



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Commission. It is a privilege to be invited to testify before the Helsinki Commission, which for more than a quarter century has served both to monitor and encourage compliance with the Helsinki Final Act. The Helsinki process has been instrumental in elevating human rights as a legitimate issue in international discourse, and has helped promote the spread of democracy and the rule of law throughout the world. As Chairman Smith has observed, “[t]he Final Act's emphasis on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is rooted in the recognition that the declaration of such rights affirm the inherent dignity of men and women and are not privileges bestowed at the whim of the state.”

It is also a great privilege to join with Natan Scharansky as one of your witnesses today. In the field of human rights, there have been many heroes, from Raul Wallenberg to Andrei Sakharov to Armando Valladares and countless others. But of all the heroes in the battle to reaffirm the fundamental rights of all human beings, none looms larger in my life than Natan Scharansky. As a young child, I wore a wristband with his name etched into it as a reminder of his imprisonment. As a high school student, I attended countless demonstrations in front of Soviet missions to protest on behalf of Soviet Jewry. As a college student, I traveled annually to Washington, DC to meet with Members of Congress to plead for them to hold the Soviet Union accountable for its human rights violations. Then as a young adult in the mid-1980s, I traveled to the Soviet Union to visit with Refusenicks who had been inspired by Natan Scharansky and who were seeking to leave the Soviet Union and gain refuge in Israel.

Only 10 days ago, we celebrated the 60th anniversary of D-Day. On that day U.S. soldiers landed on European soil to begin the final assault on Hitler and his poisonous ideology of hate -- Nazism. And the United States stood up and defeated it. We also remember former President Reagan, who stood up to the evil of Communism with the same steadfastness that an earlier generation had stood up to Nazism. Both Nazism and Communism were fundamentally expressions of nihilism – of a total rejection of religious beliefs or moral principles. Our country confronted both of these evils without moral equivocation. We knew it was our responsibility and our destiny to conquer this evil, and so we did. If we hadn't, no one else could have.

Today, our country faces the threat of a new “ism” – one that is equal to Nazism and Communism in its toxic ambitions and destructive force. I speak of the evil of terrorism, and in

particular, of the terrorism being perpetrated by al Qaeda and other radical Islamic fundamentalists. The challenge for our leaders today is to show the same determination to confront this evil as it took to confront and finally vanquish the evils of Nazism and Communism. In the war against terror, we also can not equivocate. As before, if we don't confront this threat, no one else will.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism is directly related to the upsurge in anti-Semitism throughout the OSCE countries. And anti-Semitism, often masquerading as anti-Zionism, has become one of the more potent weapons in the terrorists' arsenal in their war against the United States. Consider, for example, the scurrilous charge one hears all too often these days that the United States is fighting a war in Iraq to protect Israel's security, or that President Bush is being led by a cabal of Jewish advisors. Not only are such statements blatant acts of anti-Semitism, but they are also plainly intended to undermine the moral authority of the United States' war against the terrorists.

I recently had the privilege of representing the United States at the International Conference on Anti-Semitism in Berlin sponsored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The good news is that 55 nations agreed that anti-Semitism is a growing problem that needs to be tackled. The bad news is that the problem is growing more acute, and many Jewish leaders from Europe report that for the first time in more than half a century, Jews are afraid to wear symbols of their religion in public -- yarmulkas, mezuzzahs, and the Star of David.

On the whole, the Conference was a success. First, there was great symbolic value to the fact that 55 of the leading nations of the world gathered in Berlin, less than a mile from where Adolph Hitler had planned the extermination of the Jewish people, to discuss in earnest ways to combat anti-Semitism. The whole week we were in Berlin, I could not help imagining what the world would look like today had a similar conference taken place in 1934.

Second, the Conference produced a consensus declaration recognizing that developments in the Middle East do not justify anti-Semitism. In an organization like the OSCE where many countries have large Muslim populations and any member country if it chooses can block action by the entire body, the reference to Israel in the declaration was a very significant and positive development. But the Conference's declaration only scratched the surface of the problem we are facing. Moreover, if all of the countries represented in Berlin agreed that anti-Semitism is on the rise, there was a lack of consensus as to why this is so and whether the disturbing trends of the past few years can be reversed.

