

CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

4TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

CONSTITUENT SERVICE CENTERS:

1540 Kuser Road, Suite A9
Hamilton, NJ 08619-3828
(609) 585-7878
TTY (609) 585-3650

108 Lacey Road, Suite 38A
Whiting, NJ 08759-1331
(732) 350-2300

2373 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-3004
(202) 225-3765

<http://chrissmith.house.gov>



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEES:

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH,
GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS, AND
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

CHAIRMAN

**WESTERN HEMISPHERE
SUBCOMMITTEE**

**COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND
COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

CO-CHAIRMAN

**CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA**

CO-CHAIRMAN

DEAN, NEW JERSEY DELEGATION

**Fighting for Human Rights:
Human Trafficking and Anti-Semitism**

*Excerpts of Remarks by Rep. Chris Smith
Conference of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism
Capitol Hill, April 23, 2013*

When I first introduced the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 1998, the legislation was met with a wall of skepticism and opposition. People both inside of government and out thought the bold new strategy that included sheltering, asylum and other protections for the victims, long jail sentences and asset confiscation for the traffickers, and tough sanctions for governments that failed to meet minimum standards, was merely a solution in search of a problem.

For most people at that time, the term trafficking applied almost exclusively to illicit drugs or weapons. Reports of vulnerable persons—especially women and children—being reduced to commodities for sale were often met with surprise, incredulity or indifference. It took two years to overcome opponents and muster the votes for passage. With the tremendous help of Michael Horowitz and a bipartisan team we got the Trafficking Victims Protect Act enacted into law in 2000.

Today I am especially concerned that the United States, pursuant to the TVPA, is failing to hold accountable countries that at best consistently refuse to prioritize the fight against human trafficking and at worst permit, enable and are complicit in the enslavement of their own citizens.

Last week I chaired a congressional hearing on the importance of honestly grading every country's efforts, or lack thereof, to fight human trafficking.

Since the TIP Report's inception, more than 120 countries have enacted anti-trafficking laws and many countries have taken other steps required to significantly raise their tier rankings—citing the TIP Report as a key factor in their increased anti-trafficking response.

But the TIP Report's power is largely based on its credibility. The report must be accurate in order to be persuasive.

Generally speaking, the TIP Report has been informative and accurate. But it has not always been forthright in designating egregious violators.

Rather than accountability, the State Department has allowed some countries to sit permanently on the Tier 2 Watch list—a designation short of the shameful Tier 3—and based on a country's small steps and promises to “do more next year.”

In order to preserve the integrity of the report, in 2008 Congress created an “automatic downgrade” for any country that had been on the Tier 2 Watch List for two years, or four years with a presidential waiver.

By law this year China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Republic of Congo, Iraq, and Azerbaijan face downgrade to Tier 3 if they did not make significant efforts to prosecute traffickers, protect victims, and prevent trafficking.

I am particularly concerned about the Government of China's record. The Government of China has been on the Tier 2 Watch List for eight consecutive years in large part because its plan to fight human trafficking is inadequate, unevenly implemented, and the Government of China has not been making significant efforts to comply with the minimum standards.

Law enforcement in China is still not trained to identify or respond properly to sex or labor trafficking victims. Tens of millions of women and girls are missing from the population, making China a regional magnet for sex and bride trafficking as men reach marrying age but cannot find a mate. The Government of China is failing not only to address its own trafficking problems, but is creating an incentive for human trafficking problems in the whole region.

The Government of Uzbekistan's record is also of great concern, as the government itself continues to force hundreds of thousands of school-age children and adults to work in fields during the cotton harvest each year.

The Government of Russia has had nine years of warning that without significant change, they too should be downgraded. However, the Government of Russia does not have in place formal procedures for identification and referral of trafficking victims by law enforcement, labor inspectors, and other government officials. The Government of Russia still has not established a government body to organize government anti-trafficking activities, nor does it adequately fund shelters or services for trafficking victims. Russian citizens are trafficked from Russia to countries all over the globe as well as within Russia, and yet the Government of Russia does not have a national trafficking education or prevention plan.

