



**Advocates on behalf of Jews in Russia,  
Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia**

**Testimony of Mark B. Levin**

**Executive Director**

**NCSJ: Advocates on behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States & Eurasia**

**Before the**

**United States Congress**

**Committee on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

**Taking Stock: Combating Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region**

**February 7, 2008**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to testify on anti-Semitism in the OSCE region of the former Soviet Union. I want to recognize your leadership, and that of Co-Chairman Cardin, as well as the rest of the Helsinki Commission. The Commission's role has been indispensable in our efforts to fight anti-Semitism and promote tolerance over more than 30 years. Your collective dedication to these causes has shaped the policy priorities of successive administrations and impacted the lives of hundreds of thousands of Jews who – like so many other minorities – look to the United States as a bulwark and a beacon.

NCSJ is an umbrella of nearly 50 national organizations and over 300 local community federations and community councils across the United States. We represent the organized American Jewish community on all advocacy issues concerning the former Soviet Union, and our membership includes the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League, B'nai B'rith International, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, United Jewish Communities, Hadassah, and many other well-known agencies devoted to combating prejudice and anti-Semitism around the world.

At the federal level, the NCSJ works actively with the National Security Council, Department of State, the U.S. Congress, the White House, the OSCE and the Helsinki Commission in fulfilling our mandate to secure the rights of Jews living in the former Soviet Union (FSU). We support

U.S. efforts to aid this region and believe that an active foreign policy is one of the best antidotes to anti-Semitism, xenophobia, nationalism, and extremism. It is important that U.S. policy continues its engagement in the region in support of democracy efforts, and to counter ethnic hatred.

## **General Overview**

In the almost 20 years since the dismantling of the Soviet empire, anti-Semitism remains a significant problem for the 15 post-Soviet successor states and across Europe as well. The Jews in the FSU today constitute the third-largest Jewish community in the world. The issue of anti-Semitism is deeply rooted in the region. As you know, during Soviet times, Jews were forbidden to engage in Jewish cultural and religious life, and suffered institutional or state-sponsored anti-Semitism that blocked their opportunities for advancement.

Today, we recognize the progress achieved since the breakup of the Soviet Union, but we are also aware that the Jewish population remains vulnerable to political, economic and social instabilities. While state-sponsored anti-Semitism has been virtually eliminated in each of the 15 successor states, one of the most negative developments in recent years has been an upsurge in popular anti-Semitism, visible and vocal in segments of the press, academia, the intelligentsia, on the streets, and amongst ultra-nationalist extremists.

We have been asked to focus on three areas that describe the role of civil society and U.S.-based agencies in 1) monitoring anti-Semitism since 2002 in the OSCE region; 2) efforts to address anti-Semitism through the bodies of the OSCE and OSCE Parliamentary Assembly; and 3) an assessment of best practices in combating anti-Semitism, and the way forward.

There has been much accomplished in combating anti-Semitism across the former Soviet Union since the first OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism held in Vienna. We want to acknowledge the efforts and achievements of governments among the Soviet successor states in recognizing the problem and taking concrete actions to address it. However, much more needs to be done, especially in the key area of formulating a more systematic approach to combating anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. We encourage the OSCE and governments in the former Soviet region to promote a comprehensive, across-the-board strategy to combat anti-Semitism that incorporates close cooperation with national law enforcement, education officials, media institutions, and civil society representatives.

More than 15 years after the dismantling of the Soviet Union, governments and civil societies in the FSU need to progress in meeting this challenge, by addressing comprehensively and strategically the root causes of anti-Semitism in this dynamic region.

There have been some encouraging signs coming out of the region. Nine of the fifteen countries of the FSU are members of the Council of Europe, and have been working to meet their standards on hate crimes legislation. Eleven of the fifteen countries have submitted reports to ODIHR.

In Ukraine and Russia, with the FSU region's largest Jewish populations, we have seen an increase in the prosecution of hate crimes. Russia also experienced a decrease in the number of reported anti-Semitic motivated incidents. However, even though anti-Semitic crimes decreased in Russia, extremist crimes rose significantly.

