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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Sixtieth session  
Items 4, 6 and 17 of the provisional agenda

**REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN  
RIGHTS AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

**RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND ALL FORMS OF  
DISCRIMINATION**

**PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

**Written statement\* submitted by the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ),  
a non-governmental organization on the Roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 January 2004]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

**The alarming growth of Judeophobia/antisemitism since the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights [1993] during the UN Decade for Human Rights Education [1995-2004]**

1. The WUPJ wishes to stress the appeal made last year by High Commissioner Sergio Vieira de Mello – tragically assassinated six months later by terrorists in Baghdad – in his first report to the Commission (Human Rights & Follow-up to the World Conference on Human Rights): *“I call the Commission and, through it, the international community at large to conscience...”* *“Actions, not words, is what matters. Protection, not rhetoric is needed. We cannot shield gross violations of human rights – wherever they occur – behind the veneer of sovereignty or the chicanery of diplomatic procedures.”* (under item 4: E/CN.4/2003/14, § 1, 4)
2. In his report on ‘Information and Education: Study on the follow-up to the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004)’, the High Commissioner suggested: *“A second decade would need to be properly structured, also through the organization of regular periodical events to create momentum and continuity.”* (under item 17: E/CN.4/2003/101, § II. A (a) 10)
3. A preamble to last year’s Commission Resolution 2003/30, under agenda item 4, reads: *“Reaffirming the views of the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993, on the urgency of eliminating denials and violations of human rights.”*
4. In an address to an OSCE symposium on Antisemitism in Vienna (17 June 2003), Acting High Commissioner Dr Bertrand Ramcharan reiterated that: *“Denial is not an option. Many people of course would like to deny the reality of anti-Semitism.”* He then went on to recommend *“programmes of educational activities that can help deal with this phenomenon.”*
5. Two days later, a renowned historian and world expert on antisemitism, Professor Robert Wistrich, delivered his address, as an independent expert, on ‘Antisemitism in Europe Today’ to the same symposium, hosted by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.
6. Twenty years ago (October 1984), in the preface to his Hitler’s Apocalypse. Jews and the Nazi Legacy (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985), Wistrich predicted that: *“the evidence I have been able to marshal concerning the continuity of a radical and murderous antisemitism into the post-war era convinced me that we are dealing with a highly dangerous and fateful phenomenon which may possibly determine the future of our planet.”* Today this is a certainty.
7. Again, concluding his global remarks at the opening meeting of the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on 19 January 2004, Acting High Commissioner Bertrand Ramcharan stressed that *“the duty of conscience and the duty of protection go hand in hand.”* He reiterated – and may well have had it in mind – the late High Commissioner’s call to the Commission, and the international community, to “conscience” – quoted above under our § 1.
8. At the close of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), the World Union for Progressive Judaism is reprinting in full, with his permission, Prof. Robert Wistrich’s important text delivered at a very special event which should create momentum.(1)

**9. 'Antisemitism in Europe Today'. Address by Prof. Robert Wistrich at a symposium in Vienna on 19 June 2003 to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.**

*“Speaking to you this afternoon from the majestic setting of the Hofburg in Vienna, I am very mindful of certain historic events that can never be erased. Sixty-five years ago, in the Heldenplatz, only a few hundred meters from this building, hundreds of thousands of cheering Austrians greeted Adolf Hitler with a truly hysterical enthusiasm. In the next three years following the 1938 Anschluss, the Jews of Austria were subjected to indescribable humiliations and cruelties. Over one-third of Austria’s Jews (over 60,000) were sent to the death camps in Poland—a highly symbolic microcosm of the 6 million Jewish men, women, and children across Europe who would suffer a similarly horrible fate. Today, shocking to relate, the specter of antisemitism has once more returned to haunt Europe, although it is assuming some radically new forms that require a different approach if we are to deal effectively with the challenge. This session is devoted to education, a subject of great importance. But let us not delude ourselves that education or enlightenment in themselves offer any quick fix or magic wand which will dissipate the dark clouds that are gathering around us. What goes on in the school classrooms, in colleges, in the universities, or in adult education is not divorced from standards of behavior in the broader culture, from family and socialization patterns, from the media and politics. Let us remember, before we assume that knowledge alone is the answer, that the “educators” themselves must be educated (or reeducated!) to quote that highly unfashionable 19th-century thinker, Karl Marx!*

