

Trip to Venezuela & Argentina

October 19-22, I visited Venezuela to meet with the shrinking Jewish community in Caracas. Graffiti I saw on the streets echoed comments heard everywhere I went— namely that President Chavez controls everything, that there is no public debate on complex issues, and the number one concern is community and personal security.

Under extremely tight security, I met representatives from Confederacion de Asociaciones Israelitas de Venezuela (CAIV), representatives from B'nai Brith, the Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi of Venezuela Hebraica, and the Canadian Ambassador -- who provides consular services for Israel since Israel was forced out of the country. I spoke with students at the Jewish day school, and at Andres Bello University, and visited Tifereth Israel synagogue, which was vandalized in January 2009. Almost everyone I met with had family or close



At Tifereth Israel synagogue with US Charge d'Affaires John Caulfield. Tifereth was the site of an attack of anti-Semitic vandalism in January 2009.

friends killed, kidnapped or mugged, and Jewish businesses are regularly expropriated (as, for that matter, are non-Jewish owned businesses).

Based on my conversations, I would say the local Jewish community doesn't feel the Venezuelan people participate in anti-Semitic activities, but, rather, they are concerned about government-sponsored expressions of anti-Semitism and what those might provoke. (If interested in further information, check out the State Department's International Religious Freedom report.) Sadly,

most of the youth, Jewish and non-Jewish, with whom I spoke see little future for themselves in Venezuela. This sense was brought home to me when I saw the line of visa applicants outside our embassy, which receives over 1200 visa applications a day.

While in Caracas, I met with four National Assembly Deputies. While they each repeated the government line and are part of President Chavez's party, they did express eagerness to reignite dialogue with members of our Congress. I also spoke with the Foreign Ministry's Director for North American Affairs, and discussed with her the feelings of insecurity, isolation and vulnerability the Jewish community reported to me due to anti-Semitism in state-sponsored media, websites, blogs, and public statements.

Argentina

October 22-26 I was in Argentina. Buenos Aires is a vibrant city, full of life and safety. I visited the Holocaust Museum and the La Tablada Cemetery, as well as met with many Jewish organizations including B'nai Brith, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, AMIA, the Joint Distribution Committee's L'Dor V'Dor Center, DAIA, the International Task Force on Holocaust Education (ITF), and the Latin American Jewish Congress. I also met with Bridge Builders Interfaith Dialogue, which our Embassy funds.

In Argentina, the Jewish community indicated they felt more secure than before and that they have a good relationship with the government. Concern was expressed about recent comments by some government officials that were insensitive or outright anti-Semitic, and some people worried about the relationship between the government and Iran. I was able to raise these concerns in several meetings, including conversations with Foreign Minister Hector Timerman, the National Institute Against Discrimination, and another with the AMIA Special Prosecutor Alberto Nisman.

I believe the unresolved AMIA bombing, which occurred 16 years ago, will remain an open wound for both the Jewish community and the entire country until the perpetrators can be tried. During her speech at the UN in September, President Kirschner asked Iran to agree to a trial in a third country, since the accused organizers and perpetrators are Iranians. Iran rejected that offer, and while I discussed the response to it with the Argentine government, it has not issued a response to date.



The board of the Holocaust Museum in Buenos Aires invited Hannah to a private tour of their collection. Here, they are showing

her the original fraudulent passport that Adolf Eichmann used to illegally enter Argentina in 1950.

Confronting Holocaust Denial

In August, I was invited to participate in an interfaith delegation bringing a group of American imam's to former concentration camps in Germany and Poland.

As Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, I went for a very simple reason: Holocaust denial is growing in many places, especially in Muslim countries. Holocaust denial doesn't just feed anti-Semitism; Holocaust denial is a form of anti-Semitism.

I felt that being with leaders of the American Muslim communities could help all of us better understand how history's most horrific crime of genocide, an enlightened country's building of efficient killing factories, came to take place. I also thought it would allow me to learn from them how it is that Holocaust denial can be growing in so many Muslim circles.

