



# UCSJ: Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union

"The Voice of Emigration, Jewish Survival, and Human Rights in the Former Soviet Union Since 1970"

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## TESTIMONY OF NICKOLAI BUTKEVICH

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Before the

USCIRF Hearing "Russia: Religious Communities, Extremist Movements, and the State"

The Capitol, Room SC-4

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As UCSJ's director of research and advocacy, and on behalf of UCSJ, its president, Yosef I. Abramowitz and its National Director, Micah H. Naftalin, I am very pleased to be here this afternoon. I will summarize my prepared statement, which I hope will appear in full in the record of this hearing.

I am deeply honored to have been invited to brief the USCIRF, whose work is of special importance in the case of the Russian Federation, a country which is backsliding towards authoritarianism, and has a mixed record when it comes to religious liberty and the protection of minority groups from hate crimes and hate groups.

The issues of xenophobia and antisemitism in Russia are extremely complex, and there is simply not time in this forum to present a comprehensive overview, so I am going to concentrate on the two issue that I know best—extremist groups and how the state responds to them, and recent antisemitic incidents.

### SUMMARY

The consensus among Russian human rights activists and Russia's mainstream media is that xenophobia (including antisemitism) is a growing problem, which is made worse by the lack of consistent and effective government action against hate groups. My testimony will focus on recent hate crimes and how the justice system has responded to them. I will also discuss recent antisemitic incidents in Moscow and the Moscow region. My testimony will include recommendations to improve law enforcement practices when it comes to hate crimes and emphasize the dire need for more programs, both by the Russian government and the NGO sector, to promote inter-religious and inter-ethnic tolerance.

### TRENDS IN XENOPHOBIA

When it comes to hate crimes and the response to these crimes by Russian law enforcement agencies, there are two major trends. The first is strongly negative—the number of hate crimes

and membership in hate groups continues to climb. At the same time, there is a second, weaker trend of better law enforcement practices vis a vis hate crimes and hate groups. Russian federal and local authorities are clearly taking this problem more seriously, after years of denial and inaction. However, the positive nature of this trend (which includes commendable statements by President Putin) is weakened by pockets of denial and racism within law enforcement agencies, and the clear fact that this long overdue crackdown, while commendable and necessary, does not seem to be working. Instead, it appears that the years of official inaction in the face of this problem have allowed xenophobia and hate groups to spread to such an extent that they may no longer be controllable.

### *Hate Crimes Up; Hate Groups Getting Stronger*

Starting in the late Yeltsin period, the number of hate crimes reported by UCSJ and other human rights groups have increased, as have the membership of neo-Nazi skinhead groups, their geographical scope, and the viciousness of their crimes. Unfortunately, reliable statistics on hate crimes or the number of neo-Nazis in the country are impossible to come by, since many local law enforcement agencies have for years actively tried to cover them up by classifying them as ordinary acts of “hooliganism.”

Anecdotally, while back in the 1990s reports of hate crimes crossed my desk two or three times a week, now it is not uncommon for that many reports to come in a single day. Even worse, these are only the reported number of attacks. Given the reluctance of many law enforcement officials to honestly address the problems posed by hate groups, combined with the many reports of racist attitudes and actions on the part of some police officers, and the illegal migration status of many of the victims, it is a fair assumption that the true number of hate crimes is much higher.

There are similar problems with estimating the number of skinheads in the country. Ten years ago, the estimated number of skinheads was in the hundreds, and almost all of them were in either Moscow or St. Petersburg. The US State Department’s most recent human rights report now puts the number of skinheads in Russia at 50,000. MVD figures put the number between 15-20,000, which makes Moscow’s police chief Vladimir Pronin’s January 28, 2005 statement that no organized skinhead gangs exist in Moscow even more astounding.

Given the informal structure and somewhat secretive nature of most Russian neo-Nazi groups, I am rather skeptical of the veracity of these figures. Suffice it to say that it is clear that the skinhead movement has grown at an explosive pace, and that it is no longer just a problem for residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg. I have read reports of skinhead activity taking place in dozens of cities, many far beyond the borders of the ethnic Russian heartland, including in the traditionally more tolerant regions of Siberia and the Far East.

Throughout the 1990s, the major instigators of racist and antisemitic violence were structured, hierarchical neo-Nazi parties such as Russian National Unity (RNU) or certain radicalized Cossack formations, primarily composed of adult males, some well into middle age. The RNU had national reach, some basic coordination between its regional branches, a national leadership, periodicals, regular conferences in Moscow, and a web site to spread the movement’s propaganda. Five years ago, the RNU broke up into several splinter organizations, and though some of its stronger regional branches have survived, it is for the most part a spent force whose place has been taken by the skinheads.

Most skinhead gangs are made up of neighborhood youths who have banded together to “cleanse” their area of non-Russians and homeless people. With the exception of some of the more established Moscow gangs, they tend to be uncoordinated and have a limited understanding of the neo-Nazi philosophy to which they adhere; they simply feel that non-Russians are responsible for the problems they and their country are facing, and have taken it upon themselves to seek violent solutions. In groups, they hunt the streets looking for non-Russian victims, whom they beat and kill without mercy, often in front of numerous witnesses. Unlike the RNU, skinheads don’t seem to have many friends within local law enforcement agencies, and are therefore more likely to run afoul of the law. This has led some skinheads to dispense with their trademark haircut and clothes in an effort to avoid attracting police attention. There have been several reports recently of “ordinary” youths attacking ethnic minorities in the style of the skinheads (i.e. knocking an isolated victim to the ground and kicking him multiple times in the head while screaming neo-Nazi slogans), which can either be explained by skinheads’ efforts to avoid the police or by the fact that skinheads are sometimes accompanied in their attacks by novice members or youths who sympathize with their ideas, but aren’t quite ready to live the in-your-face lifestyle of an open neo-Nazi.

### *Improvements in Law Enforcement Practices*

While ethnically and religiously motivated crimes have become a regular feature of Russian life, it should be noted that there have been some improvements in the way Russian police deal with hate crimes. Before I describe this trend, it is necessary to provide some background information on relevant sections of the Russian Criminal Code.

While I use the term “hate crime” throughout my testimony as a shorthand for ethnically or religiously motivated violence, this term does not exist within Russian legislation. Instead, the usual Russian law enforcement practice has been to classify such crimes as ordinary “hooliganism,” vandalism, or murders, in what many Russian human rights activists believe is a deliberate effort to cover up the problem. In the relatively rare instances in which ethnic or religious hatred is officially admitted as a motive, Article 282 of the Russian Criminal Code is usually tacked onto a hooliganism or murder charge. Increasingly, other even more rarely used sections of the Criminal Code are starting to be applied to crimes motivated by ethnic or religious hatred.

Article 282 prohibits “actions directed toward the instigation of nationalist, racial or religious animosity, humiliation of national pride or, similarly, propaganda of exclusiveness, superiority or inferiority of citizens on the principle of their affiliation to religion, nationality or race.” While Article 282 was primarily designed to combat hate speech, it is often used *de facto* by prosecutors as the equivalent of a hate crimes statute. This legal inconsistency, combined in some cases with clear antisemitic or racist bias on the part of prosecutors, judges, and juries, leads to many Article 282 cases falling apart, either within the investigative stage or during trial. There is the additional problem that many prosecutors feel that intent has to be proven in order to convict under Article 282. However, the word “intent” does not appear anywhere in the statute, as it did in an earlier version of the law before the mid-1990’s reforms of the Criminal Code. From what I understand, the omission of the word “intent” back then was deliberate, motivated by complaints from human rights activists that having to prove intent was so burdensome that it made the law practically unusable. Nevertheless, some prosecutors continue to cite this apparently non-existent problem in their justification for not bringing Article 282 charges, though it should be noted that this excuse is used less frequently than in the past.

The misuse of this law becomes even clearer when one takes into account that there are other provisions of the Criminal Code that appear to be useful tools for prosecuting what we in the US would call hate crimes. Unfortunately, their use is extremely rare.

Article 105, which covers murder, contains a section (Section 2, Paragraph L) which prohibits murder “motivated by national, racial or religious hatred or animosity.” Article 111, which covers aggravated assault, and Article 112 (assault), contain sections (Section 2, Paragraph E in both) with the exact same language. However, until 2004, these three provisions were essentially moribund.

