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Holocaust Remembrance: USCIRF Calls for Renewed Fight against Anti-Semitism

WASHINGTON- This weekend, people around the world will commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day, marked on the anniversary of the Soviet troops' entry into the Auschwitz Nazi death camp in 1945. It is a time to reflect anew on the tragedy of the Holocaust, to pay homage to its 6 million victims and to recommit ourselves to ensuring that such a catastrophe never again be allowed to occur.

Despite the horrifying lessons and staggering losses of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism is still a potent force and reports of anti-Semitic incidents are on the rise. In too many countries, media and hate groups are given free rein to incite ethnic, religious and other irrational hatreds, and anti-Semitism is used as a tool to smear opponents. Some governments do not do enough to fight anti-Semitism; others even fuel it.

In a particularly egregious example last month, the government of Iran sponsored a conference questioning the legitimacy-indeed veracity-of well-established facts of the Holocaust. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and other senior Iranian government officials hosted numerous Holocaust deniers, racists and anti-Semites from around the world.

"Six decades after the Holocaust, anti-Semitism remains a grave threat to Jews around the world, as well as to international peace and stability," said Felice D. Gaer, chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. "The danger is all the more

apparent in the efforts of those who would deny the fact of the Holocaust."

The Commission notes that an important 55-country international organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, has made valuable advances in devoting resources and attention to the distinct problem of anti-Semitism. Additionally, the Commission commends the United Nations General Assembly for adopting a resolution Friday that urges member countries to condemn statements or activities that deny the Holocaust. The U.S. government, which introduced the resolution at the Assembly, played a particularly important role in preparing and gathering support for the resolution.

Individual governments and citizens must do more to uproot anti-Semitism from their communities and deprive it-and any other form of hatred based on race, creed or ethnicity-of any place in civilized discourse. Only then can we have hope that the words "Never again" will not ring hollow.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Felice D. Gaer