



Kiev conference on antisemitism

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On October 15-16, Rabbi Ehud Bandel, ICCJ's 1st Vice-President, had the honor of representing the ICCJ at the International Conference on antisemitism, held in Kiev Ukraine.

Some 250 people from 40 countries took part in this conference convened by Ukrainian MP Oleksandr Feldman, President of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The conference marked the 100th anniversary of the infamous Beilis Trial. Among the participants was Jay Beilis, the grandson of Menachem Mendel Beilis, who was tried in Kiev in autumn 1913 on the false charge of murdering a 13-year-old Christian boy to drain his blood for the baking of matza.

The conference provided an opportunity to consider the Beilis legacy, the evolution of Antisemitism, and lessons for the future. The fact that the concluding session was held at the Verkhovna Rada (The Parliament of Ukraine), attested to the progress Ukraine has made, at least on the governmental level, in combating Antisemitism. Nevertheless, the conference was also a platform to raise awareness and concern for contemporary challenges and modern types of Antisemitism, including "Blood Libels."

Dr. Shimon Samuels of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in France gave an example for such new blood libel directed against the State of Israel when the IDF medical team sent to the rescue of Haiti earthquake in 2010 was accused by a Swedish newspaper of harvesting the body organs of Haitians.

The need to differentiate between fair-minded criticism of Israel and Antisemitism, one of ICCJ's twelve points of Berlin, was echoed by many speakers throughout the conference.

However, the fact that Anti-Zionism and Anti-Israel are the current replacement of medieval-religious Antisemitism was also stressed time and again. Another point of concern was the threat posed by extreme right wing European political parties such as Golden Dawn in Greece, Jobbik in Hungary and Svoboda in Ukraine.

Education and interreligious dialogue were pointed out as key elements in combating Antisemitism. In that regard, it is crucial that Interreligious and intercultural organizations such as the ICCJ will continue to be represented and take an active role in future meetings.

Rabbi Ehud Bandel, 1st Vice President of the ICCJ and Co-Chair of the International Abrahamic Forum.