

We need more Intolerance

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Today, January 27, is Holocaust Memorial day. I came across the following statement:

- The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission, Catherine Ashton, issued the following statement today:
 - *“Today the international community remembers the victims of the Holocaust. We honour every one of those brutally murdered in the darkest period of European history. We also want to pay a special tribute to all those who acted with courage and sacrifice to protect their fellow citizens against persecution. On Holocaust Remembrance Day, we must keep alive the memory of this tragedy. It is an occasion to remind us all of the need to continue fighting prejudice and racism in our own time. We must remain vigilant against the dangers of hate speech and redouble our commitment to prevent any form of intolerance. The respect of human rights and diversity lies at the heart of what the European Union stands for. “*

Who was murdered in the Holocaust? Who were the perpetrators? This is unclear from that statement and Ashton seems to have a personal problem to use the words “Jews have been killed” “by Germans (and their European allies)”.

Philosopher Harry Frankfurt would frame this statement as pure “bullshit” (this is the title of a bestselling pamphlet by Frankfurt). Ashton and the EU want “to prevent any form of

intolerance". In fact we need much more intolerance – intolerance towards antisemitism, often framed as “criticism of Israel”, and anti-Zionism. We need intolerance towards Islamist and Arab Jew-hatred, Holocaust affirmation and Holocaust denial. We need intolerance towards EU policies to single out the Jewish state and products being produced (often by Palestinians, who earn a wonderful living!) in the disputed territories or Westbank. We need more intolerance towards a German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier who attacks the Israeli government over settlements on the occasion of the burial of former Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon.

Germany just started to put buttons on Israeli products from those territories. This is simply a reminder to “Kauft nicht beim Juden”, plain and simple.

We need more intolerance towards useless speeches and statements like this one. The EU has no problem at all with hate speech as long as it comes from Arab or Muslim extremists, or left-wingers who aim at Israel. Moderate Muslims and pro-Zionist activists are singled out on a daily basis by NGOs, conferences, academic networks, political institutions and the like. EU policies towards Iran are endangering Jews in Israel and abroad and we need more intolerance towards these policies.

And we need more intolerance to this denial of the uniqueness of the Shoah. We know this denial of the unprecedented character of the Shoah by postcolonial scholarship, take Edward Said, Hamid Dabashi, Aimé Césaire or Jürgen Zimmerer, Donald Bloxham, Dirk A. Moses or the Prague Declaration from 2008 (signed by Vaclav Havel and German President Joachim Gauck, among others), which equates those who built Auschwitz and gassed the Jews to those who liberated that concentration and extermination camp, as examples.

Did Ashton mention antisemitism, when she talked about the Shoah today? No. She mentions “prejudice and racism” and

misses the point that antisemitism is different. Antisemitism is genocidal and she could have learnt this had she spent any time in her considering the very specific history of Jew-hatred in Europe in general and Germany in particular.

It is shocking that the leading foreign policy representative of the EU does not even mention antisemitism and Jew-hatred on Holocaust Memorial Day. Instead, she uses words dedicated to distorting what the Holocaust was about. As if the Shoah was nothing but disrespect for “diversity”. Probably Ashton follows EU guidelines for all their application processes and she uses the word “diversity” in every single speech she delivers to an equally ignorant audience, used to embracing code words and people who detest any kind of analysis or real remembrance of a specific, very specific history at all.

We need more intolerance towards those who make a great living from distracting attention from the real problems of the Middle East – Islamism, dictatorship, lack of democracy, anti-feminism, scarce water resources, failure to develop a civic political culture, anti-Americanism, to name but some of the core problems in that troubled region – by being obsessed with the one and only Jewish state of Israel.

Therefore, we need more intolerance of useless statements like this one by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.