

Defining the Dimensions of the Threat, May 4 2015 in Brussels (AJC)
By Lena Posner-Körösi

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,
Thank you for allowing me to address you all at this important venue.

This year marks 70 years when we commemorate the murder of 6 million Jews, and of course the end of 2nd World War.

Three years later in 1948 Israel was established, and “never again” became a repetitive slogan among Jews all over the Globe.

Today I stand here before you as a representative of the Jewish Community in Sweden, where we now see an increase of anti-Semitism across the country, but also in other parts of Europe.

15 years ago, in year 2000, the Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson was instrumental in the establishment of some important initiatives for the sake of the Jews.

- “The Stockholm Conference on Holocaust education”,
- “ Forum for Living History”,
- the booklet “Tell Ye Your children” which was distributed to every household in Sweden,
- January 27th became a national commemoration day in Sweden;
- Paideia - The European Institute of Jewish Studies was established thanks to the generosity of the Swedish government and the Swedish business community.

For some years we nourished a sense of hope that Europe had been vaccinated against Jew hatred and that the initiatives of Holocaust commemoration and education would lead to tolerance and acceptance of minorities in the various countries.

15 years ago the challenge was right wing hatred towards Jews in Sweden.

That was dealt with by legislation prohibiting nazi symbols and gatherings.

Today we see hatred towards us coming from the far left disguised as so called criticism of Israeli politics, as well as from some Moslem communities where we find the hard core anti-Semites hating both Jews and Israel.

During last years the Swedish city of Malmö has become known to the world as having had a mayor blaming the small Jewish population for attacks against the synagogue, the rabbi and individual Jews.

Why, because the perpetrators are identified as men coming from the Middle East, and of course “they have the right to be upset and angry” as the Jews have not clearly speaking up against Israel.

Twice President Obama has sent his special envoy to Malmö, Mrs Hanna Rosenthal in 2012 and now in 2015 Mr Ira Forman. The situation in Malmö has calmed down a little – but from appr 1200 Jews there are now 400 left. It is truly a tragedy.

Sweden was not in World War II; Sweden is known to be an open and tolerant society which cares for the weak, I believe these are two of the reasons why it has been so hard for Swedish politicians and opinion makers to realize how serious the situation is for Swedish Jewry.

Summer of 2014 was a turning point for the Swedish naiveté. The social democratic party leader, not yet Prime minister, Stefan Löfvén, expressed that Hamas is responsible for the ongoing rocket shooting, and Israel has the right to defend itself.

This statement for us was quite lame, but it caused uproar and more than 3000 hateful e-mails and postings on the Social Democratic party's face book.

A few weeks later in a meeting with Stefan Löfvén he expressed his concern for the Jewish population, and I just welcomed him to the club. The kind of hateful e-mails and comments on face book is just everyday life for us I said.

During late 2014 and in 2015 we have had the killings of Jews in the Jewish Museum in Belgium, murder of journalists and cartoonists at Charlie Hebdo, the murder of Jews in the Kosher store in Paris, and just a few months ago in February a Jew, and a friend of my sons, was shot dead outside the Jewish Community in Copenhagen while doing his volunteer duty of protecting a Bat Mitzvah party.

It was then, after Copenhagen killing the Swedish politicians, media and public started to react. What we had claimed all along became clear - the threats are for real. It could have happened in Sweden, it happened in Denmark, just a door step away.

The coming weeks the Jewish institutions in Sweden had police protection 24/7. But, everything must come to an end. Today there is hardly any protection beside our own. One could wonder why – has hatred come to an end? According to well-informed authorities within the police it is no change – threat level is as high. But...

So what can be done in order to combat the current threats against us Jews but also towards the democratic societies in which we live?

My understanding is that we all need to encourage moderate Moslem leaders to speak up both within their own communities and to the public. The radical Islamism growing in their communities is as much a threat to the moderate Moslems as it is to our societies and our communities.

Freedom of expression and thought are fundamental rights – but at the same time we need to find ways to take legal actions against all the hatred and conspiratory ideas which are being spread via social media channels.

Dear friends, the small Jewish population in Sweden of appr 20 000 is determined to remain in Sweden and contribute to the society.

We will continue our efforts to work against any kind of intolerance and hatred – be it directed towards us or anyone else. We do it for the sake of democracy, but also because 70 years after the Holocaust we must be able to say “never again”.

Thank you