

# AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

## PRESS CONFERENCE ANNOUNCING THE COALITION TO DEFEND FREE SPEECH

### WELCOME:

RICHARD GORDON,  
PRESIDENT,  
AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

### SPEAKERS:

FLOYD ABRAMS,  
HONORARY CHAIR,  
COALITION TO DEFEND FREE SPEECH

PAULA SCHRIEFER,  
ADVOCACY DIRECTOR,  
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SEAMUS HASSON,  
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RICHARD GORDON: Good afternoon. And thank you for coming. I'm Richard Gordon, and I'm the president of the American Jewish Congress. And I want to thank you all for being here today. The American Jewish Congress has had a long tradition – actually 90 years – of defending First Amendment rights, especially the rights of freedom of speech and freedom of religion, and clearly the right to speak freely and express oneself freely about religion. We believe the free exchange of ideas, even if it may be offensive, controversial, or even defamatory, is critical to a free society. That's why we organized the Coalition to Defend Free Speech.

The current attempt to ban and criminalize expressions critical of religion is simply fundamentally wrong. It also chills free speech and blocks discussion of critical issues, such as the role of religion in government and the relationship of Muslim nations to the West. I'm especially pleased today to welcome and present today's speakers, and I'll name them in the order that they will be speaking today.

Our first speaker is Floyd Abrams. He's the honorary chair of the Coalition to Defend Free Speech, and as most of you know, is one of our nation's leading advocates of free expression and First Amendment rights. He will be followed by Paula Schriefer and then Kevin "Seamus" Hasson, and then John Wohlstetter, so if we may begin, Abrams.

FLOYD ABRAMS: Thank you, and welcome everyone. Religion matters: It matters a lot. Precisely because it matters a lot, it is all the more important that people feel free and be free to comment – favorably; unfavorably; neutrally – as they like about other religions, their own religions or no religion at all. One thing that we should not have in this world are state-enforced notions, across the world, of heresy or blasphemy. That's one of the reasons why it is so distressing to have seen the Organization of the Islamic Conference, representing 56 nations around the world, advocate with such vigilance and persistence the imposition of limitations on commentary – criticism – of religions around the world. If successful, those efforts would have – and are intended to have – the effect of banning Danish cartoonists of the future; the Salman Rushdies of the future; the moviemakers of the present and of the future, from having their say about important issues around the world.

What is most important, I think, to know at this time is that, while the efforts of that organization are couched in terms of avoiding the defamation of religion – or, as is now sometimes phrased, inciting to hatred of religion – the reality is that this is a political effort for, essentially, political reasons. The effort is to cut back, if not to end, criticism – hostile commentary; views with which the organization does not agree – with respect to subjects as broad and sweeping as 9/11 itself, terrorism in the world and those who participate in it and countenance it, and criticism of certain aspects, which some view as offensive, in Islam.

The effort is, essentially, to take off the table, for public debate, a variety of subjects, lest the people who speak about them say things of which the member states, who are trying to impose their will on the rest of the world, disapprove. That, in and of itself, is reason enough for the formation of this coalition, because that effort, in and of itself, is one which should be resisted and thwarted. Thank you.

MR. GORDON: I neglected to tell you where everyone's from, so I will do that now. Our next speaker will be Paula Schriefer, who's the director of advocacy at Freedom House. Kevin Hasson is the founder and president of the Becket Fund for Religious Freedom, and John Wohlstetter is the co-chair for the coalition. Afterwards, we'll be happy to take your questions.

PAULA SCHRIEFER: Thanks, Richard. It's really a pleasure to be here today with my colleagues. Intolerance and stereotyping based on a person's religion are repugnant and all too common in the world today. Discrimination based on a person's religion is not only repugnant, it's actually a violation of an individual's human rights. However, attempts to create international law regarding the vague notion of defamation of religion, as well as attempt to criminalize such offenses through laws within a given society, do nothing to address these problems; in fact, we believe they exacerbate these problems.

