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General Introduction “An End to Antisemitism!”

No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin or his background or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love. For love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.¹

– Nelson Mandela

Ending Antisemitism?

Antisemitism continues to be a persistent and pernicious danger to Jews. It has recently progressed to the point of calling into question the very continuation of Jewish life in Europe. As Frans Timmermans, the First Vice-President of the European Commission stated in 2015, “In some (EU) states the majority of the Jewish community is not sure they have a future in Europe.”² The threat posed to Europe’s Jews may be the most visible, but it is not the only place where Jewish life is now confronted with issues of antisemitism in ways that were perhaps unthinkable a few years ago. Whether it is demonstrators chanting Nazi slogans in the US, politicians in the United Kingdom repeating antisemitic slurs, the violence and murder of Jews in France and other European countries, rewriting and whitewashing the history of the local collaboration in the Holo-

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1 N. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994), 542.

2 “Paris attacks: Timmermans warns of Jewish exodus,” *BBC News*, January 21, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30924276>. See also the updated summary of a recent study carried out by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights on experiences and perceptions of antisemitism in the European Union, “Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism: Second Survey on Discrimination and Hate Crime against Jews in the EU,” issued March 2019, accessed May 20, 2019, https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-antisemitism-survey-summary_en.pdf.

caust in Poland and Hungary, memes and conspiracy theories spread on the internet, or stereotypes and accusations used by radical groups, some of which are state sponsored—antisemitism poses a strong threat to the stability and wellbeing of our world. Antisemitism does not even require a strong Jewish presence; it can appear in societies where there is very little visible Jewish life, or even none.

The very existence of the State of Israel has proven to be a catalyst for antisemitism. The refusal to accept the right of the Jewish people to have a state and to accord them the same right of self-determination accorded to other peoples has sparked and inflamed antisemitism throughout the world. Too often antisemitism today is framed in terms of opposition to Israel, rhetoric that is supposed to provide justification and protective cover for both sophisticated and crude versions of antisemitism, a spurious legitimization that can be used by both left and right, Christian and Muslim.

The first person known to argue against Jew-hatred was the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. In the late first century C.E., Josephus wrote a defense of Judaism against the notorious Egyptian Jew-hater Apion entitled *Against Apion*. Since then, attempts to fight antisemitism with rational arguments have proven futile. Generations of anti-Jewish thought and action culminated in the Holocaust, the genocide of Europe's Jewish population, the paradigmatic and ultimate manifestation of antisemitism. After World War II, the world created a network of structures, such as the United Nations and the European Union, that were designed to safeguard the rights and lives of Jews and other minorities. Concepts such as human rights, war crimes tribunals, and prosecution of crimes against humanity became institutionalized as responses to atrocities and as preventative measures but had a limited impact on combating antisemitism.

In light of the age-old persistence of antisemitism, many are skeptical as to whether antisemitism indeed can be overcome and are convinced that the endeavor of eradicating antisemitism will continue to fail. It seems almost impossible to change the mind of a person with a deep-seated prejudice and even more so to eradicate the antisemitic prejudices so deeply rooted in the cultures of the world. Antisemitism is, therefore, often viewed as an ultimate evil that can at best be restrained—as a human condition that cannot be stopped and with which the world has to live.

This attitude comes close to surrender in a conflict in which antisemites do not even allow Jews to capitulate. The only end antisemites envision to their fight against Jews and all friends of Judaism is their eradication.

It is important to understand that there is nothing divine about antisemitism. Everything that has a beginning will also have an end—and so will antisemitism! History shows that other forms of hatred have abated. Hatred, and especially specific forms of hatred, are learned attitudes and thus can be unlearned.

We argue that antisemitism can be stopped over several generations. This long-term perspective is important and should be kept in mind. The question should not be if antisemitism will end, but when it will end, and how it can be ended. The need to fight antisemitism creates a categorical imperative that everyone must do everything humanly possible to end antisemitism!

