



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Address by the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Katherine Brucker
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
February 1, 2024

Ambassador Gras, welcome to the Permanent Council. The United States is grateful to Croatia for serving as the Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, or IHRA, and appreciates your committed leadership. The bitter lessons of the Holocaust must guide us in our present-day OSCE work. History tells us that hatred, if left unchecked, can lead to terrible human catastrophes, for communities, for countries, for entire regions and for the wider world.

As President Biden said in commemoration last week:

“We join nations around the world ... to mourn one of the darkest chapters in human history, when six million Jews were systematically targeted and murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators in the Holocaust ... We also grieve the Roma, Sinti, Slavs, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ individuals, racial minorities, and political dissidents who were abused or killed. And we honor the courage of survivors and the heroism of people who bravely stood up to the Nazis, risking everything to save innocent lives.”

To honor the memories of those who perished in the Holocaust and all who fought the evil of Nazism, we must all resolve to combat antisemitism, including Holocaust denial and distortion, and other forms of hatred in our world today.

To do this effectively, it is essential that governments, law enforcement, and the public know how to recognize the many contemporary forms this hatred takes. This is why the United States has embraced IHRA’s working definition of antisemitism, including its examples, and puts them into practice. We encourage all 23 participating States that have not yet done so to do the same. And we applaud the Chairman-in-Office’s Tolerance Representatives and ODIHR for putting the definition into practical use as they conduct their essential work.

As noted in the IHRA definition, Holocaust denial and distortion are among the many forms that contemporary antisemitism takes. For example, it is obscene that the Kremlin tries to manipulate the history of the Holocaust and the Second World War to justify its aggression against democratic Ukraine and to further its geopolitical ambitions.

Today, only about 245,000 survivors of the Holocaust are still alive to bear witness to the horrors they endured. Unfortunately, surveys in both the United States and Europe show that an increasing number of people – especially those between the ages 18 and 29 –

believe the Holocaust was either greatly exaggerated or entirely fabricated. Combating Holocaust denial and distortion and promoting Holocaust education are essential to reversing this trend and countering current-day antisemitism. At a time when malign actors can spread antisemitic messages and disinformation online with unprecedented speed and reach, it is especially urgent to teach new generations the truth about the Holocaust and empower them to counter antisemitic lies with facts.

Antisemitism is not, unfortunately, a distant memory, but an alarming and dangerous daily reality. Organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League have recorded a dramatic increase in antisemitic incidents since the horrific October 7 terrorist attacks against Israel. In fairness, we must all take a moment to be introspective. In the United States alone, Jews have experienced an average of nearly 34 antisemitic incidents per day. Vandals have desecrated and defaced synagogues, Jewish cemeteries, and Holocaust memorials throughout Europe. This is deeply disturbing.

The United States commends the authorities in the many countries that have taken steps to safeguard Jewish communities and create environments in which all people can freely practice their religion without fear. We urge all governments to take the security of Jewish communities seriously and to use all resources at their disposal to ensure the safety and security of these communities, including appropriate investigation, prosecution, and punishment for those who commit antisemitic hate crimes. It is more important than ever that governments collect disaggregated hate crime data and that they share it with ODIHR.

As Secretary Blinken said, “It’s no accident that people who seek to create instability and undermine democracy often try to cast doubt on the Holocaust. They want to blur the line between truth and lies. They want to use disinformation and conspiracy theories to gain power. And they want to provoke hate – against Jewish people, and more broadly against refugees and asylum-seekers, people of color, LGBTQI+ people – anyone who has been targeted for violence and dehumanized because of who they are.”

It is precisely because the United States recognizes antisemitism as both a human rights concern and a national security threat that the Biden-Harris Administration released the first ever U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism in May 2023. As we developed this document, we were informed by the European Union’s important strategy. We can all learn from one another. Our new strategy is the most comprehensive and ambitious U.S. government effort to counter antisemitism in our nation’s history. It calls for increasing awareness and understanding of antisemitism, improving safety for Jewish communities, reversing the normalization of antisemitism, and building coalitions across communities to fight hate. Essential components of the strategy are to increase awareness and education in schools, communities, and the workplace about both antisemitism, including the Holocaust, and Jewish American heritage. We urge all participating States that have not yet done so to adopt strategies outlining their approach to countering antisemitism and ensuring that their Jewish populations are able to live and practice their faith without fear for their safety.

Once again, I want to thank you and Croatia for your important, principled efforts on Holocaust remembrance. We look forward to working with the United Kingdom as the next IHRA Chair.

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