



United States Mission to the OSCE

The 10th Anniversary of the Berlin Conference on Anti-Semitism and the 76th Anniversary of Kristallnacht

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kate Byrnes
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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November 9 marked the 76th anniversary of Kristallnacht – the Night of Broken Glass – when 267 synagogues and 7,500 businesses owned by Jews, as well as Jewish homes, schools, and hospitals, were destroyed or damaged by Nazis in Germany and Austria. Over 90 people were killed over the course of the night. Here in Vienna, 91 synagogues were destroyed.

The voices speaking out against the events of Kristallnacht were few in 1938. Although President Roosevelt recalled his ambassador to Germany and harshly denounced the rising tide of anti-Semitism and violence in Germany in the days following Kristallnacht, very few governments condemned the violence, and very few religious leaders protested the cruelty perpetrated against Jews. As we remember Kristallnacht, let us remember our moral responsibility, both as government officials and as individuals, to speak out against all forms of hatred and intolerance.

Today, high-level participants from throughout the OSCE region are gathered in Berlin to mark the tenth anniversary of the 2004 Berlin Conference on Anti-Semitism. This commemoration comes at a critical time: anti-Semitism is increasing in the world and throughout the OSCE region. This year, the Anti-Defamation League released a groundbreaking survey that reached over 53,000 participants in 102 countries. Their responses showed that more than a quarter of the people surveyed harbor anti-Semitic attitudes. Furthermore, a report by the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency noted that almost half of the members of Jewish communities surveyed worried about becoming the victim of an anti-Semitic verbal insult or harassment in the subsequent 12 months, and one third feared a physical attack in the same period.

As our colleagues meet today in Berlin to consider the challenges presented by anti-Semitism, it is worth recalling that the OSCE has a rich body of commitments to combat anti-Semitism, and intolerance and discrimination more broadly. We welcome efforts already taken by participating States to implement these common commitments. We urge those participating States that have not already done so to enact appropriate legislation to combat hate crimes, collect data on the commission of these crimes, provide appropriate training to law enforcement and assistance to victimized communities, engage civil society to promote tolerance, and promote inclusion of minority groups. We encourage participating States to make use of ODIHR's resources and expertise and the CiO's Three Personal Representatives to Combat Intolerance.

As the OSCE reviews today's Berlin anti-Semitism conference, we encourage the incoming Serbian Chairmanship to consult closely with the Tolerance Representatives and ODIHR, and to support their important work. No participating State is immune from intolerance, and we must work together to prevent discrimination and hatred from gaining currency in our societies.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.