

**Testimony of Hannah Rosenthal
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At a hearing entitled
“Combating Anti-Semitism: Protecting Human Rights”
Before the
House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on
International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight
April 14, 2010**

Chairman Carnahan, Ranking Member Rohrabacher, and Members of the Subcommittee, this is my first appearance before you, and I thank you for the invitation to testify. It is a deep honor for me to appear before this committee because it has long demonstrated great leadership in combating anti-Semitism. I am well aware that the role of the Special Envoy and my office was created by the Global Anti-Semitism Review Act of 2004, which came out of this committee. I recognize the special role this committee has played over the years in drawing attention to the problem of anti-Semitism. Your attention to this important human rights issue is welcome and appreciated. Regrettably, it is also needed.

I am also pleased to be here today with Kenneth Jacobson of the Anti-Defamation League, Rabbi Baker of the American Jewish Committee, Elisa Massimino of Human Rights First, and Rabbi Abraham Cooper from the Simon Wiesenthal Center. I want to thank them, and also commend them, for their significant contributions to this cause. They provide my office with up-to-date information, and thoughtful recommendations. Their work is absolutely critical to the cause of fighting anti-Semitism and I look forward to working even more closely with them in the days ahead.

Last Sunday, April 11, was International Holocaust Remembrance Day, where millions across the world honored the memories of the victims of the largest genocide in world history. The Holocaust was an attempt to obliterate an entire culture. We cannot bring back the dead from the gas chambers, extermination camps, and mass graves, but what we can do is recommit ourselves to remember them, and to educate future generations, collectively and repeatedly saying “never again.” In so doing, our task is not only the use of ringing words to show the world that we remember and we care. We also give those words meaning through our actions. In the words of Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, we must “create sparks in our hearts out of the ashes.”

As a child of a Holocaust survivor, fighting anti-Semitism is something very personal to me. When I was old enough to somewhat understand what my father endured as the only member of his family to survive and to escape Buchenwald, I asked him how he kept going through the Holocaust. He responded, “I survived to have you, Hannele!” In those words, he took that mantle off his shoulders and put it squarely on mine, and I have dedicated my life to eradicating anti-Semitism and intolerance with a sense of urgency and passion that only my father could give me.

This path led me on January 27th this year to walk -- voluntarily -- through the gates of Auschwitz – under the infamous ‘Arbeit Macht Frei’ sign. I went to Auschwitz as a member of the official U.S. delegation to mark the 65th anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz. In his remarks for the commemoration, President Obama eloquently reminded us all that the survivors of Auschwitz “are living memorials. Living memorials to the spirit we must strive to uphold in our time—not simply to bear witness, but to bear a burden. The burden of seeing our common humanity; of resisting anti-Semitism and ignorance in all its forms; of refusing to become bystanders to evil, whenever and wherever it rears its ugly face.”

The problem of anti-Semitism occurs on every continent. Each year the Department of State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, of which I am a part, prepares the Congressionally-mandated *International Religious Freedom Report* and the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*.

These reports include information on anti-Semitism gathered through our embassies and consulates, as well as information from a range of other sources such as non-governmental organizations with deep knowledge of these issues. This year, both reports revealed an increasing trend in incidents of anti-Semitism, with incidents cited in 74 countries.

The Pew Global Attitudes Project released survey results in 2009 on unfavorable views of Jews and Muslims. The survey found that negative opinions about Jews are on the rise in many countries. In Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon, more than 95 percent of people hold a negative opinion of Jews, according to the Pew survey. In Spain, 46 percent of people surveyed held negative opinions about Jews in 2008, up from 20 percent in 2004. Some European countries are taking steps to address this concern. For example, the French government recently appointed a special coordinator to deal with anti-Semitism in response to an increase in anti-Semitic incidents.

The outrageous statements by Iranian President Ahmadinejad that the Holocaust never occurred and that Israel should be wiped off of the world map are more than anti-Israel rhetoric. It is not land that would be driven into the sea, but Jewish people. The United States strongly condemns this call for the destruction of the State of Israel, and finds reprehensible this explicit incitement to commit the most extreme violence. The world community has been uncomfortably quiet on this issue, with a few notable exceptions like Chancellor Merkel of Germany.