At two recent hearings, I also heard from experts on the trafficking of Vietnamese citizens in Russia. Vietnam received an upgrade in the TIP Report to Tier 2 even though there is

credible evidence that they assist traffickers in Russia to hide victims from police—tipping them off to move young girls held for sex trafficking when they know there might be a raid.

The Government of Azerbaijan continues to use administrative fines for traffickers, allowing traffickers to write-off the crime of trafficking as a simple business expense that is less expensive than hiring their workers.

These countries must be held accountable in the TIP report for their failures. We have seen true accountability produce real results—saved lives—the world over.

Just yesterday, I had the privilege of rolling out a new, simple anti-trafficking initiative for the airline and travel industry. Airline Ambassadors and the Department of Homeland Security have developed a training for flight attendants and other transportation professionals so that they will know the indicators of human trafficking, and be able to alert authorities.

Women and girls have been trafficked in plain sight in the transportation industry of every country. We are working to change that with a simple, low cost intervention.

According to the State Department’s Trafficking in Persons Office—created by the TPVA—more than 12 million people worldwide are trafficking victims. Free the Slaves, a highly respected anti-human trafficking non-governmental organization (NGO), suggests that there are over 27 million victims. Today we know that human trafficking—modern day slavery—is the third most lucrative criminal activity in the world. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) human traffickers make profits in excess of \$31 billion a year.

I’d also like to talk to you about fighting anti-Semitism. In 1982, during my first term in Congress, I traveled to Moscow and Leningrad to meet Jewish refuseniks in their homes and to engage Soviet leaders.

For hours on end, we heard stories of Soviet physical and mental abuse, systematic harassment, gulags and psychiatric prisons, and an array of seemingly wanton, brutal acts of anti-Semitism.

To apply for an exit visa – a universally-recognized human right, which at least on paper the Soviet Union recognized – was to invite the cruelty and wrath of the KGB and other small-minded, morally stunted thugs.

To courageously seek freedom rendered the refuseniks ineligible for employment in Lenin’s farcical “workers’ paradise.”

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, a small group of us heard Sharansky’s mother admonish us to do more for her son, because his life was in jeopardy.

“Raise Anatoly’s situation with the highest officials,” she asked us. Which of course we did.

To a new 27-year-old Congressman, however, it was all deeply troubling – why do they hate the Jews? Why the anti-Semitic obsession?

A few years later and shortly after Sharansky’s release, I visited Perm camp 35 in the Ural mountains – a horrific gulag filled with prisoners of conscience.

While there, I saw the solitary punishment cell called the Shizu – where Natan Sharansky suffered and persevered. To the utter dismay of Lt. Col. Osin – Perm camp’s KGB warden – Congressman Frank Wolf and I interviewed and videotaped most of the prisoners and pushed for their release. In time, they all got out, following the path paved by Natan Sharansky, one of the bravest, wisest, and most noble men on earth.

Then, almost suddenly, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact collapsed and hope and expectation soared. A new day dawned – the matriculation of several dictatorships to democracy, respect for human rights, the peace dividend, and a better future for Jews.

It didn’t take long, however, to be disappointed. So in 1995 I chaired a Congressional hearing – the first ever – entitled, *The Rising Tide of Global Anti-Semitism*, as it was becoming increasingly clear that the status of Jews in many countries was actually deteriorating.

Many more hearings followed. I authored the legislation that created the State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, and worked with other members and parliamentarians from other countries to put combating anti-Semitism high on the agenda of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Two things experience has made abundantly clear are that the monster of anti-Semitism is constantly shape-shifting – meaning that to be effective against it we have to stay current – and that the State Department and other countries only prioritize the fight against anti-Semitism to the extent they feel the pressure to do so from Congress.

So in late February, working closely with Michael Horowitz and Rabbi Saperstein, I chaired another hearing, this one entitled, “Anti-Semitism: A Growing Threat to All Faiths.”

We had one panel of witnesses from other faiths, who talked about how anti-Semitism directly threatens not only Jews but also Christians and Muslims, and democracy and civil society. When we fight anti-Semitism it is not only a matter of justice for Jewish fellow-citizens, but also of standing up for Christianity, and for Islam, and for the possibility of decent living itself. We all have a direct stake in the fight against anti-Semitism.

This is most tragically clear in the Middle-Eastern countries where the government propagates anti-Semitism as an official or quasi-official ideology. These governments incite anti-Semitic hatred of Israel in order to distract the people from their own tyrannical rule, from their own abuse of human rights, denial of democracy, economic corruption. Sadly, it works. We see

this in governments as varied as those of Iran and Egypt, Pakistan and Syria and Saudi Arabia, and the list doesn't end there.

Tens of millions of people who live in these countries are in this sense suffering from anti-Semitism. Few of them are Jewish – most are Muslim, millions are Christian. It's true that, to some degree or other, many of the people in these countries have bought into the evil of anti-Semitism, but many others have not.

One of our witnesses, Dr. Zuhdi Jasser, President of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy, testified that, "It is self-evident that supremacists from within a particular faith community will create and exploit hatred towards another faith community in order to collectively rally their own followers against a common enemy. Islamists utilize anti-Semitic imagery, profiling demonization of Jews as a tool for their own ascension into power among Muslim majority communities and nations..." He spoke of how, since the early days of the Arab Spring, anti-Semitism has functioned as the 'gateway drug' into oppressive authoritarianism.

We also had a second panel, where we heard reports from a number of European Jewish leaders about anti-Semitism in their countries, how the governments are responding, and whether these responses are effective.

As many of you probably know, in some countries, progress has indeed been made, yet the scope and outcome of anti-Semitic acts have not abated in others, and in some nations it has actually gotten worse – in France, the number of physical attacks on Jews more than doubled last year – just the increase in anti-Semitic acts was more than eight times the number of all other racist and xenophobic acts.

Rabbi Andrew Baker, Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism of the OSCE Chair-in-Office, testified about this violence, which is often driven by radicalized young people of Muslim background, as well as about the weak response of governments and public indifference, the rise of anti-Semitic populist parties, and legislative initiatives seeking to outlaw Jewish practices and rituals.

Rabbi David Meyer, a professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, testified about the depth of the problem. It is not only that most European countries have significant minorities of anti-Semites, but that the majorities are simply indifferent, seeming to feel little human sympathy or connection with their Jewish fellow citizens.

"Even after 2000 years of attested Jewish life in Europe," he said, "we are still perceived as a foreign tribe recently landed on the European continent... Whatever the words of politicians, it is somehow accepted for Jews to be targeted."

Here Rabbi Meyer was echoing something said by Dr. Shimon Samuels at another hearing I chaired, in 2002: "The Holocaust for 30 years after the war acted as protective Teflon against blatant anti-Semitic expression (especially in Europe). That Teflon has eroded, and what was considered distasteful and politically incorrect is becoming simply an opinion... cocktail chatter at fine English dinners can end as Molotov cocktails against synagogues."

Terrifying, true words!

Rabbi Meyer didn't shrink from proposing the most difficult solution – a change of heart. Let me quote his challenging words:

“It is my view that what Europe needs to do in order to truly fight anti-Semitism is to truly accept and not just tolerate its own Jewish population. To value Judaism and Jewish communities in Europe cannot be limited to words of comfort when tragedy strikes. It requires much more than that. Our leaders need to show a real interest in Judaism and to do so publicly. An interest that would not simply be the expression of a ‘devotion’ to the mythical image of the Jews, remnant from the past that once contributed to the make-up of Europe and its culture and later almost exterminated from Europe. But rather a genuine interest, because... we are still contributing to making Europe what it is today and bringing a certain diversity of values and knowledge.”

As with anti-Semitism, we must also hold governments accountable for other violations of human rights, upholding, in every sphere, the dignity of the human person.

I hope you will join me in calling for transparency and accountability on human rights. The interventions of truth and education are simple; their outcomes save lives.