*Unofficial Transcript*

**The Human Rights Dimension: Addressing the Rise of Global Genocidal Anti-Semitism and Vatican II’s Nostra Aetate**

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Conference at the United Nations

MONSEIGNEUR GUY MASSIE, Chairperson for the Ecumenical and Inter-Faith Commission for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn: Thank you. I think I agree with what was just said about Nostra Aetate. We celebrate the 50th anniversary of that document this year in October. And it was because of that document, because of that brave turnabout in Catholic thinking in 1965 that I sit here today and that I was able to study at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem to learn and to have my degree in Judaic studies.

The document, as you have just heard, not only condemns anti-Semitism but also recognizes very clearly the roots of Christianity in Judaism, from the patriarchs to the apostles to Christ Himself, to ourselves. And as a result we share that common religious background. With that in mind, Nostra Aetate also opens up discussion with Judaism and the learning from Judaism our past as we discuss with Judaism who we are.

Nostra Aetate also opens up discussion with Islam and approaches Islam from a very interesting perspective as a recognition that God speaks in so many different ways and we find truth in so many different places, including Hinduism and Buddhism. It is a document that opens our understanding of people on all of these religious backgrounds.

The reference that was made by Nelly Shiloh as to the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe, this past summer, I would say July, I was in Paris myself and I was at the Metro station and I was exiting the Metro only to find graffiti on the wall that was clearly anti-Jewish. And I said, my goodness. Here we have a document in our time and now in my time this is now going on again.

The irony, I thought, that in a technological society that we have with Internet, iPhones and every other way in which we are in communication with each other, I would have thought that mutual understanding would have grown. And yet I'm not sensing that. I'm sensing more of a division among all of us among issues that seem to be very surprising, religious issues, economic issues, racial issues, national origin issues.

We also see, to my great surprise, the religious fundamentalists in certain areas killing people because of what they believe, and I'm referring to the killing of so many Christians of every denomination in parts of the Middle East and elsewhere. This is more than a religious issue. This, I think, is an issue of people not being able to perhaps see beyond their own areas.

How do we speak not only to the people who are for us, but to religious fundamentalism that seems to want to convert to their particular way of thinking about things that are transcendent and thinking that they have the whole truth that all of us have to follow a particular way. This is a very dangerous time.

And so when we look at documents such as Nostra Aetate, which opens up this dialogue, it also opens up and is based not -- it's based on what we believe, the dignity of humanity. Because the dignity of humanity represents God. God is present in humanity from my perspective and from the perspective of much Christian theology because of our belief that God becomes human in the person of Christ. Therefore when we see people who are persecuted, as that document says, persecution of any person from any place is wrong for religious reasons, gender reasons or national origin reasons.

How do we translate the ability of each of these religious traditions, whatever they are, to translate into the dignity of the human person, which is God-given? In each of these, when you are against someone, when I'm reading these things on the -- the graffiti, when we're singling out people for who or what they are, it shatters the image that is divine, from my perspective. And in that, then for those who are morally-minded, they're a sin.

Nostra Aetate, 50 years, has opened up a great panorama of learning and of mutual appreciation. However, fundamentalism, wherever it is, in any of these communities, is a problem. Is a problem. Perhaps the genesis of that problem is fear. How then do we not only condemn anti-Semitism and these persecutions, but how do we educate people who are of the thinking that this is a dangerous time for them?

In our generation, in our time of Google, of Internet, of technology that puts us in touch with the world in an instant, we are still facing the primitive behavior of hatred because of national, religious or ethnic background. There's something profoundly sinful in that.

LAURI REGAN, President of the New York chapter of the Endowment for Middle East Truth: Thank you, Laurie, and thank you all for coming out today for this very important forum. If someone had suggested to me a decade ago that I would be sitting in a conference room in the United Nations discussing the rise of global anti-Semitism, I would have thought them crazy. Yes, this millennial hatred has seemingly existed since the beginning of time but as historian Richard Landes discussed in a recent essay, the years from 1945 to 2000 in the West represent the longest sustained period of principled and open Philo Judaism, what I would transcribe as Christian support for Israel's independence in Zionism in the three millennial-long history of Israelite Jewish civilization.

Landes specifically dates the onset of the current wave of anti-Semitism to the early days of October 2000 when France and other European countries saw sharp rises in a range of hostile acts towards Jews. Noted author, scholar and psychologist Dr. Phyllis Chesler authored a book entitled *The New Anti-Semitism* in 2003 that was mostly ignored at the time. Her very prescient thesis that the anti-Zionism taking hold across the globe was just a cover for what in reality was actually good, old-fashioned anti-Semitism, is now a generally-accepted reality that cannot be ignored.

And Professor Landes stated, "Jew hatred has taken many forms over its millennial-long history, constantly adapting to new conditions, mutating to best disseminate its means under the conditions of modernity after the Holocaust, UN Geneva Convention where open hatred of all Jews is stifled by political correctness. Anti-Zionism offers the most successful mutation. Anti-Zionist means can fly where anti-Semitic ones are prohibited and then bring them along."

I was slower to wake up to the ramp into anti-Semitism flowing across the world. But when Israel's Operation Cast Lead became the impetus for violent and ugly demonstrations, it was impossible to ignore. In France, Britain, Norway, Greece, Malaysia, Sweden, Bosnia, Lebanon, Thailand, South Korea and India, the hate manifested itself in hysteria.

The United States was not immune as videos of demonstrators screaming, "Death to Israel. God bless Hitler. Kill the Jews and reopen the ovens" could be heard on the streets of New York, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C. and Ft. Lauderdale.

Last summer's ugliness escalated beyond my wildest expectations as anti-Semitic demonstrations were once again held across the world in response to another Israeli defensive war with the terrorist organization Hamas. Sitting in my midtown Manhattan office almost 40 floors up, I was astounded to hear loud chants, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."

Operation Protective Edge was yet another excuse for anti-Semites to take advantage of their First Amendment rights and call for violence and hatred of Jews. In the United States, demonstrations once again occurred with violence becoming commonplace. In San Francisco we heard calls of, "Long live the intifada. We support the intifada." In Los Angeles there were violent attacks on pro-Israeli demonstrators.

In Seattle signs were brandished proclaiming, "Zionist Israel equals Nazi Germany. Palestine screams terror. Israel screams greed. APAC supports the murder of children." And one poster depicted a Jew eating a Gentile child with a cup of blood on the side. The anti-Semitic canards are sadly alive and well on the streets of the United States.

In Europe, where a record high 543 anti-Semitic incidents occurred in July and August of 2014, leading to the UK's David Cameron calling anti-Semitism one of the greatest evils of humanity, we were reminded that the hatred that led to the Holocaust is once again rearing its ugly head. The violence took hold in Paris, Casablanca, Minsk, Mumbai, Istanbul, Frankfurt, London, Brussels and other cities across the globe, where Jews are fleeing en masse as chants of "You Jews are beasts," Israeli flags are burned and, yes, Jews were murdered while visiting a Jewish museum in Brussels and shopping for Shabbat dinner at a kosher butcher shop in Paris.

In France, where Jews represent 1% of the population, 50% of all racist crimes are motivated by anti-Semitism. In the United States, FBI hate crimes statistics bear out the harsh reality that attacks against Jews far outweigh any other religious group.

In response to the violence that left hundreds of Jews besieged inside a synagogue in Paris, one reporter stated, "What I have seen today is Arab hatred against Jews, pure hatred right in the middle of Paris. Don't try to explain or understand. It was hatred period."

Which brings me to my next point. Islam is the religion with the highest percentage of open hostility to Jews and anti-Semitic attitudes as well as Holocaust denial. And before people rush to call me an Islamophobe, I suggest that we must recognize this phenomenon and question what we can do to stem the tide of this raging aggression. And it is important to note that Muslim hatred of Jews has absolutely nothing to do with the existence of Israel and its conflict with the Palestinians and that any suggestion of that is based in either ignorance or anti-Semitism itself.

Arab Muslim attacks against Jews from the beginning of the 20th century, well before any alleged occupation of disputed lands, have been well documented. And if Israel did disappear into the sea, as far too many of this earth's inhabitants seem to wish, anti-Semitic canards such as "Jews are warmongers, greedy Jews control the world" and other such nonsense would continue to flourish.

As the brilliant scholar Ruth Wisse recently wrote, "If we mistakenly imagine that this is about the Jews, we fall into the trap that anti-Semitism sets for us by deflecting attention from perpetrators to victims. The trail of terror leads not to the Jews but from those who organize against them. Opposition to Israel was the unifying feature of an otherwise splintering Arab League that found in anti-Zionism the same ideological energy that Europeans have found in anti-Semitism."

