

Testimony of Gregg Rickman
Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism
Department of State
Before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe
February 7, 2008
2:30 pm, Dirksen 406

“Taking Stock: Combating Anti-Semitism in the OSCE Region”

Thank you, Chairman Hastings, Senator Cardin, and other distinguished Members of the Commission for inviting me here today. I welcome the opportunity to discuss anti-Semitism, especially trends in the OSCE region. Your active, personal commitment and this Commission’s early and sustained attention to this growing problem have helped spur international efforts against anti-Semitism within the OSCE region and beyond. Indeed, the OSCE’s pioneering work serves as a model for other regional institutions in condemning and combating contemporary forms of anti-Semitism worldwide.

Current Overall Conditions:

I would like to begin by relating three incidents to you to give you an idea of the frightening state of anti-Semitism in recent years.

- In London in August 2006, Jasmine Kranat, a 13-year old Jewish girl was riding home from school on a bus. Fellow students demanded that she tell them whether she was “English or Jewish.” When she paused, they robbed her and then beat her unconscious, breaking her cheekbone in the process. No one made a phone call or left their seat to help her.
- In February 2006, Ilan Halimi, a French Jew, was kidnapped by a gang of African immigrants who mutilated him, at times even while negotiating with his parents over the phone for a ransom. Eventually they left him in a field, in the winter, naked and burned. When caught by the police, the gang leader admitted that they targeted Halimi because he was Jewish and “all Jews had money.” Halami died on the way to the hospital.

- In October 2005, Andrey Dzyuba, a 21-year old Jewish man in Yekaterinburg, Russia was beaten in a cemetery by five teenagers who then plunged a cross torn from a nearby headstone into his chest, killing him.

These, and other, chilling accounts speak to the truth of Secretary Rice's statement that, "More than six decades after the Holocaust, anti-Semitism is not just an historical fact.... It is a current event. Anti-Semitic hate crimes are on the rise still at home and abroad."

Today's anti-Semitism is manifested by an increased number of violent attacks against Jews and synagogues in much of the OSCE region and beyond. Traditional anti-Semitic screeds, such as *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* and *Mein Kampf*, remain commonplace worldwide, and Jews often are blamed for "why things go wrong." Age-old and new anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and propaganda, such as the assertion that Jews control the United States and are overly influential on the world stage, circulate rapidly via satellite television, radio, and the Internet. Jews continue to be accused of dual loyalty, and the symbols and images associated with classic anti-Semitism, such as the charge of blood libel, endure. Holocaust denial has become one of the most prevalent forms of anti-Semitic discourse. Holocaust denial has even become state policy in Iran. Israeli policy is often compared to that of the Nazis.

Contemporary anti-Semitism manifests itself in both overt and subtle ways, persisting in places where Jews live and even where they do not.

Anti-Semitism within the OSCE:

The OSCE region, which is home to many Jews, has the highest record of reported physical attacks on Jews and on Jewish institutions *despite* government efforts to combat anti-Semitism. Governments in the region recognize their responsibility to work against societal anti-Semitism, with the exception of Belarus, where state enterprises freely produce and distribute anti-Semitic material.

According to reliable NGO reports, in 2006 (the last full set of reportable data) a number of OSCE countries experienced increases in overall anti-Semitic incidents, including non-violent incidents such as graffiti and verbal assaults. Examples include:

- Belgium, with 66 reported anti-Semitic incidents (the largest number of acts since 2001, when reporting began);

- The United Kingdom, with 594 reported anti-Semitic incidents (31% over 2005);
- Switzerland, with 140 reported anti-Semitic incidents (73 in the German-speaking region, double the number from the previous year; and 67 in the French-speaking region, a decline from 75 in 2005);
- France, with 371 incidents (24% over 2005, though statistics for the first half of 2007 reveal a decrease);
- And Canada, with 935 reported incidents (a 12.8% increase over the previous year).

