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Open letter to Mr. Romano Prodi President of the European Commission

Strasbourg, 6 September 2001

Mr. President,

Some particularly serious statements made on September 4 2001 by Mr. Chris PATTEN, European Commissioner, before the Plenary Meeting of the Parliament of Strasbourg, give rise to our profound indignation.

Questioned on the misappropriation of European funds in the Palestinian education system, feeding both anti-Jewish propaganda and calls to martyrdom, Mr. PATTEN declared, **"...the schoolbooks are not going to change the tragic reality of daily life in the Palestinian territories or in the Palestinian camps"**. Apart from the fact that it tries to minimize the impact of these misappropriations, this affirmation seems to us to be scandalous in itself: It is precisely because hate towards Jews has been printed in the minds that so many young Palestinian people are today candidates for suicide attacks. It is because this ritual hatred was blocking the road towards peace, that the chances of Camp David were not seized. On the contrary, we think- and all of European history bears witness to this - that it is by education that humanity progresses, and peace advances. Until now, too many generations have been trained according to fanaticism, encouraging new ones constitutes an obstacle to peace and a crime against the values at the foundation of community action.

Even more serious, the Commissioner continuing his talk, tried to justify the unjustifiable, **"...it can't be very easy for a teacher in the camps to teach children tolerance and conscience when, when they leave the camp in the evening, they see the tanks, the guns and hails of stones..."** Thus, for Mr. PATTEN, the context of violence would excuse ideas being instilled, which would

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bring anyone in Europe a condemnation for incitement to racial hatred and revisionism. Apart from the cycle of violence not necessarily starting with the tanks, but with fanaticism and fear, these words testify to an inadmissible indulgence towards those, who arm human bombs with convictions.

Finally, with persistence that some would qualify as bad faith, the Commissioner continued to give indirect, evasive answers to precise questions, which we had asked him. It was thus that while we had called upon him on several occasions in writing and orally on the entirety of community aid, which could finance an educational system distributing Anti-Semitic propaganda, inciting to martyrdom, and while we have proof of the existence of this teaching, Mr. PATTEN thought we would be satisfied to learn that the EU did not finance the printing of the racist works directly, but rather provided, more largely, **"an assistance to the education system concentrated on infrastructures, equipment, everyday expenses of the schools, such as teachers' salaries"**.

On this last point, having in our possession precise, supporting elements, showing how Palestinian education contributes to the climate of violence and hatred, in breach not only of the Oslo Accords, but also of the Fundamental Rights, we call upon the President of the European Accounts.

Furthermore, we allow ourselves to ask what the President of the European Commission thinks of the following words, **"I do not think it opportune that members of this Chamber give the impression that we do not spend the money of the European taxpayer correctly"**, in fact Commissioner Patten's response to the Parliamentarians, who are legitimately enquiring into the utilisation of the funds allocated by the Commission...and therefore the taxpayer.

In anticipation of the Commission's explanations on the entirety of these words and facts indicated, we present you, Mr. President, with our most sincere regards.

Francois Zimeray
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