



Intervention on behalf of CEJI – A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe

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OSCE CONFERENCE ON INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MUSLIMS, CORDOBA, 9-10 OCTOBER 2007

Intervention delivered by Ruth Friedman, Dialogue Co-ordinator, CEJI, during Plenary 3, *Media and public discourse as instruments to counter intolerance and discrimination against Muslims* | ruth.friedman@ceji.org | www.ceji.org/dialogue

CEJI – *A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe* runs networks of anti-racism education and religious diversity training in eleven countries in Europe and in EUROMED programmes.

I would like to address the issue of the ‘other’ – in our conference today we are of course addressing the issue of ‘other’ as Muslim – but in our society this issue of ‘other’ takes many forms – Islamophobia – of course, but also it manifests as antisemitism, homophobia, racism, xenophobia, discrimination against all migrants and refugees, and indeed against women. These discriminations are all different faces of the same problem. We – and I mean ‘we’ as members of society – have an apparent need to discriminate against ‘other’ whatever form it takes. This problem is not the problem of the Muslims, the Jews, the homosexuals or whatever ‘other’ is the topic of current concern – it is a problem of society at large, and so the problem should be tackled by society at large.

We believe that minority groups should support each other and that all of society should work together on this issue.

So what can the OSCE do?

The OSCE and its Participating States should indeed start by acknowledging the situation, namely that racism, including islamophobia and antisemitism, exists. And that it should be monitored and measured. The role of the Personal Representatives of the OSCE CiO’s on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims as well as the Personnel Representatives for Discrimination against the Jews and against the Christians. These roles should be clarified and indeed strengthened.

Next, promote education and dialogue. Promote people sitting together who would not normally do so. Support networks that include people from various backgrounds and encourage interfaith initiatives. I would like to take this moment to inform you of the Mapping Reports we produced of Jewish Muslim Dialogue projects already existing and which are the subject of the side event tomorrow morning. Indeed we are launching an ongoing Platform European of Jewish Muslim Co-operation on November 27th at the European Parliament.

We ask that the OSCE support and strengthen education about ‘the other’, about minorities and about identity in general. Encourage teaching about identity, about how important it is to have an awareness of one’s own identity and that of your neighbours.

Support NGOs that already reach out to teach about diversity and respect, about living together and cooperating.

In short: the OSCE should ensure that there are more – and more effective – opportunities for people, and for young people especially, to learn to understand each other.