

Statement of Deborah E. Lipstadt
Nominee for United States Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat
Antisemitism
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
February 8, 2022

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

Thank you, Senators. Being here is one of the great honors — and great surprises — of my life. I am nominated for a rather unusual ambassadorship, so with your permission, I'd like to open with something unusual: a Hebrew blessing.

Barukh ata Adonai, matir assurim.

Blessed are you G-d, who frees the captives.

This blessing was recited by Jews worldwide when we heard of the escape from the Colleyville, Texas, synagogue of the resourceful and incredibly brave captives.

Many of us, fearing the worst, sat suspended over the void with another blessing at the ready: *Barukh dayan emet*, Blessed is the merciful judge, the blessing Jews traditionally recite upon hearing of a death, particularly an untimely, tragic one.

Senators, this was no isolated incident. Increasingly, Jews have been singled out for slander, violence and terrorism.

Today's rise in antisemitism is staggering. It is especially alarming that we witness such a surge less than eight decades after one out of three Jews on Earth was murdered.

Often, in their long history Jews have felt abandoned. But then *is not now*, certainly *not* in the United States.

Today the American government recognizes Jew-hatred as a serious global challenge. I sit here because, the United States Senate, in a bipartisan effort led by Senators Rosen and Lankford, takes this problem seriously enough to create, fund, and now, elevate this position to an Ambassadorship.

Senators, I have taught about antisemitism for 40 years. I have written seven books and countless articles about it. I have designed museum exhibits, including at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I have lectured at universities from Germany to the Vatican's Pontifical Institute.

But I haven't stayed in the academy's Ivory Tower. I have repeatedly confronted real world antisemitism. I cite three life-changing moments.

In 1972, when I was a young graduate student, I visited the Soviet Union to meet Refuseniks, the Soviet Jews whose applications to leave the USSR for Israel or the United States were rejected by Moscow. They lost their jobs; their families were harassed; their children were bullied.

I anticipated finding people cowering in fear. I did not. Senators, those Soviet Jews were the bravest, most resolute people I've met. They spoke truth to tyranny and were profoundly liberated by so doing. I went to strengthen their Jewish identity and their fight for freedom. I left strengthened by them and acutely aware of democracy's precious gift.

Let me share a second episode. In 1996, I was sued for libel for accurately describing the world's leading Holocaust denier as a fraud, racist, and antisemite. He sued me in the U.K., hoping to exploit Britain's more lenient libel laws. The grueling six-year legal battle resulted in a resounding verdict in my favor and

against antisemitism. Yet for the ten weeks of the trial, I sat in a London courtroom, listening to a Hitler apologist spew Holocaust denial, antisemitism, and racism.

And finally, a more recent episode. In 2021, I was an expert witness at the Charlottesville civil suit against the organizers of the vile August 2017 demonstration. For those extremists, who came to Charlottesville ready to do battle, neo-Nazism, racism and antisemitism are intimately intertwined.

Senators, as those episodes suggest, Jew-hatred can be found across the *entire* political spectrum.. One finds it among Christians, Muslims, atheists, and, sadly, even a handful of Jews; in Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and even in countries with no Jews.

I am an equal-opportunity foe of antisemitism. Unless one is willing to fight Jew-hatred ***wherever one finds it***, one should not be a nominee for this position.

My parents were immigrants to this exceptional republic. And they embedded in their children a love for country, a rock-solid Jewish identity, and the belief that we could achieve great things.

But they certainly never imagined that one of their children could be nominated for an ambassadorship—and one that speaks of our republic’s determination to confront a hatred that defies our founding ideals.

Senators, I am blessed with a job I love, at a university I revere, with inspiring students. This new role, if I am honored by confirmation, will be difficult and demanding. When I was first asked to apply for it, I told an old friend that I doubted I would. Without hesitation, she said, “***But you could make a difference.***”

Senators, if confirmed, I shall fight antisemitism worldwide, without fear or favor and with that one goal emblazoned before me: *to make a difference*.

Finally, if confirmed, I pledge to make myself available to this Committee, its Members, and staff to seek advice and guidance wherever appropriate.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, thank you for your time and your consideration. Thank you for this great honor. I look forward to your questions.