

# **The fight against Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia** Bringing Communities together

A Summary of three Round Table Meetings  
Initiated by Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou

European Commission

European Monitoring Centre on  
Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)

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## Foreword

Concern about the reported rise in anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Europe following the September 11 atrocities led the European Commission and the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia to organise a series of Round Tables on these themes. The three meetings brought together leading experts from around Europe to look at practical ways of combating discrimination and encouraging dialogue and co-operation between ethnic and religious groups.

During the three Round Table meetings experts in Islamic and Jewish issues, sociologists, researchers and commentators, parliamentarians and government representatives from EU Member States and candidate countries looked at current patterns of discriminatory attitudes and behaviour, and how these should best be tackled at local, national and European level. Particular emphasis was given to the fields of politics, legislation, education and the media.

The Round Tables have shown that political leaders, religious leaders and community leaders must accept their responsibility and take action promote co-operation and understanding between different groups in society. The final Round Table on 20 March 2003 concluded that we must promote "a culture of healing". A culture is the result of thousands of small acts, apparently insignificant in isolation, but powerful in combination. Leaders at all levels and in all walks of life must have the courage now more than ever to challenge racism and to promote the culture of healing.

This publication documents the excellent contributions made by leading experts at the Round Tables, and I would like to thank all participants for the good work and their efforts to help make the European Union a more open, more tolerant and more inclusive place to live and work.

Anna Diamantopoulou

# Contents

Foreword .....	i
Contents .....	ii
<b>PART 1 .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Manifestations of Anti-Semitism in Europe .....	5
<b>Agenda of the Round Table Meeting .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Summary of the Round Table Meeting .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Opening Speech .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Odile Quintin – Director-General for Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission .....	12
<b>The EUMC: Pro-actively combating anti-Semitism .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Beate Winkler - Director of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), Vienna, Austria .....	15
<b>Introduction by the Chair .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Professor Ed van Thijn – Universities of Amsterdam and Leiden; EUMC Management Board Member .....	18
<b>Anti-Semitism: New Developments and Counter Measures .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Dr. Henrik Bachner – Dept. of History of Ideas, Lund University, Sweden .....	21
<b>An Active Observer’s View: The Contribution of CEJI .....</b>	<b>24</b>
Pascale Charhon – Director of the European Jewish Information Centre (CEJI) and Vice-President of ENAR, Belgium .....	24
<b>Anti-Semitism in Denmark .....</b>	<b>28</b>
Prof. Lars Dencik - Professor of Social Psychology, Roskilde University .....	28
<b>Anti-Semitism in Greece .....</b>	<b>31</b>
Prof. Dr. Hagen Fleischer – University of Athens .....	31
<b>Anti-Semitic Incidents in the Netherlands .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Hadassa Hirschfeld - Deputy Director, Centre for Information and Documentation on Israel, Netherlands .....	33
<b>What to do against anti-Semitism? .....</b>	<b>42</b>
Prof. Jonathan Webber - University of Birmingham .....	42
<b>Concluding Remarks .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>List of Participants .....</b>	<b>48</b>

<b>PART 2.....</b>	<b>51</b>
Manifestations of Islamophobia in Europe .....	51
<b>Agenda of the Round Table Meeting .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Summary of the Round Table Meeting .....</b>	<b>53</b>
Manifestations of Islamophobia in Europe .....	53
Brussels, 6 February 2003 .....	53
<b>Opening Speech.....</b>	<b>57</b>
Odile Quintin – Director-General, Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission .....	57
<b>Islamophobia and European Identity.....</b>	<b>61</b>
Robert Purkiss – Chairman, EUMC Management Board .....	61
<b>Fighting and Preventing Islamophobia in Switzerland.....</b>	<b>65</b>
Dr. Fawzia Al Ashmawi – University of Geneva, Switzerland .....	65
<b>Islamophobia in France? .....</b>	<b>68</b>
Valérie Amiraux – Researcher, CNRS/CURAPP, France.....	68
<b>National and European Policies against Islamophobia .....</b>	<b>70</b>
Prof. Pandeli M. Glavanis – Northumbria University, UK .....	70
<b>Policies against Islamophobia on the European Level .....</b>	<b>73</b>
Prof. Tim Niblock - University of Exeter, UK .....	73
<b>Islamophobia - the Factual Situation in Denmark .....</b>	<b>76</b>
Dr. theol. Lissi Rasmussen – Director, Islamic-Christian Study Centre, Denmark	76
<b>Aspects of Islamophobia in the Nordic Context .....</b>	<b>80</b>
Associate Professor Anne Sofie Roald - Malmö University, Sweden.....	80
<b>Fighting Islamophobia in a Region .....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>List of Participants .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>PART 3.....</b>	<b>89</b>
The Fight against Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Bringing Communities Together	89
<b>Agenda of the Round Table Meeting .....</b>	<b>90</b>
The Fight against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: .....	90
<b>Summary of the Round Table Meeting .....</b>	<b>92</b>
Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism: Bringing Communities Together.....	92

<b>Opening Speech .....</b>	<b>99</b>
Anna Diamantopoulou - Commissioner responsible for Employment and Social Affairs - European Commission .....	99
<b>Introductory remarks.....</b>	<b>102</b>
Robert Purkiss – Chairman, EUMC Management Board.....	102
<b>Keynote Speech.....</b>	<b>105</b>
Lord Amir Bhatia - Chairman, Ethnic Minorities Foundation (EMF) & British Muslim Research Centre (BMRC).....	105
<b>Abrahamic and Interreligious Teams .....</b>	<b>114</b>
Dr. Jürgen Micksch – Interkultureller Rat in Deutschland, Germany .....	114
<b>Models of intercultural and interreligious dialogue in the field of religion</b>	<b>116</b>
Diocesan Bishop Dr. Egon Kapellari - Graz-Seckau, Austria.....	116
<b>Turning Words into Action.....</b>	<b>118</b>
Chief Rabbi Bent Melchior - Denmark.....	118
<b>List of participants .....</b>	<b>122</b>

# **PART 1**

## **Manifestations of Anti-Semitism in Europe**

**Round Table Meeting  
Brussels, 5 December 2002**

# Agenda of the Round Table Meeting

## Manifestations of Anti-Semitism in Europe Brussels, 5 December 2002

### Opening of the Round Table

Welcome and opening remarks

by Ms Beate Winkler (EUMC Director)

Welcome and opening remarks

by Ms Odile Quintin (Director General DG Employment)

### Introduction to the Round Table

by Ms Beate Winkler (EUMC Director)

### Introduction of Participants (Tour-de-Table)

### Anti-Semitism in the EU15 in the first half of 2002

Presentation by Berliner Institut für Antisemitismusforschung

### Session 1: Manifestations of anti-Semitism, Causes and Trends

Chair: Mr Ed van Thijn (Member of the EUMC Management Board)

#### Statements by Participants and Discussion

- What is anti-Semitism today? New manifestations?
- Patterns of violence and aggression, changes in attitudes, motivation?
- Identifying perpetrators and victims
- Different situations in the Member States (cf. the Anti-Defamation League Survey)
  - Before and after 11 September 2001
  - Before and after the increase in tension in the Mid East

### Session 2: Strategies to prevent and reduce anti-Semitism

Chair: Mr Ed van Thijn (Member of the EUMC Management Board)

#### Statements by Participants and Discussion

Strategies in general and specially, e.g. recommendations in the field

- of politics
- of legislation (is the legal basis sufficient?)
- of education
- of media
- of civil society including inter-religious dialogue
- Who are the key actors to be addressed?
- What are already existing “good practices” on the local/grass root level?

# Summary of the Round Table Meeting

## Manifestations of Anti-Semitism in Europe Brussels, 5 December 2002

The Round Table on anti-Semitism, the first in a series of three such meetings, was held in Brussels on 5 December. The Round Table, chaired by EUMC Management Board member **Ed van Thijn**, brought together over 20 experts to look at the manifestations, causes and definitions of anti-Semitism and to put forward recommendations to decision-makers on how this could be overcome and prevented.

In her opening address, **Odile Quintin**, Director General of DG Employment and Social Affairs, stressed the importance of looking at possible solutions to anti-Semitism, including for example, inter-religious dialogue. She also called on the Round Table to look at the role of legal instruments, inclusion strategies, immigration and social policies in the fight against discrimination.

## Research on anti-Semitism

An overview of research on anti-Semitism in the EU, carried out for the EUMC, was presented by **Dr Werner Bergmann** and **Dr Julianne Wetzel** of the Berlin Institute for Research on Anti-Semitism.

The authors explained that they had studied incidents of anti-Semitism in the EU in early 2002. Data collection had, however, proved difficult as in certain countries state bodies gather data, while in others private bodies or the Jewish community carry out this work.

Dr Bergmann and Dr Wetzel also explained that they had used as a basis for their research Holocaust researcher Helen Fein's definition of anti-Semitism<sup>1</sup>. However, according to a number of participants, this definition was too complex and difficult to apply. Some suggested alternative definitions, such as

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<sup>1</sup> *Anti-Semitism is an aggressive worldview containing the following characteristics:*

- *Jews are not only partially but totally bad by nature; that is, their bad traits are incorrigible.*
- *Because of this given nature Jews have to be seen not as individuals but as a collective.*
- *Because of this bad nature Jews exert a harmful influence on the surrounding society, in which they remain essentially alien.*

*Although the Jews bring disaster on their 'host societies' or on the whole world, they are doing it secretly, therefore the anti-Semites feel obliged to unmask the conspiratorial, bad Jewish character.*

simply “anti-Semitism is hatred of Jews”. Others argued that more than one definition should be used depending on "the context of who is saying what, why and where".

According to the researchers, a link could exist between anti-Semitic behaviour/attitudes and media reporting, but in this, and in all aspects of research on contemporary anti-Semitism, it was crucial to establish the dividing line between criticism of the policies of the Israeli Government and anti-Semitism – a theme which was to recur throughout the day's discussion.

In a discussion on the research that followed, participants were divided on whether current manifestations of anti-Semitism are new, old or somewhat different to before. Some speakers argued on how the historical context of anti-Semitism in Europe could best be reflected in the research. Some argued that the research should also have examined anti-Semitic behaviour/attitudes by political parties or the state, including on the issue of restitution.

However, a number of participants disagreed with this and argued that today's anti-Semitism is different. One speaker referred to the “Palestinisation” of anti-Semitism (similar to the “Le Pen-isation” of French politics).

## **Anti-Semitism - Manifestations, Causes, Trends**

A lengthy discussion was held on how to 'measure' anti-Semitism, as such measurement was necessary to assess trends. There was broad agreement that results depend on the *definition* of anti-Semitism, as not all anti-Semitic acts are as obvious as the burning of synagogues. Participants agreed that collecting and assessing quantitative data alone was not the best approach, as this did not reflect the complexity of the issue.

One participant said that the definition of "anti-Semitic acts" should not be used in an "inflationary way". He gave the example of the desecration of Jewish cemeteries, explaining that interviews he had carried out with cemetery wardens showed that in some cases when a Jewish cemetery was attacked, the neighbouring Catholic or Protestant cemeteries were also damaged at the same time. What could be reported as an anti-Semitic act, therefore, was more an act of mindless violence with no targeted religious or ethnic motivation.

He also stressed that reported figures should be carefully analysed, otherwise they risk becoming meaningless. For example, although they face less discrimination, assimilated Jews tend to report discrimination more often than orthodox Jews, who might perhaps be more resigned to the fact that they will face discrimination because of their dress. The speaker also pointed to the fact that in general much ethnic violence goes unreported, and that Jewish men appear to suffer more overt discrimination than women.

Participants agreed that databases that define categories and sub-categories of anti-Semitic incidents, such as the one used by the Stephen Roth Institute in Israel, can be useful in identifying trends and tendencies. Such databases, where they exist, should be shared, as this would help identify, for example, links between Lega Nord and other extreme right groups. However, participants agreed that the different data collection methods across the Union make any cross-EU comparisons difficult.

On the structure and forms of contemporary anti-Semitism in the EU, participants disagreed as to whether this was "new" or "old" anti-Semitism. Some spoke of the shift from negationist to more fundamentalist anti-Semitism, with fundamentalist groups mixing old anti-Semitic ideas with new myths (including National Socialists, Moon and other sects) increasingly visible on the Internet.

Some also pointed to the need for a historical and sociological framework to understand new phenomena, as the new roots of anti-Semitism are very much linked with the old. "New anti-Semitism" is increasingly being propagated through modern communication means. One participant mentioned an anti-Semitic soap opera in Egypt.

However, a number of participants felt it was merely a distraction to talk about a "new anti-Semitism". Even if it manifests itself in new ways, this is the same anti-Semitism as before, which continues to use traditional stereotypes. Judaism as cruel and vengeful, Jews as Christ killers, Jewish power and influence over the media, politics and economy, blaming of Jews for 9/11, are frequently heard in public debate. Expressions such as "Kosher conspiracy" and the Star of David on the US flag have also been used.

For some participants, however, 'traditional' anti-Semitism has developed new components such as Holocaust denial. In the view of one speaker, in Sweden, anti-Semitic ideas are becoming increasingly widespread, with extremist propaganda influencing larger audiences and penetrating public discourse. Another speaker referred to a recent Anti-Defamation League survey which identifies the growing presence of "dinner party" ("salonfähiger") anti-Semitism.

Several participants stressed the importance of drawing a distinction between anti-Semitism and criticism of Israeli government policies. They also felt it was important to differentiate between traditional anti-Semitism and the attitudes of some Muslim or pro-Palestinian communities, and to acknowledge that the latter has nothing to do with Islam but forms a reaction to the conflict in the Middle East. Although Muslim communities might identify with Palestine - as Jews do with Israel - this does not automatically lead to hatred or violent acts. One speaker stressed the need to distance ourselves from the equation of anti-

Semitism with criticism of Israel, which is often spread by Israeli media and many Jewish communities.

## **Preventing anti-Semitism**

Discussions showed divergent views on whether strategies to prevent anti-Semitism and Islamophobia should be dealt with together. A number of participants felt this would be useful given the degree of similarity between both forms of discrimination and stressed that the links between the situation in the Middle East and anti-Semitism could not be ignored. Others emphasised historic differences and favoured keeping the two separate. It was agreed that the issue of how the two could come together should be looked at during the final round table.

Participants discussed at length the issue of education, agreeing that education ministries across the EU had not yet caught up with the new multicultural reality of Europe today. A number of concrete proposals were put forward, including:

- - national ministries of education should organise round tables and seminars on mutual respect and tolerance;
- - all teachers in the EU should be required to learn about different religions and faiths, cultures and traditions. One participant challenged this proposal, supporting the need for education on respect and reconciliation, but asking why someone should necessarily know about a religion before respecting it;
- - History books used in schools around Europe should be examined for prejudice, or one-sidedness.

There was also strong agreement for a EU-wide campaign against hatred and violence and to promote mutual respect. A further proposal called for a EU-wide study or action on the rehabilitation of people convicted of racist crimes.

On legal means, discussions pointed to the need to reinforce legislation against racism and religious discrimination and to fill any legal gaps. Participants agreed, however, that although laws are essential they need to be properly enforced. It is also necessary to define with some objective criteria, the boundaries/limits of anti-Semitism in order to establish if an act is illegal or not.

In terms of political recommendations, the EU should improve its own public relations mechanisms, in order to counter accusations that Europe is endemically anti-Semitic. At the same time, EU governments need to be more vocal in speaking out against anti-Semitism.

One participant argued that Jews also needed to look at their own image, and at how they themselves can counter anti-Semitism, which they should not view as inevitable. It should be made clearer that Jews hold more than one opinion on Israel and responsible Jewish leaders should not use the situation in the Middle East to inflate the issue.

On inter-faith dialogue, a number of participants agreed that such dialogue is essential, and pointed to the potential role of EU institutions as a mediator and facilitator.

Summing up the day's discussions, the Chair spoke of the complexity of anti-Semitism, which could not be simply explained in relation to the Middle East conflict. In order to fight discrimination, the definition of anti-Semitism must be clear, and a distinction should be drawn between anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli government. A key theme emerging from the discussions was the role of education, and in particular education on the rule of law in society. Mobilising political leadership would also be vital in dealing with anti-Semitism.

## Opening Speech

### **Odile Quintin – Director-General for Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission**

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would first like to thank the staff, and members of the Management Board, of the Vienna Monitoring Centre for having helped us organise this conference today. In our discussions we will no doubt be drawing on their experience.

Over the last two years, an increasing number of anti-Semitic acts, sometimes violent, have been committed in many European countries, and particularly in those where there are large Jewish communities.

These acts do not mean that anti-Semitism has again returned to our countries and it would be a caricature to speak of a "wave" of aggression. Apart from far right-wing movements which have an anti-Semitic ideology but which remain isolated groups, they have mostly been carried out by individuals with no real social base, with no organisation and no goal other than violence for its own sake. Furthermore, anti-Semitism in Europe today has no serious intellectual support, which was not the case, to our collective shame, at the time of the Dreyfus affair or during the Nazi era.

The work done by the Monitoring Centre shows clearly, by referring to actual examples, the paradoxical situation of anti-Semitism today since it reveals the complex causes of this situation. We are witnessing an inextricable combination of hatred from the second Intifada, exported to Europe, and the consequences of the current crisis in Europe regarding the integration of immigrant communities. The formidable combination of these two factors has led some young people along the path of intolerance and violence.

While the roots of this evil are complex and cannot easily be explained, the problem itself has a special significance for all Europeans. This is because anti-Semitism is not the same thing as racism and xenophobia. The experience of the Shoah has made it impossible to treat anti-Semitism as just another social problem.

In 'Question juive' (*the Jewish Question*) in 1946, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote that an anti-Semite is a person who "*is afraid of himself, of his conscience, of his freedom, of his instincts, of his responsibilities, of loneliness, of change, of society and of the world*". Hatred of Jews, says Sartre, enables that person to feel that he exists. Moreover, "*if the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would*

*invent him*". Anti-Semitism cannot thus be compared with "ordinary racism" as it will always have a specific nature. This makes it impossible to "understand" the authors of anti-Semitic actions.

The Union should therefore do all it can to curb such actions, first at the national level, as governments carry the greatest responsibility, but also jointly, by defining a common legal framework. The draft framework decision on combating racism and xenophobia will be discussed at the Council of Ministers on 20 December 2002 with a view to reaching an agreement. The Commission fervently hopes that the text adopted will provide a large measure of protection against racist and xenophobic acts including Holocaust denial and anti-Semitic acts.

It is of course necessary to understand what causes these acts in all their diversity and complexity. The Commissioner therefore decided to organise round table discussions for experts to evaluate precisely the current situation, to determine the causes and to propose adequate responses. So my purpose in coming here this morning is above all to ask you questions and to listen to you. How for instance may we describe current expressions of anti-Semitism? What forms do they take and what motivates them at the deepest levels? Religious or ethnic hatred? In this case, is it possible to say that there is a difference between pre and post second Intifada and between pre and post 11 September? The Israeli-Palestinian situation as well as the Iraqi crisis have obviously had a considerable impact. The picture becomes even more complicated when we see that the authors of anti-Semitic acts often consider Israel and the United States as embodying the same values and having the same policies.

As you can see, this can lead to a vicious circle spiralling out of control. Thus, legitimate democratic criticism of Israeli government policy can quickly degenerate into an anti-Semitic attack. Conversely, it is too simple to label any criticism of Israel as "anti-Semitic", as this in itself would lead to radicalisation of critics. Holding this high ground requires intellectual and moral steadfastness which goes well beyond the legal framework, in that it involves many players, intellectuals, teachers, the media and religious authorities themselves. The dialogue between religious communities is thus essential if progress is to be made, in particular to stop the circulation of erroneous representations of the Muslim religion as being backward and hostile, while in reality our history of ancient Greece is largely due to the efforts of Muslim intellectuals. This is why we should support efforts to structure a representative organisation for the Muslim religion whose Sunni branch, which represents the majority of Muslims in Europe, is not a "church".

Conversely, should we be focusing on social and economic causes, in other words, the burden of social exclusion and experience of discrimination, in particular among immigrant communities from Muslim countries, an experience which is said to radicalise young people and lead them to consider Jews as

sympathisers or even representatives of the Israeli government's policy towards Palestinians? We may then ask what role current instruments can play in the fight against discrimination and exclusion. We already have comprehensive legislation against all kinds of discrimination with the two directives adopted in 2000 and which should be transposed into national legislation before the end of next year, as well as the European strategy against exclusion, which coordinates national policies, and not forgetting the European Social Fund which finances transnational projects for innovative actions to fight discrimination through the EQUAL initiative.

Finally, since the integration problems which some migrants encounter undeniably play a role in the genesis of such acts, the Commission believes that consideration should be given to the links between immigration, employment and social policies, and it will adopt a policy statement on these subjects early next year.

These instruments may help in their way to promote an integrated society based on the active participation of all its members, through global prevention policies. Moreover, even though exclusion cannot be limited to unemployment, policies which reduce the unemployment rate by creating new activities, for instance by raising the level of professional training, will also help to resolve these situations, in which the social crisis feeds ethnic withdrawal and hatred. These are the main strategic priorities of the European Social Agenda which we will be evaluating in 2003.

The Vienna Monitoring Centre has already done a great deal of work in collecting and analysing data and drafting proposals, but it has also shown where the limits lie, by emphasising the great differences in methods used and effort made by different countries in recording anti-Semitic acts. This is why its role is so important for furthering the knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon needed to support public policy in all fields. I am thus eager to hear the opinions of the experts who will be taking part in this round table.

# **The EUMC: Pro-actively combating anti-Semitism**

## **Beate Winkler - Director of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), Vienna, Austria**

It is a great honor and privilege for the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) to organise this important Round Table together with the European Commission. It gives us a great opportunity to develop common strategies and concrete action in order to reduce anti-Semitism, to reduce fear and to build bridges.

The main purpose of the EUMC is to provide the Community and its Member States with objective, reliable, and comparable data at the European level on the phenomena of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. The EUMC is also required to study the extent and development of the phenomena and manifestations of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, analyse their causes, consequences and effects, and examine examples of good practice in dealing with them.

The EUMC has established the RAXEN network (European Information Network on Racism and Xenophobia) for data collection in the Member States. The network consists of 15 National focal Points, one in each Member State. Since mid 2001 they are collecting data in four priority areas: Employment, Education, Racist violence and Legislation. In addition to collecting existing data in the Member States, the EUMC initiates scientific research projects, surveys and feasibility studies.

From our research we know that collecting and comparing data on the phenomenon of anti-Semitism is a highly complex task. The data is not always consistent or comparable. Some countries do not report any anti-Semitic initiatives, other concentrate mainly on public discourse and others not at all.

We know that, over the last 12 months, anti-Semitism was recorded to a higher extent in some Member States than others, i.e. in France. It is also reported that violence is perpetrated by immigrants with an Arab/Muslim background. Fundamentalist groups are known to cooperate with racist right-wing groups and to publish anti-Semitic hate sites, which are steadily increasing on the Internet.

The anti-Semitic incidents in Europe are ominous. Old images reappear. The anti-Islamic sentiments after 11 September are ominous too. And in both cases, it is the symbols of other religions – synagogues and Jewish cemeteries, mosques, and headscarves – which become the cause of violence. Symbols, in particular, often have a much stronger effect than words – pictures that leave a much deeper impression than words.

All these issues raise a number of vital questions: “How will Europe deal with cultural, ethnic and religious diversity in the future? How will Jews, Christians, and Muslims live together? Where nobody has the fear to be attacked on the street because he/she is e.g. recognised as Jew?” Many people have fear of future and are looking for simple answers to complex questions. It is these fears, and this climate, which can be exploited by populists.

## **Activities of the EUMC**

The EUMC itself is a sign of the European Union's commitment to tackle racism and anti-Semitism. It is our task to collect data through the RAXEN research network and through our research initiatives. Overview of the situation regarding racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism are published in our annual reports and other publication. “ Cultural diversity in the media and “Internet racism and football” are two recent examples.

The EUMC does not simply focus on the negative, but also attempts where possible to highlight and promote good practice. We have therefore made diversity education and intercultural education as one of our top priorities.

For example:

- In 2000, in co-operation with the Anne Frank House, we carried out an inventory of initiatives, programmes and organisations in the field of intercultural education.
- In our National and European Round Table conferences and workshops we focused on Diversity Education and asked participants to present and exchange models and programmes of good practice from within and beyond the EU.
- The National Focal Points of the RAXEN Network have compiled comparative studies of Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia not only in the Education Sector but also in the fields of legislation, employment and racist violence. A special focus is on violence against Jews and the Jewish community. The EUMC will finalise and publish the documentation this year.

And last but not least, the EUMC supports the “Charter of European political parties for a non racist Society”, which had been signed by about 100 European political parties. We hope that this Charter will be re-launched in autumn by the European Parliament and by the Council of Europe. We are closely involved in the preparation.

### **EUMC future priorities on Anti-Semitism**

The Monitoring Centre will continue its approach to integrate anti-Semitism across the full range of its activities. It is clear that anti-Semitism has new forms but with long historical, religious, psychological and political roots. The current situation regarding anti-Semitism in some European countries cannot be linked only to the situation in the Middle East. The whole context must be considered very carefully also when we support and initiate intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

A different approach in our societies is necessary: an approach based on inclusion, value, respect of differences. An approach, which includes the past and our memory.

A memory, which enables us to work towards a culture of respect and a culture of healing.

## Introduction by the Chair

### **Professor Ed van Thijn – Universities of Amsterdam and Leiden; EUMC Management Board Member.**

Addressing the issue of anti-Semitism today means: not accepting the silence in the midst of our societies, and asking many questions: Has there been an increase of anti-Semitism in the past year? What events were triggered by 11 September? What happened later to escalate the crisis in the Middle East? Does the crisis in the Middle East have an impact on the relations in our local communities? Are there new forms of anti-Semitism taking place, and – that's the most crucial issue for this meeting – is there a dividing line between anti-Semitism and critical attitudes towards Israeli politics? And if there is a dividing line, what kind of dividing line?

First, we need quantitative and qualitative analyses on anti-Semitism. We need databases to make information comparable, otherwise we cannot speak with any authority. Moreover, collecting comparable data is the core business of the EUMC and, although many statistics are misleading, the EUMC is continuing to improve its methods to ensure their reliability and objectivity.

Second – and more important – is there a new anti-Semitic culture? There has been a big debate about the historical dimension. It is said there is nearly nothing new about anti-Semitism today compared with “pre war”. I fully disagree with that. The Second World War happened. The difference between pre war anti-Semitism and today's anti-Semitism is the holocaust. How could you be an anti-Semite today after everything that happened before?

Third we have the universal declaration of human rights as an important project of the lessons we learnt and we have to implement.

Fourth we have a clear-cut definition of racism in place. We all know that anti-Semitism but also Islamophobia expressions of racist cultures are subcultures: that's the difference with the pre war period. In the “pre war” period the Jews were the enemy. Today there are a number of enemies.

We have to fight racism in all its aspects and there is a mutual interest to fight anti-Semitism and Islamophobia together.

The EUMC notes the political debates related to the Middle East conflict. Some of these debates were critical towards Israeli policy and Palestinian reactions and were not anti-Semitic per se. The EUMC also notes that there is often confusion between anti-Semitism and legitimate criticism of Israel.

We also have to discuss the dividing line: being critical towards Israeli policy and Palestinian reactions is not being anti-Semitic per se. It makes anti-Semitism banal when every criticism of Israel is considered to be anti-Semitism. But it is not that straightforward – some forms of criticism of Israel can be considered anti-Semitic. It is definitely anti-Semitic when you use anti-Semitism and speak about stereotypes and Jewish conspiracy. It is absolutely anti-Semitic when you ignore the rights of Israel to exist. It fits in the definition of anti-Semitism when you say Jews are collectively responsible for every anti-Semitic act that happens. That most Jews in the world feel a certain solidarity for what happens in Israel makes all of this very complicated. Muslims also have a certain code of conduct not to criticise fellow Muslims even when they are terrorists – this makes life complicated. It is possible to make a distinction between being anti Israel and anti-Semitism and we need that distinction in order to develop a strategy.

The Holocaust is an ethical compass in the history of Europe and mankind. So we should never ignore it and never penalise it. The Holocaust is frequently abused to legitimise certain things today. It is also a fact that anti-Semitism is sometimes a label on everything. And there is another big issue in the Jewish community: when Jewish people criticise Israeli politics they are considered sometimes as an example of self-hate. We are fighting intolerance, but how tolerant are we ourselves towards intolerance? It is easy to make a statement far away from the Middle East and Diaspora. If you live there and are confronted with violence each day it is very hard to remain tolerant.

We have to define who we are going to target when we try to reduce anti-Semitism. If we want concrete solutions we have to know whom to address. We have to address teachers; we also have to address Jewish and Arab leaders in our society. As the mayor of Amsterdam for quite some years I was very much involved in bringing these communities together.

I am very frequently asked by Moslem leaders and by intellectuals how can we solve the problem in anti-Semitism in our own ranks? Can we learn from the Jewish community how they handled anti-Semitism? Then I always remember the golden rule from the Old Testament: that you should not do unto others what you do not want done to yourself. And I always talk to Moslem leaders in that sense: how can you be racist when you are the main victims of racism in our society?

It is getting worse and worse and worse in our society. Towards minorities and migrants we at least could make a comparison. But what are the similarities between Islamophobia and anti-Semitism and what are the differences? I know many differences, first of all because of the historical dimension but there are also a number of similarities: the most important one being that they are both forms of racism.

The big problem in many EU Member States today is when you look at the multicultural society. The gap between the different groups is getting deeper and deeper. We developed an index of integration and segregation and what you see in the big cities is for example that 90% of the elderly people from Muslim groups never meet people from outside their own groups. When we look at the younger Moroccan people, about 70 to 75% are in this position and it's getting worse. We have to invest enormously in cross-cultural initiatives, talk to responsible leaders, especially religious leaders who have a certain responsibility on their shoulders.

Studying anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and developing joint projects are necessary. You can see how in the political campaigns Islamophobia is exploited by politicians and by the media each day. And there are new issues: we have seen the consequences of radicalisation from all sides in the Muslim world and at the end of the day I think some of them will blame the Jewish because we are "next".

As a monitoring centre we have to go for all those issues. We are now in the middle of the radicalisation, in an atmosphere of Islamophobia. It produces intolerant groups and phenomena and they produce anti-Semitism. It is a vicious a circle. We have first of all to be aware and secondly to fight this in spite of the fact that we also fight Islamophobia. We cannot ignore these phenomena. It is not by the number of individual incidents but as a whole that you can see the developments growing in many places in Europe.

# Anti-Semitism: New Developments and Counter Measures

**Dr. Henrik Bachner – Dept. of History of Ideas, Lund University, Sweden**

## Manifestations of anti-Semitism, causes and trends

Over the last two years – specifically since the outbreak of the second intifada – anti-Jewish prejudice and resentment has again become more visible in Europe and other parts of the world. However, to speak of a “new” anti-Semitism is problematic, since the manifestations of this phenomenon – not least the myths and stereotypes used – are basically traditional.

Possible new developments are

- An increased acceptance of and attraction to anti-Jewish beliefs – specifically ideas of Jewish power and manipulation – within parts of mainstream political culture.
- A reactivation of anti-Semitic forms of anti-Zionism within parts of the far-left and the anti-globalisation movement.
- An escalation of Muslim and primarily Islamist anti-Semitism in Europe.
- A return of anti-Semitism as an important factor in international politics through its central role in the worldview, propaganda and actions of extreme Muslim fundamentalist groups.

Present-day anti-Semitism in Europe is to a large extent nourished and activated by two factors: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the historical, political and psychological consequences of the Holocaust. This in itself is not new, but has been a characteristic of European anti-Semitism during much of the post-war era. The effects of the Holocaust influences anti-Semitism in a more crucial way in countries that were directly involved in the genocide, but it also stimulates resentment against Jews in other countries. In Sweden (and other countries) this can be seen in the widespread projection of Nazism and the Holocaust onto the Jewish state and its policies towards the Palestinians.

There is no evidence suggesting that anti-Semitism on a general level colours or motivates criticism against Israeli policies. Yet, there are clear indications that Israeli policies and actions, especially if provocative, and the criticism they unleash, stimulate and activate anti-Semitism within parts of the general public

and mainstream media. Israel, in this context, functions as both a catalyst of anti-Semitism and an object onto which anti-Jewish beliefs and resentment can be projected. The debate on Israel is also an important forum for anti-Semitism within mainstream political culture because it constitutes the only public arena where negative attitudes toward Jews can be legitimately articulated, since in this context they can easily be packaged and rationalised as criticism of Israel or Zionism.

An examination of anti-Jewish motifs in public discourse in Swedish mainstream media relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to the Holocaust points to three dominating themes:

- 1) Christian anti-Jewish motifs: Israeli policies are explained or condemned by direct and indirect references to the idea of Jewish vengefulness and cruelty (“eye for an eye”, “Old Testament mentality”) as well as the accusation of Christ-killing.
- 2) The myth of Jewish power and conspiracies: Fantasies of Jewish power over politics, media and economy is invoked in the debate on U.S. foreign policy. “Zionist lobbies” or “powerful groups” (code words) are accused of censoring and manipulating news and debate on Israel. An increased interest in the Holocaust is explained by references to the “Holocaust Industry” or similar conspiracy theories.
- 3) The projection of Nazism and the Holocaust onto Israel and Israeli policies.

## **Strategies to prevent and reduce anti-Semitism**

### *Politics*

European governments have in some cases been reluctant to acknowledge manifestations of anti-Semitism for what they are. The EU and the governments of member states must acknowledge the problem of anti-Semitism and the dangers it poses. References to racism and xenophobia should always explicitly include the word anti-Semitism.

The slowness and unwillingness of some European governments to address the anti-Semitism present in draft statements preparing the UN conference in Durban 2001 as well as at the Durban meeting was alarming. The EU and individual member states must be much more outspoken and take a firm stand against anti-Semitism emanating from the Arab and Muslim world, whether it is propagated by governments, NGOs, the media or religious authorities.

The EU and the governments of member states should make clear that anti-Zionist propaganda denying Israel’s right to exist and demonising the Jewish state (applying anti-Semitic images onto Israel) is a form of anti-Semitism and therefore unacceptable.

The EU and the governments of member states must confront openly the problem of anti-Semitism within Arab and Muslim communities in Europe.

As pointed out by the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (2002) the monitoring and reporting on anti-Semitic incidents by European governments must be improved and become more systematic and efficient.

### ***Education***

Education remains crucial in all efforts to combat prejudice. National and European history must include Jewish history, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust (as well as the history of other minorities and other forms of prejudice and persecution).

In order to promote knowledge on anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, EU member states as well as candidate countries should be urged to join the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research.

### ***Media***

Media plays an important role in counteracting as well as fostering and legitimising anti-Semitism and other forms of xenophobia and racism. Journalists and journalism students are therefore a key group to be reached by educational efforts. In Sweden seminars on stereotypes of Jews, Muslims and immigrants in present-day media and public discourse, organised by the Swedish Committee Against Anti-Semitism and directed towards journalists and teachers, have received a very positive response.

### ***Civil society/inter-religious dialogue***

Finally, to counter the spread of anti-Semitism within and from parts of the Arab and Muslim communities in Europe it is crucially important for Muslim and other authorities within these communities to speak out against anti-Semitism.

The EU and governments of member states should help initiate and promote dialogue between Muslim and Jewish communities in Europe.

# **An Active Observer's View: The Contribution of CEJI**

**Pascale Charhon – Director of the European Jewish Information Centre (CEJI) and Vice-President of ENAR, Belgium**

## **Introduction**

We would like first of all as CEJI to welcome the initiative taken by the EUMC to organise this first exchange on the topic of European anti-Semitism. There is a clear need for a concerted European acknowledgement and response to what has been recognised as the biggest surge of anti-Jewish manifestations and incidents since the end of the Second World War.

CEJI's perspective is a broad one, as we are not experts on the monitoring of anti-Semitism. We consider ourselves as an active observer of the current situation, but most of all, we are a provider of positive responses to challenge anti-Semitism and discrimination in all its forms. We would like to reflect upon three specific issues, which are at the centre of the context of anti-Semitism, which Europe faces today.

## **The European context**

Our continent has become a stable, democratic and relatively wealthy part of the globe, but it is also a complex mix of peoples, cultures and religions, who have now and then difficulties in living together in peace and mutual respect. It is a fact that anti-Semitism is on the rise and European Jews are deeply concerned about it. The Mölleman case and the controversy surrounding Marcel Reich Ranicki and Martin Walser in Germany, banning Israeli scientists from English academic journals, the burning of synagogues, attacking Jewish school children in France, the use of swastikas to criticise Israel, the rise of anti-Semitism in New Age movements are all signs that anti-Semitism in Europe has woken again after two generations of rest.

Nowadays, the perpetrators are no longer the Churches, which learned from the Holocaust and did much to change the attitudes of the Clergy since the Second Vatican Council. Even the extreme right has become less vocal, perhaps because they have different targets such as the migrant communities.

Nowadays, anti-Semitism's face is often seen to be reared through the instrumental misuse of the Middle East Conflict in certain parts of Arab-Muslim communities in Europe. The relationship between second-generation Arab migrant youth and Jewish communities is particularly complex and tenuous. Studies in the Netherlands show that anti-Semitic feelings amongst young Turkish and Moroccan Dutchmen are significantly higher than amongst the indigenous population.

Their anti-Semitic behaviour is also fed by media reporting in the Middle Eastern countries, where Jews are blamed for the indeed tragic situation of the Palestinian people. During Ramadan, Egyptian television broadcast a soap opera based on the anti-Semitic tract “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion”. The soap was purchased by 17 other Arab TV stations. Of course this kind of propaganda has influence on the Muslim communities living in Europe, who receive TV broadcasting from their home countries by satellite. For them it is extremely difficult to translate this ideology directed against Israel to the European situation. At the outset, we must state that this anti-Semitism should not be confused with opposition, however impassioned, to Israeli policies and actions. But when classical western anti-Semitism such as the use of the protocols of the Elders of Zion or the Holocaust denial applies to any political portrayal of Israel, we can say that we have clearly moved from political opposition to the realm of chimerical anti-Semitism.

## **The information deficit**

One of the most worrying issues raised by the resurgence of anti-Semitic incidents in the last two years has been the failure of European Union member states to accurately report and effectively engage in concerted actions to combat this form of racist violence. All of us, decisions makers, NGOs and the EUMC, are aware that this issue has to be conceptualised in a broader framework, which is the lack of organised and systematic methods of data collection when it comes to the reporting of racist crimes all over the EU member states.

It is interesting to note that the only bodies which have been monitoring anti-Semitic incidents over the last ten to twenty years are non-governmental Jewish bodies, mostly American Jewish organisations among which the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-defamation League, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Steven Roth Institute for the study of Contemporary anti-Semitism and Racism at the Tel Aviv University, and the Institute of Jewish Policy Research in the UK.

The Lawyers Committee for Human Rights has identified several important ways to improve the recognition and reporting of anti-Jewish violence and recommends that EU member states:

- Acknowledge at the highest level the extraordinary dangers posed by anti-Semitic violence in the European context.
- Establish clear criteria for registering and reporting crimes motivated by racial animosity, sometimes described as bias crimes or hate crimes through regular and accessible reports.
- Distinguish clearly in reporting between acts of violence, threatening behaviour, and offensive speech.

As well as political steps by the EU and its Member States, civil society should also undertake activities to challenge anti-Semitic behaviours engrained in old rooted prejudices and stereotyped attitudes. The role played by anti-racist NGOs in this process is also highly complex. One of the major lessons emerging from the Durban Conference was that intercultural dialogue, even within the anti-racist NGO family, is far from being standard practice and cannot be taken for granted. A shared political culture of democracy – based on common values of respect and openness, rejection of violence, equality of opportunity and individual and collective responsibility – are key in combating anti-Semitism and discrimination in all of its forms.

## **The positive building Response and the role of European NGOS**

So how can and do NGOs contribute here?

One of their major contributions in this field is what is usually known as action research, which is implemented through projects aimed at reducing prejudice.

This is also where NGOs have a decisive role to play, with their enormous store of knowledge and expertise in the fields of “informal” education and social action. Their involvement in the field of life-long education programmes provide an extremely useful complement to the role played by national legislation and European intergovernmental activities.

Since 1997 the European Jewish Information Centre (CEJI) has been working in partnership with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) (United States) and other organisations in Europe, with support from the European Union’s COMENIUS Programme, on a training programme geared to testing and adapting the A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE Institute’s training techniques in the education systems of four European Union countries (Belgium, France, Italy and the Netherlands).

The A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE institute’s programmes were initiated by an American non-governmental organisation – the Anti-Defamation League – and are based on a long series of research projects carried out in the United States and Europe on how prejudices are formed and how they can be combated.

The “A CLASSROOM OF DIFFEREMCE” programme was developed between 1997 and 1999, in the form of a teacher awareness campaign based on the “A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE” educational model in schools in the four countries taking part in the project’s pilot phase (Belgium, France, Italy and the Netherlands). Thanks to the EU COMENIUS Programme, CEJI and its national NGO partners were able to launch the pilot phase of this programme in the aforementioned four countries. Once the programme was launched, a positive evaluation was carried out which, thanks to the support of various foundations, has enabled the project to continue in the French, Belgian and Italian education systems.

Another example from the field of action research on intercultural dialogue was the training network for young voluntary workers involved in combating discrimination.

The EPTO, CEJI’s youth department, is a European network of young trainers specialising in combating racism and xenophobia. The network is geared to training youth association leaders to run workshops on respect for multicultural diversity. The EPTO is funded by the EU Youth Programme and covers 10 European countries.

The EPTO began work in 1996 on the initiative of the European Jewish Information Centre (CEJI), using material from the Anti-Defamation League’s A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE Institute, with support from the European Union’s Youth for Europe Programme.

The EPTO uses a learning technique with which the Council of Europe is very familiar and which were effectively used in its “All Different, All Equal” campaign. This so-called peer training method involves young people as training officers and thus breaks down the barriers between teachers and students. If backed up with adequate resources, the peer ground approach can have a very positive influence on attitudes and behaviours, whether it is implemented in a formal or an informal environment.

## **The inter-religious dialogue**

CEJI believes that the capacity of Jewish and Muslim communities to work on inter community building is key to overcome bias and hatred. CEJI has been striving for some years to establish a European Muslim-Jewish Dialogue. Regular encounters between Jews and Muslims should help take away misunderstanding and prejudices.

# Anti-Semitism in Denmark

**Prof. Lars Dencik - Professor of Social Psychology,  
Roskilde University**

## **Manifestations of anti-Semitism, Causes and Trends**

Globalisation, increased migration and mobility in Europe during the last decade have had repercussions in the form of new manifestations of xenophobia and populist politics in several European countries. 11 September caused latent anti-Muslim sentiments to be voiced openly in the public debate. Two tendencies can be identified in the wake of this: on the one hand a growing emphasis on national unity and national culture, on the other hand steps towards a growing militancy of groups that feel themselves targeted by this. With the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian hostilities acting as a catalyst, both of these tendencies, but each in its own way, have found an outlet in clear-cut anti-Semitic manifestations.

This "new nationalism" brings with it less tolerance and acceptance of differences. At the same time, what appears as a new "Muslim militancy" very often implies violent anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish standpoints and actions. Interestingly, both of these tendencies have recently been manifested in Denmark, one of Europe's most advanced liberal welfare states, but probably also the country in Europe today with the most xenophobic public debate and also government politics. One significant factor in this is the appearance of the populist "Dansk Folkeparti" (The Danish People's Party), a political party that combines intense anti-immigration/immigrant campaigning with defence of social welfare state values. One may label their political platform a kind of "welfare state chauvinism", implying that what has until now been granted to the Danes should not be shared (or as they imply "destroyed") by the "strangers".

The appeal is outspokenly anti-EU, anti-multiculturalism and strongly "culture-centric". Strong appeals are made in defence of what is referred to as the values embedded in the Danish "folkesjæl" (spirit of the Danish people) and "folkestam" (the tribe of Danes). In the last public elections the party gained approximately the same support as many other populist parties in other countries of Europe (12,5% of the voters), but in contrast to what has happened elsewhere, the populists in Denmark have gained a dominant influence both on the public debate and on government politics as far as immigrants, asylum seekers and "strangers" are concerned.

Contributing to this has been the strategy chosen by the two major political parties in Denmark, the Social Democrats and the Liberal Party ("Venstre"), in combating the challenge posed by the Danish Peoples Party. In what at best could be understood as an attempt to pre-empt the challenge, they co-opted the anti-immigrant and anti-multiculturalist arguments put forward by the Danish Peoples Party, thereby in effect legitimising the very discourse launched by the populist agitators. Greatly helped by a populist tabloid press – and by a certain brand of Danish intellectuals influenced by the thoughts of the 19th century Danish writer and philosopher Grundtvig – the idea of "the people" as consisting rather of "the Danes", than of "the inhabitants of Denmark", found a deep popular resonance.

The elections turned out so that the Liberal Party could form a government with the parliamentary support of the Danish Peoples Party. Political measures and even more so the political rhetoric and public discourse in Denmark now ostensibly aim at protection of what is perceived as "danskheden" (Danishness) and the ethnic homogeneity of the country.

## **Two examples to illustrate the points:**

- 1) On 20 November 2002 the leading Danish liberal newspaper *Politiken* published an article arguing against the Jewish tradition of circumcising baby boys. One argument given to explain why this habit has been permitted to persist in Denmark reads: "*Partly it is due to a general fear of touching on a critique of Jewish interests. Holocaust has drawn a trace of guilt through the modern history of Europe, that many times have given the Jewish arguments exaggerated space, a space they have known to exploit*". Following this article lots of comments have been published supporting the suggestion to prohibit this, to Danish culture "alien" and deviant" Jewish tradition, in Denmark. (In this context it should be mentioned that similar initiatives have recently also been launched by members of the Conservative Party in the Swedish Parliament.)
- 2) This summer 2002 a fundamentalist organisation of Muslim students in Denmark called *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* on its web-site published a supposed quote from the Koran stating: *And kill them wherever you find them, and expel them from wherever they expelled you*. Shortly after this suggestion was also distributed on printed pamphlets in Copenhagen. The quote clearly refers to the Jews. The Jewish Community in Denmark perceived it as a threat directed towards its members and brought the case to court. Voices were also raised to have this fundamentalist Muslim organisation – that counts about 200 active members and has called meetings that have attracted many more listeners and supporters – dissolved and forbidden in Denmark. In the trial the spokesman officially responsible for the publication was sentenced for having violated §266b in public law ("violation of the law against racial persecution"), but the organisation as such has so far been left alone.

These two illustrations are given here not only to exemplify recent manifestations of anti-Semitism in one of Europe's most "civilised" societies, but also to elucidate how two seemingly unrelated phenomena, on the one hand the tendency towards a "new nationalism" in some European states, and on the other the tendency towards increased "Muslim militancy" in several European societies, may in fact be related. Each of these tendencies by themselves sooner or later tends to manifest itself in anti-Semitic standpoints and actions, but more intriguingly, by the decreasing tolerance and acceptance of differences in cultural life-style that accompanies the new nationalism, the possibility of integrating the growing Muslim communities in EU countries also diminishes. Some sections within Muslim communities then can end up *culturally marginalised and radicalised*, even to the point that they identify – possibly also through violent actions – with anti-Western, anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish fundamentalist Muslim standpoints.

### **Strategies to prevent and reduce anti-Semitism**

The main strategy to prevent and reduce anti-Semitism should be to focus on public and political discourse. The aim should be to fight nationalist tendencies and to support and facilitate the integration of "ethnic others" such as the Muslim newcomers to the European societies. In order to prevent the public discourse becoming "hijacked" by populist agitators and parties the way it has become in Denmark, one must do everything possible to persuade representatives of the established democratic political parties and leading intellectuals and commentators *not* to give in to the populist temptations always present in dynamic, developing societies.

# Anti-Semitism in Greece

## Prof. Dr. Hagen Fleischer – University of Athens

Because it is much less organised and violent than in most other countries, anti-Semitism in Greece<sup>2</sup> since World War II has been considered a marginal phenomenon. Particularly in Thessaloniki where most Greek Jews lived, the two major forces driving pre-war anti-Semitism of economic rivalry and nationalist fears of a "fifth column" in the threatened and ethnically heterogeneous northern provinces have disappeared as a result of the Shoah.

Nonetheless, religious prejudices against "the Christ killers" remain. Several bishops, monasteries, and individual Orthodox clerics, especially members of fundamentalist groups, have published and distributed anti-Semitic tracts. Anti-Semitic segments of the liturgy during Holy Week remain, as do some "folk" customs such as burning Judas in effigy. Latent prejudices and bigotry became evident during the last two years over the issue of having religion included on Greek identity cards. When the Greek government, in accordance with other EU countries, removed this reference, the government in general and Prime Minister Karamanlis in particular were vilified for "bowing to Jewish pressure."

Because of the so-called "special Greek-Arab relations" since the state of Israel was founded, any resurgence of the Arab-Israeli crisis tended to bring hidden prejudices to the surface. The escalation of the Middle East crisis in 2002 has once again made visible and intensified anti-Israeli feelings in Greek society; feelings that are expressed mainly in the mass media, but also by well-known intellectuals and prominent people from all political parties and several social organisations. At the height of the crisis, numerous mainstream papers depicted Israel as a "Nazi state", if not "the world's first Neo-Nazi state". There also were some rabidly anti-Semitic letters to the editor and cartoons, often on the front page, depicting the Palestinians as victims of a "new Auschwitz" or of a modern crucifixion (especially during the Holy Week).

In addition to continual protests against Israel's policy, criticism was repeatedly launched against Greek Jews criticising them for not disassociating themselves from what was described as the "Fascist Israeli regime". Verbal attacks were repeatedly followed by incidents (mostly graffiti but also a few incursions desecrating cemeteries and holocaust monuments).

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hagen Fleischer, Griechenland. Das bestrittene Phänomen. In: Hermann Graml, Angelika Königseder and Juliane Wetzel (Eds.), *Vorurteil und Rassenhaß. Antisemitismus in den faschistischen Bewegungen Europas*, Berlin 2001, pp. 207-226.

## **Recommendations to reduce anti-Semitism in Greece**

The first step needed to be taken to reduce latent and open anti-Semitism in Greece is to dismiss the persistent belief that there is no anti-Semitism at all in the country or that anti-Semitism in Greece is minuscule compared to the anti-Semitism in other countries. The government and public services should take a more consistent stand against anti-Semitism, immediately investigating and condemning at least major incidents. The Greek anti-racist law should at least be enforced more strictly; perhaps it should be amended.

In the long run, education is much more effective than punishment. After a long campaign by the Central Jewish Board of Greece, the occasional minor anti-Semitic passages in state-issued textbooks have finally been removed, thereby showing that such protest can be effective. There are still, however, almost no mention of Greek Jews in Greek schoolbooks, and only brief references to the Holocaust. This error by absence has to be corrected. Lectures, seminars and conferences should be held with the participation of respected non-Jewish scholars, journalists and other prominent individuals. Documentaries should be prepared on the Holocaust, Jewish-Gentile relations and the issue of anti-Semitism in its historical context. Perhaps the EU can sponsor these efforts. At the same time, the absurdity of equating Sharon's deplorable hard line policy with the Nazi genocide should be demonstrated.

The Central Jewish Board of Greece should further improve and increase communication with the media and public figures, clerics included. Instances of hardcore anti-Semitic slander should be met with legal action. Any steps taken by the Central Jewish Board of Greece, however, should be kept separate from any steps taken by the Israeli embassy or foreign Jewish NGOs in order to avoid claims, as have been made in the past, that Greek Jews are under "remote control" and are "Un-Greek". Intervention by non-Greek Jewish NGOs should be held in reserve, for frequent resort to foreign exhortations has been counter productive in Greece, even more so than in other countries.

## Anti-Semitic Incidents in the Netherlands<sup>3</sup>

### Hadassa Hirschfeld - Deputy Director, Centre for Information and Documentation on Israel, Netherlands

On 13 June 2003 the Centre for Information and Documentation on Israel submitted its annual report of anti-Semitic incidents in the Netherlands to the minister of the Interior and the chairman of the Lower House Commission of the Interior. The 62-page report describes the incidents reported to the CIDI in 2002 and anti-Semitic occurrences registered in the first four months in 2003. It is subdivided into reports that concern the following categories:

*physical violence; threat of violence; slurs; destruction of synagogues / cemeteries; graffiti on synagogues; graffiti on Jewish cemeteries; graffiti on monuments; sports; e-mails; letters / pamphlets / faxes / stickers; miscellaneous (media, books, music)*

A separate chapter covers the number of lawsuits concerning anti-Semitism. Various articles in Dutch penal law prohibit deliberately insulting Jews in public and inciting hostility toward them.

The new report concludes that the number of anti-Semitic incidents rose sharply in 2002. The number registered was up by 140% to 337. The increase was particularly pronounced among e-mails disseminating hatred. The number of serious incidents (physical violence, threats of violence and slurs) also grew, from 62 in 2001 to 99 in 2002. This worrisome trend started in 1999. Note that CIDI counts regular slurs directed at a single individual or institution as one report and has disregarded Internet sites and chat boxes. The Meldpunt Discriminatie Internet (hotline for reporting Internet discrimination – MDI) records such occurrences.

The report for 2002 and the first four months of 2003 is based on reports received by CIDI, the anti-discrimination bureaus in the Netherlands (ADB), the Meldpunt Discriminatie Internet and the anti-fascist research group Kafka. This year the police for the Amsterdam-Amstelland region supplied anonymised data as well. The report also reflects data from the Commissie Gelijke Behandeling (Commission for equal treatment), the fifth monitor report on Racism and the Extreme Right by the Anne Frank Foundation and the

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<sup>3</sup> This contribution was updated by the author and includes now data for 2002 and January – May 2003.

University of Leiden, the Centraal Meldpunt Voetbalvandalisme (football hooliganism reporting centre), the KNVB (royal Dutch football league) and the Landelijk Expertise Centrum van Discriminatiezaken (national expertise centre for discrimination cases – LECD).

CIDI elicited information for 2001 from several individuals identifiable as Jews because of the widespread stories about regular slurs.<sup>4</sup> To compare the periods, the same individuals were questioned again this year. This serves to verify the reports we receive and to determine the resulting impression about the state of anti-Semitism in the Netherlands.

All CIDI reports previously published about anti-Semitism in the Netherlands note that registering such incidents is a complex procedure. Mere numbers are not sufficiently meaningful. Is an anonymous phone call to a Jewish institution more serious than groups chanting anti-Semitic slurs, and is this in turn – since there are several perpetrators – more serious than an incident where two Jewish men in Amersfoort were verbally abused by ‘only’ two youths of North-African descent? How does this compare to a schoolchild who has suffered so much anti-Semitic taunting from fellow students that he lacks the courage to attend school anymore? Question may also arise as to whether somebody received truly anti-Semitic treatment in an argument, or whether the victim is interpreting the argument as anti-Semitic. Differences in interpretation are also the reason why not all incidents reported to or registered with other organisations appear in the CIDI report. These differences are particularly complicated where anti-Israel remarks are concerned. Given the virulent anti-Israel sentiment among certain groups in Dutch society, such as within the Arab European League, which has operated in the Netherlands since the end of 2002 and has its main office in Antwerp, and the action committee Stop de Bezetting (Stop the occupation – which opposes the Israeli policy toward the Palestinians), and considering the many discussions about the relationship between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, we need to explore what makes a statement against Israel anti-Semitic as well. Utterances purely directed against Israel, however virulent they may be, are **not** included on the CIDI list of anti-Semitic remarks. While a slur such as ‘Sharon is a murderer’ may be offensive to a head of state, it is not an anti-Semitic utterance and therefore does not appear in our report. ‘Adolf Sharon is a murderer’ is included, since it equates the actions of the Israeli prime minister with what the Nazis did to the Jews.

The incidents mentioned in our report are primarily indicative of the number of anti-Semitic incidents disclosed. Although our annual report is acknowledged as an indication of the state of anti-Semitism in the Netherlands, these data are not an exhaustive list of such occurrences. People often do not express racist ideas,

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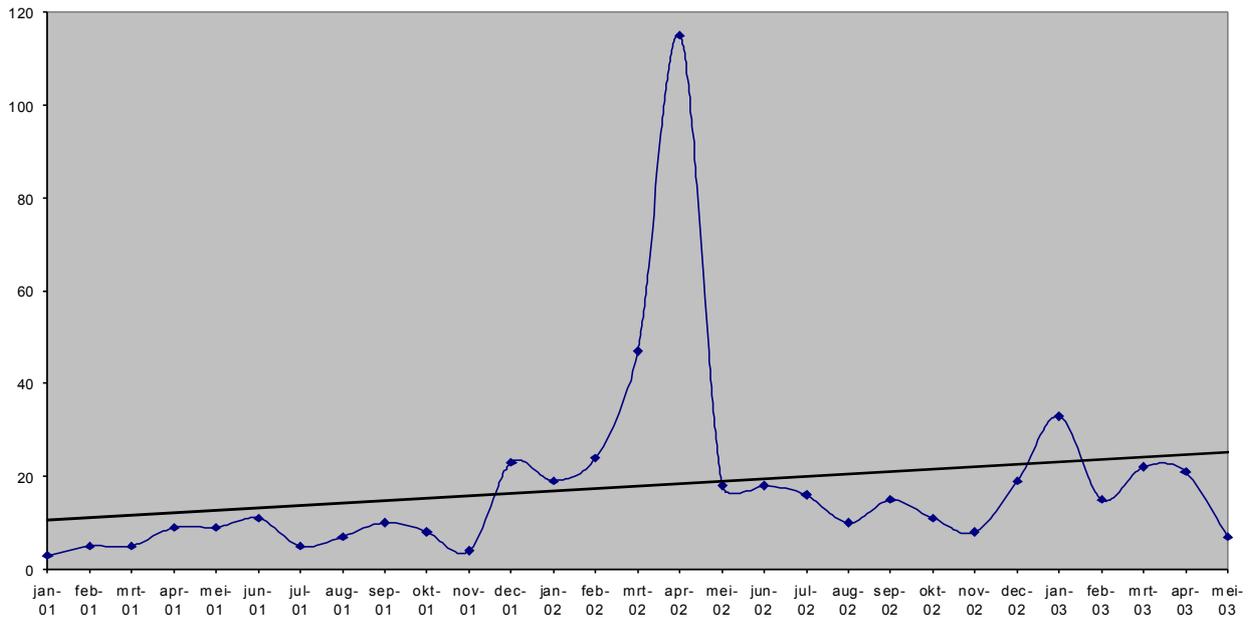
<sup>4</sup> In the reports, the description ‘identifiable as Jewish’ refers to persons wearing a yarmulke or otherwise recognisable as Jewish because of their style of dress.

and sometimes the spirits of victims of anti-Semitic incidents are so broken that they cease to report them.

### A breakdown of the figures

The rise in anti-Semitic incidents during 2002 is noted above. The table below shows this clearly. The months January-May 2003 reflect fewer incidents with respect to the same period the year before. Disregarding the non-recurring sharp peak (because of the situation in the Middle East) in March and April 2002, expressions of anti-Semitism are still up with respect to the previous year. This is depicted in the trend line in the figure below.

**Graph 1: The trend of anti-Semitic incidents in January 2001 – 5 May 2003.**



**Table 1: Figures of the different occurrences of anti-Semitism**

The figures for the different occurrences of anti-Semitism are as follows:

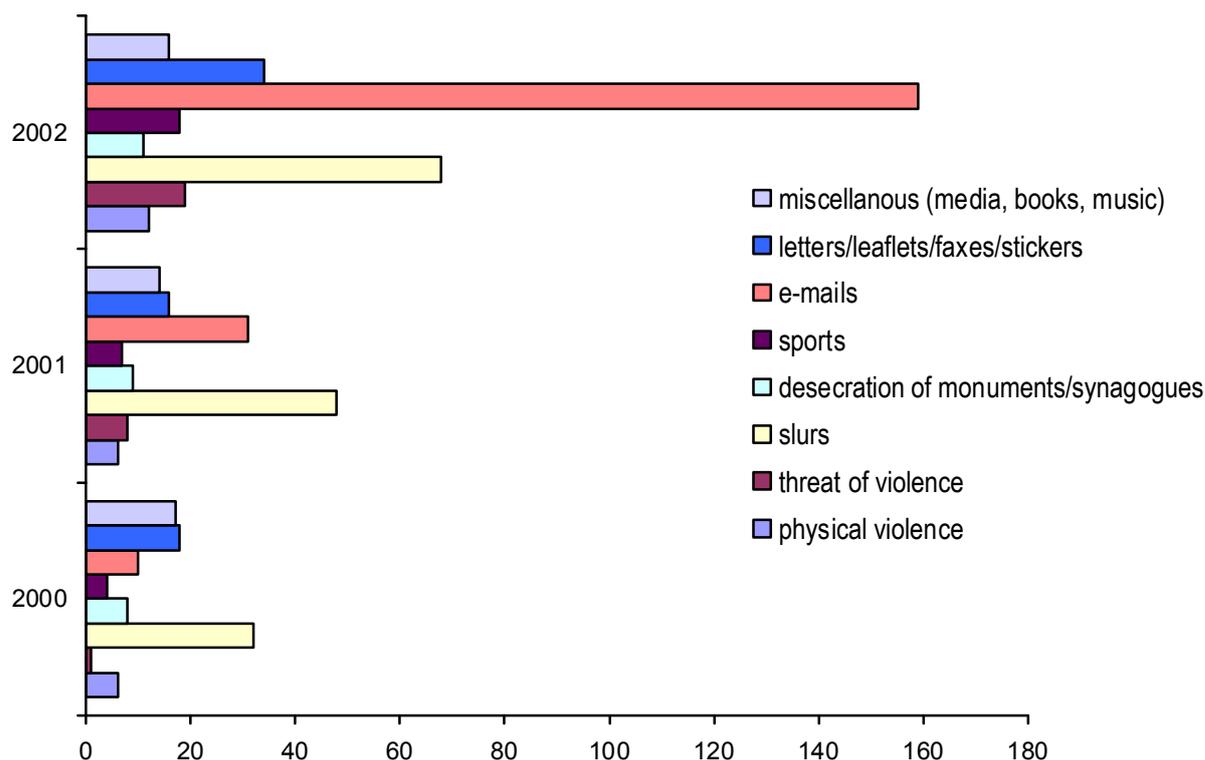
	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2002</b> until 5 May	<b>2003</b> until 5 May
<b>physical violence</b>	6	6	12	8	1
<b>threats of violence</b>	1	8	19	9	2
<b>slurs</b>	32	48	68	40	21
<b>destruction of synagogues/cemeteries</b>	0	2	2	2	1
<b>graffiti on synagogues</b>	6	0	3	1	0
<b>graffiti on Jewish cemeteries</b>	2	3	1	0	0
<b>graffiti on monuments</b>	0	4	5	4	3
<b>sports</b>	4	7	18	6	4
<b>e-mails</b>	10	31	159	110	54
<b>letters/leaflets/faxes/stickers</b>	18	16	34	28	2

Table 1 is to be considered in light of the following aspects:

- The number of verbal abuse incidents for 2002 and 2003 include regular incidents, for which the frequency of occurrence is impossible to determine accurately. They include reports of Jews who suffer regular verbal abuse, torrents of verbal abuse at synagogues or regular verbal abuse directed against a Jewish child at a playground. These reports are each counted as a single incident.
- Of the 158 e-mails in 2002, 108 were addressed to CIDI, including 55 in April. They include multiple e-mails from the same authors.
- These statistics do not reflect the increase that occurred on the Internet. The MDI has reported a rise from 197 to 584.
- Graffiti on public (non-Jewish) sites has been omitted as well, as their degree of severity (from mischievous to offensive) varies too much.

Chart 1 concerns the years 2000-2002. As was noted in the introduction, the figures are not comprehensive. In their monitor report for 2001 referring to British research, the investigators Van Donselaar and Rodrigues even suggested that the figures might need to be quadrupled to be realistic. After all, many incidents go unreported. There are several possible reasons for not reporting an incident: either people do not consider such action worthwhile, or they believe that filing a report would be pointless, since the police are rarely in a position to trace the perpetrators and in some cases even refuse to record the incident. Victims may even have become so broken-hearted by their intolerant surroundings that they feel a report would be a waste of time.

**Chart 1: Anti-Semitic incidents in the Netherlands, listed by category for the years 2000-2002**



## Comparisons

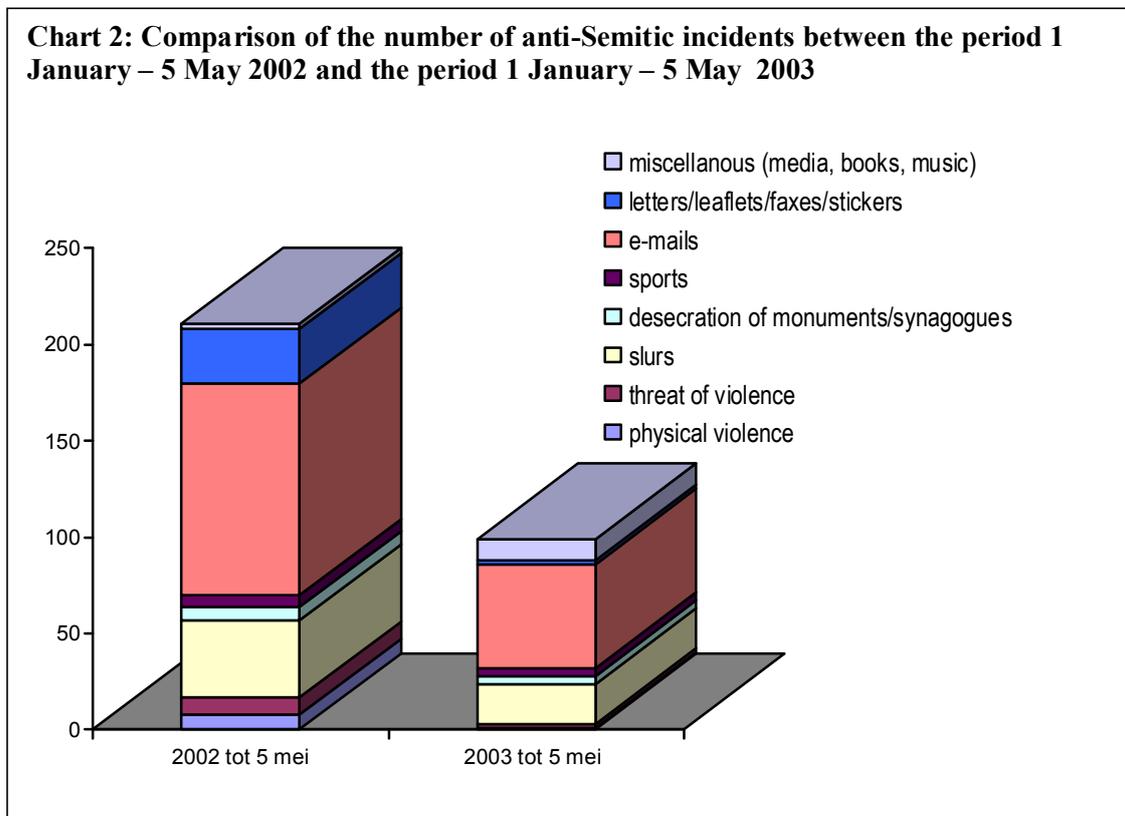
In 2001, CIDI observed a progressive worsening of anti-Semitism, especially since manifestations were emerging in every sector of society: at work, at school, in sports, on the Internet, in e-mails. The situation persisted throughout 2002.

The figures for 2002 reflect a remarkable rise in the number of incidents involving violence or the threat of violence, as well as the number of incidents of verbal abuse with respect to 2001: from 62 to 99, respectively; a total increase of 60 percent. These data are particularly threatening to those identifiable as Jews, as these people are victimised by such treatment in increasing measure. The perpetrators are often North-African youths. The rise in the number of incidents at schools is similarly disconcerting: in 2001 there were four, in 2002 there were six, and during the first few months of 2003,

seven such reports were received. School should be a place where anti-Semitism and other forms of racism are not tolerated.

Last May CIDI wrote that the rise in 2002 was attributable to the coarsened society (the number of incidents against Muslims has increased in recent years as well) and especially to the surge in violence between Israel and the Palestinians in March/April 2002. This increase in manifestations of anti-Jewish sentiment is clearly related to the violence in the Middle East, as apparent from the exceptional rise in March/April 2002. “Operation Defensive Shield” in those months was in progress at the time. In fact, 55 Palestinians and 22 Israelis were killed. Although the fighting between Israel and the Palestinians continued ‘as usual’ during the period January – early May 2003, this reduced interest in this violence because of the war against Iraq led to a decline in the number of anti-Semitic incidents compared with the same period the year before. The rising trend from the past returned. The extent to which this trend will continue is impossible to predict at this time. Presumably, this reduced attention to Israel in recent months is not the only cause of the decline in actual manifestations of anti-Semitism in January-May 2003. Another phenomenon is materializing.

**Chart 2: Comparison of the number of anti-Semitic incidents between the period 1 January – 5 May 2002 and the period 1 January – 5 May 2003**



## **Anti-Zionism, anti-Semitism**

Most – but by no means – all incidents of verbal abuse are perpetrated by youths of North-African descent. CIDI has observed this pattern since 2000. These youths tend to exhibit a strong sense of solidarity with the Palestinians and are encouraged by Arab TV stations that export the religious-anti-Semitic prejudices prevailing throughout the Arab world to Europe via satellite. Some second and third-generation Arab youths are poorly integrated in Dutch society. They do not distinguish between Jews and Israel. They express their abhorrence of Israeli politics through anti-Semitic utterances directed against Jews. World War II occurred in the distant past in their view and means nothing to them. The five disturbances of the national commemoration of the victims of World War II recorded in Amsterdam on 4 May 2003 clearly demonstrated this. Some even abused World War II as an opportunity to incite.

But a relatively small group of Arab youths is not the only problem. Society is becoming progressively less able to discuss Israel without sharing prejudices about Jews.

Admittedly, the distinction between anti-Semitism and criticism of Israel is a very fine one. Let us repeat: criticism of Israel as a state, its policy or the human rights situation is not anti-Semitism and is at most a political difference of opinion. In a host of situations, however, such criticism coincides with false accusations that have no bearing whatsoever on the local situation. Such accusations nearly always concern a negative interpretation of the history and religion of the Jewish people.

In his recent article ‘The new antisemitism, or when is a taboo not a taboo?’, former Professor of Political Science and Modern History Peter Pulzer (Oxford University) signs a test to distinguish anti-Semitism from anti-Israel criticism. The following is a slightly modified version of the test.

Does the individual who made the statement:

- criticise or attack not only specific individuals or organisations, but also anonymous collectives, such as ‘the Jewish lobby’, ‘the Jewish community’, or ‘the Jewish vote’?
- emphasise or exaggerate the economic status of Jews, involvement of Jews in the media or other allegedly ‘Jewish’ characteristics?
- complain that every criticism of Israel is automatically denounced as anti-Semitism?
- compare the Israeli government with Nazism and the Israeli army’s actions with the SS, the Holocaust or genocide?

- demand boycotts and sanctions exclusively against Israel, without ever having done so for other serious issues worldwide?

With visual material, the additional question is:

Does the artist or television producer:

- use the Star of David to identify Israeli military equipment?
- use a skullcap to identify Israeli politicians?
- use swastikas to identify Israelis or Zionists?
- portray Israelis or Zionists in the manner of the traditionally caricatured Jew?

If the answer to one or more of the above questions is yes, the individual who made the statement is approaching the danger zone, and will easily make the transition from anti-Israel conduct to anti-Semitism.

## Recommendations

These acts of violence and the smouldering anti-Semitism (*de Volkskrant*, 3 April 2003) in Europe necessitate coordinated and specific measures against the rising anti-Semitism. Possible measures might include consistent and clear condemnation of anti-Semitism by governments and local authorities alike. Anti-racist legislation needs to be implemented properly and funding allocated toward educational projects. All appeals to sympathise with anti-Semitic individuals or organisations are to be rejected, since accommodating them will merely fortify those organisations and will elicit a socially undesirable backlash. There should also be more dialogue among the populations groups (Jews and Muslims) that would like to be on good terms with each other.

Proper legislation is one of the chief instruments in the fight against anti-Semitism. Such laws are useless, however, if they are not enforced. In recent years CIDI has issued regular public warnings that Dutch courts were taking far too long to settle legal cases, if they made it to trial at all. This is socially irresponsible, even with all due respect for the overburdened legal system. Experiences have also demonstrated that the lack of an adequate international agreement to eliminate anti-Semitism and racism on the Internet will probably instigate a procedure similar to the one observed with the groups hurling anti-Semitic chants at football stadiums. Years ago, Dutch governments still believed that these chants would remain within the stadiums. They were not prohibited. But how do you make clear that what is allowed within the stadium is prohibited outside the sports arena? The same thing might happen with Internet. How can society maintain that statements that are permissible on the

Internet are not allowed in the real world? The time has come for a global agreement on the subject.

# What to do against anti-Semitism?

## Prof. Jonathan Webber - University of Birmingham

Anti-Semitism is not an easy subject to analyse. As a single category it would seem to be far too bland a concept to describe and then explain a multitude of very different kinds of phenomena – including acts of violence and destabilising, venomous publications, as well as others which are relatively trivial.

We still seem to know too little about anti-Semitism. One might have thought after the Holocaust that the subject would be so well researched and understood that there would be clear, easily available answers to questions such as 'How serious is anti-Semitism in the UK?' or 'What threat is it to Europe's Jews?' But this does not seem to be the case. What in fact is the relationship between prejudice among the educated and peer-group pressure among the young for committing acts of violence?

For example, (a) the media have a preference for sensationalist reporting: anti-Semitism always seems to be 'resurgent' or 'on the rise'; one hears very little serious reporting how it may be in decline. This only adds to the sense that we do not fully understand the phenomenon.

(b) Some statements about anti-Semitism put out by responsible Jewish leaders are hard to understand and do not really contribute to our knowledge – for instance, the claim by the secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress that these past two years have witnessed the worst anti-Semitism in Europe since the end of the Second World War (this overlooks many other serious episodes), or the comparison made by some French Jewish leaders between the recent attacks on French synagogues (in which no one died) and the Reichspogrom/Kristallnacht of November 1938 (in which in fact 91 Jews were killed, 30,000 arrested, and 191 synagogues set on fire).

(c) Responsible Jewish leaders are not in agreement about even the basic issues: the British Chief Rabbi Dr Jonathan Sacks has said that anti-Semitism has reached unprecedented levels, whereas Lord Jakobovits (his predecessor) thought in 1998 that it is in significant decline. Rabbi David Goldberg, leader of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London, has written that the alleged recrudescence of anti-Semitism is paranoid and exaggerated, especially given the security in which Jews generally live today.

