

**Statement of Senator Benjamin L. Cardin  
Co-Chairman  
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

**Hearing on Combating Anti-Semitism on the OSCE Region: Taking Stock of the Situation  
Today**

**Friday, December 2, 2011**

Mr. Chairman, I commend you for convening this hearing on an issue of long-standing importance to me personally and to this Commission.

Just over 20 years ago, I had the opportunity to attend the 1989 Copenhagen Conference on the Human Dimension as part of a Helsinki Commission Congressional delegation.

Until that meeting, every effort to refer explicitly to the problem of anti-Semitism in an international document had been blocked by the Soviet Union. In Copenhagen, with the U.S. Delegation under the able leadership of Ambassador Max Kampelman, that finally changed. I feel privileged to have witnessed that historic meeting that produced **an international agreement that broke new ground in so many areas and included an explicit condemnation of anti-Semitism.**

But as Ambassador Kampelman observed at a subsequent Helsinki Commission hearing, "having accomplished the words in Copenhagen [we now have to see] how those words are being implemented."

That is exactly what today's hearing should do.

With this in mind, I want to flag an issue that has been of particular concern to me and one that I hope are witnesses may be able to address: the **continuing strength of extremist parties and movements.** In a number of European parliamentary systems, these extremist parties (which often combine anti-Semitism with other forms of bigotry) can find themselves, by default, kingmakers.

To be clear, the threat from these groups is not just because of the rhetoric they espouse, but because extremist views have a tendency to bleed over into the mainstream. In Hungary, for example, more than 16 percent of the voters in the last elections cast their votes for a noxious extremist party, *Jobbik* - either as an intentional sign of support for its anti-Semitic platform or without regard for it. Following the elections, Peter Feldmayer, president of the Hungarian Jewish community, warned "Today is a very dark time for modern Hungary . .

It is a very dangerous direction not just for Hungarian Jews, but for Hungarian democracy."

In the context of *Jobbik's* electoral success, I take particular note of the facts that

1) President Pal Schmitt quoted from convicted war criminal Albert Wass in his August 2010 inaugural address.

2) the Budapest City Council cut by one third the funds it provided for the annual Holocaust memorial event “March for Life” after *Jobbik* objected to the event.

3) the new constitution adopted in April disavows Hungarian responsibility for war-time atrocities committed after March 19, 1944 (the date of the German occupation), without regard for Hungarian complicity in the deportation of half a million Hungarian Jews, and

4) Some Hungarian officials have asserted that the 1920 Treaty of Trianon was worse than the Holocaust, thereby trivializing the genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity of World War II.

The ascension of the Dutch Freedom Party (PVV) to power purportedly following an agreement to pass anti-Muslim laws that ultimately led to Dutch efforts to ban the ritual slaughter of animals, impacting kosher practices, is yet another example of how extremist parties have hurt not only Jewish communities but also worked to undermine basic OSCE human rights and democratic principles. There are also many other examples of this phenomenon in the region.

I commend the OSCE participating States for using the OSCE as a tool in the effort to combat anti-Semitism. There is much that the OSCE has to contribute in this regard. But the offices and institutions of the OSCE need to push on an open door. It is one thing to provide training for a country that genuinely seeks expertise and reform, but where a country lacks the political will to address these issues at the national level, then we have a different sort of challenge in front of us.

Finally, I feel I would be remiss here if I did not make a few observations in connection with the High Level Conference on Tolerance the OSCE convened last year in Astana, under the Kazakhstani Chairmanship. We often speak of the critical role of civil society and I think the partnership with NGOs in this particular field has been exemplary.

Thank you.