*“Let us also recall that although this conference is devoted to Europe, thus far no speaker has seriously addressed the burning issue of contemporary Muslim antisemitism, something highly relevant to our topic. Today, we are witnessing a dangerous, toxic, and potentially genocidal form of antisemitism in the Arab-speaking Middle East. The scale and extremism of this literature and commentary—in newspapers, journals, magazines, caricatures, on Arab and Islamic websites, on the radio and TV news, in documentaries, films, and soap-operas like the Egyptian-produced version of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, “Rider without a Horse,” is comparable only to Nazi Germany at its worst. The educational materials of the Arab world are soaked in this poison, made even more inflammatory by what is regularly preached in the mosques. The motifs and symbols of this genocidal antisemitism combine the worst slanders of European anti-Jewish bigotry (including the Christian blood-libel) with Nazi-style caricatures, the myth of the world Jewish conspiracy, and the tendentious use of Islamic sources, including the holy Qur’an. The Islamists (but not only them) have hijacked Islam and are producing a new and more deadly anti-Jewish cocktail, one which is now being re-exported back to Europe. It has already infected part of the Muslim youth in France, Holland, Belgium, Great Britain, Germany, Sweden, and other European countries. This rebound effect has brought Middle Eastern fanaticism and a violent new antisemitism right back into the heart of Europe. No educational strategy that turns a blind eye to the acuity of this problem can possibly succeed.*

*“Educational methods also need to be revised in the light of the highly mediatized global village in which we now all live. This has made the transmission and amplification of antisemitic images and ideas so much more mobile, transnational, and globalized.*

*Today's educators have to confront libels that whiz through cyberspace at the speed of light—malicious disinformation of the kind that accuses not only the Israeli army but “the Jews” per se of infanticide (cold-bloodedly murdering Palestinian children), libels which blame dark “Jewish cabals” for pushing the United States into the Iraq war; or accuse “neo-cons” (a codeword for East Coast Jewish intellectuals) of seeking a “war of civilization” with Islam. Then, there are the grotesque fantasies claiming that the Mossad or the Jews orchestrated the September 11 attack on America. Millions of credulous people out there believe these lies!*

*“Contemporary antisemitic conspiracy theories often hide under the mask of anti-Zionism, anti-Israel prejudice and/or anti-Americanism. Their purveyors are far more likely to be Islamists than Christians. They often come from the Left more than they do from the Right; they are not outwardly racist and frequently adopt an “anti-racist” disguise. They almost never call themselves “antisemitic,” unlike their predecessors of 60 or 100 years ago. Indeed, the “new Judeophobes” invariably wax indignant at the very suggestion that they are against the Jews. Their main focus is on demonizing Israel, on dissolving the so-called “Zionist entity” and making the world Judenstaatrein—cleansed of the world's only Jewish state.*

*“We cannot deal educationally with this “new look” antisemitism unless we tackle its changing dynamics head-on and expose the pretensions of its new intellectual garb. This is not the ethnic, nationalist, racist, or Nazi antisemitism of six decades ago, which had its roots in late 19th-century Europe. All the delegates we have heard from today appear united in their opposition to that type of brutal racist antisemitism, in their rejection of Neo-Nazism, right-wing populism, and xenophobia. That is, of course, gratifying and I welcome it. But we will accomplish little if we think that this is the real problem confronting us in 2003.*

*“Let me, then, share with you some heretical thoughts. Antisemitism at the dawn of the 21st century comes nicely wrapped in the radiant and beatific glow of Human Rights. It is an “antisemitism without antisemites,” an antisemitism with a good conscience! Not only that, but some of its most prominent spokesmen think of themselves as being in the forefront of the struggle against racism, fascism, and other related evils. In its “anti-Zionist” masquerade, this style of antisemitism is part of the new religion of Humanity—adapted to a post-national utopia without frontiers—which Israel's existence is allegedly and bizarrely obstructing. Already, at the UN Conference against Racism in Durban (Autumn 2001) we witnessed the shameful spectacle of how such a worthy cause as “anti-racism” can be hijacked and turned into an ugly hatefest against Israel and the Jewish people.*