This was a historic trip. As soon as the imams decided to pray by the Dachau sculpture commemorating the six million Jewish lives exterminated, I knew history was being made. When they prostrated to the ground in prayer, every tourist, every passer-by, stopped in their tracks to witness the moment. Their prayer was also near the "Never Again" sign and I believe it became a symbol to all of us travelers that we had a special responsibility to ensure 'never again' has powerful meaning.

Another historic moment for me was when we walked out of the gas chamber at Auschwitz. A guard brought out a table and a large book and pen for these special guests, these dignitaries to sign. Usually dignitaries sign their name and date. But each of our imams took quite a while to write something meaningful in the book. Most wrote in Arabic so that any national leader in the world that would sign it would know that the imams were here, bearing witness and bearing the burden of that witness.

It was clear from questions the imams posed to our guides and the survivors we met with, that they had a sincere interest to understand how this could happen. Horrid violence continues to occur around the world, and hatred seems to grow daily, but it was clear to all of us that this history is unique because never before and not since Auschwitz has there ever been the construction of a place built and designed to exterminate an entire people, efficiently and effectively.

The most historic moment of the trip for me was in Munich when leaving a Turkish mosque, these religious leaders read aloud a statement that they had written collectively. Recognizing their unique responsibilities as leaders in their communities, they condemned without reservation Holocaust denial and all other forms of anti-Semitism.

After the trip, I participated in a hearing held by Congressman Keith Ellison, where I joined the Muslim leaders in testifying about our experience.

November 18-19 I will attend the first international conference on anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial.



American Imams stop to pray during a tour of Dachau

Twining of Mosques and Synagogues

A truly outstanding case of inter-religious outreach took place on November 5th through 7th across twenty-two countries and four continents. **The Foundation for Ethnic Understanding** (FFEU), in coordination with the **Islamic Society of North America** (ISNA) and the **World Jewish Congress**, organized the third annual **Weekend of Twining of Mosques and Synagogues**. It was the world's largest gathering of Jews and Muslims. Tens of thousands of Muslims and Jews met in synagogues and mosques for inter-religious dialogues, youth meetings, discussions on how to fight negative stereotypes, tea drinking, and much more. The goal is to build relationships, reconciliation, and cooperation between the two faiths. Check out the details and information on similar initiatives at <https://www.ffeu.org/index.htm>



Memorial to those who died in the AMIA bombing

ONE YEAR IN OFFICE

Friends and colleagues,

November 2010 marks my one year anniversary in office as the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism. During the past year acting in this capacity, I have noticed six distinct and troubling trends in anti-Semitism occurring around the world:

- Traditional anti-Semitism still continues, such as the infamous blood libel fabrication, and adherents to the forgery *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

- Holocaust denial.
- Holocaust glorification; calling for a new Holocaust to finish the job.
- Holocaust relativism, in which the Holocaust is equated with suffering under other repressions.
- Anti-Israel rhetoric becomes anti-Semitism when Israel is demonized, delegitimized, and held to different standard than other nations.
- And fear of “the other”—be it Jews, Roma, Muslims, compounded by growing nationalist movements.

ACTIVITIES IN NOVEMBER, 2010

Inter-Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism, Ottawa, Canada

Parliamentarians and experts from over 40 countries gathered in Ottawa from November 7- 9 to take part in the 2010 Conference on Combating Anti-Semitism. The conference, hosted by the Inter-Parliamentary Coalition for Combating Anti-Semitism (ICCA) with sponsorship by the Government of Canada, was the largest of its kind. Over three days delegates explored data and exchanged best practices to learn about the most effective ways to combat anti-Semitism around the world.

International Conference on Anti-Semitism and Holocaust Denial, Dublin, Ireland

This conference from November 18- 19, sponsored by the Holocaust Education Trust of Ireland, will address the core issues of anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial, and will include challenges on the themes of denial in general, the psychology of denial and myth. The program for the conference demonstrates its interdisciplinary nature: anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial, History, Philosophy, Legal and Ethical dimensions.

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