

Testimony of Paul Goldenberg

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**“Anticipating and Preventing Deadly Attacks on European Jewish Communities”**

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Good Afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Paul Goldenberg. I currently serve as a senior advisor to the United States Department of Homeland Security as a member of the Secretary’s Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC). In that capacity, I serve on the Countering Violent Extremism Sub-Committee, Co-Chair the Foreign Fighter Task Force and am Vice-Chair of the Faith-Based Advisory & Communications Sub-Committee. In addition, for the past decade, I’ve served as the National Director of the Secure Community Network (SCN), the official national homeland security initiative of the American Jewish community. Working under the auspices of The Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, we serve to connect the 151 Federations, 300 network communities and over fifty organizations that make up these entities with vital information, intelligence and resources to best ensure the safety and security of the Jewish community, here in the United States.

In addition to these efforts, I have had the recent privilege of working closely with the Faith-Based Communities Security Program at Rutgers University. As a part of this new initiative, and working under the leadership of former New Jersey Attorney General John Farmer, I have made countless trips in recent months overseas, traveling to multiple European cities. Through these trips, I have been able to gain a first-hand understanding of the current climate, hearing the concerns of communities who are under threat, and assessing what can do to best assist them. What we have seen, heard and learned has confirmed our initial hypothesis: while the levels of cooperation and partnerships between Jewish and other minority religious communities with their respective policing services – in many parts of Europe – is as diverse as the communities themselves, more work needs to be accomplished to move closer to a medium and standard of safety and security. While this presents distinct challenges, there is also hope. For much of what we have learned, innovated, tested and improved upon here in the United States, as well as in other progressive nations, can be imparted to, and replicated by, many of our partners.

Mr. Chairman: thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the current state of affairs in Europe, specifically the alarming levels of anti-Semitism impacting Jewish

communities but, more broadly, acts of targeted violence, extremism and terrorism impacting both vulnerable communities as well as the broader public. I am both proud and honored to be here with such a distinguished group of colleagues, today. I applaud you and the Commission for its steadfast commitment and unwavering support towards ensuring that human security dimension remains an enduring right of all people, particularly during such challenging times.

I speak to you today not as an academic, but as a practitioner—as a former law enforcement executive who has personally seen the impact of hate crimes, acts of targeted violence, extremism and terrorism. I began my career over thirty-five years ago walking the beat, a rare American Jewish cop on the streets of Irvington, New Jersey. I retired as Chief of the New Jersey Attorney General’s Office of Bias Crimes and Community Affairs, the first-of-its-kind office in the nation.

In 2004, I was appointed by the Chairman as a senior law enforcement advisor to the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In that capacity, I had the honor of working with law enforcement officials and community leaders in nearly 10 European countries, working hand in hand to combat anti-Semitism, xenophobia, extremism and domestic terrorism. As a law enforcement professional who spent over twenty years working on the issues we are discussing today, what I can tell you is that, over seventy years after the fires of National Socialism in Europe were extinguished, sadly, disturbingly and dangerously, the embers of that hatred still glow. In some places, they burn. Fires can move quickly. Engulfing things rapidly. Unless we act, we risk allowing the fires of hate to kindle further. To move faster. To reach farther.

Jewish communities in Europe have long been targeted. But much more than simply the target of hate, they represent something else. They have often acted as the proverbial canaries in a coal mine, forecasting larger problems and issues...foreshadowing broader concerns for other communities. In this, recent events – from the attacks in Paris against Jewish targets to the potential targeting of Jewish people in Brussels – are not a new phenomenon for Jewish communities, across Europe. Rather, the most recent attacks merely represent the continuation of targeted violence that has changed the way in which—as a community—they function, from the way religious institutions and schools approach gatherings to what community members wear in public.

Highlighting these issues, the Anti-Semitism Report for 2014 saw a significant increase in anti-Semitic incidents worldwide and found that local governments are often not doing enough to eradicate the incidents and violence. The report also notes that 2014 showed a marked increase in terrorism as well as unprecedented violent attacks against Jewish targets:

- Some 55% of respondents do not feel safe in their own country and are afraid to walk around with Jewish symbols in the street.

