

PRESS RELEASE

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**ECI expresses concern over rising anti-Semitism in Sweden and election victories of racist parties in the European Parliament;  
Calls for emergency EU-summit in Stockholm**

**Brussels 21 August, 2009** - A growing number of anti-Semitic incidents and a general hostility towards the state of Israel in parts of Swedish media have caused the European Coalition for Israel to send an official letter to the Foreign Minister of Sweden Carl Bildt, currently the holder of the EU-presidency, to call for an EU-emergency summit in Stockholm to combat rising anti-Semitism and racism in Europe.

This would not be the first time that the government of Sweden would take the lead in combating anti-Semitism in Europe. In January 2000 the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust was organized by the Swedish government to raise awareness about the Holocaust and to prevent it from happening again by educating new generations about the deadly virus of anti-Semitism.

Recent reports from Sweden seem to indicate that the need for education is now more urgent than ever. In March 2009 a Davis Cup match in tennis between Israel and Sweden had to be played before an empty stadium due to a decision by the mayor of the host city of Malmö to give in to anti-Semitic threats of violence instead of ensuring public safety at the sports event. Later remarks by the mayor have confirmed that his decision was not primarily made out of security concerns but were mainly politically motivated. The tennis match, nevertheless, drew together violent anti-Israeli demonstrations but a peaceful solidarity rally for Israel was stopped by the police, also for "security reasons."

Now a leading evening newspaper in Sweden, Aftonbladet, is openly fabricating medieval myths of Jewish blood libel by running articles accusing Israeli soldiers of stealing and selling the organs of Palestinians. According to the Council of Europe and the OSCE such allegations classify as traditional anti-Semitic rhetoric's and were widely spread in the Middle Ages and during the pogroms in the 19th and 20th century.

According to NGO Monitor, an Israeli organization following the activities of NGO's in Israel, the article in Aftonbladet is not an isolated aberration but rather the result of a long campaign of anti-Israeli demonization based on manufactured "evidence" repeated by "Palestinian eyewitnesses."

Earlier this summer it was revealed that the Swedish government was one of several EU countries which were financially supporting a report by an anti-Israeli group called "Breaking the Silence", which accused the Israeli army of war crimes during the Operation Cast Lead.

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) has a long history of supporting anti-Israeli groups while at the same time being the single largest contributor to the Palestinian authorities. Many of the NGO's which receive Swedish government funding routinely accuse Israel of "genocide", "ethnic cleansing" and "apartheid" and some compare Israeli military officials to Nazis. These false accusations also fall in to the category of anti-Semitism as defined by OSCE and the Council of Europe.

This rise of anti-Israelism and anti-Semitism in Sweden comes at the same time as the government of Sweden has taken over the rotating presidency of the EU and is in the centre of international media attention.

But anti-Israeli incidents are not isolated to the events mentioned in Sweden but are also spreading in other parts of Europe though the case of Sweden is of a particular concern.

The recent victories in the European Parliament elections of openly racist and anti-Semitic parties is another reason why the European Coalition for Israel now calls upon the Swedish EU-presidency to organize an emergency EU-summit in Stockholm with the aim of combating this current tide of anti-Semitism, racism and xenophobia in Europe.

“- A new Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust will be needed to find new and effective European strategies of combating the demons of anti-Semitism and racism”, writes ECI director Tomas Sandell in the letter to the Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt and concludes that “there can be no better way to mark the tenth anniversary of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust than to renew the pledge to fight anti-Semitism and to commit to educating the new generations about the tragedies of the past. The Holocaust did not happen over night but started with demonization and false accusations of the Jews. Now it is time to stop the tide in Europe while there is still time. “

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