

The theme: the fight against anti-Semitism

*By Gilberte Jacaret
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This year's convention, on Sunday, 13th January, brought together some 800 people to discuss the rise of anti-Semitism throughout France.

A statement by the CRIF ahead of the conference stated that delegates would consider the most effective ways of combating anti-Semitism, bearing in mind that it poses danger not only to the Jewish Community but equally to the French Republic. The unique platform was designed to "give public figures who share our concerns the opportunity to speak out", continued the official comment.

High-profile attendees included French MP Nathaie Kosciusko-Morizet (member of former President Nicolas Sarkozy's right-wing UMP party), Abdelghani Merah (brother of radical Islamist Toulouse murderer Mohamed), Gilles Bernaim, Chief Rabbi of Paris, and French Jewish philosopher and writer Alain Finkelkraut.

The themes were:

- Can we recover from anti-Semitism?
- How can we fight hate on the Internet?
- From Judeo-phobia to anti-Zionism.
- Blasphemy and freedom of expression.
- The name of "Israel" in the media as a curious carrier of delirium.
- Political and democratic Islam.
- France facing anti-Semitism.

General conclusion by **Richard Prasquier**, President of the CRIF.

Among the speakers, let us single out a few. For Jacques Tarnero, Jews are warning devices. Anti-Semitism is getting more and more virulent in Eastern Europe. Israel was first strongly attacked in Durban in 2001, a few days before September 11th. Hatred toward Israel is the modern times religion. In France, French culture is rejected by the Muslims, as you may read in the book: The lost territories of the Republic. The Halimi drama, Dieudonné's deliriums, Gaza war, Mahomet-caricatures, Islamo-phobia, the drama in Toulouse and the unaccountable success of Stephane Hessel's book, all this shows that we are all threatened.

Laurent Joffrin from the Nouvel Observateur is sorry that the press has minimized the danger of juvenile delinquency. Islamists are the guilty ones, not all Arabs. The Palestine Authority is never criticized.

Arié Bensenhoun puts a stress on the fact that hating the Jews spells a threat to the republic. Society as a whole should be aware of it. One should concentrate on radical Islamism and support the war in Mali.

Alain Chouraqui shows that anti-Semitism reveals a symptom.

Iannis Roder, a teacher of history and geography, insists on the role of the school. Taking pupils to Auschwitz should be a scientific device.

After the **Chief Rabbi of France, Gilles Bernheim's** intervention, the philosopher Alain Finkielkraut draws the conclusion that we have to fight because the left is not ready to face the real facts.

CRIF president **Richard Prasquier** had previously spoken out about the dangers of the internet in inciting anti-Semitism and religious hatred. To-day, he thinks one should talk about anti-racism. Teachers should take this into account.

CRIF - the representative council of Jewish organisations in France - holds its annual convention

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In conclusion, he stresses the importance of building **bridges**.