

**STATEMENT BY FELICE D. GAER
CHAIRPERSON OF THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
AT THE OSCE CONFERENCE ON ANTISEMITISM**

Vienna, 19 - 20 June 2003

Mr. Chairman, Ambassadors, and Distinguished Participants,

I am pleased to address this historic, first OSCE meeting on antisemitism. I do so as the chair of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, an independent federal agency created by Congress in 1998. I also serve as Director of the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights of the American Jewish Committee.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom monitors violations of religious freedom and makes recommendations to the President, State Department and Congress. A unanimous Senate resolution adopted last year specifically requested that the Commission monitor and report on worldwide-antisemitism. Many details on recent, serious antisemitic incidents in the OSCE region have been outlined here by the panelists who have already spoken. The US Commission wishes to stress that these antisemitic acts must be seen for what they are: they're not hooliganism, they are human rights abuses.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom examines and monitors country compliance with their international commitments. The responsibility to prevent and protect against antisemitism is a binding commitment of OSCE states.

UN human rights instruments prohibit antisemitic acts. And the OSCE's Copenhagen Concluding Document outlines specific commitments in Article 40. These commitments call for:

- “effective measures, including the adoption of laws to protect against incitement to violence . . . based on national, racial, ethnic or religious discrimination, hostility or hatred, including antisemitism,”
- a requirement to “take appropriate and proportionate measures to protect persons . . . and their property,” and
- “recognition of the right of the individual to effective remedies and . . . to initiate and support complaints against acts of discrimination...”

These Copenhagen commitments remain commitments of the OSCE member states.

Our Commission has searched, unsuccessfully, for any assessment of compliance, of progress with these commitments by the OSCE.

While we welcome the updates offered at this session regarding antisemitism, particularly the moving presentation of Judge Abella, we have hardly touched the surface.

Staff of the US Commission participated in a seminar on human rights and antisemitism convened in this building earlier this week. I am pleased to welcome and reiterate here the

recommendations made there * by representatives of international human rights groups, Jewish communities, and anti-racism groups to OSCE states to

- “establish a mechanism for monitoring, reporting and follow up by states in implementing the commitments” of Copenhagen and to
- “develop a system for monitoring, and registering anti-Semitism incidents . . . building upon international human rights standards.”

Statistics, monitoring, reporting publicly and regularly about compliance and violations are essential to realize any serious human rights commitment.

In accord with those recommendations, we emphasize the need for:

- the creation of a mechanism within OSCE, perhaps in the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), to monitor and report regularly on anti-Semitism and the implementation of the Copenhagen commitments.
- the review of this information on compliance by OSCE states on a regular basis.
- the convening of a regular supplementary Human Dimension meeting next year to undertake that review.

In closing, we reiterate, when it comes to antisemitism, remember, “It’s not hooliganism - - it’s human rights abuse.”

* see document PC.DEL/614/03, 19 June 2003