



November 26, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We have just returned from participating in the High-level Commemorative Berlin Conference on Anti-Semitism of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and we write to urge you to press for a Ministerial Council decision next week in Basel to embrace its outcome and follow up action. The stunning rise in anti-Semitism, which Ambassador Samantha Power called a threat to “the core principles upon which a peaceful and stable Europe has been built,” demands action. The Berlin meeting produced substantial recommendations that, if adopted, would respond to Ambassador Power’s call for “a perpetual effort” to combat anti-Semitism. As she noted, “it is critically important that OSCE participating States follow up on the Berlin Declaration this year and rally around an updated plan of action that charts a concrete, unified path forward, which responds to the problems as we see them in 2014. And make no mistake, she said, “we have a problem.”

We agree. That’s why our organizations have worked to deepen the engagement of American civil society groups at the OSCE to press states to take action against anti-Semitism, hate crime, and all forms of discrimination. In the best American tradition of coalition advocacy and intergroup solidarity, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights brought an impressive and diverse delegation of American civil and human rights leaders to Berlin to demonstrate our unity in the fight against anti-Semitism and to present an action plan for governments. The presence of such a diverse group sent a powerful message of serious and urgent concern about the alarming rise of anti-Semitism in Europe.

We urge you to recognize this broad concern and mobilize U.S. allies and partners in support of action by the Ministerial Council next week to endorse the concluding statement of the Swiss Chair in Office as well as the recommendations from the conference’s Civil Society Forum. This action would provide a path and a sound basis for following up on those conclusions and recommendations as part of the OSCE’s work in 2015.

And much work remains to be done. As Ambassador Power emphasized, the failure of governments to respond to anti-Semitism is also linked to broader gaps in how governments address hate crime. The Anti-Defamation League and Human Rights First have analyzed recently-released OSCE data on combating anti-Semitic and other forms of hate crime. Their conclusion is sobering: the majority of the 57 Participating States of the OSCE are falling short of honoring their commitments. The Berlin conference produced several concrete recommendations to improve government responses.

ODIHR's hate crime work is just one outgrowth of the leadership of the United States. The State Department and Ambassador Dan Baer have been effective and valued partners with us in the fight to keep these issues squarely on the OSCE's agenda and in sending a strong message that, for the United States, bigotry against any group is everyone's concern.

We urge you to do all you can to ensure that the upcoming Ministerial Council formally recognizes the Berlin conference and its outcome as an essential step to confront anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry across the OSCE region.

Thank you for your leadership and for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Abraham H. Foxman
National Director
Anti-Defamation League



Elisa Massimino
President and CEO
Human Rights First



Wade Henderson
President and Executive Director
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

cc: Hon. Samantha Power, Ambassador to the United Nations
Hon. Victoria Nuland, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs
Hon. Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor
Hon. Daniel Baer, Ambassador to the OSCE
Hon. Ira Forman, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism