

From the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism (SEAS)

# The SEAS Monitor

Dear Friends,

I wish you a happy and sweet New Year. May the coming year bring peace, good health, and an end to intolerance on earth.

I hope that you are all well! This is the August-September issue of "The SEAS Monitor." It is a way for me to keep you informed about my work as the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat anti-Semitism. Please click for [previous copies](#).

Please enjoy and keep in touch.

L'Shana Tova,  
Hannah

 [www.state.gov/g/drl/seas/](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/seas/)  
 [www.facebook.com/SERosenthal](http://www.facebook.com/SERosenthal)  
 [@HannahAtState](https://twitter.com/HannahAtState)

## **EVENTS:**

[Iftars](#)  
[Embassy of Lithuania](#)  
["Parade" & Lincoln Legacy Project at Ford's Theatre](#)

## **INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH:**

[Lithuania](#)  
[UNGA](#)

## **MEDIA:**

[Live interview on Turkish radio](#)  
[Briefing VOA journalists](#)  
[Web chat with Farah](#)

## **AT THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE:**

[Screening "A Road to Mecca"](#)  
[Release of International Religious Freedom Report](#)  
[International Visitors: Kuwait](#)  
[Our Newest Team Member](#)

## **DOMESTIC OUTREACH:**

[Olive Tree](#)  
[Interfaith Dialogue](#)  
[ALIM Conference](#)  
[Quarterly meeting with Jewish organizations](#)  
[B'Nai Brith International Durban event](#)

## **INTERNET OUTREACH:**

[My Facebook](#)  
[My State.gov](#)  
[My HumanRights.gov](#)  
[My Twitter](#)

**EVENTS:** [\[click here or any title to go back to table of contents\]](#)

## **Iftars**

The evening meal when Muslims break their fast during the month of Ramadan is known as an iftar. In August, during Ramadan, I was invited to join three iftars. I attended one hosted by the Turkic American Alliance, the first-ever iftar hosted by an Israeli Ambassador as well as one hosted by the White House. Secretary of State Clinton hosted a reception marking the end of Ramadan, called Eid ul-Fitr, at the Department of State, which I also attended.



*Greeting President Obama at White House iftar, August 10, 2011*

## **Embassy of Lithuania**

### **“Songs of the Vilna Ghetto”**

I attended a special program, “Songs of the Vilna Ghetto,” at the Embassy of Lithuania in Washington, DC, on September 15. The music and spoken word were so moving. The program was part of the Embassy Concerts series and highlighted Lithuanian efforts in 2011 to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust.



*Speaking with Irena Degutienė (center), Speaker of the Seimas, the Lithuanian Parliament, at the Embassy of Lithuania in Washington, DC*

## **Roundtable**

The Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania to the United States convened a roundtable discussion on September 16 to discuss how to honor Lithuanian Jewish heritage and promote relations between Lithuania and the American Jewish community. In attendance were Irena Degutienė, Speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs Emanuelis Zingeris, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Asta Skaisgiryte-Liauskiene, Lithuanian Ambassador to the U.S. Zygimantas Pavilionis, and the Lithuanian Honorary Consuls in the U.S. (and Mexico), and representatives of American Jewish organizations.

## **The Lincoln Legacy Project: “Parade”**



*Courtesy of Ford's Theatre website*

On September 27, I had the privilege to attend the opening night of the Ford's Theatre production of “Parade,” a musical which tells the story of Leo Frank, a Jew from New York working in a pencil factory in Georgia. He was wrongfully blamed for the murder of a worker there. The evidence was trumped up and ultimately Leo Frank was lynched because he was a Jew. With “Parade,” Ford's Theatre is launching the [Lincoln Legacy Project](#), “a five-year effort to create a dialogue in our nation's capital around the issues of tolerance,

equality and acceptance.” The *Lincoln Legacy Project* speaks so clearly to my mission to promote acceptance and respect among people of different faiths and walks of life. Paul Tetreault, director of Ford’s Theatre, has created a series of events around this show (as well as other future productions) that will “encourage people of differing viewpoints to engage in meaningful and respectful dialogue about tolerance and understanding.” This outstanding show reminds us of historic bigotry but also how vigilant we must be to continually combat anti-Semitism and all forms of hatred.

