



UNITED STATES COMMISSION *on* INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

USCIRF HEARING SUMMARY: **ANTI-SEMITISM**

January 2020

Tony Perkins
Chair

Gayle Manchin
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Nadine Maenza
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Commissioners

Gary Bauer

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USCIRF's Mission

To advance international freedom of religion or belief, by independently assessing and unflinchingly confronting threats to this fundamental right.

Global Efforts to Combat Anti-Semitism

On January 8, 2020, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) held a hearing in the U.S. Senate on [Global Efforts to Combat Anti-Semitism](#) to consider how governments can respond to the rising levels of harassment, discrimination, and violence directed at the Jewish community around the world. The hearing, led by USCIRF's Chair, [Tony Perkins](#), convened an [array of witnesses](#) who provided multiple perspectives on the issue and recommendations for the U.S. government and the international community.



Witnesses at the hearing provided recommendations to counter anti-Semitism and discussed how the international community can more effectively ensure that the global Jewish community can worship freely and without fear.

Senator Jacky Rosen, Co-Chair of the Senate Bipartisan Taskforce for Combating Anti-Semitism, opened the hearing by calling on all people to stand together on this issue, saying “When anti-Semitism and bigotry occur, it is critical that we do not allow ideological or partisan thinking to blur our perspective of what is right and what is wrong because combating hate is always and must always stay a nonpartisan issue.”

Commissioner Gary Bauer agreed with the Senator in his opening remarks saying, “Let us not permit anti-Semitism to become a political football in the United States.

If someone on the right engages in anti-Semitism, those of us on the right should aggressively confront that individual. If anti-Semitism comes from the progressive left, the first responsibility to deal with it comes from the leaders of the progressive movement, who should boldly get it out of their movement.”

The United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Religion or Belief, [Ahmed Shaheed](#) gave a brief overview of his recent [special report on anti-Semitism](#) and enumerated his top recommendations for governments, including the United States.

- Dr. Shaheed suggested that foreign governments take a human rights-based approach that acknowledges different forms of intolerance and takes comprehensive steps to address cross-cutting issues through legislation, law enforcement, data collection, and the monitoring of hate crimes.
- He appealed for governments to adopt the [“Working Definition of Antisemitism”](#) developed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). With its various examples, the IHRA working definition offers the most comprehensive understanding of anti-Semitism and is a useful tool for law enforcement and government entities.
- He called on social media companies to take reports about cyberhate seriously, enforce terms of service and community rules that prohibit the dissemination of hateful messages, provide more transparency of their efforts to combat cyberhate, and offer user-friendly mechanisms and procedures for reporting and addressing hateful content.
- He recommended that the UN Secretary General should consider appointing a senior-level focal point within his office with responsibility for engaging with Jewish communities and monitoring and reporting on anti-Semitism worldwide.



Panelists Dr. Ahmed Shaheed and Elan Carr provided overviews of the UN and U.S. government’s roles in monitoring and speaking out against anti-Semitism worldwide.

The U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism [Elan Carr](#) spoke about the State Department’s efforts to fight anti-Semitism.

- Special Envoy Carr described the numerous bilateral and multilateral meetings in which he has participated, with the goal of creating coordinated and consistent responses to anti-Semitism among allied countries.
- He noted the importance of the U.S. government urging foreign governments to provide adequate security for Jewish communities and Jewish institutions, pressing them to investigate and prosecute anti-Semitic hate crimes, and demanding that they remove anti-Semitic content from textbooks and confront and condemn hate speech, especially on the internet and increasingly on the dark web.
- In response to a question from Commissioner Bauer about anti-Semitism as a policy priority of the Iranian government, Special Envoy Carr stated that Iran is the “world’s chief trafficker in anti-Semitism” and that “Anti-Semitism isn’t ancillary to the ideology of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is a central foundational component of the ideology of that regime, and we have to be clear about it, and we have to confront it and call it out for what it is.”



(From left to right) USCIRF Vice Chairs Nadine Maenza and Gayle Manchin, and Chair Tony Perkins.

[Dr. Deborah Lipstadt](#), Dorot Professor of Holocaust Studies at Emory University, explained the contradictory and irrational nature of anti-Semites' and conspiracy theorists' ideologies, along with historical and contemporary examples of anti-Semitism.

- Dr. Lipstadt noted with concern that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a notorious forgery from early 20th century Russia used by the Nazis to justify their anti-Semitic campaign, is widely available throughout the world in multiple languages, including on Amazon.
- She also discussed a more recent iteration of anti-Semitism: Holocaust denial. Deniers, without evidence, assert that Jews were able to plant evidence, doctor documents, arrange for "survivors" to give false testimony, and convince the Allies to hold war crimes trials that falsely charged defendants with having committed genocide.

[Sharon Nazarian](#), the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) Senior Vice President of International Affairs, described her portfolio and provided an overview of ADL's work to monitor and combat anti-Semitism abroad.

- Ms. Nazarian recommended that the international community: (1) promote detailed and comprehensive public reporting on anti-Semitic incidents and all other forms of hate violence and discrimination; (2) ensure there are specific senior officials tasked with combating anti-Semitism and other forms of hate; (3) mandate hate crime prevention and response training in law enforcement education; (4) ensure that school curricula include education about the Holocaust, modern-day anti-Semitism, and inclusive anti-bias training; and (5) vigorously combat violent extremist groups that perpetrate attacks on Jews or other communities, whether from radical segments of the right wing, the left wing, or other religious or ethnic communities.

[Ambassador Akbar Ahmed](#), Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies and Professor of International Relations at American University, discussed his efforts to facilitate interfaith dialogue between the Abrahamic faiths, with the goals of reducing tensions and promoting understanding between practitioners of each faith.

- Ambassador Ahmed stressed the necessity of understanding people of different faiths through scholarships, visiting houses of worship, discussions with scholars, and interfaith activities.
- He stressed that the media is blamed for creating controversy but can be an ally for promoting a better understanding of each other and provide a platform for interfaith dialogue.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center's [Rabbi Abraham Cooper](#), Director of the Global Social Action Agenda, discussed the role of social media companies in moderating unprotected hate speech on their platforms and Iran's state policy of Holocaust denial, as well as recommendations for USCIRF's 2020 Annual Report:

- Rabbi Cooper recommended that USCIRF add France, Sweden, Germany, and the United Kingdom to its list of Tier 2 countries for anti-Semitic activity. His concerns included France's release of the murderer of a Jewish kindergarten teacher, the alarming increase of anti-Semitic incidents in Sweden, Germany's refusal to designate Hezbollah a terrorist organization, and the increase in anti-Semitic sentiment in the Labour Party in the United Kingdom.



Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV) opened the hearing with observations about growing anti-Semitism and the need for an appropriate US foreign policy response. She is joined by Chair Tony Perkins (left) and Commissioners Gary Bauer and Johnnie Moore (right).

Chair Perkins ended the hearing by concluding, “This is not just a problem for the Jewish community. If anything,

they are at the tip of the spear. What we see happening to the global Jewish community is something that will affect every religious community in every part of the world.”

USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government should:

1. Ensure that combating anti-Semitism is a key priority of the International Religious Freedom Alliance once it is launched;
2. Encourage foreign governments to create positions similar to the U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism and urge the United Nations Secretary-General to create a position in his office to engage with Jewish communities worldwide and monitor and report on anti-Semitism globally; and
3. Provide technical support to foreign law enforcement officials to update and standardize hate crime reporting procedures to ensure the accurate collection and dissemination of data on anti-Semitic and other hate crimes.

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