

**Hannah Rosenthal
Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat anti-Semitism
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor**

**At a hearing of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
ON ANTI-SEMITISM IN EUROPE**

December 2, 2011

Chairman Smith, Co-chairman Cardin, Commissioners—thank you for the invitation to testify before you today. Since its founding in 1976, the U.S. Helsinki Commission has dedicated itself to addressing human rights issues, including anti-Semitism. And for the past three decades, Chairman Smith has provided unparalleled leadership in his efforts to combat anti-Semitism and promote human rights. As the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat anti-Semitism, I am honored to present my findings on anti-Semitism in Europe.

The Obama Administration is unwavering in its commitment to combat hate and promote tolerance in our world. The President began his Administration speaking out against intolerance as a global ill. In his historic speech in Cairo, he signaled a new path that embraces a vision of a world based on mutual interests and mutual respect; a world that honors the dignity of all human beings. He then went to Buchenwald concentration camp to remind the world of the horrors of the Holocaust and the ultimate lesson that the Holocaust represents the possible.

President Obama and Secretary Clinton have honored me with this appointment, and have elevated my office and fully integrated it into the State Department.

We are attempting -- through traditional diplomacy, public diplomacy and grassroots programs all over the world -- to confront and combat hatred in all its ugly forms, whether it is directed against people on account of their religion, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation or differences of political opinion or due to their country of origin. Anti-Semitism is one such form of hatred rooted in historical forces that go far beyond any current policy debate. If we want to change this trend, we need to stand together in our efforts to promote tolerance, acceptance and compassion.

As a child of a Holocaust survivor, anti-Semitism is something very personal to me. My father was arrested – on Kristallnacht, the unofficial pogrom that many think started the Holocaust – and sent with many of his congregants to prison and then to Buchenwald. He was the lucky one – every other person in his family perished at Auschwitz. I have dedicated my life to eradicating anti-Semitism and intolerance with a sense of urgency and passion that only my father could give me.

Since the murder of six million Jews in Europe, we have made some great strides as the countries of Europe have come together to denounce new and old forms of anti-Semitism and forcefully state in unison, “Never Again.” But we have also seen many setbacks within these very same countries that issued these statements and bore witness to the Holocaust seventy years ago. Over the past two years, my staff and I have diligently reported on anti-Semitic incidents throughout Europe, following and tracking developments in new and old cases. We have classified these incidents into six trends, which provide a comprehensive framework from which we can analyze anti-Semitism in Europe.

First of all, anti-Semitism is not History, it is News. I run into people who think anti-Semitism ended when Hitler killed himself. More than six decades after the end of the Second World War, anti-Semitism is still alive and well, and evolving into new, contemporary forms of religious hatred, racism, and political, social and cultural bigotry. According to reports done by the governments of Norway, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom there is a disturbing increase in anti-Semitism.

This stems from the fact that traditional forms of anti-Semitism are passed from one generation to the next, and sometimes updated to reflect current events. We are all familiar with hostile acts such as the defacing of property and the desecration of cemeteries with anti-Semitic graffiti. Since June, we have seen desecrations to Holocaust memorials, synagogues, and Jewish cemeteries in Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Lithuania, and Poland. The Holocaust memorial in Thessaloniki, Greece, was vandalized with a swastika and a statement denying the Holocaust on the day the City was to honor the 30 Holocaust survivors still living Thessaloniki. Swastikas and slogans such as “Hitler was right” were spray painted on the Holocaust memorial for the Ponary massacres in Lithuania; “they were flammable,” defaced the monument to the victims of the Jedwabne Pogrom in Poland during World War II. Although both governments immediately condemned the attack, the harm was already done. There are still some accusations of blood libel, which are morphing from the centuries-old accusations by the Catholic Church that Jews killed Christian children to use their blood for rituals, to accusations that Jews kidnap children to steal their organs.

Conspiracy theories continue to have traction with some groups, such as supposed Jewish control of the U.S. media and the world banking system, or that Jews were involved in executing the September 11 attacks. In July 2010, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia held a roundtable in the Duma "On the Question of Recognizing the Genocide of the Russian People" which produced a declaration blaming the "international Zionist financial mafia for genocide against the Russian people." The old Czarist forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, can be found in parts of the OSCE region. In October 2011, the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Europe identified approximately 20 anti-Semitic texts on display at the prestigious 2011 Frankfurt Book Fair. The "old fashioned" anti-Semitism is alive and well.

