

Your excellences, honoured members of the European institutions, dear friends

I am grateful for this opportunity to give testimony of the consequences of a life in the aftermath of the anti-Semitic terrorist attack last February in Copenhagen.

I am Jewish, born and raised in Denmark, married to Claus and together we have 3 children age 14, 13, and 8 who all attend the Jewish school in Copenhagen.

70 years ago my grandparents knocked on a stranger's door and said: "We are Jewish – will you take us in?" The father of the family and his 16-year old son, took my grandparents in a rowing boat to safety in Sweden, where my mother was later born.

That fact has had a profound meaning in my life – that someone was willing to risk their life – the life of their child! To save a complete stranger! I live because someone was brave and did the right thing! What an unselfish deed!

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of February our family and friends celebrated our 12-year old daughter Hannah's Bat Mitzvah – marking her coming of age and into the responsibilities of adulthood according to Jewish tradition.

Hannah spoke that day during the morning service in the Great Synagogue of Copenhagen about the importance of tolerance, showing compassion and doing good deeds. As parents we were filled with pride of the values we have managed to instil in our child.

That night, the Jewish security guard Dan Uzan, blessed be his memory, was murdered, while protecting the entrance to the synagogue where we were inside celebrating. In the moments after the attack, we and our remaining 44 guests, most of them children, were taken to a safe-room where we hid for 3 hours, before being evacuated by the police.

That night Hannah, her two brothers and their classmates who were there with us, learned the meaning and consequence of former prime minister of Israel Golda Meir's famous words of the difference between parents who love their children more than they hate anyone and parents who hate someone more than they love their children. They learned that tolerance and compassion does not always extend to them.

I could go on and on about the nightmares, the many, many tears we have shed for Dan and his family. The post-traumatic stress that we all suffer from or I can tell you about our youngest son Elias of 8 years, who since February has slept in our bed, and is afraid of being recognised as a Jew and shot in the streets of Copenhagen. Or Jacob of 14 who finds himself re-traumatised every day, when seeing the police outside his school – a sight that is not normal in Denmark – even for Jewish standards. He has not slept through a single night since February. Or that my sweet girl thought she was going to die that night. 12 years old and thought that her life was ending, just because she is Jewish. My sweet Hannah, who will forever be "the girl with the Bat Mitzvah party".

My children now know that they live, but that Dan died - making sure that they were safe. They have a sense that that obligates them somehow – but how do you every live up to that??

The very foundation of our lives – the right to live in peace without fear of persecution has been shaken to its core and we now doubt many of the choices we have made for ourselves and our children regarding Jewish life in Denmark.

The beautiful story of the rescue of the Danish Jews – is the story that the Danes still cling to, when they say “there is no anti-Semitism in Denmark” – even now. Especially now.

But there **is** anti-Semitism in Denmark – even if it has no news-value for the media and it is not just a few fanatics. There is anti-Semitism in Denmark, just as there is in each and every country in Europe!

European Jews are constantly being held responsible for the actions of the state Israel – no matter how we as individuals feel about it!

When we speak out about our safety concerns – we are accused of whining and always playing the victim, playing on the guilt of Holocaust.

When the Danish Government legislated against Jewish ritual slaughtering and political parties make it their agenda to ban the circumcision of boys – a key stone in the life of Jews and Muslims alike, they marginalize and alienate us from society at large, and make it acceptable to remove our rights as a religious minority. They are pointing a moral finger at us – telling us, that we are somehow less Danish. You sometimes get the feeling, that you are most unwanted in your own country.

Very often the media will compare the plight of Muslims and Jews in Europe, but there is a need to differentiate between anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim tendencies. Jews in Europe are not to blame for anti-Muslim tendencies! And neither the growing anti-Semitism in Europe – nor the growing anti-Muslim sentiments can be fixed by saying that “Jews and Muslims have to become friends”!

I will meet and talk to any person – of any background, religion or political conviction, I will do my part to break down prejudice, but this is not a Jewish problem – it is a European problem that we all need to address! It cannot be the responsibility of the minorities alone to fight hatred and prejudice against them.

One cannot legislate against the hate in people’s heart, but as politicians, as teachers, as civil society, as community leaders – you can oppose ignorance and prejudice. You can educate – you can enlighten and create understanding and acceptance.

You can enforce the law and ensure equality. And you can send a strong message of no acceptance of hate and violence.

In Judaism we are judged by our actions and my father has always told me, that a society can be judge on how they treat their minorities – if that is the case, I’m not so sure how Europe is doing.

But time will tell, for in 5 years we will be celebrating our youngest sons Bar mitzvah. Whether we will be celebrating that in Denmark or be forced by fear to be elsewhere outside of Europe - is up to you.

I thank you for listening to the concerns of a fellow European and hope that we – together, will make a difference