



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Anti-Semitism and the Media

Drafted for delivery by Rabbi Marvin Hier
to the Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism
and on Other Forms of Intolerance
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Last month, the world commemorated the 60th anniversary of the defeat of Nazism. Shortly after the Holocaust, its major perpetrators were brought to Nuremberg to stand trial. Those in the dock were not only generals and admirals who had conducted Hitler's war of annihilation, but bankers and economists who had plundered Europe's economy, amongst them newspaper editors and publishers whose words tore into the flesh of innocent people like bullets.

Every day, during the twelve-year history of the Third Reich, Josef Goebbels, Hitler's Minister of Propaganda, and Julius Streicher, Publisher of the infamous *Der Stuermer* newspaper, each with his own audiences, served up daily potions of hate that helped sell Hitler's need for a "Final Solution of the Jewish Question." Goebbels committed suicide and avoided the court's judgment. But to Julius Streicher, Justice Lawrence handed down the death sentence, charging him with incitement to commit murder and extermination. The judgment at Nuremberg made it clear that words have consequences and those who author incitements to hate-based violence and crime bear responsibility.

What should be the responsibility of the media be in today's battle against Anti-Semitism, when almost everyday, particularly in the Middle East and at times in Europe, there appear Anti-Semitic articles under the guise of freedom of the press?

Clearly, the safest guarantee of a free society is to have a vibrant, aggressive and free press that serves a check and balance against abuse by the government or by the more powerful groups in society. But on the other side of the spectrum, there is also a need to speak out when the media validates lies and becomes the perpetrator and advocate for distortions when it seeks to manufacture the truth, rather than to search for it, and when it has an agenda and then looks for the facts to fit that agenda.

It is precisely the blurring of those lines that led France's Versailles Court of Appeals last week to rule against three reporters and directors of that nation's most respected newspaper *Le Monde* saying they committed "a racist defamation" by publishing an article which said of the State of Israel, "One has trouble imagining that a nation of refugees, descendants of people who have suffered the longest period of persecution in the history of humanity...would be capable of transforming themselves into a dominating people...and with the exception of an admirable minority into a scornful people finding satisfaction in humiliating others." The court ordered the newspaper to publish a condemnation of the article because it constituted incitement.

We live in a different world. In today's world, you don't have to attend a rally to become a bigot. Or to be present at the orchestrated giant rallies that the Nazis organized at Nuremberg to be imbued with hate. Today, when a newspaper article or television broadcast appears in a foreign country and is instantly transmitted via satellite, cable and the Internet into the homes of millions of people throughout the world, you can become a bigot and Anti-Semite in your own living room, watching via satellite the Iranian produced television series, *Zahra Blue Eyes*, depicting Israelis kidnapping Palestinian children and transplanting their organs to Jewish children, or the Syrian miniseries, *Al Shattat* (The Diaspora) about the alleged secret Jewish government that controls the world.

Or reading the words of Portuguese Nobel Laureate Jose Saramago: "the Jews endlessly scratch their own wound and keep it bleeding to keep it incurable, as if it were a banner... Israel in short is a racist State by virtue of Judaism's monstrous doctrines, not just against the Palestinians but against the entire world which it seeks to manipulate and abuse."

Or the Lithuanian Newspaper, *Respublika*, who published a series, "Who Rules the World?" And answered, "The Jews."

Occasionally, as in the *Respublika* case, the government speaks out and condemns such actions. However, this is not always the case, and it is simply unconscionable that sixty years after the Holocaust, in spite of numerous films and books on the subject, that Anti-Semitism is again in vogue in Europe and around the world.

In such a world, the media has a special role to play in exposing the lies and defending truth. They can help by debunking the myth of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, by interviewing Holocaust survivors involved in promoting tolerance, highlighting schools that commemorate Yom Hashoah, put the spotlight on political leaders who aren't doing enough to stop to hate, focus attention on institutions in Europe and around the world that are promoting tolerance, cover the tensions in the Middle East fairly and objectively without hurling Anti-Semitic slurs comparing Sharon to Hitler, or the Israeli army to the Nazis.

What is at stake is nothing less than the future of civilization, and the future of our children and grandchildren. History has taught us that we have paid a grave price for indifference. There can be no bystanders in this battle.

As Edmund Burke reminded us, "The only thing necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing."