

May 23, 2018

The Honorable Michael Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Now that you have been confirmed as Secretary of State, we wish you every success in this essential work and in representing the interests of every American. As members of civil society and faith-based groups who care deeply about combating global anti-Semitism, we hope that the United States will remain a leader in fighting this global problem. A near-term action you can take to signal that this will be a priority for you is to immediately identify and appoint someone to the position of U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, as you pledged to do in your written nomination hearing responses. We are also concerned that the position of Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor remains vacant. These two positions work best when they work together.

The special envoy position has now sat vacant for over fifteen months, seven of which have passed since Secretary of State Rex Tillerson recommitted to retain it in August. Five bipartisan Congressional letters have been sent to the administration on the subject – emphasizing just how seriously Members of both parties and in both chambers of Congress view this continued vacancy. We urge you to work with the White House to advance the staffing of the Special Envoy position as one of your priority actions.

The absence of a U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism is particularly distressing given the increased number of anti-Semitic incidents taking place around the world, including in many countries where the United States enjoys otherwise strong diplomatic ties.

For example, during 2017, violent anti-Semitic assaults increased 34 percent in Britain according to the Community Security Trust and increased 26 percent in France according to the French Ministry of the Interior. In March, an 85-year-old French Holocaust survivor was brutally stabbed to death because she was Jewish and left to burn in her home in Paris. Two Jewish houses of worship were firebombed in Sweden, including one where Jewish youths were gathered inside. And synagogues in Tunisia and Iran were also desecrated.

In January 2018, the Polish Sejm passed a law, later signed by President Andrzej Duda, that criminalizes certain speech about individual Polish complicity or collaboration during the Holocaust. As a result, anti-Semitic rhetoric in Poland, in both private media and on state television, has intensified.

The Special Envoy position and the Office to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, established under the Global Anti-Semitism Review Act (Public Law 108-332), which Congress passed in 2004 with broad bipartisan support, and signed into law by President George W. Bush, were created to respond to crises such as these. Past envoys have developed and implemented policies and partnerships to combat antisemitism, working with foreign governments and civil society.

With each additional day that passes without a Special Envoy due to U.S. inaction, Jewish communities around the world are less safe. And our European allies do not have a high level official dedicated to fighting anti-Semitism to whom to turn for assistance.

Congressional commitment to the position and staffing the office has since been prioritized through appropriations. House Report 114-693 on the FY17 Omnibus specified that "the Committee recommendation... includes funds for support of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism." The explanatory statement on the FY17 Omnibus went further, declaring that "the Secretary of State is directed to fill the position of Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism authorized by Public Law 108-332 in a timely manner."

Last summer, nearly two dozen of the nation's most prominent religious leaders - including representatives of the Catholic, Muslim, Protestant, Evangelical, Hindu, Sikh, and Jewish faiths - signed an open letter to Secretary Tillerson urging him to fill the position "as soon as possible." In June of last year, 116 Members of Congress signed a letter that urged Secretary Tillerson "to maintain staff in the Office to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism" while an envoy was being selected.

We cannot afford further delay in fully addressing the problems and threats facing Jewish communities around the world. By appointing a respected and effective advocate, and equipping the office of the Special Envoy with adequate resources and staffing, you will be reasserting U.S. moral leadership on this issue and reassuring Jewish communities that the United States stands with them.

Failing to come together in the face of this rising tide of hate also would threaten the progress made since the Holocaust toward a world based on respect for human rights. Where antisemitism is resurgent, it is a harbinger of greater human rights problems. Therefore, it is also important to nominate an Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor who will work closely with the Special Envoy.

We urge you to fully implement Public Law 108-332 by returning adequate administrative and subject-matter staff to the Office to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism and appointing a respected and qualified U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism without delay.

Sincerely,

**Organizations:**

Agudath Israel of America  
Anti-Defamation League  
B'nai B'rith International  
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.  
HIAS  
Human Rights First  
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington  
Jewish Community Relations Council of New York  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Jewish Democratic Council of America  
The Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice  
National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry (NCSEJ)  
National Council of Jewish Women  
The Rabbinical Assembly  
Reconstructing Judaism  
Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association  
Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission  
Union for Reform Judaism  
Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union (UCSJ)  
World Jewish Congress United States

**Individuals:**

*Affiliation is provided for identification purposes only*

Ambassador Akbar Ahmed, Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies, American University  
Bishop Joseph Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, Chair of the Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Office, USCCB  
Howard Berman, former Member of Congress and former Chair, House Foreign Affairs Committee  
Professor Nicole Bibbins Sedaca, Chair, Global Politics and Security Concentration, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University

Erik Brattberg, Director and Fellow, Carnegie Europe Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Stuart Cobert

The Honorable Debra Lerner Cohen

Viviane Eisenberg, Vice President Legal Affairs, Home Box Offices, Inc.

Gregory Feifer, Institute of Current World Affairs

Richard Foltin, Senior Scholar for Religious Freedom, Religious Freedom Center, Freedom Forum Institute

Ira Forman, former U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism

Jeffrey Gedmin, Atlantic Council

Ilan Goldenberg, Center for a New American Security

Holly R. Huffnagle, former policy advisor to the U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism

Michael Jacobs, Partner, Morrison & Foerster, LLP

Jonathan Katz, Senior Fellow, The German Marshall Fund of the United States

James Kirchik, Visiting Fellow, The Brookings Institution

Scott Lasensky, former American diplomat

Ambassador Sarah Mendelson, former US Representative to the UN's Economic and Social Council

Thomas O. Melia, Washington Director, PEN America

Blaise Misztal, The Bipartisan Policy Center

Hannah Rosenthal, former U.S. Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism, President and CEO, the Milwaukee Jewish Federation

Daniel B. Shapiro, former U.S. Ambassador to Israel

Nina Shea, Director, Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom

Mary Ann Stein, President, the Moriah Fund

Daniel Vajdich, Non-Resident Senior Fellow, The Atlantic Council

Veronika Velch, Advocacy Director, Ridgely | Walsh

cc:

Vice President Mike Pence

Deputy Secretary of State John J. Sullivan

Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback