

**Statement and Recommendations of**

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My name is Abraham Foxman, I am the National Director of the Anti-Defamation League, an organization currently celebrating its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of working to expose and counter anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry. I am pleased to have the opportunity to address the subcommittee, not just to offer an assessment of the problem, but to highlight concrete steps that Members of the Senate and the US government can take to counteract it.

As nations of the world, including our own, have turned their focus to the fight against terrorism, we are acutely aware that fighting anti-Semitism and other forms of hatred is critical, not just on humanitarian grounds, but as a matter of the national security of all freedom loving nations.

Mr. Chairman, the convening of this hearing is just one more example of the kind of ongoing leadership, commitment and focus by members of the Committee to spotlight and combat anti-Semitism for which we are grateful.

This hearing is so timely because unfortunately have had a fresh opportunity to examine a monumental manifestation of anti-Semitism and the reaction of the international community and Europe in particular. I am referring to the poisonous, hate-filled, anti-Semitic speech by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad just last week.

Let me begin by applauding the Senate for swiftly passing a Resolution condemning the Mahathir statement. Your action stands in stark contrast to that of other leaders who responded either with silence or bitter deliberations over whether it was appropriate to call anti-Semitism by its name and to criticize it publicly.

At last week's meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir took the already incendiary issue of global anti-Semitism to new and dangerous heights in his call to leaders of the 57 nations

assembled for a final victory against the Jews who “rule the world by proxy.” I have attached excerpts of Mahathir’s remarks to my written testimony which you have in front of you.

The audience at this gathering was made up of the leaders of nations, most of which have witnessed an upsurge of anti-Semitic hate over the last three years. Surveys indicate that significant part of the populations in these countries believe the big lie that Jews were responsible for carrying out the attacks of 9/11. Many opinion leaders and intellectuals in those states claim that the Holocaust did not happen or was greatly exaggerated by world Jewry in order to win support for Israel. There has been a proliferation of anti-Semitic stereotypes – Jews as Nazis, Jews drinking the blood of Muslims, Jews controlling America – in state-controlled media. And Muslim residents of European countries, inspired by this outburst of hate from Islamic media and the Internet, have committed hundreds of acts of anti-Semitic violence against Jews and Jewish institutions.

But the significance of Mahathir’s speech being delivered to this particular forum lies not merely in the prevalence of anti-Semitism in those countries but in the fact that this was a meeting of Islamic nations. This was not a United Nations committee meeting, or the organization of French-speaking countries, or the Davos Economic Summit. The OIC member nations are not bound by geography, or politics or culture – but by religion.

This was a rallying cry to an entire faith, a call to holy war against the Jewish religion and people by 1.3 billion Muslims. It is grotesque anti-Semitism with the intent to incite a religious war on an international scale.

The potential effect of the hatred spewed by Mahathir is particularly lethal because of the ability of his message to reverberate across the Muslim world where there are those who are more than willing to take them at face value, to translate into international terrorism and suicide bombs.

It is far from a surprise that Mahathir personally holds these views. He has a history of which we are aware. In 1997 he blamed Jewish billionaire George Soros for the currency crisis in his country. In 1984 Malaysia banned a performance of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra of a work based on Hebrew melodies by Jewish composer Ernst Bloch.

It is shocking, nevertheless, that 60 years after Europe was decimated by the worst kind of horror that can result when anti-Semitism is unleashed and unchecked, after we had come to believe the world had learned the lessons of the Holocaust, that a head of state would make a call for holy war against Jews the “swan song” of his decades-long political career.

But what alarms us most is Mahathir's presumption that, in making this incendiary speech, he was walking through an open door. And indeed, his confidence was born out by the standing ovation he received after his remarks.

We were truly dismayed and saddened that among the leaders of 57 countries, including US allies like King Abdullah II of Jordan, Prince Abdullah Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia and Morocco's King Mohamed VI, no one stood up, no one walked out and no one challenged him. Where were the good people at this summit who should have stood up to proclaim that Mahathir's words were evil and unacceptable?

