

2020-09-24

Ms. BG



Message by European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas, on the occasion of Rosh Hashana

L'Shanah Tovah U'Metukah!

On behalf of the European Commission I would like to express my warmest wishes to Jewish Europeans, their families and friends for Rosh Hashana. May the year 5781 be full of joy, prosperity and good health.

This year's festivity will be a special celebration, and some might find it difficult to count their blessings while the distressing consequences of the pandemic are still unfolding. A pandemic that kept us away from loved ones, and made us have to say goodbye too soon to members of our communities, especially elderly ones including many Holocaust survivors. May their memory be a blessing.

I send my wishes particularly to families who cannot be united for this evening due to travel restrictions. More than anything, Rosh Hashana is a celebration of the community, of coming together as a family whether here in Europe, in Israel or elsewhere. And it is inspiring to see how the Jewish community was able, even if physically far apart, to come together in spirit and cope with the situation with steadfastness and endurance. Let me thank you for your contribution in the coronavirus response, and your support to the community and society as a whole.

The pandemic has presented us with great challenges, from a severe hit to our economy, to political populism and lurking racism and antisemitism attempting to exploit this crisis. We saw a worrying rise in antisemitic myths around the spread of the virus, which we quickly acted to counter. Antisemitic violence targeting the Jewish community, like the attack on the synagogue in Halle on Yom Kippur last year, are of great concern. It is crucial that any manifestation of antisemitism, from lethal terrorist acts to everyday harassment, offline and online, must not only be condemned and recorded, but also be prosecuted with the full force of the law.

In my first year in office, it has been a pleasure to visit several Jewish communities, listen and learn about the rich diversity of Jewish life of which too many Europeans are still unaware. The celebration of 1700 years of Jewish life in Germany next year will be an excellent opportunity to highlight the Jewish heritage and Jewish contribution to Europe. Empowering Jewish communities and honouring their contribution means strengthening Europe's very foundations.

In January, I had the honour to represent the European Commission in the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz alongside hundreds of Holocaust survivors, a sobering and humbling experience which galvanized my determination to lead the European Union's fight against antisemitism. Europe must – and will – remain a place where Jewish life continues to flourish and enrich our Union.

Rosh Hashana is about renewal. The European Commission is reaffirming its pledge to the Jewish community to ensure that human rights, equality, freedom, respect for human dignity and the rule of law are upheld for every individual, regardless of their identity or beliefs. Our European way of life is based on these fundamental values. Building on our close cooperation with Jewish communities and EU Member States, we will further push the protection and promotion of European Jewish life and strive to ensure that the impact can be felt by Jewish citizens everywhere across Europe.

Wishing you a safe, healthy and prosperous New Year!

Yours sincerely,
Margaritis Schinas

