

**Statement of Representative Christopher H. Smith**  
**Ranking Member, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**  
**Hearing, "Taking Stock: Combating Anti-Semitism in the OSCE"**  
**January 29, 2008**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning to everyone. On behalf of the Helsinki Commission and the US Congress, I would like to add my own very warm welcome to Professor Weisskirchen and Doctor Meyer.

I remember when, in 2002, several of us from the US Congress--including my good friend Representative, now Senator, Cardin--noticed the spike of anti-Semitic violence sweeping through much of the OSCE region, particularly western Europe. This Commission held a hearing to learn what the facts were, and they were indeed frightening. Then we worked together with Professor Weisskirchen and others in Europe to launch the OSCE into the fight against anti-Semitism.

For many of us on this Commission, 2002 was a turning point. More than any other time since the dark days of World War II, Jewish communities throughout Europe and North America again were facing violent attacks against synagogues, Jewish cultural sites, cemeteries and individuals. It was an ugly reality that we knew wouldn't go away by ignoring it or by wishing it away. It was a chilling reminder that our societies still harbor a dangerous collection of bigots and racists who hate Jews. It had to be defeated.

In 2002 we gathered with our colleagues from other countries under the banner of the OSCE in Vienna, and later in Berlin, Paris, Brussels, Cordoba, and Bucharest, to plan what practical steps we could take not just to mitigate this centuries-old obsession, but to crush this pernicious form of hate.

In the first years after 2002, speaking out was the most important thing. When national leaders failed to denounce anti-Semitic violence and slurs, the void was not only demoralizing to the victims but silence actually enabled the wrongdoing. Silence by elected officials in particular conveyed approval—or at least acquiescence—and contributed to a climate of fear and a sense of vulnerability.

But the Vienna and Berlin Conferences and those that followed it were not just about words. We worked so that words would be matched--and even exceeded--by deeds.

One of the most important deeds has been to commit the OSCE states to keep reliable records on hate crimes, including anti-Semitic crimes. A surgeon can't remove a cancer or prescribe a course of treatment without documenting the nature, scope, and extent of the disease. We had to find out what was going on!

To the extent countries have followed through on this commitment, they are able to craft better strategies for combating anti-Semitism, and to tailor police training to the kinds of hate crimes that most often occur.

Another important deed has been to promote Holocaust education and remembrance. It seems to me that only the most hardened bigot can study the horrors of the Holocaust and not cry out: Never again!

It is now six years since the OSCE has put a special emphasis on the fight against anti-Semitism. The record in these six years is mixed. But we can't allow human rights fatigue and indifference to set in. Anti-Semitism remains what it has always been, a unique evil, a distinct form of intolerance, the oldest form of religious bigotry, and a malignant disease of the heart that has often led to murder.

I look forward to learning how the OSCE commitments to combat anti-Semitism have been implemented by the Participating States, and where we need to redouble our efforts in the fight against the scourge of anti-Semitism.

I assure our witnesses that they can count on the support of the members of this Commission.