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## *Dr. Robert Friedmann: Is anti-Semitism on the rise?*

This age-old hatred pathology has raised its ugly head again. Germany reports plans for an online platform to report it (FastCompany, December 26, 2018). UN Secretary General says that “tackling ‘deeply worrying’ global rise in anti-Semitism is a job for all societies everywhere” (UN News, January 26, 2019). Macron’s government is struggling to respond to increases in antisemitism in France (Washington Post, February 19, 2019). The Guardian reported as far back as 2014 that the rise in anti-Semitism across Europe is “in worst times since the Nazis” and CBS reported following the Pittsburgh synagogue massacre that anti-Semitism is on the rise (December 9, 2018). The ADL has issued numerous reports on hundreds of individuals who actively participate in antisemitic rallies and it documents anti-Semitic incidents. The defense in Belgium Jewish Museum slaying used antisemitic stereotypes claiming their client was set up by Israeli agents (The Charlotte Observer, February 28, 2019) and lawyers were shown displaying the quenelle with the anti-Semitic Dieudonne. The anti-Semitic “Deadly Exchange” campaign claims that Jewish groups finance police exchanges with Israel to hurt minorities (Legal Insurrection, December 9, 2018) thus seeking to exploit pre-existing domestic racial tensions to stoke antisemitism in order to turn minority communities against Israel. This campaign is spearheaded by a misleadingly named “Jewish Voice for Peace.” The world pays little attention to anti-Semitism in the Middle East which is evident in Arab/Muslim government declarations, religious edicts, media, poetry, literature, and popular TV series.

Anti-Semitism is institutionalized through thousands of years of persecution of a small and powerless group. It is seen in a spectrum that starts with hate, moves on to vilification emerges into dehumanization, evolves into incitement and ends with violence of genocidal magnitude. Alfred Dreyfus, was a French Jewish captain framed by his peers, wrongfully tried and convicted for treason against France (1894). The trial impacted French politics for decades and it prompted Theodor Herzl to write The Jewish State (1896). Yet what drove the public outcry in France against the government-backed conspiracy trial was an open letter by French writer Émil Zola published on the front page of L’Aurore (1898) accusing the French government of anti-Semitism, unlawful imprisonment, judicial errors and lack of substantive evidence. In 1899 Dreyfus was found guilty again but was pardoned. In 1906 he obtained an annulment of his guilty verdict and awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honor.

The Dreyfus affair portends important lessons to fight modern anti-Semitism. Institutionalized anti-Semitism must be confronted with institutionalized political and societal powers. At the turn of the 19th century it was the literary circles that exercised influential leadership in fearless criticism against the government. Twenty years into the 21st century literary circles may not be enough to lead an effective campaign against antisemitism. Efforts should focus on the early stages of anti-Semitism even before it transforms into violence. Expressions of anti-Semitism should be forcefully confronted by unequivocal condemnation, by political leaders, celebrities, civic advocacy groups, and social media. It should also be followed by legal action against the promotion and promoters of anti-Semitism.

A phenomenon that has existed for 2000 is not going to be eradicated overnight. Certainly not when after a few years of not being “fashionable” following the Holocaust, it has now become far more acceptable again. Yet, taking a strong stand against it can make it far less effective and far less damaging. Showing zero tolerance for the word is likely to result in a lesser need to cope with the deed. That strategy applies not only against anti-Semitism but also against terrorism as it has the same exact pattern of hate and incitement that culminate in violence

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