To be sure, we must not take such statistics as the final word on the problem. Drawing accurate cross-country comparisons is complicated by the fact that countries use differing data collection methodologies and definitions. For example, some countries—such as Russia—tend to record attacks against Jews as “hooliganism” or ordinary criminal attacks, without recording the anti-Semitic nature of the crime. This same problem exists outside of the OSCE region in Australia, from where I have just returned last week. There, police forces are only beginning to approach the problem of anti-Semitic attacks in a systematic way, despite the occurrence of 638 incidents from October 2006-September 2007. In contrast, in North America and Western Europe, governments are more apt to report the anti-Semitic dimension of hate crimes and allow nongovernmental groups to monitor the problem. So we must be very cautious about “rank-ordering” countries on the degree to which anti-Semitism is a problem based on available statistics because comparisons are not always equal.

That said, the documented upsurge in anti-Semitism within the OSCE region remains cause for great concern in the OSCE region. As you know, Mr. Chairman, since 2003, the OSCE has convened six major forums addressing anti-Semitism, at which national leaders underscored their commitment to combat anti-Semitism at home and abroad. The OSCE *Conference on Anti-Semitism* held in Berlin in April 2004 culminated in the issuance of a declaration that, “Recogniz[es] that anti-Semitism...has assumed new forms and expressions, which, along with other forms of intolerance, pose a threat to democracy, the values of civilization and, therefore, to overall security.” The Declaration also states “unambiguously that international developments or political issues, including those in Israel or elsewhere in the Middle East, never justify anti-Semitism.”

During my time as Special Envoy, I have traveled to numerous OSCE countries, including the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Russia, Ukraine and Poland, where I have spoken to government officials, community leaders and victims of anti-Semitic violence, such as Jasmine Kranat, whom I just mentioned. I have also gained a number of impressions from travel throughout the Middle East and well beyond. One thing that is clear is that anti-Semitism remains and moreover, has proven to be an adaptive phenomenon.

Allow me now to share some observations about trends, especially within the OSCE region, where classic anti-Semitism continues to exist, but where new forms of anti-Semitism also have evolved:

Traditional anti-Semitism—that is, the overt demonization or degradation of Jews based on ethnic and religious differences—remains prevalent in parts of Central and Eastern Europe and in Russia. To cite just a few examples of traditional anti-Semitism:

- In Poland, the conservative Catholic radio station Radio Maryja is one of Europe's most blatantly anti-Semitic media venues.
- The Interregional Academy of Personnel Management, a private institution in Ukraine commonly known by the acronym MAUP, is one of the most persistent anti-Semitic institutions in Europe. In 2007, MAUP accounted for nearly 90% of all anti-Semitic material published in Ukraine. I have personally bought their publications in Kiev at a kiosk on the street.
- In Russia, where xenophobic, racial and ethnic attacks are widespread and on the rise, the primary targets of skinheads are foreigners and individuals from the North Caucasus; however, skinheads often express anti-Semitic sentiments as well.
- In Germany, a country that has, more than any other, tried to come to terms with its past, and which has been a leader within the OSCE and the EU in combating anti-Semitism, neo-Nazi violence has taken its toll. Between 2002 and 2006, 237 Jewish cemeteries were reported desecrated, an average of nearly 50 a year. There are also a number of individual cases of physical assaults and other incidents.

Despite these and other examples, the good news is that, in much of the OSCE region, especially in Western Europe and North America, traditional anti-Semitism has been relegated to fringe extremist groups.

However, new forms of anti-Semitism have evolved. They often incorporate elements of traditional anti-Semitism. However, the distinguishing feature of the new anti-Semitism is criticism of Zionism or Israeli policy that -- whether intentionally or unintentionally -- has the effect of promoting prejudice against all Jews by demonizing Israel and Israelis, and attributing Israel's perceived faults to its Jewish character.

At times, hostility toward Israel also translates into violence against Jews worldwide. There was, for example, a sharp upsurge in violent anti-Semitic incidents worldwide during the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel in Summer 2006, including here in the United States.

