

February/March 2011

From the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti- Semitism (SEAS)

## The SEAS Monitor

### Campaign to Fight Hate



On February 17, during a meeting at the OSCE, Special Representative Farah Pandith and I launched *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign. A stop at the State Department Media Hub in Brussels allowed us to get the message to media from around the world: We are asking young people globally to pledge their time to volunteer for “the other.” For example, a Muslim could volunteer at a Jewish community center, a Christian at a Sikh organization, a Jew at a Muslim food pantry, or a Catholic at a Baha’i shelter. The results of the OSCE presentation included invitations from over a dozen countries to come to meet with youth in their countries to get them energized to be part of the campaign.

Over the next year, the campaign aims to inspire 2011 hours of service. We will visit countries where there has been a history of prosperous coexistence between people of different beliefs.



**Getting out the message at ISNA with Special Representative Farah Pandith**

Speaking to the *Islamic Society of North America* (ISNA) Forum, Farah and I again described not only the *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign, but how we are targeting countries that in their history have had Jews and Muslims living and thriving together, and how that history must be remembered. We urge young people in those countries to actively support the pluralism, mutual respect, acceptance, and tolerance that are needed today.

### Turkey



### **Special Envoy Rosenthal and Special Representative Pandith speak with religious community organizations in Turkey**

Farah Pandith and I traveled to Turkey, a country that has had a rich history of Muslims and Jews co-existing and thriving together. Turkey is like many other countries in Europe, experiencing a form of new nationalism. In Turkey, there is tension between the secular and religious movements and identities. In our meeting with University of Ankara's Divinity School faculty and students we heard about the secular/non-secular divide, where the head scarf is an individual freedom issue to some, and a political and religious fashion statement to others. One of the students said "without outside interference, we can live together," and another said, "anti-Semitism is a human disgrace" and another, "jihad should be done with pens, not guns." They explained that anti-Semitism in the past was due to religion and now it is more an ethnic attitude of difference. They want more multiculturalism and want Jews and Muslims to get to know each other better.

We also met with University of Kecioren representatives, whose message was clear: anti-Semitism is not about geographic divisions, but a mindset that needs to be confronted forcefully.

Our meeting with the Parliamentary Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Murat Murcan, was tense and difficult. Mr. Murcan clearly blamed Jews for Israel's actions last May, with respect to the Turkish flotilla. Thankfully, some of his staff and youth had a different perspective, understanding anti-Semitism more broadly and how unfair it is to blame all Jews for the actions of the sovereign state of Israel, and to hold Israel to different standards than any other country.

In Istanbul, we met with students from Bahcesehir University, who reinforced the need for more outreach across religious and cultural divides. The Mayor of Beyoglu, Ahmet Misbah Demiran, leads several wonderful initiatives to promote diversity, including leading tours of youth to synagogues, mosques and churches in his city, and hosting a summer camp for children of many faiths and from many countries.

The Turkish Jewish communities, according to its leaders, saw a spike in anti-Semitic incidents following the flotilla events and especially harsh slurs and statements in the media. They worry that the anger may grow and be fueled by media after the release of a new installment of the “Valley of the Wolves” franchise – a vehemently anti-Semitic film series. It was released on January 27, the official Holocaust Remembrance Day.

“Protocols of the Elders of Zion” is available widely and when someone is trying to accuse another of something awful, he is called a “secret Jew.”

There is much work to do.

### Azerbaijan



### **Special Envoy Rosenthal and Special Representative Pandith promote the 2011 Hours Against Hate campaign in Azerbaijan**

*A version of this report was previously posted on the State Department's Dipnote blog.*

Azerbaijan has a history of more than 2,000 years of multiculturalism; we see this through its living monuments to the country's long-held tradition of religious coexistence. The Sha Hi Lar and Juma mosque demonstrates the Islamic history in this country. Similarly, in Baku's old city, with buildings from the 12th century, one can see, through etchings on the walls, relics of the different religious groups that lived within them.

Among our many meetings, we had the honor of visiting the new synagogue of the Mountain Jews--a community of Jewish people who have lived in Azerbaijan for over 2,600 years. The rabbi informed us that Special Representative Pandith and I were the first official visitors to the

new synagogue, and the message of our *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign was the perfect way to open the door of this place of worship.

