

Berlin, 05 May 2013

Summary of Ahmad Mansour's Speech to the German Islam Conference (Speech made in German with English translation)

I'm delighted that Rabbi Daniel Alter invited me to speak at the conference today. His presence is a reminder to all of us about the importance of addressing anti-Semitism, especially in Muslim communities.

As some of you may know, last summer Rabbi Alter was physically attacked by anti-Semitic youth in Berlin. This attack is a clear example of the continued prevalence of anti-Semitism among German youth today, particularly in the Muslim community. 70 years after the Second World War, Germans absolutely cannot accept that a person is attacked in the street on the basis of his or her religion.

It is critical that we identify the roots of anti-Semitism among different social groups in Germany today. Among Muslim communities, anti-Semitism stems from:

- 1) the Middle East conflict
- 2) the prevalence of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, particularly in Turkish communities
- 3) the misappropriation of passages from the Quran and Hadiths to legitimize anti-Semitism.

Prevention work with young people has achieved a great deal in recent months. My own experience countering anti-Semitism, radicalisation and gender inequality has consistently proven that it's absolutely possible to reach vulnerable youth.

To succeed, we need to overcome this "us" V. "them" mentality. We need to stop thinking in such polarised terms. Vulnerable youth – along with their religious and cultural leaders – need to feel part of the "us," and believe that they really do belong in German society.

Establishing trust is critical to this process. We have to conduct a dialogue on their level. We need to offer role models from within their own communities. We need to introduce vulnerable youth to people who approach these controversial issues differently, more openly, and without prejudice or fear. As Muslims, we also have a responsibility to establish new, honest, inner-Islamic debate about these topics.

In every school - even in kindergartens - we need innovative educational curriculums that address anti-Semitism and promote inclusiveness and diversity. We need to stop being scared to talk about these controversial issues. Above all, and more urgently than ever, we need activities both in and outside of schools that encourage young people to think critically. Only in this way will vulnerable youth begin to question and eventually renounce anti-Semitic beliefs.