



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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CEJI Calls for Positive Responses in the Wake of Gaza

Brussels, 19 January 2009 – CEJI – *A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe*, calls on Jewish, Muslim and political leaders to provide positive responses for healing the intercultural wounds in Europe resulting from the war between Israel and Hamas.

We deeply regret the violent escalation of the conflict in Gaza and the loss of lives, and hope that the current cease-fire will soon lead to a permanent peace in the region. We are also distressed by the current rise of antisemitic violence taking place in Europe and a general deterioration of Jewish-Muslim understanding.

The conflict in the Middle East provokes highly emotional reactions in people throughout the world, bringing serious repercussions for intergroup relations. We worry about the increase of antisemitic sentiment, leading to over 100 attacks on Jewish people and properties throughout Europe during the past three weeks.

In recent years great strides were made in combating islamophobia and antisemitism in Europe, and there are numerous examples of Jewish-Muslim dialogue and cooperation efforts taking place at grassroots level. CEJI hopes that the positive relationships they built over the years will weather this test of strength. Now more than ever we must demonstrate good communication despite disagreements, solidarity against hatred, and a common will to let the positive relationships prosper.

Aiming to continue its proactive co-operation between Jews and Muslims, the **European Platform for Jewish Muslim Co-operation will hold an Executive Committee meeting on January 26th** in Brussels. The impact of the Gaza situation on Jewish Muslim relationships will be the primary topic on the agenda. CEJI will also organise an open **workshop on antisemitism and islamophobia on January 27-28** in Brussels, aiming to use educational programmes as tools in intercultural dialogue, especially for confronting prejudices.

In a letter to the European Union's leadership, CEJI Director, Robin Sclafani, asked them "to consider what positive strategies may be necessary to prevent such hateful acts in the future," including educational programmes and dialogue opportunities such as the ones taken by CEJI.

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CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe stands with individuals and organisations of all religions, cultures and backgrounds to promote a diverse and inclusive Europe. Our activities include delivering diversity education, enhancing interfaith and intercultural dialogue, advocacy at a European level and facilitating Jewish participation in European affairs.

The European Platform for Jewish Muslim Co-operation facilitates co-operation, dialogue and partnership between Jewish and Muslim communities at local, national and trans-national levels within Europe; Increases the visibility of and empowers existing Jewish Muslim initiatives; Initiates and promotes new opportunities for dialogue and co-operation between Jewish and Muslim communities. More information on the Platform can be found at http://www.ceji.org/dialogue/cooperation_platform.php.

CEJI's Mapping Reports on Jewish-Muslim Dialogue across six EU countries can be found at http://www.ceji.org/dialogue/mapping_reports.php.

The Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training aims to address religious diversity and discrimination issues, and is open to people of all senses of religious and non-religious belonging. Using highly interactive and participatory methods that have proven effective in dealing with general prejudice and discrimination, it seeks to provide adult educators with tools for situations where religious diversity and discrimination are a concern. This project, which includes submodules on antisemitism and on islamophobia, was generously supported by the Ford Foundation and the European Commission. More information on the Religious Diversity and Anti-Discrimination Training project can be found at http://www.ceji.org/education/religious_diversity.php.