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OSCE MUST ACT ON ANTI-SEMITISM *Youth, Coalitions Key to Winning Anti-Semitism Fight*

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Germany, in cooperation with the Swiss Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), held the Berlin Tenth Anniversary Conference on Anti-Semitism on November 12-13, 2014, against the backdrop of the ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict.

The Conference was set to be a commemorative meeting acknowledging government efforts to combat anti-Semitism over the past decade. However, the recent rise in anti-Semitic incidents such as those that resulted in deaths in Kansas, Brussels, and Toulouse earlier this year, dictated that the meeting focus on a way forward to address current problems. Although the Conference attracted a notably lower level of attendance than it did a decade earlier, participants identified key opportunities for coalition development and OSCE action in the years to come.

The Conference was attended by some 550 participants (including approximately 200 civil society representatives), and featured high-level panelists and speakers including Ambassador Samantha Power, United States Ambassador to the United Nations; Miroslav Lajčák, Slovak Republic Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs; Lynne Yelich, Minister of State of Canada; Paavo Lipponen, Former Prime Minister of Finland; and Tzachi Hanegbi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Israel.

Against the backdrop of a record rise in anti-Semitic acts in 2014 ranging from murders to vandalism, issues of focus at the two-day event included a review of efforts across the OSCE region to monitor and combat anti-Semitism; strengthening political leadership in the fight against anti-Semitism; challenges to the security of Jews and Jewish communities; countering anti-Semitic discourse and propaganda; the relationship between nationalism and anti-Semitism; responding to Holocaust denial and distortion; addressing anti-Semitism against the background of the conflict in the Middle East; the impact of recent challenges to religious practices; and fostering civil society networks to combat anti-Semitism.

Mobilizing youth of all backgrounds through education and other initiatives as a way forward in the fight was highlighted through a panel on youth issues and the inclusion of youth in the event. Several speakers focused on the value of youth efforts to combat anti-Semitism ranging from education initiatives in school to exchanges with Muslim youth to dispel prejudices. Ilja Sichrovsky, Founder of the Muslim-Jewish Conference (MJC) based in Austria challenged participants to "take a 'risk' and fund youth efforts as the way forward in the fight against anti-Semitism."

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“Combating anti-Semitism is not, and cannot be seen as, a Jewish issue – it is a human rights and civil rights issue.”

– Ambassador Samantha Power, shown here with Helsinki Commission Staff Director Ambassador David Killian in Berlin

Head of U.S. Presidential Delegation Gravely Concerned about Anti-Semitism

As the head of the U.S. Presidential Delegation¹ to the conference, Ambassador Samantha Power noted a decline in OSCE participating States efforts to address anti-Semitism despite having adopted commitments 10 years ago. She also noted grave concern with anti-Semitic incidents in Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and the worrying growth of extremist parties in Hungary, Denmark, and elsewhere in the region. In addressing recent incidents in the region related to Middle East tensions, she said:

“Just as there is a way to express criticisms of Palestinian policies and actions without expressing Islamophobic views or attacking Muslims; so too is there a way to express criticisms of Israel’s policies and actions without making anti-Semitic remarks. Our nations pledged to uphold the clear distinction between anti-Semitism and legitimate acts of political expression when we signed the Berlin Declaration, which states unambiguously that: ‘international developments or political issues, including those in Israel or elsewhere in the Middle East, never justify anti-Semitism.’ Ten years later, our job as governments is still to guard that distinction vigilantly.”

In addition to the need for strengthened government actions, she also highlighted the diversity of the Wade Henderson-led Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (LCCR) civil society delegation as an example of the coalition building needed amongst diverse groups to successfully address the problem.

“President Obama’s delegation to this conference includes a diverse range of civil society leaders who have been leading advocates for justice in the United States and around the world – and justice of all kinds. Combating anti-Semitism is not, and cannot be seen as, a Jewish issue – it is a human rights and civil rights issue. [...] It is essential that we [...] broaden the representation in civil society so that it represents a cross section of the human rights community, because those are the stakeholders we need to engage on this issue.”

The full transcript of Ambassador Power’s remarks is available at <http://usun.state.gov/briefing/statements/234009.htm>.

