

**OSCE CONFERENCE ON COMBATING DISCRIMINATION AND PROMOTING  
MUTUAL RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING**  
**Follow-up to the Cordoba Conference on Anti-Semitism and Other Forms of Intolerance**

**Introductory Remarks AS GIVEN**  
**The Honorable Alcee L. Hastings**  
**President Emeritus, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**  
**Chairman, United States Commission on Security and Cooperation**  
**Plenary Session 4**  
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Thank you and good afternoon. I have been on the road the past 2 weeks in Warsaw, Poland, Israel, Ramallah, and in a Roma camp in Kosovo.

As many of you know, I am the immediate past President of the OSCE's Parliamentary Assembly. In that capacity, and as a member of the United States House of Representatives, I have worked with my colleagues in the OSCE PA like Ambassador Strohal and Professor Gert Weisskirchen to help institute a focus on anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance within the OSCE.

Today I will tell you a little about my history as an African-American living during the civil rights era and how the United States came to develop some of its tolerance laws. I hope we can all learn from my words how best to tackle the scourge of anti-Semitism, racism and other "-isms" that exists in each of our countries.

It was only 40 years ago when "separate but, equal" was a law in the United States and Whites could legally discriminate against blacks and others by having separate facilities.

Legally, I, nor any other black person, could sit next to a white person on a bus, eat at the same restaurant, or even use the same restrooms, or drink out of the same water fountains. While facilities were separate as the law required, they were definitely not equal.

After years of struggle, I and many others of my generation, *standing on our forbearers' shoulders*, created the climate that enabled Congress and then-President Lyndon Johnson to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

That groundbreaking law ended legal discrimination in the United States and served as the foundation for other laws; such as the historic Voting Rights Act, which prohibited discriminatory voting practices, and the Fair Housing Act, which prohibited discrimination in the sale or rental of housing.

However, the days of colonization and slavery, made it difficult for whites to accept laws now stating that blacks and others should be treated equally. To maintain the status quo, white supremacy groups attacked blacks and their supporters to instill widespread fear in the black community and anyone else calling for change. The Kennedys, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr. were assassinated. Black churches were burned.

But the violence had the unintended effect of bringing Americans together to support civil rights legislation. Americans realized that extending Constitutional rights to some and not all would be the undoing of America.

So, in the 80s and 90s, the brutal murders of racial and gender minorities and flames atop the rooftops of churches and synagogues again became a beacon for change. Congress reacted by passing hate crimes laws to collect statistics, impose longer prison sentences, and investigate arsons and rebuild churches and refurbish synagogues that had been decimated.

Until the Civil Rights Act in 1964, race and class-based preferential access had been reserved for whites.

For example, the U.S. government funded GI bill, predominantly provided free college education and housing assistance to white World War II veterans. And, so called '*legacy rules*' guaranteed college admission to family members of white alumni.

Affirmative action did help make up for the decades of missed opportunities by qualified blacks blocked from attending top universities and upper-level jobs irregardless of their intelligence and skills.

Now, while my country may be seen somewhat as a model for tolerance and anti-discrimination laws, I sadly must admit that our work is not yet done.

Just last year, the U.S. Congress reimplemented its historic Voting Rights act the right. Those of you watching our presidential elections in 2000 and 2004 may remember the irregularities that prevented thousands of predominantly poor and minority voters from having their votes counted as a result of discriminatory tactics. This was purposeful and has forever altered United States and world history.

Our hopes are that in passing these new voting rights laws, Americans will no longer experience discrimination at the voting booth.

We are all aware of the OSCE's unmatched work in election observation that hinges upon the teaming of ODHIR bureaucrats with seasoned elected officials from the PA under the great leadership of my peer Ambassador Strohal. I urge you all to watch our elections, and when the invitation to monitor comes next year... **Come**. Monitor our

elections and see if our laws are being upheld. And I encourage you all to do the same in other OSCE spheres.

