



**Statement**

**by**

**H.E. Dr. Nawaf Salam  
Permanent Representative of Lebanon  
to the United Nations**

**at the  
Informal meeting of the General Assembly  
on  
Antisemitism**

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*Check Against Delivery*

Mr. President,

Recalling that the Charter of the United Nations calls upon us, “We the peoples”, “to practise tolerance” and to “promote and encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion”,

also recalling that this General Assembly has adopted numerous resolutions on “the promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation”, “the elimination of all forms of religious intolerance” and “the elimination of all forms of intolerance and of discrimination based on religion or belief”,

Lebanon organised a thematic debate on “Intercultural Dialogue” when it assumed the presidency of the Security Council in May 2010, and underlined in the Concept note it prepared to that effect how the political implications of “essentialist approaches” especially about religions and civilizations, mutual fears, stereotyping, and preconceived ideas continue to give rise to dangerous acts of violence.

We also stressed the need to overcome prejudice and hostile perceptions, to combat ignorance and xenophobia, and to advance a culture of reconciliation based on the values of respect, tolerance, diversity, equality, justice, protection of human rights, and the rule of law.

In line with this principled position, we are here today to condemn in the strongest terms all forms and manifestations of Anti-Semitism in the same way that we condemn in the strongest terms all other forms and manifestations of racism and chauvinism, such as those directed against Blacks, Women, Arabs, Kurds, Moslems, or any religious, national or ethnic group.

In fact, Anti-Semitism – a misnomer indeed as Arabs are Semites too – is the hatred of Jews because they are Jews irrespective of their deeds, political orientations, social conditions, or economic activities. And this is the defining trait of all kinds of racism and bigotry.

Yet, the magnitude of the tragedy besetting the Jews between 1933 and 1945 and the horrors of the Holocaust “beggars our powers of description and Understanding” as wrote Edward Said, the late Palestinian leading intellectual, for whom “the more one studies this period and its excesses the more one must conclude that for any decent human being the slaughter of so many millions of innocents must, and indeed should weigh heavily on subsequent generations, Jewish and non-Jewish.

Mr. President,

Contrary to what is sometimes insidiously claimed, there never was any widespread Arab or Muslim Anti-Semitism, similar to what Europe has witnessed. True for example that the notorious “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” were published in Arabic, but that was mainly a “European import” as these so-called “Protocols” were a creation of the secret police of Czarist Russia.

And it has been rightly observed too [inter alia, by Uri Avnery] that the Muslims never imposed their religion by force on Jews and Christians, as shown by the fact that almost all the Jews when expelled by the *Reconquista* from Andalusia, where they had flourished for centuries, settled in Muslim countries. Moreover, there has never been any Jewish Holocaust in the Muslim world or Arab pogroms.

Mr. President,

I would also like to draw your attention to a confusion which is often intentionally made by portraying the critics of Israel's policies as Anti-Semites in an attempt to intimidate and discredit them. Likewise, the false category of "self-hating Jew" was invented for those who share the religion but not the politics of Israel's rulers.

Let us therefore be very clear on two points: One, "Zero tolerance" must remain our policy towards Anti-Semitism for it is but an abject form of racism; Two, when we criticize Israel and condemn its policies, as in the numerous resolutions adopted by this General Assembly and the Security Council, it is never because of the Jewish character of the majority of its population but because of its continued occupation of Arab territories in violation of the UN charter and of the principles and rules of international law, and because of its disrespect of basic Palestinian human rights.

Mr. President,

I would like to conclude with the following farsighted words written as early as 1939 by George Antonius, one of the most influential Arab thinkers of the past century, in his classic "The Arab Awakening":

"The treatment meted out to Jews in Germany and other European countries is a disgrace to its authors and to modern civilization; but posterity will not exonerate any country that fails to bear its proper share of the sacrifices needed to alleviate Jewish suffering and distress. To place the brunt of the burden upon Arab Palestine is a miserable evasion of the duty that lies upon the whole of the civilized world. It is also morally outrageous. No code of morals can justify the persecution of one people in an attempt to relieve the persecution of another. The cure for the eviction of Jews from Germany is not to be sought in the eviction of the Arabs from their homeland; and the relief of Jewish distress may not be accomplished at the cost of inflicting a corresponding distress upon an innocent and peaceful population."

Thank you.