Limiting the ability of individuals to raise concerns, criticisms and even questions breeds ignorance and intolerance. Moreover, such attempts place the sole responsibility of judging what is defamatory and what is acceptable into the hands of governments. Freedom House has joined the Coalition to Defend Free Speech because the concept of defamation of religion is one of the most dangerous challenges to the fundamental freedom of expression that we're facing today. It is not the only challenge, as our annual freedom of the press survey points out all too clearly that it is an important one, and it has been gaining traction at a time when people of all faiths need to engage in more, and not less, dialogue with one another. By limiting the very ability of people to raise questions, ideas and opinions, one undermines not only freedom of expression, but intellectual, academic, and religious freedom as well.

We will never overcome prejudices by making certain topics off-limits. Faiths, beliefs, ideas must by their very nature be open to debate, discussion, and yes, criticism and even ridicule. As our colleagues at Article XIX and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights recently stated before the U.N. Human Rights Council, it is perfectly possible to disagree – even vehemently disagree – with a particular religious tenet while respecting the rights of others to believe it. Indeed, international human rights law protecting freedom of religion and expression is intended to ensure the rights of individuals and groups to have and express their beliefs.

This is easy enough to do when the beliefs of individuals fall within a majority. It becomes harder when individuals' beliefs fall within a minority. It becomes harder still when those beliefs shock or offend the majority view, but it is nonetheless those types of

views and the most vulnerable individuals for whom human rights protections are the most important. As much as we may not like it, being shocked or offended is not the same as having our rights violated. This is true even in regards to comments that shock or offend groups and individuals, for whom international law is designed to protect. It is absolutely true for beliefs and ideas, which international law is not designed to protect.

The U.N. special repertoire on freedom of religion or belief, together with the special repertoire on contemporary forms of racism, xenophobia and intolerance, are presenting a paper today at a conference in Geneva on this topic, in which they state very clearly: Defamations of religions may offend people, and hurt their religious feelings, but it does not necessarily or directly result in a violation of their rights, including their right to freedom of religion. Freedom of religion primarily confers a right to act in accordance with one's religion, but it does not bestow a right for believers to have their religion itself protected from adverse comment.

The movement to limit and criminalize speech that is deemed defamatory has been led by governments and some religious leaders, primarily in the Islamic world – the Organization of the Islamic Conference, in particular. As such, some will ask whether this coalition is being set up to counter Islamic beliefs and values. We hope that this press conference and the activities of the conference going forward will demonstrate that, in fact, the exact opposite is true. It's worth noting that the defamation movement has been pushed most strongly largely by self-appointed governments of Muslim-majority countries, and as such, their citizens – by far – have been the most victimized by measures to suspend their speech.

I think it's appropriate to conclude my remarks with the thoughts expressed by an activist who has been directly affected by her government's efforts to silence critical voices. Dahlia Ziyadeh (ph) is the director of the North Africa office of the American Islamic Conference; she's a blogger, and she's a human rights activist, and she writes: "Freedom is an uncontrollable virus that once released, no one can stop, and it will infect everyone. My friend, Kareem Amer, who is 22 years old is now service four years in jail because he dared to criticize Islam on his blog. The government wanted to scare us and teach us a lesson, however the number of bloggers has increased, and the existing bloggers and writers have now become more courageous in expressing their thoughts without fear. Now we are all infected with the freedom virus that once infected Kareem. Truthfully, we do not want to be cured, because the freedom virus has made us stronger human beings." Thank you.

MR. KEVIN HASSON: Hi, I'm Kevin "Seamus" Hasson of the Becket Fund. You may notice that I'm shaking a little bit – this is not because I'm afraid of you: It's because I'm afraid of Floyd Abrams. (Laughter.) This is the only thing that Michael J. Fox and I have in common. Parkinson's is good for some things; I can make a much better martini now that I have Parkinson's. But it is not the best for public speaking.

