Commission on Security & Cooperation in Europe: U.S. Helsinki Commission

"The Alarming Rise in Anti-Semitism and Its Threat to Democracy"

Committee Members Present:
Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), Chairman;
Representative Steve Cohen (D-TN), Co-Chairman;
Representative Joe Wilson (R-SC), Ranking Member;
Representative Ruben Gallego (D-AZ);
Representative Marc Veasey (D-TX);
Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)

Other Members Present:
Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV)

Witnesses:
Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism;
Rabbi Andrew Baker, Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism and Director of International Jewish Affairs at the American Jewish Committee (AJC)

The Hearing Was Held From 2:21 p.m. To 3:49 p.m., Room SDG-50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), Chairman, Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe, presiding

Date: Tuesday, December 13, 2022

Transcript By
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CARDIN: The Helsinki Commission will come to order. First, I want to apologize for the schedule. We're near the end of the legislative session, as I think everyone knows. And when we scheduled this hearing, it was a clear afternoon. Unknown to us, the president has scheduled the bill signing on Respect of Marriage Act, starting with our colleagues having to be there at 3:00. So we tried to advance this hearing a little bit so that we could accommodate some of our members' schedule. And then Senator Schumer scheduled a vote at 2:15. So I apologize for the scheduling

This is one of our most important hearings. It happens to be our last hearing of this Congress. And I just want to take a moment to thank the Helsinki staff for an incredible two years. We've been really challenged because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the violations of every one of the Helsinki commitments by Russia in its invasion of Ukraine. The Commission has taken a focus on that, not only to deal with the sovereignty of Ukraine, but also the human rights disasters that were caused by Mr. Putin and Russia, including the violations of war crimes by the Russian Federation and, as we've seen, a rise in hate crimes and anti-Semitism in this country. So this hearing is a particularly important hearing. And I want to thank the staff for putting this together and thank our two very distinguished witnesses.

I wanted to have this hearing because I was alarmed by the shocking rise of antisemitic speech and attacks. I served not only as chair of the Helsinki Commission, but also as the special representative for anti-Semitism, racism and intolerance for the Parliamentary Assembly. And in 2004, I participated in the high-level OSCE Berlin Anti-Semitism Conference, where all OSCE states pledged to speak out against antisemitic acts. Yet, almost two decades later, 2021 saw the highest number of antisemitic attacks in the United States ever. And 2022 appears to be on a similar trajectory. The threat is so serious that on November 30th, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security issued a warning about the heighted potential for violent domestic attacks, including antisemitic attacks.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, instances of anti-Semitism remain at historic levels in the United States. In fact, antisemitic instances targeting Jewish institutions jumped 21 percent from 2020 to 2021. We expect that numbers in 2022 will have a similar story. Fears about anti-Semitism has been on the rise since the mass shooter claimed 11 lives at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh in October of 2018, the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S. history. In the intervening four years, a range of Jewish houses of worship, homes, and businesses have been targeted by violent antisemitic attacks, including a Chabad in Poway, California, a kosher market in Jersey City, New Jersey, and a rabbi's home in Monsey, New York, to name just a few.

A multitude of other Jewish institutions have been subjected to threats and harassment, despite not being physically attacked. There's also been an uptick in the threats of Jewish communities and religious spaces, including synagogues, JCCs, and Jewish day schools. In November 2022 alone, more than 10 instances were reported of suspicious phone calls and explicit threats made to Jewish institutions across the country.

We must speak out loudly and clearly against anti-Semitism when it occurs. As leaders, we must lead and fight against hate. We cannot allow anti-Semitism or any type of prejudice or intolerance to be normalized. What we learned from the Berlin conference – one of the first recommendations that was made is that leaders need to lead. They need to act. Words have consequences. Leaders must put a spotlight on any type of antisemitic activities and be willing to condemn it. We saw just the opposite in Mar-a-Lago, when the former president had dinner with Kanye West, a known antisemite, and Nick Fuentes, a White supremist. I am pleased that so many of my Republican and Democratic colleagues spoke out against that dinner by the former president. Words have consequences, and we must be prepared to act on that.

At the most recent board meeting of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the dots were connected that the threats to our democratic institutions make us more vulnerable for antisemitic activities. When you see disinformation, when you hear all the conspiracy theories giving oxygen, including the replacement theories, when you see election deniers, all that weakens our democratic institutions and leads to more violent activities in our community targeted to vulnerable groups, including antisemitic activities. So these attacks are more vulnerable if we allow our rule of law and our democratic values to be threatened. In our crusade to end anti-Semitism we must be equally aggressive in protecting our democratic institutions from these attacks.

We need a whole of society response. We need a national unified strategy. A couple weeks ago I convened a roundtable group. Two of our distinguished witnesses were both part of that. We had representatives from the White House, from the Department of Justice, Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee. All were engaged as we tried to talk about what we can do. And one of the first recommendations was: We need a unified national strategy. I was pleased to see the vice president convene a similar group in the White House just a few days ago. And I think it was yesterday or the day before the president announced that there would be an interagency coordinated group to develop a unified strategy for this country to fight anti-Semitism.

So we're moving in that direction, and that's so, so important. A national strategy must incorporate issues such as education. I was pleased to see that the Congress has appropriated funds, including in this year's budget, for Holocaust education. We need to be mindful of public safety, and that's why we are so concerned about the nonprofit grants that are available to religious institutions, in order to protect the public. We have to have better data collection. And I'm interested in the article I read in this morning's paper and the Department of Justice changing their standards for reporting information. We may not be getting all the information that we need. We have to make sure that we're getting that.

And we do need unity among all vulnerable groups. Coalition building is critically important to a successful strategy to fight anti-Semitism. The United States must be a global leader on this. We know anti-Semitism is on the rise throughout the world, and the United States must be a leader. But it must first start by what we do at home. We must set an example here about how we will not tolerate anti-Semitism, and how we speak out and act out against anti-

Semitism, and then work with the international community to make sure that we have effective global strategies.

I am so pleased that we have two real experts on the subject who have devoted their lives to the issue. Deborah Lipstadt was confirmed by the United States Senate on March 30th, 2022 as the special envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism, with the rank of ambassador. As special envoy, she leads efforts to advance U.S. foreign policy to counter anti-Semitism throughout the world. Ambassador Lipstadt has a storied history as a historian, academic and author.

We're also joined by Rabbi Andrew Baker, who has been a long-time prominent figure in international efforts to combat anti-Semitism and in addressing Holocaust-era issues in Europe. In January 2009, he was appointed personal representative of the OSCE chair-in-office on combatting anti-Semitism and has been reappointed in successive administrations. And I've worked very closely with Rabbi Baker in regards to the work with the OSCE. We appreciate that. In addition, of course, he is director of International Jewish Affairs for the American Jewish Committee. A busy person.

Before I recognize Ambassador Lipstadt, let me acknowledge Senator Rosen for any comments that she might want to make.