With regard to monitoring efforts, one of the biggest challenges facing the OSCE is securing the cooperation of these countries to better document hate crimes, particularly anti-Semitism.

In the past several years, a wide range of blatantly anti-Semitic acts have been committed but not properly identified by the countries in question. In Belarus, for example, the same Jewish cemetery in Minsk was desecrated twice in 2005. Both attacks were labeled as 'hooliganism'. On April 20, 2006, a group of skinheads attacked the synagogue in Orenburg, Russia, while commemorating Hitler's birthday. They smashed the windows of the synagogue with rocks. The police arrested a man identified by witnesses, but treated the crime as 'ordinary hooliganism.' In Kyiv, Ukraine, on July 16, 2006, the memorial commemorating the victims of Babi Yar was vandalized. The local police arrested someone in connection with the crime, and also classified the case as 'hooliganism.' In Uzbekistan at the beginning of 2006, two prominent members of the Tashkent Jewish community were assaulted. At the end of 2005, a Jewish member of the Uzbek media was beaten and anti-Semitic sayings were painted on his house. The chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers Committee on Religious Affairs in Uzbekistan stated that none of these cases were the manifestation of anti-Semitism.

This lack of reporting is symptomatic of how insignificantly local law enforcement units, from one country to the next, treat the issues of hate crimes, extremism and xenophobia in the region. Enforcement, investigation or prosecution of hate crimes is rare within any of the FSU countries. In addition, the region overall still has inadequate hate crimes legislation.

According to the SOVA Center in Moscow, Russia recently revamped their legislation to the extent that it could be used to limit religious freedom of speech. Without laws that clearly fight xenophobic and racist forces, extremists groups will continue to thrive.

Broad, general insensitivities towards Jews and other minorities continue to fester throughout the region. Even in countries where governments have taken legislative steps to combat bias, the general population still holds on to negative stereotypes. These are, in some cases, being perpetuated by the local media and religious organizations.

While official or state anti-Semitism has been relegated to the past, political anti-Semitism by individual parliamentarians and local officials still persists. In some cases, leaders who speak out strongly against anti-Semitic rhetoric and incidents do not repudiate comments made by political allies and challengers.

## **Recommendations**

There are several action steps that must be taken in order to adequately combat anti-Semitism throughout the region:

- All countries must have adequate hate crimes legislation: Governments should appoint a high level official to oversee implementation of existing hate crime and hate speech laws, and appoint national and local task forces to coordinate this implementation. Any legislation should also provide for law enforcement identification of hate crimes and how to treat victims of hate crimes. These laws should also remove immunity for elected officials suspected of inciting ethnic hatred.

Support from the OSCE PA, U.S. based agencies, and NGOs working with the region are integral in the success of this point. Parliamentarians can work with their counterparts to aid them in drafting language. The OSCE PA could also create a forum in which leaders can discuss successes and failures in drafting and implementing hate crimes legislation.

- Provide training to local law enforcement: In order to combat anti-Semitism and extremism, we must begin by empowering the local police forces. Russia, according to ODIHR, has shown “initial interest” in training its police. Training will enable police to delineate between ordinary hooliganism and a crime motivated by bias or hate. A well trained police force will better follow through on hate crime enforcement and investigations, which will lead to an increase in prosecutions and data collecting.

The OSCE PA can work with their counterparts in these countries to provide best practices in the area of police training. The commitments by these government made in the Berlin Declaration must be followed through.

- Continue to improve monitoring efforts: This is an effective resource to counter the extremist forces in the region. The continued cataloguing and reporting of xenophobic and bias motivated activities provides a better understanding of the extent of the problem so that resources can be provided to victims and communities on the ground.
- Implementation of tolerance education: Teaching children from a very young age the values of tolerance and pluralism is an effective way to combat the roots of popular or ‘street’ anti-Semitism.

Efforts continue to combat anti-Semitic attitudes that have been percolating in the region for generations. ODIHR and NGOs in these countries and elsewhere have created materials to teach about prejudice and anti-Semitism, which must be more widely used throughout the region.

