



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Testimony :: Stacy Burdett

Associate Director, Government & National Affairs - Anti-

Defamation League

Good morning. My name is Stacy Burdett, I am the Associate Director of Government and National Affairs for the Anti-Defamation League - ADL. For over ninety years, since 1913, the ADL has worked to expose and counter anti-Semitism, as well as all forms of bigotry. We are grateful to the Commission for holding these hearings today and are honored that ADL has been part of this Commission's efforts against anti-Semitism in the OSCE region for many years -- culminating with the success of the Berlin conference on anti-Semitism.

Let me offer special thanks on behalf of ADL and its National Director, Abraham Foxman, to Chairman Smith all the of Commissioners whose commitment to this issue and determination to move beyond concern and on to concrete action, inspires us all in ADL to do our jobs even better.

The Berlin conference and the many discussions and lobby meetings around it were part of a broad effort to mobilize awareness and action against anti-Semitism, particularly in Europe. This campaign has yielded some results and there have been some hopeful signs.

I have attached to my statement a summary of results of an opinion survey of attitudes about Jews in ten European countries which ADL released in Berlin on the eve of the conference [appendix I]. The survey found some decrease in anti-Semitic attitudes compared to our 2002 findings. We attribute this to the beginnings of a drumbeat of statements actions by some leaders to counter anti-Semitism, and a recognition that doing so makes a society stronger.

Since each of us have had conversations with officials who fear that public action against anti-Semitism won't be supported by their electorate, we put questions into the field to take the pulse of public attitudes about increased government monitoring and action. We were gratified that respondents in all ten countries overwhelmingly support increased action and monitoring by their governments.

But polls and conferences, even successful ones, do not prevent hate crimes. Appended to my statement you will find just a sampling of incidents of anti-Semitism that have continued to occur in the first few months of 2004. The Helsinki Commissioners are ever mindful that the

numbers and statistics represent real people, many of them children. Even in France where the overall rate of incidents is not rising at the rate it once had been, the number of incidents aimed at children increased in 2003. Each child - each victim, has a name - has a mom or a dad; perhaps a kid brother or sister; possibly a grandparent; all of whom watch and feel the hurt and debasement of being singled out, attacked or harassed for who they are.

For those of us who have watched the problem closely, it is without question that a key factor that has enabled the growth of this problem is the fear, reticence, inability to talk about it in honest terms. Something about defining, talking about anti-Semitism today touches a raw nerve.

In this regard, addressing anti-Semitism in the OSCE region presents the same challenges as confronting any form of bigotry.

First, it is believed that, if you talk about the problem, you create it.

Second, without a common language and understanding about what the problem is, we cannot come together to combat it, monitor it, or implement counteraction measures. There is still no common language – no common definitions – no agreement as to what is indeed an act of anti-Semitism. Further, there exists no formal system through which to channel information – if you ask the man or woman on the street to whom they should report anti-Semitism, you will often hear conflicting answers.

Third, confronting and recognizing bigotry honestly often runs against a prevailing political climate. Just as openly confronting bigotry against African Americans in the American South was an irritant in the climate of the day, so today we are struggling to achieve recognition of the current manifestation of anti-Semitism that is causing the most problems today.

Addressing the new forms of anti-Semitism honestly is considered controversial. In the UN and even in the OSCE, language on anti-Semitism is not dealt with by the human rights departments – but in the Middle East section. Talking about anti-Semitism that is related to Jewish equal rights to have their nationalism, their self determination, their homeland – is a political hot-button issue.

If we are to mainstream anti-Semitism as a “rights” issue, we must first reject attempts to brand it a Middle East issue subject to efforts to be even handed. There is no even handedness when it comes to defending victims of racism and hate violence.

Anti-Semitism is not a conflict between two ethnic minorities that should be brokered, mitigated, massaged. We must reject the notion that a leader who acknowledges anti-Semitism must pay a price for somehow disrespecting their Muslim constituency. Surely we oppose all forms of bigotry including anti-Muslim hatred, but exposing anti-Semitism as it is found in our society should not be shunned as a denigration of any other religion or group.

We hear much about controversy surrounding the identification of the perpetrators and have

seen examples of how naming sources of anti-Semitism is considered too provocative. Those who oppose identifying sources and perpetrators – think exposing anti-Semitism should be limited by a fear of insulting the communities to which perpetrators of hate violence belong.

As with any disease, the denial is insidious and makes it fester and grow. The Berlin Conference and its Declaration marked an end of that kind of denial and marked the beginnings of a collective awareness about the role that anti-Israel rhetoric and action plays in stoking the fire of anti-Semitism.

If the conference signaled an end to governmental denial – on the non-governmental side, at least in the American NGO community, the conference eased the alienation Jews have felt by the silence of the civil and human rights movement on the subject of the “new” anti-Semitism. An impressive delegation of organization heads who are members of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights stood with the Jewish community to demonstrate that combating anti-Semitism is a human rights and civil rights imperative. In a meeting with Secretary Powell and American NGOs, the Secretary reiterated America’s determination in the fight against anti-Semitism. We were deeply moved by a sense of unity as non-Jewish civil rights and human rights NGO leaders stood up to affirm their support and even to press the Secretary further on the details of greater US follow-up. OSCE as a forum has always embodied a sense of unity in the fight against intolerance.

In that spirit, ADL is engaged in all three OSCE meetings this year devoted to different aspects of the fight against intolerance. In addition to serving as Public Advisor to the Berlin delegation, ADL was honored to be appointed to serve on the US delegation to the OSCE conference on Cyberhate which opened today in Paris and we plan to lend our support and know how to the September conference on xenophobia in Brussels.

Now is the time to seize on the momentum provided by the Berlin conference and to breathe life into the program of action adopted by the 55 participating states. The focus of my statement today is to offer some ideas for how governments can put in place programs which fall squarely within the Berlin action program and which can have a meaningful, sustained impact on the ground. I have attached a checklist of ADL programs that have been identified as “promising practices” by governments and NGOs in the fight against racism and xenophobia [appendix III]. These run the gambit of programs implemented in Germany in response to hate crimes against Turkish Muslim immigrants in the early 1990s to others that address interfaith issues and Holocaust education. The appendix also notes formal evaluation information where available.

Beginning with our own government, we know that further progress will continue to depend on strong US leadership.

The US must continue to address the nature and source of the problem squarely. There has been progress but the problem will grow until European leaders do more to speak out and to counter Middle Eastern sources of anti-Semitism flowing into Europe. US diplomacy has been the vital tool for promoting and rewarding morally responsible action and for calling

governments on their shortcomings. This continues to be an uphill battle and continued US leadership is essential.

The US must work to secure condemnation of the new anti-Semitism in fora like the UN, and EU and even the OAS. Since explicit recognition and condemnation is still lacking, bucking this trend will continue to require US diplomatic muscle.

I. MONITORING

Considering the challenge of building political will, it is no surprise that there is a lack of appropriate monitoring. Beyond the Jewish community organizations following this issue, institutions like ECRI [European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance] or organizations like Human Rights First and they will tell you there is a gross information deficit and that anti-Semitic crimes is estimated to be vastly underreported.

It is critical that governments come together to create a common language and process for data collection, as well as appropriate training of those empowered to collect the data. Without this we cannot comprehensively describe the problem nor find mechanisms for correcting it. The OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting should include an agenda item on this topic flowing from the Berlin and Brussels meetings.

The value of monitoring has many layers. The very process of data collection is a powerful mechanism to confront violent bigotry. Increased public awareness of data collection, promotes reporting. Studies have repeatedly shown that victims of hate crimes are more likely to report the crime if they know that a special reporting system is in place. Moreover, the more crimes reported, the better informed the public becomes of the extent of the problem and thus the more demand for a solution and/or a willingness to be part of the solution.

In this particular area, the US has great expertise to lend. I have attached to my statement a compendium of US governmental best practices which we have suggested the US cite in its submission to ODIHR [appendix IV]. The US truly leads in hate crime data collection, as well as in the training of those responsible for it. Far more than mere statistics, the US Hate Crime Statistics Act has increased public awareness of the problem and sparked meaningful improvements in the local response of the criminal justice system to hate violence. Police officials have come to appreciate the law enforcement and community benefits of tracking hate crime and responding to it in a priority fashion. Law enforcement officials can advance police-community relations by demonstrating a commitment to be both tough on hate crime perpetrators and sensitive to the special needs of hate crime victims. By compiling statistics and charting the geographic distribution of these crimes, police officials may be in a position to discern patterns and anticipate an increase in racial tensions in a given jurisdiction.

- Nations should adopt comprehensive hate crime data collection laws and provide training to appropriate law enforcement professionals in how to identify, report, and respond to hate crimes.

- Governments should fund national assessments of hate violence, its causes, the prevalence of the problem in state schools, the characteristics of the offenders and victims, and successful intervention and diversion strategies for juveniles. There is a direct connection between identifying the nature of the problem and identifying appropriate educational initiatives to address the problem.

- OSCE Monitoring. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights(ODIHR) has been tasked by OSCE ministers with serving as a "collection point" for data on anti-Semitic incidents and other hate crimes. Since so many OSCE participating states have no data collection laws or mechanisms, it is vital that OSCE take a much more proactive approach to encourage states to institute these mechanisms. Proactive follow up with states and find ways – perhaps through a publication – to put forward a common data collection model and guidelines for law enforcement.

- Enhance US Reporting. The efforts of the US to raise international awareness about this problem have been singular in their importance and effectiveness. US reporting on anti-Semitism as a human rights and religious freedom issue is an indispensable tool in spotlighting the problem as well as a tool for diplomacy. As with any reporting which originates in embassies around the world, it varies from place to place. We welcome the introduction of legislation that would bolster the quality and consistency of America’s reporting on anti-Semitism.