ROSEN: Well, thank you, Senator Cardin. And I want to thank the U.S. Helsinki Commission for convening this important and timely hearing on the ways to combat rising anti-Semitism in the United States and around the world. And I want to give a special thank you to Ambassador Lipstadt and Rabbi Baker for being here with us today, and of course Aaron Keyak as well. Thank you so much.

Over the last few years, violent and often deadly antisemitic attacks have devastated communities across our nation in Pittsburgh, Poway, Colleyville, Jersey City, and Monsey, just to name a few. And in recent weeks, prominent public figures have amplified antisemitic tropes and conspiracy theories to millions – millions – of their followers. Anti-Semitism, which has been resurging across our nation, is increasingly becoming mainstreamed. This hate has a corrosive effect on our society and our democracy. We cannot be silent. We cannot normalize anti-Semitism. We cannot normalize hate.

You know, this issue is personal to me. It's one I've been working on, like many of you here, for years to address. This is why I founded, with Senator Lankford, the first – Senate's first bipartisan Task Force for Combatting Anti-Semitism, which I am proud to say has 56 senators, evenly divided by party. And of course, I want to deeply thank Senator Cardin, who has been a member since day one and for all the work he's been doing in his many years here in the United States Congress. He's been a real leader on all of these issues his whole life as well.

Last week, I co-led with my Senate-House task force co-chairs a bipartisan and bicameral letter signed by 126 members of Congress to President Biden calling for the development of a unified national strategy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism and ensure closer interagency coordination with the goal of adopting a whole of government approach. I'm proud to say, just

last night the White House heeded our call, announcing the formation of an interagency task force to combat anti-Semitism and islamophobia. And its first order of business is to develop a national strategy combat anti-Semitism.

So, moving forward, here are some of the specific actions that we can, and that we must, pursue. One, addressing the proliferation of online anti-Semitism. Two, allocating increased resources for the nonprofit security grant program to provide physical security for Jewish institutions. There, educating students about the Holocaust and anti-Semitism.

Four, improving hate crimes, data collection, and reporting which, as we saw in the FBI's 2021 hate crimes report which was released just yesterday, has significant gaps and omits hate crime data from some of the largest cities in this country, and it's very disturbing. We must have all the data. Five and finally for this beginning of our work, we need to advance a whole-of-government approach to combatting anti-Semitism through closer interagency coordination and moving closer to that unified national strategy.

So I look forward to hearing from our distinguished panel on specific steps that can be taken to combat anti-Semitism, and how we can build and improve our interagency coordination so that we can do everything we can, everywhere we can, to root out the world's oldest hatred. Thank you. Thank you, Senator Cardin.

CARDIN: Well, thank you, Senator Rosen. And I, we all, deeply appreciate your extraordinary leadership on this subject, working with Senator Lankford on the bipartisan caucus. You've taken on one challenge that I would not ever attempt, and that is leadership in your synagogues. (Laughter.) So we also give you credit for taking on that particular issue.

Ambassador Lipstadt. I should point out the House members are completing votes. We expect them to be joining us shortly.

LIPSTADT: Thank you, Senator Cardin, thank you, Senator Rosen, and Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, for convening us today. Thank you for your leadership on combatting anti-Semitism, racism, intolerance, and so many other important human rights issues, including championing them through the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The OSCE, as I'm sure we'll hear more about from my colleague and friend Rabbi Baker, has done pioneering work on combatting anti-Semitism, beginning with, as you mentioned a moment ago, Senator Cardin, the historic 2004 Berlin conference and the adoption of the 2014 Basel declaration. And that's been done greatly through the tireless efforts of Rabbi Baker and his fellow tolerance representatives. I also want to express my appreciation to the bipartisan Task Force for Combatting Anti-Semitism and both the Senate and House of Representatives for their support,

I'm a historian, and I look for trends. But it doesn't take a historian to note what you've referred to just a moment ago, Senator Cardin, in the rise in anti-Semitism worldwide. Whether we're seeing antisemitic tropes online with increasing frequency, rhetoric from government leaders and public figures implying outsized Jewish control of national, regional, even global matters. We see physical manifestations of anti-Semitism – marchers in Charlottesville chanting

"Jews will not replace us." Others carrying Nazi symbols. People painting swastikas. Violent attacks on Jews.

And while we see many of the same old tropes, the spread of anti-Semitism is changing and manifesting itself in new and different ways. In the seven months that I've been privileged to serve as special envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism, I've already visited 10 countries on four continents to convey the message that the United States government takes anti-Semitism very seriously and urges other governments to do the same. It used to be that my predecessors could go to these countries and say: You have a serious problem with anti-Semitism, and we think you have to take it seriously. I have to go and say: We have a serious problem with anti-Semitism. And we take it seriously and would like you to do the same.

Though my remit is overseas as a member of the State Department, domestic and foreign anti-Semitism are linked intimately. Over the past two months I've traveled to Belgium, the United Kingdom, France, South Africa, and Morocco. And the conversations I had there impressed upon me the importance of meaningful partnerships and coalitions. My travels abroad have also reinforced the importance of multilateral efforts, such as the OSCE, the U.N. and other international bodies. None of us can fight this fight alone. This country can't fight it alone. No body – single body can fight it alone. And the United States government and my colleagues at the State Department are committed to working with government, civil society, faith communities, and the private sector to fight this wherever it rears its ugly head.

You know the threat of global anti-Semitism well. I don't want to spend my few moments reiterating that. But I'd like to talk a little bit, and briefly, about what I've been trying to do since I came into office. First and foremost, and this might sound strange to the people on this Commission, I want to get more people to understand what anti-Semitism is. Now, we may think, how could someone not know what it is? But I think very often there is confusion as to what it is and how it manifests itself.

First of all, anti-Semitism is a prejudice, like other prejudices – racism, or any one of the many other -isms. But it's different. It has a distinctive characteristic. And that distinctive characteristic is that it is a conspiracy theory. It conceived of Jews as engaged in a major conspiracy, a powerful conspiracy, to harm other groups. It's also different because it's ubiquitous. It's free flowing. It comes from all directions – from Christians, from Muslims, from Atheists, even from Jews. It comes from everywhere on the political spectrum. And though it may present itself in different force at one time or another from where it's coming from, it's – the one thing many people on far opposite ends of the political spectrum can agree on is anti-Semitism.

Antisemites punch down, as do racists, as do other prejudiced people. They look at the person that they dislike and they say: If that person moves into our neighborhood, there goes the neighborhood. If their kids go to our school, there goes the school. But they also – the antisemite also punches out. Remember that conspiracy theory I just mentioned. They believe that Jews are out to harm them. Jews are out to get them. And they must be stopped by any means necessary. And that, in part, is what makes anti-Semitism so dangerous.

But there's another aspect to fighting anti-Semitism, and I think the people on this Commission are, and the representatives here, are well aware of it. You can't fight anti-Semitism in a silo. There is a concept of the inter – as I like to talk about it – the interconnectedness of hatred. The interconnectedness of anti-Semitism with other forms of hatred. I work closely with my colleagues in the State Department who are concerned with fighting racism and fighting for religious freedom to craft approaches to make people understand how these hatreds are connected.

