

**Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.**  
**Opening Statement**  
**Hearing on Anti-Semitism in Europe**  
**Wednesday, October 22, 2003**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this important hearing.

I wish we didn't have to hold this hearing. But I'm not naive. Anti-Semitism has been a disgusting aspect of European - - and world - - history for nearly two millennia.

This Committee has held many hearings on this distasteful topic. In the summer of 1994, for example, when I was Chairman of the Subcommittee on European Affairs, we held a series of three hearings on right-wing movements in Europe - - which differed from each other in many respects, but had as a common thread the old, virulent anti-Semitism.

It goes without saying that one can oppose certain policies of the State of Israel without being anti-Semitic. On the other hand, anti-Semites regularly try to conflate the two issues and, moreover, often distort Israeli actions in the process.

In April 2002 we got a vivid picture of this tactic. In response to the first wave of suicide attacks against civilians in late March and early April of that year, the Israeli army went after terrorists in the refugee camp in Jenin.

The European news media, with very few exceptions, bought the line of the Palestinian terror lobby hook, line, and sinker. Massacres of seven or eight hundred civilians were proclaimed as fact.

In response to a petition by Arab Members of the Knesset, the Israeli Government allowed international observers into the camp. They found that a total of fifty-two people had died, thirty-three of them armed terrorists.

Of course the anti-Semites in Europe didn't want to be bothered by the facts. A really sick stream of vituperation spewed forth all over the continent - - with over-the-top language that went far beyond criticism of Israeli actions, which themselves, as I said, had been described completely incorrectly. These statements were blatantly, unashamedly anti-Semitic, and many of them were made by prominent Europeans.

I cited a few of them in a floor statement I gave in June 2002 in support of a Resolution that I co-sponsored, condemning the growing intolerance and acts of persecution against Jews in many European countries.

The French Ambassador to the U.K. made a demeaning, scatological reference to the State of Israel, and the only "scandal" that resulted was criticism of the supposed "indiscretion" of other guests for having leaked the story to the press!

Then there was the wife of the President of the European Central Bank who after flying the PLO flag from her house in Amsterdam complained that "Israel is being kept going by those rich Jews in America."

A similar example of objectivity came from Oslo where a member of the Norwegian Nobel Committee declared that she would like to rescind Shimon Peres's Nobel Peace Prize. Needless to say, she didn't choose to mention, let alone criticize, Yasser Arafat or the suicide bombers whom he aids and abets.

Even Germany's Free Democrats, a party with a proud history of liberalism and tolerance, was shamed by one of its top officials who explained that the Deputy Director of the Central Council of Jews in Germany had brought on anti-Semitism himself by his supposedly aggressive behavior as a television talk-show host!

One must add, sadly, that this troubled individual later committed suicide, and certainly he was not typical in any way of the Free Democratic Party.

And, of course, none of the other three statements reflected the policies of the French, Dutch, or Norwegian governments. But such utterances by prominent individuals do matter greatly in setting the tone of public discussion.

Well, Mr. Chairman, in the year since the United States Senate passed the Resolution in question, anti-Semitic acts - - both rhetorical ones and physically violent ones - - have continued.

Students in a Jewish Day School in Paris were assaulted by a gang of North African teenagers. In another incident, a rabbi, who is the leader of a liberal Jewish movement was knifed on a Paris street and his car set afire.

A Vienna rabbi was assaulted on his way home from prayer.

A Berlin man wearing a Star of David was attacked on a bus by a group of teenagers who kicked him in the face, spat on him, and shouted anti-Semitic slurs.

Jewish cemeteries have been desecrated in London, Rome, and other European cities.

Just last week a new Jewish monument in Belarus was defaced.

Yes, several European governments have responded with declarations against anti-Semitism, and a few, like France, have stiffened laws against anti-Semitic and other such violence.

EU member-states are considering a proposal to harmonize their laws against racism.

But many observers have finally dared to discuss what has long been a “dirty, little secret” - namely that the threat of violence from millions of impoverished, often unemployed Muslim men in Western Europe has, at the very least, induced governments to temper their reactions to anti-Semitism. In truth, Europe’s relations with the Muslim world increasingly affect its public diplomacy.

How else can one explain the absolutely scandalous behavior of the European Union last Friday in Brussels at the meeting of the European Council, the heads of EU governments?

On the previous day at a summit meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahatir Mohamad (*mah-hah-TEER mo-HAHM-id*), had treated the world to one of his periodic ravings, this time about Jews.

Mahatir’s (*mah-hah-TEER*’s) comment on the most heinous crime in history, the Holocaust, was the following: “The Europeans killed six million Jews out of twelve million, but today the Jews rule the world by proxy.”

He went on to enlighten the Conference about Western intellectual history, explaining that the Jews “invented socialism, communism, human rights and democracy so that persecuting them would appear to be wrong, so that they can enjoy equal rights with others.”

The United States immediately and publicly condemned Mr. Mahatir’s ignorant bigotry. We would expect no less from our government.

The European Union reportedly was asked to include a similar condemnation of Mahatir’s (*mah-hah-TEER*’s) speech in the lengthy “Presidency Conclusions” ending its own summit meeting last Friday. It chose not to.

The “Presidency Conclusions” offered a perfect opportunity for a condemnation, since it devoted an entire section to “External Relations.”

This section included declarations on the following international topics:

- the WTO
- a so-called “New Neighborhood Initiative”
- the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
- the “Northern Dimension”
- Moldova
- Iraq
- Iran
- Kosovo
- Bolivia
- Guatemala
- the Great Lakes Region of Africa; and even sections on
- the Middle East; and
- relations with the Arab world

Mr. Chairman, it is incomprehensible to me that the EU would publicly comment on these topics but not on the vile, anti-Semitic speech in Malaysia.

French President Chirac reportedly said that it was not the EU’s place to issue a condemnation. There’s real moral leadership!

Mr. Chirac apparently wrote a private letter to the Malaysian Prime Minister criticizing his remarks. I doubt that many of the one billion Muslims in the world had access to this letter.

Once again, the EU had a chance to show its true moral colors, and it failed the test miserably. How could it not forthrightly speak out against such repulsive nonsense, especially given the weighty historical burden of European anti-Semitism?

Mr. Chairman, I’m not sure, but I think it exemplifies the same lack of a moral compass that the EU showed when it voted for Libya to chair the UN’s Commission on Human Rights, on the pathetic grounds that the chairmanship is rotational by geographic area.

Heaven forbid that Brussels should offend the Africa Group by rejecting its candidate!

Heaven forbid that the EU should offend the Organization of the Islamic Conference by publicly repudiating Mahatir’s (*mah-hah-TEER’s*) hateful garbage!

This reluctance to speak out is not only morally indefensible; it is also self-defeating.

Anti-Semitism is to democracy as the dead canary in the cage is to coal miners: a warning of impending doom. Miners can’t compromise with lethal coal gas, and democracies can’t compromise with purveyors of anti-Semitism.

Mr. Chairman, I am eager to hear the testimony of our expert witnesses today.

I know Mr. Harris, Mr. Foxman, and Mr. Levin personally - - and I have the highest regard for their objectivity. I met Mr. O'Donnell briefly when he was our Consul General in Frankfurt and I was enroute to the Balkans on one of my frequent trips there.

I hope these gentlemen can disabuse me of my continuing impression of European half-heartedness when it comes to battling anti-Semitism.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

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