

A COORDINATOR TO COMBAT EUROPEAN ANTISEMITISM; A BOLD MOVE OR TOO LATE, TOO LITTLE?

By Alexander Zanzer



European Commissioner Frans Timmermans

The European Union, as well as all other countries, have woken up realising they are at war. Like with every death of a person, the fazes they are going through change from denial to acceptance to end up in political resilience. The European Union has nominated officially Katherina von Schnurbein as coordinator on combating antisemitism. It was a difficult birth since pressures from different countries mixed antisemitism with anti-Israeli feelings. Finally, a decision was made to nominate two coordinators. One for antisemitism and one for anti-Muslim hatred. Some consider it a political compromise, others a bold move and many as too late, too little.

Anti-Semitism has evolved from denial to acceptance, from hate crime to terrorism to crystallise finally as a war in peace time.

The message of European Commissioner Frans Timmermans for Chanukah is clear. But words without deeds remain an empty shell. We will judge by the deeds of Europe, a continent and an institution which is confronted with the biggest crisis since its existence; an explosive cocktail of immigration and terrorism pushing many countries to review their commitment to European ideals of unity to stop aggression and war. It is the difficult process to find a workable compromise against strong decisions that brought Europe where it is.

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The only issue Europe united about is labelling some Israeli goods.

They chose the Israeli-Palestinian conflict among more than 200 other conflicts, one more bloody than the other.

It will take many terrorist attacks and the robbing of our freedoms and way of life to push Europe to realise that they are all Jews searching for protection against an evil which makes less and less distinction between people of good will.

Message from First Vice President Frans Timmermans on the occasion of Chanukah 2015

This Chanukah comes at the close of a difficult year. The horrific attacks in Paris and Copenhagen shook us all at its start. At the time we made clear that an attack on the Jewish community is an attack on Europe as a whole. Because, as I often say, for Europe the Jewish community is like a canary in the coal mine. When the canary stops singing, all alarm bells must ring.

Because what is at stake is our way of living, our values.

Our societies of the equal and the free. I am deeply convinced that preventing and combatting antisemitism cannot be left to Jewish communities alone. It is a matter too for politicians, for mayors, for civil society, for religious leaders, for the media, for teachers – a matter of conscience for all Europeans.

In times of doubt and mistrust, Chanukah – the festival of light – brings a moment of brightness, celebrating the triumph of light over darkness, a symbol that is shared by many religions around the world. It is a triumph of freedom over oppression, of good over evil, both badly needed in today's world. A triumph of mutual support over a culture of looking the other way. Chanukah is a celebration that symbolises unity and peace.

During this season of Chanukah, may you and your loved ones enjoy peace, prosperity and happiness.