*“We must also contend with the twisted use of the Holocaust as a propaganda weapon against the Jewish State and the Jewish people. I am not just talking about Holocaust denial. What does an educator do when he or she is confronted with the numerous examples of European intellectuals, artists, clerics, journalists, and caricaturists who today twin the Nazi swastika with the Star of David? Here are just a few random examples from an ever-expanding dossier: The Greek caricature in Ethnos (7 April 2002) showing two Israeli soldiers somewhere in the disputed territories. One says to the other: “Don't*

*feel guilty, my brother! We were not in Auschwitz and Dachau to suffer but to learn!” Or the Nobel prize winner for literature from Portugal, José Saramago, who last year compared what was happening in Ramallah to Auschwitz; or the well-known British poet Tom Paulin, who periodically offloads his venom against the so-called “Zionist SS”; or Abbé Pierre, one of France’s most revered Catholic priests, who informs us: “Les Juifs, de victimes sont devenus bourreaux.” (“The Jews, once victims, have become executioners.”)*

*“This is the surreal climate of “democratic,” “humanistic,” bienpensant stereotyping of Jews as Nazis and the libeling of the Jewish State as an apartheid, racist monster engaged in the “ethnic cleansing” of Palestinians. Worse still, it is the intellectual and political elites of Europe who seem to encourage, repeat, aid and abet such falsehoods under the impeccably respectable but deeply misleading label of “criticizing” Israel. There is a world of difference between criticism and defamation. The disproportionate and relentless singling out of Israel alone for human rights violations is a sure sign of discriminatory practice.*

*“In the media, churches, universities, and in the mainstream politics of the European Union there is an elusive but unmistakable whiff of antisemitism, which we ignore at our peril. What kind of “Enlightenment” is it, for example, when the more “progressive” European media use archaic Christian motifs, to suggest that Ariel Sharon is a deicidal Jew and Yasser Arafat is Jesus Christ? At the end of December 2001, the French left-wing daily Libération ran a cartoon about the fact that Arafat, a Muslim, was not allowed by the Israeli government to go to Bethlehem to celebrate Christmas. Sharon was shown preparing a Cross for the Palestinian leader, with hammer and nails at the ready (an Israeli tank in the background) and a caption underneath stated that Arafat would be welcome for Easter—i.e., for the Crucifixion!*

*“Then there is La Stampa (3 April 2002)—a liberal Italian paper which is certainly not antisemitic—but which could nevertheless run a caricature showing the baby Jesus, asking when “they” (i.e., the Israelis/Jews) are going “to annihilate me once more”. Britain’s liberal newspaper, The Independent, depicts Ariel Sharon crunching a Palestinian baby in a clear echo of the medieval blood libel. The Press Complaints Commission in the U.K. did not censure the paper, claiming that nobody in Britain today knows what the ritual murder accusation means! So while we talk about education against antisemitism, it transpires that highly educated journalists in the U.K. are so ignorant of the history of antisemitism, they do not even know what the blood libel is or why it matters! Who needs to be educated?*

*“The problem, ladies and gentlemen, is not to engage in well-meaning, ritualized indictments of racism and antisemitism. We have to address the fact that even some highly educated people do not recognize Jew-hatred except when it is dressed up for them in a Nazi uniform. The problem is that a Heil Hitler salute is no longer the main criteria for measuring antisemitism.*

*“Of course, echoes of the Nazi past are still with us in Europe, America, the Middle East, and beyond. Indeed they must not be ignored. Jewish cabals and conspiracies are once again the flavor of the month, as they were back in 1938. We hear a great deal about warmongering Jews, about Sharon, Israel and the “Jewish lobby” who allegedly control*

*America and would like to control the whole world. Even the much-respected BBC encourages documentaries about these “dangerous liaisons” in tones uncomfortably reminiscent of darker times.*

*“Great Britain, it should be said, has not been a major bastion of antisemitism in modern times. Yet, the much revered Labor MP, Tam Dalyell, recently alleged that British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw—who apparently has a Jewish grandfather—was also a member of the “Jewish cabal” behind the Anglo-American assault on Saddam Hussein. According to such a reckoning, this would make Mr. Straw a Mischling Zweiten Grades—a second-degree Mischling (mixed race) as defined by the Nazi racial laws of 1935. Tam Dalyell is a pacifist, a strong critic of Mr. Blair, a pro-Palestinian advocate, and a passionate opponent of the Iraq war. There are many like him who have begun to move from pro-Palestinian advocacy down the slippery slope of intemperate Israel-bashing to outright anti-Jewish mythologizing. This greatly complicates our task.*

