

RABBI ANDREW BAKER
Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism
AJC Director of International Jewish Affairs
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International
Organizations
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JEWISH COMMUNITY SECURITY

We have spent much energy trying to convince governments of the special security challenges that Jewish communities in Europe face and then pressing them to take action to address these problems. Of particular note in this effort was the OSCE Expert Conference on Jewish Community Security in Berlin in 2012, in which Jewish community leaders and law enforcement officials described the situation and offered some best practice examples.¹

Eventually governments came to recognize the seriousness of the situation. I would like to think that this was due to the successful advocacy efforts on my part and on the part of other individuals and organizations. But in reality we were surely helped by the tragic events of terrorist attacks in Paris, Brussels and Copenhagen. No longer were governments able to ignore the situation.

They have responded, and that is good news. But problems still remain. Governments have taken different approaches, and some only in stop-gap measures.

The French government mobilized the military to protect Jewish schools and other institutions, an unprecedented step to offer security to Europe's largest Jewish community. There is little doubt that this resulted in a significant reduction in anti-Semitic incidents reported last year and probably also in the decline of French Jews leaving the country for Israel or elsewhere. However, no one expected that this would be a permanent measure. And in the face of more general terrorist attacks and threats, security forces are being repositioned.

The Jewish community in Sweden reported that its government stepped up its activities following the terror attack on the synagogue in nearby Copenhagen. The Stockholm community had been spending a quarter of its budget for security needs, and it faced a variety of road blocks even in implementing its own measures. By way of example, positioning security cameras on the streets in front of the synagogue and community centers was deemed a violation of privacy protections. In the city of Malmö there had been a dramatic number of anti-

¹ "Summary Report of the Expert Conference on Addressing the Security Needs of Jewish Communities in the OSCE Region: Challenges and Good Practices." 13 June 2012. Berlin, Germany. <http://www.osce.org/odihr/105253?download=true>. Accessed March 2017.

Semitic incidents— by all accounts mostly stemming from the city’s large immigrant community— leading to a steady emigration of Jewish families.

I visited Stockholm and Malmö again this past September. The government is providing funds to upgrade the security of Jewish buildings—and those of other religious and ethnic communities—and deserves commendation for this. But policies that limit the amount that can be spent on each building—a seemingly fair approach in the abstract—are a special burden to the Stockholm Jewish community. Much of its activity takes place in a recently-constructed community center that combines a day school with a café, communal offices, a kosher market and meeting spaces. The costs necessary to provide the needed security enhancements—not envisioned in the initial design—far exceed the per-building subsidies that are offered.

The Malmö Jewish community reports that it now has received funding to pay for a full-time security professional. After repeated anti-Semitic attacks on the community’s rabbi, one perpetrator was finally apprehended and prosecuted. However, they also note the lack of coordination and communication between them and police and intelligence agencies. When I brought this up at a meeting with the city’s own security chief, he expressed his own frustration at receiving very little essential information from the national authorities.

By all accounts the United Kingdom offers the most successful relationship between the Jewish community and government authorities in dealing with security concerns. The community’s security arm, the Community Security Trust (CST), works closely with police authorities in nearly all respects.² They share data and a unified approach to monitor incidents; they are involved in the development of teaching manuals for police cadets and in their ongoing education program; and they are now collaborating in providing training in security and data collection for other faith communities.³ The CST and government authorities have also devised new methods to alert Jewish community members of impending dangers or special measures by linking these messages to key topics and phrases on Internet search engines.

Finally, I want to cite the work of ODIHR and its Words into Action project which is now in the final stages of preparing a comprehensive practical guideline for government authorities on Jewish community security.⁴ This “security toolkit”—the result of extensive consultations with police professionals and NGO representatives—will be presented later this spring. It offers recommended practices and useful examples, and I very much hope that it will be taken onboard by the OSCE participating States.

WORKING DEFINITION OF ANTI-SEMITISM

² <https://cst.org.uk/about-cst/police-partnership>

³ “A Guide to Fighting Hate Crimes: A CST Publication. ”Community Security Trust. <https://cst.org.uk/public/data/file/1/0/Hate-Crime-booklet.pdf>. Accessed March 2017.

⁴ <http://www.osce.org/project/words-into-action-to-address-anti-semitism>

Ten years have passed since the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) issued its Working Definition on Antisemitism.⁵ This is a comprehensive definition that, together with examples, provides an important guide for civil society monitors and government officials alike in understanding the various manifestations of anti-Semitism. At its core anti-Semitism is a hatred of and prejudice against Jews but it also presents itself in conspiracies about Jews, in Holocaust denial, and in ways relating to the State of Israel. It is a useful tool in helping police recognize anti-Semitic hate crimes and in assisting prosecutors and judges in their work. Without its guidance we have seen how real attacks on Jewish targets are still dismissed as politically-motivated incidents.

Last year the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), consisting of thirty-one member governments, adopted the Working Definition at its plenary session in Romania.⁶ Also last year the OSCE Chair-in-Office, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, sought to secure the official adoption of the same definition at the OSCE Ministerial Meeting in Hamburg in December. As those who were present know, effectively 56 of the 57 participating States were prepared to accept the draft decision on this presented by the Chairmanship. In the end, only the Russian Federation stood in the way of its adoption—by raising questionable reservations and proposing last minute changes that would alter the essential meaning of the decision. I very much hope that under the current Austrian Chairmanship the OSCE will again seek adoption of the Working Definition. Obviously, we will need to make new efforts to secure the Russian endorsement of an acceptable draft decision if we are to succeed.

