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Open letter to the President of the Conference of European Rabbis

Bigotry is not what drives European right wing parties today. In fact, the worldview of these parties is motivated by the same values that motivate right-wing Zionism.

Contact Editor | Rafael Castro, 05/12/18 10:15 | updated: 09:06



In your latest visit to Israel you urged the Israeli government to fight European "right-wing extremism". I understand the philosophical merits of fighting racism and jingoism from a Jewish perspective. However, before you persuade Israel to pick this fight indiscriminately, please heed my words of caution.

When Donald Trump was elected, the mainstream media in Europe warned us that his victory might be as catastrophic as Hitler's rise to power in 1933. They argued that his deceased father's youthful sympathies for the KKK, Trump's criticism of "global elites" and dismissive remarks of Mexican aliens echoed the anti-Semitism and racism of Nazi Germany.

Two years later we can agree that these fears were unfounded. America's democracy is as vibrant as ever. The welfare of blacks and Hispanics under President Trump has reached record highs. Meanwhile Jews around the world can delight in the most pro-Israel US administration in living memory.

I cite this example to show how misleading mainstream media reports can be. We knew this from their coverage about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; we know this now about their coverage of the Trump presidency; we will eventually realize this about the bogeyman of "right-wing extremism" in Europe.

I do not deny that there are bigots in Europe's populist right-wing parties and some of the parties have to weed them out. Reports about these bigots are amply reported in the mainstream newspapers we read and we must be wary of them. However, bigotry is not what drives these parties today. In fact, the worldview of these parties is motivated by the same values that motivate right-wing Zionism.

Right-wing Zionists believe that Israel should be and remain a proud Jewish State. They defend this belief by defending the Law of Return that restricts naturalization to ethnic Jews, converts to Judaism and their spouses, the national primacy of Jewish symbols and the Nationality Law that defines Israel as a Jewish state.

Likewise today's European right-wing "extremists" believe that France should remain French in the traditional sense of the word, just like The Netherlands should remain Dutch and Italy Italian. To associate these demands with pre-War World II nationalism is mistaken: The right-wing parties you lambast do not praise militarism nor do they call for territorial expansionism.

The fact they criticize the European Union is not a call for renewed military conflicts on the Old Continent. It is a last-ditch attempt to avoid a centralized super-state that will quash the sovereignty and self-determination of Europe's citizens. Criticism of the European Union is not motivated by crude nationalism: It is motivated by the same love of freedom that makes your native Switzerland proudly preserve its independence and sovereignty.

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Did you know that the leader of the "far-right" *Partij voor de Vrijheid* in The Netherlands is a staunch Zionist who volunteered in a kibbutz? Did you know that the romantic partner of the leader of the *Front National* in France is Jewish? Did you know that the head of the *Alternative für Deutschland* is a woman whose partner is South Asian?

If you don't know these facts you are not to blame. The mainstream media has done its very best to conceal the openness and diversity found in the right-wing of Europe's political spectrum. However, the media does an excellent job at lambasting these parties for being anti-Islamic and racist.

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That criticism of Islam amounts to racism is a common trope in progressive circles. Personally, I do not think Islam is a race, just like Christianity, Buddhism, Communism and Fascism are not races. However, if we were to concede that Islam is a race, we would have to accept that all other religions are also races. Since Islam rejects all other religions as inferior and/or despicable, it is clear that according to this "progressive" definition Islam is racist and – by extension – Muslims are also racist.

Israel should not intervene in European politics. Particularly since the parties you condemn are the only ones that given the chance would end both European subsidies to Palestinian terrorists and European support for the tyrannical Ayatollahs. Jews and Israel have the right and the moral duty to call out historical revisionism and unwarranted xenophobia. However, this must be done in light of Israel's experience and the everyday problems European Jews face.

Your efforts to make Israel join the crusade against right-wing parties in Europe may be praised at inter-religious conferences and by Muslim leaders. However this gratitude will be short-lived: The next time Gazans die in a conflict with Israel, the streets of Paris, Berlin and Brussels will, as in past years, reverberate with crowds shouting "Death to the Jews!"

In the meantime your efforts will have contributed to expand the demographic pool from which these crowds come and will have alienated parties that nowadays stand alone in unabashedly condemning the Jew-hatred and intolerance that flourishes in Islamic circles.

That is certainly not what you intend.

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/23110>