Physical violence is also a problem. Just last week in Belgium a 13-year old girl was beaten by a group of girls shouting: "Shut up, you dirty Jew, and return to your country". Instances like this are not isolated to Belgium. We praise the Belgium government for addressing this specific instance and, more so, for being proactive. As we speak, there is a conference going on in Brussels addressing ways to fight anti-Semitism.

A second trend is Holocaust denial. It is being espoused by religious and political leaders, and is a standard on hateful websites and other media outlets. In August 2010, British Holocaust denier David Irving went on Iranian TV and declared that he thinks that Jews "have overplayed their hand... They've over-used the Holocaust and this in turn, has tarnished the Zionist cause." Catholic Bishop Richard Williamson is another well known Holocaust denier and anti-Semite. Last year he was convicted of Holocaust denial in Germany, having claimed that Jews were not murdered in gas chambers and that *only* 300,000 European Jews were killed in all. Just recently, this Holocaust-denying bishop reportedly blamed the Jews for deicide. And Holocaust denial still plays a role in our diplomatic engagements with countries that are trying to come to terms with their moral responsibility to prosecute Nazi war criminals and denounce the past crimes of their citizens. As the generation of Holocaust survivors and death camp liberators reaches their eighties and nineties, the window is closing on those able to provide eyewitness accounts and thus we have a heightened sense of urgency to promote Holocaust education, create museums and memorials, and carry the memory and lessons of the Holocaust forward. That is why I sponsored a program at the State Department honoring Father Patrick Desbois, who has made it his life's work to find, identify and honor almost 1000 previously unknown mass graves of Jews and Roma murdered in Ukraine, Belarus and Poland.

A third, disturbing trend is Holocaust glorification, which can be seen in parades honoring soldiers who fought in the Waffen SS, which glorify Nazism under the guise of fighting the Soviets and obscures their roles in the Holocaust. Following a March 2011 commemoration in Latvia, a notorious neo-Nazi made blatantly anti-Semitic statements, including incitements to violence against Jews, on a television talk show. In Austria, Carinthian Freedom Party Councilor Gerry Leitmann resigned in May after his “Blood and Honour” tattoo, the motto of the Hitler Youth, was seen in public. And in the Netherlands in March, soccer fans in The Hague chanted, “ Hamas, Hamas, all Jews be gassed,” during a soccer match. No less, in August, London Regional Secretary Chris Hurst was expelled from the far-right British National Party for shouting “sieg heil” and giving the right-arm salute at a far-right rally in Hungary. Satellite TV is also a concern, as it is an accessible means for the propagation of anti-Semitic views. Some Middle Eastern satellite channels integrate anti-Semitic rhetoric into programming that reaches into Europe. Such broadcasts can have a negative impact on European citizens and residents who are already predisposed to anti-Semitic beliefs. Truly bone-chilling.

A fourth concern is Holocaust relativism – where some governments, museums, academic research and the like are conflating the Holocaust with other terrible events that entailed great human suffering, like the Dirty War or the Soviet regime.

No one, least of all myself, wants to weigh atrocities against each other, but to group these horrific chapters of history together is not only historically inaccurate, but also misses opportunities to learn important lessons from each of these historic events, even as we reflect on universal truths about the need to defend human rights and combat hatred in all of its forms.

Other examples of trivializing the Holocaust and the Nazis, are examples of overuse and misuse of comparisons, for example spiteful politicians have compared their opponents to Hitler: In August, London Mayoral candidate Ken Livingstone said that next year’s mayoral race, “[is] a simple choice between good and evil – I don’t think it’s been so clear since the great struggle between Churchill and Hitler.” And in September at a meeting of the EU’s finance ministers, Austrian Finance Minister Maria Fekter compared criticism of the banking industry to the Nazis’ persecution of Jews, a remark she later apologized for. History must be precise – it must instruct, it must warn, and it must inspire us to learn the particular and universal values as we prepare to mend this fractured world.