In the meantime we can cite several important examples of the endorsement and use of the definition:

- The UK Government, following a recommendation by the Parliamentary Home Affairs Committee, has formally adopted the definition for use in that country.⁷
- On January 26, 2017 the collective EU Member States bloc in the OSCE Permanent Council issued a statement that noted their support for the OSCE adopting of the Working Definition—the first written endorsement by the European Union.⁸

⁵ “EUMC Working Definition of Antisemitism.” European Parliament Working Group on Antisemitism. <http://www.antisem.eu/projects/eumc-working-definition-of-antisemitism/>. Accessed March 2017.

⁶https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press_release_document_antisemitism.pdf

⁷ Walker, Peter. “UK adopts antisemitism definition to combat hate crime against Jews.” The Guardian. 11 December 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/dec/12/antisemitism-definition-government-combat-hate-crime-jews-israel>. Accessed March 2017.

⁸ “Déclaration de l’UE en réponse au Président de l’Alliance Internationale pour la mémoire de l’Holocauste.” OSCE Conseil Permanent No 1129 Vienne, 26 janvier 2017. <http://www.osce.org/fr/pc/296796?download=true>, p.2. Accessed March 2017.

- The Justice Ministers of Austria and Germany have each announced that the definition would be part of the materials used in the training of new prosecutors and judges.
- The ODIHR security guidelines (mentioned above) will also include the full definition.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND RITUAL PRACTICES

We are also mindful of efforts in a number of European states to restrict or ban altogether the longstanding ritual practices of circumcision and animal slaughter. These practices—*brit milah* and *sh'chita* in Hebrew—have been elemental requirements of Jewish observance since Biblical times. Prohibiting them would represent a genuine challenge to the continued viability of Jewish life in these countries.

Proponents of these bans are most often children's rights advocates or animal rights activists. There is little doubt that support also comes from a growing anti-Muslim animus in these countries, as Islam also mandates its own version of male circumcision and ritual slaughter. Additionally, the inherent principle of religious freedom which we hold in such high regard in the United States may be viewed differently in Europe with its own legacy of religious domination in state affairs.

Jewish communities have already accommodated themselves to some restrictions. A number of countries prohibit religious slaughter altogether. In some cases this legislation dates back decades and was originally enacted with a clear anti-Semitic intent to discourage Jews from settling there. For the moment there are still no restrictions on the importation of kosher meat. But as prohibitions increase, even this may be challenged. In some countries legislation imposing conditions on the practice of infant circumcision, such as requiring the presence of medical professionals has been enacted with the agreement of the Jewish community. But rather than ending the debate, there are new calls to ban the practice altogether.

Ironically, with all the anti-Semitic restrictions that accompanied Jewish life in Europe over the centuries, Jews were generally left alone to carry out these internal acts of religious observance as they saw fit. Until now there was no need to make a public defense, let alone to devise a compelling argument to a largely secular public.

In the face of this, there are some positive developments including growing Muslim-Jewish cooperation in countering these efforts. There are also plans now for ODIHR to convene a meeting on religious freedom and ritual practice early this summer that will highlight these efforts and seek to raise awareness to the challenges posed to religious life in Europe.

UNCERTAIN POLITICAL CLIMATE

I cannot leave unspoken a general concern and unease at the increasing support for right-wing, populist and xenophobic political parties in much of Europe. The ideology and agenda of these parties are primarily stoking fears of Muslims, Roma and Sinti, and recent waves of migrants primarily from the Middle East. But European Jews themselves also recognize that these movements will not view them kindly. Many of these parties' supporters if not the leaders themselves are openly anti-Semitic. Marine Le Pen, the Presidential candidate of France's National Front Party, has already indicated that Jews must "do their part" in her call for banning the Muslim headscarf by removing their *kippot* in public too.⁹ Even though in some countries the worst fears of their success—e.g., presidential elections in Austria and parliamentary elections in the Netherlands—may not have been realized, their potency cannot be discounted.

European Jewish leaders have so far largely maintained a policy of non-communication with these parties and their leaders, even as some of them are actively courting Jewish voters. They are also seeking with some limited success meetings with Israeli leaders and potential Jewish interlocutors in the United States. By most accounts the goal is one of "koshering" their candidacy rather than genuinely excising the anti-Semitism that is inherent in their ideology.

We need to be clear-eyed in confronting and combating anti-Semitism, which manifests itself on both the right and the left. Many incidents of anti-Semitism come from segments of the Muslim communities in Europe, and governments are not always willing to acknowledge this. There can be little doubt that many of the newly-arriving refugees and migrants have brought with them to Europe the strongly anti-Jewish and anti-Israel sentiments that are so prevalent in their home countries. We cannot excuse this or ignore it or worse still allow it to be "balanced" by anti-Zionist proponents who would blame Israel and absolve these individuals.

At the same time, if the essential lesson of the long and vibrant chapter of Jewish life in America has taught us anything, it is that we are most secure in a society that is protective of all its minorities, appreciative of diversity and pluralism, and committed to eradicating racial, ethnic and religious discrimination. Surely what is true here—and we may need some reminders these days—also holds true for Europe.

⁹ "Marine Le Pen: French Jews Should Sacrifice Yarmulke In Struggle Against Radical Islam." Jewish Telegraphic Agency. 6 February 2017. <http://www.jta.org/2017/02/06/news-opinion/world/marine-le-pen-french-jews-should-sacrifice-yarmulke-in-struggle-against-radical-islam>. Accessed March 2017.