In recent months Europe has also seen some disturbing acts of anti-Semitism. In Poland, in the early morning hours, thieves stole the ‘Arbeit Macht Frei’ sign from above the entrance of the Auschwitz death camp site. The sign was found a few days later, cut into three pieces. On March 18, the Regional Court in Krakow convicted three Polish nationals who pled guilty to the charges and sentenced them to terms ranging from 18 to 30 months, and two more Polish nationals also face charges in the incident. The alleged ringleader, Swedish neo-Nazi Anders Hogstrom, reportedly intended to sell the sign to raise funds for neo-Nazi political activities. Hogstrom was arrested in Stockholm, and decided not to appeal a Swedish court ruling that he should be extradited to Poland.

In Greece, two recent arson attacks struck the historic Etz-Hayyim Synagogue, the last Jewish monument on the island of Crete. The first attack on January 5 caused damage to the exterior of the synagogue, and the second attack on January 16 destroyed nearly 2,000 books and severely damaged the wooden roof, floor, and offices. Greek officials widely condemned the attacks, and our embassy continues to engage with the Greek government and religious leaders to encourage greater understanding and to combat hatred. The Greek Prime Minister issued an open letter to the Jewish community, stating “The government, myself, and also the Greek people condemn in the strongest way the attacks and we are taking action to bring the perpetrators to justice... Anti-Semitism and racism do not have any place in Greek society.”

Anti-Israel statements are increasingly the vehicle for anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism is often couched in demonstrations, cartoons, and speech against the state of Israel. In countries with a high incidence of anti-Semitism, there are few public attempts to distinguish between anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli sentiment. The legitimate role of public expression criticizing government policy can quickly cross into hateful racial slurs and denunciations of the Jewish people themselves. This is unacceptable. For example, when anti-Israel protestors gather outside a synagogue, a sacred place of worship for the Jewish faith, and then proceed to march to an Israeli Embassy, there is a dangerous blurring of lines between legitimate political expression and opposition to people simply because of their religion.

Criticism of Israel is not necessarily anti-Semitic. Criticism of Israel crosses the line to anti-Semitism when, for example, that criticism applies double standards, comparing a current policy of Israel to that of the Nazis, or holds all Jews collectively responsible for actions of the State of Israel, or denies that Israel has a right to exist. Natan Sharansky identified the “three D’s” that cross the line: “It is anti-Semitic when Israel is *demonized*, held to *different standards* and *delegitimized*.”

The goal of fighting anti-Semitism is a high priority for the Obama Administration, and to that end my office has the most visible role. To elevate and better integrate the Special Envoy's mission into the overall mission of the Department of State, I work closely with the Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Michael Posner to shape policies and messages in a way that reflects our commitment to combating anti-Semitism and promoting tolerance, as a critical component in the overall goal of promoting human rights.

Let me briefly describe the range of efforts my office and the Obama Administration as a whole is making to fight against anti-Semitism worldwide.

Monitoring - We vigilantly monitor anti-Semitic acts and discourse. I work with all regional bureaus within the Department of State, with the Bureau that manages our efforts at the UN and other international organizations, and with our diplomatic missions abroad to ensure timely and accurate reporting. I am forging partnerships with key offices across the U.S. government, including the National Security Staff at the White House. And I am building on the powerful partnerships we have with many scholars and non-governmental organizations that are active on this critical issue. As Secretary Clinton said in December in her Georgetown University speech on the Department of State's human rights agenda, "to be successful, we need to work bottom up." We seek to forge strong partnerships with academia and NGOs to help us document abuses and we welcome your insights and ideas on how most effectively to work to address such abuses.

Diplomacy – We will continue to raise concerns about anti-Semitism in the context of our bilateral relationships with other countries. We encourage other governments to take steps against anti-Semitic manifestations within their own societies. We encourage outreach by governments to members of Jewish communities. We also encourage governments to partner with us in international institutions such as the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to those same ends. Governments can be part of the problem or part of the solution. We are ready to work with governments that want to be part of the solution, and call out those that allow anti-Semitism to flourish either through their actions or through their silence.