The Nature of Antisemitism

Antisemitism can only be fought successfully in all its forms and appearances when its nature is understood properly. For instance, the UN Vienna conference on human rights of June 1993 declared antisemitism to be “a form of racism” that required allegedly no need for a separate legal treatment³—the conference’s resolution became an excuse to avoid dealing with antisemitism. A major problem in the confrontation with antisemitism is thus that different people define in various ways what antisemitism is and who are its main carriers. The terminology is frequently confusing (e.g., the misleading term “secondary antisemitism,” meaning post-Holocaust antisemitism).

1. Antisemitism is *not*, primarily, a social prejudice system like xenophobia, homophobia, or Islamophobia. It is *not* necessarily connected to racism, since antisemites from the left or the educated middle of society fight racist actions and ideologies but at the same time reveal a deeply embedded Judeophobia. Antisemitism is *not* necessarily connected with anti-modernism and national thinking, since many people who are open and tolerant towards social changes of all kinds adhere to antisemitic thinking.
2. The Middle East conflict is *not* the cause of the recent surge in antisemitism, although it is too easily related. Antisemitism has adapted to present-day conditions, in the form of anti-Israelism. As the Jewish state, Israel is the most visible expression of contemporary Jewish life and hence the “natural” magnet for present-day antisemitism.
3. It is *not* difficult to distinguish between critique of Israel and antisemitism. Israel’s policies can (and are) criticized, like the policies of any other country, even in Israel itself. However, using classic antisemitic stereotypes and projecting them onto the Jewish state is verbal antisemitism.

³ See D. Porat’s contribution to the present volume, “The Working Definition of Antisemitism – A 2018 Perception,” 475–87.

4. Antisemitism is *not* restricted to the radical right of western societies but has a broad basis in the political center as well as in the radical left. It is as at home with Islamic fundamentalists as it is with radical Christian groups.

Antisemitism is a heterogeneous phenomenon that expresses itself in a wide variety of different forms. While it is a phenomenon of modern times, it also reaches back into antiquity. Both Christianity and Islam incorporated antisemitic prejudice into their respective cultural and religious memories and were thus key elements in the dispersion of antisemitism throughout the world. In modern times, Christian antisemitism has influenced, and continues to influence, both secular and religious parts of Western societies. In the Muslim world, the Quran as well as Hadith and Sira furthered antisemitic prejudice, and, under the influence of modern Islamic hate preachers, the antisemitism of Muslim cultural and religious heritage has been allowed to thrive. At the same time, since the nineteenth century, antisemites began to form their own (anti)cultural memory by way of antisemitic texts such as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* or Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, which now thrive both in the Western and Muslim worlds online and in print.

It is precisely because of the huge impact that antisemitism had, and still has, on the cultural and religious heritage of the Western and Muslim worlds that Jew-hatred seems to be unstoppable and occurs in so many different forms and in so many different places around the world. The antisemitic parts of the Western and Muslim cultural memories provided, and persist in providing, interpretative grids that allow for identifying the collective Jew as the source of every evil, be it the plague in medieval times, the economic crisis of 1927, or the suffering of Palestinian people. Especially in situations of crisis, such antisemitic prejudices guided and guide significant parts of the world's population to allocate guilt and responsibility for catastrophes not where they belong but with the Jewish collective instead. An example for this practice can be found in the motif of Jewish well-poisoning. With its origins dating back to medieval times and various elements describing how and why Jews would poison a city's well to harm their Christian neighbors, the motif evolved to serve as one of the backgrounds for finding a cause for the outbreak of the plague in medieval times that caused hundreds of thousand deaths. However, the outbreak of the plague was not caused by well-poisoning, since Jews were also suffering from its consequences, today it is clear that it was because of poor and confined housing combined with bad hygienic circumstances causing the spread of bacteria that had led to multiple outbreaks of various pestilences of varying proliferation. Still, the motif of Jewish well-poisoning was not forgotten and has survived up until contemporary times. Dating back only a couple of years, Mahmoud Abbas, President of the

Palestinian Authority, echoed this motif as a false accusation in a speech to the European Parliament in June 2016.⁴ This shows how stereotypes, emotionally motivated as they are per definition, can easily shift between frames of reference of time and culture.

