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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
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**CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE QUESTIONS OF:  
RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE**

**Joint written statement\* submitted by the Coordinating Board of Jewish Organizations (CBJO), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status and B'nai B'rith, a non-governmental organization on the Roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[16 February 2005]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

This year, as the United Nations and the world mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Holocaust, we once again witness the rise of anti-Semitism. Jewish institutions, Jewish individuals, and the Jewish State are attacked verbally, physically, and politically. All of these attacks erode the basic human rights of the Jewish people.

Today's manifestation of anti-Semitism feeds on the hate propaganda exported from Europe, particularly its vilest form by the Nazis during the Second World War. Official and governmentally-licensed media in the Middle East publish cartoons that resemble those that appeared in the infamous *Der Stuermer* and other Nazi publications. Widely viewed Arab television channels have broadcast dramatizations of the notorious anti-Semitic publication *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* that was concocted by the Czarist secret police over 100 years ago. But even elsewhere newspapers and Internet sites revitalize the age-old canard of the blood libel – accusations that Jews kill non-Jewish children in order to perform their religious rites.

Middle East governments hide behind the excuse that these are symptoms of a “free press,” or that these expressions are merely expressions of political criticism of Israeli policies. While criticism of any government's policies is legitimate, these formulations go far beyond the political realm. They serve to portray Israeli officials in traditional European stereotypes of Jews. The history of Germany Jewry in the 1930's has taught us that such portrayals were not political in nature, but rather the first step on the road to the Holocaust: demonize, isolate, dehumanize and exterminate.

Globalization has eased the return of this anti-Semitic propaganda to Europe through the Internet, satellite television, and taped messages that are spread by radical clerics and extreme right-wing nationalists, such as a proposal recently tabled in the Russian Duma calling for all Jewish organizations to be outlawed. At first, European governments wished to close their eyes to these attacks by labeling them as political in nature, or as youthful pranks. This past year, however, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) adopted the Berlin Declaration, recognizing the true nature of this new wave of anti-Semitism, and advancing a plan for OSCE governments to counteract it via law enforcement and education.

We are disappointed that the Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Religion or Belief did not mention anti-Semitism at all in her report to the Commission. We understand that she has only been in this position only since July 2004. We hope that in subsequent reports she will examine the phenomenon of anti-Semitism throughout the world, which is well documented, and which is mentioned in the resolution under this agenda item, along with other forms of anti-religious behavior.

Some in the human rights community do not believe that the modest size of the world Jewish population merits a specific condemnation of anti-Semitism by the Commission on Human Rights. This chilling statement – emanating from the heart of Europe – demonstrates the need for the UNCHR to condemn anti-Semitism by name, and for governments and civil society to advocate for more education about the Holocaust. The danger of anti-Semitism is not a function of the numbers of Jews in the world, but about one of the world's oldest forms of discrimination, persecution, and mass murder.

Indeed, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated at the UN General Assembly Special Session commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps, “the tragedy of the Jewish people was unique. Two thirds of all Europe's Jews, including

one and a half million children, were murdered. An entire civilization, which had contributed far beyond the its numbers to the cultural and intellectual riches of Europe and the world, was uprooted; destroyed; laid waste.”

However, the Holocaust did not emerge in a vacuum. As Secretary-General Annan stated, “The Holocaust came as the climax of a long, disgraceful history of anti-Semitic persecution, pogroms, institutionalized discrimination and other degradation. The purveyors of hatred were not always, and may not be in the future, only marginalized extremists. ... Such an evil must never be allowed to happen again. We must be on the watch out for any revival of anti-Semitism, and ready to act against the new forms of it that are happening today.”

The events of the Holocaust – the consequences of unchecked religious intolerance – were “fresh in the minds of the delegates at San Francisco, when this Organization [the United Nations] was founded. The United Nations must never forget that it was created as a response to the evil of Nazism, or that the horror of the Holocaust helped to shape its mission. That response is enshrined in our Charter, and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” the Secretary-General said.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in Article 18, guarantees the right to freedom of religion, including the “freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.” This guarantee applies to Jewish individuals and community organizations wherever they may be found. Article 7 of the Declaration guarantees “equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against incitement to such discrimination.” The Declaration also guarantees the right to live free from attacks upon honor and reputation, which anti-Semitic articles, cartoons, television programs and popular culture violate. The Jewish people should enjoy all of these rights, including the right to live free from discrimination or incitement to discrimination, based on ethnicity and/or religion.

The actions of the Nazi regime against the Jews in the decade leading up to the Holocaust demonstrate the need for vigilance today in the fight against anti-Semitism. The lesson we should learn from the Holocaust is that fighting religious intolerance in any guise opens the way to the demonization, isolation, dehumanization and extermination of a religious group. In this 60<sup>th</sup> year since the liberation of the concentration camps, fighting religious intolerance should begin with combating anti-Semitism in all its forms.

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