

Testimony to House of Representatives

By Dan Asmussen

Chairman Jewish Community of Denmark

Dear Mr. Chairman, Dear members of Congress

It's an great honor for me to testify before the United States Congress. I would like to thank the honorable Congressmen and the World Jewish Congress for allowing me to share a few remarks with you.

You probably think of Denmark as a small and peaceful country. And it is basically also the way, we think ourselves.

In October 2013, the entire Danish society came together in order to celebrate the 70th commemoration of the saving of Danish Jewry from the Nazi onslaught. It was an amazing achievement of the Danish society to stand up, come together and to save its Jewish minority. The Danish population believed that its Jewish neighbors and friends were an integral of the their own society, making Denmark *a* country that could rightfully be defined at Righteous Among the Nations.

On February 15th, the Danish society once again came together. This time to mourn the loss of Dan Uzan, a 37-year-old Jewish man, who was murdered while protecting the guests at a Bat Mitzah party in the Jewish Community Center. Thousands of Danes came together order to speak out against terror, hatred and indifference.

While the community was in shock and despair, Danes once again showed how much they care for their Jewish citizens. In the days following the attack, thousands of people showed their respect. They laid flowers in front of Copenhagen's Synagogue.

On February 15th, the Jewish Community and the whole Danish society was brutally awoken to a new reality. We had warned the authorities for years that one day such an attack could happen on Danish soil. We had urged them to take the warning signs seriously, while we in parallel took it upon ourselves to safeguard our community's security.

The terror attack against the Jewish community in Denmark did not occur in a vacuum. It did not happen in Copenhagen just by chance. It was the culmination of years of growing anti-Semitism. It happened in a country where it has become widely acceptable

to criticize and question both Israel and Jews with a carelessness that we did not expect or imagine just a few years ago.

During the Gaza War last summer, a few hundred people were evacuated by police as the latter could not guarantee for their safety during a demonstration calling for peace.

A few days earlier, almost 4,000 people signed a petition urging Danish media outlets not to use journalists with Jewish heritage for coverage of the Middle East conflict.

Yet it was not before the Jewish school in Copenhagen was vandalized with graffiti that politicians decided to react and speak out against these incidents.

It is however, important to understand that the Danish society itself is not has never been anti-Semitic and that many of the threats facing Danish Jewry, like in the rest of Europe, come from marginalized and radicalized Muslims – and these form a small minority of all Muslims in Denmark.

The terrorist who committed the two murders was born and raised in Denmark and used his religion and affiliation to Islam to justify the crime. Unfortunately, he is not alone there with his views. That was demonstrated when more than 700 people participated in his funeral.

On the other end of the specter we have witnessed how Muslims organizations spoke out against hatred and prejudices against their fellow Jewish citizens. We truly appreciate that expression of support and we welcome any such initiatives. It is important for me to emphasize that we have good relations with moderate Muslim organizations. We work together on issues of common religious rights.

However, we still need for the Muslim community to do more, to become more outspoken against violence and hatred. To confront hate and prejudices toward Jews.

The Danish society can only do so much. The real long-term solution needs to be found inside the Muslim community, and we need them to take more responsibility in speaking out against anti-Semitism, and against terror committed in the name of Allah.

In recent weeks, the Jewish community received strong support from the Danish politicians and media. We believe it served as a wake-up call, and we expect that our problems will now be taken more seriously now than in the past.

Last week, I met with Ira Forman, the US Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism. He made it clear to us that the Danish government is not doing enough compared with other European countries, to combat Anti-Semitism.

And he said that it could never be justified that the Jewish community, or any other minority group for that matter, should have to prioritize security over education, or ultimately prioritize security over the future of the community.

Mr. Forman is right.

If we spend all our resources on security, our children won't have a future.

Yet if we fail to protect our children, Danish Jewry doesn't have a future either.

We need a long-term governmental plan that will keep our community safe as much as possible. The Danish Justice Department has said that such a plan is in the making.

And we need the Muslim community to speak out and help in building a democratic, tolerant and peaceful society. This is the only viable and long-term solution, so we one day will not need to risk the lives of children in order for them to protect the community.

I feel truly grateful towards the Danish society for standing up for their Jewish minority in these difficult times. I just wish they had done so when we asked for help after the incidents in Toulouse and Brussels.

Thank you Mr. Chairman,