

Letter from Vienna: Europe Must Take Action to Counter Rise in Anti-Semitism
By Mike McClintock, LCHR Program Director

This week in Vienna, Austria, the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE, held its first international meeting dealing specifically with antisemitism. In closing today, high level representatives of the OSCE's 55 member states pledged to support a range of actions to combat antisemitism on an ongoing basis.

A theme throughout the conference was that antisemitic acts must be more forcibly confronted—by governments and civil society alike—and treated as the serious violations of international human rights they are.

The meeting was held in response to the extraordinary rise in antisemitism in Europe, and a recognition by many OSCE members that past pledges to address antisemitism within the framework of the OSCE's antiracism and religious intolerance agenda had not been fulfilled.

The significance given the meeting by OSCE member states was shown by the high level and number of government representatives who took part. Nongovernmental human rights organizations, including the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, also participated fully in the proceedings.

The Lawyers Committee joined with other human rights groups in a statement urging that the conference represent only the beginning of a sustained effort on the part of states and the OSCE as an institution: "to monitor and combat discrimination and violence faced by Jewish communities throughout the OSCE region."

Conference delegates offered support for immediate action by OSCE members and institutions to better monitor and report upon antisemitic acts. This was a needed response to what Lawyers Committee Director of Program Michael McClintock, who attended the conference, called a "'see no evil, hear no evil' information deficit within the OSCE's own human rights mechanisms and in the governments many European states."

The head of the United States delegation, former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, called for OSCE members to enact hate crimes legislation—and to collect and regularly publish timely, detailed, and comprehensive statistics on antisemitic acts in order to guide policy to combat hate crimes. He also urged member states to make such information available, however incomplete, for the OSCE's follow-up meetings on the right against antisemitism. A proposal by the German delegation that a follow-up meeting be held next year in Berlin was welcomed.

The Vienna OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism should lead to greater international awareness of the new reality of antisemitism and encourage member states to take needed action to combat it. It also provides a firm basis for follow up through the OSCE's next meetings on human rights issues: in July, a conference on religious freedom, in September, a conference on racism and intolerance, and the October Human

Dimension Implementation Meeting to take place in Warsaw, Poland. The Lawyers Committee and its partner organizations will be monitoring this process closely in order to encourage states and the relevant OSCE mechanisms to take concrete measures to combat antisemitism and other racist violence.

The failure of OSCE governments and institutions adequately to monitor, report upon, and take action to combat antisemitic and other racist acts is addressed in the Lawyers Committee's 2002 report *Fire and Broken Glass: The Rise of Antisemitism in Western Europe* (also available in French) and in a forthcoming report, *A Critique of the Department of State's Annual Human Rights Reports*.