Similar mechanisms of blaming the Jews collectively for any mishap in the world have occurred throughout history and are still prominent today. Antisemitism is prevalent not just in the attitude of many groups and parties towards the State of Israel but in the attitudes of many parts of Western and Muslim societies towards all Jews.

Antisemitic prejudices communicated by the cultural and religious memories of the Western and Muslim worlds guided, and continue to guide, antisemites not only in how they perceive Jews and Judaism but also in their treatment of Jews. This perception of Jews causes slander, discrimination, persecution, murder, pogroms, and genocide, the most horrendous expression of which was the Shoah.

Antisemitism can be looked at as the discrepancy between real Jews and the antisemitic imagination of them, that attributes to them imaginary characteristics and objectives. Once this is understood, decision makers and influencers at large may serve as a positive and useful channel to enhance the well-being of Jewish citizens, thus securing social order and stability, and righting a wrong.

An important characteristic of antisemitism is its irrationality: Antisemitism has a very *strong emotional and irrational dimension at its core. Therefore, a rational approach will not be enough to combat it.* In blaming "the Jews," antisemites do not only construct Judaism as a negative concept but create a positive group identity for themselves as *not* being Jewish. Professing antisemitism becomes a sign of a cultural/religious identity, of one's belonging to a specific cultural or religious camp. In the process of antisemitic identity building, the individual antisemitic stereotypes and canards become *transnational, transcultural, and transreligious*. Associating Jews with the Devil, while common in Christianity since antiquity, is widespread in contemporary Islamic polemics against Jews, although it was rare in early Islam.

Antisemites understand themselves as innocent victims engaged in a heroic fight with the ultimate Jewish evil. In an antisemitic world view, both Judaism and the various alternate antisemitic identities are always religiously determined regardless of whether antisemites understand themselves as religious or not.

⁴ Cf. D. Hadid, "Mahmoud Abbas Claims Rabbis Urged Israel to Poison Palestinians' Water," *The New York Times*, June 23, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/24/world/middleeast/mahmoud-abbas-claims-rabbis-urged-israel-to-poison-palestinians-water.html>.

Antisemitism is thus dualistic in nature and the hatred it churns out is religiously motivated. Even in its racist expressions, antisemitism comprises a dualistic religion. Antisemites believe, for example, in the purity of an Aryan race despite the fact that biological studies demonstrate that no racial differences exist among the people called *homo sapiens*.⁵

Other examples for this phenomenon include the Arabic translations of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* or Henry Ford's *The International Jew* that are today bestsellers in the Arab world. A variety of meanings are thus transferred and reinforce each other through a historical and now trans-regional and trans-national cultural/religious antisemitic code.

Antisemitism is thus both a unique cultural and a unique religious category. It is deeply rooted in the Western and Muslim worlds. In its beginnings, it goes back to early Islam, early Christianity, and even beyond. Like a chameleon, it has changed and changes colors and expressions over the ages, while remaining essentially the same. It is stored in the cultural and religious memories of the world and has remained a central part of collective consciousness in spite of the trauma of the Holocaust.

The phenomena of culture and religion are therefore the key to fighting antisemitism successfully. Exclusively educational, and thus rational, approaches to combat antisemitism such as Holocaust education have failed largely due to the quasi-religious nature of antisemitism.

Antisemitism as a Human Rights Violation

Since antiquity, antisemitic agitation has resulted in persecution and murder of Jews. Examples include the pogrom of Alexandria in 38 C.E., the pogroms connected with the first crusade, the pogrom of Granada, the plague pogroms, and the Spanish inquisition. Millennia of antisemitic thought and action culminated in the Shoah, the genocide of Europe's Jewish population—the paradigmatic and ultimate manifestation of antisemitism. History leaves thus no doubt that antisemitism leads to the most horrendous forms of violence.