### *The Use and Misuse of Anti-Hate Crimes Legislation*

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, most reported hate crimes resulted in no arrests. The vast majority of government officials and political leaders either completely ignored the problem or made statements minimizing it, terming it “ordinary hooliganism” or “children’s pranks.” Starting in 2002, however, the number of arrests of skinheads started to increase in Moscow. In 2003-2004, the same thing began to happen in Saint Petersburg and some other cities. Official rhetoric on this issue changed as well, to the point that the head of the MVD last year finally admitted that skinheads exist in Russia and pose a threat to social order. Unfortunately, he was almost immediately contradicted by his second in command, who tried to minimize the problem, making it obvious that denial is still a major problem within some law enforcement circles. President Putin made a number of important and useful statements condemning racism and antisemitism. Clearly, Russian officials were starting to take neo-Nazi groups more seriously as they grew in size and geographical scope.

Around the same time, Article 282 prosecutions started to rise, according to a study published last year by UCSJ’s Moscow affiliate—the Moscow Bureau on Human Rights.<sup>1</sup> However, very few of these cases ever made it to a court, and if they did, they almost always resulted in suspended sentences. The one exception to this rule was if the perpetrator was accused of being a Muslim extremist, especially if he was accused of being a member of a Chechen rebel group. While the threat of Islamic radicalism in Russia should not be discounted, this disparity showed the government’s dangerously skewed priorities, since ethnic Russian extremists were, in comparison, treated with kid gloves.

The Bureau’s study was based on statistics collected by the office of the Prosecutor General on Article 282 cases dating from the first three years of Vladimir Putin’s presidency: 2000-2003. According to these statistics, in 2000, there were 17 Article 282 cases in Russia; eight of which were brought before a court. In 2001, there were 32 Article 282 cases, only six of which got as far as a court. In 2002, the number of Article 282 cases jumped significantly to 74, 19 of which were sent to a court. In 2003, 72 cases were brought under Article 282; only 11 ever made it to a court.

The cases profiled by the Bureau included both instances of illegal hate speech, which Article 282 was primarily intended to combat, and hate crimes, including assaults and murders, which

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<sup>1</sup> A more extensive English language summary of this report, along with the full Russian language text of the Bureau’s report, can be found at: <http://www.fsmonitor.com/stories/081904Russia.shtml>

would have been more appropriate to prosecute under the appropriate sections of Articles 111 (aggravated assault), 112 (assault), and 105 (murder).

Until 2004, I was only aware of three cases in which these articles were applied in the decade since the Criminal Code was reformed—in two of those cases, those specific charges were dropped; in 2003, one Article 105 case in Moscow ended in a guilty verdict (the case dealt with the murder by skinheads of an Armenian youth in 2002). However, in 2004, at least three such cases were opened in connection with the following crimes committed by skinhead gangs: The murder of an African student in Voronezh, the murder of a Tajik Roma girl in St. Petersburg, and the murder of an ethnic Avar man in Saratov.

These unprecedented steps in Russian law enforcement practices raise the hope that at least some local law enforcement agencies have decided to transform what were once moribund sections of the law into the effective countermeasure against hate crimes that they were intended to be.

The murder in Voronezh is an interesting case study of how law enforcement agencies are beginning, with some reluctance, to change their approach.

On February 21, 2004 skinheads stabbed an African student there to death. The murder received prominent coverage in the Russian media, partially due to constant reports from local and national NGOs that accurately portrayed Voronezh as a city with a particularly vicious skinhead movement and dangerously indifferent law enforcement agencies. (Indeed, the heads of the regional FSB and MVD both made separate statements in 2002 and 2003 denying that skinheads even exist in Voronezh, despite dozens of reported neo-Nazi attacks, and in the late 1990s, the local RNU mounted joint patrols with the police in some areas of the city.)

Even after three skinheads were arrested in connection with the murder, local law enforcement agencies denied that it was a racist crime; they even allegedly spread rumors that the African student was killed because he used the services of a prostitute and refused to pay, or that he was involved in drug trafficking and got what was coming to him.

On March 19, one of the arrested skinheads blew these theories out of the water when he announced to the Leninsky District Court that they murdered the student because: “We were bored and decided to go to Mir Street, where there are many foreign [student] dorms, and kill a black.”

It later emerged that two of the accused murderers had received suspended sentences the previous year in connection with an assault on a different African student, a clear example of how the laxness of the Russian justice system towards neo-Nazis can sometimes inspire in them a dangerous sense of impunity.

