



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
High Commissioner on National Minorities

address by
Christophe Kamp

OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

to the
Conference on Addressing Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region
Hosted by the OSCE Chairpersonship of Finland

[Check against delivery]

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On 27 January, on International Holocaust Memorial Day, we commemorated the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp. In the words of one survivor: “It’s necessary for the world to know”. This powerful reminder shows us that memory is an active, urgent imperative. At the same time, we must also ensure that the truth of the Holocaust is not only remembered, but learned from and used as a warning against ethnic hatred, intolerance and the dangerous indifference that allows such atrocities to occur. This is especially the case, as we are witnessing an increase in anti-Semitic incidents in our region, with some Jewish community organizations reporting an enormous increase since October 2023.¹

I therefore take this opportunity to thank the Finnish OSCE Chairpersonship for organizing this important discussion on addressing anti-Semitism in the OSCE region. My gratitude extends to Rabbi Andrew Baker, Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism, as well as to ODIHR and other OSCE structures for their valuable contributions and participation today.

The recent launch of the United Nations Action Plan to Combat Anti-Semitism – the first UN system-wide response to this challenge – underscores the urgent need for co-ordinated action at the national, regional and international levels.²

Over the past three decades, the institution of the High Commissioner on National Minorities has developed comprehensive Recommendations and Guidelines that are highly relevant to combating anti-Semitism. For example, *The Ljubljana Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies* emphasize that successful societies embrace diversity through effective governance and participation. More recently, *The Tallinn Guidelines on National Minorities and the Media in the Digital Age* provide crucial frameworks for addressing online hate speech and disinformation. These tools, combined with our latest set of *Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Social and Economic Life*, offer participating States pragmatic strategies to build more inclusive and resilient societies, also recognizing that marginalization can create fertile ground for the proliferation of extremist ideologies, hate speech and destructive conspiracy theories.

The digital transformation of our societies has fundamentally altered how hatred spreads and how we must combat it. Social media and online platforms can amplify racism and conspiracy theories at unprecedented speeds, reaching younger generations who may lack the historical context to recognize dangerous patterns. One single hateful message can now reach millions within hours, creating a “cascade effect” of intolerance.

¹ Survey from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, July 2024: [Jewish People’s Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism – EU Survey of Jewish People \(europa.eu\)](#).

² [United Nations Action Plan to Enhance Monitoring and Response to Antisemitism | United Nations Alliance of Civilizations \(UNAOC\)](#).

Two fundamental pillars must guide our response:

First, education remains our most powerful tool for ensuring that “Never Again” is not just a slogan but a living commitment. Drawing on *The Hague Recommendations on the Education Rights of National Minorities*, we recognize that education is a critical pathway to social cohesion and mutual understanding. Traditional Holocaust education, while essential, must evolve to meet contemporary challenges. The past informs the present, but we must also equip new generations to recognize hatred in its modern forms.

We need a “transformative educational framework” that bridges historical understanding with digital literacy. This means creating immersive learning experiences where young people do not just learn about historical anti-Semitism, but critically analyse its contemporary manifestations across social media platforms, political discourse and daily interactions. Educators are critical first responders who need practical tools to address both historical contexts and current expressions of racism in their classrooms, equipping students with analytical skills to recognize and challenge prejudice in its evolving forms. We must foster an environment that encourages objective historical research and responsible public debate, while steering clear of efforts to limit academic, educational or public discourse on historical issues to a singular, rigid national narrative.

Second, we must demonstrate zero tolerance for anti-Semitic hate speech and hate crimes. When political leaders respond with silence or ambiguity, they create a permissive environment for hatred. Every incident of anti-Semitism is a test of our societies’ commitment to human dignity and democratic values. Without any doubt, the OSCE community shares a responsibility to fight the evils of genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia, which still scar humanity, making the prevention of atrocities a priority for us all.

Anti-Semitism intersects with broader patterns of intolerance and discrimination. The OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security, enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, recognizes that protecting minority rights and combating discrimination are essential for preventing conflicts and building stable societies. This principle becomes even more crucial as our communities become increasingly diverse through migration.

We have observed that when communities build resistance to racism, they develop resilience against all forms of intolerance. This demonstrates the “interconnected security principle” – when we protect and strengthen one community, we reinforce the social fabric that protects all communities from discrimination and hatred.

From this perspective, any expression of racism and intolerance often signals broader societal breakdown. Therefore, our collective response to this must be comprehensive and multifaceted. Drawing on three decades of experience accumulated by the institution of the HCNM, I propose

three concrete recommendations to address and combat anti-Semitism, including its contemporary forms:

First, we must ensure the transition from reactive to proactive national strategies that comprehensively address this persistent challenge. Each participating State should develop robust action plans that engage deeply with Jewish communities and civil society and all other countries involved, supported by sophisticated data collection mechanisms to analyse trends and create more targeted prevention strategies.

Second, our legal and educational frameworks must be simultaneously strengthened and reimagined. This requires not just robust legal protections against anti-Semitism, but educational programmes that cultivate critical thinking, provide profound historical context about the Holocaust, and equip younger generations with intellectual tools to recognize and challenge prejudice in its evolving forms.

Finally, combating anti-Semitism demands a co-ordinated public advocacy approach. We must unequivocally denounce anti-Semitic incidents across all platforms – online and offline – while at the same time involving educators, politicians, civil society, and young people in this process. Our strategy must transcend traditional boundaries, fostering interfaith dialogue with a special emphasis on youth from different communities who can collaboratively combat hate speech and promote mutual understanding. By empowering young people as agents of change, we build societal resilience and create a unified response recognizing anti-Semitism as a fundamental threat to democratic values.

To conclude, our response to anti-Semitism and intolerance today will determine the societies of tomorrow. The OSCE's expertise in combating anti-Semitism must continue to evolve from knowledge to action. This requires a co-ordinated approach through enhanced information sharing and effective national early warning mechanisms. As OSCE institutions, executive structures, and we bear a critical responsibility to lead the fight against all forms of racism, ensuring our efforts and recommendations to participating States remain sustainable, comprehensive, principled and decisively action-oriented.

Thank you for your attention.