II. PROMOTE AND INSTITUTIONALIZE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- Participating States should be urged to institutionalize anti-bias education. This is an essential building block of combating hatred. History has shown that, when people of conscience are given tools and skills to recognize and combat bigotry, prejudice and discrimination, they will do so. We know that people are not born to hate - they learn to hate. And, if we learn it, so might we “un-learn it” or prevent the initial learning from taking place to begin with. Senators should urge parliaments to use schools as a staging ground for Anti-Bias Education. Governments must act now to provide on-going Teacher Training in the use of Anti-Bias Education curricula and methodologies as well as providing opportunities to empower students through Peer Training programs. Research has shown that from the age of 3-5 years-old when children begin to recognize differences and form attitudes based on their perceptions of differences, to the college and university level where intergroup understanding is critical to fostering a successful learning environment, anti-bias education is necessary to equip students with the skills and confidence which enable them to confront prejudice, to become activists against bigotry and to serve as agents for change.

ADL has identified a number of programs that have demonstrated both results as well as transferability to the European pedagogical model and context. Validated by the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Education, the ADL A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE Institute has delivered programs to over 450,000 US teachers, training them in how to confront their own biases as well as how to use specially designed curricular materials. Further, this program has been exported to eight European countries, as well as to Argentina, Japan, states

of the Former Soviet Union and Israel. The Institute's Peer Training program is currently in use across the US as well as in Austria, Belgium (in French & in Flemish), France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and The United Kingdom.

III. PROMOTE HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE

As we have all repeatedly acknowledged, crimes against humanity such as the Holocaust, serve as grim reminders of where intolerance can lead if permitted to flourish and of the absolute necessity that it be stopped.

v Congress should continue to support the work of the International Task Force on Holocaust Education. Parliamentarians should seek to implement Holocaust curricula in public schools to draw upon the lessons of this tragic period to illuminate the importance of moral decision. There are a number of quality programs working well in Europe today and two relatively new programs would be useful models as well.

v There is a wealth of innovative educational tools like a new ADL Holocaust curriculum, developed together with the Shoah Foundation, which utilizes video survivor testimony as a teaching tool and could easily use testimony in different languages to resonate with students from different countries. As the survivor population ages, this kind of video adaptation will be critical to helping the memory of survivors endure.

v The Holocaust is a meaningful education tool for law enforcement. Working with the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, ADL's Law Enforcement and Society: Lessons of the Holocaust program challenges law enforcement professionals to examine their partnership with the communities they serve. It uses the history of the Holocaust to explore issues of their role as protectors of individual rights, checks and balances, and personal responsibility of officers 60 years ago and today. Officers have said this examination of the Holocaust has helped them gain a deeper perspective on the critical role they play in society and a greater understanding of the values and code of ethics of their profession.

v Working with Religious Institutions. In the US, ADL's Bearing Witness Program for Religious Educators helps teachers examine anti-Semitism and the Holocaust as a starting point for addressing issues of diversity in contemporary society. Its goal is to successfully implement Holocaust education in religious schools. In order to do this effectively, teachers work to confront and to acknowledge the history of the Holocaust including the role of Churches and other religious institutions. This program is a collaborative effort between ADL, the Archdiocese, and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. Initially offered only in Washington, DC, the program has now expanded and will be offered in five US cities this summer.

IV. Working with the Parliamentarians

Replicate the CSCE Model in other Parliaments. So many important initiatives against anti-Semitism – including the Vienna and Berlin conferences -- have originated in hearings like this

and are advanced by Members of Congress moved by their convictions to take action. Beyond the important work of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, it would be important to replicate this activity abroad. Let other parliaments do as you have done, convene hearings like this one, pass resolutions against anti-Semitism, set up caucuses like the Helsinki Commission or the Congressional Task Force Against Anti-Semitism and develop national action plans to combat it.

V. Develop Exchanges of Best Practices

OSCE and Participating States should host a showcase of “promising practices.” As the populations of participating states become more diverse through immigration, the need to promote tolerance, respect and understanding becomes greater, especially for young people. Beyond the tasking of ODIHR to collect and disseminate information on best practices, governments should host “Showcases of Best Practices.” These will allow for maximum exposure of working methods as well as for exploration of how states might adapt these to their specific country culture.

CONCLUSION

Even in Berlin there were those who asked whether all of the efforts to pull off the Berlin conference really worth the trouble. The concrete legacy of this effort is still a work in progress being crafted in hearings like this, in our follow up, in Warsaw, in Sofia and beyond.

Yes a conference is made up of speeches, and a declaration is only a piece of paper. But when I imagine what it would have been like in Durban if 55 governments – no if five governments – had made a statement or said even one sentence to one reporter recognizing that I was an equal victim of racism, and not a perpetrator of racism and apartheid and ethnic cleansing, it would have thrown at least a cold stone into a boiling pot.

Abe Foxman frequently poses the question “what if?” referring to pre-war Europe. What if there were five Raul Wallenbergs, or five hundred or five thousand? What if 55 government leaders had banded together then to say no?

With that question in mind, we must follow up with rigor on the Berlin effort. We hope that your work, your commitment, and initiatives like those I've outlined will command the day.