

The Monitor

November 2013 – March 2014

Dear Friends,

This *Monitor* covers my activities from November 2013 to early March.

Over the past several months, I visited Jewish communities that face anti-Semitism and learned about the difficulties they encounter in practicing their religion freely. I have also visited countries where the strength of the Jewish community provides an opportunity for partnership as we work to promote religious tolerance and combat anti-Semitism.

In addition to my international travel, I met with representatives of foreign governments in Washington, bringing anti-Semitism to their attention and discussing my main issues of concern. By forging strong relationships with these leaders, the United States government will be better positioned to reach out and work with their governments on issues of anti-Semitism.

Please note that I frequently comment on the latest developments around the world on Twitter (see page 10). You can follow me @SEASForman.

Thank you for your continued interest and support of our work.

Ira Forman



 www.state.gov/j/drl/seas

In this Issue

Travel **3.**

Travel to Ukraine

Travel to the United Kingdom

Travel to the Netherlands

Events **6.**

B'nai B'rith International Annual Policy Forum

United Nations NGO Committee Panel Discussion on Anti-Semitism

International Holocaust Remembrance Day Screening of "There Was Once"

At the Department of State **6.**

Quarterly Meeting with Jewish Organizations

Meetings with Foreign Governments

On Capitol Hill **8.**

Briefing on Imam Trip

MEMRI Annual Lantos Anti-Semitism Program

In the Community **9.**

Staff Changes **9.**

Online Outreach **9.**

Travel

Travel to Ukraine



Rabbi Shmuel Kaminetsky, Chief Rabbi of Dnipropetrovsk, shows SE Forman an overlook of the city (photo courtesy of Department of State)

Before the recent upheaval in Ukraine, I visited Kyiv, Lviv, and Dnipropetrovsk November 11-16. In Lviv, I visited some of the many Jewish heritage sites, met with Jewish community leaders, spoke with government representatives and was briefed at the campus of the Ukrainian Catholic University. In Dnipropetrovsk, I toured the magnificent new Menorah Cultural and Community Center and met with local government officials to discuss the level of anti-Semitism in that community. While in Kyiv, I toured Babi Yar, which was the location of one of the largest massacres of Jews by the Einstazgruppen during the Holocaust. Here over 34,000 victims lost their lives in the span of a week. Rabbi Dukhovny, the Chief Reform Rabbi of Ukraine served as my tour guide through this site, as well as the newly opened Hatikvah Jewish Community Center. I also met with a number of representatives of Jewish organizations, as well as scholars of Holocaust programs and government officials.



SE Forman with Susan Sandler (from the State Department's Office of Holocaust Issues) and Rabbi Dokhovny near the site of the Babi Yar massacres.(photo courtesy of Department of State)

Travel to the United Kingdom

I visited London March 3-6 to meet with the Jewish community and leaders from other faiths, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations involved in tolerance and Holocaust education. I met with His Grace Bishop Angaelos of the Coptic Orthodox Church and discussed the difficulties the Coptic Orthodox Church faces in Egypt. Additionally, I was able to meet with Member of Parliament John Mann, who serves as Chair of the Parliamentary Committee against Anti-Semitism. We discussed ways in which anti-Semitism impacts British society and how parliament and other institutions are combating anti-Semitism. I also met with representatives from the Board of Deputies of British Jews and was briefed by the Community Security Trust, a Jewish organization that works with government and law enforcement to provide security for British Jewry. The Community Security Trust hosted me at its annual dinner, which marked the release of its [annual report](#) on anti-Semitic incidents.

Travel to the Netherlands



*SE Forman with members of the
Liberal Jewish Community of Amsterdam
(photo courtesy of Department of State)*

Following London, I traveled to the Netherlands where I spent March 6-7 in Amsterdam and The Hague. I met with the Director of Centre for Information and Documentation Israel, which works to document and build awareness of anti-Semitism facing the European Jewish community, and educate the public about the connection between anti-Israel sentiment and anti-Semitic actions. Similarly, I met with representatives of the Magenta Foundation and the Dutch Complaints Bureau for Discrimination on the Internet to discuss the rise in anti-Semitic incidents taking place online. Our embassy in The Hague and our consulate in Amsterdam brought together numerous Dutch Jewish community leaders for us to discuss the special problems facing the Netherlands' Jewish community. I also had a fascinating discussion with staff from the Anne Frank House on the type of programs most effective in combating anti-Semitism. Finally, I met with members of the Dutch government, including the Director General of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Marcelius Boerenboom, and the Director General of the Ministry of Education, Andre de Jong, to address anti-Semitism.

Events

B'nai B'rith International Annual Policy Forum

On November 18, I spoke at the B'nai B'rith International Annual Policy Forum at the Madison Hotel in Washington on my role in the Department of State and our office's vision for taking action on issues of anti-Semitism and intolerance.

UN NGO Committee Discussion on Anti-Semitism

On November 25, I was the featured speaker at the offices of the Baha'i International Community about anti-Semitism in Europe. The meeting was attended by members of the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion and Belief of the United Nations, which is comprised of different NGOs and human rights organizations that represent religious and belief groups. Following my presentation, I answered the questions of the participants which led to lively discussion of the realities of anti-Semitism today.

At the Department of State

Quarterly Meeting with Jewish Organizations

I hosted our second Jewish Quarterly Meeting on January 8 to talk about recent activities and hear from the many professionals in the Washington Jewish representative community who work on a daily basis on issues of anti-Semitism.

