

THE BATTLE AGAINST ANTISEMITISM IN THE OSCE REGION

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates:

International relations are increasingly in a state of flux and turmoil, as are notions of tolerance, democratic principles and ideals, human rights, and robust citizenship. These values appear to be receding within many institutions and societies, while the international community seems to be less strident in trying to defend them.

Scholars and experts who have a deep understanding of contemporary antisemitism, as well as its historical and deadly legacy, know that “antisemitism begins with Jews, but never ever ends with Jews.” Once this virulent form of hatred is unleashed upon society – all of society will suffer, affecting its very core. In World War II, six million Jews were murdered; but we know that more than 80 million Europeans were eventually murdered as no real opposition to the Nazi ideology was effective until it was too late. It would appear that the Jew, or perhaps more importantly the image of the Jew, is at the center of this global moment. Both historically and today, antisemitism is a social disease that begins with the Jews but does not end with them, making the Jewish people the proverbial canary in the coalmine. This deadly strain of hatred often turns against other groups, such as women, homosexuals, moderate Muslims, and other sectors of the population who are perceived as not being ideologically pure, as well as against key democratic notions such as robust citizenship, equality before the law, and religious pluralism. Antisemitism is consequently a universal human rights issue and a regional security issue -- of importance to the OSCE.

In view of antisemitism's destructive power against the “other”, that is both well known and well documented, its historical lessons are a key aspect in the development and defense of Western civilization, and thus a subject of dire interest for the OSCE. Today, as Jewish Peoplehood has been demonized for decades; and reactionary social movements use this hatred to fuel its rise to power – like the puppeteer – focusing on the Jew, on Zionism, on Israel – we see this reactionary social movement taking over institutions and even societies – attacking any and all that stand in its way. This deadly rejection of the other – is causing death and destruction – hundreds of thousands murdered – millions made into refugees. This turmoil is now on the doorstep of many OSCE nations. We must never tolerate antisemitism. We must understand and defend democratic institutions and principles against the dangerous scourge.

All those dedicated to the security of the OSCE states can no longer afford to engage any social movement that includes killing and death as an essential element of its culture. We are all duty-bound to defeat such a movement ideologically, and to develop sound policies to do so. ISGAP and the experts affiliated with it – can contribute to this most urgent task, on both an academic level to understand and measure antisemitism on a global level and on a practical level, to educate and counter such prejudice.

The distance between Warsaw where we meet today and Kiev where we will next week remember the wanton murders that took place in Babi Yar during the Holocaust 75 years ago is just 691 kilometers (429 miles), less than an hour away by plane. History shows us that distance and time do not serve as a barrier to antisemitism and bigoted hatred. Let us work together to create a new world of equality and tolerance, of peace and understanding. We have a far way to go to achieve this. We must learn the lessons of history, for the benefit of all peoplehood for our and future generations.