

March 2012

**From the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism (SEAS)**

## **The SEAS Monitor**

Dear Friends,

I hope you are well. This is the March issue of *The SEAS Monitor*. It covers my activities during the month of March. *The Monitor* is a way for me to keep you informed about my work as the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism. Please click here for [previous copies](#).

I encourage you to “Like” my page on Facebook: “Hannah Rosenthal, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism.” When you “Like” a page on Facebook, it will be listed under your “Activities and Interests” tab, which can be found in your Info section. If my page is updated, the update will appear on your News Feed on your homepage.

Be sure to follow our weekly posting entitled “Here’s What We’re Hearing: Anti-Semitism News Updates.” It is through these updates that we monitor global incidents of anti-Semitism. “Here’s What We’re Hearing: Jewish World News Updates” contains relevant news regarding positive efforts to promote tolerance and inter-religious cooperation.

For those of you will celebrate Passover, I wish you a sweet, healthy, and peaceful Pesach. For those of you who will celebrate Easter, I wish you the same. For those of you who celebrate other spring festivals, the same! To those who do not mark this time of year, I hope spring brings renewal and life to all your days.

Please enjoy and keep in touch.

Warm regards,  
Hannah

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**EVENTS:**

### **Holocaust Museum Next Generation**

On March 2 in New York, I was interviewed by Julianna Goldman, a reporter for Bloomberg Television, before 300 of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's Next Generation supporters. The subject of the discussion was the importance of combating hatred and intolerance.



Courtesy of Michael Priest Photography

I talked about how being a child of a Holocaust survivor fuels my passion to combat anti-Semitism, as well as the six trends I have seen since I have held this job. I also spoke of anti-Semitism coming out of the Middle East and beamed via satellite to Europe and other parts of the world. We live in an age of technology. It is important for us to utilize the same technology that is used to promote hate to promote our message of respect to our youth. I commended the Museum on translating its website into 12 languages to assist with fighting anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial.

## **“Give Bigotry No Sanction” at Facing History and Ourselves**

*“It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights.”*

– George Washington

On March 26, I traveled to Boston, Massachusetts to speak at an event hosted by the non-governmental organization Facing History and Ourselves. Titled “Give Bigotry No Sanction: The George Washington Letter Exchange,” Michael Feldberg, the Executive Director of The George Washington Institute of Religious Freedom opened the event and Laura Tavares, Senior Program Associate of Facing History and Ourselves, introduced Special Representative to Muslim Communities (SRMC) Farah Pandith and me to the audience of educators, members of the public, and board members.



In 1790, President George Washington received a letter from Moses Seixas, warden of the Touro Synagogue, seeking assurance of religious freedom for Jews. In his reply to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island, Washington stated, “It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights.” To me, the essence of Washington’s statement is that tolerance was necessary but not sufficient for a government. Washington wanted to move past tolerance to acceptance and mutual respect. The letter writing represented the first time that a country began protecting the Jewish community. Our Constitution says it will actively protect the rights of all religions. Farah and I also discussed our *2012 Hours Against Hate* campaign to stop bigotry and promote respect across lines of culture, religion, tradition, class, and gender.

## **13<sup>th</sup> Annual Mosaic Luncheon**

The Jewish Federation of Greater Austin hosted me as the keynote speaker of their 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Mosaic Luncheon on March 29 in Austin, Texas. 600 leaders of the Austin community listened as I spoke about recent events of anti-Semitism, and how the rest of the world is responding. The local paper had recently printed a letter to the editor denying that the Holocaust ever happened. So descriptions of increase in Holocaust denial and Holocaust glorification rang profoundly to the group. I discussed the importance of condemning this and all forms of anti-Semitism swiftly and strongly.

## INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH:

### England

This summer, the world's attention will turn to London for the Summer Olympics. As I reported in the [January-February Monitor](#), the London Olympic Organizing Committee has approved *2012 Hours Against Hate* to spread the message of tolerance during the Olympic and Paralympic Games this summer.



On March 5, Special Representative Farah Pandith and I traveled to London to launch *2012 Hours Against Hate* for the London Games. We met with Ruth Turner, head of the Tony Blair Interfaith Foundation and discussed how the Foundation could get involved with *2012 Hours Against Hate* through its network of schools around the world.

Farah and I also attended a conference sponsored by Faith Forums for London and the Fayre Share Foundation, two UK NGOs. There we met with some of the British NGOs that are leading in the *2012 Hours Against Hate/2012 Hours for Unity* campaign, including the Three Faiths Forum, ReneCassin Foundation, the CEDAR Network of Muslim professionals, and the Phoenix Group. Some of the NGO projects underway for the campaign include: encouraging 12 people to volunteer 20 hours of their time; feeding 2,012 people at an interfaith iftar dinner during Ramadan; creating a day of programs for schoolchildren combining volunteer projects with interfaith assemblies; and assisting in the production and performance of a theater piece highlighting the discrimination faced by Roma. We encouraged this type of creative participation and offered our support.



Launch of *2012 Hours Against Hate* with British NGOs partners in London

### Greece

We then went to Athens, Greece on March 6-7. Farah and I presented *2012 Hours Against Hate* in a well-received series of meetings with the Greek Ministries of Education, Justice,

and Foreign Affairs; students of international relations; and the Hellenic Olympic Committee and Olympic Truce. Farah and I were interviewed by Mosaiko, a website that is an initiative of the U.S. Embassy in Athens to help connect U.S. and Greek citizens.



Special Representative Pandith and I meet with students about *2012 Hours Against Hate*.

