

The critical lesson we have learned from the experience of those who perished in the Holocaust is that indifference to the suffering of others is itself a crime. Therefore, it is the moral responsibility of all people of conscience to aggressively confront every form of racial, religious, or ethnic hatred, whether it occurs in Charlottesville, Virginia; Warsaw, Poland; or elsewhere. As the Holocaust recedes further into the past, its lessons faded if not altogether lost, it becomes even more crucial that post-Holocaust generations raise our collective voices on behalf of all groups, anywhere in the world, who are subjected to discrimination and persecution, or who are threatened by annihilation. Seventy-three years after the Holocaust, and nearly two decades after the start of the current rise of anti-Semitism around the world, one simple imperative can serve as a rallying principle: that the responsibility to confront hatred falls squarely on all of us.