



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

STATEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

As delivered by Ambassador Robert Kvile
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 21 January 2016

Mr Chairman,

Anti-Semitism is not a sentiment of the past.

A recent survey found that anti-Semitic views and stereotypes still exist among Norwegians. Regrettably, there are indications of anti-Semitic sentiments also in new minority groups in Norway, even in the younger generation.

Mr Chairman,

In our effort to eradicate anti-Semitism we must keep the memory of Holocaust alive.

Norwegian authorities, institutions and organisations are contributing to this in various ways.

A Centre for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities was established in Oslo some 15 years ago. Symbolically, it is located in the war-time residence of the Norwegian collaborator and Nazi leader Vidkun Quisling. Here schoolchildren and the public can learn about Jewish culture, the Holocaust and how to prevent this from happening again.

Mr Chairman,

The ceremony to mark the International Holocaust Remembrance Day is held every year at the harbour in Oslo, at the very site of the deportation of Norwegian Jews in 1942, carried out by Norway's own police officers, who followed the orders they had been given by the occupants.

In 2012 in his Holocaust Remembrance Day speech Norway's Prime Minister expressed his deep regret that this could happen in our country.

Every year a few thousand Norwegian schoolchildren visit Auschwitz-Birkenau and other concentration camps. Many of these school classes have been accompanied by Norwegian concentration camp survivors, to hear first-hand about daily life, and death, in the camps.

Mr Chairman,

In May last year, Mr Samuel Steinmann passed away in his 92nd year. He was the last survivor of the small group of Norwegian Jews who in 1945 returned back to Norway from Auschwitz-Birkenau.

It took Mr Steinmann many years before he was able to tell his story from Auschwitz. But when he finally did, his testimony became a strong reminder of why we must never forget, of why we must continue to build an international framework that ensures respect for human rights and dignity for every citizen, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity or origin.

Last year, horrified by attacks against Jews in European countries, a group of young people in Oslo, mainly young Muslims, organised a powerful demonstration of solidarity with Norway's Jews by forming a chain of hands around the synagogue in Oslo.

Mr Chairman,

The Holocaust was extreme in every way. One of the factors that made it possible was the prejudice and hatred that was stirred up among ordinary people beforehand. We honour the victims by increasing our efforts to fight all forms of discrimination and intolerance to ensure that something like this will never happen again.

Thank you.