First, a word from our sponsor. The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty is a bipartisan, interfaith public-interest law firm that protects the free expression of all

religious traditions. Over the last 14 years, we've amassed a batting average of .850 in courts across the country, and in other places of the world, defending basically every faith you can imagine – everything, we like to say, from Anglicans to Zoroastrians. But certainly, many Muslim clients are able to wear their hijabs or are able to take time out for prayer or even have their mosques because of us. Nevertheless, there are other statements of religious ideology that are not statements that advance religious debate, but deny religious debate to believers, and when that happens, we actually oppose – find ourselves opposing – believers in court.

The Danish cartoons were tasteless, dumb, short-sighted, and offensive; but they were not then and should not now be illegal. It's not the government's job to decide what is true or false about religion. These are, after all, the same people who brought you the DMV and the IRS. What are the odds that they're going to get theology right? (Laughter.) Blasphemy may be punished by God in the hereafter; it's not the government's job to punish it in the here and now.

When, in 1999, Pakistan engaged in truth in labeling, if little else, by opposing regulation to ban defamation of the Islamic religion, it set off – it set the U.N. off – on a wild goose chase, really, but a dangerous one; a mission to seek out who it is that would defame religion, and Islamic religion in particular. Following 9/11 and the Danish cartoonists, the Islamic countries, led by Pakistan, changed the wording to say that they wanted to avoid defamation of religions generally.

Well, saying you're against people opposing defamation of religion is an odd way to try and make friends. Who's opposed to defamation of religion? Who wants defamation of religion? Who thinks it's a good idea to defame religion? Well, nobody does, but in a more fundamental sense, there's no such thing as defamation of religion. Defamation is something that affects the reputation of a person. People have rights; ideas don't have rights. Religion is a very powerful idea, and we defend it with all our strength – the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. But it is not the subject of rights and it doesn't have any.

People, on the other hand, do, and the rights that they have – the right to freedom of religion – that is itself oppressed by bans on defamation of religion. How? Because those are limitations on what real people – living, breathing human beings; subjects of very serious rights recognized by the U.N. – are oppressed in their religious freedom by the U.N. seeking to ban defamation of religions and seeking its member states to ban it as well.

I'll just give you a couple of examples. In Pakistan itself, which enforces Sharia law in all its strictness, there are – I believe there were – 50 blasphemy cases that have been brought over the last several years. The Afghanistan court has currently got a guy in jail. He's been convicted of blasphemies; he's been sentenced to death for mentioning in class his academic questions on religious freedom and Islam. And there was a famous little boy in Sudan who got his teacher in trouble this year by asking her if she could

name the class teddy bear after him. She did. His name was Muhammad, and she was promptly convicted of blasphemy.

It's important to see that the Sharia code of blasphemy is the goal behind the movement to ban defamation of religions. Defamation of religions is code for, as much of the Sharia law on blasphemy as I can possibly get into civil law, and that is something that is an equal-opportunity oppressor for believers and nonbelievers alike across the globe; it's a domination of religious freedom, and the Becket Fund is proud to have been the – one of the – sparks that started the backfire in – I suppose you've been to California – to stop this wildfire. We submitted a brief to the U.N. office of the high commissioner of human rights. It was cited several times by the opponents of this measure, and I'm proud to say we've had something to do with what went on in Congress last Saturday night, and what the White House said on defamation of religion. And we're proud to stand with our fellow organizations and experts in defense of religious freedom and in opposition to anti-defamation of religions or blasphemy codes. Thank you.

JOHN WOHLSTETTER: Good afternoon. Free speech is under fire. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, we have seen a growing threat to free speech. The values of free speech that form the moral, social, political and constitutional core of the West are being undermined by two malignant forces. First, the credible threat of violence. Second, the hijacking of Western legal systems to file lawsuits as a weapon to injure the reputation and financially damage those speaking out freely.

When one faces a threat, it is necessary to be able to describe it in plain and clear terms, identify which countries may be promoting it and which sub-national groups, which individuals, enablers and supporters may fairly be associated with it. If one cannot identify an enemy, describe its strategies and tactics, evaluate its progress and formulate objectives to meet and defeat such threats, one cannot reasonably expect to prevail in this struggle.

