



הארגון הבינלאומי של עורכי-דין ומשפטנים יהודים (ע"ר)
THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH LAWYERS AND JURISTS (R.A.)

July 20, 2014

To

Mr. Mutuma Ruteere

Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Palais des Nations

CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Fax: +41 22 917 9006

Email: racism@ohchr.org

Subject: Request to enquire recent racial and anti-Semitic statements and expressions in Turkey

Dear Mr. Ruteere:

The International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists wishes to express its concern regarding recent statements and expressions made by Turkey's Prime Minister Erdogan, government officials and media. We are extremely worried that these anti-Semitic statements and expression will incite to violence toward the Turkish Jewish community and will eventually provoke harm and danger. As the Special Rapporteur on the topic of racism and xenophobia we believe it is your responsibility and duty, in light of the following information, to enquire on these statements, expressions and recent events.

In the last few days we have witnessed escalating violence in the Middle East between Israel and Hamas. While hundreds of rockets are fired indiscriminately on Israel's towns and cities, and thousands of civilians from both sides are endangered, Prime Minister Erdogan chose, instead of mediating between the parties and assisting in achieving a cease-fire, to express contempt, racism and anti-Semitism toward Israel, Israel's officials and especially the Jewish community in Turkey. Moreover, other Turkish government officials have followed his path and so did most of the media in Turkey, without any intervention by Turkish authorities.

And so, we have witnessed Prime Minister Erdogan comparing the Israeli MP Ayelet Shaked to Hitler and claimed that since 1948 Israel is systematically committing Genocide of the Palestinian people. We have also witnessed the Mayor of Ankara, Turkey's capital calling on his Twitter account to get rid of Israel's Embassy. Many Parliament members on behalf of the AKP party (the party to which Prime Minister Erdogan belongs) took part in violent demonstrations in Ankara making racist and anti-Semitic declarations, inciting to violence against Jews and Israelis. Finally, a well-known and established newspaper, known for its ties with the government and the AKP party published an article that calls Prime Minister Erdogan to demand the Jewish community in Turkey to officially apologize for the actions taken by Israel in Gaza. The article "reminded" the Jews who live in Turkey that they were actually expelled from Spain 500 hundreds years ago and gained their wealth while using and on the account of the Turkish people. Accordingly the Jews in Turkey owed their lives and wealth to the Muslims and should apologize for Israel's actions. Lastly, the article called to boycott all Jewish products and businesses in Turkey. Obviously, no action has been taken by the Turkish government to stop this incitement, nor did any of Turkey's officials expressa contrary opinion. Needless to say, that no judicial action or investigation by Turkish authorities was taken in light of these declarations and statements.

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It is our opinion that these statements, expressions and actions taken by Turkey's Prime Minister, government officials and media constitute incitement to violence on racial grounds, are anti-Semitic and highly dangerous to the Jewish community living in Turkey. We ask therefore, and in light of these declarations, that the Special Rapporteur will intervene and will start an immediate enquiry in the matter. Such enquiry will ensure Turkey's compliance with its international obligations; will reassure the Jewish community living in Turkey and in other countries around the world. As the Special Rapporteur must be aware of, words and statements like these can and will provoke eventually violent acts (as we have witnessed in Paris recently).

We await your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Irit Kohn, Adv.

President