## **INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS**

Beyond the speech itself, it is instructive to look at how the world beyond the OIC reacted, even under the microscope of intense media scrutiny. And what should engage and concern this subcommittee is the fact that this incident is emblematic of one of the most difficult aspects of the new anti-Semitism in Europe which reverberates from the Middle East and – absent clear condemnation and prevention -- has too often translated into acts of violence, and even murder of Jews in Europe and elsewhere.

Let us first look at just a sampling the response from some leaders of Muslim nations:

**Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher** said: "This was a pep talk to the Muslim countries for them to work hard and look to the future, but as soon as you have any criticism of Israel, then there are people who are very eager to rush to condemnation, even without comprehending what it's all about."

**Somalian President Abdiqasim Salad Hassan** defended Mahathir, saying: "The prime minister was not inciting war. He was just saying that we should be united to face threats from many quarters, including Israel."

**Yemen's Foreign Minister Abubakar al-Qirbi** said it bluntly. "I don't think they were anti-Semitic at all. I think he was basically stating the fact to the Muslim world."

Days after the controversy roared, Mahathir himself was unrepentant and defended his comments in a press conference saying: "My speech was very clear. I said that the Jews have all the world behind them... and that's why they can defy the United Nations."

In Europe, the response of those who should be the most sensitive, because of their history, and their own experience with a leader rallying nations around this kind of invective, was mixed.

A two-day summit of the European Union Council in Brussels last week provided the perfect forum to publicly issue a forceful joint declaration. Italy, which holds the current EU presidency, issued a strong statement as did Spain, Germany and others.

However we were stunned that representatives to an EU summit in Brussels had to debate in closed session whether to condemn this anti-Semitism as part of their concluding declaration. In the end, they did not see fit to make it a part of the official record of the summit. A French government spokesperson defended the position saying that it is not customary policy to deal with such issues in summit declarations. Beyond the fact that this incident should have compelled them to break with "customary policy", numerous reports indicated that leaders of France and Greece actually blocked a condemnation that some EU members asked for. We are not alone in our assessment of the French reaction. Malaysian newspapers report that Mahathir had expressed his gratitude to President Chirac for his "understanding" of the speech.

I'll read to you the French response so you can see first hand the kind of reticence we are talking about. Even after an international outcry, they could only say: "We have respect for the Organization of the Islamic Conference. We have respect for the vast community of Moslems whom this Organization represents. We expect those who speak on behalf of the OIC to show the same respect towards other faiths, in accordance with the spirit of tolerance which is also Islam's." President Chirac later issued what he must have believed was a stronger statement saying to Mahathir: "Your remarks on the role of Jews provoked strong disapproval in France and around the world." The President of France could not bring himself to use the word anti-Semitism.

There certainly have been good people of conscience who prevailed in their own way and were able to mobilize an outcry. But we sorely regret that, while Mahathir's remarks are proudly posted on the OIC website, visit the official EU website and you will find their criticism makes no mention of the word anti-Semitism and is buried deep in its document archive. While the hater unabashedly trumpets his message, the condemnation is muted by dissent within the EU. Let me quote the simple message that was so difficult for some to accept, hotly debated behind closed doors:

"The EU deeply deplores the comments made earlier today by Dr Mahathir in his speech at the opening of the 10th session of the Islamic Summit conference in Putrajaya, Malaysia . . . . Such words hinder all our efforts to further inter-ethnic and religious harmony, and have absolutely no place in a tolerant world."

We commend those in the international community who took a strong stand against the incendiary anti-Jewish scapegoating of Mahathir's speech. In particular, we recognize the European Union, Italy, Spain and Germany for their important comments and efforts to rightly denounce and condemn this speech as

anti-Semitic, dangerous and morally repugnant. We salute those who worked behind closed doors in the EU to push for a rejection of Mahathir's speech and message.

We are appalled by those who acquiesced, with their silence or even with public support. We are especially outraged by the actions of French President Jacques Chirac and Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis to block the EU Summit official condemnation. By their disgraceful behavior, these countries are willingly complicit in spreading these words of hate.

ADL wrote the leaders of Australia, Germany, Italy and Spain to express appreciation for their strong condemnations of Mahathir's speech, and, on the other side, to France, Greece, Jordan, Turkey, Morocco, Russia, and others, calling their behavior a "disgrace to their countries."