OSCE working together with NGOs in the region can encourage local municipalities and the national governments to implement these programs. The OSCE PA should continue to speak out and work with its members to implement educational programs on a state by state basis. Without this type of educational effort, the stereotypes of Jews and other minorities will continue to be perpetuated.

- Reform the message of religious and media outlets: Beyond the classroom and the government, the two other major sources of information in the FSU are the media and places

of worship. Academic, religious, and cultural leaders, as well as government officials must be a part of any broad-based effort to support a more tolerant society.

There is progress being made in this area. In Kyrgyzstan, when an anti-Semitic article was published, local groups rallied and the paper issued a retraction and an apology. In countries like Belarus though, where the Orthodox Church continues to spread an anti-Semitic message, and its media has published numerous slanderous articles, there is still much work to be done.

The OSCE, along with U.S.-based agencies, need to increase the number of partnerships between religious groups inside countries and on a regional level. This will foster an increased understanding between peoples with different religious and cultural backgrounds, and decrease divisiveness in the region.

I would like to close by quoting former Czech President Vaclav Havel, who has written: “The time of hard, everyday work has come, a time in which conflicting interests have surfaced, a time for sobering up, a time when all of us – and especially those in politics – must make it very clear what we stand for.”

NCSJ does not judge the post-Communist governments by what they found among the shards of Soviet tyranny; we judge them by their commitment to moving forward. We hold them accountable for efforts to condition public attitudes through public statements and education, and we challenge them to enact and enforce the democratic rule of law to protect Jews and other minorities.

NCSJ has worked closely with the OSCE and the U.S. government for many years to alleviate the pressures felt by Jews in the FSU. We urge the OSCE and the U.S. government to continue to reach out to these governments to promote the development of democratic and pluralistic institutions and ideals. The protection of minority rights, within the overarching goal of protecting human rights, is at the heart of this cause. The former Soviet Union’s successful strides toward human equality and democracy depend on it.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before this committee. We look forward to working with you in the future.

## **Appendix A**

The following country descriptions are drawn from NCSJ's country assessments, produced in 2007. For further information about the countries, please visit [www.ncsj.org](http://www.ncsj.org).

### **Armenia**

Armenia has an estimated 500-1,000 Jews. In general, the Armenian Jewish community has good relations with the government and the Christian majority. In the period we have been asked to describe there have been a few documented acts of vandalism against Jewish memorials in Armenia. In February 2005, paint was poured over a Holocaust memorial in Yerevan.

In accordance with the Council of Europe, Armenia has a government-appointed Human Rights Defender. According to the Armenian constitution, this person "protects the human rights and fundamental freedoms violated by the state and local self-governing bodies or their officials."

Armenia has yet to submit any information on hate crimes legislation, statistics, or practical initiatives to ODIHR.

### **Azerbaijan**

Azerbaijan has an estimated 25,000 Jews. There have been Jews living there since the 5<sup>th</sup> century, are protected under Azeri law as a 'traditional' religion. The Jewish community has a longstanding, friendly relationship with the government and other ethnic groups in the country. Azerbaijan's constitution guarantees "equality of rights and liberties of everyone, irrespective of race, nationality, religion, language, sex, or origin..." Their criminal and police codes also call for similar standards.

The Azeri Government has submitted information to ODIHR on hate crimes legislation, statistics and has provided a national point-of-contact as recently as July 2007. They have asked for assistance from ODIHR to develop diversity education.

### **Belarus**

With an estimated Jewish population of 50,000 to 80,000, Belarus is one of the larger Jewish centers in the former Soviet Union, and has a troubled history with anti-Semitism.

Since last testifying in 2004 there have been multiple incidents:

- In March 2005, the Jewish cemetery in Minsk was desecrated twice.
- In May and November of 2005, the Jewish cemetery in Rechitza was vandalized.

- The 2005 and 2006 the Orthodox Calendar issued by the Minsk Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul contained the prayer “In memory of the martyr Gavriil Belostotskiy tortured by ‘zhid’ (Jew)”. This calendar also refers to Jews as “beasts.”
- On November 30, 2006, an explosive device was detonated in Brest on a monument to the victims of the Brest Ghetto. The incident was labeled as hooliganism by local authorities.
- According to Human Rights First, in 2007 alone, Jewish organizations reported more than 30 cases of vandalism throughout Belarus.
- The *Respublika*, the *Communist of Belarus*, and the *Neman Literature Journal* all frequently publish anti-Semitic articles.

