



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Testimony :: James S. Tisch

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Organizations

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before this committee and to discuss my concerns about anti-Semitism. My name is James Tisch and I am the Chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, representing 52 national Jewish organizations from across the political and religious spectrum.

Just two months ago, Secretary Powell joined representatives Benjamin Cardin and Christopher Smith, the Honorable Ed Koch and other leaders at the OSCE conference on anti-Semitism in Berlin. Secretary Powell's participation and strong congressional support demonstrated the seriousness of the United States' commitment to combating anti-Semitism.

The Conference of Presidents was represented in Berlin by our Executive Vice-Chairman, Malcolm Hoenlein, who was a Public Advisor to this year's delegation and a Public Member of last year's delegation to the OSCE conference in Vienna. Anti-Semitism is a vital concern and priority for the Conference of Presidents, and I am pleased to make this statement on our behalf.

The OSCE conference produced the Berlin Declaration, which advocates combating anti-Semitism in all its forms. That document, however, could not have been named the Beirut Declaration, the Cairo Declaration, or the Riyadh Declaration. While the countries of Europe to varying degrees are battling anti-Semitism, the Arab world is promoting it.

I don't blame the Arab man in the street for being fiercely anti-Semitic. He doesn't stand a chance of being anything but, considering the barrage of hatred and venom about Jews to which he is constantly exposed. This river of lies flows from his leaders, his newspapers, and his television set. The Arab media and the governments that sponsor and tolerate this flood of poison are to blame. This isn't about politics; it's about an ocean of hatred.

We know that there is an enormous difference between the official statements Arab leaders make to foreign media concerning Jews and anti-Semitism, and what they then say in the Arab press, or what is then broadcast on Arab television. Let me give you a few examples.

The demonization of Jews comes straight from the top in Saudi Arabia. Concerning the terror attack at Yanbu in which six foreigners were killed, Crown Prince Abdullah told his subjects on Saudi television: "Zionism is behind everything. This has been established, I am not saying by 100%, but by 95%." He went on to claim that "Satan's helpers" had "seduced" young Saudis into committing the attack. The Saudi Interior Minister, Prince Nayef, publicly blamed 9/11 on the Jews. And although the Saudi ambassador here in Washington grudgingly admitted on "Meet the Press" that Prince Nayef was wrong when he claimed that September 11th was a Zionist plot, I am sure that clip did not appear on Saudi TV.

And it's not just the Saudi leadership that promotes anti-Semitism. When Malaysia's Mahathir Mohammed said in a speech that the "Jews rule the world by proxy" and must be fought, he received a standing ovation from the leaders of 57 Islamic countries. Some of these leaders control the media in their countries, and actively promote anti-Semitism.

Egyptian TV and other Arab channels ran "A Knight Without A Horse" during the Muslim holiday of Ramadan in 2002. This 41-part series was based on the famous anti-Semitic forgery, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion." The plot of the series concerns the hunt for a copy of the "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," which is portrayed as a genuine Jewish plot to control the world. Jews are accused of infiltrating governments everywhere in order to instigate wars, racism and religious clashes. The Jews will then step into the bedlam and dominate the world through their control of the world's supply of gold.

Some governments, like Lebanon, tolerate anti-Semitic incitement by private TV stations such as al-Manar, also known as Hezbollah TV. Indeed it was al-Manar that broadcast what is perhaps the most gruesome example of hate-mongering that I want to share with you today. During Ramadan this past October and November, Arab audiences were treated to a 26-episode, Syrian-produced series called "Diaspora." Nine days before American families gathered at Thanksgiving to celebrate, eat and watch football, Arab families gathered for Ramadan to celebrate, break the daily fast together, and perhaps watch a little TV. Let me describe to you what they saw on Hezbollah TV that day. By Western standards, the production values were terrible, like a third-rate soap opera. The content, though, was genuinely outrageous.

In episode 20, a black-hatted, side-locked Jew instructs his teenage son to abduct Joseph, the child next door, because they need the blood of a Christian child to make the Passover matzah. A third conspirator brings Joseph to the house. The boy is about 8 years old. The Jews force the child into a windowless basement. At this point, the tone turns ominous, and what had seemed like a poorly produced soap opera now has the feel of a horror film. In the middle of the basement floor is an empty basin. The boy Joseph is scared and asks to be taken home. The three Jews exchange a knowing look, and the slaughter begins. Two of the Jews grab the boy. He struggles and shouts for his mother, as they position his neck over the basin. The camera pans in to show Joseph's face. The third Jew pulls the boy's head back, puts the knife to his neck, and slits his throat. For the next 20 seconds, the camera focuses on a grotesque close-up of the boy's blood flowing into the basin. In the next scene, the black-hatted, side-locked Jew offers matza to another Jew, telling him that it is "tastier and holier because it is kneaded with

pure blood.”

Ramadan happens to be the peak television season in the Arab world, but I can assure you that this poison is being spread year-round. So I repeat, how does the Arab man on the street have a chance not to hate Jews?

Why bring up examples specific to the Arab world at a hearing on the OSCE and anti-Semitism? Because al-Manar TV, Syrian TV, Saudi TV, and other Arab stations are broadcast by satellite and via the world-wide web to Europe, North America and the rest of the world. Arab living rooms today are also in France and Florida. This hate-mongering has been documented and acknowledged. Recognizing the severity of the problem, the French government is taking action through their FCC in response to the al-Manar broadcast of the Blood Libel program.

Mr. Chairman, I do not have a ready solution for the dire problem of Arab anti-Semitism. I do know that we must bring to bear the same high-level commitment against Arab anti-Semitism as the OSCE has done, not only because this hatred is wrong, but also because it makes achieving peace in the Middle East much more difficult. Anti-Semitism, based on and promoted by lies, breeds generations who loathe Jews. Secretary Powell should put the battle against anti-Semitism on the diplomatic agenda with Arab states that promote or tolerate incitement against Jews, and the US government should hold Arab leaders responsible for the anti-Semitic poison in their state-controlled media.

In the OSCE member states, the commitments of the Berlin Declaration must be implemented and enforced. Mechanisms must be strengthened for monitoring, accurate reporting, and law enforcement. Within the OSCE Secretariat, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights must have the resources to meet its reporting obligations. It is my hope that the Berlin Declaration will also be adopted without amendment by the UN General Assembly, which has been as yet unable to pass a resolution on anti-Semitism.

In 1840, the first political action of organized American Jewry was to ask President Van Buren to aid the Jews of Damascus, who were being persecuted on account of the same Blood Libel story that Arabs watched on Hezbollah TV just last year. So today, nearly a century and a half later, American Jewry again urges the President and the Congress to take action against anti-Semitism coming from Damascus and other Arab capitals, for it is a poison that knows no borders.

Thank you.