A particular danger is accepting the obligation to assuage sensitivities of groups and individuals who complain that they're being unfairly targeted. It is the most extremist among those who are most likely to possess the most exquisitely amplified sense of those sensitivities. They, thus, will demand the most in terms of restraints imposed upon the speech of their critics. Thus, at the very time when it is most important to be able to speak freely when confronting the West's most dangerous adversaries, the West may find itself with the least freedom to speak out.

Especially disquieting is that nearly all those silenced will lose their freedom in anonymity. Speeches that are not given; articles in books never written; plays and films never made; ideas not aired – all will be lost if free speech is not defended to the utmost. Our enemies will happily “repair to Mr. Justice Holmes” as freedom for the thought we hate, as they prepare to destroy the civilization that gave rise to such ideas. Freedom to air thoughts our enemies hate is essential to our survival. Nations of the West cannot bring the blessings of free speech to the non-Western of the world if they cannot protect such freedoms at home. The West must respond vigorously and promptly, making sure

its values and laws are not turned into a collective suicide pact that destroys the very freedoms they are meant to secure.

MR. GORDON: We're happy to take your questions.

Q: What are the biggest concerns about blasphemy in Islam? Because there are so many different factions in Islam, and there are so many different interpretations of what the latest law. Considering Iran, the blasphemy law is pretty much up to the local judge to determine if something has been done. Now, in the case of the Muhammad teddy bear situation, I don't think anybody meant any harm, but what happens in a situation where somebody makes a mistake? There's a big difference between somebody making a mistake – because they don't understand Islam and don't understand the culture – they make a mistake versus somebody who intently sets out to blaspheme a religion. There's this big gray area that really needs to be defined, right? How do we go about that – do you have any ideas?

MR. ABRAMS: Well, I would say, first of all, that we should make no distinction between your first and second point in terms of the application of law. It's perfectly true that there's a serious vagueness problem, and – (background noise). I didn't like your speech. (Laughter.)

MR. : That's alright, you should be afraid of him.

(Laughter.)

MR. ABRAMS: A serious maintenance problem in defining, as you rightly point out, what is the correct – the actual – meaning of certain precepts of Islam, or indeed any other religion, the proponents of which might feel insulted. And, if we were prepared to go down the road of saying, well it's all right to allow prosecution of people who purposely say hostile things about religion, but not people who simply err innocently, that that was a distinction one might make, but it's not a distinction that we should make. Because as a legal matter, people should be free to say hostile and critical and nasty and mean-spirited things, as well as well-intentioned and attractive and charming and favorable things. Because once we start saying that we will prosecute, or we will acquiesce in the prosecution or suppression of speech because of its critical or hostile nature, then all is lost.

MR. HASSON: If you remember the original Saturday Night Live, the skit would generally go on – someone would say, you know, well I wasn't expecting the Spanish Inquisition, at which point a couple of guys in tall white hats would come onto stage and say, no one expects the Spanish Inquisition. That's the Sharia police skit, but it's deadly serious now. You know, a teacher says, I just named a teddy bear after a kid in my class; I wasn't expecting the Sharia police, and then offstage come the guys in the funny hats – no one expects the Sharia police.

The relevant line to draw, I think, is not whether someone is well-intentioned or ill-intentioned. I think the relevant line to draw is renaming the whole effort – I wish the whole effort would just go away, but if they're going to do it, they should at least practice truthful labeling. Renaming the whole effort either the effort to impose Sharia blasphemy laws on the world, or else, if they wanted to do something good, then they should name it the effort to oppose sentiments of religious violence.

It would be a very good thing to do to stop people from preaching, go out and burn down that synagogue or go out and burn down that mosque. That would be a fine thing to do. And occasionally, you might find a Danish cartoonist who might stray into immediate sentiments of religious violence. It could happen – it's hard to imagine – but it could happen. Most of the time, what you find is the very people who are pushing this would be caught in their own trap, and that would be a fine thing. That's the line we should draw. Take the Saturday Night Live jokes and leave them where they belong.