Of course, historical sites that show the history of religion and culture in Azerbaijan are important. In order to get a real feel for the country's traditions of multicultural exchange, we spent time with the people: civil society organizations, youth groups, religious leaders, and other Azerbaijani citizens working to strengthen the bonds of coexistence in their communities. The spirit of mutual respect that is enshrined in Azerbaijan's history is alive and well with the country's next generation. One young man said to us, "We can tell you about the Azerbaijani identity--it is not your ethnicity or your religion, it is a set of values." During our eight youth meetings, roundtables, and town halls with community leaders, this set of values was immediately clear: to be Azerbaijani is to be blind to divides of race and religion and to celebrate diversity.

The *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign is spreading, and we are thrilled to have so many young people in Azerbaijan and across the world supporting the message, pledging their time, and making this campaign their own. If you look at the campaign's [Facebook page](#), you will see several young Azerbaijanis who recorded videos for *2011 Hours Against Hate*. One girl is organizing a group to volunteer at Save the Children, helping kids who are less fortunate, while another said he is going to volunteer with people who have been victims of war. Peace Corps volunteers are also jumping on the bandwagon and will be organizing service projects in the communities where they live.

One of our last meetings in Azerbaijan was with Sheikh Allahshukur Pashazade, the leader of the Muslim community for all the Caucasus. He expressed concern about the influx of negative information via the Internet. As someone who is not a "digital native" like all the young people we met (but yes, I do have a Twitter account! [@HannahAtState](#)), I understood his worry. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized that the *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign is doing just the opposite. People all over the world are using the Internet as a tool to mobilize for good. With a click of a mouse, a text message, or 140 characters on Twitter, people are pledging their time to touch the life of someone who is different than them.

## Spain



### **Special Envoy Rosenthal and Special Representative Pandith visit the historic city of Cordoba, Spain, with the *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign**

After a great visit to Azerbaijan, the *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign—or, as the Spanish call it, “2011 Horas Contra el Odio”—touched down in Cordoba. Cordoba presents a unique model for our vision of a world of multicultural exchange and cross-religious understanding; the city’s historic period of “Convivencia,” or coexistence, continues to attract students of history, religion, philosophy, art, spirituality, and culture. As historians have written, Cordoba’s Convivencia period is notable for the culture of productive coexistence created by the city’s Christians, Muslims, and Jews. The legacy of multicultural exchange persists in the works of art, literature, and philosophy developed during the period, particularly in the texts of Moses Maimonides and Averroes.

Throughout our campaign trip, Special Representative Pandith and I were overwhelmed by the enthusiastic responses of the city’s political leaders, community organizations, and student groups. The message of coexistence, of mutual respect between religious and cultural groups, was clear. The campaign trip was marked by a series of events across the city, including a student town-hall at the University of Cordoba. Youthful enthusiasm permeated the students’ participation in the town-hall; one student told us, “This campaign is all of ours.” Students from across Spain submitted questions via Facebook, revealing the pervasive utility of new media as a vessel for social change and youth empowerment. For Cordoba’s government officials, the campaign provided an opportunity to emphasize the importance of volunteerism and community engagement. In tandem with the 2011 observance of the European Union’s Year of Volunteerism, the message of cohesion and cross-cultural partnership could not have been more relevant.

So the question still remains...What will you do? How many hours will you pledge? Who will you reach out to to stop hate?

You can pledge [here](#), and follow the campaign on Twitter via [@2011AgainstHate](#) and #2011AgainstHate.

