

Report of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism

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During this year I was able to make two joint country visits with my colleagues to Belgium and Greece, and four separate country visits to France, Italy, Latvia and Romania. I want to offer a special note of thanks to Romania for the high level of meetings that were organized and to Italy for the excellent logistical assistance that was provided.

It has been my practice to share a preliminary draft of my report in advance with the respective governments. In some cases this has elicited a robust discussion. I am grateful for the attention and seriousness that the drafting of these reports has elicited. I hope we can draw on that in the coming year for new follow-up opportunities and further focused discussion.

We held an important high level expert conference in cooperation with ODIHR in Berlin in June that focused on Jewish community security. This highlighted the special dilemma that many Jewish communities face as they confront growing anti-Semitic threats and harassment and are at the same time potential terrorist targets. The conference, which featured an address by the German Interior Minister and an important statement by the OSCE Chair-in-office, Foreign Minister Leonid Kozhara, was a singular contribution to defining the scope of the problem and offering some examples of good practices. But if it is to truly prove its worth we must take further steps next year to follow up—with country by country analysis and by encouraging specific governments to address the identified unmet needs.

I was also afforded the opportunity this year to participate in and to address the high level conference on intolerance in Tirana and also important conferences on anti-Semitism which took place in Jerusalem, Budapest and Kyiv.

At these events and previously this fall when addressing the HDIM in Warsaw and the Human Dimension Committee here in Vienna I have tried to outline what I observe to be the key problems of anti-Semitism in the OSCE region, recognizing that they may differ country by country and that they will require individual, national commitments to address them successfully. Let me summarize them here:

1. **Jewish Community Security:** As noted above with regard to the June conference, most Jewish communities in Europe today face a special burden in providing for the security of their members. Often communities must channel as much as a quarter of their budgets for this purpose and sometimes they are forced to make painful choices between security and programs which, as we witnessed in Toulouse, France in 2012, can have lethal consequences. They are engaged in training volunteers from among their members and alerting everyone to be on the lookout for potential

threats. There are a number of good examples where governments have provided funds to install security enhancements and where police protection can be quickly ratcheted up when the need demands it. But many more countries still fail to recognize the problem or to implement the necessary measures to deal with it.

2. **Anti-Semitism in Public Discourse:** This subject was addressed in an OSCE high level expert conference in Prague in 2011, which was an important contribution to defining the problem. But that does not mean that it has been solved. Frequently in general media and on the Internet Israel is demonized and decried as a racist state, and just as frequently European Jewish communities are conflated with the State of Israel. The 2005 FRA working definition of anti-Semitism is a helpful tool in letting monitors, government authorities and civil society know that these are manifestations of anti-Semitism and not political criticism, yet they still continue. As we have also witnessed they can have a corrosive impact that directly threatens the physical safety of Jews.

3. **Identifying the Source of the Problem:** I have noted in a number of my country reports—e.g., France, Sweden, Belgium—that Jewish community representatives indicate that the major source of anti-Semitic incidents including physical and verbal harassment are today coming from elements in those countries' Arab and Muslim communities. This is further confirmed by a comprehensive survey of Jews in nine EU countries conducted by the FRA (and due for release tomorrow) where respondents have similarly identified the largest percentage of anti-Semitic attacks coming from this group. Although the reasons may vary, some countries are reluctant to confront this fact—due to political correctness or to laws that prevent the collection of data on the basis of religion and ethnicity or to concerns that it might increase prejudice against a minority group that already suffers from discrimination. But if governments cannot be clear-headed in identifying the source of anti-Semitism it is hard to believe that they will be successful in devising the appropriate and necessary tools to address it. And in the meantime it adds to the anxiety and uncertainty that Jewish communities feel when they should be confident that that their own governments will protect them.

4. **The Growth of Right Wing, Extremist Parties:** We have seen in recent years the growing political success of various right wing parties which are able to capitalize on times of economic stress and political turmoil. Most notable have been the Jobbik Party in Hungary, the Golden Dawn Party in Greece and the Svoboda Party in Ukraine, but well-established parties in France and Austria are also riding this wave. The voters themselves may not all be racists or anti-Semites, but the parties who receive their votes are able to advance a xenophobic and anti-Semitic agenda. The hateful language that was once confined to street corners has now entered the halls of national parliaments. Ironically, as each of these parties espouses a strong, nationalist agenda, they may have very little in common with each other, with the one exception being that anti-Semitic thread woven through all of them. Mainstream political leadership must find ways to confront them forcefully but constitutionally, as we have witnessed the Greek Government doing in recent days.

5. **Campaigns to Restrict or Ban Ritual Circumcision and Ritual Slaughter:** The practice of these two traditions has been elemental to Jewish life since Biblical times. (They are also basic to Islam.) However, we now see political efforts by children's rights advocates and animal rights activists to enact legislation that would restrict or do away with these practices altogether. Earlier this year the Polish parliament defeated legislation that would have provided an exemption to Jews and Muslims to carry out ritual slaughter for their own community needs. A recent resolution passed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe declared that ritual circumcision was in the same category as female genital mutilation and urged governments to take steps to address it. Those who are leading these campaigns may not be anti-Semitic (or anti-Muslim) but they have generated a significant degree of anti-Semitism in the public discussion. And their potential success is truly an existential threat to the future of Jewish life in these countries.

Next year will mark the tenth anniversary of the OSCE conference on anti-Semitism in Berlin and the ground-breaking Berlin Declaration. It should be an opportunity to look back, to take note of the tangible progress that has been made, but also to recognize that many of the commitments made by governments still remain unfulfilled and the problem of anti-Semitism today in the OSCE region is no less serious.