We spent time discussing the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency survey on Jewish attitudes toward anti-Semitism in eight EU member states, including Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Entitled "[Discrimination and Hate Crime against Jews in EU Member States: Experiences and Perceptions of Anti-Semitism](#)," this important document found that 66 per cent of respondents in the EU member states surveyed considered anti-Semitism to be a problem, and 76 per cent indicated that anti-Semitism had worsened over the past five years in the country where they live. Twenty six per cent of the respondents reported they were victims of anti-Semitic insults or harassment, and four per cent

reported they had been physically attacked or threatened. Of those who were physically attacked or threatened with violence, 64 per cent did not report the more serious incidents to the police. I was particularly struck with the finding that in some of the eight countries surveyed, as many as 48 per cent of the respondents had considered emigrating because of anti-Semitism.

There was also a lively discussion on proposed circumcision bans in certain European countries. I shared information from my trip to Norway, and heard from the group on plans for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to mark the ten year anniversary of the Berlin Anti-Semitism Conference. We also reviewed the different forms of anti-Semitism across Jewish communities as diverse as Hungary, Venezuela, Turkey, and Iran.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day Program



*SE Forman with Director Gabor Kalman and
Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Mike Kozak at the event
(Photo courtesy of the State Department)*

On January 30, Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Mike Kozak and I welcomed more than 100 guests to a screening of “*There Was Once..*,” a documentary film concerning the fate of the Jewish community of a small town (Kalocsa) in Hungary during the Holocaust. In the question-and-answer session that followed, guests—including Holocaust survivors, representatives from the Polish, Spanish, Israeli, Hungarian, and Ukrainian Embassies, local students, and civil society colleagues—posed questions to Director Gabor Kalman and the film’s protagonist, Gyongyi Mago, who joined the group virtually from Budapest. Our embassy in Budapest used the event to engage high school teachers and Hungarian Education Ministry officials.

Meetings with Foreign Government Officials

Part of my job is to build relationships and partnerships with officials from other governments. I have met with Ambassadors and other officials from countries coping with anti-Semitism and other issues of intolerance. In the past several months, I have met with ambassadors and other officials including Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer and Israeli Deputy Head of Mission Reuven Azar, the Apostolic Nunciature of the Holy See Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, Ambassador Bjorn Lyrvali of Sweden, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Hungary Gergely Prohle, Ambassador Iulian Buga of Romania, Ambassador Kare Aas of Norway, Canadian Ambassador for Religious Freedom Andrew Bennet, Ambassador Rudolf Bekink of the Netherlands, and Ambassador Taksoe-Jensen of Denmark. During these meetings, we discussed issues such as the increasing influence of right-wing, anti-Semitic political parties, levels of anti-Semitism, circumcision and ritual slaughter bans, and how to fortify struggling Jewish communities all over the world.

On Capitol Hill

Commemorating Holocaust Remembrance Day with Muslim Leaders

Congressman Keith Ellison, the first Muslim to be elected to Congress, hosted a briefing for Members of the House of Representatives and their staffers to mark the International Day of Holocaust Remembrance on January 27. Along with Rabbi Jack Bemporad of the Center for Interreligious Understanding, Professor Marshall Bregar of Catholic University, Imam Mohamed Magid, Special Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Rashad Hussein, and Senior Fellow for Muslim-Christian Understanding at the Institute for Global Engagement Suheil Khan, I discussed our “Imams to Auschwitz” trip last year. This ground-breaking trip resulted in international imams and Muslim scholars signing a statement condemning anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial.

MEMRI Anti-Semitism Program

The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) hosted the fifth annual Tom Lantos Anti-Semitism and Holocaust Denial Archives Commemoration at the Capitol on January 28. This event was held in conjunction with the release of MEMRI’s annual report on anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial in the Arab and Muslim world. This report covers both the hateful messages as well as the courageous voices who speak out against intolerance. I had the honor of

addressing the gathering, alongside Senator Bill Nelson of Florida and Congressman Paul Ryan of Wisconsin.

In the Community

[This new film](#) produced by the United States Holocaust Museum discusses the Nazi rise to power in Germany, and the environment which made the Holocaust possible.

Staff Changes

Welcome to our winter intern, Molly Bernstein, who joined our staff in February. Molly is a senior in the Scholars Program at the University of Maryland where she is a double degree student in Government & Politics and Arabic Studies. Molly is originally from Philadelphia, but spent part of her childhood living in Israel. She is deeply involved in Jewish life on campus, and is enthusiastic about contributing to the mission of combatting anti-Semitism world-wide.

Online Outreach

[Facebook.com/StateDRL](https://www.facebook.com/StateDRL) 

Please click on the above hyperlink to connect to the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Facebook page. The “Like” button is at the top of the page and has a thumbs-up symbol. The symbol disappears once you have “Liked” the page.

[State.gov](http://www.state.gov) 

I also encourage all of you to visit our page <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/seas/index.htm> on the [Department of State's website](http://www.state.gov). You can also connect via the homepage of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) <http://www.state.gov/j/drl> and then click on “Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism” in the left vertical column. Here you will find information about our office, as well as remarks, press releases, past issues of *The Monitor*, and photos.

HumanRights.gov 

You can also visit [HumanRights.gov](https://www.humanrights.gov), which is the U.S. government's official website for international human rights related information.

Twitter.com

Please also follow me on Twitter. You can find me at: @SEASForman