I mentioned the TikTok supermarket shooting, I think where 11 people were murdered. The shooter there, the murderer there, came to the supermarket to kill as many Black people as he could. If you read his so-called manifesto, you see in it that there is intense hatred of Jews. He sees Jews as manipulating Black people, and any advancement they make is being manipulated by Jews as part, as you mentioned, Senator Cardin, of the replacement theory. I'm not saying one hate is more important than the other. What I'm saying is that they are interconnected in a way that makes it impossible to fight one without fighting the other.

One of the things I am trying to do and trying to do both with governments abroad and individuals abroad but also within our own government, is to get people to understand that anti-Semitism is not a niche issue. It's not just about helping or protecting Jews. As you entitled this hearing, it's also a danger to democracy. Jews are the canary in the coal mine. If something is – if anti-Semitism is manifesting itself, other hatreds cannot be far behind.

But there's another aspect to my work which is positive and affirming. And that may be a strange thing to say when you hold the office of monitoring and combatting anti-Semitism. But that grows out of the Abraham Accords, the renormalization, the efforts of countries in the Middle East which were once purveyors of anti-Semitism, now to rethink their attitudes towards Jews, to rethink their attitudes about anti-Semitism, to try to change the narrative.

I've been to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is not yet, to speak optimistically, part of the Abraham Accords. I met with young journalists. I met with leaders of NGOs. I met with government officials, all of whom they met me knowing that my title is, as confirmed by – I was a Senate-confirmed representative of the United States government with the job of monitoring and combatting anti-Semitism. I hadn't come to talk about climate change. I hadn't come to talk about COVID, as important as those things may be. But they sat with me to discuss this, and they discussed it seriously.

I hope in the near future to also visit Egypt, Bahrain, and Turkey. These countries have their human rights shortcomings. We can't ignore them. But my mantra is, and the mantra of my colleagues is, that we will go anywhere to talk to anyone who is serious about discussing anti-Semitism. I am an equal-opportunity fighter of anti-Semitism, as I told you during my confirmation hearings, as I've repeated many times since I came into office. I don't care where it originates. I don't care about the views of the person saying it. If they are going to express anti-Semitism, then I am going to condemn it.

There's one other aspect I think that is exceptionally important. In October I participated in a high-level ministerial meeting at the EU about religious slaughter, which affects both the

Muslim community and the Jewish community, and the attempt by certain countries to ban it. And it was a – I think it becomes part, enabling Jews, enabling to live a full life in Europe is something – it may not be motivated by anti-Semitism when you do those bans, but anything that makes it harder for Jews to live in Europe, with Europe's history, is important and part of my remit.

Finally, I am attempting to build a wide-ranging support overseas for calling out and combatting anti-Semitism. Working with special envoys in other countries in order to get them to join me, calling out anti-Semitism wherever I see it. I am blessed to have colleagues at the State Department who have reached out to my office for guidance. They have been eager to work with me. I'm doubly blessed to have a president, a vice president, a secretary of state, and a second gentleman who have enthusiastically support what I am doing, who believe in this mission.

Finally, let me close by saying when we fight anti-Semitism, we're not just fighting it because it's a danger to Jews, which it is. And that alone would make it worth fighting. But we're fighting it because any – the antisemite believes, remember the conspiracy theory that I mentioned, the antisemite believes Jews control government, Jews control media. They've lost their faith in democracy. If the antisemite sees Jews, believes even though it's fallacious, that Jews do all this, then they don't believe in democracy. Anti-Semitism is the first death knell for the fate of democracy. Thank you very much.

CARDIN: Well, thank you for your testimony, and thank you for those observations, and what you do every day.

As I said earlier, the House was having some votes. We're now joined by our House colleagues. One of the really great things about this Commission and being the chair of this Commission is the cooperation we receive. Congressman Cohen and Congressman Wilson have been incredible partners in the House, and the work of the Helsinki Commission. It's bipartisan. I thank Congressman Wilson and Senator Wicker for their help. Congressman Cohen's been a great co-leader of this commission over these last two years. And I look forward to the senators helping the House members as the chairmanship rotates to the house in the next Congress.

And, Congressman Gallego, welcome. It's nice to have you here with us. I want to recognize Rabbi Baker. And then I'll turn it over to the co-chair and ranking member for any comments that you want to make, and any questions.

Rabbi Baker.

BAKER: Thank you, Senator, for this opportunity, to members of the Helsinki Commission giving me a chance to share my views with all of you. I want to offer now a briefer summary of my written testimony.

In 1995, Gary Lauck, an American Nazi from Nebraska, was arrested in Denmark and then extradited to Germany. He was put on trial for smuggling antisemitic material into Germany. He was convicted. He spent four years in prison. At the time, Germany said he was

the single largest source for these illegal materials in the country. That was how anti-Semitism spread globally less than 30 years ago. And don't we all wish that that would be the extent of the problem today.

Today, anti-Semitism moves effortlessly around the world via the internet and social media. It infects groups and individuals who then carry out attacks on Jewish targets. Local police and national authorities must address these security concerns, but they do so with limited resources and manpower, and not always with the political will. But there is growing consensus in the OSCE region about the steps governments should take. Let me briefly outline them for you. All those with a responsibility to combat anti-Semitism must understand it.

The IHRA working definition of anti-Semitism offers clear, succinct and pragmatic examples of both traditional and new forms of anti-Semitism. It is the most widely used and authoritative definition we have. States must report and record incidents of hate crimes. ODIHR collects this information annually. In 2021, 41 countries provided some information on hate crimes, but only 35 provided statistical data. And of them, only 23 had disaggregated data identifying the bias motivation.

This information is critical, yet accurate data collection is largely still an aspirational commitment. And, sadly, the U.S. sets a very poor example. It relies on the FBI annual report, which depends on the voluntary reporting of local law enforcement agencies. And we are all aware of the very special problems with this year's data.

Jewish community security needs are real and constant. Most governments now recognize this. there should be adequate police protection and coordination with community security specialists. Physical security for Jewish community buildings is an unfortunate necessity. And it should be paid for by governments. It is unfair that Jewish communities still shoulder much of these costs.

Holocaust education has special relevance in Central and Eastern Europe, where the role of local collaborators and perpetrators may still not be acknowledged and addressed. Honoring fascist-era leaders or ignoring their anti-Semitism undermines the wellbeing of Jewish communities who are, themselves, largely the descendants of those Holocaust survivors. Once due to ignorance or for the legacy of communist propaganda, today this Holocaust distortion is employed knowingly by populist and right-wing politicians.

An effective strategy to combat anti-Semitism, as you have already indicated, requires a whole of government approach. This is why adopting a national action plan and appointing a national coordinator are so important. Persistent efforts in Europe have elevated what was once a rare best practice into now an expected strategy that all states should follow. Less appreciated, but a growing problem for European Jews, is legislation that would ban kosher slaughter or Brit Milah. Proponents may say they are acting in the name of animal welfare or children's rights, but they welcome support from anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and antisemitic parties. And their success threatens the very future of Jewish life in Europe.

