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American Jewish Committee (AJC) 2011 Global Forum
Excerpts of Remarks by Rep. Chris Smith
April 27, 2011

Whether it be strengthening support for Israel or Jews worldwide or confronting the Iranian threat or pushing reconciliation in Sudan, or opposing the hypocrisy of Syria's all-to-serious bid to join the already discredited U.N. Human Rights Council, the American Jewish Committee has a record of unparalleled competence and accomplishment.

So I am especially grateful to receive the AJC Congressional Award tonight from an organization that has made a huge, positive difference in the world.

David Harris, thank you for your amazing leadership, talent, and vision.

Ken Stern has literally written the book on fighting anti-Semitism.

And Rabbi Andy Baker leads all 56 countries of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in combating anti-Semitism. He too is amazing. And gets results. It was a privilege to join Rabbi Baker—again—this time in Prague four weeks ago at the OSCE conference that focused on confronting anti-Semitism in public discourse.

In 1982, during my first term in Congress, Davis Harris, Mark Levin, Jerry Goodman, and a few others put together a congressional delegation trip to Moscow and Leningrad to meet refuseniks in their homes and to engage Soviet leaders.

For hours on end, our delegation heard stories of Soviet physical and mental abuse, systematic harassment, gulags and psychiatric prisons and an array of wanton brutal acts of anti-Semitism. Just ask former refusenik Sam Klinger.

The Soviet system, militantly atheistic and morally incoherent, wouldn't let Jews leave, but didn't want Jews to stay either—a bizarre paradox.

In Dr. Alexander Lerner's Moscow apartment, our delegation heard Natan Sharansky's mother admonish us to do more for her son, for she feared his life was in jeopardy.

The deceit, lies, bluster, threats, and doubletalk by Soviet officials was both numbing and motivating.

Many of us got angry and I for one decided in Moscow that I was “all in.”

Good intentions, by scores of Congressman, Senators and even Presidents, however, needed direction.

It is clear to me that absent the expertise, well-honed strategies, reliable information, and actionable intelligence provided by AJC and others, little would have been accomplished.

In human rights work, hyperbole and falsehood are lethal. The bad guys know when you're faking it, or acting out of ignoble intentions.

The Jewish organizations turned advocacy into success, in large part, by linking human rights with trade.

The incalculable wisdom of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment—linking Most Favored Nation (MFN) status with Soviet Jewish emigration—was pure genius and enabled the freedom of more than 657,000 Soviet Jews between 1975 and 1991, alone—1.4 million over forty years.

And not only that, but the success of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment revolutionized human rights policy *for the better* on multiple fronts.

All but the most naive know that diplomacy and moral suasion has only limited appeal or efficacy in dealings with dictatorship.

Mere talk—especially the nicety of diplomatic chatter—is often cheap.

Jackson-Vanik proved that the judicious application of economic rewards and punishment yields positive human rights results—and freedoms for many who are oppressed.

I have authored numerous human rights laws over the years, including the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, 2003 and 2005—laws designed to combat sex and labor trafficking. The lessons learned from Jackson-Vanik are the reason why I—and others, despite considerable opposition—insisted that foreign aid penalties be applied to nations complicit in or

indifferent to human trafficking. Predictably, such linkage has and is working well to mitigate and combat this modern day manifestation of slavery.

Linkage tells bullies we mean business!

In March of 1996, I chaired a Congressional hearing that focused in part on Louis Farrakhan's so-called world friendship tour to rogue nations including Sudan and Libya.

Congressman Tom Lantos, Ranking Member of my human rights subcommittee at the time, ominously noted that "... words have consequences...(and)...it is important for all of us to understand that the most monstrous events in human history did not begin with actions; they began with words, words of hate, bigotry, monstrous lies, calls for murder of innocent people and destruction of innocent communities... ."

I thought of that hearing and Tom Lantos when I heard Minister Farrakhan this past February describe Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi as "my brother...my friend" just as Gadhafi was slaughtering his own people in the street.

I thought of Tom Lantos' words as Minister Farrakhan pushed two books on slavery during his speech that AJC's Ken Stern has compared to the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion."

This month Minister Farrakhan continued his anti-Semitic rant at nearby Howard University noting that he wanted to be heard "unfiltered through the corporate-controlled, Jewish-controlled, Zionist-controlled media of the United States of America."

Despite serious ongoing efforts to expose and combat anti-Semitism, this oldest and most nefarious form of hate continues to grow and morph and manifest in a myriad of ways.

According to the U.S. Justice Department Hate Crimes statistics for 2009, there were 1,376 hate crimes motivated by religious bias.

Even though Jews make up less than 2 percent of the U.S. population, 70 percent of the offences were anti-Jewish.

At home and abroad, much remains to be done.