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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by United Nations Watch, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 February 2019]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



The UN Human Rights System Must Stop Ignoring Antisemitism

United Nations Watch urges the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the Human Rights Council and its special procedures mandated to address discrimination, to address the comprehensive study that we recently published, *The United Nations and Antisemitism: 2008-2017 Report Card*.¹ This 40-page report reviewed the responses to antisemitism over the past decade by numerous UN agencies, experts and senior officials.

Although the United Nations has a unique global role to play in combating hatred, incitement and violence against Jews, our research showed that key UN officials, agencies and experts have routinely ignored rising antisemitism.

These findings are reinforced by the July 2018 statement of Dr. Ahmed Shaheed, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, criticizing the “scandalous lack of attention” paid by the UN human rights system to antisemitism.

United Nations Watch is extremely concerned by the failure of the Human Rights Council and UN human rights officials to address the problem of growing antisemitism worldwide.

Worldwide Rise in Antisemitism

On the morning of October 27, 2018—the Jewish Sabbath—a gunman armed with an assault rifle and at least three handguns marched into the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh and began indiscriminately shooting, killing 11 congregants. The massacre, which has been described as “among the deadliest against the Jewish community in the United States,”² shocked the Jewish community and the world.

World leaders, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, British Prime Minister Theresa May, French President Emmanuel Macron, and UN Secretary-General António Guterres condemned the attack.³ Regrettably, absent from these voices of condemnation was that of UN High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet, and the special procedures of the Human Rights Council.⁴

The Pittsburgh shooting did not occur in a vacuum. Antisemitism around the world has been on the rise for several years. The FBI’s annual hate crime statistics for 2017 showed an increase in antisemitic attacks for the third straight year, with a 37% spike between 2016 and 2017.⁵ Antisemitism was behind a staggering 58.1% of all hate crimes in the United States of America targeting a religious group.⁶

¹ *The United Nations and Antisemitism: 2008-2017 Report Card*, UN WATCH (July 9, 2018), <https://www.unwatch.org/united-nations-antisemitism-2008-2017-report-card/>.

² Campbell Robertson, Christopher Mele and Sabrina Tavernise, *11 Killed in Synagogue Massacre; Suspect Charged with 29 Counts*, NEW YORK TIMES (Oct. 27, 2018).

³ Raphael Ahren, *World leaders condemn deadly shooting at Pittsburgh synagogue*, TIMES OF ISRAEL (Oct. 27, 2018), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/world-leaders-condemn-deadly-shooting-at-pittsburgh-synagogue/>; *Strongly Condemning Pittsburgh Shooting, Secretary-General Calls for United Front to Roll Back Forces Promoting Racism, Anti-Semitism, Xenophobia*, UN PRESS RELEASE (Oct. 27, 2018), <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sgsm19322.doc.htm>.

⁴ We note that almost a week after the attack, Tendayi Achiume, the special rapporteur on racism mentioned the Pittsburgh attack in a statement on the rise of neo-Nazism on the internet. *Neo-Nazism and nationalist populism fuel hatred and intolerance, says UN expert*, OHCHR (Nov. 1, 2018), <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23814&LangID=E>.

⁵ Gina Cherehus, *U.S. anti-Semitic hate crimes spiked 37 percent in 2017: FBI*, REUTERS (Nov. 13, 2018), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-hate-crimes-report/u-s-anti-semitic-hate-crimes-spiked-37-percent-in-2017-fbi-idUSKCN1NI2H6>.

⁶ *2017 Hate Crimes Statistics, Incidents and Offenses*, FBI (Nov. 2018), <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2017/topic-pages/incidents-and-offenses>.

Likewise, European Jewish communities have been experiencing an alarming rise in antisemitism. In December 2018, The EU's Fundamental Rights Agency published the results of its second survey on perceptions of antisemitism among European Jews. The survey found that approximately 90% of European Jews feel that antisemitism is worsening, and more than one third avoid taking part in Jewish events and visiting Jewish sites due to safety concerns.⁷

In **France**, in the first nine months of 2018 alone, there was a 69% rise in antisemitic acts. Although Jews comprise less than 1% of the French population, they are the targets of nearly 40% of the racist violence in France.⁸ Two recent murders of elderly Jewish women in social housing projects near Paris are being treated as antisemitic hate crimes—that of Sarah Halimi, whose body was thrown from her third floor balcony in April 2017, and that of Holocaust survivor Mireille Knoll, who was stabbed to death and left in her burning apartment in March 2018.⁹

In **Germany**, police reported a 10.7% increase in antisemitic attacks in the first six months of 2018, compared to the same period in 2017.¹⁰ These attacks include the bullying of a Jewish high school student who then transferred to a Jewish school,¹¹ and the assault by a Syrian refugee of two men wearing kippas in Berlin.¹² One recently published study shows that antisemitic content on the internet in Germany has increased by more than 20% over the last decade and that antisemitism permeates mainstream German society.¹³

In the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**, the Community Security Trust recorded 727 antisemitic incidents in the first six months of 2018, the second highest number ever recorded since it began recording such incidents in 1984.¹⁴ The highest number ever recorded was in the first half of 2017, with 786 incidents. Antisemitism has also permeated British politics in recent years. The 2015 election of Jeremy Corbyn to head the Labour party has alienated Jews from the party. Last year, Corbyn hosted an event in which the Israeli government was likened to Nazis, and in the past he has attended events honoring terrorists.¹⁵ In September 2018, the UK Jewish Chronicle published a poll showing that nearly 40% of British Jews would seriously consider emigrating should Corbyn be elected Prime Minister.¹⁶

⁷ *Persistent antisemitism hangs over EU*, EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS (Dec. 10, 2018), <https://fra.europa.eu/en/press-release/2018/persistent-antisemitism-hangs-over-eu>.