To return to the online spread of anti-Semitism, and with this I will close, even as we become more aware of the disastrous real-world consequences, we are unable to stop it. We are outnumbered and out-funded by the social media giants. Content monitors are no match for algorithms designed to push grievance as the basic business model. We know that voluntary commitments and even penalties and fines are just not sufficient. And now we see what can happen when one social media giant knowingly does away with all restraints. We must find new ways to bring this under control.

Thank you.

CARDIN: Rabbi Baker, thank you very much. We've also been joined by Representative Veasey. Nice to have you with us again. A very active member. He was at our roundtable discussion two weeks ago.

I want to now recognize the co-chair, Representative Cohen, for any comments he wants to make, as well as his first round of questioning.

COHEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for holding this important hearing, to our witnesses, and all the important work they have done.

I want to ask questions. The first question is pretty broad. Can you give what you believe is the number-one cause of the rise of anti-Semitism throughout the world? As we've seen it in America we think about social media. And it's 45, I guess, and whatever. But it's also in Hungary, and it's also in other countries in Europe and around the world. Ms. Lipstadt – Ambassador Lipstadt.

LIPSTADT: Thank you. Thank you, Representative Cohen. And thank you for your work on this Commission, and so many aspects of this issue.

The number one cause? Let me say this. I think of anti-Semitism as a virus. A virus almost like a herpes virus. You know, some kinds of herpes, someone who is unlucky enough to get that virus, it's very difficult to get rid of it. Now there's some medication that may get rid of it, but for many people who have it, a moment of stress, a job interview, their wedding, something happens, and they wake up that morning and they've got an outbreak, they've got a sore. It also is something that mutes. It's a virus that mutates.

Anti-Semitism is exactly like that. If there's a stress point in society, if there is a moment of difficulty in a society – and they can be different moments. They can be economic. They can be social. They can be political. It is so easy for the antisemite, or even for the person who isn't an antisemite, to look for someone to conveniently blame. And they fall back on the Jew. Because if they were to blame, as I like to say, the bicycle riders, people would say, you're nuts. But if they say, oh, this is – this is a Jewish conspiracy, someone will say, well, you know, I've heard that before. That is familiar. So I think that's one reason.

And I'm going to modify your question and give you a second reason. There is – and Rabbi Baker just referred to it with his example at the beginning of his remarks – there's a

delivery system for this. When I first began to study Holocaust denial – first of all, people thought I was crazy. This isn't important. This is ridiculous. Now they urge me to do more in that area. (Laughs.) But if you wanted denial materials, you had to get them send to a post office box, in many countries. You couldn't – and there certainly would be no return address, because they were illegal or highly frowned upon. Now all you have to go is to go to Mrs. Google, as I like to call her, or some other search engine, and you can find it so, so easily. It makes its way around the world before as, to paraphrase Mark Twain, before truth even has a chance to put its pants on, the lie is spread.

COHEN: Thank you. Rabbi Baker, why are these most recent years different from all other years?

BAKER: As Ambassador Lipstadt said, if you think of anti-Semitism as a virus, you can look both in terms of its severity or lethality, and also its ability to spread. I think our goal always had been, well, let's at least try to keep it, if it's a virus, more like the common cold than something with very serious medical consequences. The fact is, it's both the level of severity of the virus, but also the ability in which it can spread. Clearly, and we are repeating – I am repeating myself in saying this – we know that it spreads immediately, exhaustively, through social media. And that is a real fight we're all up against. But the very nature of it really does vary, or at least its effectiveness in affecting a society will vary from region to region or country to country. And I think in addressing it, we need to recognize that as well.

So in some places, I would say, for example, in parts of Western Europe, in France, in Belgium, and the Netherlands, there is an anti-Israel animus that is fed into the anti-Semitism environment. And that adds to the dangers, frankly, that Jewish communities face, because they're often viewed as a kind of surrogate target. In other parts of Europe, for example people have noted Hungary but I could point to some other Eastern European countries as well, there is a more traditional form of anti-Semitism, going back even before the Holocaust, an inability to kind of recognize the local anti-Semitism that was such a contributing factor to the effectiveness of the Nazi genocide. And then today, a recognition that somehow one can draw on those fascist-era figures to gain populist support.

These are countries where some of those problems in Western Europe are almost nonexistent. So we need to find a different way to treat them in those places.

COHEN: I yield back.

CARDIN: Congressman Wilson.

WILSON: Thank you very much, Chairman Ben Cardin. And I'd like to make an opening statement then questions. And it is clear what I stated last week, that anti-Semitism cannot be tolerated in any situation or under any circumstances. I'm very concerned by the rise of antisemitic incidents over the past several years, both in the United States and Europe. According to the Anti-Defamation League, 2021 was the highest year on record for documented reports of harassment, vandalism, and violence directed against Jews. And ADL predicts that 2022 will see a similar number of incidents. I have condemned such attacks over the years,

including the tragic attack on the shabbat at Poway Synagogue in 2019. As I said then, evil exists as – has no place in the United States of America. I stood then and stand now with the Jewish community in the face of antisemitic attacks.

I was born with an appreciation of the Jewish community in Charleston, South Carolina, which at the time of the American Revolution had the largest Jewish population in the new world. The constitution of the province of South Carolina was the first to recognize Judaism. The first Jewish elected official in the new world was in the provincial assembly of South Carolina. And sadly, the first Jewish American patriot killed in the revolution was in Charleston, South Carolina. So the association that we have with the Jewish community is just so solid and so positive.

In 2019, I led a nine-member House colleague delegation to Jerusalem for the opening of the U.S. embassy with Ambassador David Friedman, where we had the opportunity to meet with members of the Knesset, the Israeli parliament. With President Donald Trump, it was promises made, promises kept. We shared our priority to stop terrorism, anti-Semitism in both of our countries and across the world. As ranking member of the U.S. delegation for the Helsinki Commission I appreciate the long bipartisan history of working to combat anti-Semitism.

In response to antisemitic violence in the early 2000s, members of the U.S. Helsinki Commission pushed the OSCE participating states to recognize anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish violence as a unique, region-wide phenomenon, and to create a special representative on anti-Semitism. Since then, the Helsinki Commission has held hearings and sponsored U.S. legislation, as well as resolutions adopted by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, on combatting anti-Semitism. For example, in 2018, I, myself, offered an Anti-Semitism Awareness Act. But we must do more. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today. In fact, I've already appreciated hearing from the witnesses today. And as we strengthen efforts both at home and abroad to fight anti-Semitism.

And with each of you – Ambassador Lipstadt, countering anti-Semitism is a public endeavor. Is there any credible amount of essentially important work done behind the scenes, but is the public not engaged in pushing back against anti-Semitism and hate the haters will be emboldened. How do you think we can strengthen public education about anti-Semitism and involvement in counteracting it? And do we need more in school teaching about the tragedy of the Holocaust?

