

Council of Europe
The Secretary General

Strasbourg, 8 August 2016

Dear President,

Thank you for your letter of 16 May and for your attentiveness to the work of the Council of Europe to prevent and combat antisemitism.

I have of course followed with great concern the increase in antisemitism and antisemitic attacks in Europe in recent years. Waves of terrorist attacks and uncoordinated responses to the migrant crisis combined with ongoing economic uncertainty give fertile ground for nationalists and xenophobes to exploit public anxiety. Upon my proposal, the Committee of Ministers last year therefore adopted action plans for the fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism and for building inclusive societies.

The Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 2106 (2016) to which you refer is extremely timely in calling for a renewal of the commitment to the fight against antisemitism in Europe. Political leaders and members of national parliaments have a specific responsibility for combating antisemitism and publicly condemning antisemitic statements, and states must ensure that the legislative framework on combating discrimination covers manifestations of antisemitism and makes public denial, trivialisation or praise of the Holocaust a criminal offense.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance plays an important role in monitoring the rise in antisemitism and makes concrete recommendations to governments on preventing and combating antisemitic hate speech and holocaust denial and violent attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions. ECRI also highlights trends at the European level in its Annual Reports. Moreover, European governments are consistently called upon to make effective use of ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 9 on the fight against antisemitism.

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Of particular concern is the Internet, which has become a powerful vehicle for promoting racism and intolerance. Widespread antisemitism in social media demonstrate the importance that should be accorded to preventing and combating hate speech on the Internet. ECRI's new General Policy Recommendation No. 15 on combating hate speech provides guidance to governments, and the Council of Europe's No Hate Speech Movement has resulted in national campaigns throughout the continent.

Also, other fields of activity, including the education sector, contribute to the work to prevent and combat antisemitism, which remains at the core of the mission of the Council of Europe.

Yours sincerely,



Thorbjørn Jagland