



**Mairead McGuinness MEP**

**First Vice-President of the European Parliament**

*Message to members of Jewish communities in the European Union*

*Transmitted by Chief Rabbi Albert Guigui, Representative of the Conference of European Rabbis to the EU*

*Wednesday 31 October 2018*

Dear Rabbi Guigui, my dear friend

It was with great sadness that I learnt of the horrific and inhuman terrorist attack carried out at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, USA. Eleven innocent people slain while at prayer in their house of worship – an unspeakable act. These murders are a direct attack on the Jewish community, but also on all people of faith, and those who defend freedom of religion or belief as a fundamental and inalienable right.

In my role as Parliament's Vice President responsible for dialogue with religious communities, I have grown in my appreciation for the special contribution that Jewish communities make to European societies, sadly I have also become more and more aware of a growing anti-Semitism. Through your good offices as representative of the Conference of European Rabbis to the institutions of the EU, I wish to convey my solidarity with all Jews at this tragic time.

Our thoughts and prayers are with those whose lives were ended so suddenly and so brutally in Pittsburgh, and their families, friends and loved ones. But we also stand in solidarity with Jews everywhere at this time, faced with such vicious anti-Semitic attacks. Sadly, here in the European Union we have also witnessed growing hatred and anti-Semitism. When I visited the Grand Synagogue of Europe in Brussels, I was struck by the extra security measures in place to protect Jews simply going to worship their God.

As political leaders in the European Union, we have a particular duty to speak out against such barbaric attacks. We must remember the dark days of the 20th century when regimes driven by ideologies of hate caused the annihilation of six million Jews on our continent, along with numerous other minorities. The creation of the European project was founded on a determination by Europe's Founding Fathers that such atrocities must never happen again.

We need to commit again to the vision of these founders. We must stand up and be counted in our defence of a Europe based on openness, tolerance and respect for the dignity of each and every person. The motto of the European Union is "United in Diversity". At times like these, we must unite all our efforts to combat hatred and to demonstrate our respect and solidarity for the diversity of cultures and creeds that make our continent so unique.

Yours sincerely

***Mairead McGuinness MEP***