As a social anthropologist, I know that belief is hard to measure. Conventional assessments of anti-Semitism are based inconsistently on (a) the random

collection of reported incidents, (b) opinion polls purporting to measure popular beliefs, stereotypes, and prejudice, and (c) voting patterns for racist politicians. It is assumed that these three criteria taken together form a reliable guide to reality, whose significance is self-evident. But it is unclear to me whether this is a good method. It may be, for example, that we assume in advance that anti-Semitism exists, and merely search for the evidence, regardless of its source or internal coherence. Certainly this approach parallels a pre-existing Jewish belief structure, viz. that the non-Jewish world is either potentially or even endemically anti-Semitic. Jews expect anti-Semitism, and it is a basic tenet of Zionism that anti-Semitism is ineradicable. It is very commonly said by Jews about Poles, for example, that as a nation they are irredeemably anti-Semitic, though Jews who know present-day Poland well would not agree with such a stereotype.

The Jewish fight against anti-Semitism, together with a concern about understanding the Holocaust, has become one major element of the public and official face of post-war Jewish identity (regardless of its actual occurrence, however this is measured) and indeed something that nearly all Jews (however divided they may be on other matters, such as secularism or tradition) can agree on. Hence its importance may be disproportionately large in the current Jewish world. In practice, however, ordinary Jewish life, particularly in Orthodox Jewish society, proceeds with a lot of indifference to it. Many Jewish intellectuals, however, are often routinely involved in interfaith activities (including the combat against the social acceptability of anti-Semitic prejudice) and some may feel quite strongly that Judaism ought to make more of an effort to reach out to other faiths.

Anti-Semitism is thus not a unitary phenomenon, nor is it always what it seems to be: it flourishes even in countries without Jewish populations, but then Jewish cultural festivals also thrive in countries without Jews. The subject is not at all straightforward. It is not clear precisely what anti-Zionism might mean (other than denial of Israel's right to exist as a sovereign state); to the question whether it is anti-Semitic, the answer is both Yes and No – especially given the fact that there is a substantial peace movement in Israel, opposed to many of the same things which so-called anti-Zionists in Europe are opposed to. Hence there would seem to be a *prima facie* case that it is in Israel's current state interests to assert the case for a current upsurge of anti-Semitism in Europe, however this is to be defined.

How, then, to propose remedies? Despite the uncertainties and doubts mentioned above, the following suggestions can be made:

- 1) Attention needs to be given to pan-European methods of classifying, defining, and quantifying incidents, with allowances made for variations in reporting rates or the reliability of different monitoring bodies. There is also a range of anti-Semitic manifestations (including publications and websites)

which can be counted and described but much more difficult to assess in terms of their impact. There is, after all, no reason to assume that increases in incidents must necessarily mean an overall worsening of the moral climate generally, and it is possible that there is no contradiction between a rise in the number of incidents of anti-Semitic vandalism and an overall decline in anti-Jewish attitudes. (Not every case of the desecration of a Jewish cemetery may be motivated by anti-Semitic belief structures.)

- 2) The subject should be taken in part as worthy of being bracketed together with Islamophobia, and there should be a conference comparing and contrasting the two phenomena – taking into account such issues as attacks on individuals, the impact on the two communities of their country's foreign policy, discrimination, prejudice in the media, behaviour of skinheads, right-wing versus left-wing political attitudes towards them, the role of religious fundamentalism, etc.
  
- 3) Attention to be given to the philosophy and practice of reconciliation, a word which is heard far too rarely: (a) the training of teachers in schools across Europe ought to begin to include an obligatory component on the nature of the different faith communities in Europe and their respective contributions to European culture and values. (b) We need to re-emphasise more the quest for better vocabulary, especially among political leaders: there is no 'they', just as much as there is no 'we'. (c) There are some rehabilitation programmes in Europe for people convicted of racist crimes; the success of these should be monitored.
  
- 4) In addition to dealing as effectively as possible with criminal anti-Semitic activities, the EU should recognise that much of the anti-Semitism accusations derive from the USA and that it should therefore reinforce its own Public Relations activities accordingly, to put Europe's case more effectively. For example, what does the EU actually propose in the Middle East, and what could both sides see as their own benefits in the process?
  
- 5) Jews also need to deal with their PR and self-image, including the need to accommodate the diversity of Jewish opinions on the Middle East. Jewish leaders should avoid irresponsible demands (such as the proposed boycott of the Cannes Film Festival because of anti-Semitism in France), and instead concentrate more on the reflowering of cultural, educational, and religious activity in post-Holocaust Europe.

There are genuine Jewish Holocaust agendas, including restitution, the confronting of local historical issues such as nationalist collaboration with the Nazis, the need for Holocaust education and commemoration, and the prosecution of war criminals where appropriate. But it also needs to be recognised that in many countries this confrontation with the Holocaust past is

not straightforward at all and may itself encourage local anti-Semitic manifestations.

## Concluding Remarks

### **Professor Ed van Thijn – Universities of Amsterdam and Leiden; EUMC Management Board Member**

I think the moment has come to finalise this fascinating meeting. It was completely different from what I expected. I expected much more controversy. All in all I think we arrived at a position of “common wisdom”. I just want to make four final remarks.

- First of all we all agree that old and new forms of anti-Semitism are an increasing problem in our society caused to certain degree by the Middle East conflict. But it cannot be explained only in those terms. The question is, and we do not agree about that, in what way we should relate it? We all agree that anti-Semitism and the intolerant society is increasing today and we have to fight it. In order to fight it we have to agree on a sharp definition. There are many elements in the larger definition but I think the definition that anti-Semitism is “Judenfeindschaft” in one way or another is evident enough. But then we have to be clear on the dividing line. On this point we have discussed that being anti-Israeli does not mean that you are an anti-Semite. But there are many times when being anti-Israeli is being anti-Semite. So the conclusion is that it is an increasing problem that we have to face, to define and to fight together with the politicians, civil society, religious leaders, teachers and many other groups in society.
- My second conclusion is about all the proposals that have been made. And I think there is one priority in this discussion. All of you said that education is the most important issue at the moment, but education on what? And another aspect is legislation and the need for stronger legislation. I do not think legislation is the main problem, the main problem is the gap between legislation and enforcement. The enforcement of legislation is a key element and this has to be addressed. I think the “rule of law” is crucial for many of us. It is self-evident to us, but the problem is that for many people in our society it is not self-evident. You need the education process to make it self-evident again. But I am wondering what is then self-evident. If we are talking about the “rule of law” in the multicultural society we are talking about diversity within the framework of shared values. And what are the shared values in our societies? What is the “rule of law” of common failures in our society today?
- Thirdly, we need “minima moralia”, so that everybody knows what is accepted and what is not accepted in our kind of society. We have to reconfirm that rule of law is the core business, and we have to use our

education process to make that feasible. We are always talking about education of minority groups, but the problem is that we ask our minorities to make contributions that are not requested from the mainstream in our society. What we need is education in the core values of our society. Among them the “rule of law” should be the priority that covers the fight against racism, and covers also the fight against Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

- My final conclusion is that we have to mobilise political leadership. This is not easy. It is my specialty, my academic work, to give lectures on that subject but the political leadership in our society listens more to spin doctors instead of principals and ideals. What we are asking from them is not a popular issue, not an issue that makes them win the election. Therefore I was so impressed by what happened in Germany. Germany was the only country after 11 September where migration and integration was not the main issue during the electoral campaign. Apart from the results, everybody has his own preferences but the campaign in Germany was the only decent campaign after 11 September in Europe. Decency is a keyword. In his autobiography Eli Wiesel reports about a worldwide anti hate campaign already several decades ago, started and supported by 60 Nobel Prize winners. It was a great campaign and it had a lot of impact in those days. Maybe we don't need Nobel Prize winners, but an anti hate campaign in Europe is something we should consider. We should work on a society in which no individual feels oppressed or not taken seriously. That is the challenge for Europe.

## List of Participants

Round Table on “Manifestations of Anti-Semitism in Europe”,  
Brussels, 5 December 2002

### EXPERTS

**Dr. Henrik Bachner**

Researcher at Dept. of History of Ideas, Lund University, Sweden

**Prof. Wolfgang Benz**

Professor and Director of the Centre for Research on anti-Semitism  
(*Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung*) at the Technical University of Berlin

**Dr. Werner Bergmann**

Professor at the Centre for Research on anti-Semitism  
(*Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung*) at the Technical University of Berlin

**Dr. John Bunzl**

Researcher at the Austrian Institute of International Politics, Vienna

**Pascale Charhon**

Director of Centre Européen Juif d'Information (CEJI) and  
Vice-president of ENAR (European Network against Racism), Brussels

**Prof. António Costa Pinto**

Professor at Dept. of History at ISCTE University, Lisbon

**Serge Cwaijgenbaum**

European Jewish Congress, Paris

**Prof. Lars Dencik**

Professor of Social Psychology, Roskilde University, Denmark

Prof. Dr. Hagen Fleischer

University of Athens

Department of German Studies

**Ariana Goldstaub**

The Centre for Contemporary Jewish Documentation (Fondazione Centro di  
Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea – CDEC), Italy

**Hadassa Hirschfeld**

Deputy Director

Centre for Information and Documentation on Israel, Netherlands

**Patrick Moreau**

Expert in right-wing populism and anti-Semitism, France/Germany

**Prof. Johnathan Webber**

University of Birmingham  
Chair in Jewish studies

**Mr Nicolas Weill**

Journalist at “Le Monde”

**Dr. Juliane Wetzel,**

Researcher at Centre for Research on anti-Semitism  
(*Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung*) at the Technical University of Berlin

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Director-General

**Barbara Nolan**

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Unit D/4

**Adam Tyson**

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**Deirdre Hodson**

### **DG Justice and Home Affairs**

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Unit A/5

### **DG Education and Culture**

**Karin Lopatta - Loibl**

Unit D/1

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**Prof. Francesco Margiotta-Broglio**

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University of Florence, Faculty of Political Sciences, Italy

**Beate Winkler**

Director

**Alessia Bursi**

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**Peter Fleissner**

Head of Unit “Research and Networks”

## **PART 2**

### **Manifestations of Islamophobia in Europe**

**Round Table Meeting  
Brussels, 6 February 2003**

# Agenda of the Round Table Meeting

## Manifestations of Islamophobia in Europe Brussels, 6 February 2003

### Opening of the Round Table

Welcome and opening remarks

by Ms Odile Quintin (Director General DG Employment)

Welcome and opening remarks

by Mr Robert Purkiss (Chairperson of the EUMC Management Board)

### Introduction to the Round Table

by Ms Beate Winkler (EUMC Director)

### Introduction of Participants (Tour-de-Table)

### Islamophobia in the EU15 after 11 September 2001

Presentation by Prof Jørgen Nielssen (University of Birmingham, UK) see also  
“Report on Islamophobia”

### Session 1: Islamophobia, a new kind of xenophobia?

Chair: Mr Robert Purkiss (Chairperson of the EUMC Management Board)

#### Statements by Participants and Discussion

- Concept(s) of Islamophobia
- Identifying attitudes
- Patterns of violence and aggression
- Perpetrators and victims
- Causes and motivation
- Status quo and trends in the Member States

### Session 2: Strategies to prevent and reduce Islamophobia

Chair: Mr Robert Purkiss (Chairperson of the EUMC Management Board)

#### Statements by Participants and Discussion

Strategies in general and specially, e.g. recommendations in the field

- of politics
- of legislation (is the legal basis sufficient?)
- of education
- of media
- of civil society including inter-religious dialogue

Who are the key actors to be addressed?

What are already existing “good practices” on the local/grass root level?

# Summary of the Round Table Meeting

## Manifestations of Islamophobia in Europe Brussels, 6 February 2003

The important role of education and media was one of the key findings of the round table on Islamophobia, held in Brussels on 6 February. The meeting, which brought together over 20 leading experts in the field, was opened by **Odile Quintin**, Director General of DG Employment and Social Affairs. Ms Quintin outlined that discrimination towards Muslims in Europe is not only religious discrimination, but an obstacle to the social integration of entire communities, and stressed the important role of inter-faith dialogue in fostering communication and co-operation. The media should also be seen as vital. In some cases, media reporting presented a distorted image of Islam. Director General stressed that the European Union had many tools at its disposal to fight discrimination, including legislation, social inclusion and employment strategies, and the European Social Fund and Equal initiative.

## Islamophobia in the EU since September 11

**Beate Winkler**, Director of the EUMC, explained how the EUMC had responded to the September 11 attacks by carrying out research, through its RAXEN network, on Islamophobia in the European Union. **Prof. Jørgen Nielssen**, University of Birmingham, gave a short overview of the EUMC's report on Islamophobia, which had looked at a four months period from September to December 2001. Since September 11, there was evidence of increased street violence towards Muslims as well as negative reporting in the media. At the same time, however, there were many examples of good practice which must be taken into account, including positive statements from church leaders and politicians.

Prof. Nielssen also spoke about the difficulties in compiling and comparing such research data, as source material varied significantly between EU Member States. For this reason, the methodological problems around measuring Islamophobia need to be addressed. He also suggested considering, firstly, the extent to which Islamophobia is a media-driven phenomenon, and secondly, whether it constitutes a particular form of racism.

## Islamophobia, a new kind of xenophobia?

In the general discussion that followed, participants gave their reactions to the report and spoke about Islamophobia in their own countries. All participants agreed that the issue of improving research methodology was vital and that the collection and comparison of qualitative as well as quantify data was crucial.

A number of speakers raised the issue of the role of politicians, and how since September 11 the issues of security, immigration and asylum had climbed further up the political agenda. The "dangerous game" of playing the race and ethnicity card had accentuated conflict between communities and, according to one speaker, had led to the creation of an intellectual space, including in certain universities, where criticism of Islam and generalised statements about Muslims are increasingly tolerated.

One speaker regretted "the culture of exclusion" which is building up around the second largest religion in Europe, manifested in debates about "whether Islam can belong in Europe". A number of participants referred to the debate in Italy on whether Muslims should have the right to build Mosques.

Speakers also referred to the co-operation, for the first time, between certain Muslim and non-Muslim groups (including NGOs and trade unions) to organise marches against the war on Iraq. According to some participants, Muslim communities are becoming more organised, visible and assertive. One participant felt, however, the approach was generally a defensive rather than a positive one, with Muslims defending "what they were not".

A number of speakers were of the view that Islamophobia was a distinct phenomenon from racism, and all spoke of its complexity. However, one participant felt that Islamophobia was a "slippery concept", which was often closely bound up with immigration, migrants and 'foreigners' in general. Participants also warned of over-using the term "phobia" – if an Imam criticises a Bishop is that 'Christianophobia'?

Manifestations of Islamophobia can vary from one town to the next. One speaker spoke of the importance of double or multiple identities – is a Muslim woman discriminated against because she is Muslim, or a woman or both? We should not force people to have single identities, when the reality is much more complex. The link between nationality and Islamophobia was also seen as problematic. One speaker pointed to the significant number of Muslim converts.

The role of the media was also discussed and speakers felt that some parts of the media had caused damage by making generalised statements that linked terrorism with Islam and by presented Islam in a reductionist or distorted manner.

## Preventing Islamophobia

In the afternoon session, participants looked at the measures, which could be taken to help prevent Islamophobia in the Member States. There was broad agreement that the European level was becoming increasingly important in fostering cross-community dialogue, as this was relevant to the basic rights of fellow Europeans. According to one speaker, the EU should "open up spaces" where Muslims and non-Muslims can communicate and interact. The questions surrounding Turkey's accession to the Union would also be crucial in terms of the Union's relations towards Muslims. A number of speakers considered that progress made on gender equality could serve as a positive example for combating all forms of discrimination, in particular as regards legislation. Social inclusion policies at EU and national level also played a crucial role.

Concerning the EU's role in terms of legislation, the Commission gave a short overview of the Article 13 Race Equality and Employment Framework Directives, which were currently being integrated into national law in all Member States and Candidate Countries.

Education was one of the key areas where all speakers felt a difference could be made. According to one speaker, education "was a long-term process which needed short-term strategies". A number of dimensions of education were addressed during the discussions.

Textbooks should not reinforce or perpetuate myths. Islam was either completely absent from textbooks or presented in a distorted or prejudiced manner. According to one speaker, people do not just need education on Islam, but need to look at themselves, and how they perceive themselves as Europeans. Muslim communities should also be encouraged to learn about other religions. Participants disagreed as to whether faith schools should be encouraged.

Participants felt that intercultural dialogue should be approached with an open mind, recognising that some leaders who favour dialogue are criticised within their own communities. Bottom-up grassroots activity is essential. An example of good practice at local level was an open-door day held by Austrian Mosques for non-Muslims. In another Member State, however, financial support for such grassroots initiatives had been dramatically reduced. In yet another, the position and activities of Mosques that receive state support is under review.

Discriminatory language by politicians should also be criticised, including by the EU. Political leaders at all levels should be more vocal on the right of all Muslims to equal treatment and equal opportunities.

In terms of the media, one example of good practice cited was a seminar for the general press on issues affecting Muslims, held in Germany. One participant

reported that he had been commissioned to write a short paper on Sharia law as a reference document for national journalists.

In summing up the day's discussions, Dr Winkler recalled the key issues, which had been highlighted – education, the role of institutions, participation and dialogue, legal framework and political leadership. All of these instruments must be mobilised if we are to effectively prevent and reduce discrimination against Muslim in Europe.

# Opening Speech

## **Odile Quintin – Director-General, Employment and Social Affairs, European Commission**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my thanks to the members of the Management Board and the staff of the Monitoring Centre in Vienna for having helped us organise this second round table, devoted today to Islamophobia, after that of 5 December last year on the new manifestations of anti-Semitism. As with this first round table, our considerations on Islamophobia will benefit from the experience and the knowledge gained by the Monitoring Centre.

First of all, I would like to point out again, should this be necessary, the difference in nature between the subjects of these two round tables. In Europe, however, Islamophobia has a history almost as long as that of anti-Semitism. The Crusades left profound impressions on the collective imagination, both of Europeans and of Arabs. The expulsion of the Spanish Jews was ordered at the very moment that the "reconquest" over the Muslims was completed. And, until the 19th century, the border with the Ottoman Empire was considered, in the West, also to be that of Europe.

Nonetheless, the Muslim religion has been European for more than a thousand years. But its history, after the disappearance of El-Andalous, has been confined to Bosnia and Albania. This Islam has therefore remained unknown to most Europeans. It is immigration from Muslim countries during the last half century that has truly enabled Islam to take root in our societies. There it has even become one of the main religions as a result of the widespread nature of its practice.

Because of this, Islamophobia is not only a manifestation of religious intolerance. It is also aimed at the immigrant communities, or those of immigrant origin, because many Muslims, born in Europe, have the nationality of the country from which their grandparents or parents emigrated. By making their position vulnerable, it thus affects social cohesion in general. But Islamophobia therefore risks damaging the process of integration of certain immigrant communities, at the very time that the ageing of the population in general should on the contrary lead to the development of a real policy in this area, realistic but without taboos.

Unfortunately, contemporary history has not helped to encourage positive developments. Since the revolution in Iran in 1979 until 11 September, via

Algerian Islamists or the regime of the Taliban, little has happened to give the people of Europe a positive picture of Islam.

Added to this there has also been a drift towards fundamentalism, in Afghanistan and Chechnya for example, among certain young people, and which the media have made much of, giving an often distorted picture of the reality of the faith and of Muslim practices in our countries. And this has provoked, albeit without meaning to do so, a sometimes aggressive and violent intolerance from some people.

Between concerns about identity on the part of some, and ignorance and fear on the part of others, there is a need to act on all fronts, and resolutely.

This must be done first of all by emphasising the strong ties that exist between Europe and many Muslim countries – human and cultural ties that enrich our societies. Here of course I am thinking of the Mediterranean countries with which intense dialogue and cooperation have developed within the framework of the "Barcelona process". Moreover, on 23 January, President Prodi officially set up the High-Level Advisory Group on the Dialogue between Peoples and Cultures, which is intended to help give new momentum to the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue.

There is a great deal at stake here. Europe, its values, its institutions and the organisation of its society are characterised by a profound secularisation of its collective practices and individual behaviour, as well as by equal rights and responsibilities between individuals. Today Islam is perceived, if not as being resolutely hostile, at least to be adapting itself with difficulty to this situation, for example where equality between men and women is concerned. Certain political movements are taking the opportunity to exploit fear and to accentuate divisions. While the great majority of Muslims in Europe practise a religion of tolerance, the absence of a Muslim Church limits the opportunity for the voice of Islam in Europe to be heard on important issues. Everyone knows what the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church and the protestant faiths "think" about abortion, social exclusion or even the process of European integration. This is why the efforts to organise representation for the Muslim religion must be welcomed and continued.

Moreover, in order to stop the spread of distorted representations of Islam, it is now a matter of urgency that a variety of parties become involved. Because Islam is a religion of internal wisdom, the very absence of a Church and clergy, and therefore of a higher authority, shows that the Prophet wanted faith to be first of all a matter of conscience and an intimate relationship with God. It is therefore the opposite of many distorted representations that are conveyed by the media or collective fear.

Dialogue between religions is of course an essential way of making progress. I would also stress the importance of education, from the very youngest age: the secularisation of our societies does not rule out teaching about religions, their history and their practice, and school curricula should include this teaching, starting in primary school. The media, since September 11 always quick to see "Islamist tracks" everywhere, should take part in this process of education to learn the true nature of Islam, its human and religious diversity. And to give this religion, which is that of many citizens of the Union, the status of a European religion, which it deserves.

We must also ask ourselves what role can be played by our current instruments in combating discrimination and exclusion, in particular that of immigrant communities. We already have full legislation against all forms of discrimination, including religious and ethnic discrimination, with the two directives adopted in 2000, which must be transposed into national law before December. Since 2000 the Union has also developed a European strategy against exclusion, which coordinates national policies. Finally, there is the European Social Fund, which provides financial support for innovative transnational projects aimed in particular at discrimination, through the EQUAL initiative.

Finally, the Commission wishes to develop a common approach to issues regarding the integration of immigrants, including issues raised by the religious diversity created by the recent waves of immigration. Today, consideration needs to be given to the links between immigration policy, employment policy and social policy, and a communication on these subjects will be adopted at the European Councils in Brussels, next March, and in Thessaloniki, in June.

These instruments can contribute, in turn, to promoting an open and inclusive society, encouraging the active participation of all. Moreover, even if exclusion is not just a question of unemployment, policies that promote higher employment rates, by creating new activities or by raising the level of training, will also help to resolve situations where social crisis encourages communities to withdraw into themselves and promotes religious fundamentalism and racial hatred. These are the main strategic priorities on the European social agenda, which we will evaluate in 2003.

The Monitoring Centre in Vienna has already done a great deal of work in collecting data, analysing the situation and making proposals. Its reports on Islamophobia after September 11 and on the situation in the Islamic communities in five European towns (Aarhus, Bradford, Mannheim, Rotterdam, Turin) have already contributed to the debate on this subject. This is why its role in establishing a base of knowledge and conducting the evaluations needed to support the public policies in all areas is so important. I therefore look forward with interest to the contributions of the experts taking part in this round table.



# Islamophobia and European Identity

## Robert Purkiss – Chairman, EUMC Management Board

At the EUMC we have investigated manifestations of Islamophobia quite thoroughly over the past couple of years. This was to large extent motivated by international political developments. As our task is to monitor racism and xenophobia in all its forms, we are still in the process of coming to terms with how Islamophobia and racism are related. Is Islamophobia a specific form or racism – i.e. cultural or religious racism? Or should we accept that religion is a separate, and increasing important site of conflict with a very specific negative impact on European Muslims?

What we do know is that Islamophobia directly affects European Muslims in many aspects of their daily lives, and has done so for a very long time. Europe is home to between 12 an 18 million Muslims, which makes Islam the second largest religion in Europe. Most Muslims live in France (3.5 – 4 million), followed by Germany (2.5 – 3m.) and Britain (1.8m). Muslim citizens and residents are an integral part of our European population.

And yet our conceptions of European identity are probably among the strongest drivers of Islamophobia. Despite Islam's contribution to the development of European societies, it has been excised from the prevailing understanding of Europe's identity as Christian and white, Islam has long served as Europe's "other", as a symbol for a distinct culture, religion and even ethnicity that characterises non-Europeans. This perception, as well as its very real effects on European Muslims, had probably gained a more prominent role due to recent political developments,

It also indicates that Islamophobia works in ways quite similar to racism. While it might no longer be automatically acceptable to openly use skin colour as immutable attribute to distinguish people, religion and culture have gained in currency as markers of "natural" sites of difference, European Muslims used to be perceived predominantly as racial, ethnic or national minorities, but now their identity is increasingly marked by their faith – though this might mean nothing more than that faith has become a symbol for race or ethnicity. At the same time, religion and culture tend to be perceived as synonymous. This indicates another dimension of prejudice, as European Muslims are seen as representing a unified culture different from "European culture" and tied to certain prominent countries of origin.