- In the United Kingdom, 45% of respondents reported that they do not feel safe in their own country and about 37% of respondents are afraid to walk around with Jewish symbols.

In the span of two decades, we've moved from swastikas on buildings, the desecration of graveyards and simple assaults as well as, long-standing institutionalized anti-Semitism, to brutal violence, commando-style shooting attacks and even suicide bombings on the streets of Europe by battlefield trained terrorist cells and organizations.

From the 2006 torture and killing of Ilan Halimi, to the schoolyard slaughter of Jewish children in Toulouse, France in 2012 to the attack against the Brussels Jewish Museum, largely viewed as the first ISIS-related attack in Europe, -and- , nearly two years before many European countries recognized ISIS-trained operatives were immersed across the continent. The list goes on... The escalation of these attacks, from seemingly isolated incidents against Jewish communities and military targets, has materialized into a recurring phenomenon where no soft targets, including children, are safe. "Soft targets" – once thought of as safe havens and sanctuaries – have become the chosen targets of hatred and violent extremism...and Jewish affiliated locations, organizations and people, the preferred victims.

Unfortunately, some communities have imported the Middle Eastern conflict into their host countries, with attending acts of violence and unbridled anti-Semitism toward local Jewish communities which had otherwise lived peacefully except during the Holocaust interregnum. While these events are not without precedent, the pace, frequency, and scale should be setting off alarms not just in Europe, but here in the U.S.

According to the annual Terrorism and Political Violence Map released by Aon Risk Solutions just last week, "2015 was the most lethal year for terrorist violence in Europe in nearly a decade." Over the past year, France in particular has been on the frontlines of this battle, experiencing multiple mass casualty attacks within the span of eight months including one of the worst terrorist attacks in French history.

In the past few years, we have watched as a storm has been brewed. Growing anti-Semitism, xenophobia, attacks against religious institutions by those inspired by Jihad, and now ultra-nationalism, is growing unlike anything we have seen since the 1930s.

This vortex has spawned not just a threat to select vulnerable communities and populations in Europe, but poses an overarching threat to human security and the safety and security of free and open societies where citizens enjoy the right to worship and gather freely without intimidation, fear and harm. When citizens of free countries, including our own no longer feel safe in their houses of worship...this is a direct threat to a nation's democracy and freedom.

But, as so many have watched the storm brew...few did little, if anything, to prepare. For some, it now appears that we have little more at our disposal than an umbrella...for a hurricane.

What is at risk from this threat? This new reality?

In a sense, it is the very fabric and spirit of these democratic societies and the collaborative, cooperative and trusting relationships between authorities and the communities they're sworn to protect.

The passage of House Resolution 354, "Expressing the Sense of the House of Representatives Regarding the Safety and Security of Jewish Communities in Europe" is a watershed moment that has reinvigorated and will provide much needed support to enable much needed collaboration with our European partners. It is the formalization of this resolution, Mr. Chairman, and years of tireless work leading up to it, which has provided us with the impetus and roadmap to truly operationalize these public-private capacity building and community engagement efforts across the EU.

An epidemic that plagues Europe requires a transnational approach and commitment to working across borders and jurisdictions to effectively combat the threat. Our effort proposes a comprehensive approach that would connect the Jewish and other communities, law enforcement and other mechanisms of civil society in identifying the specific challenges facing the communities of Europe from the perspective of organizational structure, training, awareness efforts, standardized technologies, and coalition building.

The effort will then develop *operational* recommendations for partnership building, exchanging good practices, providing critical security awareness training, based on strategies that have been developed over time in Europe, Israel, the United States and elsewhere, and that can be effective in confronting the identified challenges. One of the most critical outcomes of the effort would be a formalized recognition and relationship between those responsible for Jewish communal security and the policing agencies that vow to protect them.

