



United States Mission to the OSCE

We Must Never Forget – Holocaust Remembrance Day

As delivered by Ambassador Daniel B. Baer
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
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The United States welcomes to the Permanent Council State Secretary Takacs and Dr. Klein, and thanks them for their presentations. We also thank the German Chairmanship for dedicating this Permanent Council meeting to International Holocaust Remembrance Day, which on January 27 will mark the 71st anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau.

To observe International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we solemnly recall and reflect on the horrors of the Holocaust and honor the six million Jews and millions of Slavs, Roma, LGBT persons, and persons with disabilities who were murdered by the Nazis. This is a time to reaffirm our commitments and responsibilities to ourselves and future generations. It is incumbent upon us, the participating States of the OSCE, to make real the words, “Never forget. Never again.”

As we contemplate the gravity of this anniversary, it is important to reflect upon the commitments we have made to combat anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance and discrimination. In our 2004 Sofia Ministerial Declaration on the Sixtieth Anniversary of the End of World War II, participating States said, “We have learned from history the danger of intolerance, discrimination, extremism and hatred on ethnic, racial and religious grounds. We are committed to combat these threats, including through the OSCE, and we reject any attempts to justify them.... We strongly condemn any denial of the Holocaust.” More recently, in the 2014 Basel Ministerial Declaration, we expressed concern over the “disconcerting number of anti-Semitic incidents that continue to take place in the OSCE area and remain a challenge to stability and security.” We rejected and condemned “manifestations of anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination against Jews.” Implementing each of these commitments would be a fitting way to honor the victims and the survivors of the Holocaust.

We are grateful that Holocaust survivors, despite the trauma they carry with them, continue to educate us by sharing their experiences, their strength, their wisdom, and their generosity of spirit to advance respect for human rights and to fuel our resolve to combat hatred in all its ugly forms. We must always reflect on the actions, and inaction of those who came before us. It is our duty to confront discrimination; to unite against anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry; to insist on the rule of law and the prosecution of hate crimes; and to reaffirm our fundamental commitment to protect the rights and dignity of every human being, including those of refugees seeking asylum in Europe. Our determined fulfillment of these objectives would demonstrate in deed that we have understood the crucial lessons of the Holocaust. Dark-hearted attitudes must never again go unchallenged. We must always stand up unequivocally for human rights and the inherent value of every person.

With the survivors' examples to guide us, together we must condemn the anti-Semitism that is still far too common today. In the past year, we saw Jews murdered in Paris and Copenhagen, Jews stabbed in Marseilles and Milan, and heard reports of shouts of "Slaughter the Jews!" in Malmö, Sweden. Vicious anti-Semitic attacks continue in many participating States, including assaults on rabbis, attacks on Jewish school children, and the vandalizing of Jewish graves and other property. OSCE officials have raised serious concern over attempts to rehabilitate the reputations of historical anti-Semites and Nazi collaborators, such as Balint Homan in Hungary. State Secretary Takacs, the United States welcomes the cancellation of the Homan statue that had been planned in Hungary and commends the Government of Hungary for its handling of the Chairmanship of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

As we remember the Holocaust, we call on OSCE participating States to implement the Basel Ministerial Declaration on Combating Anti-Semitism promptly and completely and to support ODIHR fully in its efforts to fight all forms of intolerance. We welcome the strong public statements of support for Jewish communities by officials in Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and elsewhere in Europe. More must be done to ensure the safety of Jewish communities. We commend Serbia's Working Group on the draft law concerning Holocaust-era heirless property restitution and encourage Serbia's leaders to pass this important legislation as soon as possible. We likewise welcome ODIHR's new program, "Turning Words into Action to Address Anti-Semitism," and applaud ODIHR's hate crimes reporting program.

Mr. Chair, last fall, as the United States has made a point of doing each year in conjunction with the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, and sometimes accompanied by other OSCE colleagues, a U.S. delegation paid its respects to the victims and the survivors at Auschwitz-Birkenau. We would like to thank the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and Memorial staff for supporting what has become an annual visit by members of our HDIM delegation and other U.S. officials. Each year, we return from that soul-searing experience with a renewed determination to act against hate in defense of human dignity.

In closing, the United States reiterates that we must never forget the lessons of the Holocaust as we stand together against anti-Semitism and all other forms of bigotry, intolerance, discrimination, and hate. We thank Rabbi Andrew Baker for serving as the Personal Representative of the Chairmanship on Anti-Semitism and U.S. Senator Ben Cardin for serving as the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on Anti-Semitism, Racism, and Intolerance. Dr. Klein recalled Elie Wiesel's powerful words and connected the commemoration of this meeting to threats against universal values in our region today. As we reaffirm our commitments and honor all of those who suffered, I'm reminded of the Maya Angelou poem, "On the Pulse of Morning," in which she wrote:

"History, despite its wrenching pain,
Cannot be unlived,
But if faced with courage,
Need not be lived again."

Thank you, Mr. Chair.