Belarus criminal code has multiple articles that deal with crimes motivated by religious or other bias that call for a wide range of fines and prison terms. Last year, Jewish organizations reported more than 30 cases of vandalism, but not a single one was prosecuted under these laws. According to the government of Belarus, the investigation of these attacks revealed no anti-Semitic related motives but rather, they were the result of “the upbringing of those who committed the crimes.” The prosecution of anti-Semitic crimes is rare and receives little media coverage.

On October 12, 2007, President Lukashenko classified the city of Bobruisk as “a Jewish city, and the Jews are not concerned with the place they live in. They have turned Bobruisk into a pigsty.” His comments only embolden extremist activities against Jews.

Belarus has submitted information to ODIHR on hate crimes legislation, statistics, and practical initiatives as recently as July 2007. They have also given testimony to the UN on human rights, but there is little evidence that they follow through on their reports.

## **Estonia**

Estonia has a population of approximately 3,000 Jews. Reports of anti-Semitism in Estonia are rare. One of the major issues between the Jewish community and Estonia centers on World War II and the Holocaust. For example in 2006, Estonian veterans dedicated two new monuments to Dutch and Belgian members of the SS who had fought on Estonian territory against the Soviets.

The Estonian government has made strides to address some of these issues. On January 27, 2006, an event was held to commemorate victims of the Holocaust in Klooga, Estonia, site of a wartime massacre, as part of Estonia’s commemoration of Holocaust Memorial day. On May 8, 2007 (V-E Day), Prime Minister Ansip laid a wreath in the name of the Estonian government to the victims of Nazism at the Klooga site, accompanied by members of his government and foreign diplomats.

Estonia submitted reports on hate crimes statistics, legislation, and a national point-of-contact to ODIHR through 2007, and provided testimony to the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights as recently as 2006.

## **Georgia**

Georgia's Jewish community settled in the area 2,600 years ago, and once numbered over 100,000. Today, Georgia has around 8,000 to 10,000 Jews. This centuries long relationship with the Jewish community has fostered a very positive relationship among Georgian Jews, the other native ethnicities and religions, and the Georgian government.

Georgia has a 'Public Defender' who is mandated to address hate-motivated incidents. The Public Defender has put in place several social programs to promote diversity in Georgia, and has created a Council on Ethnic Minorities to encourage interethnic cooperation.

Georgia has provided ODIHR with information on a national point of contact for hate crimes in 2007, and provided testimony on human rights to the UN.

## **Kazakhstan**

There are an estimated 5,000 to 8,000 Jews in Kazakhstan. There have been no reports of anti-Semitic acts of violence in the country in several years. One area of concern is the continued operation of the Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami organization. They operate mainly in the south of Kazakhstan, and distribute anti-Semitic leaflets and books. They are considered an extremist group by the Kazakh government, as well as by many other countries around the world.

Kazakhstan has hosted several conferences to promote inter-religious discussion, and will assume the OSCE chair in 2010.

Kazakhstan's criminal code provides protection for its citizens from attacks motivated by bias, and has a separate law on the freedom of religion. It has also complied with ODIHR in providing multiple reports on hate crimes legislation, statistics and a national point of contact.

## **Kyrgyzstan**

Kyrgyzstan has an estimated 1,500 Jews, with the main Jewish population centered in the capital, Bishkek. The Jewish community rarely complains about being mistreated. The director of the Menorah Center in Bishkek serves on the Kyrgyz religious council, a federal body. The only limitation to Jewish societal integration is a language requirement for service in high government posts.

In 2005 a national Kyrgyz newspaper, *Pyramid Plus*, published an article that stated, "Our matzah eating friends...rule our country." The Jewish community of Kyrgyzstan immediately released a response that was submitted to the government. The editor of the newspaper issued an apology, and printed the Jewish community's response.



Kyrgyzstan has not submitted any reports to ODIHR.

