

## Imams, rabbis in Brussels to improve Muslim-Jewish ties

By JONAH MANDEL  
12/07/2010 03:47

**“If Jews are being driven out of parts of Europe once again, this does not bode well for the future of the continent,” EJC head Kantor says.**

BRUSSELS – A delegation of Muslim and Jewish religious leaders from Europe met with European Council President Herman Van Rompuy in Brussels on Monday to share their initiatives for bettering the relations between the communities, as well as legislation to ensure the rights of the religious groups in Europe.

The meeting with the president was part of a daylong gathering of some 50 city and state rabbis and imams from Western Europe, brought together for panel discussions on the condition, but primarily the future, of

relations between Muslims and Jews in Europe, in a joint effort by the New York-based Foundation for Ethnic Understanding (FFEU), the World Jewish Congress (WJC) and the European Jewish Congress (EJC).

EJC head Moshe Kantor stressed in his opening remarks how education was a key element in bringing about reconciliation between the groups, and how legislation was key in ensuring tolerance toward minority groups. Kantor, who brought *The Jerusalem Post* to the event, reiterated his call for EU countries' need to immediately adopt the Framework Decision on Combating Racism and Xenophobia.



Photo by: Michael Thaidigsmann

Since the condition of the relations between the faith groups differ from country to country, imams and rabbis from the UK, France, Germany and Italy presented, in turn, the key issues and action they were taking to face the challenges of their specific communities.

Such challenges are influenced by endless factors, such as the backgrounds of their flocks, their socioeconomic standings and the degree of integration into mainstream society.

Later, the participants attended a kosher-halal working lunch with senior officials at the European Commission, and met with Van Rompuy, who expressed his support for the group's efforts and called for a "revolution of moderation" in religious communities in Europe.

In a private meeting with Van Rompuy, Kantor expressed his concern over the condition of some Jewish communities, such as Malmö, Sweden, where Jews are feeling forced to leave the city.

"If Jews are being driven out of parts of Europe once again, this does not bode well for the future of the continent," Kantor, who co-chairs the European Council for Tolerance and Reconciliation, told the president.

He also suggested that the EU impose on its members and officials a code of behavior that would sanction those who made anti-Semitic and racist remarks.

In addition, Kantor called on the EU to end the freeze on its upgrade in relations with Israel.

"If we hope to live in a free and peaceful world, we need to bolster the only democracy in the Middle East, especially at a time when its mere presence is challenged," he said, referring to the threats from Iran.

Before the day wrapped up with Hanukka candle-lighting and a dinner with the Brussels Diplomatic Corps, the draft of a common statement calling for closer cooperation between the two communities in Europe was presented. The statement expressed a wish to put an end to "the mutual fear and resentment precipitated in large part by the conflict in the Middle East, which all too often in recent years has caused violence between members of our two communities."

This campaign of interfaith dialogue and understanding, the statement continued, "will strengthen the forces of moderation in both communities and serve as a check to voices preaching extremism and violence, that are a danger to the moderate majorities in both communities, and to our efforts to build a united, free and pluralistic future for Europe," while taking steps "to ensure that Jews and Muslims are able to practice our respective faiths fully and unimpeded by intrusive, discriminatory and unfair governmental regulations."

It concluded, "We commit ourselves to successfully developing good Muslim-Jewish relations in our communities and across Europe, thereby showing our two peoples and the larger societies in which we live that Muslims and Jews can live and work together fruitfully for the betterment of all."

FFEU President and WJC Vice President Rabbi Marc Schneier called Monday's event "a promising beginning."

"Today, we have hopefully kick-started a movement that will spread across Europe," he said. "The recipe really is quite simple: Our two communities must focus more on what unites us than what separates us. We also must restrain the radicals within our own ranks and make sure they don't gain the upper hand."

Schneier also noted the great importance of the different religious groups expressing empathy with one another, noting as a moving example the prayers that Imam Dr. Abduljalil Sajid, chairman of the Muslim Council for Religious and Racial Harmony, offered in his address for the victims of the recent forest fire in the Carmel.

As one of the participants said, "there is definitely room for hope. Five years ago, a meeting such as today's would never have taken place."

## **Talkbacks (7):**

### **7. Talking to Ourselves and Feeling Alone ...**

- Author: Dov Benmen
- Country: USA
- 12/07/2010 23:41

Has there ever anywhere been even one of these inter-faith harmony initiatives that have been started by any organization that is not lead by and chartered by Jews? When was the last gathering prompted by any member or organization hailing from Islam? I don't ask cynically, but out of sincere ignorance and willingness to be shown the truth ...

### **6. Jews First Target. Christians are Second**

- Author: Linda Rivera
- Country: USA
- 12/07/2010 18:52

Jihad is an obligation in the Koran. The Koran commands all nations and peoples to be conquered and subjugated under excessively cruel Islamic sharia law where defenseless non-Muslims have no human rights. Europe, what are you going to do? Are your indigenous, mostly Christian people of Europe going to have to mass emigrate also in order to be safe? Which countries will you go to for safety? All of Europe and the UK are colonized with massive numbers of Muslim immigrants.

#### **5. Decision was made in 1939**

- Author: Mark
- Country: Canada
- 12/07/2010 17:22

Europe already drove out or murdered its Jews. A second deliberate decision was made about 30 years ago to replace them with Muslim immigration. For the past thirty years we have seen an increase in anti-Semitism within the political, economic, and intellectual elites of the EU. This is demonstrated most clearly in the one-sided obsessive criticism of Israel and the blind eye turned to the Arab dictatorships. The message is very clear in Europe.

#### **4. Talk! Talk! Talk!**

- Author: mimi
- Country: USA
- 12/07/2010 16:31

This is a joke. What are the imams going to do? What is their plan? How are they going to reach the Muslims who want to kill Jews and run them out of their own countries? Enough talk....let's see some action! Shalom.

#### **3. Waste of money**

- Author: Al
- Country:
- 12/07/2010 14:34

Those Imams are just in there for free trips and luncheons. They have no control over the uneducated problem-making Muslims youths who deface European cities. They feel superior- they soon will be in numbers- police can't touch them or they're "racists". Europe is in a sad, sad state.

#### **2. It is over folks .**

- Author: trumpeldor
- Country:
- 12/07/2010 08:56

Jewry is vanishing in eurabia

## **1. Misguided efforts**

- Author: Israeli
- Country: Israel
- 12/07/2010 05:47

European Jewry confounds me, I have to admit. What exactly is their vision? What are they thinking? The rehabilitation of European Jewry is seriously misguided and goes against the current of history. It is time to complete the dream of Herzl and join their brethren in Israel.