## Mixed Messages

A perfect example of this exclusionary definition of Europe's identity in racial, cultural and religious terms is the debate on Turkey's accession to the EU. Giscard d'Estaing said – and he was by no means the only one – that Turkey's entry into the EU would be the end of Europe, as Turkey has “a different culture, a different approach, a different way to life.” I wonder what the 3 million people of Turkish origin who live in Germany have made of that pronouncement. Are they not Europeans? A designation of the European Union as a Christian club would be based on substantive cultural and religious values rather than democratic principles. By implication this would exclude Turkish residents in EU countries – and indeed all European Muslims.

So what are the messages we are sending to our fellow citizen and residents of Europe? We are against Islamophobia but we don't want a country with a predominantly Muslim population in our Union. Such mixed messages are also visible in our handling of other current political issues. This is particularly acute with regard to Europe's approach to combating terrorism. European Muslims and asylum seekers from Muslim countries are routinely suspected of being potential terrorists. European Muslims have become the targets of a securitisation of society, which marks specific ethnic and religious identities as security risks. The entire effort of harmonising our immigration and asylum policies has become tarnished by the link we continue to make – despite our denials – between terrorism and Islam.

## **Day-to-day discrimination**

But Islamophobia is not just about a climate of suspicion, media frenzy, popular feelings and fears. It is not just an image problem for Muslims and a barometer of our public and political discourse. Instead, if we want to continue using this term, we should do so as suggested by the Islamophobia Commission in Britain, which emphasised that Islamophobia is about real discrimination faced by European Muslims in their daily lives.

For example, research in many Members States has shown that Muslims generally suffer more than any other population group high unemployment, low wages and poor working conditions. In Britain, where legal protection from discrimination includes race and ethnicity but not religion, Pakistani Muslims are three times and Indian Muslims are twice as likely to be unemployed as Indian Hindus. Pakistani and Bangladeshi men, who are predominantly Muslim, earn significantly less than all other groups, whereas Indian men have now surpassed the income level of white men. Factors other than religion will undoubtedly have contributed to these inequalities, especially in countries like Germany where Turkish communities have lower rates of citizenship than other second-generation migrant groups. However, discrimination on grounds of religious and/ or culture cannot be discounted easily.

It is not always possible to distinguish between discrimination against religious groups, which occurs in area not connected to the exercise of faith, and religious discrimination related to faith issues. Especially in the arena of state action, rules and regulations based on the relationship between state and church can determine the range of opportunities open to Muslims in a wider context than that of religion.

The field of education serves as a good example. While no member state monitors attainment by religion, statistics do show that groups that originate from Islamic countries tend to do worse than those from countries where other religions prevail. Education is a sector highly regulated by the state, and the relationship between the state and church is of significance here. In all Member States, Muslims are somewhat restricted when it comes to exercising their religion within in education system on par with Christians. In France, Britain and Germany, for example, the extent of accommodation of religious diversity in education has mainly been determined by the overall relationship between state and church. With its strict separation of church and state, secular French society has rejected any acceptance of signs of Islamic religion and culture in its schools, though critics say the same is not always true for the Catholic faith. In Germany, with its two state-sponsored religious confessions, the contested terrain has been religious education in schools and whether Muslims, or Islamic organisation, should be allowed to teach religious education. In Britain, which has a state religion that runs thousands of state-funded Anglican schools, we have a very small number of separate state-funded Islamic schools with Muslim staff. Any of these arrangements could, in one way or the other, influence the educational attainment of Muslim pupils as well as intercultural understanding.

### **The way forward: equality and solidarity**

State action to accommodate religious needs is likely to influence Islamophobia, as is legislation against discrimination on religious grounds. The adoption of the Employment Directive is welcomed, as it outlaws discrimination on grounds of religion in employment. I hope that Member States are inclined to implement this in areas beyond employment to include other crucial fields such as education and housing. Discussions are also underway to outlaw incitement to religious hatred as part of the Draft Council Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia.

It seems to me that religious minorities now face a choice between emphasising such a move towards equal rights, as presented in these legislative initiatives, or the pursuit of special protection for specific religious needs. Should the emphasis be on equality or on difference? It seems to me that disadvantages suffered by Muslim communities are not in themselves a religious issue, even though discrimination is based on perceived religious as well as racial identities.

While some acts and structures of discrimination are directly related to religious activities or needs, many others are not. This suggests that the issue of equal rights is likely to be more important than that of the accommodation of specific religious needs, though equal treatment of these needs must be included in any equality approach.

Religion is one aspect among a range of factors, which make minority groups appear different. It can add a layer to processes of exclusion or become a dominant element in these, but it does not displace disadvantages encountered on other grounds. Increased hostility against Muslims has been provoked by a heightened fear of difference, coupled with resentment and disaffection, which exceeds the focus on a particular religious identity. It has produced a dynamic of exclusion that encompasses a range of vulnerable groups, including other religious minorities, Middle Eastern and Arab people more generally and asylum seekers.

I think what is needed to counter Islamophobia and religious discrimination is not so much renewed focus on the role of faith in our societies but rather an overarching pursuit of equal rights. We need to find a way to acknowledge and appreciate difference without turning it into something immutable, foreign and threatening. We must establish a common ground to assert both difference and equality by showing solidarity with all people that face exclusion and discrimination.

# Fighting and Preventing Islamophobia in Switzerland

**Dr. Fawzia Al Ashmawi – University of Geneva, Switzerland**

**In schools:** In principle, minorities must not suffer discrimination in European schools, yet discrimination does occur. Unlike in France, where students are forbidden from wearing headscarves in the state schools, there are no such rules in Switzerland. Nevertheless, teachers have been prevented from wearing a veil in Swiss state Schools. Many cases of discrimination against Muslim pupils and teachers have reached the cantonal and the federal courts of justice in the country and also the European Court of Justice in Strasbourg.

**In workplaces:** Despite the fact that European labour policies strictly forbid discrimination against foreigners from taking on certain jobs, Muslim permanent residents in almost all European countries are unable to teach at state schools or hold key position in the medical sector. It is certainly true that foreigners have a lower average income than native Europeans do and that Muslim foreigners far more frequently do certain jobs, which require few qualifications. Nowadays, there is discrimination against veiled Muslim women in the European labour market. Statistics show that Muslims (Turks, Albanians, Somalis, Moroccans) suffer more than other foreign nationals from low salaries, poor working conditions, poor health insurance and low educational qualifications.

**In political life:** In some European countries, foreign nationals, including Muslims, do not have the right to vote even if they are holders of a permanent residence permit.

**In the media:** Xenophobia in general, and Islamophobia in particular, do exist. The news coverage of many right-wing newspapers has a tendency to be islamophobic in character. This is expressed in reports on foreign affairs, e.g. the representation of the Middle East conflict or the representation of Muslim fundamentalism, which is not always clearly treated as an extremist movement and distinguished from Muslim culture.

## Manifestations of Islamophobia in Switzerland

In spite of being laic, Switzerland has a long tradition of Christianity. Islam does not count as an official religion of the population. About 4% of the Swiss population today is Muslim; these Muslims are diverse in their ethnicities, cultures and nationalities. There clearly exists a kind of xenophobia among the rest of the Swiss population, which targets asylum seekers. However, this form of xenophobia is not specifically threatening the Muslim minority living in Switzerland but is now widespread in many western countries. On the other hand, it should be noted that discrimination on ethnic or religious grounds is unlawful in Switzerland as stipulated by article 4 on equal rights and article 49 on freedom of religion of the Swiss Constitution. Switzerland has also ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights whose Article 2 stipulates that: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration". Islamophobia, defined as dread or hatred of Islam and of Muslims, is less frequent in the country than xenophobia against foreigners in general.

It is recommended, though, to promote cultural exchanges and awareness of Muslim culture and religion in order to fight prejudices and negative perception of Islam and Muslims.

## **Strategies to prevent and reduce Islamophobia**

We believe that in order to alleviate the problem of discrimination and xenophobia against foreigners in general and Islamophobia against Muslims in particular, one must look to the roots of the problem: misinformation. Shedding a positive and truthful light on Islam would certainly be an effective point from which to start. The promotion of cultural exchanges and the awareness of Muslim culture and religion to fight prejudices would be appreciated. Changes should occur at educational, cultural, social and political levels.

**Educational field:** More importance must be given to school books at all levels, and steps should be taken to correct false stereotypes and negative images of Islam and Muslims in the curricula.

**Labour market:** Labour statistics show that there is a need to modify European labour market policies in order to allow Muslims to integrate more into the labour European market and take part in the economic life of the European Union.

**Social integration:** There is a need to take measures to avoid exclusion of young second generation Muslims, who are born and grew up in European countries; to encourage their inclusion in their societies and to increase their participation in political, economic and cultural affairs.

**The media:** The media should play an important role in changing attitudes and not always concentrate on the aspects of Islam, which they perceive as negative.

The media should try to involve Muslims or specialists in Islam in the presentation of articles, to ensure that sensitive Islamic issues are handled in an appropriate manner. They must take care not to assimilate all Muslims with fundamentalists or terrorists, and also to moderate their expressions when using Islamic terms or concepts (Jihâd, Sharî'a ...). The media must give Muslims more freedom to express themselves.

**Political field:** There is a need to change the legislation of some European countries in order to give permanent residents including Muslims the right to vote and to participate in the political life of the country where they live. Also, there is a need to facilitate the accession of European citizenship for Muslims living in European countries.

### **Some suggestions for preventing Islamophobia**

- The encouragement of meetings and conferences with Muslim representatives in order to express themselves in the media and to expose their views to the authorities.
- The organisation of exchange programs in schools and universities with Arab and Islamic countries.
- The promotion of cultural Muslim Associations and provision of financial support and resources for such institutions.

# Islamophobia in France?

**Valérie Amiriaux – Researcher, CNRS/CURAPP, France**

The situation in France after 11 September 2001 did not show any intensification of « Islamophobia » as new type of racism against Muslims. Many surveys and analyses have on the contrary shown the relatively quiet atmosphere that dominated public opinion immediately after the attack against the USA. This does not mean that racism and xenophobia do not concern Muslims and, moreover, that the public perception of Islam both as a faith and as a culture, is a positive and tolerant one. Nor does it mean that, as in many other European States, the security discourse did not gain a strong legitimacy in the aftermath of September 11. A recent report published by the Open Society Institute on *Minority protection and the situation of Muslims in France* underlines the extreme ambiguity of the Republican political framework towards the treatment of Islam and the inequality between Islam and other faiths.

The term of «Islamophobia» does not mean the same thing in all European contexts and it should not be used as a catchword to designate ignorance, lack of information, social fear, racism, hate, competition, distrust. It is therefore extremely difficult to evaluate and compare the situation from one country to the other. It seems to me more relevant to consider the dominant attitudes of the French administration as far as the issue of the public recognition of Islam is concerned: paternalism, neo-colonial management, intrusion of the State in the internal affairs of the faith (and therefore violation of the neutrality of the State). The policy style is in a way setting the «tone» of the public language used for discussing such issues. This national dominant pattern should then be questioned regarding the European process of implementation of legal provisions (anti-discrimination provisions, minority protection) that could be used by Muslims, collectively and individually, to bypass the national framework and report their claims to the European level (following a path similar to the one adopted by the Kurds toward the European Court of Human Rights).

«Islamophobia» sounds very much like a victimisation discourse produced by certain types of actors, which is not equally shared by all representatives of the Muslim communities. As such, its legitimate use in the policy-making sphere needs to be discussed. More recently, precisely since September 2003, an increasing public discussion of racism and xenophobia has emerged in France, focusing in parallel on Islamophobia and what is called in French “judéophobie”. This discussion is mainly articulated around the idea that anti-Semitism and anti-Moslem racism are in a way feeding each other. Some

examples of violence directed against religious persons, such as rabbis or imams, attacks against religious buildings, such as synagogues or mosques, and even reaching secret areas such as Moslem and Jewish cemeteries are happening more and more regularly. The potential radicalisation of the political discourses using these examples as illustrations of the “hatred” between Jews and Moslems has to be carefully monitored.

## **Strategies to prevent and reduce Islam phobia**

One of the most intriguing elements of the discussion around Islam and Muslims in France is the confusion between the pure «religious» aspects (meaning the faith, the ritual practices and the theological discussions), and the cultural elements (identification, education). This confusion leads inexorably to the incapacity to discuss Islam in a rational and peaceful way, for instance in the media. So communication and education seem to be the first areas where innovative public policies should be developed.

Legislation obviously exists to protect believers of any religion from discrimination and racism (in the French case: Comprehensive law on discrimination following the European requirements and directives). But it is hardly used by victims of such aggression, be it at work, at school, or in the access to social rights. For instance, even if the Separation law of 1905 is supposed to produce equality for all religions in the Republican framework, the situation in the French context is rather a configuration of «implicitly recognised faiths» than a pure laic system.

Another important aspect of the current situation in France is the growing gap between an «official» leadership and the «silent majority». This leadership, which has emerged over the last three decades (to some extent sponsored and supported by the various governments), resembles other types of organisations that can be found elsewhere in the European Union. But as religion is not considered a «legitimate element» of the public space, the topic «Islam and Muslims in France» is hardly discussed beyond the restricted circles of this Muslim leadership. Civil society organisations prefer to discuss «laïcité» rather than Muslim faith. Similarly, the inter-religious dialogue, which is becoming an important arena for discussing Islam in Germany or in the United Kingdom for instance, does not have the same impact and echo in France where it almost always remains anecdotal.

It is also clear that the difficulty of the European Union to develop its own «religious identity» (e.g. the discussion on Turkey’s accession to the EU) can only underpin this French ambiguity towards religion (and not only towards Islam).

# National and European Policies against Islamophobia

**Prof. Pandeli M. Glavanis – Northumbria University, UK**

Europe suddenly seems to have made the uncomfortable discovery that it is full of Muslims. Historically, the identity of Europe was partially constructed through the exclusion of Islam, and clearly elements of that construction still circulate in popular as well as elite discourses. For “Europeans”, the effect of Muslim settlement in Europe is disturbing for three main reasons: **firstly**, one of the main exclusions around which the identity of Europe was constructed was that of Islam, thus the Muslim presence impacts on the nature of modern European identity in that it challenges the very idea of Europe. **Secondly**, the Muslim presence seems to problematise the Westphalian order. Demands that Muslims abide by Westphalian conventions and accept no higher loyalty than that of the state (even if the state is not inclined to reciprocate that loyalty) are frequently made from various quarters including liberal institutions such as universities where suggestions that Muslims need to be taught tolerance (the hallmark of secularism) are often made. **Thirdly**, it presents academics with a major challenge, namely how to conceptualise ethnic identities. European writing finds it convenient to use measures of race, language and culture to define ethnic identity. Ethnicity is seen in essentialist terms, where membership of an ethnic community is imparted from birth and immutable for the rest of one’s life. It is difficult, however, to see how Muslims can be contained in such classical notions of ethnicity. Thus, a Muslim identity directly challenges positivist ethnography by pointing towards its socially constructed rather than its biologically given nature.

Thus, although the term 'Islamophobia' is relatively new (it has been in use now for approximately ten years), the root origins of the question date back many centuries. This new term encapsulates an identifiable *new form of a much older phenomena* in Europe, namely that of a fear or hatred of Muslim peoples and Islam which manifests itself in various forms of discrimination, exclusion and in some case subjugation (colonial wars, etc.).

It must be stressed, however, that the current term Islamophobia differs from other forms of discrimination, in that the discourse that has developed about Islam and Muslims is *highly politicised in an international arena* in a way that social and political discourses about other religions and peoples are not. Thus, it must be emphasised that Islamophobia can be identified as a form of discrimination that is *distinct* from racism, sexism, xenophobia, etc.

The main identifying features of Islamophobia can be summarised as follows:

- The perceived emergence of an 'Islamic threat', nationally & internationally;
- An extension of xenophobia and racism to religious hatred;
- The perception of 'otherness' for Muslim peoples, communities & nations;  
and
- The exclusion of Muslim viewpoints from 'mainstream' debates.

There is also evidence that Islamophobic sentiments are accepted as being '*natural*' and '*unproblematic*'. Similar to '*common sense*' racist attitudes, anti-Muslim views are expressed as though they were normal and writers continue to demonise Islam in both the tabloid and '*quality*' press and other literature. Furthermore, developments or events in countries such as Afghanistan or Iraq are seen as being *representative* of Islam and Muslims in ways that developments in Christian countries would never be interpreted as representative of Christianity.

## **Strategies to prevent and reduce Islamophobia<sup>5</sup>**

The European Union should take adequate steps to establish a commission whose purpose is to investigate the issue of 'Islamophobia' in its various manifestations for Muslims living and working in Europe today. The establishment of such a commission would serve, primarily, to acknowledge that the problem of Islamophobia is one that affects Europe as a whole and not one or two individual nations or states. This is important as it would ensure that the European Union itself co-ordinates and establishes policy in this area. The commission should benefit from the particularities of each member state and the regions within those states. In this way, any recommendations that the EU make would be extensively informed and would be able to acknowledge and address the specificities and generalities that exist in EU member states and regions, thus producing a broad policy that is constructively applicable to 'Europe' as well as individual nations. Some issues that should be considered are:

### ***Legislation***

- Religious Discrimination and Incitement to Religious Hatred.

### ***Political Inclusion and Participation***

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<sup>5</sup> Extracted from the Final Report of an EU-funded Research Project entitled, '*Muslim Voices' in the European Union: The Stranger Within*', which was carried out in 8 European Countries and coordinated by P Glavanis.

- Political representation of Islamic organisations at local, regional and national levels.

### *Education*

- Non-discriminatory curriculum;
- Dress (tolerance of headscarves & trousers for girls);
- Dietary considerations – *halal* school meals;
- Facilities for prayer;
- Respect for non-participation (e.g. swimming);
- Respect & observance of Islamic festivals;
- State funded schools (in line with other denominations).

### *Employment*

- Greater awareness & provision for religious needs, particularly flexibility to allow for prayers;
- Understanding & adaptability for religious holidays, especially as the precise dates are often not known until a few days prior to the occasion (the Muslim community must make an effort to reach a unanimous decision on which days these holidays should be);
- Employers must encourage inter-faith and intercultural awareness amongst employees in order to engender mutual respect and knowledge.

### *Media*

#### Avoid

- Stigmatisation of Muslims as mainly problematic citizens;
- Generalisation of particular incidents to ALL Muslims;
- Irresponsible use of charged and negative terms;
- Depersonalisation of Muslims;
- Perpetuation of the negative images of Islam and Muslims

### *Interfaith Dialogue and Confidence Building*

- Acceptance of Islam as an official religion to enhance true dialogue and confidence.

# **Policies against Islamophobia on the European Level**

**Prof. Tim Niblock - University of Exeter, UK**

## **The nature of Islamophobia: concepts and identifying attitudes**

Islamophobia is associated with reductionist attitudes to other cultures/religions/ethnic groups, where emphasis is placed on aspects which are perceived as being of the essence of the belief system, and which are then characterised as alien and threatening to the host culture/religion/ethnic group. The reasons for adopting such a position, of course may, and usually do, stem from very different reasons: social, political and economic. Both the perpetrators and the victims of violent Islamophobic attacks tend to come from the poorer parts of society, but the ideological framework which supports the attitudes of perpetrators is propagated from higher up in society – mainly through the vehicle of the media.

## **The reasons behind increasing Islamophobia in Europe**

Political developments over the past two years have been the key factor in increasing Islamophobia. While Western politicians may stress that the war against terrorism and the impending attack on Iraq are not a war against Islam, this is not the image, which stays in the minds of substantial numbers of people in Europe (and this holds true both of European Muslims as well as non-Muslims). The issue of asylum seekers, moreover, also becomes confused in these attitudes. The perception of there being a war of cultures is perceived in much of the rhetoric used by politicians, although it may not be articulated in these precise terms.

## **Mutually reinforcing essentialisms**

The trend towards essentialising other cultures, and seeing them as wholly alien, is occurring in both directions – creating a vicious circle of intensified and intensifying misperception. Muslim groupings, under the pressure of Islamophobic attitudes from other elements of the population, are tending themselves to essentialise the differences between themselves and “European

culture”. This in turn creates an image, which Islamophobics take as vindication and justification of their own perceptions.

## **Strategies to prevent and reduce Islamophobia**

One positive dimension which comes from current developments is that the “essentialising” pressures which are coming from parts of the media, and from some politicians (whether intentionally or not), are being undermined by forms of social solidarity which bring Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe into frameworks of common organisation and common struggle. A good example of this is the current anti-war movement, which has seen widespread organisation uniting the efforts of Muslims with significant numbers of non-Muslims. While there may be a danger of exaggerating the importance of this development, its significance should also not be underestimated. The character of the non-Muslim involvement provides grounds for the latter statement. The non-Muslim involvement has not been constituted solely of individuals, but has brought in a range of different types of social organisations: church groups, peace movements, trade unions, ecological movements and a wide variety of NGOs. The anti-war issue has, moreover, become fused within this trend to wider concerns of combating racism, Islamophobia and ecological depredation. In civil society, therefore, there does exist a framework where Islamophobia is being contested and challenged.

The paradox in creating a strategy to prevent and reduce Islamophobia at an official level (involving governmental action), therefore, is that the social forces, which oppose Islamophobia, largely do so within an anti-governmental framework. They perceive governments (some more than others, depending on the European country concerned) as part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

### **The immediate recommendations, which follow from this, are:**

- European governments need to recognise that current (US-led) policies on the war on terrorism, on Iraq and Palestine are closely related to increasing Islamophobia. Changes in national legislation at the moment, while current policies persist, are not likely to change this trend.
- European institutions have a strong role to play. Those who seek to confront Islamophobia do not tend to regard European Union institutions as “part of the problem”. EU measures towards creating and promoting the political/social spaces in which the grassroots interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim opponents of Islamophobia can be fostered would therefore be both feasible and productive. While it would no doubt be impossible for EU institutions to encourage developments antipathetic to

national governments, the creation of the social/political spaces in which grassroots dialogue can take place – not focused exclusively on Islamophobia but linking it with the concerns of all of those organisations, which have taken up the issue – would be valuable. Wider issues of racism, ecology, social deprivation, human rights etc, all need to be bound into the dialogue, while retaining Islamophobia as a central concern. This can provide a secure basis for new perceptions to be purveyed through the media, education etc.

# Islamophobia - the Factual Situation in Denmark

**Dr. theol. Lissi Rasmussen – Director, Islamic-Christian Study Centre, Denmark**

## From xenophobia to Islamophobia

September 11, its aftermath and the immediately following election campaign in Denmark gave a speedy impetus to the further development of Islamophobia that had already intensified since the beginning of the 1990s. Since the election right wing forces have been able to set the political agenda and have gained general respectability.

## From Islamophobia to anti-Muslimism

Thus, the situation since the period covered by the EUMC report on anti-Islamic reactions (September – December 2001) has not improved much. Physical violence has vanished but verbal abuse and aggression, hate speech, accusations, sweeping generalisations are still the daily fare for Muslims. However, Islamophobic attitudes seem increasingly to take the form of "anti-Muslimism" as an institutional and widely accepted discourse that has a certain functional role. There are a growing number of targeted campaigns against named Muslim individuals. Some Muslim representatives are constantly made suspect and stigmatised through the media, by politicians, journalists and others who influence public opinion.

The following recent examples are symptoms of this development. They show that the Islamophobic discourse in Denmark is normalised to the degree that it no longer creates a sensation or an offence in the legal system, the administrative authorities, the parliament or in the media. Freedom of speech weighs heavier than protection of minorities.

- The New Year speech of 2002 by the Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen. In his speech he stated that Danes for too many years have been foolishly kind. They have not dared to say that some values are better than others. But this must happen now. Danes must speak directly against the "fundamentalist imams" and prevent medieval religious forces and political fanaticism to take root in Denmark, he said. One quarter of the speech dealt

with this issue.

After this followed a campaign against imams, led by the ministers of integration and of church affairs and based on statements made by one Somali "imam" in defence of girls' "circumcision", and on sensational newspaper headlines. This resulted in new headlines like "Haarder (minister of integration) will keep an eye on imams." "Fergo (minister of church affairs) will take away the licence of imams to officiate at a weddings."

- Use of explicit highly anti-Islamic writers and journalists as "experts" on Islam in the media. These are not only given space in major newspapers but are accepted as serious and qualified "experts". Islamophobic statements are increasingly taken for granted, not only in serious mass media but also in books published by well-reputed publishers.
- Cases dismissed in court. A couple of weeks ago a politician from the Danish People's Party was acquitted by a Danish court on a charge on making racist comments, when he stated that "Islam is not a religion in the traditional sense, rather it is an international terror organisation, attempting to gain world dominance by violence." Statements like "There is only one civilisation. That is ours... Islam with its fundamentalist tendencies must be fought" are not rare in the parliament and often not opposed.

## **Populism legitimises Islamophobia as a public consensus**

There has not been a real attempt from the political side – in words or action – to eliminate anti-Muslim sentiments that were reinforced after September 11. The government has not recognised the existence of Islamophobia. Rather the sentiments are seen as "natural and normal fear" – a "concern" that is understandable and has to be respected. The solution to "the problem of Muslims" is according to the government stricter laws against medieval traditions and to control the imams.