⁸ *Anti-Semitic acts up 69 percent in France in 2018, prime minister says*, FRANCE 24 (Nov. 9, 2018), <https://www.france24.com/en/20181109-france-anti-semitic-edouard-philippe-mireille-knoll-nazi-kristallnacht>.

⁹ James McAuley, *The brutal killing of a Holocaust survivor raises anti-Semitism fears in France*, WASHINGTON POST (March 26, 2018), https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/frances-jewish-leaders-raise-the-alarm-over-brutal-murder-of-holocaust-survivor/2018/03/26/28cf8686-30f4-11e8-8abc-22a366b72f2d_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.0ed4f3d9ca07.

¹⁰ Tamar Pileggi, *German police record sharp rise in anti-Semitic attacks, mostly by far-right*, TIMES OF ISRAEL (Aug. 9, 2018), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/german-police-record-sharp-rise-in-anti-semitic-attacks-mostly-by-far-right/>.

¹¹ Elizabeth Schumacher, *Jewish student in Berlin bullied for months with anti-Semitic attacks at renowned high school*, DEUTSCHE WELLE (June 27, 2018), <https://www.dw.com/en/jewish-student-in-berlin-bullied-for-months-with-anti-semitic-attacks-at-renowned-high-school/a-44430805>.

¹² James Masters, *Germans of all faiths in 'wear a kippa march' against anti-Semitism*, CNN (April 25, 2018), <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/04/25/europe/germany-kippa-protest-intl/index.html>.

¹³ Don Snyder, *Anti-Semitism on the rise in Germany as Jewish business owners and students are targeted online*, FOX NEWS (Aug. 2, 2018), <https://www.foxnews.com/world/anti-semitism-on-the-rise-in-germany-as-jewish-business-owners-and-students-are-targeted-online>.

¹⁴ *Antisemitic Incidents January-June 2018*, CST (July 26, 2018), <https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2018/07/26/cst-antisemitic-incidents-report-for-january-june-2018-published-today>.

¹⁵ Laura Smith-Park, *Anti-Semitism is so bad in Britain that some Jews are planning to leave*, CNN (Aug. 17, 2018), <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/08/17/uk/uk-anti-semitism-intl/index.html>.

¹⁶ Lee Harpin, *Nearly 40 per cent of British Jews would 'seriously consider' emigrating if Corbyn became PM*, THE JEWISH CHRONICLE (Sep. 5, 2018), <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/nearly-40-per-cent-of-british-jews-would-seriously-consider-emigrating-if-corbyn-became-pm-1.469270>.

Likewise, **Switzerland**, home to the Human Rights Council, has witnessed its share of antisemitic incidents. In December 2018, vandals smashed the window of a Jewish synagogue in Basel;¹⁷ in October 2018, the Kosher butcher shop in Basel was vandalized four times;¹⁸ and in July 2018, three Orthodox Jews in Zurich were assaulted by a man with a knife.¹⁹ These are just a few examples.

Failure of the UN Human Rights System to Address Antisemitism

Antisemitism is a human rights issue. Attacking Jews who display visibly Jewish symbols, such as a kippa or Star of David, or who attend services and events at Jewish institutions, violates Article 18 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Furthermore, Articles 4 and 5 of the Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) obligate States to eradicate racial discrimination, including incitement thereto, to protect persons from being physically attacked due to their race, and to guarantee religious freedom.

Pursuant to its founding document, Resolution 60/251, the Human Rights Council is meant to promote “universal respect for the protection of all human rights...” and to “address situations of violations of human rights...and make recommendations thereon.” However, the disturbing rise in antisemitism around the world and horrific—sometimes deadly—attacks on Jews have never been addressed by the Human Rights Council in its regular sessions or resolutions.

Moreover, the High Commissioner of Human Rights, a powerful and well-respected UN official with a broad mandate “to promote and protect all human rights,” has routinely ignored horrific antisemitic attacks. While we acknowledge that Michelle Bachelet is still new to the position, we are troubled by her failure to condemn the October 27th massacre of 11 Jews at prayer at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh.

The safety of Jews worldwide—a minority in every country in which they live except Israel—should be a matter of utmost concern to the global human rights community. Antisemitic attacks should be strongly condemned by every relevant human rights official, and should be the subject of interactive dialogues and meetings of the Human Rights Council. The fact that it is being ignored by the UN human rights system is outrageous, and must be rectified.

¹⁷ *Vandals smash Swiss Synagogue window with hammer*, TIMES OF ISRAEL (Dec. 3, 2018), <https://www.timesofisrael.com/vandals-smash-swiss-synagogue-window-with-hammer/>.

¹⁸ *Swiss kosher butcher shop vandalized 4 times in one month*, JTA (Oct. 24, 2018), <https://www.jta.org/2018/10/24/global/swiss-kosher-butcher-shop-vandalized-4-times-one-month>.

¹⁹ Benjamin Weinthal, *Violent Attacks Committed Against Jews in Berlin and Zurich*, JERUSALEM POST (July 8, 2018), <https://www.jpost.com/International/Violent-Attacks-on-Jews-in-Berlin-and-Zurich-561964>.