

Christians, Jews and Muslims united against all forms of Extremism

An international forum of experts reports on antisemitism today



Sheikh Muostafa Rashed Abou Abdalla and Mordechai Kedar

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In introducing the last of a **three day international conference on Anti-Semitism** organized in Rome by Robert Hassan, Director for Europe of ISGAP (Institute for the study of Global Antisemitism and Policy), ISGAP's Executive Director Charles Small referred to **Elie Wiesel's conviction that "Anti-Semitism begins with Jews but never ends with Jews"**.

"Today", said Small, "Anti-Semitism targets Jews as a people . The demonization of Israel has entered universities. The Muslim Brotherhood – represented under different names all over the European continent as well as in the U.S. and the Middle East - is in many areas distributing 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion', the Czarist libel originally used as 'false news' (as we would say today) to increment Nazi propaganda that accused Jews of plotting to overtake the world!" Again referring to Elie Wiesel, Dr. Small recalled the Nobel Prize winner's warning that "the Holocaust began with words."

The topic of the concluding day was, "Antisemitism as a Strategic Threat to Europe", significantly underlining its universal danger. It was hosted by the Italian Parliament's Chamber of Deputies - ironically and with fortuitous historic justice, **in the "Queens Room" - in the very room where Italy's anti-Semitic laws were unanimously passed in 1938.** The session's proceedings were skillfully moderated by parliamentarian Gea Schiro, a member of the Chamber of Deputies' European Affairs Commission as well as of the Italy-Israel Parliamentary Friendship Association. The preceding two days of conferences were held respectively at **"La Sapienza"- the University of Rome, on "Anti-Semitism as a Gateway to Terrorism"** and at the Pontifical **"Augustinianum" Institute, on "Antisemitism and Minority Rights in the Middle East – Regional and International Implications"**.

Tony Blair, the UK's former Prime Minister, who had come to Rome especially for the occasion, **delivered the opening speech.** With vibrant support of Israel and passionate denouncement of the return of antisemitism even in his own party, he pointed a finger at the BDS movement ("Boycott, Disinvest, Sanction Israel") as seriously transgressing the boundaries of legitimate criticism of Israel's policies and thereby fomenting antisemitism. At the end of the session, the whole group led by Tony Blair was received in private audience by Pope Francis.

A “happening” during that first morning set the harmonious tone of the conference. When Sheikh Muostafa Rashed Abou Abdalla, President of the World Union of Islamic Scholars for Peace and the Islamic Centers of Australia and New Zealand found himself bereft of an Arabic language translator, another speaker, Mordechai Kedar, a Jewish academic expert on the Israeli Arab population who served for 25 years in Israel’s IDF Military Intelligence, volunteered to stand beside the Sheikh as his personal translator.

There was essential agreement between **all who spoke, over and beyond their ethnic and religious diversities**. They were Muslims, Christians, and Jews originating from Nigeria, Iraq (of Yazidi ethnicity), Egypt, Israel, Britain, U.S.A., Italy, etc.

All speakers seemed to focus on **the danger posed by the Muslim Brotherhood**, who, according to Erich Trager, an expert on Egyptian politics, are “losers, rejected by the majority of Muslims in Europe, but remain a peripheral entity that needs to be kept on the sidelines”.

There seemed to be a consensus on the following conclusions:

1) **The Muslim Brotherhood**, actually quite small and not representative of European Islam, is however, the **most efficient propagator of Islamist ideas** said Mordechai Kedar. Widely spread out and excellently organized, it projects a false mainstream image. It constitutes a tiny minority of Europe’s 56.52 million Muslims (amounting to 7.66% of Europe’s total population of 739.69 million people according to 2016 statistics).