The media uncritically perpetuate this image and maintain that Muslims are a problem. Their approach is generally marked by sensationalism, essentialism and culturalism. The result is that Islamophobia and anti-Muslimism have gone under the skin of Danes, even intellectuals who used to be able to think about Islam and Muslims in a more sensible and nuanced way. Rational arguments and facts have become less and less viable.

## **Islamophobia – strategies**

The term "new racism" has been used as another name for Islamophobia. The tendency towards a situation where culture or religion are made a biological

category as a substitute for race has been increasing in Denmark since September 11.

Raised forefingers and distrustful demands have intensified in relation to Muslims through the media and by politicians and other opinion leaders. Muslims, especially those born in Denmark, have felt excluded and discouraged. Some reacted by leaving the country, others became depressed, others turned against the Danish society to take refuge in their own ethnic or cultural background or in their religion, sometimes even in extremist Islamic groups.

## **Good practices**

There have, however, also been positive consequences. Dialogue-oriented Christians and Muslims have come closer together. Initiatives have been taken to appeal to the best sides of human beings, to tolerance or even just to normal decency. Among these good practices have been common prayers, exhibitions, debates, projects at various levels – in churches, places of work, Muslim and non-Muslim organisations, commercial art, advertising, media etc. Muslims have been invited for seminars, lectures, courses etc. Muslims and non-Muslims have produced books and teaching material.

## **Strategies and recommendations**

- To make politicians – not only in the extreme right wing party, the Danish People's Party but also in more mainstream political parties – aware of the existence of Islamophobia in the Danish society and of their responsibilities to counteract and not legitimise anti-Muslim sentiments, to reduce and not increase tensions and mutual mistrust, to give signals of inclusion instead of exclusion of the Muslim minorities. Furthermore, politicians should be urged to make sure that existing laws against racism and discrimination are implemented in practice.
- The media: There is a need for information and education of editorial staff and journalists about Islam and Muslims and about Islamophobia. Muslims should be involved. The media often avoid the rational scientific angles to the advantage of populist and politically motivated construction of Islam. Therefore the media should be encouraged to enlarge the scope of professionalism rather than Euro-centrism. Muslim representatives should be more visible in the media, and the selection of them more responsible and nuanced.

- Information and education. To produce books and other material with a pluralistic approach for schools and libraries in order to promote a democratic understanding of the Danish society which values diversity and includes ethnic minorities as equal citizens.
- To urge politicians and authorities to support financially initiatives taken to promote integration and interaction between minorities and the majority. Recently councils and centres were either closed or had funds cut by the government (among them our own common initiative for dialogue and co-operation, the Islamic-Christian Study Centre). All NGO projects for integration and anti-discrimination are at the moment losing municipal funding, including ethnic minority radio- and TV-stations. It is constantly demanded that ethnic minorities become integrated and self-active. But the basics that should make this possible are removed.
- To encourage the establishment of an Islamic national body or/and an umbrella-organisation for ethnic minorities which can function as dialogue partner to the government. No one should be excluded. This may provide the condition for recognition of Islam as a faith community in Denmark, which would have a positive psychological effect on Muslims.
- To make room for the contributions of young Muslims who are interested in taking part in public debates and dialogues. In this way media coverage and political initiatives and statements could have a more real basis.
- To support and establish permanent centres for dialogue where face-to-face encounters between majority and minority populations can take place on an equal footing, where friendship, trust and respect can be built. To encourage Muslims and Christians to engage in common projects and jointly work on resolution of shared problems.

# Aspects of Islamophobia in the Nordic Context

**Associate Professor Anne Sofie Roald - Malmö University, Sweden.**

The term ‘Islamophobia’ alludes to a fear or phobia of the religion Islam and its followers. The concept ‘Islamophobia’ includes not only this fear, but a campaign which many Muslims feel is waged against Islam and Muslims. ‘Islamophobia’ might therefore be defined as a fear of Islam and Muslims that might activate an anti-Islamic campaign directed at Muslims.

Reasons for Islamophobia might be religious, cultural, political, racist and even economic. Many reasons have been put forward to explain the obvious conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims in Western society. One of these is the scapegoat theory: groups of people need to physically or mentally oppress contrasting groups or individuals in order to build up group sentiment and adherence (see for instance Hippler and Lueg 1995). The legitimisation for this kind of tribal conflict might be found in the dynamics between in-groups and out-groups (cf. Turner and Giles 1981).

Religious Islamophobia might be built on the notion that Islamic ideas pose threats to worldviews in the Western world.

Cultural Islamophobia might be built on an “us” and “them” perspective, where non-Muslims consider cultural traits and social structures in those parts of the world where Islam is prevalent as less acceptable than those of the West.

The expression of political Islamophobia can be illustrated by how the media present images of “a threat from the East”. In this picture, Islam is sometimes a challenge, sometimes a threat; in the latter case Islam and Muslims are seen as representing a danger to the Western world on various levels of society.

Racist Islamophobia might be built on racist theories where certain ethnic groups considered as representatives of Islam are ranked lower than the majority community.

Economic Islamophobia tends to come to the surface in times of economic recession when unemployment and public expenditure increase and immigrants, in particular Muslims, are often blamed.

All aspects of Islamophobia discussed above can be regarded as fitting into the frame of general racist expressions. Modern images of Islam and Muslims and forms of Islamophobia vary across Europe according to their specific economic and socio-political situation and the prevalence of other immigrant communities.

### **The victimisation of the Muslim woman**

The conflict between Islam and the West, which I believe to be largely a political conflict, often becomes, as described above, more one-dimensional as the political arguments are accentuated. However, when the image of a threat is transferred to a social level, the notion of Islam as a religion hostile to women emerges and this has become the main anti-Islamic argument in European society. The victimisation of the Muslim woman is expressed in terms that suggest Muslim women in general are oppressed. Headscarves have become the uttermost symbol of Islam. A common view among researchers is that the idea of the oppressed Islamic woman serves the purpose of distracting us from things that are wrong in our society, as these defects appear more acceptable if someone else's experience is even worse (Lueg 1995:20). Islamophobia has thus to be addressed on a deeper level, as it has as much to do with the majority's reconstruction of their identity in a changing world as it has to do with the immigrant population.

### **Strategies to prevent and reduce Islamophobia**

Islamophobia is, first and foremost, expressed through the media; explicitly in parts of the tabloid press and commercial TV channels and implicitly in the quality press and national TV channels. The media's description of Islam and Muslims tends to create negative perceptions that filter into the encounter between Muslims and non-Muslims on various levels. The anti-Islamic campaign has many dimensions, each of which reflecting the myth that Islam is a threat to the Western world. This myth is built on an idea of Islam as a homogeneous system, where it is not simply the political aspect of Islamic activism that comes to represent Islam and Muslims in general, but the most extreme and violent forms of this activism.

As the media tends to convey hostile and condescending images of immigrants in general and Muslims in particular, it is in the public space that many Muslims feel attacked. Hostility towards Muslims is generated cyclically, where hostile and condescending images are presented in magazines, popular books, newspapers and television, as a consequence of which the public tend to react towards Muslim individuals in a similarly hostile or condescending way. Through the media's creation of negative images of 'the other', 'the ordinary

individual’ acquires a sense of superiority both socially and intellectually, generating a need for further such presentations. Thus, the presentation of Muslims in a certain way becomes part of the supply and demand of the market.

## **Strategies**

Politics:

- To politically secure the possibility for Muslim women to wear the headscarf in all public places.
- To secure that legislation against ethnic discrimination is applicable.

Education:

- It is important that the curriculum recognises immigrants in general and Muslims in particular.
- To deal with Islamophobia in the curriculum

Media:

- Media representatives are the key actors to address. Firstly, it is important for them to be aware of their responsibility in the construction of “the other”.

Examples of good practices:

- A journalist in Sweden developed courses for journalists of some of the big newspapers where journalists were taken to various Muslim families, mosques, and associations for personal meetings with Muslims. At the same time lectures were given by Muslim intellectuals as well as by researchers of Islam.
- Danish journalists will produce a special brochure about Islamic issues to be distributed among journalists. In this brochure short articles about women, shari’a, democracy, and Muslim daily life will provide journalists with basic knowledge.

## **Fighting Islamophobia in a Region**

### **Ibrahim Spalburg – Director, Foundation Platform of Islamic Organisations in Rijnmond (SPIOR), Netherlands**

The outcome of the local elections for the city council of Rotterdam in May 2002 showed that a large part of the population were not in favour of the ways and means the former city board used to tackle the integration problem of Muslims in Dutch society.

The discussion about Islam and Islamophobic reactions in Dutch society possibly has to be placed in a broader perspective than in other countries.

Even before the catastrophic event of September 11 and also before the Rotterdam elections took place, the leader of a certain political party stated that a cold war has to be started with Islam and that Islam should be considered as a threat. After 11 September he repeated this statement in the same words. This roused Islamophobia.

Islamophobia in the Netherlands was also evoked by the statement of an Imam that homosexuality is a sort of disease and a threat to society. The statement of the Imam took place in the same period that some youngsters with an Islamic background were involved in the harassment of homosexuals. A number of organisations as well as the Ministry of Integration claimed that the statement of the Imam could be interpreted as condoning the behaviour of these youngsters. Recently some Imams said controversial things about women during the Friday sermon. More recently some Muslim girls in Amsterdam decided to wear a veil in school that covers the whole face except the eyes, instead of the hijab that only covers the hair. This led to discussions concerning the behaviour of Muslims in the public space. The discussion about the conduct of Muslims in Dutch society has increased and still goes on.

Both the statement of the leader of the political party concerning Islam, and the statement of the Imam concerning homosexuals, were reported to the Rotterdam Anti Discrimination Board (RADAR). The difference in reactions from the public is significant. Six hundred (600) complains were registered by RADAR concerning the statement of the Imam, while there was no public uproar concerning the statements of the political leader at all.

My conclusion is that Islamophobia is based on traditional prejudice as well as on a new wave of prejudice, which in the case of Rotterdam began with the call of a political leader to start a cold war against Islam and to consider Islam as a threat.

The catastrophic event of September 11, as well as the statements of some Imams in the Netherlands, incidents of harassment of homosexuals by youngsters with an Islamic background and the recent veil incident, are seen by large numbers of Dutch people as a proof that Islam and Muslims are a considerable threat to their society.

### **Strategies to prevent and reduce Islamophobia**

The key actors to be addressed in this matter are politicians, Muslim and non-Muslim citizens of Rotterdam, welfare organisations and last but not least the media.

Politicians and political parties in the municipality of Rotterdam play a very important role concerning the Muslim community. In the past the city council entered into formal discussions with Muslim organisations on the relocation of mosques in Rotterdam, during urban renewal in the early eighties. In the late eighties the council also decided to subsidise an umbrella organisation to liaise between the Islamic communities and the local authorities. That organisation became “SPIOR” (in English translation the Foundation Platform of Islamic Organisations in Rijnmond; Rijnmond being Rotterdam and its surrounding region).

After the problems with the relocation of mosques were solved, the city council decided to investigate the role that mosques play as centres of social activities. The survey was carried out by “COS” (Center of Survey and Statistics). Although Islamophobia has increased, I hope there will be still enough support in the city council to make it possible for the municipality to continue to cooperate intensively with the Muslim community. These forms of cooperation will help to prevent and reduce Islamophobia.

The Muslim community in Rotterdam has not yet reached the level on which they can compete fully and in all the fields of society with their fellow citizens. Some member groups of the Muslim community are more successful than other groups as regards the integration and participation in Dutch society. To keep this process of integration moving on it is necessary to invest in schooling and employability of all the member groups. There has been a lot of criticism towards Muslims and Islam, for example concerning statements of Imams and the behaviour of some youngsters. The Muslim community is not always fit or capable to deal with this criticism. From another point of view it is obvious that emancipation is taking place. The education level of the second and third generation is increasing and their employability is improving. Yet as a whole the community does not yet have sufficient means and capacities. SPIOR is initiating many activities to increase the participation and integration of the Muslims in Rotterdam society. The most important activities in this respect are:

- Projects and activities focused on citizenship. For example Dutch language programmes for women, Imams and the unemployed. SPIOR has presented a plan, as co-organiser, which is meant for these groups and can be organised in cooperation with the department of education and education centres in mosques or their surroundings.
- Training of Communicators. Muslim communities have a lack of well-trained communicators. In the field of public relations they are at a disadvantage. All member organisations should be ready to participate. This means that we have to train two persons from every member organisation.
- In cooperation with the teacher training institution of Rotterdam SPIOR will develop education programs on Islam and Muslims.
- The ongoing dialogue between citizens is an important activity in the city. Last year November SPIOR and other organisations together with the Municipality of Rotterdam organised 94 roundtable meetings with the purpose that citizens meet each other, talk to each other and eat together. Fourteen of these meetings were held in mosques.

In short SPIOR will continue projects and activities in 2003 with the intention of creating a better society and reducing Islamophobia.

As far as non-Muslims are concerned, they should realise that Islam is rather a religion than a culture. Many people around the world are Muslim and have their own cultural background and ethnicity. Not all Muslims are Arabs or Turks. Prejudice towards Islam is a deep historically rooted phenomenon. I am not able to answer the question to what extent Islamophobia is simply a technical name for racism directed towards Muslims, and how far it is really linked to the religion. It is a very complex issue, and there is also maybe resistance against “foreigners” in a low economic tide. All kinds of factors are involved; one of them certainly is a real “phobia” of Islam as a religion.

However, the most important step citizens (Muslims and non-Muslims) can take in this respect, lies in the sphere of open-mindedness, patience and willingness to listen to each other.

The regular welfare institutions should open their doors more and more for Muslims and other new groups in society. They have to discuss with them what kind of activities can be organised to encourage the participation of Muslims and others.

The media have an important responsibility. They should improve the level of information about Islam. A Muslim reporter in Rotterdam once mentioned to me the desirability to organise special classes about Islam and Muslims for newspaper reporters.

## List of Participants

**Round Table on “Manifestations of Islamophobia in Europe”,  
Brussels, 6 February 2003**

### EXPERTS

**Professor Fawzia Al-Ashmawi**  
University of Geneva, Switzerland

**Dr Stefano Allievi**  
Researcher, Department of Sociology  
University of Padova, Italy

**Ms Valerie Amiraux**  
Researcher, CNRS/CURAPP, France

**Ms Carla Amina Baghajati**  
Initiative Muslimischer Österreicherinnen, Vienna, Austria

**Professor Pandeli Michel Glavanis,**  
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**Ms Shada Islam,**  
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**Ms Brigitte Marechal**  
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**Professor Francesco Margiotta Broglio**  
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University of Florence, Italy

**Prof. Gema Martin-Muñoz**  
profesora de Sociología del Mundo Árabe  
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**Prof. Tim Niblock**  
Director of the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies  
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**Prof. Jorgen S. Nielsen**

Director, Graduate Institute for Theology and Religion  
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**Dr Lissi Rasmussen**

Director, Islamic-Christian Study Centre, Denmark

**Associate Professor Anne-Sofie Roald**

IMER, University of Malmö, Sweden

**Anas Schakfeh**

President, Islamische Gemeinde in Österreich, Vienna, Austria

**Mr Ibrahim Spalburg**

Director, SPIOR, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

## **EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

### **DG Employment and Social Affairs**

**Odile Quintin**

**Director-General**

**Barbara Nolan**

Head of Unit D/4

**Anthony Lockett**

Unit D/4

**Adam Tyson**

Unit D/4

**Deirdre Hodson**

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### **DG Justice and Home Affairs**

**Ana Herrera de la Casa**

Unit A/5

### **DG Education and Culture**

**Karin Lopatta – Loibl**

Unit D/1

**DG Research**

**Fadila Boughanémi**  
Unit K/4

**EUMC**

**Mr Robert Purkiss**  
Chairman, EUMC Management Board Member, CHAIR-Person of the meeting

## **PART 3**

### **The Fight against Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Bringing Communities Together**

**Round Table Meeting  
Brussels, 20 March 2003**

# Agenda of the Round Table Meeting

## The Fight against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia:

### Bringing Communities Together Brussels, 20 March 2003

#### Opening of the Round Table

Chair: **Mr Robert Purkiss** (Chairperson of the EUMC Management Board)

Welcome and opening remarks

by **Ms Anna Diamantopoulou** (Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs)

Session 1: Welcome and Overview about the Outcome of the Round Tables on Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia

General overview by Chair **Mr Robert Purkiss** (Chairperson of the EUMC Management Board)

Anti-Semitism Round Table: **Ms Eliane Deproost** (EUMC Management Board Member)

Islamophobia Round Table: **Ms Beate Winkler** (Director, EUMC)

#### Session 2: Framework for inter-religious and intercultural dialogue

- Including political leadership and legal dimension

Presentation by **Lord Amir Bhatia, OBE**

Session 3: Turning words into action

#### Models of intercultural and interreligious dialogue

##### In the field of religion

Addressing the current status of the teaching of religions in Member education as well as that of teaching the history of theological systems:

**Jürgen Micksch**, Chair - Interkultureller Rat,

**Bishop Egon Kapellari** Diözese Graz-Seckau

**Rabbi Bent Melchior**

**Mr Aiman Mazyek**, Press officer of Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland e.V.

**Chair:** Ms Eliane Deproost (EUMC Management Board)

##### In the field of education and culture

Education and teaching materials; intercultural dialogue, in arts and sciences

**Professor Anne Morelli**, School without Racism

**Ms Pascale Charhon**, Director Centre Européen Juif d'Information (CEJI)

**In the field of the media**

providing the media with appropriate information to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes:

**Mr Frans Jennekens**, Project Manager Multicultural- Netherlands Program Service

**Mr Per Knudsen**, Chief Editor – Politiken

**Mr Gualtiero Zambonini**, Head of Funkhaus Europa

**Comprehensive strategies at local level**

Engaging NGOs in activities of mutual information and a commonly shared experience of the presence of the “other”:

**Mr Peter Moore**, Committee of the Regions

**Mr Omar Al Rawi**, Member of the Vienna Regional Council

# Summary of the Round Table Meeting

## Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism: Bringing Communities Together

### Brussels, 20 March 2003

#### Introduction

Opening the meeting, EUMC Chair **Robert Purkiss** said that when the round tables were first announced, no-one could have foreseen that the concluding meeting would take place only hours after the war in Iraq had broken out. The war could lead to growing tensions between communities in Europe, making the need for intercultural dialogue greater than ever before. Mr Purkiss, who chaired the morning session, recalled that a key aim of the day's discussions was to look at how Islamophobia and anti-Semitism could be dealt with together, within the context of society as a whole, but also in terms of relations between Muslim and Jewish communities.

Both Islam and Judaism have for a long time been the "other", he said, in what was perceived by many as an "exclusively white Christian Europe". He stressed the need to move beyond a "single minded focus on protecting the rights of very specific groups" and take the needs of all people and all groups into account. Religion is just one of many factors which lead to discrimination, which is all too often fuelled by "resentment, disaffection and fear". The key focus needs to be, not on religion, but on the wider picture of equal treatment, equal rights and social inclusion.

Mr Purkiss also stressed the important role the European Union had to play in facilitating cross-community dialogue, in supporting the work of the EUMC and by using the full range of its tools to combat discrimination, including the new Employment Framework Directive, which bans discrimination in employment on the grounds of religion.

Speaking on behalf of Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou, **Juhani Lönnroth**, Deputy Director General of DG Employment and Social Affairs, said that the war in Iraq would open many wounds in the minds of people. He said the focus on the discussions should be "to heal the wounds, to build trust among people and to help build societies based on solidarity, justice and the rule of law".

The fact the Round Table was taking place on the eve of the International Day against Racism was also significant. Given its "shameful history", Europe, he said, "has a responsibility to do all it can to promote the values of equality,

freedom and justice". Since the 1980s, the Union has turned more and more to fundamental rights as the inspiration for its actions. The new Article 13 Directives to combat discrimination in the workplace and beyond sent a "powerful political signal" of the EU's commitment to combat discrimination and intolerance.

## **Developing a framework for Inter-religious and Inter-cultural Dialogue:**

**Lord Amir Bhatia**, of the UK House of Lords, spoke of the similarities between Judaism and Islam, both referring to one God, both having the same common father Prophet Abraham, and both being known as Ahle-Khitab, people of the book. Similarities also exist in terms of rites of passage and other cultural traditions. While tensions between these communities can certainly not be ignored, the contributions of Islam and Judaism to European history and culture must be recognised. European Jewry has contributed to science, arts and commerce in Europe and continues to "enrich our Member States and collective existence in more ways that we could possibly count". Muslims also played a key role in shaping science, arts, medicine in Europe and today continue to sustain the "very fibre and existence of our Member States."

However, the 1.2 million Jews and 12 million Muslims in the EU today have suffered and continue to suffer prejudice, discrimination, disadvantage, harassment and violence. Both groups are often perceived as "closed" belief systems or as "fundamentally different". In policy and media debates, as well as in education, freedom of expression has been exploited to attack these communities. It must be recognised, he said, that "the right to free-speech is not an absolute right, it comes with duties and responsibilities".

Socio-economic disadvantages are a particular problem for Muslim communities. In the UK, as elsewhere, Muslim pupils achieve less well than other pupils at all stages of compulsory education, Muslim men are significantly more likely to be unemployed, and more than 80% of Muslims live in households where income is below the national average (compared to 20-25% of non-Muslim households.) Muslims are also underrepresented in politics and the public sector in general. Lord Bhatia stressed the need to reengage marginalised communities. Legal systems must also catch up with the realities of religious pluralism in order to demand "greater integration, allegiance and better citizenship from minority communities".

In order to challenge European anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, open and frank discussions about their causes, manifestations and nuances must be the starting point. Secondly, Lord Bhatia stressed the need for more research and analysis in order to increase our understanding of these phenomena. The third step is to look at the legal tools. The EU's Article 13 Employment Framework Directive

is a good starting point but, to provide full protection against religious discrimination, it should be extended to cover all areas, such as housing or education, that are covered by the Racial Equality Directive. Other tools such as mainstreaming the equality needs of particular groups across all policies and programmes, and empowering local groups, are also vital. Fourthly, independent bodies should exist to support and enforce anti-discrimination measures in the field of religion.

Lord Bhatia concluded by saying that the way forward was to foster interfaith dialogue. Extremists take advantage of the situation in the Middle East to fuel tensions. Christian churches also have a role to play in bringing communities together. We must look in particular at how interfaith collegiate links can be formed. All victims' communities should work together to combat discrimination. Dialogue must be broad and inclusive, involving governments, social partners, NGOs, media, schools and churches. Initiatives could include a European Year or Action Plan against Racial and Religious Discrimination.

In the discussion afterwards, a number of speakers spoke of the importance of the media, as well as the need for establishing a proper legislative framework to combat discrimination, including incitement to racist behaviour. Legislation was not enough in itself, but required proper enforcement at local level.

Professor Nielsen stressed the importance of focusing not just on the negative, but highlighting the positive and recognising that progress has been made. He recalled that in many local authorities in England, Muslims are highly visible and active.

## **Dialogue in the field of religion**

**Jürgen Micksch** gave a short presentation on his work as chair of the Intercultural Council of Germany, which organises regular inter-faith meetings and conferences. The underlying message of these events is that "religion can never be an excuse for racism and xenophobia". One project underway is the creation of 'Abrahamic teams' of Jewish, Christian and Muslim people to go into schools, the army, police stations, etc... to discuss inter-community action and dialogue. Such initiatives should be encouraged Europe-wide with the financial support from the EU.

Chief Rabbi of Denmark, **Rabbi Bent Melchior**, said that a major stumbling block to interfaith dialogue was the divisions within religions. He made an appeal to all faiths and churches to develop umbrella groups to represent them vis-à-vis the state or other religions. Dialogue, he said, is not about convincing or proselytising, it is about understanding. The Rabbi also spoke about the current fear, which prevails, particularly in Muslim and Jewish communities, which may hinder inter-community co-operation.

**Bishop Egon Kapellari** spoke about his own experiences in inter-faith dialogue, as Bishop of Graz-Seckau (Austria), and as chaplain of Graz University, home to students of many faiths. Intercultural dialogue is broader than just religion, yet religion is still crucial. In this respect, we should stress the positive contribution that religion can make in society. Graz is currently building on its role of European City of Culture 2003 to organise a series of inter-faith initiatives. European cities that are working to promote inter-faith initiatives should be given greater publicity in order to share best practice, as taking small steps at local level is vital.

**Aiman Mazyek**, of the German Council of Muslims, spoke of an increase in Islamophobia since September 11, which has resulted in growing fear within Muslim communities. He spoke of a survey, which had been carried out in Germany, where 71% of respondents said that Muslims should not be allowed to live according to the rules of their faith, and one in three respondents felt that Mosques were a sign that Islam wanted to be powerful. Muslims want and have the right to their rightful place in mainstream society. Many positive initiatives are carried out by Muslim communities, such as Open Door days in Mosques and the development of an Islamic Charter, yet the Muslim community also needs to receive signals from society as a whole that dialogue is possible and desirable.