MR. WOHLSTETTER: What makes this doubly worrisome to all of us – I think I can speak for all of us on this – is that this blasphemy seems to be largely a one-way street. I don't know how many of you have ever looked at, say, some of the videos and the Palestinian memory the Middle East Media Research Institute posts on its website – and there is no difference, by the way, between those put up by the Palestinian authority or Hamas; indeed, they jointly co-sponsor one – just to give one very quick – extremely brief – example, there is a child who has to be in the single digits who's being interviewed by an off-camera voice. And the child's about four years old, I think, and the voice asks, what do you think of when you think of Jews, and she said, she thinks of apes and pigs. So that not only are we in danger of censoring ourselves, but the other side gets to say anything in print – any Orwellian or Hitlerian lies or – (unintelligible) – that they wish, and it's not just in the West Bank: It can be found all over in the mid-East, all over in many countries there.

Q: Hi, I'm Mark – (inaudible). This isn't Copenhagen, and this isn't the Middle East. Right here, in Washington, D.C., area, there's a Saudi academy that is teaching the kids to hate, to hate people like all of us in this room. It's been well-reported in the press. They operated under facilities and equipment provided by the Saudis – by Saudi Arabia – they have an agreement with the State Department that enables them to function in the United States. Yet they violate the law in Fairfax County. Jerry Connelly (sp) is the chairman of the board of supervisors in Fairfax County – he's running for Congress. I haven't seen much about that. Perhaps if you could –

MS. SCHRIEFER: If I might, actually, this – it's an interesting topic. Actually Freedom House, a couple of years back, did a report on curriculum and the content and various curricula that was being funded by the Saudis, both curriculum within the country as well as curriculum that was being exported into other places. You know, we stand by the view – again, what I started with – any kind of speech that is not intended to be constructive in any way – that is purely racist or anti-religion, or puts down a group or an individual for one of those reasons – is extremely offensive: Nobody likes it. But I just want to back up what my colleague says: It is very dangerous to draw distinctions

between that kind of speech which is intended to be offensive and that kind of speech which is actually intended to evoke thoughtful questions and understandings, and we think those arguments are best left open for individuals to engage in and for them not to be made – put into the realm of law.

Certainly, sometimes the line is crossed. The U.S. has some of the highest standards in the world for the bar of when hate speech crosses a line – there has to be impending, I mean, imminent threat of violence. Fine, we know that many other countries don't have a standard that high. Certainly, the international covenant on civil and political rights has a bar that we can all agree with. It's been mentioned a couple of times before, which is, lets leave it at speech that is directly inciting violence, hatred and so on. I think that's something we can all live with.

Q: (Inaudible) – think we're violating the law?

MR. HASSON: Well, those who live by the First Amendment die by the First Amendment. The – (unintelligible, cross talk, laughter.) And I know the academy because my children's soccer teams play them from time to time and we go through the compound to get to it and they're – the girls play in hijabs and long-sleeve jerseys and so forth – and it's a very – on the one hand, you have to admire people who are willing to play in uniforms that basically mean you can't possibly win against a decent team. On the other hand, there's no question that the school is teaching the antithesis of American values – of religious freedom for everybody.

What to do about it is a much trickier situation. There are lots of schools in the country who teach things that I disagree with. In fact, if you put together all the various clients of the Becket Fund, from the Anglicans to the Zoroastrians, in one room – well, if you put them all in one room, there would probably be a food fight – but if you got them all together and asked them what they object to in public schools, there'd probably be nothing left. How to distinguish the ability of public and certainly private schools – because there's a high order of difference from public schools – ability to teach the kids what they want without the school being able to teach this particular subject is not an easy line to draw.

