



The Demands of Our Time

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Looking with alarm and revulsion upon the current resurgence of antisemitism in many countries the ICCJ publishes a statement entitled "The Demands of Our Time"

Blatant and shameless displays of antisemitism are on the rise in Europe, the Americas, and elsewhere, becoming more and more frequent in public life. Attacks or vandalism against property, buildings, or people – and even murder – have occurred in several countries. Jews in many places testify to a growing sense of fear and insecurity.

History shows that the scourge of antisemitism has the pernicious ability to transform itself into a seemingly endless variety of manifestations according to context. In the pre-Christian Mediterranean world, Jews were sometimes assaulted for rejecting pagan social and religious norms. Jews were marginalized in European Christendom because they did not accept the Christian Gospel, thus becoming easy scapegoats in times of crisis. In the Enlightenment, supposedly secularized society was offended by Jewish religious and cultural resistance to assimilation, but later suspected Jews who did assimilate of plotting various schemes. These conspiracy theories were sometimes contradictory, such as when Jews were accused of masterminding capitalism while simultaneously accused of championing communism. Pseudo-science branded Jews as genetic menaces to allegedly superior races. More recently, Jewish longing for the security of political self-determination, something seen as a human right of other peoples, has been tarred as racist.

The International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) looks upon the current resurgence of antisemitism with alarm and revulsion. The ICCJ was founded in 1947, following a pivotal "Emergency Conference on Antisemitism" at Seelisberg, Switzerland. That conference was a Christian and Jewish response to the antisemitism that led to and still persisted after the Shoah (Holocaust). In the wake of Seelisberg, numerous Christian churches repudiated past teachings of contempt and labelled antisemitism as a sin against God and humanity. They embarked on an unprecedented effort to dismantle the religious antagonism that had fuelled hostility to Jews for so long and to replace it with theologies promoting interreligious friendship and collaboration. Frustratingly, this revolutionary reform occurs at a time when religious communities have limited power to reverse the antipathy they helped embed in Western culture.

It has been said that renewed antisemitism is a warning sign of societal breakdown. Indeed, we see today in many places the widespread growth of racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, intolerance, and an absence of basic human respect for people who are in some way "different." Humanity can and must be better than this. Although our voices can sometimes seem feeble and ineffectual, the times call upon us all – as individuals, organizations, and societies – to redouble our opposition to all forms of bigotry and prejudice, to insist that leaders promote the common good of everyone, and to recommit ourselves to be practitioners of dialogue on all levels.

Signed by

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

(ICCJ)

MARTIN-BUBER-HOUSE HEPPENHEIM, FEBRUARY 28, 2019

A PDF-file of the statement on antisemitism can be found [here](#).