LIPSTADT: Thank you. Let me say – being on a note of personal privilege. In graduate school, my first graduate school paper was on Temple Beth Elohim of Charleston, South Carolina, Rabbi Isaac Harby.

WILSON: A beautiful synagogue, hear, hear.

LIPSTADT: And it was one of the first – one of the oldest and most interesting synagogues there. So I know of what you speak.

WILSON: Hear, hear.

LIPSTADT: And I got a mark on the paper too, so. (Laughs.) What can we do? I think that there's certainly actions that the Congress has taken. And so many of you pushed for a national strategy, signed those important papers. You've been pushing for it for months. One of the things I'm going to say may sound somewhat puny, but I think we've seen int demonstrated in the past few weeks. Leaders have to speak out. Leaders, not just political leaders – certainly political leaders – religious leaders, celebrities, opinion makers, they have to speak out and say this is wrong. And they have to do that not just when it's coming from someone with whom they disagree politically, but even when it's coming – especially when it's coming – from someone with whom they agree. So I think the public profile, people speaking out and saying this is unacceptable, is extremely important.

In terms of education, I'm an educator. I've spent my whole life educating about this, teaching about it. I think it is exceptionally important. Exceptionally important to teach about the Holocaust, exceptionally important to teach about anti-Semitism, and the dangers that anti-Semitism posed to world stability, to democracy. There's no – in history, there was no country that tolerated high levels of anti-Semitism that stayed a stable country. I'll give you an example, Weimar Republic, the interwar democracy in Germany. It was a fledgling democracy. It was weak, but it was beginning to get its sea legs. But at the same time, there was this rising chorus of anti-Semitism coming from the National Socialists, from the Nazis. I'm not saying that's the only reason Weimar collapsed. There are too many other – there are other reasons. But it certainly helped corrode that – the strength of democracy.

So I think, A, speaking out and speaking out forcefully, irrespective of who is expressing this. B, supporting education about this, supporting education about the Holocaust, as an example of what anti-Semitism can lead to. Because the Holocaust didn't begin with plans for gas chambers. The Holocaust began with words. As Senator Cardin said earlier, words matter. And it began with words, and it ended up with mass murder. Again, I'm not predicting that we're moving in that direction, but the words can hurt. And we've seen the danger that they pose.

WILSON: An indication of progress, just 48 hours ago Congressman Gallego and I were in Krakow, Poland in the vicinity of Auschwitz and Birkenau. But now, what a modern country and how positive the people of Poland are, and how exciting it is that they have such a positive and bright future.

For Rabbi Baker, in the case in New Jersey last month, there was a man who was arrested for sharing a manifesto online that threatened attacks on synagogues. He claimed to be motivated by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, as well as hatred toward the Jewish people. How is hateful ideology being transmitted among extremist groups or from extremist groups to individuals? Is there a link between various types of hate toward and attacks on different groups? How can we address this?

BAKER: Thank you, Congressman, for this opportunity. It is an obvious reality today that antisemitic hatred – other forms of hatred, of course, as well – spread instantly across the globe. In particular, we've certainly seen as one source of anti-Semitism an Islamic fundamental

extremism. It has inspired terrorist activities. It effectively was the raison d'etre for the Islamic State. And it still has currency among thousands of people in Europe and here in America. I think the ideology itself is one thing, but when that is coupled with the ability of individuals to secure weapons, to identify targets, it puts Jewish communities and others at an immediate threat around the globe.

WILSON: Thank you very much for that. And I now yield back.

CARDIN: Thank you.

We've been joined by Senator Blumenthal. It's nice to have you here. Congressman Wilson, I just really want to compliment the state of South Carolina for your progressive leadership early in regards to religious freedom. Maryland was not quite as fortunate. Maryland had a provision in its constitution that prohibited Jews from holding public office, any public office.

And there was a member of the House of Delegates named Thomas Kennedy in the 1820s who had never met a Jewish person in his life. You didn't have many Jews that lived in Maryland in the 1820s. But thought it was wrong. So he introduced a bill to correct that. He lost his election, and we think that was one of the reasons he lost his election, for introducing that bill. But two years later he won reelection and reintroduced a bill in 1826 that was passed.

And shortly thereafter, Jews ran and were elected to office in Maryland. And today, the highest award you can get from the Maryland General Assembly is the Thomas Kennedy Award. And I invite you all, if you're in Hagerstown, there's a park now that is dedicated to Thomas Kennedy and religious tolerance and freedom. So it's lessons learned through history. But South Carolina led the way. So thank you for that.

Congressman Gallego.

GALLEGO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ambassador Lipstadt, for your testimony and for your distinguished career combatting anti-Semitism. I'm disgusted by the alarming rise of anti-Semitism here in the United States, and in Europe. And it seems that every day and every week there's another bomb threat at a Jewish day school, another discovery of antisemitic graffiti spraypainted on a college campus or, at its worst, a shooting at a synagogue. In fact, according to the Anti-Defamation League, 2021 had the highest number ever of documented reports of harassment, vandalism, and violence directed against the Jewish community.

So, Ambassador, where in particular should we target resources to help combat anti-Semitism? And we'll start here with the United States. And, two, are there any policies or initiatives that you believe should be codified into law?

LIPSTADT: Well, I think that something the Congress has already done, but is extremely – and is extremely laudable and necessary – is security for synagogues and for Jewish institutions. It used to be that when you went to Europe and you went looking for the synagogue

– you wanted to pray there on shabbat or whatever it might, or just visit. So many synagogues in Europe are now museums because the population was murdered. You would be told, go to this and this street. And you really don't need to know the number on the street. Just look up and down the block for the gendarmes with the machine guns, and you'll know that's the synagogue.

Sadly, that's the case today. The synagogue I go to in Atlanta, there are guards. There's a police officer. There are volunteers from the synagogue who monitor. There's a wonderful church across the street with which we have very close relations. You never see the same thing there. I was walking to the synagogue a couple of years ago with a little friend of mine who was then seven. And we were passing the police officer.

And I was about to do the stage whisper of "say thank you" to the police officer. And before I could say anything, she looked at the police officer – seven-year-old – and said: Thank you for taking care of us. And she loves the synagogue, but she knows that she has to be taken care of. So I think security for Jewish institutions is exceptionally important. And I know that it's something the Congress has devoted attention to. And I would urge that that continue.

In terms of overseas activities, one of the things that's quite promising is that quite a few countries – I don't have the exact number; my deputy, Mr. Keyak may have it – have appointed people on, compatriots or colleagues if not ambassadors or special envoys. The EU has an outstanding one and many other countries do as well, including the Organization of America States. And we all have to urge these countries, other countries that haven't yet done this, to have someone who is looking at the issue of anti-Semitism.

