



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

Hearing on “Human Rights at Home: Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy”

Thursday, July 2, 2020

11:00 a.m.

Statement of Ranking Commissioner Senator Ben Cardin

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

I commend Chairman Hastings for convening this hearing on “Human Rights at Home: Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy.”

We cannot stay silent about George Floyd's brutal and unnecessary death. Our country is grieving over the loss of this father, son, and brother. His life mattered. Black lives matter. He did not need to die. Both State and Federal law enforcement officers are moving quickly to bring police officers in this case to justice and hold them accountable for their actions.

The roots of systemic racism in law enforcement were planted centuries ago and can be unraveled with targeted and conscious action. I have introduced legislation to reform police departments in America and rebuild trust between police officers and the communities they are sworn to protect and serve. There are many other areas of long-standing systemic racism and inequality that must also be addressed, including restoring voting rights to those who have served their time and

been released from incarceration. I have also joined legislation requiring the Pentagon to remove all names, symbols, displays, monuments, and paraphernalia that honor or commemorate the Confederate States of America from all military bases and other assets of the Department of Defense.

I welcome this hearing as an opportunity to consider these issues in the context of the United States' Helsinki commitments and the resolutions previously adopted by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on racism and xenophobia affecting persons of African descent. I hope the OSCE participating States will build on its engagement with diverse civil society across the OSCE region.

Principle VII of the Helsinki Final Act is probably the most quoted text from that document, because the participating States committed to “respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.” Not always quoted, but essential for fulfilling our promises, is the commitment to do so “for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.”

As the OSCE Special Representative on combatting anti-Semitism, racism, and intolerance, I know our country is not alone in confronting these issues. We have friends and allies who face similar challenges. We also face malign actors who seek to sow divisions in our country whenever and wherever they can. But in holding this hearing today, our principal motivation should not be fear of other countries, but the aspiration for justice in our own.