Traditional anti-Semitism, with its historic linkage to Nazism and some forms of nationalism, tends to be overt and is considered unacceptable and illegitimate by much of the mainstream in Western Europe, North America, and beyond. In contrast, new anti-Semitism, characterized by anti-Zionist and anti-Israel criticism that is anti-Semitic in its effect—whether or not in its intent—is more subtle and thus frequently escapes condemnation.

According to the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) definition of anti-Semitism, regardless of the motive, anti-Zionist and anti-Israel criticism become anti-Semitic when they entail: denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination; applying double standards to Israel, using the symbols and images associated with classic anti-Semitism to characterize Israel or Israelis; drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis, or holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

According to the EUMC's *Summary overview of the situation in the European Union 2001-2005*:

“There has been some evidence to support the view that there is some link between the number of reported anti-Semitic incidents and the political situation in the Middle East.... Moreover, some of the data indicate that there have been changes in the profile of the perpetrators. It is no longer the extreme right which is seen as solely responsible for hostility towards Jewish individuals or property.... Instead, victims

identified ‘young Muslims,’ ‘people of North African origin,’ or ‘immigrants’ as perpetrators.”

The EUMC concludes that in Europe: “Anti-Semitic activity after 2000 is increasingly attributed to a ‘new anti-Semitism,’ characterized primarily by the vilification of Israel as the ‘Jewish collective’ and perpetrated primarily by members of Europe’s Muslim population.”

But—to be clear—today’s new anti-Semitism while common in Muslim communities in Europe and throughout the Middle East, is **not** confined to these populations.

For example, the distinction between legitimate criticism of the policies and practices of the State of Israel and anti-Semitism can become blurred in the UN context. United Nations bodies are asked each year on multiple occasions to investigate what often are sensationalized reports of alleged atrocities and other violations of human rights by Israel. Various bodies have been set up within the UN system with the sole purpose of reporting on what is assumed to be ongoing, abusive Israeli behavior. The motive for such actions may be to defuse an immediate crisis, to show others in the Middle East that there are credible means of addressing their concerns other than through resort to violence, or to pursue other legitimate ends. But the collective effect of unremitting criticism of Israel, coupled with a failure to pay attention to regimes that are demonstrably guilty of grave violations, has the effect of reinforcing the notion that the Jewish state is one of the sources, if not the greatest source, of abuse of the rights of others, and thus intentionally or not encourages anti-Semitism.

Between 2001 and September 2006, UNGA’s plenary and main committees (not including the former Commission on Human Rights or Human Rights Council) together adopted over 120 human rights-related resolutions focused on Israel, with more anticipated by the end of the 2007-2008 UNGA. During that same period, less than thirty resolutions were adopted by these same bodies regarding the situations in North Korea, Burma, and Sudan combined.

The new anti-Semitism often emanates from unprecedented coalitions, uniting groups that otherwise would have little common cause. Throughout the OSCE region, and indeed at anti-Israel rallies on every continent, placards emblazoned with swastikas can be found reading, “Death to the Jews—Death to Israel” and Stars of David. Activists attending a November 16-19, 2006 conference in Beirut organized by Hizballah and the Communist Party of Lebanon agreed in their final statement “*to establish a worldwide network against the American-Zionist project which...target[s]...humanity.*” According

to the Brussels Tribunal, an international coalition of activists, the conference was attended by 400 people “from all over the world [representing] trade unions, anti-globalization, anti-war and anti-imperialist movements.”

In May 2007 the **United Kingdom**-based University and College Union offered two separate resolutions which would require its membership to support a Palestinian call for a boycott and endorse restrictions on collaborative research with Israeli scholars. The debate over the proposed academic boycott featured anti-Semitic demonization of Israel, such as Nazi analogies and suggestions that Israel is “a fascist state.” The call for a boycott later was called off.

