



PRESS RELEASE

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 15TH EU – ISRAEL HIGH LEVEL SEMINAR ON COMBATING RACISM, XENOPHOBIA AND ANTISEMITISM

(Brussels, 8 May 2024)

On 7 - 8 May 2024, the European Commission and the State of Israel held their 15th EU-Israel High-Level Seminar on combating racism, xenophobia and antisemitism in Brussels. The Seminar takes place against the background of an unprecedented rise of antisemitism in Europe and worldwide after the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians on 7 October 2023. The European Commission and the State of Israel reaffirm their full support to European Jewish communities in these difficult times. Determined to fight all forms of antisemitic manifestations they agreed to strengthen their cooperation in fighting antisemitism, particularly online as well as Holocaust distortion and denial in the digital sphere.

The EU-Israel Seminar is a unique forum, that since 2007 brings together European and Israeli authorities, civil servants, policymakers, experts, international organisations and non-governmental organisations to discuss best practices and measures to combat antisemitism and other forms of hatred. As part of its first-ever EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life adopted in October 2021, the EU committed to upgrade this forum to a High-level Seminar, with a focus on operational follow up. Today's meeting was opened by Margaritis Schinas, European Commission Vice President for Promoting Our European Way of Life, Israel Katz, Israel Minister of Foreign Affairs and on behalf of the Member States, Aurore Bergé France Minister for Gender Equality and Fight against discriminations and Maria Alexandra Kefala, Greece Deputy Minister of Social Cohesion and Family.

Since the attack, Europe has seen scenes of hatred it hoped never to see again: stars of David sprayed on houses, arson attacks on Jewish communities and synagogues, Jews dissimulating their names. University campuses have become a scene of hatred and de-humanization of Jews and Israel, instead of an environment that promotes knowledge and open discussion based on respect to the other.



The number of antisemitic incidents have raised by several hundred and even thousand percentages, according to data collected by EU Member States. Antisemitism has also exploded online, with cruel and violent language quickly converting into antisemitic incidents offline.

European Commission Vice-President for Promoting Our European Way of Life, Margaritis Schinas, stated in his opening speech:

“Antisemitism is incompatible with what the European Union stands for – it goes against European values and the model of society we represent.

But today we are better equipped to fight antisemitism in Europe than before, drawing on the first-ever EU strategy on combating antisemitism we adopted in 2021. Now is the time to step up its implementation, with EU Member States and in collaboration with our key partners.”

Israel Katz, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel, emphasized:

The October 7th Hamas attack, which claimed the lives of almost 1200 infants, children, young and older women and men, is the ultimate expression of hatred of Jews and Israel. Over 250 were taken hostage, 133 are still held by Hamas. Following the attack, we have experienced an unprecedented wave of antisemitism in Europe and elsewhere around the world. The State of Israel has a moral obligation to every Jew and Israeli around the world, but every country, home to Jews is responsible for ensuring their safety, security and their basic rights as citizens. Antisemitism is not only a Jewish matter, but is, above all, a fatal violation of basic human rights; it should be in the interest of societies seeking peace and life to eradicate it. We must join hands and stand together facing this challenge to our common future.

Following the Oct 7th attack, the European Commission has acted immediately and decisively. The EU has stepped up the implementation of its EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish lifeⁱ. On 6 December 2023, it presented the Communication No Place for hate: a Europe united against hatredⁱⁱ, which calls to all Europeans, especially civil society organizations, to stand up against hatred and speak up for respect of the Other.

The two sides reaffirmed the commitment to work together and in cooperation with civil society to make sure that the challenge of antisemitism is answered. They also reaffirmed that, especially following the October 7th attack, the IHRA working

ⁱ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_23_5527

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definition on antisemitism is the leading most effective tool to combat antisemitism, given its rights-based and victim-centered approach.

The following topics were discussed as part of the Seminar: the rise of antisemitism after 7 October and its impact on Jewish communities in Europe; artificial intelligence, antisemitism and radicalization; progresses and challenges on the fight against antisemitism; and addressing online antisemitism.

Background:

The [EU-Israel High-Level Seminar on combating racism, xenophobia and antisemitism](#) is held regularly since 2007, taking place alternatingly in Brussels and in Jerusalem. It reflects the importance attributed by both the EU and Israel to the fight against antisemitism and other forms of hatred and serves as a major opportunity for dialogue.

The first-ever [EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life](#) was adopted by the European Commission on 5 October 2021. It includes initiatives in the area of addressing antisemitism online, data collection of incidents, security, fostering Jewish life, education, research, and Shoah remembrance. As part of the strategy the EU committed to upgrade today's meeting to a High-level Seminar, with a focus on operational follow up.

EU Member States have committed to develop national strategies against antisemitism, to endorse and use the IHRA working definition of antisemitism and to appoint national coordinators for combating racism and antisemitism. They unanimously adopted in [2022 the 'Council Conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism'](#), in [2020 'Council Declaration on mainstreaming the fight against antisemitism across policy areas'](#) and in [2018 'Council Declaration on the fight against antisemitism and the development of a common security approach to better protect Jewish communities and institutions in Europe.'](#)

Following the heinous terrorist attacks by Hamas on Israel citizens and the spike of antisemitism in Europe and beyond, the Commission reacted promptly and effectively. The Commission published a Statement on the rise of antisemitic incidentsⁱⁱⁱ and co-signed a joint statement of special envoys and coordinators on combating antisemitism^{iv}.

[Link to EU newsletter](#)

[More about the European Commission's fight against antisemitism](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_23_5527

^{iv} <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/newsletter-archives/48763>