

Bipartisan Taskforce Praises European Parliament's Actions Progress in the Fight Against Global Anti-Semitism

Washington, D.C., June 27th - Today, the U.S. Congress' Bipartisan Taskforce for Combating Anti-Semitism issued an important letter in support of the European Parliament for its adoption, earlier this month, of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism. While applauding the Parliament's efforts, the Taskforce notes that "more work remains to be done," and urges all EU-member parliaments to formally adopt the definition - a step that the United States has not yet fully taken, although the U.S. is an IHRA member.

The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Right Under Law (LDB) commends the Bipartisan Taskforce for Combating Anti-Semitism for its support of the European Parliament's actions, which mirrors the center's own statement earlier this month. The Taskforce letter, addressed to Hon. Juan Fernando Lopez Aguilar, Chair of the European Parliament Working Group on Antisemitism, notes the resurgence of anti-Semitic incidents in the United States and Europe, and encourages further action in adopting the IHRA's working definition of anti-Semitism.

"The Taskforce letter is an important signal for three reasons," stated Louis D. Brandeis Center President Kenneth L. Marcus. "First, the Taskforce demonstrates that the campaign against anti-Semitism surmounts partisan rancor and garners support from both sides of the congressional aisle. Note that leading congressmen of both parties are underscoring the importance of adopting a definition of anti-Semitism substantially similar to the U.S. State Department's." That same bipartisan support was seen in December, when the U.S. Senate unanimously passed Senators Tim Scott and Bob Case's important Anti-Semitism Awareness Act, which provides Jewish students protection under Title VI of the Civil Rights act and urges the Department of Education to use the State Department's definition of anti-Semitism.

"Second," Marcus continued, "the Taskforce letter demonstrates that the United States Congress, as well as the executive branch of our government, will continue to assert strong leadership in the fight against global anti-Semitism." The timing is significant, in light of recent reports regarding staff departures at the U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Global Anti-Semitism. This Taskforce letter reassures human rights advocates throughout the world that the United States remains committed to the fight against anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry.

"Third," Marcus added, "the statement illustrates both strong momentum in the ongoing global efforts to fight anti-Semitism, as well as the substantial amount that remains to be done. The IHRA's definition closely resembles the State Department's definition of anti-Semitism, but the department does not have jurisdiction on incidents of anti-Semitism, and U.S. domestic agencies, other than the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, have not adopted the definition for domestic purposes, which is why legislative efforts like Senators Scott and Casey's work is so important.

Ongoing efforts continue to implement a national definition of anti-Semitism in light of the growing anti-Semitic incidents on college campuses. Efforts to do so are underway in South Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee.

Launched in March of 2015, the Taskforce is chaired by eight members of congress, both Democrats and Republicans, who keep their congressional colleagues apprised of anti-Semitic incidents. Members include representatives Nita Lowey (D-NY), Chris Smith (R-NJ), Eliot Engel (D-NY), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-

FL), Ted Deutch (D-FL), Kay Granger (R-TX), Marc Veasey (D-TX), and Peter Roskam (R-IL). Today's letter is bears the signature of 32 Members of Congress: the eight co-chairs as well as Task Force members. Task force members include representatives Grace Meng (D-NY), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Steve Cohen (D-TN), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL), Gregory Meeks (D-NY), Lois Frankel (D-FL), Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Mike Quigley (D-IL), Al Green (D-TX), Albio Sires (D-NJ), Adam Schiff (D-CA), Brad Schneider (D-IL), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Donald Norcross (D-NJ), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Pete King (R-NY), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Kathleen Rice (D-NY), Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), Brenda Boyle (D-PA), and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL).

The European Parliament adopted the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism on June 1, 2017. Austria, Romania, and the United Kingdom have already done so, but most European Union members have not yet followed suit. As the letter notes, "This resolution.....sends a bold statement to those who foment hatred against Jews: European leaders are aware of the growing trends of anti-Semitism and refuse to tolerate it."

Please see below for the full text of the Taskforce letter:

Dear Mr. Chairman,

As members of the Bipartisan Taskforce for Combating Anti-Semitism in the U.S. House of Representatives, we applaud the European Parliament's passage of a working definition of anti-Semitism. We wish to congratulate you and your colleagues of the European Parliament Working Group on Antisemitism for your hard work in building support for this important resolution.

The frequency and scale of anti-Semitic incidents in both the United States and Europe over the past few years has been deeply alarming. From large-scale attacks, such as the 2012 assault on a Jewish school in Toulouse, to smaller but all too common incidents of harassment and vandalism, European Jewish communities often fear for their safety and deserve a strong message of support from their governments. This resolution, which includes a working definition of anti-Semitism adopted from the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, encourages European Union (EU) Member States to monitor and prevent anti-Semitic violence and prosecute the perpetrators. It also sends a bold statement to those who foment hatred against Jews: European leaders are aware of the growing trends of anti-Semitism and refuse to tolerate it.

The resolution represents an important step in combating anti-Semitism, but more work remains to be done. Of all the states participating in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, only Austria, Romania, and the United Kingdom have formally adopted the definition. Following the recent passage of the working definition of anti-Semitism, we strongly encourage all EU-member national parliaments to formally adopt the definition and commit to greater action against anti-Semitism. Anti-Semites must understand that there is no place for anti-Jewish bigotry, and European Jewish communities must be reassured that their governments will do all they can to keep them safe.

Last month, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed the Combating European Anti-Semitism Act (H.R. 672), which would encourage greater coordination and partnerships between the

United States and European countries to address anti-Semitism. This and other important initiatives for combating anti-Semitism, including efforts to integrate a working definition of anti-Semitism into various aspects of U.S. policy and practice, are top priorities for many members of Congress. We must continue to build on the momentum created by this bill's passage and the passage of the working definition. We look forward to working closely with the EU and individual member states in achieving the shared goal of protecting Jewish communities and combating anti-Semitism.

Sincerely,

The letter is signed by Task Force Co-Chairs Representatives: Nita Lowey (D-NY), Chris Smith (R-NJ), Eliot Engel (D-NY), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Ted Deutch (D-FL), Kay Granger (R-TX), Marc Veasey (D-TX), and Peter Roskam (R-IL), as well as Task Force members Reps. Grace Meng (D-NY), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Steve Cohen (D-TN), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL), Gregory Meeks (D-NY), Lois Frankel (D-FL), Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), Mike Quigley (D-IL), Al Green (D-TX), Albio Sires (D-NJ), Adam Schiff (D-CA), Brad Schneider (D-IL), Ted Lieu (D-CA), Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Brad Sherman (D-CA), Donald Norcross (D-NJ), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Pete King (R-NY), Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ), Kathleen Rice (D-NY), Alan Lowenthal (D-CA), Brenda Boyle (D-PA), and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL).

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About The Louis D. Brandeis Center: The Louis D. Brandeis Center, Inc., or LDB, is an independent, nonprofit organization established to advance the civil and human rights of the Jewish people and promote justice for all. The Brandeis Center conducts research, education, and advocacy to combat the resurgence of anti-Semitism on college and university campuses. It is not affiliated with the Massachusetts university, the Kentucky law school, or any of the other institutions that share the name and honor the memory of the late U.S. Supreme Court justice.