Anti-Semitism has also reared its ugly head in far too many institutional aspects of civil society. The media, academia and even governments are quickly mainstreaming what was once taboo. Lethal journalism has led to the creation of groups that are specifically designed to fight these falsehoods. Palestinian lethal narratives about Israeli atrocities, such as Al Dura murder, the Jenin massacre, the Gaza open air prison and Israel's deliberate targeting of civilians are accepted as truth without any real investigation simply because of an inherent bias against the Jewish state.

While the IDF was forced to establish a media desk just to counter the lies and false narratives emanating from anti-Semitic bias that portrays Israel as the Goliath unnecessarily attacking the weaker Davids in the neighborhood, groups like HonestReporting and CAMERA were established that, while calling out falsehoods in the BBC, CNN and *New York Times*, find themselves in an uphill battle of bombardment with no end in sight.

The media is helped along by NGOs that proliferate lies against Israel at an unseemly rate, that seldom defends its Holocaust-denying researcher. And Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch only focus their faux studies on Israel rather than the human rights-abusing dictatorships.

The UN's own UNRWA is one of the worst culprits, allow a Hamas terrorist to hide rockets in UNRWA schools in Gaza and publishing books that teach Arabs to hate Jews, furthering the burgeoning animus in the region that is actually helping prevent any possibility of peace.

College campuses are hotbeds of anti-Semitism as boycott divestment and sanctions measures are voted upon by both student governments and national faculty organizations and are met with either silence or consent by college administrations.

Earlier this year Larry Summers recognized that the general failure of American academic leaders to aggressively take on the challenge posed by the BDS movement represents a consequential abdication of moral responsibility. He also added, "It is a sad irony that Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, hoped that the establishment of the State of Israel would bring an end to anti-Semitism.

On college campuses in the United States, vilification of Israel has never been so great. And yet, from NYU and Harvard to the University of Michigan and UC Berkeley, it is not uncommon for Jewish students to receive death threats or faux eviction notices, while administrators remain silent. The Muslim Students Association, a Muslim Brotherhood offshoot and Students for Justice in Palestine, a group known for its violence, aggressive tactics and intimidation of Jewish students are opening chapters on campuses across the country.

Swastikas are becoming commonplace in Jewish fraternity houses and ADPi students from across the country met recently to share their accounts of violent acts taken against them, including one that left a young man hospitalized for at least three weeks.

The BDS movement is showing no signs of waning; rather, it seems to be flourishing as anti-Semites the world over use Israel as their new punching bag, disguising their hatred of Jews as a politically correct fight against Israeli apartheid. The veil is lifted as soon as one questions why the focus is on Israel rather than the true regimens across the Middle East and beyond, which are vile and anti-Semitic and which are ignored. But those states are not inhabited by Jews.

One final thought before I conclude. It is unacceptable for any government to encourage anti-Semitism, with causal violence and dissemination of hate. But when anti-Semitic means are propagated by the President of the United States and his Cabinet members and staffers, Jews the world over must activate to defend themselves against what could very well prove to be a coming tidal wave of aggression.

As Barack Obama's full-court press to force Congress to approve his agreement with Iran moves from demonizing Republicans to demonizing Jews, who fear with good reason that they are witnessing the signing of another Munich agreement, all people of good conscience must speak out that anti-Semitism is simply not acceptable discourse no matter who is speaking. Tropes of Jews leading the world into war, of dual loyalty and the like have always been and always will be pure and simple ugly anti-Semitism.

And that poses a danger, not just for American Jews and Israeli Jews on the frontlines but of the entire world. For when Israel goes, so too does the rest of the Western world. This cancer known as anti-Semitism begins with the Jews. But as history has proven, it does not end there. It infiltrates all of society and it is coming our way. Shouts of "death to Israel" are invariably followed by shouts of "death to America."

While my office may sit 40 stories up in the clouds, anti-Semitism had no trouble reaching me last summer. It is my hope that world leaders and the citizens across the civilized Western world come down from the clouds to help stop this psychosis before it spreads too far and wide to contain. Those who fail to heed the lessons of history are doomed to repeat its tragedies and history is repeating itself while far too many are ignoring it. History will not look kindly upon the Western world in the early 21st century if we allow this cancer to grow. Thank you.