To the credit of the local authorities, they eventually decided to bring hate crime charges under Article 105 (Section 2, Paragraph L). A conviction was achieved in late 2004, and the student’s murderers got long prison terms.

The same is true of the St. Petersburg murder case mentioned above, in which no arrests were made for several months until the murder of another Tajik girl—Khursheda Sultanova—spurred local police to take the first murder more seriously. Miss Sultanova’s murderers were also

caught, but hate crimes charges against them were eventually dropped. The Saratov murder trial mentioned above is set to begin later this month.

## **RECENT ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS IN RUSSIA**

### *Violent Incidents in Moscow and the Moscow Region*

Ironically, 2005 began with the Russian government criticizing the US State Department report on global antisemitism, which expressed concern over antisemitism in Russia. A Foreign Ministry statement argued that: “As for the content of the document, the effort by its authors to somehow combine objective evidence from the Russian Jewish community about the lack of antisemitism at the state level in Russia with an expression of ‘concern’ about certain instances of religious and ethnic intolerance ‘in localities’ and from a series of political parties appears openly artificial... We are open to constructive dialogue, but we consider mentorism and groundless accusations simply inappropriate.”

In far less diplomatic terms, Dmitry Rogozin, head of the Motherland party, some of whose members were criticized in the report for inciting antisemitism, called its authors “idiots” who deserve to be fired.

Unfortunately, the first month and a half of 2005 have shown that the State Department’s concerns were well placed. So far this year, there has been a sharp increase in reported antisemitic attacks in Moscow. At the same time, an extremist newspaper published a letter with the signatures of 19 members of the State Duma that was sent to the Prosecutor General’s office demanding that all Jewish organizations in Russia be banned, and accused Jews of drinking the blood of Christians in ritual murders. The driving force behind this letter appears to be members of Mr. Rogozin’s Motherland party.

On January 1, a wooden synagogue in the Moscow suburb of Saltykovka caught fire in a suspected arson attack. Izidor Vayzer, head of the local Jewish community alleged in an interview with the Russian Jewish news service AEN that local police were dragging their feet in investigating the crime.

“It was obvious that this was an arson—on the burned out terrace there was neither electrical nor gas outlets, Mr. Vayzer claimed.” In addition, footprints in the snow were spotted by community members from the outlying fence to the building. “We photographed these tracks and are now trying to get a criminal investigation started. The police accepted our request, but they aren’t going to open an investigation until the fire inspectors conclude that it’s an arson. The tracks are already covered with [new] snow, and we can’t find the inspectors because the entire country is on holiday until the 11<sup>th</sup>.” (Police later opened an arson investigation, though I am not aware of any arrests in connection with this incident.)

According to Mr. Vayzer, extremist nationalists were probably responsible for the arson. “There is a powerful branch of the RNU [in Saltykova,” he said. “Two of our youths have been beaten up... One of their mothers told us: ‘Don’t under any circumstance do anything in response to this, otherwise they’ll come to our home and cut our throats.’ So we had to back off.”

In any event, police tend not to be particularly helpful, according to Mr. Vayzer: “When it comes to this [antisemitism], the law doesn’t work. When I go to the police and say ‘One of us Jews

has been insulted' they just answer 'Ya, ya, ya'" and don't do anything about it beyond going through the motions.

Even worse, Mr. Vayzer claimed, the RNU's presence in the town came about because the local police invited the RNU in to "bring order to the market place," where, presumably, many non-Russians trade. "They began to bring about a Russian order. They beat up Koreans, then Azeris." Police officials then had second thoughts, and ended their cooperation with the neo-Nazis. However, by then, the RNU leaders had bought control over the market place.

The same day as the suspected arson in Saltykova, a resident of Moscow was attacked on the city's metro simply because he looks like a Jew, according to a January 14, 2005 report by the Moscow Bureau on Human Rights, UCSJ's Moscow affiliate. Leonid Tsyachny was waiting for a metro train on New Year's day at the Pushkinskaya station when he was reportedly assaulted by a man identified in the report as D. Savitsky. According to the Moscow Bureau, Mr. Savitsky was arrested by metro police, and during his interrogation "did not hide that fact that he attacked Tsyachny only because he looks like a Jew."

