

AJC CALL TO ACTION

A Defining Moment for Europe:
AJC Strategy Conference on Combating Anti-Semitism



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AJC Global Jewish
Advocacy



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LEADERSHIP

AJC calls on the political institutions of the European Union and its Member States to express at the highest levels a fundamental commitment to fight anti-Semitism.

- Heads of state must speak out clearly and sincerely.
- Members of the European Parliament and members of national parliaments should seek out or create platforms to affirm solidarity with targeted communities, and identify and censure the purveyors of this hate.
- Jewish communities and the general public need to hear directly from European leaders that anti-Semitism violates core European principles and will not be tolerated.

This is the central message: anti-Semitism is not only an attack on Jews, but on Europe and its values. Civil society—including faith leaders and other opinion-shapers—should be summoned to carry the message that anti-Semitism is socially, politically and religiously unacceptable.

A PLAN

Recognizing the European Commission's planned first Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights, in October 2015, AJC calls for the development and implementation at the earliest possible moment of a comprehensive plan of action to combat the ominous rise of anti-Semitism across Europe—evidenced by repeated terror attacks, EU polls showing mounting fear among Jews, and a sharp increase in reported anti-Semitic incidents. Such a plan should include:

- community involvement,
- clear lines of authority,
- centralized coordination at the national level,
- achievable goals,
- sufficient funding, and
- a long-term commitment.

While words are important, concrete and sustained actions are even more significant.

SECURITY

Europe must take urgent steps to assure the physical security of Jewish communities, their members and institutions. Jews across the Continent experienced a surge in anti-Semitic violence and threats last summer, at the time of the Hamas-instigated conflict with Israel. More recently, even after repeated attacks on Jewish sites and even after being alerted to specific threats to their Jewish citizens, too many jurisdictions across Europe withheld or provided only token police protection—while others, including France, mobilized on a massive scale. AJC calls on European governments to:

- undertake thorough analyses of the security of their Jewish communities,
- retain outside expertise as needed, and
- enlist law enforcement authorities and provide the required training and funds to respond appropriately.

They must ensure that police, intelligence agencies and Jewish community security officials are all engaged cooperatively and fully prepared to avert new dangers.

ASSESSMENT

The dimensions and the sources of the mounting anti-Semitic threat must be analyzed and acknowledged. While European officials have widely recognized the traditional sources of anti-Semitism, such as those coming from the extreme right, many have been slow to confront the new sources. Manifestations of this phenomenon include not only violent attacks from radical Islamists, but also troubling attitudes and expressions from the extreme left and from other segments of Muslim and Arab communities.

- If governments are to be successful in dealing with the problem—in the short term via enhanced security, and in the longer term via education and other remediation—they need detailed information.
- This will come through attitude surveys that identify the sources of the prejudice, as well as government collection of precise data on anti-Semitic hate crimes, including information on the perpetrators.
- Even though all EU governments are party to OSCE commitments on data collection, many fall short.

AJC calls on all Member States to collect and forthrightly analyze the data on the sources and effects of anti-Semitism in Europe, and make appropriate use of the EUMC Working Definition of Anti-Semitism as an important tool in this work.

COUNTER-RADICALIZATION

Recognizing the specific problem of alienated and vulnerable Muslim youth, AJC calls on the European Union and its Member States to formulate and implement broad-ranging counter-radicalization programs, working in partnership with Muslim and other faith and civil society leaders.

- Part of that program will require assuring that religious leaders in Europe, conversant in European languages and upholding European values, convey messages to the faithful that are consonant with those values.
- Part of it will require much stricter attention to, and prudent steps against, the radical preachings now commonly disseminated in European prisons.
- Part of it will require long-overdue and unprecedented cooperation with responsible Muslim community leaders; their active participation in this struggle is necessary.
- Further, a successful counter-radicalization agenda will require a new commitment to civic education for mutual respect and understanding, enlisting public and private schools in structured efforts to change the attitudes of youth harboring anti-Semitic views.

Education ministries should direct greatest attention to students found to be most prone to intolerance—including those subject to intolerance themselves. AJC recognizes that educating students to identify and condemn anti-Semitism will require more than teaching about the horrors of the Holocaust—although it is essential that the central lessons of the Holocaust be absorbed by this and future generations through pedagogic methods that are effective in today's Europe—and more than clichéd paeans to brotherhood. Educators should be encouraged to develop accessible new curricula imparting the core message that anti-Semitism is incompatible with fundamental European values.

SOCIAL MEDIA

AJC calls on the EU and its Member States to develop and enforce procedures to detoxify social media. The Internet and the multiple forms of social media, the ultimate vehicles for information sharing, allow as well for the instant and universal dissemination of anti-Semitism and religious and secular extremism. Several organizations across the EU are monitoring existing web sites and social media accounts, and watching as new ones spring up. Internet Service Providers are free to—and should—exclude raw hate speech, or speech that is nothing more than a call for illegal violence. It is also necessary for EU states to cooperate in confronting the misuse of social media. Efforts to close sites that promote hate are thwarted by conflicting laws and jurisdictional questions, as well as free speech concerns. AJC calls on European governments:

- to reexamine such laws, and adopt and strengthen them to prevent, limit and punish the worst offenders, being mindful not to threaten legitimate debate or criticism;
- to enlist platform providers in the cause of preventing the Internet and social media from being used for the promulgation of hate and as recruiting tools for radical and violent extremism;
- to seek the cooperation in this endeavor of Internet Service Providers and regulatory authorities in non-EU jurisdictions; and
- to block sites and accounts that incite violence.

Better reporting processes and quicker response times will be required from social media providers to combat the spread of hate speech and radicalization online. AJC will continue its own efforts to press U.S. social media platforms to more vigorously police their own sites while being mindful of First Amendment protections, and urges those entities to create European structures and legal representations to facilitate cooperation with EU Member States in preventing such platforms from being used to promote violence, hate and extremism.

ISRAEL

In European cities in the summer of 2014, there were demonstrations against Israel that were scenes of shockingly anti-Semitic acts and expressions, including violent attacks on Jewish targets.

- Anti-Israel animus can itself be a form of anti-Semitism, and anti-Semites may hide behind a mask of anti-Zionism.

AJC, recalling with appreciation the 22 July 2014 joint declaration on anti-Semitism by the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and Italy, as well as recent comments of French Prime Minister Manuel Valls and British Prime Minister David Cameron, calls on European political and civil society leaders to recognize this form of prejudice and speak out, condemning those who deny Israel's right to exist, demonize Israel, or deny the Jews' bond to their historic homeland.

PREVENTION

For more than four years, European jihadists have traveled to Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and other conflict zones, been indoctrinated and hardened in war, and—if they survived and returned home—posed a profound security threat in their countries and across the Continent.

- “Foreign fighters,” as well as Islamist extremists who have not been to the battlefield but adhere to the same ideology, can freely traverse the Schengen Area, endangering all European citizens;
- Jews and Jewish institutions, as we have seen, are high on their target list.

AJC calls on European governments to put in place at the earliest possible moment the necessary surveillance procedures and formal systems for information sharing within the EU, and between EU and other like-minded countries, to identify and closely monitor the jihadists in their midst, to prevent the return of jihadi radicals to Europe, and, more importantly still, to keep them from leaving in the first place.

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AJC Mission:

To enhance the well-being of the Jewish people and Israel, and to advance human rights and democratic values in the United States and around the world.