## **Latvia**

Latvia has an estimated 15,000 Jews, predominately in Riga. Neo-Nazis operate out of several cities, and have desecrated synagogues and cemeteries.

Since our last hearing, there have been several reported anti-Semitic incidents:

- In June 2005, the Latvian prosecutor's office filed incitement charges against a nationalist newspaper that published derogatory articles calling for the deportation of Russian speakers and Jews living in Latvia. In 2006, two Latvian parliament deputies known for nationalist and anti-Semitic views testified in support of the newspaper's staff members, then on trial for inciting ethnic hatred.
- In September 2005, two separate Holocaust memorials in the Bikernieki Forest near Riga were vandalized.
- In December 2005, vandals toppled a large Hanukkah menorah near the Israeli embassy in Riga.
- In May 2006, a Holocaust memorial which was to be unveiled in June was knocked down by vandals. The memorial honored the murder of 120 Jews in the town of Rezekne.

Latvian criminal law provides penalties for committing a crime based on religion. Fourteen cases of incitement to hatred based on racism were documented in 2006. On May 17<sup>th</sup>, the foreign minister appealed to the public to fight anti-Semitism.

Latvia has cooperated with ODIHR in submitting their information on hate crimes legislation, statistics, initiatives, and a national point of contact, and has submitted testimony to the UN.

## **Lithuania**

Lithuania has an estimated Jewish population of 8,000. While outward manifestations of anti-Semitism have not increased there are still tensions between the Jewish community and the government. A major point of contention is the restitution of Jewish communal property lost during the Holocaust. The Lithuanian government's progress is sluggish which is raising concerns in the Jewish community. In September 2006, the Lithuanian Prime Minister announced that he was ready to send a restitution bill to parliament, whose cost was estimated at \$57 million. However, no such bill was submitted by the government in 2006.

A few anti-Semitic events have been reported over the past couple years:

- In June 2005, gravestones in a Jewish cemetery in Plunge were knocked down.

- In September 2005, during the first-ever visit by the President of Israel to Lithuania, a Holocaust memorial in the Kretinga district was vandalized, and stone tablets marking Nazi atrocities were smashed.
- In June 2006, a Jewish cemetery near Vilnius was vandalized, with tombstones toppled and smashed. The attack coincided with the 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a 1941 uprising by Lithuanian nationalists against Soviet authorities, one day following the German invasion of the USSR.
- In September 2006, a Jewish cemetery near Vilnius was vandalized. (Reports were unclear if this was the same cemetery that was vandalized in June.) Also in September, a bar in Kaunas flew the Nazi flag and dressed an employee as Hitler, provoking outrage in the Jewish community and calls for an official investigation.

Lithuania has received from ODIHR educational materials about anti-Semitism, and has submitted its information to ODIHR on hate crimes legislation, statistics, initiatives and a national point of contact.

## **Moldova**

Moldova has a Jewish population of 30,000 to 40,000 with no recent acts of anti-Semitism. However, in Chisinau in 2006, the city allowed for a commercial structure to be built over the site where the remains of several thousand Jews who were mass-murdered during the Holocaust are buried. The work was halted briefly due to local Jewish protest, but then resumed shortly after. There are also repeated instances of Holocaust deniers speaking in universities and book stores. According to the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, the government has made efforts to counteract the Holocaust deniers by providing Holocaust education in its schools and to the public.

Moldova has a law against extremist activity which provides protection for religious views. They submitted reports to ODIHR in 2004 and 2007.

## **Russia**

The estimated Jewish population in the Russian Federation is 400,000 to 700,000. In 2006, as in 2005, the number of targeted attacks against the Jewish population increased. In 2007 though, reported incidents of anti-Semitism decreased. This was offset by an increase in attacks against minorities, from the Caucasus regions, Africa, and Asia.

Several anti-Semitic acts have already occurred in 2008. In the last two weeks of January alone, there were three reported acts of anti-Semitism in the country.