Through bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, and through our assistance programs, we are working with other responsible governments to reverse disturbing anti-Semitic trends. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has made it clear that, "The United States has...led the fight in international institutions against anti-Semitism...." The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, with its path-breaking Berlin Declaration of 2004, has been a global pioneer in combating anti-Semitism, and is a major focus of our multilateral efforts. We play a leading role at the annual OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, which addresses anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance, as well as at special meetings of the OSCE devoted to the subject. And we strongly support the work of the OSCE Special Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism Rabbi Andrew Baker, from whom you will have the privilege to hear in the next panel. This year, Kazakhstan has assumed the OSCE Chair and will host a high-level conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination in June in Astana, in which I and the U.S. delegation will participate actively.

At the UN, anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiment often overlap. United Nations' bodies long have shown a bias toward condemning Israel at a rate much higher than any other country. We continue to press for Israel to be treated fairly at the UN and in other international organizations.

Last year, the United States joined the UN's Human Rights Council, the UN's intergovernmental body responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe. We are assertively exercising our presence on the Council to press it to live up to its mandate. This mandate includes addressing human rights violations and making recommendations to strengthen adherence to human

rights norms. This encompasses holding Israel to the same standards applied to other countries and combating anti-Semitism.

Advancing Civil Discourse. We promote public discussion on the nature of new forms of anti-Semitism – how to recognize it and ways to combat it, working with NGOs and civil society groups to foster thoughtful and problem-solving discussions. We do not just confront intolerance, we actively promote tolerance. We seek to educate opinion leaders and policy makers about increasing levels of anti-Semitism and how it is insidiously entering mainstream media and public settings globally. This includes the reemergence of anti-Semitism in western media, as well as in Arabic and Farsi-language regional media.

Interfaith Initiatives. Interfaith engagement, coupled with community relations and civil society outreach, reinforce religious tolerance, which is crucial to our success. As with any form of prejudice, anti-Semitism is based in ignorance and fear. It is easy to criticize and even demonize people you've never met. Building relationships among different ethnic and religious communities is central to tearing down walls of hostility. With increased dialogue, there is less room for stereotypes to spread. We are actively engaging faith leaders around the world, which is critical to fostering respect and understanding between communities and countries. This reinforces the importance of pluralism and the protection of the rights of all religious minorities. Next week, I will travel to Lithuania, Ukraine, and Tunisia to advance these efforts.

One recent example is the Interfaith Cooperation event co-sponsored by the United States and Indonesia, a direct response to President Obama's challenge in his Cairo speech to turn interfaith dialogue into interfaith service. The U.S. delegation included leaders of eight faith communities. Two prominent leaders in the American Jewish community served on the delegation: Rabbi Brad Hirschfield of the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership and Rabbi Gerald Serotta of Clergy Beyond Borders.

We will take advantage of all opportunities to increase understanding and combat anti-Semitism. King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia has led a series of international interfaith summits that included the participation of Jewish leaders. The King Faisal International Prize for Medicine in 2009 was awarded to Stanford University cancer expert Dr. Ronald Levy, reportedly the first American Jewish scholar to win such a prize in Saudi Arabia. Though modest, this presents an opportunity to reach out to the symbolic core for Muslims around the world, where anti-Semitism remains a significant problem.

The Obama Administration is strongly committed to partnering with Congress, the NGO community, religious groups, academia, foreign governments, and within international institutions to combat anti-Semitism in all its manifestations across the globe. My office, and colleagues at the Department of State, will continue to fight anti-Semitism on all fronts. To be effective, we must employ the whole range of tools—from reporting to international diplomacy, law enforcement, education, multicultural relationships, and public engagement. In so doing, we must work hard to promote three things: Acceptance, Respect, and Tolerance.

Although the Jewish story is a unique one and anti-Semitism has unique aspects – and is a story that must be told – hate is hate and intolerance is intolerance. Jews cannot eradicate anti-Semitism alone. We condemn intolerance against any and all religious and ethnic groups. We strive to eradicate anti-Semitism along with intolerance of other groups. It is in everyone's interest to work together to promote tolerance of people of all backgrounds. Together we must combat anti-Semitism and promote tolerance so that in the 21st century this age-old scourge finally is relegated to the past. I look forward to working with you all.

Mr. Chairman, I am happy to answer your questions.