Suzanne Scholte: Good afternoon, I'm Suzanne Scholte, President of the Defense Forum Foundation and it is my honor to welcome you to today’s Forum with a great speaker and a very critical and timely topic. To begin, I want to share with you that I had the opportunity to write the forward to a propaganda book that was being published in Korea. And what I wrote in the forward was a description of a scene in one of my favorite movies of all time “Life is Beautiful.”

The movie opens in a small Italian village in Fascist Italy under Mussolini’s dictatorship. There is a scene where several of the characters discuss a math question being taught in Germany. The principal of this Italian school is boasting about her visit to a third grade class in Grafeneck, Germany, and recounting the question the math students are tackling in third grade: “Listen to this,” the principal explains. “I remember it because I was so struck by it. “A lunatic costs the State four marks a day. A cripple four and a half, an epileptic three and a half. The average rate is four marks a day and there are three-hundred-thousand patients. So how much would the state save if these individuals were eliminated?”
Only Dora, the heroine of the movie, is horrified by the content of this 3rd grade math problem. “I can’t believe this,” she states, in disgust, but the Principal completely misunderstands her and responds: “That was exactly my reaction, Dora! Good Lord, it can’t be!” That a child of seven can solve a problem like this? It’s a difficult equation: the proportions, the percentages. Throw in a little algebra. For us in Italy, it’s high school material...It’s truly another race -- those Germans!”

Now perhaps even worse, Dora’s fiancé, Rodolfo, also misses the horrific implications behind the math equation and solves it stating: “Three hundred thousand times four. Kill them all and you save one million, two hundred thousand marks a day. It’s easy!”

Thus, this very brief scene in the movie powerfully illustrates how easy it is to dehumanize people. And, of course, that beautiful picturesque town of Grafeneck, where these third graders were learning their math, became the site of one of Nazi Germany’s killing centers and first uses of gas chambers as part of their forced euthanasia program.

Now, our speaker today, I have known since the first reports came out of gas chambers being used in North Korea’s political prison camps to test chemical weapons. Rabbi Cooper was one of the first to take the time and effort to investigate the witnesses who made allegations about this as a founding member since 2003 of our North Korea Freedom Coalition. He has been a great champion for all humanity and is one of the most influential Rabbis in the world and a dear friend and colleague. I have been trying to get him to speak at this Forum for some time now, because of the deeply disturbing rise of antisemitism which Pope Francis cited just this month as barbaric and resurgent. Now Rabbi Cooper, as well as addressing this issue, will be providing us with specific actions that we can take. Real action must be taken, so I hope that today’s forum will not just be yet another wake-up call, but will result in action.

**Rabbi Cooper:** Thank you Suzanne. It is an honor to be here. I didn’t think so many people were going to show up the morning after the Superbowl - so really is true. These are the people who do all the work anyway in congress, so Monday is just another work day.

Just reflecting on two things you said. Number 1, Pope Francis made that statement to our delegation. We were just with them 10 days ago in Vatican City. He denounced antisemitism again - actually - to place on the 78th anniversary of the Wannsee Conference. That was January 20, 1942, when 15 state ministers of Nazi Germany got together at a beautiful villa, Lake Wannsee, outside Berlin, to decide what would be the cheapest and fastest way to mass murder all 11 million Jews in Europe, including those in Switzerland and England.
The other point I’d like to make is, again, based on your bringing up an amazing scene from an important movie that is fictional. So as it happens, we are going to bring our Holocaust exhibition, coverage to remember, and it is a Japanese translation to the Parallel Olympics in Tokyo on September 4. Actually, we will open at the site of the 1964 Olympic village. And the question is, “Why would we do such a thing? You actually gave a tremendous hint. By virtue of the fact, before WWII broke out, the math equation you brought up actually became state policy of Nazi Germany. And they started a program called T4, which was to eliminate everyone with a physical or mental handicap. After all, if you had a member of the master race, you couldn’t have these less than perfect specimens walking around. Eventually, the T4 program closed because of the protest from the families and Church spoke out against it. Hitler and his company were about to prepare for WWII, and they sidelined that project.

However, every single one of the death camps - Auschwitz broken out, Majdanek, Sobibor, and etc, with the majority of European Jews were mass murdered by gas, all of the people trained in the T4 program before the WWII broke out. The fact that you mentioned it brings to mind that for us, the Parallel Olympics which gives us an opportunity for an amazing teaching moment, especially for people in Asia, many of whom still don’t understand why the Nazi Swastika is something that enrages, infuriates, and worries so many of us in the West.