And I think we have to speak out and condemn. Condemn our – those countries with which we have differences, and our friends, when leaders in those countries engage in anti-Semitism. I applaud everything the Congress has done. The Congress has been extremely forthcoming on this issue, and forward thinking, both the House and the Senate. And I have been overwhelmed, and I don't overwhelm easily, by the support, both officially but unofficially, that I've received from you and your colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

So I think holding hearings such as these – and, in fact, I think we discussed this when you convened your roundtable about two weeks ago. I think holding hearings such as these, speaking out, allowing people to understand – because so many people say, what are the Jews complaining about? They have it so good. And they fall back on antisemitic tropes. They're wealthy, they're powerful, they're this – all, you know, which use antisemitic tropes and imagery. And for all members of Congress – irrespective of their own faith, irrespective of their own ethnic identity, irrespective of who votes for them and doesn't – to say this is a danger.

GALLEGO: Thank you. And, Ambassador, you said something that I think is very disturbing, that we have to now have armed guards at our synagogues. My son is actually Jewish, and I have seen that. And that's a new change. You know, when I started going out with Jewish friends around 18 – I'm from the south side of Chicago, where there are not many Jewish people. But going to college, I was lucky enough to start meeting Jewish people, and they took me to their synagogues. I don't remember going – this is 20 years ago – well, more than 20 years ago – seeing any guards at any of the synagogues or any of the events that we – that we –

or celebrations that I would go to. And it's a very sad statement that that is a very common thing now that happens.

LIPSTADT: Yeah. Not only is it that, but the synagogue, as with any church, as with any other religious institution, a mosque, should be a welcoming place. When I'm in synagogue and I see someone who looks a little strange – maybe I don't recognize them, maybe they – our antenna go up. My colleague here tells the story of – and I'll say it in your name – of sitting in synagogue with his young daughter and making sure he can see the sight line of the exist. That's not how – what a house of worship should be all about.

GALLEGO: Right. And to put a finer point of that, as someone who has PTSD, that's what I do. And that's – you know, no one should have to do that because they're practicing their religion or who they are. So a sad statement about what's happening in this country.

Rabbi Baker, thank you for being here today, and thank you more for the decade of service in this role of combatting discrimination and particularly anti-Semitism. I'm especially concerned by Holocaust denial, the blaming of minority groups, and the conspiracy theories that have also spread to the political arena, including today. As you meet with Jewish communities across the world, could you compare how you see anti-Semitism in the United States and in Europe? Especially regarding Holocaust denial.

BAKER: Thank you, Congressman.

You know, the OSCE became a kind of venue to deal with the problem of anti-Semitism in large measure because of efforts by, and Senator Cardin I look at you, but members of Congress here pushing the OSCE to take this issue up. Twenty years ago, there was a sense that anti-Semitism really wasn't there, there were no way to collect data, to identify hate crimes. Jewish communities were experiencing things that, frankly, their non-Jewish neighbors didn't recognize, and certainly their governments didn't either. And it was really only after pushing that we had a first conference, a second conference, again, a declaration in Berlin, and instituted within the OSCE long-term efforts to address the problem.

And notably, I would say there was the immediate and the longer-term approach in the first instance, and as you've already indicated, the challenge of security. Again, it was something much more evident years earlier than in this country in Europe, but governments themselves were not necessarily stepping forward. You had, for example, in Sweden, the community spending a quarter of its full budget just on its own security.

Additionally, and there have been questions to this, is the need for education. And within that, at that Berlin conference and its declaration, it spoke of the importance of Holocaust education. But we also recognize Holocaust education needs to be broader than just talking about the 12 years of Nazi rule and the genocide it brought to Europe, but also understanding who Jews are, who they were before the Holocaust arose and, frankly, who they are today.

It's a challenge, obviously, to do so in places where there are few, or perhaps even no Jews. That's the case in numbers of states and areas in this country, but it's dramatically so in

much of Europe, where two-thirds of that community had been wiped out during the Holocaust. So it becomes particularly pernicious that you have, even as there are still living survivors among us, those who would deny the Holocaust.

I think what has become more insidious is those who don't deny is outright, but who will distort its history and its memory. This is something we are seeing growing in parts of Europe, where fascist-era figures are, frankly, being honored and where the role of their activity in the Holocaust is being dismissed or denied. I think in all of this there's been a strong effort here in the U.S. to push governments to look at these things, to do them clearly and critically.

And then, finally, you have two things that emerged, among others, in the OSCE, at ODIHR. A long-term program, Words into Action, to address anti-Semitism. It provides guidance to governments on how to deal with these security questions, but it also has put out guides for educators in using education, and using it more broadly, to teach about Jews, and Judaism, the nature of anti-Semitism, its origins, and its present-day reality. Within that, of course, the issue of Holocaust history plays a role, but not the only role.

GALLEGO: Well, thank you, Rabbi. And I do think it's – you know, we forget here in the United States, especially once you get to, you know, in higher ed, that the majority of America does not understand the Jewish community, the Jewish faith. Many of them will not meet someone that is Jewish for quite a while. Growing up in the south side of Chicago, we had two religions: Irish Catholic and Mexican Catholic.

And so I remember hearing Holocaust denialism happening, even in my high school. And it wasn't until way later, when high school started introduction actual curriculum to actually teach about the Holocaust, that I realized what a deep trouble some of these areas are, because they will never encounter this information unless someone actually comes and talks to them, because many times they will not go seeking, except those who want to seek extremism. So this is very important work.

And I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

BAKER: Could I just point out, I served as a congregational Rabbi in Hyde Park. I know many people don't think of it as the south side of Chicago, but it was close.

GALLEGO: Yeah, I was that little – about five miles west of that, Canaryville area. Yeah, thank you.

CARDIN: Well, I grew up in a neighborhood where there were three religions: Orthodox Jews, Conservative Jews, and Reformed Jews. (Laughter.)

GALLEGO: Diversity! (Laughs.)

CARDIN: And let me just point out that this hearing came out as a suggestion of the roundtable discussion. That's why we moved forward with this. And in regards to the security issues, that's why we are strongly supportive of the nonprofit security grants, that this year's

budgets will be an increase over last year, and we're also requesting additional funds for the nonprofit security grants. I can tell you, in Maryland 60 institutions have received help in regards to protecting their security because – it's not just the Jewish institutions. It's also Muslim institutions, et cetera, that are receiving those funds. But I can also tell you, the budgets of our synagogues, a large percentage is now devoted to security issues. So it is a – it is a continuing burden for Jewish institutions here in the United States. And it's also a burden for our local law enforcement, because they do help us dramatically in protecting our Jewish institutions.

Congressman Veasey.

VEASEY: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. I had a question for Ambassador Lipstadt. We know that century-old antisemitic tropes are being increasingly mainstreamed and normalized due, in part, to social media and the amplification of problematic individuals. And according to the ADL, there was a 61 percent increase in antisemitic tweets referencing Jews or Judaism since they have – since Elon Musk has taken over the company, to be quite frank. And we know that platforms, such as Meta and others, will allow certain – a certain amount of this sort of speech on their platforms. I wanted to ask you, what steps should we be taking in response to the rapid acceleration of anti-Semitism and extremism online?

Particularly, what response do you think the government or Congress should give? And what role do you think that corporations should give? And I do understand that we have a Constitution that does protect unpopular speech. Of course, platforms like Twitter, you know, there are certain things that they don't allow on their platform that would certainly be protected forms of unpopular speech. Obviously, pornography would be the most obvious out of those legal but protected forms of speech that they don't allow on the platform. So what role do you think they should be playing? And what role do you think that the government should be playing?

