

April 2016



THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this conference on Anti-Zionism, Antisemitism, and the Dynamics of Delegitimization.

As you are likely well aware, reports indicate that antisemitic incidents are on the rise around the world. These deplorable incidents range from hate speech and antisemitic graffiti to verbal threats, the defacement of synagogues, and acts of violence and terror as exemplified by last years' tragic killings in Paris and Copenhagen.

Even on university campuses across the United States, we increasingly hear calls for boycotts against Israel that are not only antithetical to academic freedom, but also alarmingly similar in tone and content to antisemitic attitudes that have plagued the world for generations and that tend to recur in spite of the catastrophic consequences that have repeatedly stemmed from such abhorrent beliefs. Such dangerous rhetoric often is the precursor of tragedy and must be unconditionally condemned before it can take root and spread. I am pleased that such condemnations have come recently from world leaders such as President Obama, Pope Francis, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and French President Francois Hollande.

But all too often, the increasing outbreaks of antisemitism worldwide are tragically met with silence. The antidote, in part, is to follow Winston Churchill's recommendation to "study history".

At Indiana University, the study of this somber subject is led by the university's outstanding Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, which, along with the Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism, is one of only two university programs of its kind in the United States. Under the outstanding leadership of Professor Alvin Rosenfeld, the founder and former long-time director of our renowned Robert A. and Sandra S. Borns Jewish Studies Program, the institute's work reminds us that we cannot afford to ignore the lessons drawn from the serious and informed study of present-day antisemitism and its deep connections with centuries-old traditions of suspicion and hatred.

As participants in this conference, and through the scholarly work in which you are engaged, you, too, are making vital contributions to this important mission. Your outstanding scholarship gives us invaluable insights into the motivations, the nature, and the manifestations of contemporary antisemitism and its relationship with anti-Zionism.

Today's society is, of course, being driven and shaped by the forces of international integration and global interconnectivity. The need for tolerant and engaged global citizens with international experience and the ability to appreciate and learn from different cultures and traditions led us to recently bring together Indiana University's extensive language programs and its renowned area studies centers to establish the School of Global and International Studies, which is now home to both the Borns Jewish Studies Program and the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism. Your work, likewise, promotes tolerance, understanding, and respect for the inherent dignity of all human beings.

Your explorations at this conference of the various manifestations of modern-day anti-Zionism and antisemitism in France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Iran, and elsewhere around the world—as well as your broad explorations of related historical and contemporary factors—are essential contributions that remind us all that we cannot and must not hide from our responsibility as individuals and as communities to recognize, confront, and condemn acts of antisemitism and all forms of hatred whenever and wherever we find them.

On behalf of all of us at Indiana University, I am pleased to welcome you to Bloomington. I extend our most sincere best wishes for a productive and intellectually stimulating conference.

Michael A. McRobbie

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael McRobbie".

President, Indiana University

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