## **Dialogue in the field of education and media**

Professor **Anne Morelli**, of Schools without Racism, said that given the history of religion and religious persecution, a secular society was the best way forward for intercultural dialogue, a comment that brought strong reactions from some participants in the subsequent discussion. In Professor Morelli's view, the issue concerned less religion and more socio-economic status. She gave an overview of the 'Schools against Racism' project, which fights discrimination and prejudice in the classroom.

**Pascale Charhon**, Director of the European Jewish Information Centre, stressed the important role NGOs can play in intercultural dialogue, but the UN World Conference against Racism had also highlighted the difficulties involved. Intercultural dialogue means first and foremost acknowledging diversity, and respecting the shared principles of respect for all, democracy and the rule of law. Ms Charhon gave a brief description of the CEJI 'Classroom of Difference' programme, part-financed by the EU, which was running in four European countries with the aim of fostering intercultural dialogue.

In the discussions that followed, Rabbi Professor **Jonathan Magonet** explained that at his seminary for Rabbis, classes on Islam and Christianity were

compulsory for all students. He suggested that the Erasmus/Socrates university exchange programmes be extended to cover religious training, bringing together future faith leaders. He explained also that it was important that the EU invested in the training of Imams so that Muslims in Europe had the same resources for the training of their leadership that Christians and Jews had.

**Jonathan Webber**, Birmingham University, supported this idea and said that in Europe, following the holocaust and war in Yugoslavia, a "culture of healing" rather than a "culture of cover-up" was necessary. He also pointed to the work of the Georg Eckert Institute in Braunschweig, Germany, on the rewriting of school textbooks. Popular culture, including soap operas, should also deal with issues such as race relations. Seminars about the portrayal of Muslim and Jewish communities in the media should take place with backing from the highest political level.

**Peter Moore**, of the Committee of the Regions, called for an EU programme to educate children about the contribution of different cultures to European society and learning.

**Frans Jennekens** presented his role as the multi-cultural programme manager for Dutch Programme Service (NOS). He explained that Sweden and Germany now had similar multicultural programme managers and that he was involved in creating a similar post in Portugal. Examples of diversity programmes in Holland included a soap opera about a Moroccan /Dutch couple and a TV programme for pre-school children of minority ethnic origin presented in a range of languages.

Chief Editor of the Danish newspaper Politiken, **Per Knudsen**, explained that a key concern of his paper was "to improve integration, tolerance and co-existence" among people in Denmark. One initiative of the newspaper had been to publish a weekly paper, 'Haber', aimed at the Turkish community in Denmark – the largest minority group. The paper, produced in Danish and Turkish, aims at informing readers about both Danish and Turkish issues. It is also a good medium for organisations and public authorities to reach the Turkish community. With a readership of about 10,000, publishing the paper was "not a goldmine" but has met highly positive reactions.

Politiken has also established a special training programme for students of journalism of minority ethnic origin. Mr Knudsen agreed with speakers that the media has a key role to play in speaking out against prejudice and agreed with Lord Bhatia that freedom of expression comes with both rights and responsibilities.

**Gualtiero Zambonini**, from German public radio WDR, spoke about "Funkhaus Europa", an initiative to build bridges with the two million non-native Germans in Northrhine Westphalia and the majority population.

Funkhaus Europa is a radio channel, which broadcasts 24 hours a day covering news and topics linked to immigration and diversity in Europe, in German and 15 other languages. Over the previous ten days a fifth of the population in the region had listened to the station.

## Strategies at local level

**Peter Moore**, Member of Committee of the Regions and local government member in Sheffield, stressed the importance of the EUMC and the need for the Committee and the Monitoring Centre to work more closely together, for example on guidelines for combating racism. The joint conference in Barcelona on Islamic communities in five European cities was a good example of practical co-operation between the two institutions.

He stressed the importance of the local level, and said that many of the problems that result in racist violence are a result of the lack of strategic policies and/or under-funding locally. Local strategic partnerships, bringing together local and national authorities, police, schools, social partners media and religious communities, can be vital in fostering social cohesion.

**Omar Al Rawi**, Member of the Vienna Regional Council, and the first Muslim elected to regional Parliament in Austria, spoke about the situation regarding Islamophobia in Austria. Muslims are recognised as a religious community, but are not fully accepted "on a social level". Integration means "participation at all levels, culturally, politically and socially." He stressed the importance of dealing with the media in order to be able to present Muslim viewpoints.

**David Levy-Bentolila**, President of B’Nai B’rith Europe, also emphasised the importance of the press, and suggested that it should follow a code of ethics, as is the case for other professions. The main problem was the influence of markets and advertising, which weighed heavily on what the press would or would not cover.

Summing up the discussions, the presiding Chair, **Eliane Deproost**, said that although religion plays a vital role, all people, believers and non-believers, need to be involved in intercultural dialogue, where the emphasis should be first and foremost on common values. A "one-size-fits-all approach" in Europe, however, could not work, given complex differences in language, culture and history. From the discussions it was clear that many different models and approaches to intercultural dialogue were feasible. The role of the media was also a key issue which had been raised, not just in the day's discussions but also at the first and second round tables. The EUMC should perhaps consider further research and studies in this field.

**Barbara Nolan**, of the European Commission, explained that the round table series had been a personal initiative by the Commissioner, Anna Diamantopoulou, and that the debate at all three meetings had been highly stimulating. The Commission would consider how it could best take forward the ideas raised during the debates, for example in the area of education with regard to exchange programmes. EUMC Director, **Beate Winkler**, said that the EUMC would disseminate the results of the discussions through its networks.

# Opening Speech

## **Anna Diamantopoulou - Commissioner responsible for Employment and Social Affairs - European Commission**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As we all know, today, the 20<sup>th</sup> of March, is the eve of the International Day against Racism.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of March each year, we commemorate the Sharpeville massacre, when, in 1960, South African police opened fire on 300 demonstrators who were protesting against the pass laws in the Transvaal. Seventy black Africans were killed and many hundreds injured in a racist atrocity, which has come to be the terrible symbol of the worst excesses of apartheid. But Sharpeville was also a turning point in the history of apartheid. The massacre brought international condemnation on the South African Government and strengthened worldwide support for the anti-apartheid movement. Europe of course has its own shameful history. Worse even in its scale than the horrors of South Africa. And we should not forget that in large part it was the influence of Europeans – or European emigrants –, which led to the introduction of South Africa's race laws. Europe has a special responsibility for the institutionalisation of racism, as for the development of many ideas, good and bad, which are today to be found across the world. We can be proud of many of our achievements from centuries past. But where we have reasons to be less proud, we have a responsibility to do all we can to promote the values of freedom, equality and justice.

The European Union was born from the ashes of the Holocaust. It was created to prevent a repetition of the two wars, which tore Europe apart in the last century. To prevent the ethnic massacres, which dwarf even the horrors of Sharpeville. And even if its beginnings were essentially economic, the character of the Union is slowly changing. Gradually, since the middle of the 1980s, the Union has been turning more and more towards fundamental rights as the source of inspiration for its actions. We have the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which the Convention on the Future of Europe is sure to recommend should be brought into the future Constitutional Treaty and so given real force. We have the new powers of the Nice Treaty, which came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, which provide for a considered process for establishing whether a Member State is in breach of the fundamental rights, which all the States and Institutions of the Union must respect. And increasingly, we have legislation which underpins those rights and which brings them to life for the citizens of Europe. In South Africa, the 21<sup>st</sup> of March is known as National Human Rights Day. I very much approve of that. For the fight against racism is a fight for

human rights. It is a fight to ensure that all individuals, whatever their personal characteristics, have an equal right to participate in society, to make a success of their lives, to contribute and to benefit. Now apartheid has gone from South Africa. Or at least, the laws on apartheid have gone. There is still a considerable way to go before we will be able to say that there is genuine equality between people of different ethnic origins in South Africa. And many other parts of the African continent. But is Europe so different? I asked the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia to organise this series of round tables on my behalf. For I fear that the answer to that question is 'no'. Of course, there are many, many examples of people from ethnic minority and migrant backgrounds making successes of their lives in Europe. In business. In politics. In the arts. In sport. But we see also that many communities are the victims of exclusion, of isolation, of neglect, of violence. A report into the riots in northern towns in Britain two years ago spoke of communities living "polarised" and "parallel" lives. It concluded that "Segregation, albeit self-segregation, is an unacceptable basis for a harmonious community and it will lead to more serious problems if it is not tackled." Studies in France have come to similar conclusions about the situation of people living in the high-rise suburbs of many cities, many of who are of minority ethnic origins. And this we see in two countries, which have traditionally had very different approaches to the integration of migrants in society. The one promoting multi-culturalism. The other a more assimilationist model.

Enlargement also brings particular challenges in the field of discrimination. I am thinking for example about the situation of the Roma and, in some countries, of Jewish and Muslim communities, but also of national minorities more generally. The discrimination we see against these communities is a real challenge for the Union as a whole. The EU must ensure that its values, freedoms and rights that have been developed over hundreds of years are not undermined. The European Union and the Member States, new and old, have a responsibility to respond to this challenge. We cannot allow the development, or the continuation, of an ethnic underclass, deprived of opportunities, restricted to life in particular areas, educated separately, doing particular jobs. A recent survey carried out for the Commission showed that more than 80% of European Union citizens are opposed to discrimination in all circumstances. We can be very pleased with this result. But alongside that, 62% of Europeans believe that people from ethnic minority backgrounds stand less chance of getting a job or a promotion than another person with the same qualifications and experience. Discrimination happens. It doesn't just affect the lives of migrants and people of minority origins. It wrecks their lives. And if we do nothing, the situation will risk getting worse. The current political climate is deepening the tensions between different communities in Europe. And if war with Iraq does break out, this situation could easily deteriorate. We must not let conflict in Iraq, in Israel or anywhere else be played out on the streets of Europe. And we need to start now, rather than to wait until the violence has already broken out. The EU has already sent a powerful political signal and created a firm legal base to fight

discrimination. Two new directives are due to come into force by the end of this year. On racial equality, and discrimination in general. These new rules will have an impact in all Member States, and will help protect and support women and men across the Union who face discriminatory practices, attitudes and behaviour in the workplace and beyond. The European Monitoring Centre was set up in recognition of the importance of cooperation in the fight against racism and xenophobia, the added value of learning from each other's experience and the importance of obtaining objective and reliable data. Racist acts represent clear violations of human dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Union and its Member States need to be sure that the policies and practices they introduce are the most appropriate and properly targeted. And they look to the Centre to provide this assurance as they push ahead with practical action. The Centre can help to ensure that the debate on security is conducted within the framework of rights and fundamental freedoms of everybody living in the EU. And that the needs to ensure security do not compromise the agenda on freedom, equality and justice. By producing comparable information on what is happening in each country, we can identify successful approaches, which we can encourage in other countries. In that way, we and the Member States can target our policies and practices on the real problems. The work of the EUMC can support broad EU priorities, and in particular the Lisbon strategy for growth, jobs and social inclusion.

Today, I hope that this Round Table can further explore ideas about how we can bring communities together. About how we can overcome the barriers which separate communities on cultural or religious grounds. I was pleased to see the British National Union of Teachers calling on its members last week to be ready to deal with any increase in racism, especially Islamophobia and anti-Semitism as a result of the possible war in Iraq and the continuing instability in the Middle-East. We saw, during the last Gulf War, an increase in racist bullying in schools, particularly against Muslim pupils, and more recently we have witnessed attacks on Jewish pupils as a reaction to tensions in Israel and Palestine. We must be ever alert to these risks and to take action now to prevent them. It is clear from the first two Round Tables on anti-Semitism and Islamophobia that education is seen as a vital tool in combating them. At the same time, if it is badly used, education can provoke racism and discrimination. The media play an equally important role. In either perpetuating – or dispelling – myths, clichés and stereotypes. Let us see in these – and in all fields – how we can build on the positive and eliminate the negative. I wish you every success for a fruitful and constructive discussion. And I look forward to hearing your results and recommendations.

## Introductory remarks

### Robert Purkiss – Chairman, EUMC Management Board

We are here today at this third and final Roundtable meeting to explore whether anti-Semitism and Islamophobia can be tackled by means of a joint strategy, and if so, what such a strategy could entail. The involvement of the Commissioner, Anna Diamantopoulou, in this meeting demonstrates not only her personal ownership and leadership but also the European Commission's commitment to addressing the challenges of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, and to devise and deliver solutions at EU level.

Concrete proposals from you to support the Commission in this process would be much welcomed by the EUMC. Our extensive monitoring of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism has already led to the development of some general recommendations, which we can feed, into any strategic ideas emerging from this meeting. I appreciate that this series of RTs has complemented the EUMC's monitoring with an open dialogue about extremely sensitive issues that are often regarded as taboos. The particular advantage of these meetings is that they give us the opportunity to address both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia *together* – two forms of hatred and discrimination that affect very different groups of people. This joint approach fits in very well with the EUMC's and the Commission's wider concern for equality and diversity in Europe.

It is important to move beyond a single-minded focus on protecting the rights of very specific groups. We should be concerned about protection from abuse and discrimination for Muslims and Jews, but also for Sikhs and Hindus, and indeed Roma and black people, and so on. Without neglecting the specific difficulties faced by each of these groups, problems will be compounded if we start focusing on one group over another. If we divide people into separate groups, each struggling on its own, we are unlikely to achieve respect and equality for all. Intentionally or not, we will encourage the scapegoating of those who are particularly vulnerable.

The challenges of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism illustrate this in a dramatic way. We are not only talking about tensions between the Christian majority and Muslims or Jews, but about conflicts *between* Muslim and Jewish communities. It is not just mainstream society that is prejudiced against minorities, but we, the minorities, are so ourselves. Therefore, we must work harder to dismantle all preconceptions, misconceptions and barriers, including those that we have erected ourselves. Now more than ever we must aim to build bridges between our different communities, especially between those that are subjected to a range of hostile acts and discriminatory structures.

At the EUMC our task is to monitor racism and xenophobia in all its forms, including religious hatred and discrimination. And while we understand that religion marks an important site of conflict with a very specific negative impact on European Jews and Muslims, we do not accept that religious hatred can be completely separated from racism. Often hostility and discrimination are not actually directed at the specific characteristics of a particular faith, but at the most vulnerable or visible groups of people, or at groups that are perceived to be linked to international political conflicts. The triggers for hatred are resentment, disaffection and fear, rather than specific religious differences. Religion is only one factor, which turns minority groups into targets for abuse. It is one among many markers of difference. It can add a layer to processes of exclusion or become a dominant element in these, but it is not fundamentally distinct from other factors such as ethnicity or visible differences.

Religious minorities now face a choice between emphasising special protection for their specific religious identities or moving towards joint approaches to better community cohesion and equal protection for all. It seems clear that the hostility suffered by Muslim and Jewish communities is not in itself an issue of faith, even though abuse is based on perceived religious identities. Few acts of hostility are directly related to religious activities; most target a group as an ethnic or even political entity. This suggests that the targeted groups might have more in common than they think, and that a focus on bringing communities together and ensuring equal protection might be more relevant.

This is the approach pursued by the EU, and participants at the previous Roundtables have agreed on the importance of pursuing transnational actions at EU level. And yet our conceptions of European identity are significant drivers of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. One of the similarities between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia is their historical relationship to a Europe perceived as exclusively Christian. Jews have of course suffered the most unspeakable crimes by European Christians. But it is true that *all* other religions, including Judaism and Islam, have been excised from the prevailing understanding of Europe's identity as Christian and white. Both Islam and Judaism have long served as Europe's "other", as a symbol for a distinct culture, religion and ethnicity. Most recently, European Muslims in particular are being regarded as representing a homogeneous culture different from "European culture", tied to certain countries of origin. A perfect example of this exclusionary definition of Europe's identity in racial, cultural and religious terms is the debate on Turkey's accession to the EU. Convention president Giscard d'Estaing said – and he was by no means the only one – that Turkey's entry into the EU would be the end of Europe, as Turkey has "a different culture, a different approach, a different way of life". I wonder what the 3 million people of Turkish origin who live in Germany have made of that pronouncement. Are they not Europeans? A designation of the European Union as a Christian club would be based on substantive cultural and religious values rather than democratic principles. By

implication this would exclude Turkish residents in EU countries – and indeed all European Muslims *and* all Jews. We need to watch the kind of messages we are sending to our fellow citizen and residents of Europe. If we are against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, we cannot afford to pursue political arguments by invoking Christianity.

So what are the positive steps the EU can take? There is definitely a role for fostering cross-community dialogue, such as the one we are holding today. This should be possible at local level as well, with support from the EU. It could overcome impassés at national level where ideological positions are often more entrenched. Then there is an important role for monitoring across the EU, which has been taken on by the EUMC but must receive support from Member States to enable harmonisation. Finally, I want to address discriminatory structures, which reinforce and perpetuate hostilities and resentment. The EU already has a range of tools available to dismantle institutional barriers, particularly through legislation, social and economic inclusion policies and support to participatory processes. If we take legislation as an example, we must welcome the Employment Framework Directive, which outlaws discrimination on grounds of religion in employment. I hope that Member States will implement this in areas beyond employment to include other crucial fields such as education and housing. Discussions are also underway to outlaw incitement to religious hatred as part of the Draft Council Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia. No doubt today's session will come up with more ideas for the Commission to take further action in each of these policy areas.

To conclude, I think what is needed to counter religious hatred and discrimination is not so much a renewed focus on the role of faith in our societies, but rather on social cohesion and equal rights. We need to find a way to acknowledge and appreciate difference without turning it into something immutable, foreign and threatening. We must establish a common ground to assert both difference and equality. This is a task for the whole of society, not just different religious groups. How we can live together is everyone's business. Often, our approaches to racial and religious conflicts have been geared more towards providing protection for particular groups than setting a common standard for Europe as a whole. But the new horizontal approach to equal treatment adopted by the Commission signals that this might change. Only when all of Europe shares the responsibility for combating religious, racial and ethnic hostilities, can we overcome social divisions and achieve cohesion.

# Keynote Speech

## **Lord Amir Bhatia - Chairman, Ethnic Minorities Foundation (EMF) & British Muslim Research Centre (BMRC)**

I am no expert on Islamophobia, and far less an expert on Anti-Semitism. Nonetheless, let me start with a brief exploration of the nature of these two phobias, exploring particularly their manifestations in Europe today as I see them. Clearly, there are some differences between these two forms of intolerances, and I will highlight these at the relevant places in my presentation, but in my view there are also some important similarities between the Jewish and Muslim communities that ought not to be overlooked. Theologically, both refer to the one God; genealogically, both refer to the same common father, the Prophet Abraham; and both are known as Ahle-Khitab, people of the book. Anthropologically, both derive from the same Semitic origins, and in terms of religious practices, there are also many parallels to be drawn, whether in terms of dietary requirements or rites of passage. There are, of course, many other cultural similarities between these two communities.

The EU is home to many large minority faith communities. After Catholicism and Protestantism, however, Judaism and Islam are probably the most significant. There are an estimated 1.2 million Jews and 12 million Muslims living in EU Member States, with the majority of both groups in France, followed by Germany and the UK.

The Jewish community has a long history in most EU countries, and with the holocaust of 6m Jews in Nazi Germany, occupies perhaps one of the saddest chapters of European history. From whichever perspective we care to look at European civilisation and society today, it would perhaps not be where it is without the contribution of European Jewry. Their contribution to the sciences, arts, commerce, media and civil society cannot go un-acknowledged. European Jewry today is as vibrant as it has ever been and continues to enrich our Member States and collective existence in more ways than we could possibly count.

Recent historical accounts would suggest that early European Muslims were one of the chief catalysts for the renaissance in Europe. Muslims built on Greek classical thinking, they accumulated learning from the societies they came into contact with and found new answers to questions posed by both the natural and social sciences. Contacts with the Muslim world provided the springboard for the European exit out of its Dark Ages. European Muslims today account for

approximately 3% of the EU population and are constituted from an extremely diverse mix of national, cultural, linguistic, economic, social and theological origins and backgrounds. It is a thoroughly PLURALIST community in its own right. Diverse and vibrant, the community seeks to enrich local arts and cultures; contributes to, and often sustains, many of the public services; and assists to ensure the well-being and prosperity of EU Member States in numerous other ways.

Whilst sustaining the very fibre and existence of our Member States, European Jewish and Muslim communities are simultaneously, and in many different ways, very distinct communities in the European context. As a result, both communities have suffered significant levels of prejudice, discrimination, disadvantage, harassment and violence. In the 1990s, the Runnymede Trust, a policy and research think tank in the UK set up two very important commissions on Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, respectively. The two commissions produced two landmark reports.

**The report on Anti-Semitism, entitled *A Very Light Sleeper*, stated as follows:**

*“Anti-Semitism has poisoned the history of the world for more than two millennia: it is a virus that is ready to flourish whenever the political, social or economic conditions are ripe ... the roots of Anti-Semitism lie deep in the psychology of its practitioners, reinforced by the cultural and social environment in which they live ... Anti-Semitism is alive and—literally—kicking in Britain today. Violent racial prejudice and hostility are not confined (only) to non-white minorities ...”*

The second report, entitled *Islamophobia – a Challenge for Us All*, was the first report of its kind, anywhere in Europe, encapsulating the experience of the new Muslim communities of the UK. The report defined Islamophobia as “dread or hatred of Islam – and therefore, the fear or dislike of all or most Muslims”. The report states:

*“Such dread and dislike has existed in western countries and cultures for several centuries. In the last twenty years, however, the dislike has become more explicit, more extreme and more dangerous. It is an ingredient of all sections of our media, and prevalent in all sections of our society. Within Britain it means that Muslims are frequently excluded from the economic, social and public life of the nation ... and are frequently victims of discrimination and harassment.”*

Although, both these reports were written specifically on the UK, in my view, if they represent accurately the reality in British society, then they are no less

representative of the situation generally in the rest of the EU. Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia exist and are manifested in European society in a whole variety of forms. Let us explore very briefly a few broad baskets of these manifestations.

## Manifestations of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia

The first basket of manifestations is what we might call ‘closed views’ about Judaism and Jews, and Islam and Muslims, respectively. Developed in Europe over centuries, in the case of the former this entails the belief that “Jews are inherently and fundamentally different from non-Jews, and that this difference is genetic as well as cultural”; “wealthy and powerful, but rootless cosmopolitans who are both unpatriotic and unreliable”; “vengeful, oppressive and unforgiving”; “amoral and grasping”; and “caring only of their own” (*A Very Light Sleeper*, pp 25-6).

In the case of the latter, these closed views see Islam and Muslims as being “a single monolithic bloc, static and unresponsive to new realities”; as being “separate and other’ in not having any aims or values in common with other cultures and not being able to share and exchange with those cultures”; as being “inferior to the West—barbaric, irrational, primitive, sexist”; as being “an aggressive enemy, supportive of terrorism and engaged in ‘a clash of civilisations’”; and as being “manipulative for purposes of political and military advantage” (*Islamophobia—A Challenge for Us All*, p 5).

This basket of closed views is, in the case of Islamophobia, accentuated by the fact that there is a real reluctance to deal positively with genuine Muslim needs in the public policy domain. This reluctance is borne perhaps from the European unease generally of dealing with religion in the public sphere. It may also be at least partly due to the deep-seated hostility towards Islam and the Muslim community. The hostility is present, whatever the medium - in policy discussions and debates, the media or education and training.

The sum result of the widespread permeation and acceptance of the closed views, reluctance to deal positively with Muslim needs in the public sphere and hostile references in policy discourses, the media and educational output, is at best marked by the demonisation, marginalisation and ghettoisation of a whole community, and at worst, tensions between communities, and harassment and violence directed towards their members. There is no question that Muslims face such harassment and violence on a regular basis throughout the EU. The EUMC has over the last few years done a remarkable job in monitoring this violence and harassment and producing timely reports.

Harassment and violence resulting from closed views about Judaism and Jews is a particularly prevalent manifestation of anti-Semitism in Europe today.

Harassment of and violence against individual Jews and their property, attacks on synagogues, and desecration of Jewish graves, have all seen a very sharp increase in the last few years. Particularly commonplace, and perhaps most hurtful to the Jewish community, is the evil practice of daubing the swastika on Jewish property, synagogues and graves.

The damaging role of the media and public discourse in this regard is often justified under the right to freedom of expression. Most of us would agree that any attempt to censor or stifle free speech would be wholly undesirable. But, it must be recognised that the right to free speech is not an absolute right. Speech cannot only be deeply hurtful and offensive, but can also breed a climate of threat and intimidation. Furthermore, speech can incite others to violent behaviour and discriminatory practices. The right to free speech then becomes an infringement of the rights of others. With free speech, therefore, come duties and responsibilities.

In the context of the media, these responsibilities are not fulfilled by sensationalist generalisations based on the closed views discussed above or by plucking out extremist views to represent the silent majorities of Muslims. This is now an everyday practice in our media and can only lead to worsen the discrimination, harassment and violence particularly towards our Muslim communities. In the case of the Muslims, as more than 90% of them come from non-white racial backgrounds and are therefore more visible than their Jewish counterparts, they are twice as likely to be the target of such discrimination, harassment and violence.