*“It is made even more difficult where there is obstinate denial that the phenomenon even exists, as happened in France, until about one year ago. I still remember the incredible spectacle of the President of the French Republic, declaring that there was “no antisemitism in France” and Mr. Shimon Peres, then Foreign Minister of Israel, nodding in agreement. That was before the last French presidential elections, at a time when synagogues and community centers were going up in flames, schools and Jewish students were attacked, and individual Jews harassed on a scale unknown since 1945.*

*“There are ten times as many Muslims as there are Jews in France today. But since September 2000 there have been 3–4 times as many racist acts against Jews as compared to Muslims on French soil. That is an alarming statistic. I am the first to deplore and denounce Islamophobia, but the truth must be told. The majority of antisemitic attacks in France in the past three years have been carried out by North African Arab Muslims. There have been no comparable attacks by Jews on French Muslims!*

*“In the “milieu scolaire” since 2000, things are especially serious, though the French government has at least begun to deal with the problem. Let me recommend that you read Les Territoires Perdus de la République (Paris 2002) which gives outsiders a flavor of what Jewish pupils and teachers have been experiencing, primarily at the hands of North African Arab students in French schools. Any teacher trying to communicate materials on the Holocaust in French lycées in the banlieux or the so-called “quartiers difficiles” is liable, especially since September 2000, to be subject to frightening abuse.*

*“This last example brings me squarely back to the educational sphere and contemporary antisemitism, which a decade ago in my book on the subject I described as the “Longest Hatred.” But it is not only its longevity and persistence that make it so difficult to eradicate. Antisemitism is endlessly protean, adapting itself to the Zeitgeist—like an extraordinarily cunning virus which flares up with renewed force just when it is pronounced extinct.*

*“The old slogans and tactics employed against Nazism, racism, and xenophobia—some of which have been repeated here—are not enough. Indeed, they may even be feeding the very evil—antisemitism—which they are supposed to de-fang. To “Nazify” Israel and the Jewish people is, for example, a contemporary form of Holocaust inversion that palpably incites antisemitic feelings. The kind of mindless “anti-racism” that pillories Israel as an apartheid state produces exactly the same effect. Moreover, the constant effort to subsume antisemitism under the general category of racism is not only untenable historically—it denies the specificity of anti-Jewish bigotry just as it diminishes the distinctive features of other forms of prejudice. The hostility to Jews predated the emergence of racism and racial ideology by many centuries.*

*“To successfully combat antisemitism today—educationally, morally, legally, or politically—we must be alive to its changing contours. We must go beyond conventional pieties about tolerance, pluralism, and multiculturalism—important though it is to uphold these values in practice. We must put an end to the disgraceful international campaign to delegitimize, defame, demonize, dismantle, or destroy the Jewish State. We must also condemn classic antisemitic tools employed in the political war against Israel, such as economic, academic, scientific, or cultural boycotts. For such boycotts are not only intrinsically discriminatory but contradict the principles of free scholarly exchange and of an open democratic society. In the matter of antisemitism, as with terrorism and Human Rights, this impressive international gathering must call things by their proper name. The very act of holding this meeting here in Vienna is an important statement—that the time of denial is over.”*

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#### Notes

1. See also his “Anti-Zionism and Antiosionism,” reproduced in WUPJ’s written statement under items 5, 9, 18.

(\*) Robert S. Wistrich is Neuberger Professor of modern European and Jewish history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He previously held the Chair for Jewish Studies at University College, London, as well as guest professorships at Harvard, Brandeis and Oxford Universities, and at the Royal Institute of Advanced Studies in the Netherlands. Between 1999-2001, Professor Wistrich was one of six historians appointed by the Vatican to the Catholic-Jewish historical Commission, which examined Pope Pius XII’s record during the Holocaust. He is the author of many highly acclaimed books, including the award-winning Socialism and the Jews [1982] and Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred [1992]. He also scripted, edited or presented several key documentary films for British television, including The Longest Hatred [1991], Good Morning Mr Hitler [1994] and Blaming the Jews 2003. His latest study is Hitler and the Holocaust. [2001]. In 2002 he became Director of the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and is editor-in-chief of its annual journal, Antisemitism International.

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