



**UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE  
(U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)**

**Hearing on “Human Rights at Home: Values Made Visible”**

**Wednesday, July 29, 2020**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Statement of Ranking Commissioner Senator Ben Cardin**

**OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Special Representative on Anti-Semitism, Racism and  
Intolerance**

As the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Special Representative on combatting anti-Semitism, racism, and intolerance, I have seen the divisive and damaging consequences of distorting history and denying genocide. The Commission has long played a leadership role in calling out governments that stoke historic grievances, and we have publicly condemned government officials who deny genocides, traffic in historical revisionism, or distort history to inflame contemporary prejudices. It is absolutely critical that we continue to defend academic freedom and NGOs or journalists who may be persecuted for shedding light on dark chapters of history. Addressing these issues has been an important part of the Helsinki Commission’s work.

I have also seen the extraordinary difference it can make when public leaders acknowledge past injustices, work to heal and repair the past, and build safe and inclusive societies. Across the OSCE region, and certainly in the United States, there are civic societies, faith leaders, and public offices committed to moving forward.

Last week, I supported provisions in the NDAA that would direct the Department of Defense to rename military installations that currently are named after

confederate generals. America does not need monuments to men who fought against our nation. We can learn about history without statues or military bases honoring those who sought to tear apart our union. Monuments and memorials that glorify the confederacy simply do not represent the values of this country. As a nation, we are acknowledging systemic racism and inequality in our country. Removing hurtful symbols and names is a strong first step in setting new precedents of inclusion and equality.

Representative Moore and I had the opportunity to participate in the Commission's "Truth, Reconciliation, and Healing" event last year. I welcome today's event as an opportunity to build that expertise. Representative Moore, thank you for your leadership on these issues and for chairing today's hearing.

I also commend the Helsinki Commission's Chairman, Representative Alcee Hastings, for convening a series of hearings looking at "human rights at home."