Just months ago, the U.S. House of Representatives expanded our hate crimes laws to include individuals targeted because of their gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

Though controversial, Americans ultimately agreed that there is an obligation to protect not only those with whom we share common characteristics, ideas, or belief systems, **but all Americans.**

Assuring the protection and rights of all has also been a concern in the wake of September 11<sup>th</sup> for Muslim Americans. Despite a recent survey showing that most Muslims came to America and here in Europe in search of a better way of life, desire to work hard, uphold democratic values, and reject religious extremism, they are now often treated as second class citizens. They question whether European or American dream is still achievable for them, or even truly exists.

As an African-American who lived during the Civil Rights era, I, too, have loudly questioned whether the rights enshrined in our United States Constitution applied to me. However, I now understand that the beauty of my country is that it allows for the capacity and space to change our legal and legislative system as time and circumstance dictates.

The difficulty is determining whether the time for change is now and what changes should be made.

I hope that under the Chairman-in-office's recommendation, the upcoming conference in Cordoba will raise further awareness about anti-Muslim sentiments and stereotypes throughout the OSCE region. This is a growing problem and anti-Semitism continues to be a problem both of which we must address, whether all of us in this room are willing to admit it or not.

There are no overnight solutions. Sustained activity on issues of tolerance and civil rights by introducing new laws when necessary and ensuring implementation are a necessity if we are to keep history from revisiting itself here in the EU, United States, and elsewhere in the world.

We cannot forget that only 40 years ago, civil rights legislation in my country was non-existent. And without it, it is safe to say, I would not be standing here today. Places where I was once challenged to vote, restaurants where I was unable to eat... Today's children are clearly in need of the same and hopefully a better situation than mine. Be they in the United States or elsewhere in the OSCE region.

When I see Paris burning, I see the Detroit and LA riots and wonder if affirmative action or other inclusionary laws will follow. Requirements for religious registration in some places in Europe cause me to wonder where continued anti-Semitism and the world's fear of Islam may lead and if it will ultimately trample on our freedom of religion.

Just this past Tuesday, I was in the northern Kosovo Roma camps. When I think of the abject poverty I saw there along with testaments of Roma being sent to different schools than their peers despite their intelligence, I can only think of my own experiences riding to 60 miles to school each day with hand me down books, no cafeteria, and no foreign languages taught. The OSCE with the support of the United States must continue its focus on the situation of the Roma and Sinti.

When I addressed this conference yesterday, I pointed out the critical role that the OSCE PA played in establishing this conference.

Indeed, it is fair to say that we have come a long way. Many of the countries sitting in this room today have written and passed anti-discrimination laws as a direct result of the OSCE's work to combat anti-Semitism, xenophobia, racism, and other forms of discrimination. Now we must implement them! And I for one stand in support of the Special Envoy, Personal Representatives, and NGOs. All of us are necessary to achieve positive results.

The reality remains that anti-Semitism – **the initial reason why we called for a convening such as this** – continues to run rampant in **all** of our streets, including my own. In fact, over 1500 incidents of anti-Semitic acts were recorded in the U.S. alone last year and the continued stereotypic misperceptions of Jews within the OSCE region are only increasing the propensity for violence.

In my country, we are trying to stop these attacks. All of you in these countries with our help must do the same in yours.

Member states need to collect such statistics, for anti-Semitic attacks and all hate crimes. It is in this way that we can best fully monitor and address these heinous actions.

In the words of the African-American scholar WEB Dubois, "There can be no perfect democracy curtailed by color, race, or poverty. **And I would add religion and gender.** But with all, we accomplish all, even peace."

America's history and its use of legislation to combat intolerances and discrimination can be a working blueprint for peace. I urge you to use this blue print and learn from our successes. I also urge you to learn from and not repeat our mistakes.

It is time to implement our wonderful ideas from five years of these conferences. But, please – more action and less talk!

Thank you very much.