

Dear David Bollag,

It is to your credit that you feel shame and express so publicly. Despite this, I believe that we are only obliged to feel responsible for our own actions, and that collective guilt is never fitting. After everything that has happened, what wonderful words from the Jewish side - words which, after all the aggressive and hostile reactions of those involved, remind us of those values which the Jewish religion holds most dear.

I agree with almost everything you say and find your statements of unequivocal relevance and importance. Especially because they come from a Jew.

If I allow myself a small addition to your remarks, then it is this: that both violence and terror have also been perpetrated by the Jewish side for a long time, and are not a new phenomenon. I recall, among other events, the assassination of Yitzchak Rabin. More recently, there are also an increasing number of Jewish groups, including many settlers, who no longer observe the noble foundations of the Jewish religion and act according to its precepts.

These individuals are as brutal as violent terrorist groups in the Muslim world. And we must recognise this sad fact: that there is terror on both sides.

This should lead us to a complete restructuring of the points of view clearly expressed by all concerned. All those with high moral and ethical values - *including* good Muslims, Jews and Christians in this conflict – sit on one side of the division. On the other side are violent people who abuse religion: pretending to use it as a fig-leaf while stomping their feet. This reorganisation of understanding should not force anyone to abandon their religious affiliation, but rather transcend religious boundaries. I believe this is one of the great challenges facing religious leaders on all sides.

All those individuals who spread violence under the pretext of their own religion – some very knowingly and deliberately – many doing so out of ignorance, allowing themselves to be used as the instruments of immoral leaders and demagogues, must be both discernably and materially separated from those with higher moral standards.

Statements like, 'All Muslims are ...', or 'All Jews are ...' are indefensible and archaic.

That is why education and the formation of values are of fundamental importance for our children. And the formation of values always means meeting every individual with respect and on an equal level - this is a common fundamental commandment for all the religions involved.

I know too well the complexity and history of this conflict. But the fact is that if we do not draw a line under the past, it will be as Nelson Mandela once warned us in South Africa: we will be left lamenting more dead children on both sides.

We should never forget: *In the eyes of others, I am always the other.*