LIPSTADT: Thank you for that very important question, because as both Rabbi Baker and I have referred to, one of the things – or, made mention of – one of the things that's changed is there's now a delivery system for this hatred, not just of anti-Semitism but it gets out faster. Now, of course, as you note, we have the pesky thing called the First Amendment, which we all treasure. And the United States will always uphold freedom – protections of speech of our Constitution. But, having said that, we also have to condemn hate speech. Maybe we can't – we cannot legislate it out of existence, but we can certainly condemn it. Freedom of expression doesn't mean we have to sit idly by. We have to respond and respond forcefully.

Tech platforms – you know, I'm not sure – I recently heard someone say this, and I think it's worth repeating. I'm not sure we have an internet or social media problem; we have anti-Semitism problem. I like to talk about or compare social media to a knife. A knife in the hands of a murderous person can take a life. A knife in the hands of a surgeon can save a life. It depends what you do with it. And I think that we should be urging, encouraging, supporting social media platforms to live up to the standards they themselves have professed that they – that they have, that they say they abide by, to recognize that they have to act and the dangers.

This is a ticking time bomb. Somebody is going to – people have already been hurt, but somebody is going to be hurt by it. I think we can expand voluntary collaboration/partnerships with technology companies, impress upon them the importance of what it is they could do to stop this hatred, and ultimately to live up to their standards – their own professed standards that they – that they say they abide by.

And on a note, again reiterating what Rabbi Baker spoke about, adopting something like the IHRA – the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance – definition, which will give them guidelines – it's a working definition – guidelines for how to interpret what is anti-Semitic and what is not. We work – we all have to work together – government, civil society, the technology platforms – to stop this because it is a danger. And again, as I said earlier, it's not an internet problem; it's an anti-Semitism problem.

VEASEY: Rabbi Baker, you mentioned something in your comments about hate crimes in particular. I believe that was – that was you talking about the hate crimes, if I'm not mistaken. I want to take you back to a problem that we had in Texas back after 2001. You probably remember the murder of James Byrd, who was a man that was drug to death in East Texas. And after that tragic murder occurred, they passed a law in Texas called the James Byrd Hate Crime bill. After the passage of the James Byrd Hate Crime bill, maybe about three or four years after that when I was elected to the state House and somewhere around 2007 or so, I filed legislation to do a study on why prosecutors were not using the James Byrd Hate Crime bill.

And what I found out was prosecuting someone with a hate crime was actually controversial and the people – and so DAs didn't want to use it. They actually thought that they were – they were going to lose their primaries if they were to prosecute someone for hate crimes. And one of the things that you would hear often from people that were even against this study to see why it wasn't being used that I had filed was, well, assault is assault; why should it matter if it's anti-Semitic? Why should it matter if it's anti-Black? An assault is an assault.

How important is it – because you talked about the numbers in your presentation earlier. How important is it for us to know who – whom are being targeted in hate crimes based on religion, based on race, based on sexual orientation or sex? How important is it – is it to know these things and to be able to differentiate them and not just throw your hands up in the air and say, an assault is an assault, it doesn't matter if it's – if it – if the person happens to be Jewish or not, it shouldn't matter? How do we get around that? And how important is it that we get around that?

BAKER: Well, it's critically important and it's been a challenge. I can recall literally 20 years ago here in Washington meeting at the time with Javier Solana, essentially the foreign minister of Europe. And were seeing a dramatic resurgence of anti-Semitism in a number of European countries, and he said to me, I don't see it. He wasn't denying it, but he was effectively reporting that no one in these countries understood hate crimes. No one was recording them as hate crimes. And in a way, that meant they didn't happen.

A lot has changed, but notably it is first and foremost recognizing that a crime with a bias motivation is not the same as the crime by itself because it not only attacks an individual, but by

extension it affects an entire community that are part of the victim of that hate crime. And so we've had, and certainly within the OSCE region, over all these years I think a successful but still uphill effort to convince governments to recognize hate crimes need to be viewed as something particularly onerous and damaging, and addressed accordingly.

One of the things that has, I think, helped in this – and maybe it goes exactly to the point you're making in Texas – it has meant not only educating police, who are the first ones on the scene, to know what a – what a hate crime is and to be able to collect the information that might not automatically come without guidance, but we've seen in various countries in Europe it has to go further. It has to mean also training prosecutors and judges to understand the significance and the importance of pursuing a hate crime through prosecution and through conviction. I think, as you said, the crime may be a crime, the perpetrator may be punished, but it does not send the proper message if the hate-crime bias is not brought first and foremost into that trial and into that conviction.

VEASEY: Thank you very much.

I yield back.

CARDIN: Rabbi Baker, just to underscore that point, you pointed out that it was the U.S. Helsinki delegation – the Commission – that really brought the issue of anti-Semitism to the OSCE. We did it through the Parliamentary Assembly and we did it through the ministerial meetings. We were the ones that promoted the region taking up a strategy to deal with anti-Semitism.

And I remember very vividly we did not have a lot of support from the European countries, our traditional allies. The country that helped us the most was Germany; that was, really understood the need to make sure that hate crimes have no place in their country. And they were our principal ally in getting this agenda moving within the OSCE.

Now, today it's different. I do acknowledge we have lots of allies in Europe that are working with us on this. But we still have countries in Europe that have significant problems that are not acknowledging those problems.

Senator Blumenthal.

BLUMENTHAL: Thank you, Senator Cardin. And thank you for holding this hearing. And thank you for your very significant and important advocacy on this topic.

And to each of the witnesses who are with us today, thank you for your great work.

You know, as I was listening, Rabbi Baker, I was very much involved in the NO HATE Act, which was passed. The impetus for it, of course, was the attacks on Asian Americans. I had worked on the Heyer-Jabara measure for a year. None of these incidents involved anti-Semitism, but obviously the hate-crimes legislation pertains to anti-Semitic assaults and other violence.

And I would invite you and others to look at the law that we have right now and suggest additional improvements either to deter or to educate.

One of the innovations that we included in hate-crimes legislation was to give judges the option in sentencing to require that the convicted defendant, the perpetrator, perform acts of community service that put him or her in direct – in direct contact with the community who was the victim of the hate crime. And I took this idea from an incident in Connecticut where a mosque was attacked by someone who actually fired a weapon at the mosque – didn't injure anyone, but very traumatic and frightening. He was convicted and the judge sentenced him to do community service with the congregation of the mosque. And it was really moving to talk to both the defendant and the mosque congregants about what that experience was like and the mutual education that occurred.

And so, you know, that's the kind of innovative approach that I would just suggest that you, who have so much knowledge on these topics, might suggest to us in improving hate-crimes legislation, which goes along, Ambassador, with the point you were making about your contacts in Saudi Arabia, the Abraham Accords, and about your working with Arab leaders there to reduce the sense of the other related to their views of – their – Jews in general and specifically the ones that they deal with on a day-to-day basis in the course of diplomacy. So I would invite you to make those kinds of suggestions.