Who’s Who: the U.S. Presidential and Civil Society Delegations

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power led the Presidential Delegation to the Conference (the first of its kind to an OSCE event) which included:

- The Honorable John B. Emerson, U.S. Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany, Department of State
- The Honorable Daniel Baer, U.S. Permanent Representative to the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, Department of State
- The Honorable Melissa Rogers, Special Assistant to the President and Executive Director of The White House Office of Faith-Based Partnerships
- Mr. Ira N. Forman, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, Department of State
- Dr. Deborah Lipstadt, Member, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council and Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies at Emory University
- Mr. Abraham H. Foxman, National Director, Anti-Defamation League

Wade Henderson of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights led the 30-person U.S. civil society delegation to the Conference that included leading Jewish, Muslim, Latino, African-American, Asian American, women’s, and LGBT civil rights leaders with the goal of highlighting inter-faith and inter-racial coalitions as a model for cooperation against anti-Semitism and hate crimes. More information on the delegation’s participants is available online at <http://www.civilrights.org/press/2014/osce-delegation-berlin.html>.

Helsinki Commission at the Vanguard of the OSCE's Fight against Anti-Semitism

Helsinki Commissioners Chairman Senator Ben Cardin, Co-Chairman Chris Smith, and Ranking Member Alcee L. Hastings in his role as OSCE Parliamentary Assembly President were among Helsinki Commissioners instrumental in the holding of the original Berlin Conference. In a demonstration of the continued commitment of the Helsinki Commission to combating anti-Semitism, Commission leadership worked closely with USOSCE Ambassador Daniel Baer, the OSCE and participating States, and civil society in support of holding the Tenth Anniversary Conference this year.

“Ten years ago, the United States, Canada, and countries from across Europe held a critical meeting in Berlin to fight a surge in anti-Semitism,” said Senator Ben Cardin (MD). “I wish I could say this were purely a commemorative meeting to acknowledge what was achieved in the last 10 years, but facts dictate this must be a working meeting focused on resurgent anti-Semitism.”

Co-Chairman Smith also flew to Berlin immediately prior to the conference to champion the work of European civil society in addition to the Commission sending a staff contingent to support overall US delegation efforts at the Conference. “Over the past 10 years we’ve made progress in getting the OSCE and its member states to recognize their responsibility to fight the terrible social evil of anti-Semitism,” Representative Smith said. “Now we’re going to hold their feet to the fire on their commitments.”

The Helsinki Commission, in cooperation with USOSCE Ambassador Daniel Baer and U.S. German Ambassador John Emerson, held a U.S. civil society event where Helsinki Commission Staff Director Ambassador David Killion noted, “The anti-Semitic violence we are witnessing in the region today not only calls for a reaffirmation of the efforts of 2004, but a renewed commitment by participating States to utilize the tools of the OSCE to engage in concrete efforts to combat anti-Semitism.” For the full text of Ambassador Killion’s speech, please visit <http://1.usa.gov/1veiBWz>.



Helsinki Commission Co-Chair Rep. Chris Smith meets with representatives of civil society in Berlin, including Rabbi Andrew Baker, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism

Berlin Tenth Anniversary Conference *(continued from page 1)*

Several OSCE participating States noted continuing problems in their countries and ongoing efforts in the anti-Semitism fight. Germany called on other participating States to recall their history, while noting Roma were also victims of the Holocaust. Canada indicated its continuing support for OSCE efforts and urged further action. Russia highlighted issues of anti-Semitism in other countries but spoke little of what it was doing to combat extremism in its own borders. Several delegations raised hate speech as a major impetus to anti-Jewish violence. Beyond extremist political parties, anti-Semitism in mainstream political life was raised as a major break from the past, and an issue of great concern.

[Civil society recommendations](#) stemming from consultations at an affiliated civil society conference the day before were also presented to governments, and particularly called for an OSCE Ministerial or Permanent Council decision to codify the recommendations and ensure OSCE action.

A [concluding document](#) was presented by the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship at the end of the event that encourages participating States to heighten efforts in countering anti-Semitic acts and hate crimes in the OSCE region, and reaffirms that tensions in the Middle East do not justify anti-Semitism. The OSCE is currently considering action at its December 4-5 Ministerial Council Meeting in Basel, Switzerland to recognize this concluding document and plan a way forward for the incoming-Serbian OSCE Chairmanship for 2015.

About the U.S. Helsinki Commission

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, also known as the U.S. Helsinki Commission, is an independent agency of the Federal Government charged with monitoring compliance with the Helsinki Accords and advancing comprehensive security through promotion of human rights, democracy, and economic, environmental and military cooperation in 57 countries.