While ISIS is disintegrating, its ideology survives, said Mordechai Kedar. **It aims at destroying European civilization along with Israel, and replacing both with a caliphate** on this continent and in the Middle East, subverting minds to anti-western and anti-European ideology and aiming at making Jerusalem its capital, he said. The Brotherhood, along with other groups espousing the Shariah adopt **an aggressive, Salafite interpretation of the Koran** dating back to **an old Saudi translation which completely transforms the authentic text in Arabic**, said Haras Rafiq, Ceo OF Quilliam, the world’s first counter-extremism organization. The day **after the attack on Charlie Hebdo and the Kosher supermarket in Paris**, said Dina Lisnyanski, an academic and security expert on Islamic culture, **“90 Salafite mosques were closed while private Muslim Brotherhood schools remained open**, “preaching hatred” and the FIOE (Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe) was preaching the founding of a new homeland for Islam in Europe (i.e. and Islamic State). Weapons were found in homes in St. Denis and Clichy sur Bois.

2) **A major problem is the financing of mosques in Europe with funds coming from Saudi Arabia and Qatar as well as from European governments**. Lorenzo Vidino, head of the New Radicalization and International Terrorism Program of ISPI, reported on the situation in Austria where the Muslim Brotherhood, representing Austrian Islam, receives funds supplied by the country's generous laws supporting Austria's official national religious communities, in addition to contributions from Qatar.

3) **The target of anti-Semitic Jihadist groups is western civilization itself**, plus those Muslims who do not conform to the Shariah, as well as Jews, Christians, and all other “infidels”. **Their unified aim necessitates wiping Israel off the map** to make Jerusalem the capital of a Middle East caliphate. **“From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” is the war cry of supporters of the BDS movement**, nominally calling for boycotting Israel to end its “occupation” over Palestinians – but actually indicating a new Islamist geopolitical setup

for the entirety of Israel/Palestine that would eliminate all non-believers – meaning Jews, Christians, secular people and “westernized” Muslims.

4) Not much was said specifically about “**good practice**” aside from **investment in education and integration and increasing awareness of the strategies at work**. However, the story of one successful action to keep the BDS movement at bay was reported by Attorney Gabriel Groisman, Mayor of Bal Harbour in Florida, who won an anti-BDS ordinance in his town requiring “any entity that enters into a contract with Bal Harbour to certify that they are not boycotting, and will not boycott, or divest from a legitimate, recognized U.S. trade partner.” The positive transformation of opinion, he recalled, can be read in the town’s history. “Only as late as 1984” he recalled, “Bal Harbour repealed a long-standing law forbidding Jewish ownership of homes.”

5) **Antisemitism is a byproduct, but also a unifying and useful scapegoat employed to further the Islamist goal**, politically supported by Europe’s Extreme Left as well as its Extreme Right, aiming at the building of this new Islamist utopia. Much anti-Israel propaganda that feeds on anti-Semitism is based on outright lies – or “false news”, said Ben Dror Yemeni, a prominent Israeli journalist. Some examples he mentioned were those of “equating Israelis to Nazis...calling Israel 'a child-murdering community'...accusing Israel’s treatment of Palestinians as the main cause of world violence...and on and on.” David Harris the CEO of AJC (American Jewish Committee) recently stated that, “trifocal lenses” are needed to confront antisemitism – we must look in three directions – the far left, the far right, and the Jihadists.” Quillam’s CEO Haras Rafiq, in line with the overall consensus of the speakers, warned his prediction that these different forms of radicalization “linked by anti-Semitism and especially by conspiracy theories” will, twenty years from now, lead to Islamism’s being overshadowed by the Far Left and the Far Right, unified by a common antisemitism.

Noemi Di Segni, President of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, sent a message expressing her regret at being unable to come personally to the three day meeting but fully identifying with its contents. She also pointed out that “**the threat of antisemitism does not concern only Jews but the survival of a democratic Europe**, the future social cohabitation on our continent and beyond, which, it pains us to admit, is today again endangered.” She also identified the three “masks” of current anti-Semitism as, again, coming from Islamist terrorism, the Extreme Left and the Extreme Right. She mentioned the importance of the European Parliament’s having adopted the IHRA “Definition of Antisemitism” to be used by European countries to combat these “masks” and promote education that will produce a **bulwark “against all forms of intolerance, racism and antisemitism.”**

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