And I would just like to ask – I think I'm maybe one of the last of the questioners here – you know, in the course of our history we've had some ups and downs in terms of the way the State Department has dealt with these issues. And you know, not so long ago – namely, at the beginning of World War II and during World War II and afterward – the State Department was thought by many to be in some parts continuing to harbor some anti-Semitic views. And I wonder if both of you perhaps could reflect on the State Department.

Now, I suspect that those days are behind us, in the rearview mirror, and that we need not have any fears about it. But I continue to encounter some members of the community who still have that lingering sense that maybe there's some anti-Semitic residue in the Department of State.

LIPSTADT: Not only – you qualified some people thought of the State Department during World War II as anti-Semitic. I would drop the qualifications and just say during World War II the State Department showed absolute anti-Semitism in barring the way for Jewish refugees who could have legally entered this country under the quota system and not allowed them in.

Earlier this year, I was privileged to appear – it was filmed, of course, before I took office – in the Ken Burns documentary on America and the Holocaust. And I just said to someone: The State Department is one of the principal actors in that documentary, but it's not a protagonist. It's a place that failed mightily.

And I stress that because the place where I have the privilege to go to work every day is a very different place. We have a secretary who, on the day he was nominated by then-President-

elect Biden, talked about the fact that he was the stepchild of a Holocaust survivor who remembered seeing a tank roll through the forest where he was hiding with a five-point white star on the side and the driver of the tank, an American GI, saying to him: You're free.

I work in a place where, again, the secretary has said to me and said about me when talking about this position: We don't have positions such as that occupied by Ambassador Lipstadt - by Deborah Lipstadt - because we have it right. We know we make mistakes, but we are intent on taking it seriously here and asking others to take it seriously as well.

I think I'm privileged as the child of two immigrants to work in a place that takes this issue very seriously. And in the seven months that I've been there, I see people who – not that they were – God forbid I'm not saying they were anti-Semitic at all, but they, eh, you know, it's – begin to – have begun to understand how critical this issue is not just for the protection of Jews – that alone, as I said before, would make it worthwhile – but because this is the canary in the coalmine.

So I'm very proudly – one of the first things I did when I got my job was go down and buy a T-shirt and a hat that said State Department on it. And I'm very careful where I wear it. Anybody who thinks – might think differently, that's what I show up wearing, so.

BLUMENTHAL: Rabbi Baker?

BAKER: You know, over the last, really, decades, issues that I've worked on in the OSCE and the American Jewish Committee have relied really significantly on the support of U.S. diplomats, the State Department generally. I think how even at the beginning of the NATO enlargement effort this was an opportunity to push countries wanting to join NATO to confront their Holocaust-era past – issues of a legacy of anti-Semitism; issues of property restitution; correct, objective, critical Holocaust education. We had entre to these governments and to these political leaders largely because the U.S. government – U.S. diplomats – pushed us forward, effectively were our partners in these efforts. And it's, frankly, continued literally to these days. I mean, only in these last weeks the prime minister of Lithuania said she wants to address unfinished issues regarding Holocaust restitution, some kind of monetary payment in recognition of heirless Jewish property.

We're bolstered in this by U.S. diplomats, literally right alongside. And certainly in the fight to confront anti-Semitism, as Senator Cardin pointed out, it was the U.S. and notably it was the State Department sitting at the table at the OSCE in Vienna that has really advanced almost all the tangible efforts that have succeeded, beginning with those first conferences in Vienna and Berlin, the creation of a department on tolerance and non-discrimination in ODIHR that has taken up and promoted Holocaust education, the collection of hate-crime data, full programs on education as well.

So my experience has been almost uniformly positive. And I have to say it's U.S. diplomats and the State Department that have played the essential role in bringing these things to reality.

BLUMENTHAL: I thank you for those kinds of statements because I think that they're important for all of us to understand and confirm and for members of all communities to understand. Thank you.

CARDIN: Senator Blumenthal, I appreciate your bringing that up and I thank you for your leadership particularly in regards to hate crimes, your work on the Judiciary Committee. And we appreciate it very much.

History will reflect exactly what Ambassador Lipstadt said about the United States State Department during World War II. Today, the State Department is professional and carries out the values of America. We, the legislative branch of government, have made sure that there's a focus on values in our missions in countries, because in our individual missions in countries there's a lot on the plate and the bilateral relationships sometimes will take on issues that could cause us not to pay as much attention as we want to on human rights, democracy, and other similar types of values.

So Congress has passed laws to put a focus on the State Department, including elevating your position, Ambassador Lipstadt. That was an action by Congress to make sure that we've institutionalized within the bureaucracy of the State Department a focus to combat anti-Semitism. And we're very proud of the role that you play in that regard. We have the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor that puts a focus on those values. We have the trafficking in persons representative. These are all areas in which we have, as a – as a legislative branch, the policy arm of government, have helped the State Department to focus on these important issues – our State Department, made up of professional diplomats. And we're very proud of the service that they perform, and we think we've helped them by providing this focus so that they can carry out these missions, which is in the best interest of our country, under the direction of the mandates from Congress. So we thank you all for that regard.

Anything further?

WILSON: I want to say one thing. Senator Blumenthal was correct; times have changed. The first time I came to Washington, I came on a bus as a teenage Republican July the 3rd, 1963, for the National Draft Goldwater Rally. And at the National – at the National Guard Armory here, it was being picketed by George Lincoln Rockwell and his crowd. And the first thing that occurred to me is that if they're against Barry Goldwater, he must be good. So I was very happy to be a participant. But how sad that something like that could occur, and it was a reflection on the Jewish heritage of Barry Goldwater.

But I – again, it's so exciting to see that times can change. And as a little guy, I was just very shocked to see what I saw. But again, it convinced me I was doing the right thing. Thank you.

CARDIN: If there's nothing further, I want to thank both of our witnesses for not only being here, but for your service to our country and in Rabbi Baker's case to the global community in the OSCE.

We are putting the focus on this. We're going to continue to monitor this. We talked about developing that unified national strategy. We're pleased that the president's moving forward with that with the announcement he made yesterday. We will be working very closely with the administration to deal with every one of the elements that we've talked about today.

I'll just make one closing comment in regards to the internet. I agree with Ambassador Lipstadt. It is an incredibly valuable part of our – of our fabric and can be used for good, and we know it can be used for bad. I admire your desire for the private sector to do what's right. We hope that's the case. But I do think there's a role for government consistent with our First Amendment for us establishing parameters, because if you espouse hate, if you espouse violence, you're not protected under the First Amendment. So I think we can be more aggressive in the way that we handle that type of use of the internet. We know that Europe has done things and I think we have to learn from each other. So I hope we can figure out the strategy, that we need everybody united on it, and we know the two of you are going to be key players in carrying out that strategy.

So thank you very much for your service. And with that, the Helsinki Commission will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:49 p.m., the hearing ended.]