## **LESSONS GOING FORWARD**

This chapter illustrates yet again that one cannot talk about anti-Semitism in Europe without confronting the role of the Arab world propagation of the kind of anti-Jewish myths which flourished in Europe centuries ago. These canards are being revived and cloaked in theology and religion. Islamist campaigns within the Muslim world and Europe have moved the anti-Jewish beliefs within Islam from the fringes, where they historically resided, closer to the center. This demonization of Jews and Judaism emanates from houses of worship and from clerics. It pervades educational systems, government-sponsored media, and it permeates popular culture well beyond the Middle East.

The ensuing radicalization of youth in Muslim countries and in Europe has played a large role in the attacks against individual Jews and Jewish institutions. I have appended to my written testimony just a sample of recent anti-Semitic incidents in Europe. This is in no way a quantitative representation but merely to demonstrate that, while the frequency may vary, the violence continues and presents a real danger to the security of Jews living in Europe.

Mr. Chairman, even the brief overview I have provided of world reaction to this one incident leads us to one paramount conclusion – that the US is unique in its resolve to be a voice of conscience when it comes to calling anti-Semitism by its name.

Even as the President traveled to Asia to meet world leaders to bolster US ties with nations on issues of vital US interest, he faced this issue literally head on. While others were afraid to mention the words anti-Semitism, our President spoke boldly and clearly in a face to face encounter with Prime Minister Mahathir himself.

We commend the President for his forceful denunciation of anti-Semitism, both in the public statements by his administration over the last several days and in his face-to-face meeting with Prime Minister Mahathir. In making his outrage known on both a personal and public level, the President has left no doubt that the prime minister's anti-Semitism and his continuing defense of his speech is unacceptable and morally repugnant in the eyes of the United States.

With similar moral clarity, the Senate swiftly passed a resolution of condemnation – not at the urging of the Jewish community – but instinctively as a matter of clear policy and principle.

It is abundantly clear that the vital task of getting leaders around the world to denounce the ideology of anti-Semitism that has gripped the Islamic and Arab world will rise or fall on the steadfastness of US leadership.

While the last century witnessed the most heinous results of bigotry unchecked, fortunately, we also have witnessed in our lifetime powerful examples of how strong US leadership has brought about dramatic change.

Members of Congress and of this committee are uniquely positioned to exert such leadership and to build among our allies in Europe a coalition of those willing to stand up. In Germany we have found an important partner already in so many areas. Germany, along with the US, has taken a lead in getting the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to address anti-Semitism for the first time in a separate meeting in Vienna. Germany has offered to host an important follow up meeting next April in Berlin.

I mentioned countries like Spain and Italy that have shown courage in speaking out. Your membership in this Committee, your meetings, your travel, your bilateral contacts with heads of state, foreign ministers and parliamentarians provide an opportunity to broaden the alliance of those who are courageous enough to stand up even where it is unpopular to do so.

We must reject the notion that a leader who acknowledges anti-Semitism must pay a price for somehow disrespecting their Muslim constituency. Surely we oppose all forms of bigotry including anti-Muslim hatred, but condemning anti-Semitism is in no way a denigration of any other religion or group.

On the contrary, combating anti-Semitism, especially in Europe advances the protection of all minorities. It was anti-Semitism which infected Europe and dismantled its democratic institutions and ultimately the freedom of all its inhabitants. Jews have been referred to as the canary in the coal mine – because concerted attacks against Jews will not stop there but will endanger the civilized world and democratic institutions wherever they exist.

I would like to highlight some concrete steps which we hope the Committee will be able to take. We look forward to continuing to cooperate and share ideas about how to carry on this fight -- armed with the clear knowledge that we can make a difference.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **1. European nations must take seriously the ideology of anti-Semitism coming out of the Arab and Islamic world.**

