

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2009

The Honorable Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero
Prime Minister, Republic of Spain
Complejo de la Moncloa,
Avda. Puerta de Hierro
s/n. 28071 Madrid
España

Dear Prime Minister Zapatero:

As members of the United States Congress who support close U.S.-Spain relations, we want to express our concerns regarding growing anti-Semitism in Spain. As a democratic partner and ally of the United States, we strongly believe that you and your government must take immediate steps to denounce and combat anti-Semitism in Spain.

As you may be aware, the Pew Research Center's 2008 Global Attitudes Project documented that anti-Jewish sentiment is on the rise in several countries in Europe, but the situation is "particularly dramatic in Spain, where unfavorable views more than doubled over the last three years, rising from 21% in 2005 to 46% in the current survey".

In a 2007 survey conducted by the Anti Defamation League (ADL), 60 percent of respondents in Spain answered that Jews are more loyal to Israel than to Spain, 53 percent of respondents believed that Jews have too much power in the business world, 68 percent believed that Jews have too much power in international financial markets, and 46 percent responded that Jews still talk too much about what happened to them in the Holocaust.

The Pew and ADL surveys indicate a disturbingly high level of anti-Semitic sentiment, and raise serious concerns about the safety of the Jewish community in Spain, which for years has reported to Spanish authorities disconcerting issues, including incidents of verbal harassment, vandalism of synagogues and Jewish community institutions, and increasing anti-Semitic sentiment in the public discourse and at public gatherings such as sporting events.

We are also deeply concerned about continued anti-Semitic rhetoric in the Spanish media which undoubtedly impacts public perception in Spain and contributes to intolerance and hate-filled acts. While we understand that there may be legitimate criticism of the Israeli government and its policies, we are concerned that the mainstream press, particularly prestigious newspapers such as El Pais which are read throughout the Spanish speaking world, is consistently publishing articles and cartoons conveying crude anti-Semitic canards and stereotypes. Furthermore, we are concerned by reports suggesting that officials in the Balearic Islands are using public funding to publish material for children that contain anti-Israeli sentiment and cartoons. This unacceptable anti-Semitic rhetoric, wrapped in the disguise of anti-Israel sentiment, is dangerous and reinforces negative stereotypes of Jews in Spain and internationally.

The U.S. State Department also documented the concerns of the Jewish community in Spain in its 2005 and 2008 reports on Global Anti-Semitism. Unfortunately, current indicators suggest that

animosity towards Jews has not declined; in fact it has risen to new heights. If this situation is not addressed at the highest levels of government, we fear that the situation could descend into violence towards the Jewish community in Spain.

Prime Minister Zapatero, we commend you on your leadership in establishing the Casa Sefarad and the Fundacion Pluralismo y Convivencia and for Spain's involvement in the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research. These are valuable and important initiatives, which we believe will establish a strong foundation for your government to take further steps to combat anti-Semitism and establish a constructive and positive relationship with your nation's Jewish community and world Jewry as a whole.

It is essential that your government take additional steps to stem anti-Semitic sentiments in Spain. To that end, we urge you and your government to make public statements and take strong positions rejecting expressions of anti-Semitism. We believe your government must fully implement anti-discrimination legislation which would make anti-Semitism a criminal act, penalize Holocaust denial, and create a special prosecutor to address acts of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism. Finally, it is important that any effort by your government to address this issue also include a Holocaust and Jewish studies education component, specifically in higher education institutions. It has been demonstrated in Europe and elsewhere that such educational programs yield positive results.

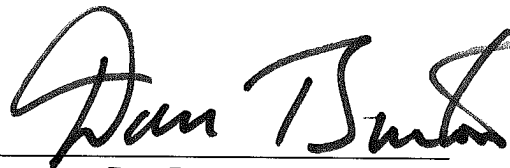
At a time when President Obama and the United States are in the process of establishing an agenda with our allies to promote democracy, human rights, religious freedom and combating xenophobia, intolerance and hate, it is important that Spain join the United States in addressing anti-Semitism. We believe that American-Spanish relations – which rest on common values - would be further bolstered by your government's efforts to deal with this issue and we stand ready to work with you to address anti-Semitism and other issues of mutual importance.

We look forward to your response and to hearing more about your efforts to combat the disturbing rise of anti-Semitism in Spain.

Sincerely,



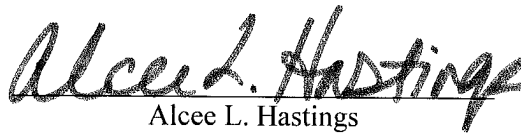
Rep. Robert Wexler
Member of Congress
Chairman, House Subcommittee on Europe



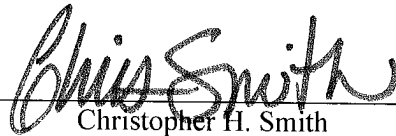
Rep. Dan Burton
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on
Middle East and South Asia



Eliot Engel
Member of Congress
Chairman, House Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere



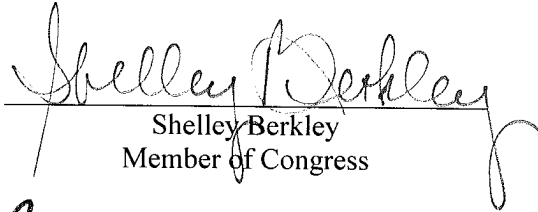
Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress
Co-Chairman, Commission on Security and
Cooperation in Europe



Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, House Subcommittee on
Africa and Global Health



Frank Wolf
Member of Congress



Shelley Berkley
Member of Congress



Ron Klein
Member of Congress



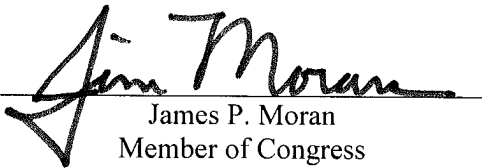
Michael E. McMahon
Member of Congress



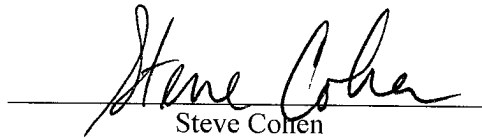
Carolyn McCarthy
Member of Congress



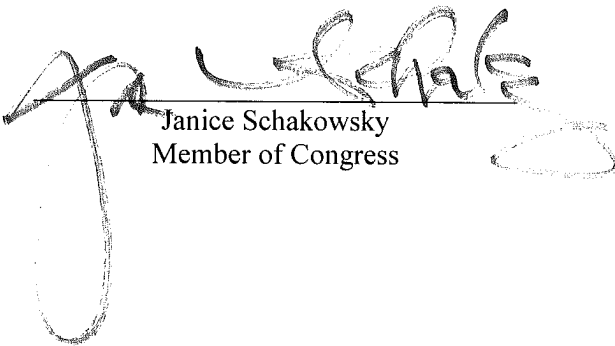
Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress



James P. Moran
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Janice Schakowsky
Member of Congress