

Irwin Cotler: World Is Witnessing New, Virulent and Even Lethal' anti-Semitism

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Irwin Cotler, Canada's former justice minister and attorney general, warned Tuesday that hatred of Israel was behind a "new, escalating, global, sophisticated, virulent and even lethal [anti-Semitism](#)."

Cotler, a top international human rights lawyer, described this new strain of anti-Semitism as "discrimination against, denial of, assault upon the right of Israel and the Jewish people to live as an equal member of the family of nations, in fact the right even to live, with Israel emerging as the collective Jew among the nations – the targeted collective Jew among the nations."

Addressing the Knesset Committee on Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs, he said evidence of this new anti-Semitism could be found in the tendency to deny Israel's right to exist and to single it out as the "embodiment of all evil." Cotler was a guest speaker at a special session of the committee devoted to anti-Semitism and the delegitimization of Israel.

Also addressing the session, Gideon Behar, director of the department for combating anti-Semitism at the Foreign Ministry, said that the anti-Jewish sentiments had taken a particular turn for the worse in Europe, [as evidenced by recent statistics](#).

"Our expectation is that because of demographic changes in Europe and the resulting strengthening of the extreme right, things are bound to get worse for Jews there," he warned.

Behar noted that in the first six months of 2015, anti-Semitic incidents in France rose by 84 percent, compared with the same period last year. In Britain, the increase was 53 percent. "What we are seeing as a result is growing fear among Jews in these countries, greater numbers of Jews moving, assimilation that takes the form of Jews taking off their kippahs and removing other signs of their Jewishness, and a self-ghettoization, with more and more Jewish communities living behind walls and armed guards," he said.

According to figures presented at the session by Avinoam Bar-Yosef, president of the Jewish People Policy Institute, an independent Israeli think tank, Jews in France feel more threatened today than anywhere else in Europe, while Jews in Britain feel safest. "It shows us that how Jews feel has a lot to do with whether they feel they can rely on their governments," he said. "And here is where our Foreign Ministry can play a key role."

Charles Asher Small, director of the New York-based Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, alleged during the committee session that the spread of anti-Israel sentiments and campaigns to boycott the Jewish state on university campuses around the world had financial roots.

"Follow the money," he said. "We're finding very strong and clear links between nefarious sources, even funders with connections to terror, funding some of the most eminent universities in the world."

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