

Minister Kenney at the Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism

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**Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism –
At the Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism**

Jerusalem, December 16, 2009

Shalom. Thank you very much. It is an honour to be here to participate in this Global Forum on Anti-Semitism. Let me begin by commending the Government of Israel for hosting this and bringing us together for this, one of the most critical issues in the world today.

Let me also begin by acknowledging and thanking the large Canadian delegation for their presence and participation here, including my parliamentary colleagues, the Honourable Irwin Cotler, a former Minister of Justice and one of the founding members of the IACCA, Scott Reid, Chairman of the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights and Co-Chair of the Canadian Inter-Parliamentary Coalition to Combat anti-Semitism, together with his colleague, the other Co-Chair, Mario Silva, a member of parliament from Toronto, who's done tremendous work on these issues. In addition, we have here assembled, the leadership of most of the major Canadian Jewish organizations and I'd like to thank them for participating.

Shortly after he came to office as Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper said that unfortunately in some countries, hatred of the Jews is still preached from religious pulpits and still proclaimed from political podiums.

"There are still people who would perpetrate another Holocaust if they could. That's why we must resist the error of viewing the Holocaust as a strictly historical event. It's not good enough for politicians to stand before you and say they remember and mourn what happened over six decades ago. They must stand up to those who advocate the destruction of Israel and its people today. They must be unequivocal in their condemnation of anti-Semitic despots, terrorists and fanatics, because those who attack Israel and those who sponsor such attacks do not seek merely to gain some leverage or to alter some boundary or to right some wrong."

He said, "they seek what they and those like them, have always sought, the destruction of Israel and the destruction of the Jewish people." Why? "A thousand complicated rationalizations, but only one simple reason: because the Jews are different, because the Jews are not like them. And because Israel is different and alone in a complicated part of the world, it is too easy to embrace the rationalizations and to ignore the truth. But our government believes that those who threaten Israel also threaten Canada because, as the last World War showed us, hate fuelled bigotry against some is ultimately a threat to us all and must be resisted."

What is this fanaticism, this hatred to which Prime Minister Harper referred?

Well he saw it firsthand two weeks ago in visiting Mumbai during a trade mission to India when he went and paid his respects at Nariman House, the Chabad-Lubavitch House in Mumbai, the scene of a terrible massacre committed against Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg and his wife, Rivka in

November of last year.

Almost at the same time that Prime Minister Harper was visiting Chabad House in Mumbai, anti-Semitic fanatics in his home city, my home city of Calgary, Alberta were spray painting anti-Semitic graffiti on the Jewish Community Centre, Jewish homes, on public transit installations and indeed, spray painting swastikas on our city's Holocaust memorial. Some of this graffiti called for the end to the Israeli genocide in Gaza -- "Stop the Israeli genocide in Gaza."

What Prime Minister Harper witnessed in Mumbai, what happened at the same time in Calgary, were practical expressions of the new anti-Semitism. Even though Canada is celebrated around the world as being a successful model of mutual coexistence and tolerance, we too have seen a troubling increase in incidents of anti-Semitism. B'Nai Brith Canada publishes the authoritative registry of anti-Semitic incidents in Canada. In 2008, they received reports of 1,135 incidents of anti-Semitic instances, the highest number recorded in 28 years of the study, an increase of 8.9% over 2007.

Statistics Canada reports that 15% of all hate motivated crimes target Jews who only constitute 1% of our country's population- and that two thirds of hate crimes that are targeting religious communities were targeting members of Canada's Jewish community.

So how have we addressed these growing incidents of anti-Semitism? Well first of all, on the domestic level, our government has worked with the Jewish community to begin a program of recognizing our own history of official anti-Semitism. Before and during the Second World War, Canada imposed immigration restriction measures which denied access to our country of European refugees. Most notoriously in our decision, in 1938, to refuse to accept the M.S. St. Louis as a refugee ship. We've launched a \$2.5 million commemorative fund to work with organizations to understand better research and educate future generations about the hatred which underscored those policies.

We've launched a fund to provide assistance to upgrade security at vulnerable institutions in the Jewish and other communities and have faced vandalism or threats. And now we've been able to work with the community to upgrade security at dozens of Hebrew schools, synagogues and community centres.