- Political, intellectual, and religious leaders must insist in a variety of forums that, the Big Lie --blaming the Jews for 9/11, growing Holocaust denial, the spread of the infamous forgery the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and other manifestations of anti-Semitism in the Arab and Islamic world, are unacceptable, and call on Arab leaders to do something about it. The silence of nations in the face of this dangerous incitement against Jews must end.
- Nations of Europe have it well within their power today to play a very different role in international organizations where anti-Israel bias has been reflected even in the revival of the infamous "Zionism is racism" ideology. This bias has shown itself to be easily transformed into outright anti-Semitism, as we witnessed at the U.N. World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa in 2001.
- Nations must confront the connection between the bias against Israel internationally and the surge of anti-Semitism on the streets. While the state of Israel is not beyond legitimate criticism, states must reject the self-satisfying rationalization that this bias and violence are manifestations of disagreement with Israel. Leaders must recognize that the singling out of Israel creates an environment in which anti-Semitism flourishes. We cannot let anti-Semitism and efforts to brand Israel a pariah state seep into the public debate disguised as political commentary. The ultimate question is not whether one can criticize Israel without being an anti-Semite, but whether that criticism reflects a double standard and an unfair bias against Jewish national self-expression, and self-determination.

**2. Recognize anti-Semitism as a human rights violation – de-linked from Middle East issues.** While anti-Semitism has been acknowledged as a form of racism, there is a reticence to address its re-emergence squarely within multilateral frameworks because of age-old fear of raising the ire of Arab communities or states, or of running against a political climate which is increasingly hostile toward Israel. US diplomats and NGOs repeatedly encounter discomfort with any kind of special focus on the issue. In the United Nations, language on anti-Semitism or Holocaust commemoration is dealt with as part of negotiations of language on the Arab – Israeli conflict and not as a separate human rights or religious freedom issue. Addressing anti-Semitism head-on

should not be viewed as a Middle East issue or taking a particular side in any regional political conflict.

Anti-Semitism is xenophobia that infects the community where it occurs – it is not a political hot-button related to conflict in the Middle East. Even, and especially when support for Israel may be unpopular, defense of Jewish rights must not be allowed to fall out of favor.

### 3. Hate Crime Data Collection and Monitoring

- **National and local authorities must call attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions what they are – anti-Semitism.** The first step is to ensure that incidents are taken seriously and appropriately categorized as hate crimes. We have witnessed in some countries incidents rationalized as drunken hooliganism, as expressions of political disagreement with Israel. They are a violation of national law in many states and of international norms and treaties against incitement, religious intolerance, and hate violence.
- **Enhance worldwide monitoring efforts by governments and non-governmental bodies alike.** Nations should promote the adoption of comprehensive hate crime data collection laws and provide training in how to identify, report, and respond to hate crimes for appropriate law enforcement officials. It is impossible to properly assess the scope and nature of the problem without data collection and public reporting on anti-Semitic incidents.
- **Nations should allocate funds for national assessments of hate violence,** its causes, the prevalence of the problem in state schools, the characteristics of the offenders and victims, and successful intervention and diversion strategies for juveniles. There is a direct connection between identifying the nature of the problem and identifying appropriate educational initiatives to address the problem

### 4. Using the Bully Pulpit

- **Urge political and civic leaders to utilize opportunities they have every day to speak out against bigotry.** Their statements and actions to promote tolerance resonate nationally and internationally. It is hard to overstate the importance of outspoken leadership in opposition to all forms of bigotry. Civic leaders set the tone for national discourse and have an essential role in shaping attitudes. Further, politicians and civic leaders should never engage in divisive appeals based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion.
- **Urge parliamentarians abroad to take action.** The challenge is how to replicate this activity in parliaments of other nations. Building on the efforts of the US Congress, it is vital to broaden the alliance of those parliaments willing to speak the truth about this issue and raise it time and again. Let other parliaments do as Congress has done, pass

resolutions against anti-Semitism and develop national action plans to combat it.

- **Urge support for the OSCE Berlin Follow-Up Conference.** We may not have all the answers, but the first step is to shine a light on the problem, expose its danger, and report on the performance of governments in responding.

## **5. Implement Anti-Bias Education**

Anti-Bias Education is an essential building block of combating hatred. History has shown that, when people of conscience are given tools and skills to stand up against bigotry, they will do so. The ADL has many programs, some of which have been highlighted by European governments as “best practices” in the fight against racism. One of our earliest successes, which is used as a model worldwide, was implemented in Germany in response to hate crimes against Turkish Muslim immigrants in the early 1990s. I have included a checklist of additional programs we have found to be successful internationally.