**[INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH:](#)** [\[click here or any title to go back to table of contents\]](#)

### **The Parents Circle – Families Forum**

On September 6, I met with representatives of The Parents Circle – Families Forum (<http://www.theparentscircle.com/>) about their efforts at reconciliation in the Middle East. Parents Circle is an organization of Israeli and Palestinian parents who have lost children to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. They launched an initiative encouraging people on both sides of the conflict to donate blood and launched a poster campaign asking, “Would you kill someone who has your blood running through their veins?”

#### **Lithuania**



On September 15, I met with Lithuania’s Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Asta Skaisgiryte-Liauskiene. We discussed, *inter alia*, the proposed Center of Litvak Culture & Art in Vilnius, a potential public-private partnership opportunity. The plans are to refurbish a historical building in Vilnius’ Jewish quarter to exhibit art by Lithuanian Jews. The collection will feature permanent exhibits by Rafael Chwoles and Samuel Bak and revolving exhibits by other artists.

## **AT THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**



### **Bilateral Meetings**

I was in New York for the United Nations General Assembly from September 20-22. While there, I met with the following representatives from capitals around the world:

Egyptian Ambassador Laila Bahaa El-Din, Acting Deputy Foreign Minister for Human Rights and Social Issues; Secretary General of Morocco's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nacer Bourita; Mr. Peter Sztaray, Political Director, Deputy State Secretary, Hungary; Swedish Ambassador for Human Rights, Hans Dahlgren and Senior Advisor Jan Henningsson, Division of Middle East and North Africa at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In addition to describing my role as Special Envoy, I introduced the [2011 Hours Against Hate](#) initiative and discussed anti-Semitism in their respective countries. I also offered to work together to combat anti-Semitism and other kinds of hate and intolerance. I was invited to visit Hungary, Morocco and Sweden in the coming year, and I look forward to collaborating with those governments.

### **Web chat on Tolerance with Special Representative to Muslim Communities Farah Pandith**



CO.NX, part of the State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs, is a global outreach team that connects the world through webchats. It provides a dynamic forum for open discussions. While in New York for the U.N. General Assembly, Farah Pandith and I participated in a CO.NX-hosted webchat on tolerance at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations' Foreign Press Center on September 22. We highlighted the [2011 Hours Against Hate](#) campaign and took questions and comments from the virtual viewing audience. Questions were submitted via Facebook and the State Department social media websites. People "tuned in" from all over the world, including Romania and Uganda. Embassy Cairo hosted a viewing party, one of whom shared a story about efforts in the community to bring together different religious groups, while a Ugandan journalist discussed the role of the media in promoting peace. This program generated more than 2,000 interactions on Department of State social media outlets.



### **B'nai B'rith International gathering on Durban III: A Ten-Year Assessment of the UN World Conference Against Racism**



On September 21, I spoke at an event sponsored by B'nai B'rith International to assess the Durban III event. I was part of a panel that included the

Honorable Irwin Cotler, member of the Canadian Parliament and former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, John Bolton, former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Malcolm Hoenlein, Executive Vice Chairman, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and Richard Heideman, Head of Delegation to the World Conference Against Racism and the Durban Review Conference, B'nai B'rith International.

## **Project YaLa Young Leaders**



Special Representative for Muslim Communities Farah Pandith and I met with YaLa Young Leaders Steering Committee members on September 15. YaLa Young Leaders aims to promote dialogue and sustainable partnerships between Israelis, Palestinians, and Arabs from around the world in order to create a brighter future in the region through new media, education, and community activism. The young leaders we met are working together to become better informed and more effective advocates in their home communities. They seek political change by engaging directly with political leaders, international organizations and community organizers, and each other. Understanding how the conflict has polarized their communities, YaLa pushes for an open and honest conversation about the daily challenges faced by youth in the region. On January 21-23, they will host a digital conference for thousands of participants in the region to create an agenda for the future and launch sustainable projects in their communities. You can find them on Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/yala>.

**MEDIA:** [\[click here or any title to go back to table of contents\]](#)

## **Turkish Radio Live Interview**

Along with Special Representative to Muslim Communities Farah Pandith, I was interviewed live on Turkish radio by Abdullah Ozdogan on August 24. We spoke about world peace and peace among religions. Mr. Ozdogan is one of Turkey's top personalities, whose listeners number 15 million, not including the web audience.