We have articulated and implemented a zero tolerance approach to anti-Semitism. What does this mean? It means that we eliminated the government funding relationship with organizations like for example, the Canadian Arab Federation, whose leadership apologized for terrorism or extremism, or who promote hatred, in particular anti-Semitism.

We have ended government contact with like-minded organizations like the Canadian Islamic Congress, whose President notoriously said that all Israelis over the age of 18 are legitimate targets for assassination. We have defunded organizations, most recently like KAIROS, who are taking a leadership role in the boycott. And we're receiving a lot of criticism for these decisions. I can't recall how many times I've been sued for some of the decisions that we have taken, but we believe that we've done these things for the right reasons and we stand by these decisions.

We have shifted our program of multiculturalism, which is our programmatic approach to integration and to pluralism, to focus precisely on integration towards liberal democratic values to remove any confusion that may have existed that our approach to multiculturalism justifies abhorrent cultural practices and the expression of hatred.

And I need to commend our parliamentary colleagues for their tremendous work in forming the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition Against Anti-Semitism, and for launching an inquiry which is undergoing its hearings in Parliament through this month and next. A tremendous opportunity for us to bring to light the threat of the new anti-Semitism across Canada.

At the international level, we have tried to give practical expression to our profound concern about the new anti-Semitism in many ways. We did so by being the first government in the world to announce that we were removing funding for the Palestinian authority following the election of Hamas because of the essentially anti-Semitic nature of that organization. We have robustly stood by the right of the state of Israel to use the means necessary to protect its innocent civilians from attacks, terrorist attacks motivated by hatred, committed by organizations like Hezbollah and Hamas.

At the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, we have called for the continuation of a unique and particular focus on anti-Semitism in the Office on Combating Anti-Semitism, recognizing uniquely durable and pernicious hatred that is anti-Semitism. And at multilateral organizations like the Francophonie and at the United Nations General Assembly, we have consistently opposed anti-Israel resolutions that seek to scapegoat this step, democratic state amongst all others. We have taken that position at the United Nations Human Rights Council. Frequently in the past two years, we can no longer remember every Human Rights Council, I'm sure many of the members are glad to see us go, but during our initial three-year membership, on issue after issue after issue, on resolution after resolution, Canada was the only country, or one of the only countries, to consistently oppose unbalanced anti-Israel resolutions.

We have provided political, diplomatic and moral leadership in efforts to isolate the hateful regime of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. We have led the efforts of the United Nations's successful efforts to maintain a resolution condemning the reigning regimes human rights violations, including their violations of the rights of the religious minorities. And our Prime Minister led the world in the United Nations General Assembly walk out for the odious speech given by President Ahmadinejad at the UN earlier this year.

And of course, ours was the first government in the world to withdraw from the tainted Durban II process. We did that because our analysis was that it was like the impossible to repeat, to avoid a repetition of some of the notorious expressions of anti-Semitism that we all saw at Durban I and we believe that our decision was vindicated.

Now some have said that our government, in taking these positions, have some abandoned Canada's traditional position of neutrality or balance in international affairs. That we have somehow undermined Canada's international credibility and reputation on the world stage by taking these positions. I suppose these are the people who believe that there is some neutrality between tolerance and hatred, between terrorism and counter terrorism. Our government believes that in point of fact, we are reclaiming and giving new real expression to our historically

grounded values. Canada was involved in the creation of the human rights process at the United Nations and we do not believe that those institutions, that the principles of the UN Declaration on Human Rights were meant to be perverted and used against democracies, were meant to be used by regimes who prey on an ancient hatred in order for their own political reasons.

We believe those trends have been in perversion of the true vocation, the true meaning of those international institutions and we believe that Canada is restoring our true belief in ability to make moral distinctions between hatred and tolerance between terrorism and counter terrorism. And we will continue to take that position.

Finally, let me say that we are working with the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to combat anti-Semitism with the hope and expectation of hosting in 2010 the next Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Conference Combating Anti-Semitism. We believe that, given Canada's model of accommodating difference, given the challenges that we are facing on many of these issues and given the track record of Canada in the past, in the recent past, that we can offer some useful reference points and best practices to share with the rest of the world and parliamentarians who share our concern about the new anti-Semitism.

So thank you again to all of you for the great work that you are doing and we, both as Parliamentarians and as members of the Canadian government, look forward to continue our solidarity in combating this, history's most pernicious form of hatred.