



The Presidents of the Council of Christians and Jews (U.K.) | 26.01.2004

Joint Statement on Antisemitism by the Presidents of the Council of Christians and Jews (U.K.)

Since its inception sixty years ago during the darkest days of World War Two, the Council of Christians and Jews has continued to confront the evil of antisemitism with a message of healing and mutual respect between our communities.

We believe the warm friendship between Britain's Christian and Jewish leaders – nourished by the work of CCJ at local level – has had an influence that extends beyond our two faiths. It has helped to set a tone for tolerance and respectful diversity across religious and ethnic boundaries in Britain.

Today, however, antisemitism is resurfacing as a phenomenon in many parts of the world. There have been fatal attacks on Jewish people, destruction and desecration of synagogues and cemeteries and the firebombing of Jewish schools. Incitement to hatred and violence against Jewish people has increased.

Britain has been less affected than many other countries but has certainly not been immune. We recognise that many in the Jewish community feel vulnerable and afraid. They seek and deserve the support that we as religious leaders can offer.

It is against this background that, as the Presidents of CCJ, we agree on the following:

- Antisemitism is abhorrent. It is an attempt to dehumanise a part of humanity by making it a scapegoat for shared ills. We reject utterly the politics of hate and we pledge ourselves once more to combat antisemitism and all forms of racism, prejudice and xenophobia.
- We celebrate the fact that Jewish people have made a vast contribution to humanity; that Judaism is a valued voice in the conversation of mankind; and that, along with people of other faiths, Jews and Christians are called by God to work for peace, human dignity and respect for all people.
- We recognise that the suffering of the Jewish people is a stain on the history of Europe. Today, our total rejection of antisemitism, amid evidence of its resurgence, is a signal that we will not permit it to stain our continent's future as it has its past. This is our common pledge and one we call on others to join.
- We acknowledge that criticism of government policy in Israel, as elsewhere, is a legitimate part of democratic debate. However such criticism should never be inspired by antisemitic attitudes, extend to a denial of Israel's right to exist or serve as justification for attacks against Jewish people around the world.
- We share with so many others a deep longing for peace, justice and reconciliation in the Holy Land and we believe that achieving this would help to make it harder for antisemitism to flourish.

- As religious leaders we reject the misuse of religion and religious language in seeking to address political challenges. We seek instead to speak and be heard together in our shared confidence that, in the mercy of God, the wounds of the world can be healed.

Signed by the Joint Presidents of the Council of Christians and Jews:

The Archbishop of Canterbury
The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster
The Chief Rabbi
The Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain
The Moderator of the Free Churches' Council
The Moderator of the Church of Scotland
Rabbi Dr Albert Friedlander

27th January 2004