



# HELSINKI COMMISSION BRIEFING

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UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON  
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

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## Testimony :: Liebe Geft

Director - Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of

### Tolerance

As an accredited NGO at the UN, UNESCO, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, the Simon Wiesenthal Center (SWC) is vitally concerned with the challenges of Holocaust education and police hate crimes training in the context of globally resurgent antisemitism. Last year, when American officials joined European leaders at Auschwitz-Birkenau to bow their heads in tribute to Hitler's victims at the sixtieth anniversary commemorations of the end of World War II, their concern extended to the growing threat to democratic societies posed by today's hate movements, including those that target Jewish individuals and institutions from one end of the continent to the other. For Simon Wiesenthal, the namesake of our organization, who died last September at age 96, the past was always portent if not prelude. He was gravely concerned about the current rise of ferocious anti-Semitism in Europe, and warned again and again that the most important abettor of future injustices and hate-motivated criminality is the silence of the apathetic or intimidated majority.

Last June, the Founder and Dean of the SWC, Rabbi Marvin Hier, was one of the US delegates to the Cordoba conference on Antisemitism and other Forms of Intolerance. In his remarks there, Rabbi Hier called for member states of the OSCE to establish museums/resource centers as focal points of education, especially to support law enforcement professional development and best practices. We are deeply committed to the efforts of the OSCE and eager to share our experience and knowledge in this area with governments and experts from the OSCE member states. Indeed, we have already begun to do so, both in the training of delegations from numerous European countries and by working with OSCE/ODIHR to map out future areas of cooperation including sharing of resources and expertise. Mark Weitzman, Director of the SWC Task Force Against Hate sits on ODIHR's Advisory Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief, and has been a member of the U.S. delegation to the International Task Force (ITF) since its earliest stages. The SWC commends the energetic leadership of Ambassador Christian Strohal, and particularly the efforts of Dr. Kathrin Meyer and Paul Goldenberg, whose earlier testimony reflects their commitment and achievements, under sometimes difficult circumstances, in this area.

We are pleased to take this opportunity to recognize the efforts of the International Task Force on Holocaust Education, Research and Remembrance (ITF), now comprising 24 member countries. This unique enterprise—that brings together government and NGO participants in a cooperative effort to encourage Holocaust education, including open access to World War II era archives—has become the most important initiative in Holocaust education today. The commitment of democratic governments to the cause of Holocaust education underscores its importance. Here, we would like especially to acknowledge the support of the State Department, particularly the Office of Holocaust Issues headed by Ambassador Edward O'Donnell, and his staff, who have tirelessly pursued every opening and initiative to strengthen and support these efforts. Without this commitment, the Task Force would simply not be as successful.

It must also be said, however, that important areas still need to be strengthened. For example, it should be made clear that membership in the ITF for member states does not mean the end of educational efforts, and for member governments does not imply that the goal has been reached, nor that attention and commitment can be downscaled, nor that it is now the time to turn the light on other countries and away from their own. Membership in the ITF must be viewed as a beginning, and a commitment to further intensify ongoing efforts. Anything short of that will only strengthen those who are actively trying to destroy Holocaust education, whether they come from the ranks of Islamist extremists or from the corps of extreme right-wing nationalists.

We are particularly concerned with how justifiable complaints over anti-Arab and anti-Muslim prejudice have been perverted and exploited to undermine support for educating new generations about Hitler's crimes. The Wiesenthal Center firmly

believes that teaching about prejudice and punishing hate crimes are not zero-sum activities that benefit some minorities at the expense of others. Instead, our basic assumption is that learning about Europe's historic persecution culminating in the Holocaust of its archetypal minority, the Jews, can educate other minorities, including today's Muslim immigrant communities in Europe, about the dynamics of prejudice and discrimination against which they seek to empower themselves. The SWC's new documentary film, *Ever Again*, warns about extremists exploiting current European turmoil, particularly in Europe's growing Muslim community that is experiencing a veritable war for hearts and minds between moderates and the hate merchants who unfortunately have the loudest megaphones. To make matters worse, their pernicious influence is projected into cyberspace by a metastasizing network of thousands of Holocaust-denying web sites and chat rooms. The challenge of the Internet is the special focus of the Wiesenthal Center Task Force Against Hate initiative, which has just produced its eighth annual CD-ROM on Digital Terrorism and Hate. Antisemitism is the primary manifestation of the haters' diabolical purpose, and must continue to be tracked with specific focus—not lost in an amorphous holistic category with all forms of intolerance, as some OSCE members have suggested.

The monitoring of hate is the responsibility of both government and law enforcement. The Wiesenthal Center has extensive experience in law enforcement training through its educational arm, the Museum of Tolerance. The Museum's Tools for Tolerance® for Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Professionals programs have served well over 75,000 officers and law enforcement personnel since the program's inception in 1996, constituting perhaps the largest training program of its kind in the nation. The success and recognition of these programs prompted the creation of the New York Tolerance Center, thereby creating powerful bicoastal learning environments for these innovative programs to bridge personal, local and global issues, and to challenge participants to redefine professional roles in an increasingly complex and changing world.

Tools for Tolerance® for Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Professionals now offers ten distinct courses, broadening its reach in New York to the National Guard, Corrections and Probation Officers, and District Attorneys. This expands a national audience already established through the National Institutes Against Hate Crimes and Terrorism, an intense, 4-day program that has thus far brought together multidisciplinary teams of law enforcement and criminal justice professionals from 199 jurisdictions in 37 states across the U.S. to focus on critically analyzing the unique elements that differentiate hate crimes and terrorist threats from other acts of violence, and provide a structure for the creation of effective strategies for prevention and intervention. An independent evaluation of the program by the Institute for Law and Justice in Virginia in April, 2006 notes that the program "is widely heralded as one of the best trainings on hate crimes and terrorism funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice." The national reach of this training program is expanding significantly with continued Federal and State support, primarily in California and New York, as demand increases for continuing programs that aim to further enhance law enforcement professionals' capacity to proactively prevent the spread of hate crimes in their communities; to identify and address potential terrorist threats; to provide tools for building community trust without compromising safety and security; and to address the unique challenges facing today's law enforcement leadership.

The Tools for Tolerance® program is the official Trainer of Trainers in California on the controversial topic of racial profiling, which remains a dominant issue for all law enforcement agencies. Staff and faculty also train trainers around the country, as well as deliver a core Perspectives on Profiling program at the Museum of Tolerance and the New York Tolerance Center. Close to 12,000 officers have already completed this course, which utilizes a unique training tool that confronts a number of complex issues surrounding the debate on racial profiling. Based on research from 36 police agencies around the country, the product, *Perspectives on Profiling* is a cutting edge training tool that moves officers into a new paradigm of thought on the subject of racial profiling. It is sensitive to the challenges that face law enforcement both in reality and in the management of public perception. The product is founded on a robust ethical perspective projected into real life situational choices.

Tools for Tolerance® has welcomed and customized programs for delegations from numerous countries. The German military has been sending groups to the Museum of Tolerance since 1999. The heads of the French National Police attended a special program, 'Crimes of Racism and Hate: Sharing Experiences, sharing Knowledge,' at the Museum of Tolerance in March 2003, and expressed interest in continued exchanges. The Tools for Tolerance® program hosted a high ranking delegation of law enforcement and community leaders from Stavropol, Russia, in April, 2005. Sixteen heads of police and anti-terrorism, as well as educators, journalists and community representatives participated in a week-long Climate of Trust program in Los Angeles, and the Museum's project coordinator paid a reciprocal visit to Russia at the end of May. In late March, 2006, community leaders from Manchester, England, spent time with senior SWC and MOT staff exploring the possibility of promoting and possibly delivering the Tools for Tolerance® police training and other professional development programs from Manchester to the U.K. and Europe. In May, 2006, Canadian law enforcement command staff and officers are participating in Tools for Tolerance® programs. The New York Tolerance Center is also reaching the international community through the United Nations, and hosts visitors from the U.S. Department of State, including, most recently, a delegation of Muslim Imams and Russian Orthodox priests from the Urals.

In the experience of the SWC, Holocaust education—rather than being discarded or marginalized—can and must be integrated in the core of necessary, new educational paradigms. We welcome the opportunity to continue to work together with European

law enforcement to make sure that Holocaust education continues to contribute to the future of human rights. Arguably, laws punishing Holocaust denial are still necessary in the former Nazi heartland to counter potent neo-Nazi movements. Yet the ultimate positive goal of Holocaust educators should be for all the nations of Europe and the rest of the world to embrace the 1998 Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust and join the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research (ITF). Prevention trumps punishment, and Holocaust education is a preventative to twenty-first century evils that we cannot afford to forgo.