

New Coalition Raises The Alarm Against Globalized Antisemitism

Last week the Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism was founded in London

“We draw the democratic world’s attention to the resurgence of antisemitism as a potent force in politics, international affairs and society” – these are the impassioned opening words of the “London Declaration on Combating Antisemitism” which was recently adopted by Parliamentarians of 40 nations.

On February 16 and 17, 2009, 125 parliamentarians and 80 experts in the field gathered in the House of Commons in London to draft this declaration and to launch the Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism.

Participants and speakers of this conference included Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini, the Canadian Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism Jason Kenney, the Minister of the Czech Republic, Pavel Svoboda, the Councelor of King Mohammed VI of Marocco, André Azoulay, the former Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, Natan Sharansky, the Former Foreign Minister of Uruguay, Sergio Abreu, the Former Minister of Justice in Canada, Irwin Cotler, the Former Foreign Minister of Bulgaria, Solomon Passy as well as the Vice-President of the German federal parliament, Petra Pau.

The „London Declaration on Combating Antisemitism“ is a landmark document. „We note a dramatic increase in recorded antisemitic hate crimes and attacks targeting Jewish persons and property, and Jewish religious, educational and communal institutions”, is says in its preamble.

“We are alarmed at the resurrection of the old language of prejudice and its modern manifestations – in rhetoric and political action – against Jews, Jewish belief and practice and the State of Israel.

“We are alarmed by Government-backed antisemitism in general, and state-backed genocidal antisemitism, in particular.

“We, as Parliamentarians, affirm our commitment to a comprehensive programme of action to meet this challenge.”

The programme of action comprises 35 paragraphs including the request to the EU Council of Ministers to convene a session on combating antisemitism based on the conclusions of the London Conference. It also demands that governments take appropriate and necessary action to prevent the broadcast of explicitly antisemitic programmes on satellite television channels, and apply pressure on the host broadcast nation to take action to prevent the transmission of explicitly antisemitic programmes.

Alluding to the forthcoming Durban II conference of the United Nations the Parliamentarians further declared: “Governments and the UN should resolve that never again will the institutions of the international community and the dialogue of nation states be abused to try to establish any legitimacy for antisemitism, including the singling out of Israel for discriminatory treatment in the international arena, and we will never witness – or be party to – another gathering like Durban in 2001.”

The conference was chaired by Labour MP John Mann who also founded the UK’s „All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism“ at the beginning of 2006. „Jewish communities across the world should know that they are not alone“, he explained in his opening speech. „We are proud to be joined by national leaders across the political spectrum, who stand united and ready to confront this oldest hatred in the newest settings.“

The second speaker, Sadiq Khan, Minister for Community Cohesion in the British government, told the audience that, unlike other forms of racism, antisemitism is being accepted within parts of society instead of being condemned. „We are also aware“, he added, „that current rhetoric about Israel and Zionism ... employs antisemitic motifs that are consistent with ancient forms of hatred towards Jews.“

The Former Minister of Justice and Former Attorney General in Canada, MP Irvin Cotler, talked about a „new sophisticated, globalising, virulent and even lethal antisemitism, reminiscent of the atmospherics of the 30s, and without parallel or precedent since the end of the Second World War.“ Whereas old antisemitism “wished to eliminate individual Jewish people,” Cotler said, “the new antisemitism aims at getting rid of the Jewish state.”

David Harris who chairs the American Jewish Committee criticized the failure of the international community to isolate and exclude antisemites such as Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. “They are allowed to be antisemites and at the same time they are received in the international community as statesmen.”

In his impressive speech, Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism in Canada, made the connection between the Babi Yar Holocaust site near Kiev, where more than 33,000 Ukrainian Jews were slaughtered by the Nazis over a two day period in 1941 and the Chabad’s Nariman House in Mumbai, where 67 years later within a teeming city of 20 million a tiny group of people were tortured and slaughtered “because and only because they were Jews, and as such because they represented all the Jews.”

He explained why Canada is boycotting the forthcoming United Nations’ Durban II conference and criticized the participation of European countries in this gathering which is heavily influenced by Libya and Iran.

Jason Kenney, whose country sent the largest delegation including nine MPs, offered to organize the next Interparliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism (ICCA) meeting in 2010 in Canada.

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