



Paris 7 March 2011 Meeting of the Coordinating Committee of European Muslim and Jewish Leaders

Xenophobia in Europe condemned by Jewish, Muslim leaders



Religious leaders convene in Paris to issue a joint declaration against what they see as the growing tide of xenophobia in Europe.

Jewish and Muslim religious leaders convened in Paris on Monday 8 March 2011 to issue a joint declaration against what they saw as the growing tide of xenophobia in Europe.

Rabbi Marc Schneier of New York and **British Imam Abduljalil Sajid** condemned anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish sentiments across the continent and called for democratic and pluralistic values to be upheld.

“Islamophobia and anti-Semitism represent the sharp end of racism in Europe, so Jews and Muslims must fight them together, and prevent anyone from turning us into scapegoats,” said Sajid, a Muslim religious leader of Pakistani origin who is one of the founders of the Muslim Council of Britain.

“At the same time, Europeans of all backgrounds should come together to defend basic European and universal values of democracy, pluralism and mutual acceptance.”

Schneier, who is an Orthodox rabbi and vice president of the World Jewish Congress, said that many parties on the Right currently espousing an anti-Muslim agenda used to persecute Jews.

“Although much of the venom of extremist and populist parties is directed these days against Muslims, it should not be forgotten that several of the far-Right parties, including the National Front in France, have histories replete with anti-Semitism,” he said.

Schneier and Sajid have participated in several interfaith events in the past, such as the Gathering of European Muslim and Jewish leaders, which was launched in Brussels on 6 December 2010.

The coordinating council of Islamic and Jewish leaders from Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, the United States and other countries also announced it will launch a series of public events in European capitals on 9 May in honor of Europe Day. The council held its first meeting in December 2010 in Brussels. Participants at today's meeting, whose main organizers include the World Jewish Congress, condemned the fact that extremist and xenophobic parties in the Netherlands and elsewhere have become partners in coalition governments. They also expressed uneasiness over the recent claims by high representatives of Britain, France, and Germany that multiculturalism in their countries has proven to be bankrupt.