



Message by Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European Commission, to the Jewish Community in Europe on the occasion of Rosh Hashana

Shana tova ve'metuqa l'kulam. As you welcome the year 5778, I wish you, your families and friends great joy and happiness when celebrating tonight the Rosh Hashana festive meal.

As the Jewish community uses this time for reflection on the past year and resolutions on the year ahead, let me briefly reflect on the past year for the EU, and our future path.

Europe looked back on 60 years of history in March, as we celebrated the anniversary of the Rome Treaties. Our unity has ensured over 70 years of peace in our continent, underpinned by our shared values. These values cannot prevail if we don't remain vigilant and if we don't fight for them. Europeans must stand united against hatred, intolerance and Antisemitism.

We continue to see expressions and manifestations of antisemitic prejudice and hatred in Europe, despite the lessons that history had taught us. There must be zero tolerance towards them. The democratic debate stops where antisemitic tropes are poisoning the discussion and age-old conspiracies are utilised against 'enemies' of society. We must also keep educating younger generations about the dangerous path this leads down. It cannot, it should never be the case that Jews have to hide their identity in public spaces. Every Jew must be able to show openly its Jewish identity.

We go through turbulent times, but there are also encouraging signs. Without ever being naïve, I remain optimistic. Europeans increasingly refuse the hateful messages of extremists and populists. I see growing resilience in our society and increasing understanding that we must fight for our values and not take them for granted. I believe that the silent majority is waking up to the reality that those who want to destroy our diverse societies cannot be met with silence.

More than ever, we need to promote dialogue and understanding between different communities. The European Commission was proud to co-sponsor the joint day of action against antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred this year. The joint Shavuot/Iftar dinner with Jewish and Muslim youngsters also sent a powerful message of unity, co-existence and dialogue. This is the kind of initiative which will make our societies stronger.

I wish you all a happy and sweet New Year and joyful High Holidays.

Website: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/racism-xenophobia/combating-antisemitism/index_en.htm

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