## **Briefing Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) Journalists**



The BBG oversees five different broadcasting companies all located in different places. In Washington, in mid-September, I briefed BBG journalists representing Radio Free Europe, Alhurra TV, Middle East Broadcasting Network, Russian service, Voice of American (VOA), Urdu service, VOA, the international Broadcasting Bureau, and VOA Public Relations on global trends in anti-Semitism and the importance of this issue leading up to the United Nations General Assembly and the commemoration event for the 10 year anniversary of the Durban Conference. I sought to raise awareness about global anti-Semitism, and found that they were very interested in my experiences in Europe and the Middle East. I was interviewed for a Russian broadcast and am planning to participate in an interactive program with the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (alHurra TV and Radio Sawa) in October.

**[DOMESTIC OUTREACH:](#)** [\[click here or any title to go back to table of contents\]](#)

### **Bolechow Jewish Heritage Society**

In mid-August, I spoke to the annual meeting of the Bolechow Jewish Heritage Society ([www.Bolechow.org](http://www.Bolechow.org)), an organization dedicated to the preservation of the Jewish heritage of the village of Bolechow, Ukraine and the surrounding area. Bolechow is home to a Jewish cemetery which dates back to the 1400s. Through their working relationship with the municipality, the organization hopes to conserve the historic synagogue building and create a museum dedicated to Jewish Galician life. In addition to the Board of the Bolechow Jewish Heritage Society, other participants included people attending the



International Association of Jewish Genealogical Society Conference and members of the Hillel staff at George Washington University.

### **ALIM Conference**

On September 2, I spoke to the American Leadership Initiative for Muslims conference, a group of leading Shia leaders, about the importance of civic engagement and coalition-building in a thriving democracy.

### **Brookings Institute Roundtable**

On September 12, I participated in a roundtable discussion about relations with the Islamic world at the Brookings Institute with noted author and commentator Karen Armstrong.

### **Jewish Federations of North America**



I addressed the Jewish Federations of North America's annual Government Affairs Institute on Capitol Hill on September 13, speaking to an audience of government affairs professionals from Federations across the country, Members of Congress, and Hill staff.

### **Quarterly Meeting with Jewish Organizations**

I held one of my regular quarterly meetings with representatives of major American Jewish organizations on September 14. Highlighted at the meeting were the implications for the United States and Israel of the upcoming United Nations General Assembly vote for Palestinian statehood, the Durban commemorative event, the SEAS Anti-Semitism Report, anti-Semitic trends around the world, and memorializing the Holocaust and genocide in Europe. I emphasized the importance of coordination between the U.S. Department of State and Jewish organizations on issues of shared concern, such as the continued imprisonment of USAID employee Alan Gross in Cuba.

## **American Islamic College Conference in Chicago**



The Organization for Islamic Cooperation invited me to address a conference at the American Islamic College in Chicago on September 17. With the conference's focus on Islam and Muslims in America, I spoke about *2011 Hours Against Hate*, my visit to Srebrenica, the imam trip to Dachau and Auschwitz, and the need to build partnerships and speak out together in order to combat hate and intolerance.

## **Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford**

On September 19, I delivered remarks on international efforts to monitor and combat global anti-Semitism at the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford. The community leaders from the area discussed growing concerns of hate speech and hate crimes around the world.

**[AT THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE:](#)** [\[click here or any title to go back to table of contents\]](#)

## **Olive Tree Initiative**



Special Representative to Muslim Communities Farah Pandith and I met with students from the Olive Tree Initiative to discuss *2011 Hours Against Hate* on August 30. The Olive Tree Initiative promotes dialogue between pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian groups on University of California campuses, organizes an annual educational trip to Israel and the West Bank, and supports a certificate program in Conflict Analysis and Resolution. The group brings Jewish and

Muslim students together to change the tenor of discussion on campuses and exchange thoughtful narratives about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its effects on Jews and Muslims around the world. Farah and I praised their approach to bring diverse opinions together and help support each others' communities.