Antisemitism is a clear violation of the basic human rights laws and covenants that undergird our society and became part of international law in response to the horrors of the Shoah. These include Article 18 of the Universal Dec-

⁵ Cf. the declaration issued by eighteen internationally renowned human biologists and geneticists following the 1995 UNESCO Conference "Against Racism, Violence, and Discrimination" in Schlaining. "Declaration of Schlaining: AGAINST RACISM, VIOLENCE, AND DISCRIMINATION," issued June 1995, accessed May 20, 2019, https://www.friedensburg.at/uploads/files/Declaration_1995.pdf.

laration of Human Rights (1948), Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the OSCE Berlin Declaration of 2004, to name just the most important examples.

Antisemitism should be taken as an incitement to violence and human rights violation. Not only antisemitic violence, but any expression of antisemitism should therefore be subject to legal measures. Victims of antisemitism are entitled to any form of protection a democratic government can afford them.

A Long-Term Project that Requires Strategies Extending over Generations

Legal prosecution of antisemitism and protection of Jews and Jewish institutions can help to restrain Jew-hatred and improve the life of Jews. Both are central to the fight against antisemitism but will do little to eradicate Jew-hatred. As a unique cultural and religious code that is engraved into Western and Muslim societies, antisemitism cannot be overcome in a timespan of mere decades. To change the quasi-religious convictions of antisemites in such a relatively short time is as impossible as changing the cultural and religious memories of the world on short notice. To achieve this ultimate goal is a long-term process that requires long-term strategies effective over generations and that focuses on the cultural and religious nature of antisemitism. This long-term process is the second focus in the fight against antisemitism. Without such a long-term strategy, legal prosecution of antisemitic acts and protective measures for Jews will remain provisional: Jews and Judaism will continue to lead a life under threat.

Given the heterogeneous character of antisemitism and its fixed place in the cultural and religious memories of the world, combating antisemitism has to have as many aspects as antisemitism has expressions and has to follow as many policies as there are causes of antisemitism. Thus, any approach to combat antisemitism must be holistic. A *holistic and multidisciplinary* approach is therefore appropriate. In addition to the general recommendations of the executive summary below, the catalogue reproduced in the present volume therefore provides specific recommendations to religious, cultural, educational, business, judiciary, and governmental decision makers. These recommendations do not attempt to replace earlier catalogues of policies combating antisemitism such as the OSCE’s “Understanding Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes and Addressing the Secur-

ity Needs of Jewish Communities: A Practical Guide”⁶ or UNESCO’s “Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education: Guidelines for Policy Makers.”⁷ Instead, our recommendations focus on which long-term strategies might help to eradicate antisemitism in a time span of several generations without neglecting the present needs of persecuting antisemitic violence and protecting Jews and Jewish institutions.

Antisemitic contents of the world’s cultural and religious memories have to be replaced by positive contents about Judaism and an accurate depiction the history of antisemitism. In addition, the voices of all victims of antisemitism have to become part of the cultural and religious memories of the world.

The long-term eradication of antisemitism will take generations and will only be possible through concerted efforts of cultural and religious institutions worldwide. The short-term combating and restraining of antisemitism is possible in this generation. To achieve both key aims of the fight against antisemitism, we recommend a five-step process that combines both short-term and long-term strategies.

1. *Assessment:* Independent institutions need to assess the level of antisemitism in each country and worldwide in regular intervals. These assessments should include both surveys assessing how many people hold antisemitic prejudices in a given country or society as well as the monitoring of antisemitic hate crimes. Only such regular assessments will allow for qualified conclusions about how widespread antisemitism is and how successful the fight against it has been.
2. *Comprehending the problem:* While general conclusions about the nature of antisemitism are possible and necessary, the antisemitisms of each country have local specifics that need to be taken into consideration. Analysis of what creates Jew-hatred in each country, each society, each culture, and each religion is therefore required.
3. *Awareness-raising:* All members of a country, society, culture, or religion need to be alerted to the antisemitism in their country, society, culture, or religion.