Despite causing his victim what the Moscow Bureau termed "serious bodily injuries," Mr. Savitsky was freed, and no criminal investigation has yet been opened into the attack. The Moscow Bureau sent a request to the city's top prosecutor, asking that he take the case under his personal control.

In mid-January 2005, Rabbi Alexander Lakshin was beaten by a group of youths who shouted "kikes" while kicking him and hitting him with bottles in Moscow's Marina Roshcha district, near one of the city's main synagogues. The rabbi received multiple head injuries and a bone in his lower back was broken. Two hours before that incident, an Orthodox Jewish couple was attacked near by. A January 17, 2005 report by RIA Novosti cited a FEOR (Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia) spokesman saying that five antisemitic attacks have taken place in the Marina Roscha district near the Jewish community center over the past month and that one of Russia's two chief rabbis, Beryl Lazar, had sent a letter to law enforcement agencies asking for greater protection for Jews in Marina Roscha.

Three unemployed men ranging in age from 18-26 years old were arrested in their homes on the evening of January 19, 2005 in connection with the attack. The three were charged with "hooliganism" rather than assault motivated by ethnic or religious hatred, a decision that has been criticized by Jewish leaders, most prominent among them Rabbi Lazar, who was quoted in a January 18, 2005 Gazeta.ru article as saying that: "We have on multiple occasions asserted that crimes committed on ethnic or racial grounds cannot and should not be seen as typical hooliganism."

### *The Duma Letter*

In late January 2005, the Russian and international press reported that a letter signed by 19 members of the State Duma and over 400 other people had been sent to the Prosecutor's Office calling for a ban on all Jewish organizations in Russia and containing numerous antisemitic slurs. There has been some confusion in the international media about how many of these deputies have claimed never to have signed the letter, or have later repudiated it. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency, for instance, reported that all but one of the signers had "repudiated" the letter, leaving the impression that the other 18 had publicly either claimed not to have signed it, or have

disassociated themselves from the ideas expressed in the letter. However, it appears that only the request within the letter to ban Jewish organizations had been “taken back” by some of the Duma members who signed it, not the words directed against Jews.

The following information is what I have been able to glean from the text of the letter and subsequent media reports: Of the 19 Duma deputies, four have publicly admitted to signing the letter: Aleksandr Krutov (the main organizer of the letter) and Andrey Savelev of the Motherland party, and Sergey Sobko and Nikolai Ezersky of the Communist Party, who said in a subsequent interview that Jews have too much power in the business world. A hostile and possibly inaccurate account in a Kaliningrad newspaper cited local Motherland deputy Vladimir Nikitin as claiming to have signed as well. Of the remaining 14 deputies, six are likely to have signed due to their history of making public antisemitic statements, but have made no comment on the letter. These six are Motherland deputies Nikolai Leonov, Igor Rodionov (a former Defense Minister under Yeltsin), Nikolai Pavlov, and Oleg Mashchenko, as well as Communist deputies Nikolai Kondratenko and Albert Makashov.

Two of the deputies whose signature appeared on the letter, Motherland deputy Aleksandr Chuev, and Communist deputy Pyotr Svechnikov, denied having signed it. I have no information about the remaining six reported signers.

In other words, at least four and very likely as many as 11 deputies did sign a letter which went way beyond the usual antisemitic canards that Jews control the media or world finances. Instead its authors dove face first into the muck of medieval superstition and fanaticism.

The letter contained subheadings with evocative titles like “Judaic Aggressiveness as a Form of Satanism” and arguments such as: “For the salvation of his soul, a Christian must frankly tell Jews about their dangerous deviation from the truth into satanism.” Even the infamous “Blood Libel” (the myth widespread in the Middle Ages that Judaism requires its followers to ritually murder Christian children and use their blood to prepare matzo) was cited as an established fact:

In the Russian Empire, Jews, after the useless attempts of the tsarist government to make them “the same as everyone else,” were deprived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century of the equality of rights: not because they were Jews by blood (the empire was multinational); not because they were non-Christian (so were Muslims, Buddhists and so forth.); **but because the Jewish religion is anti-Christian and human-hating, reaching as far as ritual murders. Many cases of this extremism were proven in court** (for example, see a study by a well-known scholar V. I. Dal “An Investigation of Murders of Christian Babies by Jews and the Use of Their Blood”, St. Petersburg, 1884).