What is critical about the new anti-Semitism in Europe is that it does not stem predominantly from either religious bias or racial prejudice. Today's anti-Semitism is not rooted in the ancient, and discredited charge of Deicide, which was the basis of so much of the Church's anti-Semitism during the first two millennia of the Common Era. It is also not principally inspired by allegations of racial inferiority, which served as the foundation for Nazism. Instead, the new anti-Semitism has its roots firmly planted in the growing resentment toward Israel that has been fostered by Arab rejectionists and is now ubiquitous in Europe. Moreover, while this anti-Israel sentiment is surely related to the growing number of Moslems in Europe,

the surging anti-Zionism around the world is also closely related to a growing anti-Americanism being promoted both by the perpetrators of terror and by those who, for self-serving political reasons, do not want the United States to confront that terror directly.

In order for the international community to agree upon concrete steps that must be taken to combat anti-Semitism, it is first necessary to have a clear definition of anti-Semitism. I propose the following simple test: It is anti-Semitic to subject Jews or the State of Israel to a different standard of behavior than other countries. I want to be very clear that individual Jews, as well as the State of Israel, are not, and should not, be exempt from criticism when it is warranted. But the line between legitimate criticism of Israel's policies and anti-Semitism is clearly crossed when the international community applies a double standard to Israel.

A glaring example of this double standard took place just two months ago in Geneva at the United Nations Human Rights Commission. Five resolutions were adopted condemning Israel for a variety of human rights abuses including its killing of Sheikh Yassin, who had personally instigated and authorized suicide bombings against Israeli civilians, but the Commission could not muster a single condemnation of human rights abuses in either China or Zimbabwe, and the U.S. proposal to condemn the grave violations of human rights in Sudan, where more than 30,000 have died, was defeated.

Nor is it only in foreign countries where a double standard is applied to the supporters of Israel. Although the Bush Administration has been exceptional in its promotion of human rights across the globe and has not wavered in its opposition to bigotry and anti-Semitism of any kind, there have been some troubling displays of anti-Semitism on some of our nation's college campuses. Last year, there was a petition drive on several campuses aimed at forcing universities to divest from investments in Israeli companies. At some universities, there have been calls for ending financial support to Israeli researchers. And when Jewish and Israeli leaders, such as former Prime Minister Netanyahu and Minister Scharansky have been invited to give speeches on some college campuses, they have been jeered so loudly they have been unable to deliver their remarks. There is no word to describe such actions other than anti-Semitism.

In the last few years, anti-Semitism has reared its ugly head in a variety of settings. One of the most egregious examples of the toxic mixture of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism is the recurrent demonization of Jews, and in particular, of the Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon. Those who equate him with Adolph Hitler and accuse the victims of the Holocaust of the same horrible Nazi deeds deliberately and cynically blur the differences between self-defense and murder. Those who equate the two not only seek to undermine the moral authority of the Jewish people, but also insult our collective intelligence.

The OSCE's decision to combat anti-Semitism could not have come at a more important time, and I commend the Members of this Commission for their significant involvement in the Berlin Conference. In my view, as the OSCE continues its efforts in this area, it should focus its efforts in three critical areas. First, all governments must be absolutely intolerant of the acts of violence against Jews and Jewish institutions, and take prompt action to punish the

perpetrators of such acts. While we may not be able to eliminate anti-Semitism, we can strive for a day when anti-Semitic acts never have the cover of government sanction. Second, there needs to be a recognition that Israel's struggle against the terrorism perpetrated by teenage suicide bombers has become a universal struggle, just as the United States' war against the operatives of al Qaeda has become the world's struggle. For a society such as ours that is dedicated to liberty and pluralism, there is no alternative but to succeed in this war. Finally, the OSCE should pass a straightforward resolution to ensure that the human rights records of all countries are evaluated according to the same standards. In other words – Israel should be judged by the same standards as other nations. Such a resolution embracing the principle of evenhandedness would go a long way toward eliminating one of the most virulent forms of anti-Semitism today – the near universal and counterproductive condemnation of Israel on a regular basis by the international community.

I have had the great privilege of serving on the staff of President Bush for most of the last three years. I know first-hand his dedication to combating anti-Semitism. I also know, from having served with members of the Helsinki Commission, of your dedication to human rights and toward eliminating bigotry, racism, and anti-Semitism wherever it exists. I commend you on your important work and thank you for the opportunity to testify today.