

**Statement of Gregg J. Rickman, Ph.D.**  
**Former U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism**  
**for**  
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Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the state of anti-Semitism in the world today. As a matter of background, I served in the United States Department of State as the U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism from 2006-2009. During that time, I traveled around the world to twenty-eight countries, including many countries with significant Muslim populations espousing a mindset and collection of historical and political biases, the subject upon which I wish to concentrate my discussion. Specifically to this point, I will address the subject of relations between Jewish communities and ethnic and Muslim minorities in Europe.

In my travels, I found that in many of these countries with either large Muslim populations or Muslim countries themselves, the relationship between the two communities is tense. On the one hand, Muslim community leaders tell me that they respect the role Jews have made for themselves, admiring the access Jewish leaders have and the influence and relative wealth the community has come to accumulate. On the other hand, there is jealousy. “I want to catch up with Jewish groups organizationally,” one Muslim leader told me in Marseille. This leader spoke to me about “a competition of memories” with Jews, pointedly expressing a problem.

His concerns centered on Muslims’ perception of their comparative disadvantage in Europe vis-à-vis the Jews. He told me about real societal discrimination against Muslims in employment, religious observance, and in general daily life, not at all the responsibility of the

Jewish community. Yet, despite their perception of their status, they offer up the support Jews in Marseille exhibit toward Israel as the real reason for their present situation.

He expressed complaints that Jews came as “colonialists” with other Europeans to North Africa, received French citizenship and then moved to France. Muslims on the other hand lived in French-speaking North Africa and also immigrated to France but were denied the same level of acceptance. These same Jews, I was told, now unfairly “appropriated” the history of the Holocaust, intimating that it was not their history to claim. Now “we Algerians suffer from it” I was told.

Furthermore, responsibility for Muslims’ predicament, according to Ambassador Hemayet Uddin, Director General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference rests with the West for its lack of respect. Uddin declared at an OSCE conference in Bucharest, Romania in May 2008:

“The lack or insufficient understanding of the Islamic faith in the West is also due to centuries of colonization and foreign occupation of the Muslim world that left them languishing in poverty and ignorance. In the process, the glory of the contributions made by the Muslims in enriching world civilizations have either been lost in their history or blunted by the indifferent attitude of their colonial masters.

Many Muslims believe their “suffering” locks Muslim communities and individuals in a second-class position. Yet, this view according to the director of a Dutch NGO in Amsterdam is not necessarily the correct one. According to him, the community itself is not without blame in this regard. Young Muslims’ own cultural and religious reluctance to integrate does not help matters. Fewer prospects for employment are tied to their reluctance to seek proper schooling or even higher levels of education.

I have been told of this problem in Germany as well. It was explained with great detail to me the effects on Muslim teenagers who don’t stay in school. Dropping out of school, places them at a clear disadvantage economically and socially. This fact has been

reinforced by a study published by the Open Society Institute EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program which found in 2007 that three times as many foreign-born German children stop at secondary school failing to move on. Furthermore, in 1998, according to the report, about one-third of foreigners aged 20-29 remained without a professional qualification, compared to only 8% of Germans of the same age group. It has not gotten much better ten years later. Think though of the effects now on that age group, self-deprived of an education.

In Dutch schools, as the Dutch NGO director and former Dutch parliamentarian Aayan Hirsi Ali explained to me, Muslim school children are disruptive in class and teachers are reluctant to counter their obstreperous practices. Worse, according to the Open Society study of 2007 for the Netherlands, less than 10% of the Turks and Moroccans students have finished higher education or university education there.

As second generation Muslims, these youth are caught in a netherworld. They don't feel fully European, and with inadequate Arabic language fluency, they don't feel fully "Arab." Add a lack of education to this mix of circumstances and the sense of despair is only worse. These concerns have been expressed to me across Europe.

Confused European Muslim youth go "back home" to the countries of their parents and grandparents yearning to acquire that identity but are rejected there as not wholly Moroccan, Algerian or Turkish. Rejected in both "homes" they return to Europe confused, looking for meaning and of course someone to blame, and that is how they fall prey to charismatic Imams, imported from abroad, usually from Turkey, Iran, or Pakistan into Mosques financed from abroad and subject to their influence.

This need to blame as well as hatred is passed on to younger Muslim kids who harass Jews, for example, in West Amsterdam, in the banlieu near Paris and other European cities.

I have talked with a number of people in Amsterdam, rabbis, Jewish teenagers, and even elected officials who told me stories of young Muslims who yell “kill the Jews” and routinely throw rocks at Jews leaving synagogues or those daring to walk through Muslim neighborhoods. As one Jewish leader told me, “Jews are the only ones who go to synagogue or school under police protection.” This has become normal existence for Jews in Europe.

Due to this ongoing pattern of Muslim harassment of Jews in Europe, it has come to the point that an intentional segregation is taking place. Jewish families are moving out of mixed Muslim-Jewish neighborhoods. Because of the frequency of anti-Jewish harassment, it is simply no longer worth living in these areas.

Moreover, according to Catholic Church officials and Jewish leaders in France, in 2007, nearly 60% of Jewish students attended private schools in France (Jewish or even Catholic), with their parents fearing their security in the public schools. As in the Netherlands, teachers are unable to guarantee the safety of Jewish students.

I was told stories of ongoing efforts at interfaith work in the banlieu outside of Paris talking with Muslims that produced frightening results. I was told of declarations from Muslims warning those attempting this work, that Jews were a “damned and rejected people,” and that one Muslim man declared “Every day I pray for you to become a Muslim so I wouldn’t be obligated to kill you.”

It must be clear that the discrimination Muslims face is not a myth, yet Muslim communities suggest a greater role for the problem and weave it into the story of their victimhood taking on strong notes of succeeding the Jews as the newest victims of discrimination all the while blaming them for their ills. “In broader terms,” I was told, “Arabs are Semites and therefore, ‘Islamaphobia’ is a kind of anti-Semitism.” This sentiment was echoed to me by another source who casually suggested that Islamaphobia in Europe is

“ten times” that of anti-Semitism.” I hear this comparison from Saudis, Emiratis, Egyptians, Lebanese, and others around the world. Yet, just as Muslims accuse Jews of appropriating a history that they claim is not theirs, so too are they appropriating one. We need to be clear about this point; anti-Semitism means discrimination or violence against Jews, not Muslims.

This sentiment could not have been clearer than in the title of Maleiha Malik’s February 2, 2007 opinion piece in the UK’s *Guardian* newspaper entitled “Muslims are now getting the same treatment Jews had a century ago.” Other writers warn of the next Holocaust that to them, is to be perpetrated against the Muslims.

All of these stories point to a very real problem facing Jews in Europe. Available polling data reveals the same conclusions about Muslim attitudes to Jews: Muslims in Europe hold more unfavorable opinions of Jews than the general population. According to a spring 2006 survey by the Pew Global Attitudes Project:

2006 Pew Global Attitudes Project Poll on Attitudes of European-Muslim Communities Toward Jews	
COUNTRY	Percentage of People Polled with an <b>Unfavorable</b> View of Jews.
British Muslims	47%
British General Public	7%
French Muslims	28%
French General Public	13%
German Muslims	44%
German General Public	22%
Spanish Muslims	60%
Spanish General Public	39%

Relations between Muslim and Jewish communities are overwhelmed by the extension of the Middle East conflict to European shores. The hatreds, jealousies, and historic disputes are now being played out in new lands. The conclusions of the (EUMC) the European Monitoring Center's *Summary overview of the situation in the European Union 2001-2005* only reinforce this conclusion.

“There has been some evidence to support the view that there is some link between the number of reported anti-Semitic incidents and the political situation in the Middle East.... Moreover, some of the data indicate that there have been changes in the profile of the perpetrators. It is no longer the extreme right which is seen as solely responsible for hostility towards Jewish individuals or property.... Instead, victims identified ‘young Muslims,’ ‘people of North African origin,’ or ‘immigrants’ as perpetrators.”

The EUMC concluded that in Europe: “Anti-Semitic activity after 2000 is increasingly attributed to a ‘new anti-Semitism,’ characterized primarily by the vilification of Israel as the ‘Jewish collective’ and perpetrated primarily by members of Europe’s Muslim population.” These sentiments have also been related to me by Europeans, one of whom told me “anti-Semitism is caused by the Muslim community and we’ve been afraid to say it.”

The conflation of Jews and Israelis in Muslim communities and beyond is a great challenge. Across Europe and in the Muslim world in general, there is little differentiation between the two and whenever there is a problem in the Middle East, the spill-over is quite measurable and unfortunate.

Worse, Europe is more and more accepting of this attitude. As one European Jewish leader told me, “Europe is losing its shame over the Holocaust.” This leads to a blurring of the lines between the definition of Jews and Israelis and between opposition to Israel and anti-Semitism, causing in the words of Jean-Yves Camus, “the Nazification of Israel.”

Throughout the Middle East and in many Muslim communities in Western Europe and beyond, anti-Zionist rhetoric finds frequent and powerful expression especially in Arabic-language newspapers and magazines, on the radio, on television, via the Internet, and in sermons delivered in mosques.

As the March 2008 State Department report on Contemporary Global Anti-Semitism declared, “disproportionate criticism of the Jewish State and/or Israelis and demonizing them as barbaric, unprincipled, selfish, inhumane, etc. is anti-Semitic and has the effect of causing global audiences to associate those bad attributes with Jews in general.”

Anti-Semitism emanating from Muslim communities throughout Europe provides a corrosive atmosphere for Jews there and provides for an expanding hotbed of anti-Jewish feeling, attitudes, and actions. In an area so tragically associated with anti-Semitism, for this virus to return in yet another guise is both infuriating and extremely dismaying. History as well as common decency dictates that European authorities as well as individual Europeans have a distinct responsibility to curb this evil before it is allowed to again overwhelm the Jewish people, and worse spread to other lands. We must not veer our eyes as Jews elsewhere suffer from anti-Semitism, ignoring the problem since it fails to rise to such a threatening level around us. Ignoring this problem is an abandonment of the Jews there and another scar upon the history of Jews and of freedom and good will itself. As Edmund Burke is said to have declared, “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.” It is certainly time to do something.