



International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

1 October 2015. IHRA Chair Szabolcs Takács at the EU colloquium entitled "A fundamental rights based approach to tackling antisemitic and anti-Muslim hatred in Europe: specificities, commonalities and responses", Brussels.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor to have been invited to this significant conference and to have the possibility to address you in this panel-discussion as the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). IHRA, as the only intergovernmental organization dealing solely with the Holocaust, is committed to values and principles embedded in our European culture which nevertheless seems to be threatened by several challenges today. IHRA is devoted to Holocaust education, remembrance and research and to reflecting on the past to give orientation how we should deal with present day issues and concerns. In historical context it is also evident that a series of extreme violations of fundamental rights led to the Holocaust. However, although the “denial of civic and fundamental rights preceded the murder and was one of the preparatory steps to the Holocaust, – as Yehuda Bauer, Honorary Chairman of IHRA rightly put it in his essay “it did not necessarily lead to the genocide of the Jews”. The motivation of the Nazis was primarily ideological. This ideology centered on their antisemitism which led to the Holocaust. The unprecedented character of the Holocaust, therefore, will always carry universal meaning. To use the words of the Stockholm Declaration, the founding document of IHRA: “We empathize with the victims' suffering and draw inspiration from their struggle. With humanity still scarred by genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, antisemitism and xenophobia, the international community shares a solemn responsibility to fight those evils.” In order to do so, however, we first have to learn the true story of the Holocaust. Therefore, IHRA fosters research of and free access to all data and archives dealing with the Holocaust. Having committed itself to this task, IHRA cannot be neglected when, at the European level a new data protection regulation is about to be adopted. As Chair of

IHRA I was mandated by 31 member countries, of which 24 are members of the EU, at IHRA's last plenary in Budapest to initiate an amendment of the present draft of the General Data Protection Regulation so that no personal data bearing on the Holocaust can be denied to researchers on the grounds of this regulation.

In our daily lives in the present day we are faced with the fact that different forms of radicalism are on the rise in many European countries and societies. Violent physical attacks on Jews in many European cities and other atrocities throughout Europe indicate that antisemitism poses a threat to democracy, the values of civilization and to the overall security in societies. Antisemitism appears in many forms, some are less obvious, some are very aggressive. Combatting Holocaust denial or the distortion of the Holocaust is one of IHRA's main objectives. The link between Holocaust denial and antisemitism is even more obvious if we realize that radical Islamists or radical right wing extremists deny or distort the Holocaust in order to justify their assault on Jews and Western democracy. At the same time, far left extremists, instead of denying the Holocaust, trivialize it in light of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

IHRA has been successfully mobilizing more and more political, diplomatic, civil and cultural actors to combat antisemitism, racism and xenophobia. The experience of IHRA demonstrates that action is required. Words are important, but not enough. Doing nothing and attacking those who try to do something worthy, is even worse. For the sake of our security, it is essential to tackle both internal and external challenges in Europe. There is no more time to waste. Coping with the migration crisis would and should be a test of our commitment to fundamental rights and we must act resolutely. Step by step: we have to help those who are in need, and we must cooperate on a European and on an international level in order to adequately deal with the crisis where- and whenever- it is necessary. While doing all this we, however, must not forget the lessons of our past.

Allow me to quote the IHRA Honorary Chairman, Yehuda Bauer who, in his statement concerning the present migration and refugee crisis, wrote: this "crisis is notably different from the persecution of the Jews and other victims before, during and after the Holocaust. Historical analogies should be avoided; they are never useful, although there are some parallels between the treatment of refugees then and now. The world has to realize that failing to adequately address mass migration has, in the past, created the conditions for untold disaster. From the Holocaust, the world can understand, what happens when these problems are not internationally addressed".

We, around this table, have a shared task: the necessity of tackling our present day challenges with a common approach and with a perspective of their social impact at large, that is to say on the whole of Europe, on the future of Europe.