

**Statement by the President of Estonian Jewish Community
Mrs Cilja Laud**

Mr Chairman,
Distinguished participants of the Conference,
Ladies and Gentlemen

Unfortunately, I am not able to participate in the work of the Conference as a Member of the Estonian Delegation for personal reasons.

However, I decided to inform you in written form about the situation concerning Anti-Semitism in my small country – Estonia. It is easier for me to do that, because I am neither the Minister of Foreign Affairs nor a diplomat – which means that I can be more outspoken.

First of all, I would like to confirm again that there has never been Anti-Semitism at the state level in Estonia. Even during the Soviet times, many distinguished scientists, poets, musicians and economists moved from the USSR to Estonia, among them Juri Lotman, David Samoilov, David Oistrakh and others.

Still, it has to be noted that sometimes acts of Anti-Semitism take place on an everyday level – but this happens in every country. All the cases - be it the incident with the Lihula monument, articles in a newspaper or the vandalizing of War Monuments on Victory Day - have been condemned by the Government and appropriate measures have been undertaken.

We cannot live and raise young generations only on negative examples. Estonians are learning to understand the sufferings of other peoples. History is not black and white; history is colourful. Victory Day is a very important day for the Jewish people in the whole world. In Israel, it is celebrated at the state level.

I would like to inform you that this year on May 8, Estonian Prime Minister Andrus Ansip laid a wreath at the memorial site of victims of the Holocaust located in Klooga and apologized before the Jewish people for those Estonians who participated in murdering and assisted the perpetrators of most grave crimes against humanity.

Having said that, I would like to bring some positive examples to illustrate the life of Estonian Jews – because life goes on: we have to remember the atrocities of the Holocaust and honour the victims; we have to continue efforts to exclude such a horrible tragedy in the future.

I think that we are the only Jewish Community in the whole world that does not have and does not need security measures. We have a State sponsored Jewish High School and kindergarten. We have a Synagogue and we are building a new one. We organize seminars for teachers and school directors about the Holocaust and teaching

methods. We are proud that President Arnold Rüütel and the Mayor of Tallinn visited our Community and lit the first Hanukah candle in December last year.

Our Jewish Community has branches in locations all over the country where Jews live. Our Community is much respected and honoured in Estonia. I have been invited and participated in several Conferences, including OSCE Anti-Semitism Conferences as a Member of Governmental Delegations.

As the Chairman of Jewish Community, I am personally a member of the President's Round Table of National Minorities, where issues of the Holocaust have been discussed. In 1994, the Estonian Government allocated funds for the construction of Memorial Sites for the Victims of the Holocaust. In July this year, we will open five additional memorial stones (plaques) at the sites of concentration camps as was agreed within the framework of an agreement between Estonian and US Special Committees.

Ladies and Gentlemen, that is why I would like to urge you not to make general conclusions about my country based on single negative incidents, but rather keep the whole picture in mind and appreciate what has been done and is being done by the small nation that also has a tragic and sad history.

Every Friday, Jews lit Shabbat candles not only in Israel, but also in Diaspora. I would like to wish us all, that the light of the candle will unite us all in the name of light and goodness. I believe that if we all start with ourselves the world could be changed into a better and more secure place to live. I very much want to believe in that. Thank you for your kind attention.

Cordoba
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