

*Written Testimony for the Record*

Testimony of Paul Goldenberg

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Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

**“Anti-Semitism Across Borders”**

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Good Morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. My name is Paul Goldenberg. I currently serve as a senior advisor to the United States Department of Homeland Security as a member of the Secretary’s Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC). In that capacity, I served on the Countering Violent Extremism Sub-Committee, Co-Chair the Foreign Fighter Task Force and am former Vice-Chair of the Faith-Based Advisory & Communications Sub-Committee. For the past decade, I now proudly serve as the National Director of the Secure Community Network (SCN), led by Michael Siegal, the official national homeland security initiative of the American Jewish community, working under the auspices of The Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Mr. Chairman: thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the current state of affairs in Europe, specifically the increased levels of hate motivated incidents impacting Jewish communities. There has also been a wave of such incidents here in the U.S. and perpetrators on both sides of the Atlantic may be feeding each other.

Over the past two years, I have had the privilege of working closely with the Faith-Based Communities Security Program at Rutgers University, a leading edge initiative that seeks to protect and secure vulnerable populations in Europe, an effort generously funded by Rutgers Law Alumnus Paul Miller. As a part of this new initiative, and working under the leadership of former New Jersey Attorney General John Farmer, we have made countless trips in recent months overseas, traveling to multiple European cities. Since its inception, the program has conducted threat assessments throughout Europe, in France, the UK, Sweden, Denmark, Czech Republic, Belgium among others, as well as key cities across the United States, with the ultimate goal of producing operational recommendations to combat extremist violence against religious, minority and other vulnerable communities, and providing the literature and training to implement such best practices.

Through these trips, I have been able to gain a first-hand understanding of the current climate, hearing the concerns of Jewish communities who are under threat, and assessing what we can do to best assist them. Just two weeks ago I sat with the Chief Rabbi of Belgium in the Great Synagogue of Brussels, an institution that survived several wars and still stood strong after the Holocaust. A beautiful and celebrated structure that once again is surrounded by soldiers with

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assault rifles, this time; however, they serve not as an occupying and or threatening force, but as protectors of the community. Similar scenes are frequent in France, Denmark and other western nations.

Consider, the United Kingdom, there was a record number of anti-Semitic offenses recorded in 2016. The Community Security trust recorded 1,309 anti-Semitic incidents nationwide during that year, a 36% increase from the 960 recorded by CST in 2015. Previously, record high occurrences have been triggered by anti-Semitic reactions to sudden, specific ‘geopolitical events’ leading to temporary ‘spikes’ in occurrences. In contrast, there was no single, sudden trigger event in 2016. In 2014, for instance, there were 1,182 incidents recorded. Up until this year, this previous highest total coincided with a conflict between Israel and Hamas, which saw a global rise in anti-Semitic incidents. In contrast, however, there was no single, sudden trigger event in 2016, and the high number of incidents was spread uniformly through most of the year.

In Germany, according to the Coordination Forum for Countering Antisemitism (CFCA), anti-Semitism in Germany has increased in parallel to –as they note- the “general rise of far-right crime since the beginning of the migrant crisis.” The number of criminal investigations opened following attacks on Jews, Jewish property and hate speech against Jews amounted to 2,083 cases during 2015, an increase of 201% from the previous year.

A glimmer of hope seems to exist in France, following years of significant incidents and attacks, the same CFCA report notes a “significant decline of anti-Semitic incidents in 2016 after 2015 has been characterized by a rise in anti-Semitic incidents.” Experts attribute the decline to a strong and swift response by the government in launching a campaign against anti-Semitism across the country.

As a result of this, Jewish communities abroad are not only rethinking their approach to security, they are already changing their daily routines, adopting new ways of doing things, and deciding when and where to go – from Synagogue to the grocery store – based not on their desires, but on their fears and insecurities.

Ever-more connected, extremist groups in the United States are borrowing, adapting and enhancing the tactics and strategies adopted in Europe. Although not every anti-Semitic individual, group, manifestation, threat, or incident in Europe and the USA is connected, they are increasingly the context for each other. It is vital that the Congress, and U.S. government, identify, analyze, and respond to the cross-Atlantic links between anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic attacks.

Although the focus of this hearing is foreign countries, it is important to summarize what is happening in our country, so that you have a sense for how Jewish communities in the USA are now experiencing what Jewish communities in Europe have been undergoing and to inform your long-term examination of the cross-Atlantic connections.

While reliable, real-time data on hate crimes is often difficult to discern, the incoming data in recent months is troubling. The Southern Poverty Law Center recorded 1,094 bias-related harassment and intimidation incidents nationally since November 2016. According to a recently distributed report by the New York City Police Department, they found that hate crimes against Jewish people more than doubled in New York City since the start of the New Year, as compared

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to the same period in 2016; the report documents 56 hate crimes from January 1st to February 12th, with 28 incidents targeting Jews. In the same six week period the previous year, the total number of hate crimes recorded in New York City was only 31, with 13 targeting Jews. An ADL report on anti-Semitic acts that targeted journalists between August 2015 and July 2016 uncovered an astonishing 2.6 million tweets containing language frequently found in anti-Semitic speech. These tweets had an estimated 10 billion impressions (reach), likely contributing to the reinforcement and normalization of anti-Semitic language on a massive scale.

As part of our own independent research regarding the increase of anti-Jewish hate incidents, the Secure Community Network (SCN) includes open source reported statistics from January 1, 2017 through March 13, 2017. SCN's research recorded a record breaking 307 anti-Jewish incidents across forty (40) states in 75 days.

Since the beginning of the year, over 166 bomb threats were phoned in or emailed to 117 institutions, Jewish Community Centers, Schools, ADL offices and other Jewish establishments, leading to massive disruptions and the evacuation of thousands of people, to include children and infants. Indeed, one of the most enduring images of 2017 for the Jewish community may be the scenes of children being rushed into the freezing winter temperatures to evacuate JCCs, and those of empty cribs abandoned in parking lots, as dedicated staff members took infants and toddlers out of the facilities and sought safe locations for them.

This phenomenon can be summed up briefly by sharing one incident in Whitefish, Montana. A pristine, beautiful town filled with warm and welcoming people, this location hosts – in addition to a small but vibrant Jewish community –one of the most well-known members of the white supremacist movement in the country.

As Jews throughout the United States were readying their homes for Hanukah celebrations, the Jewish community of Whitefish was courageously dealing with intimidation, threats of violence and harassment from outside agitators. Marches against Jews were threatened, fake news stories alleging conspiracies by the Jewish community of Whitefish against their long-time neighbors were alleged, and the pictures of the children of Jewish community leaders were posted on neo-Nazi websites calling for followers to troll and harass the children. Attacks that specifically target children are abhorrent and unthinkable and would have the capability to paralyze any community's ability to function and thrive. The individuals behind these cowardly events – and those like them – know that if their actions can cause us to change our own routines, policies, positions or way of life, they can change the agenda and hold power, not just over political processes, but over our psychological ones as well.

Beyond death and destruction, hate groups and terrorists – whether neo-Nazis, white supremacists or Islamist extremists – seek to create a sense of fear and vulnerability. If they are successful, this can be more impactful than any attack, forcing us to not only query the safety and security of the societies that we live in, but causing us to question our own ability to protect our neighborhoods and families, and with this, causing us to change our behavior – retracting from our daily routines, way of living and compromising our beliefs – whether that means altering how we dress or pray, and even more disconcerting, after the recent bomb threats, hearing that some whom have come to relish and rely on the remarkable services offered by Jewish Community Centers, may be reassessing their memberships grounded on fear.

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We cannot voluntarily allow for what the terrorist organizations themselves could never have achieved on their own – by giving up our principles or way of life. A community immunized against the psychological influence of terrorist threats has a greater ability to resist manipulation. If those who undertake attacks or threaten our communities believe that they will not be able to create terror or panic, and a subsequent unraveling of our principles as a community, it eliminates a major cause for their activity. In this, through our own psychological strength and position, we may better mitigate against such threats or attacks and prevent them from disrupting our way of life.

The question of whether or not the American Jewish community is targeted by hatred and terror is not up for debate. Jews here and abroad remain targets. Tripwires around the world can trigger an attack; global conflict serves to put the entire Jewish community on alert. In this country, both law enforcement and the Jewish community recognize this unique reality and are taking proactive and exceptional measures to create a culture of security that joins the efforts of law enforcement – from local police departments to the FBI and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) – with the concerns of the Jewish community. We had recently met with Director Comey of the FBI and I can assure you that community leaders left this meeting with a high level of confidence and know that FBI, state, and local law enforcement support our efforts. The US Department of Homeland Security just deployed highly trained DHS professionals to Jewish Community Centers whom are providing training and additional resources.

By educating lay leaders, community members, staff and administrators as well as teachers, and by more effectively working with police, we have the fundamentals to empower ourselves, developing a sense of ownership among our whole community. Working with state and local authorities communities will better understand the resources and capabilities that government can provide during an incident, as well as what we need to do for our own communities thereafter.

Moving the Jewish community and all faith based communities beyond “awareness” to “engaged citizenry” must be a primary goal for 2017. We are and remain resilient...no other community understands better that life has its challenges and hardships; resiliency means that when confronted with such actions, we as a community will work to make them ultimately surmountable. Our community centers have become an oasis for all citizens. The organizations and people that administer these facilities understand the magnitude of security and safety.

After months of enduring 166 bomb threats across over forty (40) states, JCC members, parents and other guests have moved from fear and anxiety to defiant resolve and resilience. They refused to be driven from their schools and community spaces by cowardly acts of intolerance and hatred. In this, the hate and fear that seeks to divide us, has indeed united us even more so. Thank you Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to testify in front of this Subcommittee today. I'm happy to address any question you or other Members may have.