There are – Nina Shay (sp) does good work, and I think very highly of her, had a proposal – I think it was a couple of years ago and it may have been in Freedom House's name and it might not have – that suggested using a glitch in the U.S. consulate laws to oust them from the diplomatic school system, but if you did that, any good Virginia lawyer would simply reinstate them as a Virginia private school and be off again.

I think, unfortunately, the only way to combat that idea – well fortunately, really – the only way to combat bad ideas is with better ideas, and the Saudis should have their system thrown under a spotlight, and everybody should realize how shameful it is, how ugly it is, how degrading it is, and how truly corrupt it is. The corruption between the House of Saud and the Wahhabis has been a devil's bargain that's cost the world

immense numbers of lives. That all should be exposed. But trying to outlaw their curriculum, I think, is a self-inflicted wound on these issues.

Q: Faith McDonald (sp) from the Institute on Religion and Democracy. I think our constituents would be very interested in the coalition, and they probably want to know what they could do to either help you implement what you're doing or to make use of what you're doing in the things that they do. When you were talking about the Saudi academy, I think the lesson we take away is that we need to be free to speak what's in that curriculum and to say that we disapprove of it, and that's the thing that this defamation law is trying to stop – from even speaking the truth. So I think an important part of what we do has to be to tell the people who have the freedom to speak out, so how can our constituents get that information from you, as a coalition?

MR. : Well, look, first of all, that's why we organized a coalition and brought as many groups together as we could, and it's not a closed club, and that's why we're appealing to people in the media to write more about it – there have been reports about it – but to focus more carefully and in depth on it. So the press will be in touch with us, and everything that we put out or do, we will share. The political picture is that the attempt by the Organization of the Islamic Conference has 56 or 57 members, and that's a big chunk of member-state votes at the U.N. There are 191 nations, I believe, and 57 are already committed to the thing we're arguing against.

They have allies. We are all trying to lobby in the various forums of the United Nations – the Human Rights Council, of course the Third Committee, which is essentially the General Assembly – (inaudible) – which is meeting on these questions in October – we're going to be there, all of us are going to be there to try to convince people from countries that might be weaned away; to the Europeans to firm up their opposition; to the community of democracies to firm up their opposition; and to nations in Asia or Africa or Latin America that may have a very real agenda for the global conference on racism, for example in Geneva next spring, which is being ruined by the attempt of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to impose on the racism conference their agenda about defamation of religion. So be in touch; we have a real political agenda in terms of lobbying these countries and exerting pressure and, you know, let's see how much press we can get and how much we can accomplish.

MR. : Our government has – the United States government – has done very good work, as far as I can tell, in opposing that danger in the world today, as have the Europeans – (unintelligible). We want the people in our government to know that their efforts are appreciated – (inaudible).

MR. ABRAMS: I just wanted to add that your comments are really, correctly in the highest tradition of the First Amendment. That really is what the First Amendment is about – is about responding by speaking out; responding by exposing; responding by criticizing. And one of the price tags, you could say – one of the costs or maybe one of the benefits – of the First Amendment is that sometimes, things are said which are really awful. I mean, one of the great cases in this era in American history, the 1940 case in our

Supreme Court, which arose out of a Jehovah's Witness walking on a street in New Haven coming upon two men that turned out to be Catholic, asking them if he could play something for them on a recording device –

MR. : (Inaudible) – technology.

MR. ABRAMS: Yes, thank you, I've really never understood what the technology was that they used. And he played a virulently anti-Catholic attack on the church. They asked him to go – get out – they asked him very strongly to get out. He moved away. He was arrested later. He was charged and convicted with breach of the peace. The U.S. Supreme Court reversed his conviction – this is the only country in the world where that conviction would have been reversed, then and now – reversed his conviction, and this is what they said: “In the realm of religious faith and that of political belief, sharp differences arise. In both fields, the tenets of one man may seem the rankest error to his neighbor. To persuade others to his point of view, the pleader, as we know, in time resorts to exaggeration, to vilification of men who have been or are prominent in church or state, and even to false statement. But the people of this nation have ordained, in light of history, that in spite of the probability of excesses and abuses, these liberties are, in the long view, essential to right opinion and right conduct on the part of citizens of a democracy.”

