

October 2011

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

# The SEAS Monitor

Dear Friends,

I hope you are well. This is the October issue of “The SEAS Monitor.” It is a way for me to keep you informed about my work as the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat anti-Semitism. Please click here for [previous copies](#).

Please enjoy and keep in touch. Again, shana tov – may 5772 be a year of good health and peace.

Hannah

 [www.state.gov/g/drl/seas/](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/seas/)  
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## EVENTS:

### Program on the SS St. Louis



Passenger photo from the SS St. Louis, courtesy SS St. Louis project

On Tuesday, October 18, our team attended an event, “Voyage of SS St. Louis and its Impact on the Roosevelt Legacy,” hosted by Georgetown University’s Program for Jewish Civilization. Robert Krakow, playwright, and fill in director’s name, presented excerpts from Krakow’s play about the trial of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, with testimony from other notable actors from history, shining the spotlight on the Roosevelt Administration’s handling of the Jewish refugee issue, including the ill-fated voyage of the SS St. Louis.

The SS St. Louis was a luxury ocean liner that left Hamburg, Germany, in May of 1939, carrying 937 Jewish refugees attempting to escape Nazi Germany. Despite having landing permits for Cuba, they were refused entry. They sailed to Miami after a week in the Havana harbor, in hopes that the U.S. would allow them entry. Again, they were refused. Upon return to Europe, the passengers were accepted by on a few countries, but as the Nazis took over Europe, most of them perished in the Holocaust. A survivor from the SS St. Louis, Herbert Karliner, also spoke, bringing to life his experience as a young boy on the ship and what happened after his return to Europe. We look forward to working with Mr. Krakow to bring his play to the State Department in the future.

For more information about the SS St. Louis project, visit:

<http://thestlouisproject.com/>.

## **INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH:**

### **Albania to build Holocaust Memorial**

I met with Albanian Ambassador Gilbert Galanxhi on October 21 who said that the Mayor of Tirana has approved a Holocaust memorial to be built in Tirana in time for a January 27 dedication, the UN's International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Albania is the only country in Europe that saved every single Jew during WWII and had more Jews at war's end than at the start.

### **Polish-Jewish Dialog: New Opening Conference**

We met with Professor Artur Wroblewski, from Lazarski University in Warsaw, in conjunction with the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Georgetown University, to discuss hosting a conference on December 7 at Georgetown: "Polish-Jewish Dialog: New Opening." The conference will bring together policy makers, diplomats, analysts, students, business and others to examine Jewish life in Poland today with a look to the future, as well as the changing perception of Polish-Jewish relations and a strategic partnership between Poland and Israel.

## **MEDIA:**

### **Alhurra Presents**



Being interviewed by Sam Menassa of "Alhurra Presents"

As a follow-up to my briefing Voice of American journalists in early September, on October 27, I was interviewed Sam Menassa, host of "Alhurra Presents." It is a weekly, hour-long, interactive program by Alhurra-TV, which covers the Middle East. "Alhurra Presents" reaches 26 million viewers in

Egypt. The discussion was wide-ranging, from discussing the diversity and freedom of American society, to defining when anti-Israel sentiment crosses the line into anti-Semitism, to where anti-Semitism is prevalent around the globe. I noted how I speak out against Islamophobia and wondered why the Jewish and Muslim communities in Europe do not work together to fight hate that is faced by both communities. Viewers learned about the *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign and why educating our young people on the lessons of the Holocaust is still so critical, especially in the Middle East. Comments at the end came from Alhurra's Facebook page with over 13,000 responses. You can find the interview here:

<http://www.alhurra.com/ondemand/player/alhurrapresents/player.html>

### **Jewish Woman magazine**

Also on the 27<sup>th</sup>, I was interviewed by Sue Tomchin, editor, for the magazine *Jewish Woman*, published by Jewish Women International (JWI). I was honored by JWI a few years ago as "a women to watch". The interview was about my work preventing anti-Semitism and fighting intolerance around the world.

### **DOMESTIC OUTREACH:**

#### **Women's Leadership Initiative in St. Louis**

I addressed four different groups in a brief visit to St. Louis. I spoke to The Women's Leadership Initiative, sponsored by the Millstone Institute for Jewish Leadership on October 4 and 5, focusing on how civil society leads to social change. I also attended a meeting at the Jewish Federation of St. Louis, and the Jewish Community Relations Council to discuss the future generations of Jewish leaders committed to social change. I also had the opportunity to meet with the professors and director of the new John C. Danforth Center on Religion & Politics at Washington University.

#### **Nachson Mission of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago**

On October 11, I spoke to the Nachshon group, an informal network of Jewish men from Chicago who travel annually to Israel and other international Jewish communities, and who are involved in leadership roles throughout the federation. I talked about the current level of anti-Semitism around the world, about the Arab Spring in the Middle East, and about the Holocaust

Museum and its work on the issues of Holocaust denial, anti-Semitism, and international outreach.

