
Europe under attack. “Card. Hollerich (COMECE): "May human fraternity be our response to the evil of terrorism"

“It’s an attack on Europe carried out by a small but very dangerous group of terrorists. Their goal is to divide Europe, to strengthen far-right and populist movements which foment division, and alienate Europe from its founding values.” Contacted by phone by SIR, Card. Jean-Claude Hollerich, Archbishop of Luxembourg, President of the Commission of the Episcopates of the European Union (COMECE), commented on the acts of terrorism that fatally wounded Europe, from the beheading of history professor Samuel Paty to the attack perpetrated by a young extremist inside the Nice Basilica, to the multiple gun attack in Vienna. **Your Eminence, why so much hate against Europe?**

Because Europe shows the world that extremism is meaningless; because Europe is a continent where very diverse peoples succeeded in living together, sharing common values; because we pledged to work for a European citizenship and succeeded in bringing it to completion, tearing down those national walls that divided peoples. Moreover, Europe is also populated by many Muslims and people belonging to many other faiths and we have shown that we can live together in peace. Granted that there are groups, as is the case of the banlieues of large French cities, where full integration was unsuccessful, as a whole Europe is a successful story of coexistence and this upsets the terrorists. They cannot accept that this project, based on common values, is successful. And that is why they attack us. **Newspaper headlines and social media posts are already blaming Islam and immigration.** It does not reflect the truth. And this is evident in a number of cases. The Muslim Union of Luxembourg wrote me a letter immediately after the attack in Nice. They expressed to me, in my capacities as leader of the Catholic Church in our Country, their full horror at that act of barbarity. The Imam of Bordeaux said in clear terms that the Prophet Mohammed would have been ashamed of the attack in Nice, recalling that Muhammad has been criticized many times during his lifetime but he never took these criticisms seriously and was never upset. **In this regard, it is argued by many that cartoons that insult religious beliefs or representatives of the Muslim world are not helping to fight terrorism. What is your opinion?** I think there cannot be absolute freedom. I believe that freedom of expression must take into account other people's views, their feelings, religious beliefs in particular. In this respect, Pope Francis' encyclical "Fratelli tutti" (All Brothers) shows us the way. Its message to us all, including France, is that freedom can only be practiced together with fraternity, if not, there is no equality. **Is there a connection between terrorism and the pandemic?** I think that the terrorists might have taken advantage of this present time of vulnerability. People in Europe are in anguish. They are locked inside their homes. They are afraid. They are not well. The virus continues to circulate. Death spreads inside households. As we know, anguish can turn into aggressiveness. But that is exactly what the terrorists want. They seek the division of European society. **So what should be Europe's response to the barbarity of extremism?** First of all, it must be a united response, which means that all EU countries, all Christians, atheists, agnostics, Muslims, Jews, must speak with a single voice. All together we must say NO. We must firmly declare that we will not allow hate to win us over. We must say that, on the contrary, we intend to embrace the values underlying the European project. We intend to abide by the human fraternity outlined by Pope Francis. On this matter we will not succumb."

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