Now that's the path that we have chosen, this unanimous opinion still solid, good law. Our position here, if I can presume to speak for everyone on this, is not that every country has to go as far as we do in that direction, but that the one thing that cannot happen is to take off the table for public debate a variety of important subjects because members of one or more religions are offended. Now, let me be clear for myself at least, this would be just as offensive and just as dangerous if this did not come from the Islamic states, but came from any other group of states representing or purporting to speak for any other religion. I mean, we live in a country where the last temptation of Christ can come out as a movie and deeply offend many Christians; in which Mel Gibson can put out his movie about the crucifixion and deeply offend many Jews; and no one really comes forward and says, you know, we ought to ban that. Things happened. Arguments occurred. A variety of things were said, but we learned to live with it, and I think it's one of the great contributions to the world that we do learn to live with it, and I just wanted to complement you for your – the nature of your question.

MR. WOHLSTETTER: While agreeing fully, of course, with all that has been said on this, we need to remember two things, I think, that are particularly important. One is that the Internet is creating an unprecedented opportunity for malignant charismatics to spread hatred and to sow even the seeds of terrorism. There was a New York – NYPD – report in August of 2007, that said that the third-generation Muslim youth in the United States in middle class homes are being radicalized, because the fanatic who used to be able to preach to 28 folks in a small madrassa in Karachi can now preach to the entire Islamic ummah – the community – online. It is as if one were to give – if you get a sufficiently skilled charismatic – someone like Adolf Hitler had been able to speak not just to a rally at Nuremburg, but to the entire world, live. Or have it posted

on YouTube for later consumption. It's very important from our standpoint, of course, that we use those very avenues as well to promote other ideas.

And another thing I would draw is an analogy here – an extension, essentially, of what Natan Sharansky said in his book, “The Case for Democracy” – where he said that democracy and freedom are only possible – democracy is only possible in what he called a free society and not a fear society, and he gave the public square test: If you can walk into a public square and criticize the government, and you don't have to worry if anything is going to happen to you, and nothing in fact happens to you, then you're living in a pretty free society.

Well, I don't think I'd try that one in Red Square. I don't think I'd try that one in Ramallah or in Tehran, unless I was with a million other brave souls, as was the case right after 9/11. But, by extension, if you – in our societies – cannot criticize even private groups or even extremists who you associate with foreign religions, or even domestic religions here, if you're freedom is constrained there, than that also would make us more of a fear and less of a free society, and that really is what I think we're all here concerned about in trying to defend free speech – keeping it free from intimidation from either governmental or from private sources.

MR. GORDON: Let me just add one point. You asked specifically about what people can do and should do. We're going to reach out to opinion leaders around the world. We've already started that process. As most of you know, last week a number of world leaders were in New York for the United Nations, and a number of us met with them and raised this issue and told them about the press conference we're doing today. We'll continue that process at the United Nations; we'll reach out to members of Congress; we'll try to build this coalition as wide as we possibly can, and try to bring as many groups and as many people in who want to be part of it. It's an important issue, and obviously the louder the voice we can speak with – you know, as David said, 55, 56, 57 nations speaking on the other side – so the larger the coalition we can put together, the louder our voice will be as well.

MR. HASSON: And we've been following this and been active for quite some time, so if anybody wants history or the recent developments, go to [www.becketfund.org](http://www.becketfund.org) – only one T, we're not waiting for – (unintelligible) – [becketfund.org](http://becketfund.org). Go right past the support us now button, perhaps pausing en route, and if anybody wants some more information and the theory behind all this, there's a wonderful book on our website called “The Right to be Wrong,” by Mr. Hasson. It makes wonderful Hanukah and Christmas gifts. And it's also available on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

MR. GORDON: There you go. Thank you all for coming. We greatly appreciate it and we look forward to continuing this dialogue with you. Thank you.

(END)