- Congress should urge other parliaments to use schools as a staging ground for Anti-Bias Education. Governments must act now to provide Teacher Training on Anti-Bias Education curricula and empower students through Peer Training programs. From the ages of 3-5 years-old, where children begin to recognize differences and form attitudes based on those perceptions, to the college and university level, where inter-group understanding is critical to fostering a successful learning environment, anti-bias education is necessary to equip students with skills and confidence which enable them to confront prejudice, to become activists against bigotry and agents for change.
- Resources should be allocated to institute and replicate best practices and promising programs on prejudice awareness, conflict resolution, and multicultural education through public-private partnerships, as part of education exchange and public diplomacy programs.

**6. Holocaust Education.** As government bodies in the US and in Germany have repeatedly acknowledged, crimes against humanity such as the Holocaust, serve as grim reminders of where intolerance can lead if permitted to flourish and of the absolute necessity that it be stopped. Following up on the January 2000 the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust commitment to plant the seeds of a better future through education and remembrance, parliamentarians should seek to implement Holocaust Curricula to draw upon the lessons of this tragic period to illuminate the importance of moral decision.

- ADL developed a comprehensive, interactive secondary level holocaust curriculum enhanced with state of the art audiovisual supplements for use in American high schools. This kind of curriculum could be easily adapted for use in classrooms abroad.

- In the US, ADL's *Bearing Witness Program for Religious Educators* helps teachers examine anti-Semitism and the Holocaust as a starting point for addressing issues of diversity in contemporary society. Its goal is to successfully implement Holocaust education in religious schools. In order to do this effectively, teachers work to confront and to acknowledge the history of the Holocaust including the role of Churches and other religious institutions played. This is a collaborative effort between ADL, the Archdiocese, and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

**7. Law Enforcement Training.** In talking about grappling with bigotry with leaders, we often hear about the challenge of their changing demographics. Beyond training in hate crimes response, anti-bias education for law enforcement professionals helps develop cross cultural skills and communication in order to enhance officer effectiveness and safety by building cooperation and trust with diverse communities.

- **A new proposed EU Law Enforcement Training Center** would provide ideal opportunities in this regard.
- **Respond to racism and hate crimes in the armed forces.** Ministries of Defense should provide anti-bias and prejudice awareness training for all recruits and military personnel, improve procedures for screening out racist recruits, and clarify and publicize existing prohibitions against active duty participation in hate group activity. In Austria, ADL training has been implemented already for 8% of all law enforcement professionals throughout Austria. In Russia, ADL has provided training as part of the "Climate of Trust" hate crime training program for law enforcement.

**8. Mobilize religious leaders to speak out.** The religious nature of the Mahathir incident compels a response from religious leaders of all faiths, including Muslims. At home in the US and abroad, we maintain our vigilance and unequivocal opposition to intolerance against Muslims. But we respect the faith of Islam and its leaders enough to hold them accountable for their broad failure to speak out against anti-Jewish hatred being fed to youth and other believers as God's truth, as a tenet of faith.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the troubling assessment I bring to this committee in my testimony here today I come to you as an optimist, as a believer that we can go forward from this hearing, from this house of Congress, from this country, to make a difference. I am a survivor of the holocaust. I emerged from that horrific period only because of the courage and compassion of my catholic nanny and her priest who hid my true identity and saved me. But 1 ½ million other Jewish children were not fortunate enough to meet with those rare individuals of conscience. My story is a living reminder that individuals can make a difference, one life at a time. Think of what an impact you can have from the Halls of

Congress and through the bully pulpit of the US government to confront this pernicious hatred.

We must raise our collective voices against any expression of hate and to challenge those whose “violence of silence” aids and abets its growth. Anti-Semitism has a particular place in the history of Europe, in the history of xenophobia, focusing on it and combating it now can only advance the cause of eradicating all forms of hatred.

We assembled here know that this is not the work of a day, but a long term strategy to build an alliance of values – one country at a time, one minister at a time, one parliamentarian at a time, to sensitize our allies so that, years from now, the Mahathirs of that generation will face wall-to-wall international condemnation.

There is no greater challenge. There is no greater good.