



The ICCJ expresses deep concern to the Vatican regarding Syrian President Assad's vilification of Jews

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Referring to the recent anti-Jewish polemic of Syria's President Assad during the Pope's visit to Syria, the ICCJ's General Secretary Rev. Friedhelm Pieper wrote to Cardinal Kasper, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity with its Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, the following letter of concern

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His Eminence Cardinal Walter Kasper

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

with its Commission for Religious relations with the Jews

I - Vatican City

15 May 2001

Your Eminence,

The ICCJ and its 33 national member organisations world-wide engaged for some six decades in encounter and dialogue between Judaism and Christianity and the eradication of antisemitic misrepresentation and caricature share the horror and disgust of all decent people at Syrian President Bashar Assad's recent exploitation of the Pope's visit to Syria and first visit to a mosque by any pontiff. While Pope John Paul II called for overcoming any misuse of religion to promote or justify hatred we were shocked to hear from President Assad antisemitic phrases denigrating and reviling Jews and Judaism.

We have so far not seen an official Vatican statement repudiating those comments and affirming the Church's rejection of antisemitism in whatever disguise as well as any concept of collective Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus, suggesting also that President Bashar Assad would be well advised to follow his late father's example of a measure of restraint in this respect.

It is our hope that you will find occasion in the course of your keynote address in our Montevideo conference to express the Church's continuing commitment to reconciliation and the eradication of the unacceptable abuse of Jews and Judaism for religious as well as for political purposes.

With sincere regards,

Rev. Friedhelm Pieper

General Secretary