The fifth trend is the blurring of the lines between opposition to the policies of the State of Israel and anti-Semitism. What I hear from our diplomatic missions, and from non-governmental organizations alike, is that this happens easily and often. I want to be clear – legitimate criticism of policies of the State of Israel is not anti-Semitism. We do record huge increases in anti-Semitic acts whenever there are hostilities in the Middle East. This form of anti-Semitism is more difficult for many to identify. But if all Jews are held responsible for the decisions of the sovereign State of Israel, this is not objecting to a policy – this is hatred of the collective Jew or anti-Semitism. It is anti-Semitism when a right-wing group distributes posters depicting a doll with peyote, a yarmulke, wrapped in an Israeli flag, and with an arrow through its head—as we saw in Switzerland in June of this year. It is anti-Semitism when posters say, “Committed every war crime in the book yet the world remains silent, death to Israel,” and “Israel, your days are numbered,” and “For world peace Israel must be destroyed,”—as we saw during London’s Al Quds rally in August of this year. When individual Jews are effectively banned or their conferences boycotted, or are held responsible for Israeli policy – this is not objecting to a policy – this is aimed at the collective Jew and is anti-Semitism.

Natan Sharansky identified three cases that he believes cross the line: It is anti-Semitic when Israel is demonized, held to different standards or delegitimized.

In June, the German Left Party issued a resolution which specifically excludes the 3-Ds from the definition of anti-Semitism. While condemning traditional forms and manifestations, this resolution ignores the E.U.’s working definition of anti-Semitism, which includes hatred of Israel. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, the University College Union recently passed a resolution claiming that the E.U.’s definition of anti-Semitism is used to prevent criticism of Israel. But demonization, delegitimization, and holding Israel to different standards is not mere criticism, it is, in my view, clearly anti-Semitism.

The sixth trend is the growing nationalistic movements which target “the other” – be they immigrants, or religious and ethnic minorities – in the name of protecting the identity and “purity” of nations.

Extremist far-right parties have popular support throughout Europe. Far right groups have now entered parliaments in Austria, Bulgaria, France, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. These extremist parties run and gain popular support through anti-immigration and racist platforms. In Germany, experts are concerned about the influence of these far-right ideologies on youth. In Hungary,

the country's third largest party, Jobbik, mirrors the ideology of the Arrow Cross Party, which came to power at the end of World War II and collaborated with the Nazi regime in the Holocaust. And in Sweden, the extremist neo-Nazi "Swedes Party," organized a camp this summer called "Nordic Vision" to attempt to spread its racist views. Although the neo-Nazi "Swedes Party" is not a member of parliament, their existence and assent is disturbing.

When this fear or hatred of the "other" occurs or when people try to find a scapegoat for the instability around them, it is never good for the Jews, or for that matter, other traditionally discriminated against minorities. The history of Europe, with pogroms, Nazism, and ethnic cleansing, provides sufficient evidence. And when public figures talk about protecting a country's purity, we've seen that movie before.

We appreciate, and indeed praise, the good work of the OSCE in focusing on issues of tolerance generally, and anti-Semitism specifically. The OSCE has repeatedly provided an excellent forum for discussing issues of religious tolerance including in June 2010 in Kazakhstan, in February 2011 in Vienna where Farrah Pandith and I made a presentation, and in March 2011 where the OSCE specifically focused on anti-Semitism in the public discourse.

The State Department monitors these trends and activities and reports on them in all 198 countries and territories – in two major annual reports: The International Religious Freedom Report and the Human Rights Report. I am now involved in developing a major training initiative for State Department employees so they can better monitor what is happening in their countries, and be sensitized to the various forms of anti-Semitism. This will make our annual reports more comprehensive, and allow us to do an even better job of monitoring and confronting anti-Semitism in all its forms. These reports tell us that many countries are pushing hard to advance human rights and fight discrimination. It also tells us that there is so much more work to do. If we do not chronicle it, if we do not name it, we cannot fight it.

Of course, it is not enough to study and monitor these deeply troubling trends. It is critical that we act to reverse them.

My approach to combating anti-Semitism is not just to preach to the choir, so to speak, but to join in partnership with non-Jews in condemning it – government, civil society, international institutions, business leaders, labor unions, and media.

Last summer, Secretary Clinton launched an initiative to strengthen civil society across the globe and she instructed all of us in the State Department and all our overseas posts to treat civil society organizations as strategic partners. Partnering with opinion leaders from civil society as well as government – and building bridges among ethnic and religious groups – is the way to change a culture from fear and negative stereotyping to acceptance and understanding, from narrow mindedness to an embrace of diversity and pluralism, from hate to tolerance.