The second basket of manifestations is what we might call ‘socio-economic’ manifestations. These mainly apply to Muslim communities. A recent report from the Cabinet Office in the UK revealed some startling facts about the Muslim community in Britain: on average, Muslim pupils attain lower results than other pupils at all stages of compulsory education; on average, Muslim men face the most severe disadvantages in employment and a significantly higher rate of unemployment than their counterparts in all other groups; more than 80% of Muslim families live in households whose income is below the national average compared to 20-25% of white households; more than half of Muslim households live in the 10% of the most deprived wards in England and around a quarter of Muslim households are overcrowded; Muslims are one and a half time more likely to suffer ill health than their white counterparts.

The overall picture was that Muslims as a group came at the bottom of every socio-economic indicator used in that report. The intelligence we have on the Muslim community elsewhere in the EU suggests that the picture is not much different. The northern cities disturbances in the UK in the summer of 2001 should serve as a sharp reminder of what can be the consequence of socio-economic deprivation. If what we aspire to is a safer Europe of multi-faith, multi-cultural and socially cohesive communities, then this cannot be achieved

without sharply focusing our minds on this bundle of manifestations of Islamophobia and Islamophobic discrimination.

A third basket of manifestations, and again, one that refers more to Islamophobia than anti-Semitism, is what we may call ‘representational’ manifestations. There is a significant under-representation of Muslims in all sectors of EU and Member States’ politics, policy making and public life. For example, in the UK, Muslims make up 3% of the population, but only 0.03% of the MPs; there is a significant under-representation of Muslims in senior positions in public authorities; and there is significant under-representation in the media. The absence of Muslims in policy impacting and decision making positions means that Muslim concerns scarcely profile in mainstream politics and policy circles in a manner that benefits them; there is a lack of sensitivity and sensibility at the service delivery level; and established stereotypes and prejudices against the Muslim community continue to be unchallenged and further embedded. The combination of this with poor socio-economic conditions can then contribute to not only alienation and social exclusion but eventually also disturbance. Again, there is no reason to think that these representational concerns are specific to the UK, they are equally relevant in the context of Muslim communities in other Member States.

The fourth basket is that of ‘legal manifestations’. I recently made the point in a debate in the House of Lords that it is unfortunate enough that our laws do not protect Muslims from religious discrimination by individuals and institutions, but what is most worrying is discrimination by the state itself against some faith communities. In the UK, anti-discrimination legislation for the protection of minority communities covers all communities on the basis of their race, but only some on the basis of their faith. The Sikh and Jewish communities, seen as mono-ethnic communities, are covered under the present law, but Muslims, seen as a multi-ethnic community, are still not covered as a faith group by legislation against incitement to hatred, or anti-discrimination legislation on education, the provision of goods, facilities and services, the disposal or management of premises and the management of private members’ clubs. Muslims also have no access to an equality body to support and assist with advice and enforcement when faced with religious discrimination.

There are no reasons, however, why the legislation cannot be ‘levelled up’ to provide protection across the faith communities. The EU Employment Directive has already begun this task, and the Draft Framework Decision Against Racism and Xenophobia may add to this initiative in the criminal law arena, but there is yet a long way to go.

In the Muslim community in the UK, there is also a growing concern about indirect and institutional discrimination in the enforcement of borders and security related legal, regulatory and control functions. More specifically, there is great concern about how seemingly neutral provisions in the areas of anti-

terrorism and immigration disproportionately affect British Muslims, particularly in light of the fact that 50-70% of immigration and asylum seekers are of Muslim origin. Some would go so far as suggesting that these are perhaps some of the sharpest manifestations of Islamophobia in today's Britain.

Furthermore, there are some grave concerns about the treatment of Muslims by domestic law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system. There is some evidence to suggest that there is a significantly higher level of over-charging against Muslim youth by the police and the Crown Prosecution Service, and longer sentences given by the courts. Discriminatory and unjust treatment in this respect is a great and growing source of resentment and unease in the British Muslim community.

This then is the reality of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism in the EU, and the concern of the European Muslim and Jewish communities. Despite their socio-economic and representational strength and legal protection, the Jewish community still has to deal with anti-Semitism. But how vulnerable must the Muslim communities feel who have not made comparable progress? In view of the extent and depth of the problems of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, the range of their manifestations and their complexities, how are we to deal with these challenges—what are we to do? And what is to be said about 'bringing communities together', the sub-theme of this roundtable, and a framework for inter-faith and intercultural dialogue? What practical steps can we propose?

## **Challenging Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia**

How are we to challenge European anti-Semitism and Islamophobia? The recognition of these problems and open and frank discussions about their causes, manifestations and nuances must be the starting point. Thankfully, the work on this front has already begun, and I thank the EU not only for initiating this work in the 1980s, but keeping it on the agenda through gatherings such as this. The Council of Europe, particularly through the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), has also made a significant contribution. Unfortunately, there are still many that are yet to be convinced that this problem exists, or if they agree that it exists, that it is not solely the making of the victims. This task must, therefore, be continued, and after 11<sup>th</sup> September and in the context of the ongoing situation in the Middle East, with more vigour than before. It is vitally important that NGOs like the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) also get involved. They will take these discussions to places where others may not.

The second task must be to monitor, document and commission new research on these topics, so that we may better understand their extent, impact on victim communities and implications for the wider communities of EU Member States, and indeed, for the EU as a whole. It is only through a deep understanding of

the problems that we may seek to address them effectively. The work recently undertaken by the EUMC on Islamophobia has been most impressive. There has also been a significant contribution made to this effort by the Open Society Institute. But far more needs to be done, preferably through a partnership between organisations at the European level and those at the national level.

The third task must be to see what legal tools can be brought to bear to redress the situation. Given the current lack of legal protection against Islamophobia, and religious discrimination generally, the EU Employment Directive is a welcome start. However, the scope of this Directive is restricted to areas of employment and training only, as opposed to its sister Directive on race and ethnic origin, which is far more extensive. Thus, after the implementation of the Employment Directive, minority faith communities will still NOT be protected from discrimination in social security and health care, education, goods and services (including housing); and social advantages. It is simply unacceptable that discrimination on the basis of religion is still possible in the EU. The EU must expend every effort not only to increase the scope of legal protection against religious discrimination, but if maximum benefit is to be achieved through the legal route, to implement a positive duty to promote religious equality across the EU.

The fourth task must be to secure institutional arrangements to assist enforcement of the legal provisions — that is, an equal treatment body equivalent to, for example, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) in the UK, in each of the Member States to cover religion specifically. From the UK minority faith community experience, anti-discrimination initiatives have only worked where legislation has been backed by campaigns to raise awareness, resources to provide advice and support (including legal support) to victims, powers to investigate and effect change, and institutional arrangements to monitor, evaluate and seek change in policy and legislation. Where such backing has not been provided, the relevant legislation has proven to be almost meaningless.

And finally, it must be said that legal measures, though vital, will not in themselves be enough to deal with the whole range of manifestations of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. In the UK other tools have been used by the present Government to significant effect: mainstreaming the equalities needs of particular groups into the development of all policies and practices; specific policies and programmes aimed at improving outcomes for particularly disadvantaged groups and responding to their diverse needs; systematic goal setting by relevant departments to address disadvantage and under-representation relating to particular groups; community based capacity building; and economic empowerment of individuals. It is critical that all of these tools and other best practice methods from other Member States be employed to challenge the relevant manifestations of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia consistently throughout the EU.

## **Bringing Communities Together**

In seeking to address anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, it is important that we take account of two specific contexts. First, it is important to recognise that despite their shared histories and contemporary concerns in Europe, there is often considerable tension between the two communities themselves. Arising primarily from events elsewhere in the world, particularly the Middle East, such tensions have the possibility of causing great damage to both communities in Europe. There are extremists who take advantage of such tensions and spread animosity and hatred between the communities. A significant part of the fight against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia must therefore lie in the need to improve relations between European Jewish and Muslim communities. In the UK, there are at least half a dozen initiatives seeking to address this challenge, but there is yet a considerable way to go. We must work to find ways of bringing Muslims and Jews together so that they can assist one another rather than fight each other. We should also look at how schools, particularly faith based schools, can form interfaith collegiate links. There is a need for a Europe-wide umbrella for interfaith dialogue, and Christian leaders, representing the majority religion in Europe, have an important role to play in this respect.

The second task is to place the fight against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in the wider context of the struggle against racism and racial discrimination in modern Europe. This struggle will continue for some time yet. Bringing the Muslim, Jewish and all Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities together, towards a fairer Europe, can only strengthen the cause of each of the victim communities, and indeed, together they are stronger. The role of the EUMC in this regard is absolutely pivotal. It is equally important to bring minority communities together with majority communities. It is in this diversity and cohesion that the future potential of Europe lies. A proactive approach to a new era of inter-faith and intercultural dialogue is needed to realise this potential, and I hope very much that the EU DG Employment and Social Affairs will continue to champion this approach as it has set out to do.

## **A Framework for Inter-Faith and Intercultural Dialogue**

A framework for inter-faith and intercultural dialogue should have at least these three elements. Firstly, the dialogue must be with a wide range of partners, including Governments, trade unions, NGOs, the media, educational establishments, religious organisations, academics and policymakers, etc. Secondly, we should contemplate a concrete vehicle for this dialogue. Something along the lines of a European Year Against Racial & Religious Discrimination, led by the EU, is one idea, but there may be other better ideas

for such a vehicle. And finally, there ought to be some concrete outcomes of such a dialogue, including perhaps an Action Plan Against Racial and Religious Discrimination that could then be monitored by the EU for national implementation.

Finally, let me leave you with this one last thought: If we do not deal with these issues in Europe, we may again see the rise of prejudice on racial and religious grounds which could lead to a repetition of what happened in the last century, in Germany during the second world war and in Bosnia in the 1990s.

## **Abrahamic and Interreligious Teams**

### **Dr. Jürgen Micksch – Interkultureller Rat in Deutschland, Germany**

After September 11, 2001, I frequently received requests to give talks about Islam. When I suggested inviting Muslim speakers to come to schools, however, this was often rejected out of hand as a fear of Muslims was widely spread.

This was the reason behind the creation of Abrahamic teams of Jews, Christians and Muslims who would go to schools, parents' meetings and public events together. They would give a short overview of Jewish, Christian and Muslim positions regarding issues of co-existence and then enter into an open and critical dialogue.

With sponsorship from the Groeben Foundation, the European Commission, the German government and others, it was possible to hold more than 50 meetings with Abrahamic teams last year. In addition, at the end of the year 2002, more than 50 Jewish Christian and Muslim representatives had declared their willingness to participate in such events.

Thanks to financial support from the German Centre for Political Education, the Abrahamic teams were complemented by Interreligious teams consisting of representatives from the Alevite, Buddhist and Baha'I communities. The Interreligious Working Group of the Intercultural Council of Germany supported this new extended project, which was launched at the end of October 2002.

Special support was given to inter-religious dialogue between women and "Abrahamic teams in youth work", but demand for such initiatives was limited. Also we have noticed that so far we have only received a small number of requests from religious communities. It seems that prejudice and fear are deeply rooted here. Where the churches have prepared dialogue, however, they have met with much support.

Differences between Judaism, Christianity and Islam have been explored and highlighted for centuries. Indeed, this has led to conflicts and wars. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we should concentrate more strongly on developing what we have in common. Common to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike is Abraham, the father of faith in these three religions. The development of an Abrahamic interfaith community is possible and necessary. Europe was moulded by these religions and can therefore learn to see itself as an Abrahamic Europe.

The religions that are based on Abraham have a number of common elements: the commitment to justice, peace, preservation and integrity of God's creation, and opposition to xenophobia and racism. Where values such as these determine life, there is no room for a "war of cultures".

An Abrahamic spirituality also exists through joint prayers like the psalm, or through the veneration of the prophets. This may develop into rituals, for example joint celebrations of Sukkot, Advent or Ramadan.

In order to be able to develop such commonalities, the Intercultural Council of Germany created an Abrahamic Forum on February 5, 2001. It is composed of high-level members of the central Jewish Council of Germany, the working Group of Christian Churches in Germany, the Central Muslim Council of Germany as well as of several ministries, foundations and scientists. The original intention to create regional Abrahamic forums failed in the first instance as too many prejudices and fears were to be found in these communities. The creation of Abrahamic teams and the organisation of Abrahamic festivities and celebrations met with great success, for example on the occasion of the Day of German Unity on October 3. The Abrahamic Forum also holds conferences and dialogues on differences and common values, which involve Rabbis, Priests and Imams as well as members of other professions.

The Intercultural Council of Germany also has an Interreligious Working Group whose members are representatives of the Working Group of Christian Churches in Germany, the German Buddhist Union, the Federation of Alevitic Communities in Germany, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Germany, the Central Jewish Council of Germany, the Central Muslim Council of Germany and the World Conference of Religions for Peace. Since 1995 this working group has been organizing joint meetings and conferences and published flyers and publications. Since 1996 it has appealed to the public to hold interreligious celebrations. All parties involved are aware of the fact that their work towards dialogue has only just begun.

# Models of intercultural and interreligious dialogue in the field of religion

## Diocesan Bishop Dr. Egon Kapellari - Graz-Seckau, Austria

The consequences of anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia are some of the worst horrors of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Although there has been extensive grieving, in particular for anti-Semitism, in Europe since 1945, several recent developments in Europe threaten the future of democratic culture. I refer, in particular, to four issues, which raise urgent questions related to religion.

- How, in the politically turbulent Balkans, where cultures steeped in Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Islam are in close contact, can policy be shaped to foster lasting peace
- What is the bearing of Huntington's controversial hypothesis of the clash of civilisations for the integration of immigrants, particularly Muslims, in Europe?
- Is Europe's civil society sufficiently stable to withstand the buffeting of global economic trends and political conflict? Unemployment, infrastructural deterioration and failing solidarity must be taken very seriously as possible causes of aggression. It is an established fact that anti-Semitism and xenophobia thrive under such conditions. Such developments lead to caricatures of politicians and EU institutions as objects of hatred.
- How can we refute the unjustifiably generalised prejudice that religion feeds violence, and that secularisation is to be accelerated in the interest of world peace? Those influenced by historical perceptions are all too prone to cite abuses of religion, past and present, and to neglect its massive contribution to charity and peace-making. Many observers suppress the destructive potential of purely materialistic worldviews such as social Darwinism. It is thus that religions become a convenient screen on which civilisation's discontents are projected whilst civil society is deprived of its humanitarian roots. The attempt to expel religion from the public domain or to dissolve all faiths into one single, creedless entity understandably triggers fears among organised believers and can unleash dangerous fundamentalism as a backlash to religiously indifferent post-modern liberalism.

In the light of these matters, and in my capacity as Catholic Bishop of Graz, I am reporting on some local and regional church contributions to a peaceful and

creative partnership between religions and cultures. Graz is the European Capital of Culture in 2003, but has long been a European hub of multifarious cultural relations to other countries and continents. The universities, above all, were and are the nodes of a multicultural network. The Catholic Church was and is supportive and active in the shaping of this multicultural network, attempting to strike a balance between providing open hospitality and maintaining Christian identity. The urgency of Christian-Islamic dialogue became apparent during the war in the Balkans. Austria contributed considerable humanitarian relief to alleviate the war's legacy and supported the foundation of the Interreligious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The peaceful intentions of the religious leaders of this region favoured the project of an interreligious conference, which is to be held in Graz in July 2003. This initiative, which is to be called "Interreligious Europe", will publicise positive examples of cooperation between religious communities in European cities. In this manner Graz, in its role as European Capital of Culture 2003, accepts the major challenge of fostering peaceful co-existence in multicultural European cities in the face of global conflict.

### **In conclusion, I would like to cite two positive examples from the realm of academia:**

In the 1960s the Catholic Church of Austria endeavoured to integrate the then already numerous foreign students into academic life and society in general. The Afro-Asian Institute in Vienna and Graz offered students from the most disparate cultures and religions accommodation and a place to meet and exchange views. The first Islamic prayer room in the city was established in Graz's Afro-Asian Institute during my tenure as university chaplain. The hospitality of the church gave Muslims a chance to meet not only Christian but also Hindu and Buddhist students. In the coming year the Graz Institute will host students from China as well as scholarship winners from Tibet.

To promote exchange with non-Christian world religions the Austrian Bishops' Conference founded the "World Religion Meeting Point" in Vienna. This institution sponsors academic studies and offers a Science of Religion course accompanied by regular dialogue events.

These encouraging examples are no doubt due to the special circumstances of Austria; religious legislation originating in Austria's multinational and multicultural environment prior to 1918 guarantees all world religions equal status here. Furthermore, Austria does not bear the burden of postcolonial conflict that haunts countries such as Great Britain and France. Austria's cultural history and location endow our country with a mission and an opportunity that the church, in particular, recognises and accepts.

# Turning Words into Action

## Chief Rabbi Bent Melchior - Denmark

For a Jewish person, whose family has lived in Denmark for almost 300 years, it is impossible to address the question of how to turn the fight against anti-Semitism and Islamophobia into action without stressing that the history of the Jewish minority in Denmark in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was completely different from that of Jewish communities in other parts of Europe under Nazi occupation. From the beginning of the occupation in April 1940 the Danish authorities made it clear that if the Germans wanted some kind of Danish autonomy to function, it would mean that they should leave the Jews of the country alone. And so they did until August 1943, when the Danish government resigned in protest to some of the actions of the Gestapo in fighting the Danish Underground.

That opened the way to take action against the Jews of Denmark. Preparations were made, and the raid was to take place the night between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 1943, the night after the Jewish New Year. The good fortune of the Jewish population was that some of the Germans stationed in Denmark were in fact against the order from Berlin. They knew that such an action would be poison to relations with all parts of the population, so the German navy attaché, Georg Duckwitz, revealed the details of the plan to some of his friends among Danish politicians, who in turn brought the sad news to the leaders of the Jewish community.

Since the Chief Rabbi at the time was already under German arrest, it was my father, Rabbi Marcus Melchior, who at an early service in the Synagogue on September 29<sup>th</sup> had to stop the service and tell the congregants that they had two days to disappear. Even more important they had two days to pass the warning on to everybody concerned. Nothing had been prepared and it was not easy to communicate, with the Gestapo watching and listening everywhere. Each person and each family had to find out how to go into hiding. This is not the place to tell the whole story. Let me limit myself to the facts: a month later around 7.500 Jews had arrived in Sweden after a miraculous crossing of the sea to be likened to the famous miracle at the Red Sea in the days of Moses. About 500 Jews, captured either in their homes, in the streets or on their way to the small boats that could bring them freedom, were deported to the German concentration camp in Theresienstadt.

Indeed those Germans, who had feared the reaction of the Danish population, were proven right. The entire people stood up to protect their Jewish countrymen. They were no longer regarded as a foreign element. The contribution of the small Jewish community to Danish culture, science, politics,

finance, and any other field of public life made it completely incomprehensible to create a separation between Jews and Gentiles. All sections of the population participated in the rescue operation, in spite of the heavy risks involved. For this specific purpose I would like to mention the contribution of the Danish church.

The Bishop of Copenhagen H. Fuglsang Damgaard had prepared a statement, and on Saturday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October, when the Germans had published their intention to deport all Danish Jews, the Bishop got all his colleagues in Denmark to sign the statement, which was hand-delivered to every church to be read at the Sunday services all over the country. Let me quote from this historic document.

“Wherever Jews are persecuted for racial or religious reasons, it is the duty of the Christian Church to protest against such persecution.”

“Because it conflicts with the understanding of justice rooted in the Danish people and embedded throughout the centuries in our Danish Christian culture. Accordingly, it is stated in our constitution that all Danish citizens have an equal right and responsibility towards the law, and they have freedom of religion, and right to worship God in accordance with their vocation and conscience and so that race or religion can never in itself become the cause of deprivation of anybody’s rights, freedom or property. Irrespective of diverging religious opinions we shall fight for the right for our Jewish brothers and sisters to keep the freedom that we ourselves value more highly than life.”

“The leaders of the Danish Church have a clear understanding of our duty to be law-abiding citizens that do not unreasonably oppose those, who execute authority over us, but at the same time we are in our conscience bound to uphold justice and protest against any violation; consequently we shall, if occasion should arise, plainly acknowledge our obligation to obey God more than man.”

The whole document is of course available, but let this suffice to show why I have chosen these events to illustrate what it means to turn words into action.

This story is 60 years old, and over such a long period the degree of tolerance can easily change - and so it has. This does not apply to the relationship between Church and Synagogue, which in spite of a few incidents that do occur in every family, is still a very warm and happy story. The Jewish community continues to produce talented people, who are contributing to Danish science, culture and art. At the same time there is a continued strong assimilation.

But especially the last 30 years have brought other and much larger minorities to Denmark. Some of them were invited to fill gaps in the labour force. Later they came either as refugees or in the process of family reunion.

The dominating feature here, as in most other Western European countries, is the fact that the newcomers have a different cultural background, and the majority are Muslims. Islam was not known to the Danes in the past, and they were not used to having people from Asian and African cultures living among them. That we now have close to 200,000 Muslims and more people from different races has given many Danes a shock. They think that the newcomers have the intention to take over the country, and to change the values of the country.

The truth is that Danes are inclined to think that being Danish is equal to being Christian, even if not very observing Christian, and Danish culture is equal to Christian culture. Their knowledge about other religions and cultures is limited and gives plenty of room for prejudice and all kinds of false ideas of foreign ways of life. Since Islam is also – like Christianity - a missionary religion, there is a very real fear of Islam. If you tell Danish people that Islam has its own problem defining its faith like Christianity and Judaism, they do not believe it. They are frightened when they see women with the traditional Muslim headscarves; they feel that they are being taken centuries back as far as the position of women in society is concerned.

On top of that we also have extremist groups among the Muslims, both in the religious sense and in the political sense. Back in 1985 the Copenhagen Synagogue was bombed by Palestinians, and since then Jewish institutions have taken steps to protect themselves and above all to protect the people who use them. Threats against individuals have been very common over the last 30 years. My personal share of that has been quite considerable, and if in the 70s these were partly still threats from Danes, they have since the 80s emanated from a Palestinian movement.

The extremist group of Hizb ut Tahir has been condemned by Danish court, and it is being considered whether such an organisation can be prohibited in accordance with the Danish constitution.

So what can we do to improve the situation? Above all it is important to continue to stress that the racist and criminal acts of a few Muslims are not representative of the entire Muslim population. No one has suffered more than the Jews from the experience that the wrongdoing of some individuals were turned into the suffering of the entire community. We therefore have the obligation to warn against similar generalised prejudice against other minorities.

The Jewish community is a founding member of the Danish Refugee Council, and for many years I have been a member of the Executive of that Council. There I have had the opportunity to speak and work on behalf of refugees, and not the least on behalf of Palestinian refugees. This is only natural, since work for refugees is independent of the reasons why people have had to flee. But it still is met with positive surprise, when Jews stand up for Palestinians.

We shall remember that minority rights are there for all minorities. If there is freedom of religion, it shall apply to all religions. In a number of cases Jews and Muslims are natural allies. Both religions practise circumcision on boys. Both religions practice special ways of slaughtering. Both religions are in need of prayer houses and cemeteries. So there are many points of common interest. It seems to be the problem in many countries, including Denmark, that Muslims are not well organised and find it difficult to have an umbrella organisation, which can speak on behalf of all the various Muslim groups.

But we cannot limit our actions to the religious fields. We can see a very distinct fear of contact between Muslims on one side and Christians and Jews on the other side. The fear exists in all the groups. Unfortunately you cannot bring logical argument against fear. The only effective way is to bring people together, to acquire more knowledge about the different cultures of the countries the newcomers have left – and more knowledge about the background of the country – Denmark – to which people have come.

So last year we created an organisation of the Abrahamic religions, a Jewish/Christian/Muslim Forum. We are 3 co-chairmen, the Muslim is a member of the Danish Parliament, with whom I have close contact, and we will publish a book together. In the forum we are not basing ourselves solely on religious issues, but we realise that we have to remove some of the prejudices, so we have held meetings in a Synagogue, in a Church and in a Mosque.

We are fighting an up-hill battle. It is not easy to have people come together if they are afraid of one another. Just as an example: We would like to have a public concert in one of Copenhagen's large halls with people from all three religious backgrounds on the stage at the same time. I know it has been done on a much higher level, but it would still send an important message to the population. We found very qualified musicians, and they had a wonderful meeting in my home. But when it came to the first rehearsal the Muslims did not turn up. They were afraid of what their friends and other Muslims would say and think!

Nevertheless I think that we are on the right way, and it would be a crime to give up! Not only shall we continue along the path we believe in, but I am personally convinced that the understanding between people of different racial and cultural backgrounds will improve. Danes will understand that their country is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. And the newcomers will find out that they did not arrive in a vacuum, where they can dictate the conditions, but that they will have to integrate into language and manners, history and legislation of their new homeland, hopefully without losing their original identity.

## List of participants

Round Table on Intercultural and Interreligious dialogue to  
combat anti-Semitism and Islamophobia  
Brussels 20 March 2003

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