



## OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism

As prepared for delivery by Betty Ehrenberg,  
Director, International and Communal Affairs  
Institute for Public Affairs, Orthodox Union  
Workshop on Contemporary Anti-Semitism  
Berlin, April 29, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Moderator. On behalf of the United States delegation, I thank you for the opportunity to speak at this important workshop, and I thank our hosts, the government of Germany and the OSCE under the Bulgarian Chairmanship in Office, for having the wisdom to hold this momentous conference to confront anti-Semitism, a phenomenon we all hoped would have finally disappeared by the 21st century.

I particularly want to thank Ambassador Stephan M. Minikes, US Ambassador to the OSCE, and Ambassador Edward O'Donnell, US Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, for the outstanding work they have done in preparation for the Conference.

A "new" anti-Semitism is arising, emanating from many places in Europe and the Middle East. What is new about this brand of anti-Semitism is that it is comprised of a shocking superimposition of radical Muslim hatred of Jews and Israel onto the classic anti-Semitism of Europe. And in spite of efforts to either ignore or hide it, it is undeniable and must be squarely faced.

As President Bush wrote in a letter on the occasion of our National Days of Remembrance just last week, "Every nation has a responsibility to confront and denounce anti-Semitism and the violence it breeds. We must never lose the courage to oppose hatred, aggression and murderous ambitions wherever we find them." It is in that spirit that I wish to address this most recent brand of anti-Semitism.

This newest manifestation of anti-Semitism has two dimensions. The first is the traditional old anti-Semitism that we have seen in both Europe and North America for several decades. The second stems from the support of Palestinian terrorism by radical Islamic groups that have proliferated in Europe. Many of these groups adopt radical Islamic ideologies and use their criticism of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to conceal their anti-Semitic views.

Tensions in the Middle East may explain the upsurge in anti-Semitism – but they can never excuse it. The assault on Israel's right to exist and the questioning of Israel's legitimacy at the World Conference Against Racism that took place in Durban, South Africa in August of 2001 only served to encourage violent anti-Semitism. A conference against racism and anti-Semitism sadly became a forum that granted legitimacy to anti-Semitism. This incitement led to the violent attacks that took place in Europe—exactly the opposite of what the Durban Conference was intended to achieve.

The September 2000 eruption of the Palestinian campaign of terror against Israel was accompanied by a dismaying rise in anti-Semitic incidents in Europe. There ensued a demonization of Jews that would have been unthinkable a few years ago. A malevolent anti-Semitism was suddenly being manifested and accepted in many countries. And while we call this anti-Semitism new, it looks very much like the old.

Criticism of a specific Israeli policy cannot justify attacks on Jewish community centers and Holocaust memorials in Europe. That radical Islamists, apparently with the not inconsiderable support of European Islamic communities, purport to act on behalf of Palestinian rights by attacking Jewish targets in Europe suggests that, for these purveyors of terrorism and murder, opposition to Israel and opposition to Jews and Judaism are indistinguishable.

Most dangerous is the genocidal threat by radical Islamists against Jews. This type of anti-Semitism finds its expression not only as threats against Jews but also against the West, as witnessed in Turkey when car bombs exploded near two synagogues while worshippers were at prayer on the Sabbath. Plans for further attacks were recently thwarted in Spain and in Hungary.

Moderate Arab leaders have courageously denounced extremism and terrorism and support religious tolerance and understanding. They understand that this is an important step towards the betterment of their own societies in every aspect, social, political, and economic. These Muslims are a source of great hope and the OSCE must do all it can to encourage them, and denounce other Arab leaders who speak in different terms.

This new anti-Semitism is like a cancer that can quickly infect many countries. The same radicalized extremist Muslims who threaten Jews perpetrated the horrific bombing of Spain's commuter railway. The Spain attack, like those in Istanbul and Bali and at the Pentagon and at the World Trade Center, are important wake up calls for all of us. When civilized nations fail to combat anti-Semitism, it is only a matter a time before those who hate the Jews spread their hatred towards others. Jews may be the first victims and targets, but they are never the last ones. Self-interest, then, to say nothing of simple decency, requires the nations of the OSCE region to act vigorously to extinguish resurgent anti-Semitism.

Understanding that anti-Semitism has taken on these new dimensions, OSCE member states should commit to recognizing this new anti-Semitism for what it truly is as an important first step. As additional steps, I add the following:

1. Islamic and other leaders should be urged to join interfaith commissions instituted to increase outreach and dialogue. This will promote peaceful co-existence and cooperation on issues of common concern. Many groups that exist in the U.S. and in Europe and can be used as models.
2. Public educational programs, like those in France and Germany, should be instituted in order to teach tolerance and to prevent incitement. These should include printed materials as well as video films produced for use in schools, places of worship, and in community centers to facilitate widespread use and to help counteract media-based incitement. This is important for religious institutions as well and can be done while at the same time

respecting religious freedom. This education must extend to distinguishing between what is legitimate criticism of the State of Israel and that which draws on anti-Semitic canards, images and threats or hold Israel to a double standard. There is no room for these in legitimate criticism of a democracy. Youth leaders and teachers of all faiths should be provided with special training materials and programs to help educate young people in schools and youth clubs on respect and tolerance. These are examples of the types of programs readily available from many organizations dedicated to promoting understanding and combating prejudice.