*For more information and to pledge your hours visit*

<http://www.state.gov/s/2011hoursagainsthate>

on

 <http://www.facebook.com/2011HoursAgainstHate>

on

 <http://twitter.com/2011AgainstHate>

## STORYTELLING TO HEAL



I am always fascinated by how well cultural events can inform a community of important values and help them deal with complicated situations. So I attended an advanced reading of a play that will premiere in Chicago at the Lookingglass Theatre, *"The Last Act of Lilka Kadison."* Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation supported the development of this play. It is about Lilka, a Holocaust survivor, her life, her memories, and her identity. While the script is not yet final, it is a wonderful story being written by Nicola Behrman, David Kersnar and Abbie Phillips, who are amazing storytellers. I mention this not only because it is a work I hope everyone gets to see, but because it reminds me of the importance of telling stories, of the need for new ways to share the ancient and modern stories of Jewish heritage and culture. And of how important it is to support family and friends moving through issues such as aging and memory loss, as well as coming to terms with the Holocaust. The theater company will engage various communities through panel discussions, resource guides, and other script readings. Stay tuned for more and visit [http://www.lookingglasstheatre.org/content/box\\_office/last\\_act](http://www.lookingglasstheatre.org/content/box_office/last_act).

## Domestic Visits



### **Special Envoy Rosenthal speaks about anti-Semitism with North Shore Congregation Israel in Chicago, Illinois**

In February, I traveled to several cities where I spoke to wonderful gatherings sponsored by *North Shore Congregation Israel* and the *American Jewish Committee in Chicago*, discussing my observations about the increased anti-Semitism around the world. I also shared my experiences and analyses with Jewish NGOs in New York City, the regional gathering of Reform synagogues in Milwaukee, and the Jewish Community Relations Commission and Federation in Norfolk, Virginia.

### **Civil Society and Foreign Policy**

On February 16, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton held the first ever Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society at the Department of State. Secretary Clinton led the session with senior Administration officials and civil society representatives from more than 20 countries. Thousands of others participated via interactive videoconferences at 50 of our embassies around the world. Even more took part in live online chats in Arabic, Russian, and Spanish. The Department of State believes that civil society must be engaged in order to develop strategic partnerships to address the needs of these nations and to expand cooperation in mutually beneficial areas. The Administration also announced a more than doubling of aid to activists, journalists, and other human rights champions around the world.

Watch the Secretary's full remarks here:

[http://blogs.state.gov/index.php/site/entry/strategic\\_dialogue\\_civil\\_society/](http://blogs.state.gov/index.php/site/entry/strategic_dialogue_civil_society/)

### **Meeting with Ambassadors from Sweden, Netherlands, Hungary, Lithuania, and Saudi Arabia**

During the Chiefs of Mission gathering at the State Department in early February, I was able to meet with our Ambassador to Sweden, Matthew Barzun, to discuss the increased anti-Semitism there and ways we can help confront it and combat it. I also met with Ambassador to the Netherlands Fay Levin to discuss recent anti-Semitic incidents. The Embassy now sends updates on anti-Semitic activities or efforts to better monitor and develop strategies to combat anti-Semitism in Holland. Ambassador Kaunalakis in Hungary described the situation in Hungary, which is often reported in our weekly updates on Facebook. Anne Derse, our Ambassador in Lithuania, continues to lead USG efforts to pass the restitution bill, as well as help with the activities the government of Lithuania is planning for 2011 as the year of remembrance of the Holocaust and its victims, which was officially decreed at the end of last year.

We are also engaged with the Lithuanian Embassy here in Washington on their on-going activities, both educational and cultural, to commemorate the rich Jewish history that was so present and contributed so much to Lithuanian history, as well as remembering the catastrophic role Lithuania played during the Holocaust. And during my meeting with Ambassador Smith, who serves in Saudi Arabia, we planned my future meetings with the Minister of Education and visit to the kingdom, which is the epicenter of much anti-Semitic teaching, textbooks, and curriculum development that are exported all over the world. While Saudi Arabia is undergoing a huge educational reform to try to bring the culture into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we need to ensure that their efforts include removing hate, intolerance and anti-Semitic and anti-Christian teachings. Unfortunately, my planned meeting with our Ambassador to Egypt had to be cancelled!

### **Secretary Clinton's Speech on Internet Freedom Evokes Trip to Auschwitz with Imams**

The Secretary's February speech, "Internet Rights and Wrongs: Choices & Challenges in a Networked World," addressed the importance of confronting hate speech without stopping freedom of expression. She explained that the goal is not to tell people how to use the Internet, but that we ought to ensure that the experience is one that is safe and productive. The U.S. Government supports what the Secretary has called "the freedom to connect" for people everywhere, and calls on other nations to do the same.