Media reaction to this letter was extremely hostile, and several officials condemned it, most prominently President Putin, who declared during an international event in Krakow to commemorate the Holocaust that: “We must unequivocally and unanimously tell present and future generations: no one has the right to be indifferent to antisemitism, nationalism, racial and religious intolerance... We are not working effectively enough. Even in Russia, the country which did more than any other country to defeat the Nazis, we unfortunately see signs of antisemitism. And I am also ashamed because of that.”

The State Duma passed a resolution condemning the letter, with overwhelming support from the dominant pro-Kremlin party, United Russia. Motherland deputies abstained; the Communists and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s extremist nationalist LDPR (three explicitly antisemitic parties which won 1/3 of the party list vote in the December 2003 elections) voted against the resolution. The newspaper in which the letter was published, *Rus Pravoslavnaya*, was given an

official warning for inciting ethnic hatred; another such warning could be grounds for legal action to shut it down. Perhaps in response, Mr. Krutov and Mr. Savelev announced that they and the other signers of the letter were “taking back” their request for a ban on Jewish organizations in Russia, but they refused to repudiate the antisemitic slurs expressed in the letter. With the exception of Mr. Chuev, I have not seen any reports that indicate that other signers of the letter have repudiated it; most have apparently either refused to comment or have affirmed that they signed it.

There are various explanations for the timing of this letter, which became public at the same time that President Putin journeyed to Poland to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The most plausible, in my opinion, is that the letter was sent some months earlier in an attempt by Mr. Krutov and some of his fellow antisemites in the Duma to protest incitement charges pending against Boris Mironov—an antisemitic writer who once served as Minister of the Press under Yeltsin. The Prosecutor’s Office, so the story goes, held on to the letter and only released it in January 2005 as an attempt to both undermine the Motherland party at a time when it is attempting to take political advantage of a series of protests against the government’s benefits reforms, and to distract public attention from these protests.

Whatever the reason, to me one point stands out as the most important. Several members of the Russian parliament, knowing that they will at some point have to face the voters for re-election, were so confident in the level of antisemitic sentiment within the electorate that they signed a letter accusing Jews of drinking the blood of Christian children.

## CONCLUSION

Clearly, better law enforcement practices have not stemmed the tide of extremist violence. Better economic conditions and more funding by the Russian government and international foundations for tolerance programs are needed to bring these problems back to a manageable level. Programs such as the Swedish embassy’s efforts to promote teaching about the Holocaust in Russian schools and the American NGO the Bay Area Council for Jewish Rescue and Renewal’s “Climate of Trust” program, which twins Russian law enforcement officials with US counterparts in San Francisco with the goal in mind of teaching what hate crimes are and how to react to them, need to be better funded and replicated.

The international and the Russian NGO community is mobilizing to counter xenophobia, which given the multi-ethnic nature of the country, has clear implications for future political and economic stability if it is allowed to spin out of control. Russia’s neighbors are deeply concerned as well—in 2003, my organization, our affiliate in Moscow (the Moscow Bureau on Human Rights), and the Moscow Helsinki Group received a 1.4 million Euro grant from the European Commission aimed at combating racism and antisemitism in Russia. At the end of March 2004, the project, entitled “Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination Against Ethnic Minorities and Indigenous People in the Russian Federation,” was launched in Moscow. Under the three-year project, we are working with several of Russia’s leading NGOs and academics, as well as numerous government structures, in a comprehensive monitoring and educational effort to combat xenophobia. Monitors from 73 regions are involved in the project, a legal clinic and a hot line have been set up for victims of hate crimes, and conferences on xenophobia are being held each year of the project in Moscow and in other selected cities.

It is our hope that this project and similar efforts by other organizations will help stem the tide of xenophobia in Russia, which in recent years has reached frightening proportions.

Efforts to promote tolerance, inform the public about hate crimes, pressure local authorities to take hate crimes seriously, and coordinate anti-extremism efforts with friendly local and federal law enforcement officials and agencies are crucially important for Russia's future as a stable, prosperous, multi-ethnic and religiously diverse country. As with all human rights issues, our main weapon in this fight is publicity, and as I hope I have shown in my testimony today, the Russian and the international media have an important role to play. Even more important are expressions of concern on the part of the US government agencies, including public hearings such as this one. Thank you again for your attention to these issues and for your continuing hard work on behalf of human rights in Russia.