## **AT THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE:**

### **International Voluntary Visitors Program: Polish Educators**

Members of my team participated in a roundtable discussion on Holocaust education with a group of 10 teachers, teacher-trainers and consultants from Poland on October 3. This group told us about how they initiate programs in their classrooms as well as how they provide often free training on both the regional and national level in Poland. In addition, they actively encourage interaction between Polish and Israeli students and teachers. We were very impressed with their creative, grassroots efforts in establishing these very individualized programs all around Poland. In addition, as voluntary visitors, they undertook this trip on their own initiative.

### **Helsinki España—Dimensión Humana**



After meeting the leader and other members of Helsinki Spain during my visit to Spain earlier this year to promote *2011 Hours Against Hate*, I reconnected with Ana Nieto, its president, on October 11. Her organization has a successful University Volunteering Project, “Together we can! Toward diversity and multiculturalism.” For three weeks in June, Helsinki Spain carried out the Project in Tulsa, Oklahoma, training over 30 American university volunteers on Human Rights and multiculturalism. These students, working with Spanish counterparts who had participated previously in Madrid, then imparted their knowledge to around 400 children and teens at four different summer camps in Tulsa. Helsinki Spain also has programs in Italy, Mexico and Portugal; 700 students have been trained in total, connecting to 2,000 youth. We encouraged them to expand to South America.

## **UNESCO**



During my meeting with UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova on October 13, she sought U.S. Government support for UNESCO's programs and stated the need to separate the issue of Palestine's bid for statehood from UNESCO's good works. I took the opportunity to reinforce my view that the upcoming UNESCO Youth Summit is an opportunity to promote the popular *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign, which amplifies the UNESCO message of fighting hate. The Director General emphasized that UNESCO is aligned with US interests and is about to launch its Holocaust education curriculum.

### **Institute for Gulf Affairs**

I met with Ali Al-Ahmed of the Institute for Gulf Affairs on October 18 to discuss persistent anti-Semitism in Saudi textbooks, as well as opportunities for teaching tolerance. U.S. officials continue to press the Saudi government to complete its commitments to remove intolerant references from textbooks; to promote respect for non-Muslim religious belief, in line with King Abdullah's international initiatives; and to combat violent extremism.

### **Training**

I addressed students in the introductory Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor course at the Foreign Service Institute on October 20th as part of the on-going goal to expand State Department personnel's understanding of anti-Semitism in general and alert them to trends and new forms of anti-Semitism increasing around the world. I am also holding State Department regional offices training sessions and soon will add regional training around the world. We continue to sponsor trips for State Department interns to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

### **Launch of Religion and Foreign Policy Roundtable**

On October 18, The Department of State launched a Working Group on Religion and Foreign Policy as a part of Secretary Clinton's Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society. Representatives from civil society including religious leaders from around the world, academics, and leaders from faith-based and

secular nongovernmental organizations attended the launch and began this year long initiative.

Link to Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group Opening Remarks: <http://goo.gl/o3wvl>

You can view the webcast from October 19 which provided an overview of this meeting and answered questions from viewers around the world. Several of our embassies overseas organized viewing gatherings.

Link to the Webchat Q&A Discussion with Panelists: <http://goo.gl/ZmfxA>

### **U.S. Ambassador to Norway**

On October 26, I met with Ambassador Barry White, U.S. Ambassador to Norway, where I learned about his wide-ranging efforts to engage in interfaith dialogue in Norway, including his relations with the Jewish community. He is aware that schools and universities there are making efforts to develop a meaningful Holocaust education program and train teachers and we will continue the discussion and work when I travel to Norway in 2012.

### **Parents Circle Families Forum**



Robi Damelin and Siham Abu Awwad

I hosted a very special event on Friday, October 28, in the historic Treaty Room of the U.S. Department of State. Following a short video about the organization, Robi Damelin and Siham Abu Awwad of the Parents Circle Families Forum presented their stories of loss and reconciliation to a rapt audience. They also took questions from the assembled guests.

The efforts of the Parents Circle to fight hate fits perfectly with the message of involvement and volunteerism in the *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign,

where Special Representative to Muslim Communities Farah Pandith and I encourage youth to walk in someone else's shoes for an hour or more – to engage with someone who doesn't live like them, pray like them, or look like them.

Parents Circle Families Forum is a unique grassroots organization made up of more than six hundred families, half Israeli and half Palestinian, who have all lost immediate family members to the conflict. These families have embarked on a joint reconciliation mission in the midst of the ongoing violence, transforming their loss and pain of bereavement into a catalyst for reconciliation.

President Obama mentioned this remarkable organization in a speech on May 19:

"...Suspicion and hostility has been passed on for generations, and at times it has hardened. But I'm convinced that the majority of Israelis and Palestinians would rather look to the future than be trapped in the past. We see that spirit in the Israeli father whose son was killed by Hamas, who helped start an organization that brought together Israelis and Palestinians who had lost loved ones. That father said, "I gradually realized that the only hope for progress was to recognize the face of the conflict." We see it in the actions of a Palestinian who lost three daughters to Israeli shells in Gaza. "I have the right to feel angry," he said. "So many people were expecting me to hate. My answer to them is I shall not hate. Let us hope," he said, "for tomorrow."

President Clinton and other world leaders have praised Parents Circle Families Forum's activities.

This was a wonderful opportunity for us to meet these remarkable people and be moved by their amazing and inspirational stories.

To see the video about Parents Circle, visit:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMN6NQSILo&feature=channel\\_video\\_title](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMN6NQSILo&feature=channel_video_title)

and to learn about their Blood Relations campaign, click here

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2qwFOsCf1NE> and visit the website at [www.bloodrelations.org](http://www.bloodrelations.org).

## Meeting with Tawakkol Karman, Nobel Peace Prize-winner



I had the honor and pleasure to meet Tawakkol Karman of Yemen on October 28. A pro-democracy campaigner, Ms. Karman won the Nobel Peace Prize for 2011 (along with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first woman to be elected president in modern Africa and Leymah Gbowee, a peace activist, both from Liberia). She is an amazing woman, generously saying that her prize is for all women. She believes that democracy can help solve the many problems in Yemen, and that involving all parties will be key to the transition. I was equally impressed with her desire to bring together religious minorities. She was quoted recently as saying, “regarding religious minorities, Yemen’s Jewish citizens must have full political rights, as everyone must, including the right to run for parliament, municipal council, and the presidency,” and she told me that she participates in interreligious dialogue. I told her about the *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign and look forward to her next visit in November.

### Center for American Progress

**Fear, Inc.**  
The Roots of the  
Islamophobia Network in  
America

I met with Faiz Shakir and Sally Steenland for a briefing on the Center for American Progress report, *Fear Inc. The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America*, on October 28. The report examines a relatively small but well-funded and influential group of individuals in the U.S, who stoke fear of Muslims and Islam in the U.S. and abroad.

Some in this group have pressured the Discovery Channel not to air “The 99,” an animated series about superheroes based on Islamic values and culture. Others have pushed for legislation banning Sharia law in several states. The report publicized the names of foundations which provided a total of more than \$42 million in funding to these individuals spreading Islamophobia.

We discussed the need to combat all forms of intolerance around the world, including religious, racial, and gender prejudices. We also talked about efforts at interfaith coalition building in the United States and Europe. We would like to collaborate with the CAP to promote tolerance initiatives such as the *2011 Hours Against Hate* and expand their efforts into Europe.

A link to the *Fear Inc.* report can be found here:

<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/08/islamophobia.html>

#### **INTERNET OUTREACH:**

##### **Facebook**

I encourage you to “Like” my page on Facebook: “Hannah Rosenthal, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat anti-Semitism.” When you “Like” a page on Facebook, it will be listed under your “Activities and Interests” tab, which can be found in your Info section. If my page is updated, the update will appear on your News Feed on your homepage.

Be sure to follow our weekly posting entitled “Here’s What We’re Hearing: Anti-Semitism News Updates.” It is through these updates that we monitor global incidents around of anti-Semitism. We have also started a new initiative, “Here’s What We’re Hearing: Jewish World News Updates” which contain relevant news regarding positive efforts to promote tolerance and inter-religious cooperation.

##### **Instructions:**

Once you are signed into Facebook, search for my name and title: Hannah Rosenthal, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat anti-Semitism. The “Like” button is at the top of my page and has a thumbs-up symbol. The symbol disappears once you have “Liked” the page.

##### **State.gov**

Aside from following me on Facebook, I encourage all of you to visit my page on the Department of State's website. You can quickly find my page by clicking [here](#). Or you can follow these instructions: Begin by going to the Department of State's homepage: [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov). Then, please click on the "Democracy and Global Affairs" tab in the white toolbar. Then, please click on "Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL)," and then click on "Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism" in the left vertical column. Here you will find information about my office, as well as remarks, press releases, past issues of *The Monitor*, photos, and information about the *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign.

### [HumanRights.gov](http://HumanRights.gov)

I also encourage you to visit HumanRights.gov, which is the US government's official website for human rights related information. You can access the homepage [here](#), and you can access my personal page [here](#).

### [Twitter](#)

Please also follow me on twitter! You can find me at: [!\[\]\(f4349ea867b307dd2675269f68d0971f\_img.jpg\)@HannahAtState](https://twitter.com/HannahAtState).