

Statement of Willy Silberstein
The Swedish Committee against Antisemitism
Anti-Semitism, A Growing Threat to All Faiths
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International
Organizations
February 27, 2013

Let me start by telling you about Shneer Kesselman. He is a Rabi, born in the US.

He is working in the Swedish city of Malmö, which is rather infamous for its anti-Semitism in recent years.

What differs him from other Jews of Malmö is that people can see that he is Jewish. He wears traditional clothes.

For some years now he has been systematically harassed. People spit at him, throw cans after him, threaten him and call him things like bloody Jew.

He represents a high proportion of the total hate-crimes in Malmö.

This is of course scaring in itself. A Jew cannot walk in a Swedish city without being scared.

But this also means that if people could identify other Jews as Jews they would also risk harassment. In Sweden in the year of 2013.

Let me add that many Jews have left Malmö, simply because they are afraid and ashamed to live in a city which treats its Jews like this. Some have moved to the capital of Sweden, Stockholm, a few have also moved to Israel.

One big group that is active against Jews in Malmö – and other parts of Sweden – are Moslem immigrants. They cannot differ the conflict in the Middle East from Swedes who are Jews.

Just recently Swedish public television showed an interview with a Jewish woman who had been threatened to death by Moslems. And interviews with Moslem immigrants confirmed their hatred towards Jews.

Let me at the same time be clear. A large portion of the Moslem immigrants in Sweden are not anti-semitic.

We have also seen very positive counter-reactions. An organization called Young Moslems against antisemitism has been formed and is active in educating young Moslems.

In Malmö, my committee against anti-Semitism has been very active and we have taken part in so called kipa-marches, where people, Jews and non-Jews, have manifested their support for the Jews of Malmö.

This has been very successful and has received a lot of attention also internationally.

The Swedish committee against anti-Semitism will also, with the help of funds from the government, hold seminars for teachers on anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

We know that anti-Semitism is on the rise, polls confirm that more people now than a few years ago say yes to statements like: The Jews are too influential in the world.

1 of 3 say there is too much talk of the Holocaust in the world.

1 of 6 say Jews are greedy.

Let me add that working against anti-semitism is in the long run working against racism that can hit anywhere.

A society that accepts hatred against Jews will surely pick another group, be it Moslems or Christians or others.

A fight against anti-semitism is therefore a fight for the right for all minorities.

It may start with the Jews but it will surely not end with that.

Let me end on a personal note. My mother was liberated by American soldiers in a concentration camp in 1945. She would have been impressed if she could have seen this. She would have been proud – but not surprised.

So therefore, thank you so much for bringing your spotlight to a rise in anti-semitism in a continent that has endured so much hatred already.

This shows that we at least have learnt a lesson, silence is no option.