UK MPs find massive rise in anti-Semitism

By GEORGE CONGER

LONDON - Anti-Zionism has fueled an explosive rise in anti-Semitism in the UK, an All-Party Parliamentary Enquiry into Anti-Semitism is expected to report to Prime Minister Tony Blair on Thursday.

A draft copy of the report, quoted by the Guardian newspaper, finds that anti-Israel activists and Islamist extremists have used criticism of Israel as a "pretext" for fomenting hatred against Jews in Britain.

The conclusions drawn by the 13-member panel of MPs support the findings of a study published last month by two Yale University professors, which reported that anti-Israel sentiments were a predictor of anti-Semitism.

The parliamentary committee was chaired by former minister for Europe Denis MacShane and included former Conservative Party leader Iain Duncan Smith, Liberal Democrat environment spokesman Chris Huhne and Birmingham Labor MP Khalid Mahmood. It found that a "minority of Islamic extremists" were responsible for "inciting hatred toward Jews."

The government had not responded adequately to the upsurge in Jew-baiting, the study concluded, saying police and prosecutors had failed to tackle anti-Semitism with the same alacrity as they had other racist crimes.

The report warned against the sharp rise of anti-Semitic incidents across Britain, citing violence and physical intimidation, destruction of property and verbal abuse. It also criticized the academic boycott campaign against Israel, noting that "calls to boycott contacts with intellectuals and academics working in Israel are an assault on academic freedom and intellectual exchange," the Guardian reported.

Anti-Semitism was "no longer a 1940s far-right phenomenon," Mark Gardner of the Community Security Trust (CST) told The Jerusalem Post; "it's far wider than that. Jews are its first target, and it will not end there."

Anti-Semitic incidents have risen threefold following the start of the conflict in Lebanon, said Gardner, a spokesman for the CST, an organization whose roots stretch back to the 1930s battles with Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists in London's East End. July was the third-worst month on record. He added that he hoped
this inquiry "brings a better realization that all of society is challenged" by the scourge of anti-Semitism.

Following the committee's first meeting last November, MacShane stated there was "evidence that many British Jews are living with an unacceptable level of anxiety and discomfort as a result of a perceptible rise in anti-Semitism."

British Jews had been "forced to spend much-needed resources on securing their schools, places of worship and community centers," he said, noting that he hoped the committee's "definitive report on the state of anti-Semitism in the UK" would guide the government in taking "positive steps" to "improve the situation."

In July, MacShane wrote in his blog of his frustration in responding to voters in his South Yorkshire constituency who demonized Jews. "How do I explain politely to my constituents that the Holocaust did happen, that Jews have lived in Palestine for millennia, that the UN, not the UK, set up the State of Israel and that if the first point of politics is to demand the removal of the State of Israel, no one is going to get very far?" he asked.

A statistical link between anti-Semitic views and anti-Israel views was found in a study of 5,000 Europeans in 10 countries conducted by Profs. Edward Kaplan of Yale University's School of Management and Charles Small of Yale's Institute for Social and Policy Studies. The study supports the conclusions of the MacShane inquiry.

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