

Worldwide Persecution of Jews

**Rep. Chris Smith, Co-Chairman
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
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Welcome to our witnesses – a stellar panel of representatives of our country’s most respected Jewish-American organization, and authoritative expertise and vast experience in combating antisemitism. Welcome *back* to Ted – Ted served with me together in Congress for 12 years, and he was a great partner in co-chairing the Congressional Task Force for Combating Antisemitism.

I have known many of you for a long time – Stacy, I remember you first testified for me over twenty years ago. I also want to Rabbi Andy Baker, who for over 20 years has served the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, an intergovernmental organization of 57 countries, as Personal Representative on Combating Antisemitism.

I chaired my first hearing on antisemitism in 1996, including an important series of hearings in the early 2000s, where we identified the developing cancer of antisemitism, warned of what it could lead to, and launched congressional and governmental initiatives to combat it.

This is now the 17th congressional hearing I’ve chaired on antisemitism. Each of our witnesses, either personally or the organizations they represent, were involved in these hearings and this legislation and provided vital input to Congress on what we can do, with legislation, oversight, and funding to make our government more effective at combating antisemitism

Sadly, the crisis we warned about has, horrifically, re-emerged in recent years as one of signal scourges of our time. Now we need to hear from them again about what Congress and the U.S. government can do – because now we have tools for action, including the Office to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism and the Special Envoy position in the State Department.

This person and this office is the U.S. lead official in fighting antisemitism worldwide. It’s been built up by a series of great Special Envoys, including Elan Carr and Deborah Lipstadt. President Trump has nominated an outstanding man, Rabbi Yehuda Kaploun, to be his Special Envoy – I spent an hour with him a few

weeks ago. I believe he will be extraordinarily effective, have the full support of the president, and the resources he needs.

So this is a timely hearing – now is the time for input, as the administration is preparing to deal with global antisemitism in a very serious way.

In the days and weeks after October 7, 2023 the United States and the entire world has seen a terrifying explosion of the most vicious and often violent antisemitism.

That is to say, right after Hamas terrorists waged the deadliest attack on Jews since the Holocaust — slaughtering babies, committing sexual violence, burning whole families alive, taking over 250 civilians hostage, murdering more than 1,200 Israelis – the entire world saw a shockingly dramatic spike in antisemitism.

The slow-burning sickness of antisemitism can be seen right here – antisemitism spiked, globally, when Jews were victims of the deadliest antisemitic atrocity since the Holocaust. That is, the evil had been there all along, perhaps beneath the surface, so that an *atrocity* became, for many people, an occasion to vent *hatred* against the *victim*.

So one of the key issues for this hearing has to be – what have we seen, in respect of antisemitism, since October 7? Where has it increased? Among what people, and what forms is it taking?

In the **United States**, the explosion of antisemitism was most shocking elite university campuses, which saw violent riots and attacks.

Today we will talk about antisemitism in the United States. Though there were important congressional hearings on campus antisemitism and the shameful way university administrators had enabled it, we can depth to our understanding of antisemitism in the United States through the valuable and extensive reports recently issued by AJC and ADL.

We will also talk about the worldwide aspect – in many ways the horrors we have seen in the U.S. has been mirrored in other countries. Yet there are also some important differences – and there are certainly differences in government responses.

In many cases, there is no government response to the spread, in society, of antisemitic incitement and rhetoric. In many other cases, what is worse, governments or elected officials themselves engage in incitement or actively foster antisemitism. So we'll talk about how that has changed since October 2023, what other governments and the U.S. government have and should do in response.

Europe in particular has become a cauldron of antisemitism, at least in many cities, including Germany, where the number of antisemitic incidents has skyrocketed, synagogues need a very high level of protection, and Jews once again fear for their safety on the street. Similar things can be said about many cities in the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Ireland.

In **Latin America** antisemitism has also increased – and whereas in Europe we often have the problem of government silence or inactivity in the face of violent antisemitism, in Latin America we have governments who promote antisemitism in countries where it has been relatively weak.

In Brazil, the antisemitic incitement of President Lula should come as no surprise. He has been destroying democracy, jailing political opponents, systematically removing his political opponents from the internet, aligning his country with Iran and China. And he has compared Israel to Nazi Germany and accused it of deliberately killing women and children.

In Colombia, leftwing president Gustavo Petro began comparing Israel to the Nazis on October 9 – only two days after the slaughter of 1,500 Israelis.

In **eastern and southern Asia** Jewish communities are small and antisemitism relatively weak, but one ominous development deserves notice – **China**. In China, social media is heavily monitored and tightly controlled by the government. And antisemitic tropes, including the vicious ones that compare Israel to the Nazis, have been allowed to flourish.

We have our work cut out for us – but we also have good tools. The Special Envoy and the Office to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, created by legislation in 2004, and enhanced and elevated in 2021, by another law of mine, is going to be very ably led by Rabbi Kaploun, and I'm convinced fully-supported by President Trump.

I very much look forward to your input today – Congress has benefitted greatly from your advice, and I'm sure that will continue today.