Secretary Clinton invoked my trip to Auschwitz with Imams, some of whom had denied the Holocaust, to show how the way to curb hate is not to violate the freedom of expression, but to use this freedom to speak out against intolerance and hatred. "By exposing ideas to debate, those with merit tend to be strengthened, while weak and false ideas tend to fade away; perhaps not instantly, but eventually."

To watch or read her remarks click here:

<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/02/156619.htm>

## **Special Envoy Rosenthal Receives Faith and Humanity Award from the National Council of Jewish Women**

On March 4, at the National Council of Jewish Women's National Convention in Dallas, Special Envoy Rosenthal received the organization's Faith and Humanity Award for her work in combating anti-Semitism and defending human rights worldwide. As a recipient of the award, Special Envoy Rosenthal joins a long line of women recognized for their achievements in public service, human rights, and social justice, including Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Following the award presentation, Special Envoy Rosenthal delivered a speech on the importance of multi-issue advocacy, based on her experience as a coalition builder and as the head of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. The National Council of Jewish Women addresses a wide spectrum of domestic and foreign policy issues, including reproductive rights, economic justice, and civil liberties.

### **Our "What We're Hearing Around the World" is live!**

Our updates on monitoring and combating anti-Semitism, as well as news about the work and accomplishments of our office are live on our Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?ref=hpskip#!/SERosenthal>.

Visit often, share the news, and contribute what you are hearing from friends, family or organizations about anti-Semitic activities around the world. Together, we make a difference.

### **OSCE Conference in Prague**



**U.S. Congressman Chris Smith, U.S. Ambassador Norman Eisen, Special Envoy Rosenthal, U.S. Ambassador Anne Derse, and U.S. Ambassador Ian Kelly at the recent OSCE conference on anti-Semitism in Prague, Czech Republic**

On March 23-24, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) hosted a conference on "Anti-Semitism in the Public Discourse" in Prague, Czech Republic. It was a unique gathering focused on monitoring and combating anti-Semitism, hate speech, and

incitements to violence, featuring experts, historians, and diplomats from throughout Europe. The conference was planned by the ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE) staff and Rabbi Andrew Baker, the OSCE Chair's personal representative for anti-Semitism. The opening session set the tone. The Czech Foreign Minister, Jiri Schneider, stated, "It is deeply embarrassing that we have to deal with anti-Semitism some 66 years after the defeat of Nazi Germany...It is an old poison in new bottles." The ODIHR Director, James Lemarck, remarked, "intolerant discourse has never been as global as it is now."

In addition to statements by European and OSCE leaders, New Jersey Congressman Chris Smith participated and highlighted the many initiatives of the US to promote religious tolerance and protect religious freedom. He emphasized the importance of getting buy-in for strategies to combat hate across religious, political and cultural lines. Since the focus was on public discourse, we heard about media and social networking, as well as the need for outreach to young people about tolerance promotion.

The *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign continues to be an important organizing vehicle for many of the OSCE countries, and will expand quickly throughout Europe. The ambassadors and other representatives from the countries expressed gratitude to the initiative for providing a structure to reach out to young people. The campaign also offers an example of the positive aspects of the Internet, Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking vehicles—a critically important component of the discussion of hate speech and the unfortunate desire by some conference representatives to restrict speech.

Another high point of the conference was a moving display in the Czech Foreign Ministry by Centropa. Assuming the OSCE chairmanship, Lithuania engaged Centropa to create a photo exhibit of how Jews lived in the ghetto in Lithuania, using old photos and interviews with survivors and family members. It presented a rich beginning to help people understand events that led to the Holocaust. The exhibit put the tragedy in the context of real people living normal lives, like everyone else in the country. But people were targeted for extermination solely because they were Jewish, and the silence and complicity of the surrounding communities was profound.

### **2010 Human Rights Report Released!**

The U.S. State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor has released its annual Human Rights Report, containing important information on human rights abuses, responses, and successes throughout 2010. Our work on anti-Semitism figures prominently in the report. Take a look at the report [here](#).