## **Dialogue Institute**

I learned about [Temple University's Dialogue Institute](#) from Racelle Weiman on August 25. The Dialogue Institute runs interfaith programs for people from the Muslim world, and promotes on-going conversations to fight ignorance and misunderstanding to prevent genocide and reduce prejudice. The Dialogue Institute's work lends itself to fight ignorance and misunderstanding on more than religious freedom issues, but is interested in working with us to fight religious intolerance.

## **"A Road to Mecca"**

Members of Office of International Religious Freedom and my team joined me, Janet Breslin-Smith, and her husband, Ambassador to Saudi Arabia James Smith, for a preview of the film "A Road to Mecca: The Journey of Muhammad Asad," on September 6. Both Ms. Breslin-Smith and the Ambassador offered special insights from their perspective of living in Riyadh, and discussed the film with our colleagues.

The film tells the story of Leopold Weiss, born Jewish in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1900, who became alienated from the society he grew up in and travelled to the Middle East. After studying the Koran, he converted to Islam and changed his name to Muhammad Asad. While living in Saudi Arabia he held advisory posts to that government as well as to Pakistan.

The film's website notes: "In portraying the lifelong evolution of the philosophy of Muhammad Asad, who sought to be a mediator between East and West, *A Road to Mecca* provides a portrait of contemporary Islam, challenging deeply rooted Western prejudices by revealing the distance between fundamentalist beliefs that support terrorism and the core beliefs of a profoundly humane religion."

## **Kuwaiti International Visitors**

Members of my staff met with a delegation of Kuwaiti participants in the International Visitor Leadership Program on September 20. They discussed our work in monitoring and combating anti-Semitism, with a focus on the six trends of global anti-Semitism.

## **Release of International Religious Freedom Report**

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton released the 2010 mid-year Report on International Religious Freedom on September 13. Following her remarks, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor Michael Posner and Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Suzan Johnson Cook took questions. The Annual Report on International Religious Freedom covers the legal status of religious freedom in 198 countries and territories around the world. The International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 also mandates the designation of Countries of Particular Concern. Countries of Particular Concern are governments that have engaged in, or tolerated, systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom. You can find a copy of the 2010 mid-year Report on International Religious Freedom [here](#). You can also check out HumanRights.gov which has interactive maps on anti-Semitism in Europe, drawn from Human Rights Report data [here](#).

## **New Team Member**

Adam Cohen, a graduate student in Modern European History at the University of Maryland-College Park, has joined my team as a fall intern. His academic interests are focused on the history of Nazi Germany, the Holocaust, and anti-Semitism. Welcome!

**[INTERNET OUTREACH:](#)** [\[click here or any title to go back to table of contents\]](#)

## **Keep in touch with me via Facebook**

I encourage you to “Like” my page on Facebook: “[Hannah Rosenthal, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat anti-Semitism.](#)” When you “Like” a page on Facebook, it will be listed under your “Activities and Interests” tab, which can

be found in your Info section. If my page is updated, the update will appear on your News Feed on your homepage.

Be sure to follow our weekly posting entitled “[Here’s What We’re Hearing: Anti-Semitism News Updates.](#)” It is through these updates that we monitor global incidents of anti-Semitism. We have also started a new initiative, “[Here’s What We’re Hearing: Jewish World News Updates](#)” which contain relevant news regarding the Jewish world and positive efforts to promote tolerance and inter-religious cooperation.

### **Instructions:**

Once you are signed into Facebook, search for my name and title: Hannah Rosenthal, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat anti-Semitism. The “Like” button is at the top of my page and has a thumbs-up symbol. The symbol disappears once you have “Liked” the page.


### **State.gov**

Aside from following me on Facebook, I encourage all of you to visit [my page](#) on the Department of State’s website. Or you can follow these instructions: Begin by going to the Department of State’s homepage: [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov). Click on the “Democracy and Global Affairs” tab in the white toolbar. Next, click on “Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL),” and then click on “Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism” in the left vertical column. Here you will find information about my office, as well as remarks, press releases, past issues of *The Monitor*, photos, and information about the *2011 Hours Against Hate* campaign.

### **HumanRights.gov**

I also encourage you to visit HumanRights.gov, which is the U.S. government’s official website for human rights related information. You can access the homepage [here](#), and you can access my personal page [here](#).

### **Twitter**

Please also follow me on twitter! You can find me at:  [@HannahAtState](#).