While the widespread attacks are a cause for concern, the Russian government has made some progress in addressing these issues. President Putin directly addressed the issue of extremism on January 31, 2007, saying that combating hatred “is important not only to ensure law and order, but also to protect society from attempts to bring ideologies of extremism, ethnic, and religious

intolerance to the social and political field.” In early July 2007, the Russian Parliament passed anti-extremism legislation aimed at curbing nationalist and radical groups. The measure broadened the definition of “extremism” to include crimes driven by racial, national, or religious motives.

2006 and 2007 registered some of the more brutal attacks and desecrations against Jews in Russia since 1991:

- On January 10, 2006, the most violent anti-Semitic attack in recent years took place at a Moscow synagogue. During evening prayer services, 20-year-old Alexander Koptsev entered the Moscow’s Bolshaya Bronnaya Synagogue and stabbed worshippers indiscriminately, seriously wounding ten people. In September 2006, Koptsev was sentenced to a 16-year prison term for attempted murder and “inciting racial hatred.” The Russian courts’ determination that this attack was a hate crime, and not mere “hooliganism,” marks progress in the legal system’s prosecution of anti-Semitic crimes.
- September 22, 2006, the eve of Rosh Hashanah, coincided with three anti-Semitic incidents. In Astrakhan, the windows of a Sephardic synagogue were smashed in by a group of men, all of whom escaped. In Khabarovsk, four perpetrators threw rocks at a synagogue, resulting in broken windows and glass doors. And in Moscow, the leader of a small Jewish congregation was violently attacked in broad daylight near his home. His attacker assaulted him after asking if he was a Jew. He sustained only minor injuries and reported the attack to police.
- On April 21, 2007, Russian neo-Nazis received official permission to hold a political rally to celebrate “freedom of choice,” which they used to mark Hitler’s birthday (April 20). An estimated 350 extremists rallied in front of the presidential administration building in downtown Moscow, shouting neo-Nazi slogans and making Nazi salutes. There were no arrests, despite the fact that under Russian law, both public incitement of ethnic hatred and the use of Nazi symbols are illegal.
- On October 19, 2007, a synagogue in Astrakhan was attacked by a group of young people, screaming “Jews get out” and “Death to Kikes.”

There have been several incidents of political and propaganda-based anti-Semitism:

- On April 29, 2006, two members of the Russian Parliament, while addressing the Union of Russian People, stated, “Today, our country is ruled by a Jewish Mafia.”
- On July 20-21, 2006, in Moscow, the International Conference for Fighters for the White Race took place. David Duke and Guillaume Faye were both in attendance. At the conference they spoke of a necessity to find the most immediate possible solution to the “Jewish problem.”
- In 2006, some 150 racist and extremist websites were maintained on [Runet.ru](http://Runet.ru). These sites contained explicit instructions for racist attacks on particular individuals in Russia.

Russia has shown initial interest in receiving law enforcement training from ODIHR, and is having education materials on anti-Semitism prepared by ODIHR as well. Also in recent years, there has been a successful program implemented called "Climate of Trust." This program created a partnership between the San Francisco community and several Russian communities to provide tolerance training to local law enforcement and government officials. The last information Russia submitted to ODIHR covering legislation, statistics, practical initiatives, and a national point of contact, was at the end of 2005.

### **Tajikistan**

Tajikistan has a population of an estimated 100-400 Jews. The vast majority of Jews left when the Soviet Union fell, either moving to the U.S. or Israel. The remaining community traces their roots back over 1,000 years. The last historic synagogue was torn down in 2004. The Euro-Asian Jewish Congress negotiated with the Tajik government to supply a plot of land to build a new Jewish community center which is still pending. Two anti-Semitic acts took place in August 2006. There was an anti-Israel rally in the nation's capital with the crowd shouting 'Death to Israel!' and several teenagers tried to set fire to the lone remaining synagogue with Molotov cocktails. The congregational guards were able to put out the fire, but the government refused to provide security for the building.

Tajikistan submitted information on a national point of contact for hate crimes to ODIHR in 2005.

### **Turkmenistan**

It is estimated that Turkmenistan has 1,200 Jews, 700 of whom live in Ashgabat. Little is known about anti-Semitic incidents because of the general lack of information coming out of the country. The one synagogue in the country was converted into a gymnasium during the Soviet era, and has never been replaced.

Turkmenistan has yet to submit a report to ODIHR.