⁶ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Understanding Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Jewish Communities: A Practical Guide*, May 15, 2017, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/317191?download=true>.

⁷ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education: Guidelines for Policy Makers*, May 31, 2018, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002637/263702e.pdf>.

4. *Application of policies for combating antisemitism:* Concrete short-term and long-term strategies to combat and eradicate antisemitism need to be applied.
5. *Adjusting the general policies to combat antisemitism:* The general policies need to be adjusted to the specific needs of each country, society, culture, and religion. Regardless of legal and constitutional restraints that differ from country to country, the recommendations represent what might be the best way to fight antisemitism. The policies suggested here need always to be adapted to what is possible under the legal and constitutional framework of each country.

The Working Definition of Antisemitism⁸

In order to fight antisemitism, one has to first admit that the problem of antisemitism exists and one has to be able to identify an act, insult, or comment as antisemitic. To achieve both, a consensus is needed on how to define antisemitism. The non-binding Working Definition of Antisemitism (WDA) of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) represents both a guideline for understanding antisemitism and a practical guide to identify incidents, collect data, and support implementation of the legislation dealing with antisemitism. The recommendations made in the present volume are therefore based on the IHRA’s Working Definition of Antisemitism that was officially adopted by the thirty-one member nations of IHRA under the Romanian Chairmanship at the Bucharest Plenary of May 2016 and is accepted now by many governments and parliaments around the world.⁹ Its central statement is as follows:

⁸ For an extensive discussion of the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism, see the contributions by Dina Porat, “The Working Definition of Antisemitism – A 2018 Perception,” 475–87, and Mark Weitzman, “The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism,” 463–73, in the present volume. The full text of the Working Definition of Antisemitism is reproduced in the present volume’s appendix for the readers’ convenience, cf. 565–6.

⁹ As of February 2019, the Working Definition of Antisemitism had been adopted and endorsed by the United Kingdom (December 12, 2016), Israel (January 22, 2017), the City of London (February 8, 2017), Austria (April 25, 2017), Scotland (April 27, 2017), Romania (May 25, 2017), Germany (September 20, 2017), Bulgaria (October 18, 2017), Lithuania (January 24, 2017), the Republic of Macedonia (March 6, 2018), the Netherlands (November 27, 2018), Slovakia (November 28, 2018), the Republic of Moldova (January 18, 2019), the Czech Republic (January 25, 2019), the Greek Ministry of Education (February 11, 2019), Hungary (February 18, 2019), and France (February 20, 2019). Cf. “Working Definition of Antisemitism,” International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, issued July 19, 2018, accessed May 20, 2019, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/news-archive/working-definition-antisemitism>.

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

Antisemitism and Other Forms of Hatred

Although a unique cultural and religious category, antisemitism often pairs with other forms of hatred. Next to Jews, the Nazis murdered in their concentration camps Roma, people with disabilities, and political opponents. The Spanish inquisition targeted not only Jews but also Moriscos, and the anti-Jewish legislation of the Christian Roman Empire was accompanied by even fiercer legislation against heretics. Today, hatred against Jews pairs, for example, with hatred of migrants.

The intolerance, oppression, and violence never stop with the persecution of Jews. As Martin Niemöller puts it in his famous quote:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.¹⁰

The policies proposed in the catalogue *An End to Antisemitism!* are focused on to the fight against antisemitism. Nevertheless, potentially, they can be of great importance in the fight against all other forms of hatred as well. We can only hope that our work might be of help in the fight against intolerance, hatred, and persecution beyond antisemitism.

¹⁰ W. Gerlach, *And the Witnesses Were Silent: The Confessing Church and the Persecution of the Jews* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 47.