

**UCSJ:  
Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet  
Union**

**SUMMARY PRESENTATION**

**Of**

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National Director, UCSJ**

**Before the**

**HELSINKI COMMISSION**

**10:00 a.m. – 1539 Longworth House Office Building**

**November 6, 2007**

Mr. Chairman, members and staff, and guests of the Helsinki Commission:

Following this brief overview, Nickolai Butkevich will summarize the current status of hate crime incidents in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. I commend to your attention our detailed Briefing Paper and attachments and ask that they, and our oral presentations, be incorporated into your record.

No briefing subject could be more timely and important to UCSJ than hate crimes and religious discrimination in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. These examples of the break-down of rule of law – antisemitic and xenophobic racism and the discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities – have been the principal subject of UCSJ's monitoring and advocacy since 1970,

and especially since the dismantling of the Soviet Union. And, beyond the monstrous violence to the human rights of citizens, there should be no mistaking the foreign policy dimension – the threat that the break-down of rule of law, and the consequent absence of accountability, poses to democracy and national security.

In cooperation with the Moscow Helsinki Group, UCSJ has inaugurated an unprecedented international alliance of 30 NGOs across the three countries called the Coalition Against Hate which, through the medium of a bi-lingual and interactive Blog will promote coordination of counter-action against neo-Nazi groups and disseminate information about hate crimes and how the authorities respond to them. Central to this effort is the need to vouchsafe the future by strengthening and mentoring the burgeoning human rights youth movement.

One of our attachments provides a directory of these groups. Another is last Friday's edition of our weekly electronic newsletter, Bigotry Monitor which, together with our website and periodic reports, provides a record of our monitoring activity. Bigotry Monitor draws from the UCSJ and MHG monitoring network, the increasing input of the other partners in the Coalition, and reviews governmental reports and the mass media from across the region.

We seek to infuse rule of law goals into the fabric and conduct of statecraft. The Helsinki Commission and OSCE play a vital role in this. Beyond current concerns for the strength of election monitors in Russia, we encourage strengthening OSCE's role in the face of Russia's hostility to the agenda of the "third basket," an even stronger relationship between ODIHR and hate crimes monitoring NGOs, and developing special criteria for ODIHR to assess the relationship of hate crimes and rule of law to promoting democracy and international security.