Combating Anti-Semitism:

Having briefly described some of the components of today’s anti-Semitism within the OSCE and beyond, in the short time that remains I’d like to comment on some of the efforts underway to combat anti-Semitism.

The U.S. Government, as well as many others within the OSCE and beyond, seek to combat anti-Semitism through a variety of means, including: Publicly condemning all forms of anti-Semitism and intolerance whenever they occur; meeting with victims of anti-Semitic crime; monitoring anti-Semitic actions and maintaining public statistics; promoting tolerance in primary and secondary schools, and in society at large; devoting significant resources to investigating incidents and prosecuting perpetrators of anti-Semitic crimes, and I would add, prosecuting them specifically as hate crimes; training police to understand the nature of such crimes; promoting Holocaust awareness and education; supporting interfaith understanding and dialogue; providing security protection to threatened synagogues and other Jewish institutions; and collaborating with affected communities, NGOs, and international bodies to counter anti-Semitism. These actions are some of the best steps that governments can take to address the problem.

Laws can be among the most powerful tools for fighting anti-Semitism. Examples include: Creation of minority rights and legal protections that prevent discrimination; increased sentencing provisions for hate-motivated crimes – but importantly, these provisions must be used for prosecution; legally established commissions and agencies to counter racism, protect human rights, or fight discrimination, including against Jews; ombudsmen to address ethnic and minority issues; and strong laws against crimes linked to anti-Semitism, such as cemetery desecration.

Countries vary widely in their legal approaches to combating anti-Semitism. For instance, some countries enact prohibitions and impose criminal

penalties on certain forms of anti-Semitic expression (e.g., denial of the Holocaust and broadcasting racist remarks). In other countries, including the United States, such measures would conflict with constitutional protections on the freedom of speech. Although there are significant country variations, a common approach to combating anti-Semitism is the prohibition of governmental and certain forms of private discrimination on the grounds of nationality, race, religion, and other factors.

At the intergovernmental level, as I noted, the OSCE has been a global forerunner in efforts to combat anti-Semitism, and I know that on January 29th this Commission heard about such efforts from two distinguished OSCE experts: Professor Gert Weisskirchen, OSCE Chairman-in-Office's Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism, and Dr. Kathrin Meyer, Advisor on Anti-Semitism Issues with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. I firmly express the State Department's strong support for permanently retaining the positions these individuals occupy, namely Professor Weisskirchen's position as the Personal Representative on Anti-Semitism of the Chair-in-Office, and I applaud Finnish Chairman-in-Office Kanerva's decision to retain the three personal representatives to combat anti-semitism, anti-Muslim and other forms of religious intolerance and discrimination. . Renewing Professor Weisskirchen's mandate and ensuring his and the additional two positions' proper funding is essential to our efforts to combat anti-Semitism in the OSCE region.

For their own part, Jewish communities must not sit back and accept the attacks that are launched against them. It is incumbent upon these communities to file complaints with their representatives and their governments when attacked. I understand their reservations to this approach that arise from fear of calling too much attention to themselves, as well as a well-founded fear of reprisal. Yet, governments serve to protect and they should be expected to respond when notified of an incident. They can, however, only respond when they are notified.

Additionally, a free and independent media is essential in countering misperceptions and prejudices and promoting tolerance. Reporting of incidents is also important to provide notice that these incidents are occurring.

In the OSCE region and around the globe, responsible governments, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental groups, religious leaders, other respected figures, and ordinary men and women are working to reverse the disturbing trends discussed here today. A lot of work remains to be done in key

areas of education, tolerance promotion, legislation, and law enforcement before anti-Semitism, in all its ugly forms, can be consigned to the past.

Conclusion:

History has shown that wherever anti-Semitism has gone unchecked, the persecution of others has not been far behind.

Anti-Semitism must be seen as a human rights issue that must be seen as a cause of great importance not only for Jews, but for all people who value humanity and justice and want to live in a more tolerant, peaceful world.

I thank you for the opportunity to come before you today, and welcome any questions you may have.

