

An End to Anti-Semitism!

Organized by: University of Vienna (Institute of Jewish Studies; Klaus Davidowicz and Armin Lange), Tel Aviv University (Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary Jewry; Dina Porat), New York University (Global Network for Advanced Research in Jewish Studies; Lawrence H. Schiffman), and the European Jewish Congress (Ariel Muzicant)

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In the last decade, a shocking increase of anti-Semitism both in Europe and world-wide can be observed. Jew-hatred is not restricted anymore to the radical right wing margins of the political spectrum and Islamic extremists. While the roots of anti-Semitism reach back to antiquity and continued to manifest themselves both in the Islamic and western worlds, today the conflict about the State of Israel, – often expressed with anti-Semitic motives, plays a role not only in the Islamic world but has an ever increasing presence in anti-Semitic agitation as a whole. Even in democratic societies and among academics anti-Semitic resentments are widespread again. The spectrum of anti-Semitic activities ranges from physical violence against and persecution of Jews via discrimination, slander, and verbal abuse to the structural anti-Semitism of many societies and cultures. Several European countries and even the United States have sadly become hotspots of anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic violence. In addition, in Israel, in particular, Jews suffer from the anti-Semitic violence and anti-Semitic slander by Muslim terrorists. In many other countries of the world the various forms of religious, racist, and political anti-Semitism are on the rise as well. Sometimes, anti-Israel attitudes as well as demands for boycotting Israel (BDS) may morph into anti-Semitism, adding another dangerous factor. Neither the critical study nor the attempts to suppress anti-Semitism can thus be restricted to Europe. Satellite-TV, the internet, and worldwide waves of migration make anti-Semitism a global phenomenon that needs to be fought on a global scale in all countries of the western and Muslim worlds but even inside Israel.

On May 13, 2014, the Anti-Defamation League published the results of the first global survey investigating the attitude towards Jews based on polling 53,100 people in 100 countries. According

to this survey, approximately 1.09 billion people worldwide hold anti-Semitic prejudices (see <http://global100.adl.org/>). The recent report on anti-Semitism of the Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry at Tel Aviv University lists for the year 2014 766 cases of violence against Jews with an anti-Semitic background (<http://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/sites/default/files/Doch2014-2.pdf>). France heads this list with 164 cases followed by the UK (141 incidents) and Germany (76 incidents). The total number of anti-Semitic acts is much higher. For Austria the report lists 255 acts of anti-Semitism in the year 2014. This and other surveys show that the attempt to fight anti-Semitism by means of education alone had only limited success and needs to be supported by further measures.

The first conference that researched anti-Semitism critically convened in 1944 in San Francisco. This conference, “*Anti-Semitism - a Social Disease*,” was groundbreaking in its sociological and psychological approach to anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, even based on this approach, the study of anti-Semitism was not able to develop effective strategies for the eradication of Jew-hatred. This problem is the focal point of the Vienna conference, “An End to Anti-Semitism.” Beyond the study of the history of anti-Semitism and education about it, it will develop a catalogue of policies against anti-Semitism addressed to politicians, religious dignitaries, and other decision makers and leading figures in our societies. The aim will be to establish specific strategies and recommendations for large-scale, concrete action. The recommendations contained in this catalogue are intended to help extinguish or least to suppress anti-Semitism globally. One major recommendation we are already considering is the adoption of the Working Definition of Anti-Semitism (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=B8-2017-0383&format=XML&language=EN>;

https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/press_release_document_antisemitism.pdf), a central tool that defines both antisemitism and the antizionism that is actually anti-Semitism.

The conference “An End to Anti-Semitism” will be based on the Working Definition of Anti-Semitism and wants to address its topic in its full breadth and historical framework, from the ancient roots of Jew-hatred until today. For this purpose, the below fields of study need to be involved. Each of these fields will be represented at the conference with one panel headed by one or two field chairs.

1. Ancient History (Benjamin Isaac, Tel Aviv University)
2. Medieval History (Simha Goldin, The Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, Tel Aviv University)
3. Bible and Christianity (Karin Finsterbusch, University of Koblenz-Landau, and Armin Lange, University of Vienna)
4. Islam (Esther Webman, Tel Aviv University)
5. Modern History (Klaus Davidowicz, University of Vienna)
6. Contemporary Period (Dina Porat, Kantor Center for the Study of European Jewry, Tel Aviv University)
7. Judaism and Jewish Studies (Lawrence H. Schiffman, New York University)
8. Israel Studies (Evyatar Friesel, Hebrew University Jerusalem)

9. Philosophy and Ethics (Julius Schoeps, Moses Mendelsohn Center, Potsdam)
10. Sociology and Social Sciences (Eliezer Ben Raphael, Tel Aviv University)
11. Psychology (NN)
12. Pedagogy (Martin Rothgangel, University of Vienna)
13. Media-Studies and Journalism (Frank Stern, University of Vienna)
14. Internet and Anti-Semitism (Monika Schwarz-Friesel, Technische Universität Berlin)
15. Jurisprudence: Aleksandra Glizczynska-Grabias (Poznan Human Rights Centre, Institute of Legal Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences)
16. Political Studies (Stephan Grigat and Karin Stögner, University of Vienna)

The conference aims to bring together and into cooperation academics, religious dignitaries, political leaders, and other decision-makers. Many academics have already accepted our invitation in addition to field chairs including the French philosopher Bernard-Henri Lévy. Among the decision makers are, in alphabetical order, Michael Bünker (Bishop of the Protestant Church of Austria), Hassen Chalgoumi (Imam of Drancy), Irwin Cotler (former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada), Israel Meir Lau (the Chief-Rabbi of Tel Aviv), Katharina von Schnurbein (European Coordinator on Combating Antisemitism), and Natan Sharansky (Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Israel). These varied groups will join together at the conference in both studying the phenomenon and in formulating feasible specific public policy proposals, rooted in the research presented at the conference. The participants will be invited to discuss how the recommendations of the conference can be applied to help eradicate and suppress anti-Semitism in all its forms.

Venues and Dates

Vienna Town Hall and University of Vienna

Date: February 18th-22nd 2018

Sunday-Thursday: Four days (beginning Sunday evening and ending Thursday afternoon)

Presenters

150 international presenters from the humanities and sciences, from politics, religious communities, and from decisions makers in our societies.

Course of Events

In the morning: Plenary talks by academics (English)

In the morning: Leadership talks by decision makers (English; open to the general public)

In the afternoon: parallel sessions of several seminars (English)

In the evening: Public events (German or English)

Communication before the Conference

Written versions of all presentations will be distributed by the conference organizers to all lecturers to ascertain their interconnectedness two months before the conference. Based on this exchange of presentations, all presenters will be asked to submit written suggestions to the conference

organizers for strategies to fight anti-Semitism, at the latest one month before the conference. These written suggestions will be compiled into a draft catalogue of proposed measures against anti-Semitism that will be distributed and debated at the conference itself.