We were also interviewed by the major Greek daily newspaper, *Kathimerini*, which covers Greece, Cyprus, and Southeastern Europe. Despite the difficult economic times, Greek officials were receptive to the *2012 Hours Against Hate* message, expressing several ideas to make the campaign their own.



Special Representative Pandith, Athens DCM Virginia Bennett, and me at lunch hosted by Greek Ambassador Aliferi.

## **Albania**

On March 8-9, Farah and I visited Albania, where I thanked the government and people for saving Jews during the Holocaust. We met with Prime Minister Berisha, Minister of Culture Bumci, State Committee on Cults Chairman Hasanaj, and Tirana's Mayor Basha. There were cameras and press inquiries everywhere we went. This unexpected limelight was a great

opportunity to get the word out about *2012 Hours Against Hate* and for me to thank the Albanian people for rescuing Jews.

We had a roundtable discussion with leaders of Albania's Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic and evangelical communities. Representatives from the Bektashi Muslims, who have their World Headquarters in Albania, also participated. We also met with representatives of Tirana's Jewish community and toured the site of Tirana's planned Holocaust memorial. At a very special dinner hosted by Ambassador Arvizu, we met relatives of families who saved Jews from Nazi persecution. Hearing their stories was moving and profound. They do not want recognition because it was "just the right thing to do."



(L-R) U.S. Ambassador to Albania Arvizu, Special Representative Pandith, me, and Prime Minister Berisha

In addition to the interfaith roundtable, we had separate meetings with leaders of the Bektashi and Albanian Islamic Communities, the NGO Institute for Democracy and Mediation, and a presentation and discussion with students and faculty from Madrassa Haxhi Mahmud Dauti as well as a group of university students. In addition to taking press questions at each of our stops, we were interviewed by local television station Top Channel.



Proposed site for Tirana's Holocaust Memorial

During the three days we were in Albania, the front page top fold story was about *Mein Kampf* being printed for the first time in Albanian. When the media continually asked what I thought about this, I answered that we, in the U.S., treasure the First Amendment, which protects freedom of expression—even if it is rude or full of hatred. It is not enough to just protect speech. We must condemn hateful speech.



Paparazzi



Discussion with university students

While there, I posted an appreciation for how Albania rescued Jews during the Holocaust. You may access my DipNote blog by clicking [here](#).

### **Interfaith Roundtable**

On March 28, Deputy Special Representative to Muslim Communities (SRMC) Adnan Kifayat, SRMC Assistant Sarah King, and I participated in a discussion with 22 Muslim and Jewish leaders from seven Latin American countries: Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay. They came to Washington with the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding for an intensive two-day conference on Muslim-Jewish Relations. I spoke about my role as the Special Envoy and introduced the leaders to the *2012 Hours Against Hate* campaign. I also expressed the importance of working together across religious lines. In response, one participant, a rabbi from Buenos Aires, described two TV documentaries on Muslim and Jewish life. And there was a surprise! The Jewish documentary was moderated by a Muslim, and the Muslim documentary by a Jew. Some very important inter-religious work is being done, and it was music to my ears.

### **AT THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE:**

#### **U.S. Ambassadors to Sweden, Latvia, Norway, and Lithuania**

During the Chief of Missions Conference at the State Department, I was able to meet privately with Ambassador Mark Brzezinski (Sweden), Ambassador Judith Garber (Latvia), Ambassador Barry White (Norway), and Ambassador Anne Derse (Lithuania). We discussed my plans to visit Latvia, Sweden, and Norway in April and May. I have been to Lithuania several times, and the U.S. Embassy there works closely with the government on anti-Semitism and Holocaust issues. Lithuania just completed an entire year of focus and commemoration of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

## **Ambassador of Turkey to ITF**

On March 27, I met with Ambassador Ertan Tezgor, Head of the Turkish Observer Delegation to the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research (ITF). Ambassador Tezgor outlined projects Turkey has developed for 2012, such as a conference on Jewish academics who fled to Turkey from Germany during World War II, an international interfaith conference, and opening the Anne Frank House exhibit. Turkey is also planning teacher training and to add new Holocaust education curricula in its schools in the future.

I also raised the recently aired Turkish TV ad with footage of Hitler telling men to be “real men” and use a certain shampoo. Ambassador Tezgor reported the government worked behind the scenes in getting it removed. The ad was condemned by many media outlets in Turkey.

### **INTERNET OUTREACH:**

#### **Facebook**

 [www.facebook.com/SERosenthal](http://www.facebook.com/SERosenthal)

Once you are signed into Facebook, search for my name and title: Hannah Rosenthal, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat anti-Semitism. The “Like” button is at the top of my page and has a thumbs-up symbol. The symbol disappears once you have “Liked” the page.

#### **State.gov**

Aside from following me on Facebook, I encourage all of you to visit my page on the Department of State’s website ([www.state.gov/j/drl/seas](http://www.state.gov/j/drl/seas)). You can quickly find my page by clicking [here](#). Or you can follow these instructions: Begin by going to the Department of State’s homepage: [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov). Then, please click on the “Democracy and Global Affairs” tab in the white toolbar. Then, please click on “Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL),” and then click on “Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism” in the left vertical column. Here you will information about my office, as well as remarks, press releases, past issues of *The Monitor*, photos, and information about the *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign.

#### **HumanRights.gov**

I also encourage you to visit HumanRights.gov, which is the U.S. government’s official website for human rights related information. You can access the homepage [here](#), and you can access my personal page [here](#).

## **Twitter**

Please also follow me on twitter! You can find me at:  [@HannahAtState](https://twitter.com/HannahAtState).