Educating our young is a priority - they are the future; their values and opinions form at a very early age.

No government should produce materials that are intolerant of members of any religious, racial, or ethnic group, or teach such intolerance as part of its educational curriculum. The Department of State continues to focus on this important issue. We sponsor teacher training on the Holocaust through the OSCE – focusing on its uniqueness *and* its universal lessons.

The United States provides training to foreign law enforcement officials, which covers crimes against vulnerable groups, including Jews, because these issues are of great concern to the U.S. We use old and new technologies to communicate with the public about human rights, tolerance and democracy. We strongly support the freedom for all people to express their views, even distasteful ones, both offline and online – but we also work to promote tolerance and to eradicate ignorance. We are enhancing our cultural and educational exchanges to showcase our civil society organizations, and to learn from the successes of other countries in confronting and combating hate in all of its forms.

I want to note two examples of efforts I am engaged in to encourage Jews and non-Jews to take action against anti-Semitism.

To combat Holocaust denial, I went with eight leading imams—two of whom had been deniers—to Dachau and Auschwitz last summer. My goal was to have them issue a statement condemning Holocaust denial.

When we arrived at Dachau, Germany's first concentration camp, the imams were overcome with the pictures they saw and immediately went to the ground in prayer at the sculpture commemorating the six million Jews exterminated. At that moment, I knew I was watching history being made. All of the passers-by, tourists, and docents stopped in their tracks to witness the spontaneous prayer of these leading imams. And at Auschwitz, it was as overwhelming for them, and, for some, transformational. We were walking amidst ash and bone fragments from the

1.5 million Jews exterminated there – solely because of who they were. We were facing the fact that unfettered and unanswered hatred can indeed create an Auschwitz. The imams produced a statement strongly condemning Holocaust denial and all other forms of anti-Semitism.

They are now urging colleagues and schools to join their statement. Some are planning to take their youth on the same trip, bear witness and bear the burden, to teach the destructive power of unanswered hatred, and the positive power that condemnation can have to stop hatred.

At the February OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, my colleague Farah Pandith, the Special Representative to Muslim Communities, and I launched a virtual campaign called *2011 Hours Against Hate*, using Facebook. We are asking young people around the world to pledge a number of hours to volunteer to help or serve someone who may look different, or pray differently or live differently. For example, a young Jew might volunteer time to read books at a Muslim pre-school, or a Russian Orthodox at a Jewish clinic, or a Muslim at a Baha'i food pantry. We want to encourage them to walk a mile in another person's shoes. And while our goal was to get 2011 hours pledged, we have already had over 16,000 hours pledged.

Farah and I began meeting with hundreds of young people earlier this year – students and young professionals – in Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Spain – countries that in their histories celebrated Jews and Muslims co-existing and thriving together. They expressed strong interest in the campaign – and we have already surpassed our goal of 2011 hours pledged against hate. More recently, Farah and I met with youth and interfaith leaders in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Lebanon, discussing reaching out to others and increasing tolerance and understanding among different religious groups. In Malmö, Sweden a group called Young Muslims Against anti-Semitism is touring schools to teach tolerance and combat anti-Semitism. Really, we have just begun.

So while I fight anti-Semitism, I am also aware that hate is hate. Nothing justifies it – not economic instability and not international events.

When history records this chapter I hope it will reflect our efforts to build a peaceful, fair, just, free world where people defend universal human rights and dignity. This is not a vision to be dismissed as naïve idealism – it is a real goal that should never be far from our thoughts.

Since the beginning of humankind, hate has been around, but since then too, good people of all faiths and backgrounds have striven to combat it. The Jewish tradition tells us that “you are not required to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it.”

Together, we must confront and combat the many forms of hatred in our world today. Where there is hatred born of ignorance, we must teach and inspire. Where there is hatred born of blindness, we must expose people to a larger world of ideas and reach out, especially to youth, so they can see beyond their immediate circumstances. Where there is hatred whipped up by irresponsible leaders, we must call them out and answer with our full strength – and make their message totally unacceptable to all people of conscience.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the commission for your efforts to do just that. Once more, I would like to thank you for the invitation to testify before you, and I look forward to our future collaboration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.