Inherent in this effort will be the sensitization of law enforcement to the issues, engaging the men and women of those agencies to work to build trust between the police and the communities of Europe...their communities. Committing themselves to undertake a partnership to address the threats on an ongoing – as opposed to an ad-hoc – basis; as attacks on Europe's diverse, distinct and various religious communities continue, the police will be increasingly called upon to respond to these attacks in more resolute ways. This effort will require the engagement and coalition support of regional governing bodies, policing consortiums and non-governmental organizations with deep experience in combatting anti-Semitism, xenophobia, violent extremism and terrorism; it will include leadership and security heads of European Jewish communities, along with the OSCE, European Union, Europol and Interpol. Developing an organic strategy is paramount to the success of this initiative. This is particularly critical as those targeting Jewish institutions and other communities have often, and seemingly successfully, influenced some within the public and private sector with the belief that Jewish institutions are not part of the fabric of European society; that they are nothing more than an extension of some foreign government whom are represented by its security, intelligence and military activities.

Nothing could be farther from the truth; these Jewish communities are a part of Europe...and they have been for hundreds of years and despite a history replete with efforts to expel, exterminate or simply excoriate them.

Focusing on collaborative partnerships and the protection and preservation of shared, common values can – and will – trump suspicions and differences. We will work collectively to promote community cohesion. Despite religious, ethnic and cultural differences, we’ve achieved success in rallying around the common shared values of protecting our houses of worship and safeguarding our children; both from becoming victims of violence and being lured, inspired and radicalized to become perpetrators of that same violence. While law enforcement and policing services, taking on roles as agents of social change and a visible extension of their governments’ interests in protecting its people, are integral to this process and solution, community participation, engagement and responsibility are paramount to achieve success. As we’ve experienced here at home with our own diffuse and evolving terrorism threat, law enforcement cannot tackle this burden alone.

- As such, educating and empowering communities to become active participants and stakeholders in their own safety and security pays measurable dividends in contributing to the safety and security of the neighborhoods in which they live, work and play. Here in the U.S., the expansion of the “If you See Something, Say Something” campaign has harnessed millions of eyes and ears as force-multipliers to detect and report suspicious activities.
- Treating the public as a key partner in counter-terrorism promotes greater engagement and reduced public apathy and believe counter-terrorism is primarily a responsibility of government
- Increasing information sharing efforts between law enforcement and community leaders and organizations builds “communities of trust” and facilitates greater cooperation and collaboration.
- Engaging citizens and communities through trainings and exercises teaches people to know what to look for and know how to respond in an emergency.

In closing, I’d ask you to consider this:

In January 2015, The Grand Synagogue of Paris shuttered for Shabbat services on Friday night following the terrorist attacks against Charlie Hebdo and Hyper Cacher, marking the first time since World War II that the synagogue was closed on the Sabbath. *Following the attacks, 10,000 police and soldiers were deployed across France to guard Jewish institutions against follow on attacks, an effort that, in many places, continues today.*

In December 2015, New Year’s Eve fireworks and festivities in Brussels were canceled following a terror alert warning of an imminent attack against the city, a month after the November terrorist attacks in Paris killed over 130 people.

These are NOT the “kind of firsts” we wish to celebrate...nor will we tolerate; we cannot be plagued and paralyzed by the violent will of hate and extremism. Through programs and initiatives of trust and collaboration, we’ll continue to pursue these efforts to ensure vigilance is eternal and communities and neighborhoods remain safe and secure; we’ll continue building a culture of awareness, not a community of fear.

Our strength lies in our diversity, acceptance and common collective goal to assemble freely in our respective houses of worship, without fear, intimidation or threat of violence. We’ve long recognized that an attack on one of us, is an attack on all of us. While the threat of terrorism remains our resolve has grown. However, our response will be measured, devoid of the fear and uncertainty that terrorism and violent extremist ideologies seek to instill.

Time is not on our side. We’re past the time for more summits, conferences and meetings. The pace and tempo of attacks requires swift, yet informed conviction and actions. We’ve experienced hard lessons, we must LEARN from them; we’ve developed best practices; we must SHARE them.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, “The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable.” I’d like to personally thank the Chairman and his staff for their continued leadership with the Commission in ensuring that the United States of America will forever fight for the protection and preservation of the human rights, safety and security of all global citizens.

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