### **Ukraine**

Ukraine has a Jewish population estimated at 300,000 to 500,000. Anti-Semitic attacks targeting individuals, synagogues, and Holocaust memorials occurred frequently throughout 2006 and 2007. While there are other contributing factors, this upsurge in anti-Semitism can be partially attributed to the activities of Ukraine's largest private university, the Interregional Academy of Personnel Management (MAUP). MAUP is believed to be the largest disseminator of anti-Semitic literature in Ukraine and has previously issued statements supporting the destruction of the State of Israel and expulsion of Jews from Ukraine.

The Ukrainian government has taken actions to condemn anti-Semitism, including public statements and official interventions. In January 2006, Boris Tarasyuk, Ukraine's then-Foreign Minister, spoke out on national television against MAUP's activities. He declared that MAUP

carried out “unlawful and wrongful actions” and that “there is no place for any form of anti-Semitism or xenophobia in Ukraine.” These proclamations were followed by the Education Ministry’s disbanding of seven branches of MAUP in June 2006 and, in October, the revocation of 4,655 diplomas issued to MAUP graduates. A month later, however, MAUP successfully appealed the decision to close its branches and their license was renewed. In a meeting with NCSJ, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich committed to appealing the reopening of the regional offices.

The frequency of anti-Semitic incidents rose sharply in the first half of 2007, as compared to 2006.

There have been some recent examples of anti-Semitic incidents:

- On April 20, 2006, Adolf Hitler’s birthday, a series of anti-Semitic events occurred in Dnepropetrovsk. First, anti-Semitic graffiti was discovered. Then, four yeshiva students were attacked by a group of thirty skinheads as they left synagogue in the evening; the students were uninjured in the assault. Later, a 20-year-old rabbinical student was attacked by the same skinhead group; he sustained stab wounds to his chest and multiple head injuries, but survived the attack.
- On June 23, 2006, the Choral Synagogue in Kirovograd was vandalized for the fifth time that year. Unknown assailants threw stones at the building, shattering two windows. No one was injured in the attack.
- On January 11, 2007, three newspapers associated with MAUP published blatantly anti-Semitic material. The publications featured an appeal by the Conservative Party, led by MAUP president Georgy Schokin, which blamed Ukraine’s problems on the Chabad Lubavitch movement.
- Also in January 2007, city workers desecrated a Jewish cemetery in Odessa, Ukraine that was shut down in the 1970s. A television camera crew discovered that city construction crews had used heavy equipment to dig huge holes in the cemetery, disinterring the bones and mixing them with refuse commonly dumped on the cemetery grounds.
- On May 17, 2007, in Lviv, Oleg Tyagnybok, a former member of President Yushchenko’s “Our Ukraine” party and the former head of the National Socialist Party of Ukraine, led a group of party youth activists storming a public event by a company promoting kosher ice-cream. Screaming “Ukraine won’t be sold to kikes!” and “Down with the kike-communist government of Yanukovich-Kuchma,” the youths smashed display stands and brawled with the company’s security guards. Police eventually arrived and detained some of the attackers, who were quickly released after paying fines.
- Last week, on January 27<sup>th</sup>, a rabbi was severely beaten in Dnepropetrovsk. The day before, a synagogue in Kyiv was vandalized.

Further positive developments in Ukraine include: the creation of a security services task force to deal specifically with extremism; a continued application of pressure on MAUP; David Duke being banned from their country; and at the beginning of this year, President Yushchenko introduced new hate crimes legislation that amends current law, and protects against religious bias.

They have also submitted information on hate crimes legislation, statistics and a national point of contact to ODIHR, most recently in 2007.

## **Uzbekistan**

The estimated size of the Jewish population of Uzbekistan ranges from 5,000 to 15,000. Anti-Semitic acts have taken place sporadically in the country. In 2005, there was an attack on a Jewish correspondent from the information agency, Ferghana.ru. Despite government attempts, Islamic radical groups have distributed anti-Semitic leaflets.

There are several Jewish schools, centers, and synagogues in the country that offer a wide range of services to the community.

Uzbekistan has yet to submit any information to ODIHR.