People in Asia had their own problems during the WWII. They don’t have that direct relationship, but we feel that the Simon Wiesenthal Center can use one of its educational exhibitions. So we are bringing it to the games as a teaching moment exactly when the world will take note of the amazing achievements of people with disabilities and how much they can contribute to, in this case, the Olympics, but also, humanity. So thank you very much for this wonderful invitation.

For those of you who know our host, know that at the end of the day, it is just easier to say yes to our friend here. Somedays, I almost feel bad for the North Korean leadership. I have learned the hard way that the best way to proceed this is that when Suzanne asks you to do something, just do it. And you will be better for it.

So, what I am going to do is not give an hour lecture about antisemitism. I think many of you here, especially, those of you who work for senators, congress people, and human rights organizations, you know the basics, but what I’d like to do is to review a couple of points, starting with a letter that we sent to President Trump in a few weeks ago, asking him to instruct
the FBI to create a special task force on antisemitism. We do so, by the way, our friend (Congressman) Chris Smith has indicated that he is about to put forward the resolution in Congress in support of it. We have a unanimous vote in Chicago City Council, and we expect the same in LA and New York City.

But, basically, here is our problem, here is our dilemma. We know that we are dealing with unprecedented violence against Jews - here in the U.S., especially in New York, and to a certain extent in Los Angeles, and especially religious Jews, people who are easy pickings. People who go to synagogue at the same time every week, some go to synagogue at the same time every morning, and they are obviously Jewish. Some years ago, you may recall, there was a spate of arson of black churches in the South here. And we all had more questions than we had answers, meaning we knew there were dots, but we didn’t exactly know how to connect those dots.

I am very much old school. I am a tax payer. And for whatever else is going on right now with the FBI, they still would be the right address to actually try to identify the dots and see which of those dots connect. They did a great job in the aftermath of those arsons. Some of those were self-generated because of internal politics, but over all, these were vicious hate crimes and the FBI did a type of job that only they can do. To his credit, the attorney general recently met, I think it was in the last few days, with a number of religious leaders from the New York area who came to see him at the State Department. So, I have no doubt that individually our elected officials, collectively, all want to see antisemitism, especially, the violent variety, being dealt with and being pushed back.

But I still think that we have a tremendous challenge to try to understand the dimensions of what it is that we are dealing with. So, for example, we have this new category of the domestic lone wolf. Not only domestically, we talk about the attacks on the synagogues, starting with Pittsburgh and Halle. Some of you may not know, but there was an aborted attempt in Colorado. Thankfully, the Feds were on top of that one. And not only in the states, but we had a situation in Halle, Germany, on Yom Kippur, which is the Judaism’s holiest day in the year. And Halle, Germany, doesn’t have a huge Jewish community, but on that day, in the synagogue in that city, with about 50 or 60 Jews, among them 13 American Jews, at prayer, the request of the Jewish community to have the police guard was turned down. On that morning, someone who is a young man, who dressed up like SWAT, arrived with his gun, a rifle, and tried to shoot his way into the synagogue. If he had been successful, it would have been about 50 or 60 dead Jews because there was no one on the inside. Luckily, the door had been reinforced. The person who, by the way, had the symbol of today’s lone wolf terrorist, he had a camera embedded in his helmet. He was planning the live stream of murders. When he couldn’t get in, he looked for an easier target and he gunned down two innocent people outside before he was taken into the custody by the Germans, the German authorities.

When you take a look at what motivates that kind of a shooter, we find out that the Pittsburgh shooter, the Halle shooter, and the shooter in New Zealand who mass murdered over 50 Muslims in the prayer on a Friday, they were all drinking the same Kool-Aid. They were reading the same materials online, dehumanizing Jews, Muslims and others. And each of those cases, they wanted to make sure the whole issue of social media played an important role in terms of delivering to them and empowering, giving these individuals a sense of empowerment that people all over the
world who thought just like they did, and they had, shall we say, “Courage” to act on it.

So, for starters, here’s one thing we can use some help with. On the Monday morning following the attacks in New Zealand, I received a call from upper-level management from Facebook. I will be back here next month. Congressman Max Rose is kind enough to be hosting the release of the 2020 annual report on Digital Terrorism and Hate. Some of you may have taken the 2019 report on your way in here. And I meet, I go up to the Silicon Valley at least once a year. I can confirm to you that I am always the oldest person in the room whether it is Facebook or Twitter. We put out a report card every year. We grade companies, the large ones and some of them that you may not have heard of yet but play an important role. So over the years, Facebook has generally been at the top of the heap. I remember, for a period of three years, Twitter had an F. One time meeting at their corporate headquarters in San Francisco, a lawyer asked me “Rabbi, I noticed that we got another F last year. Do you think you might change the grade this year?” I said “Yeah, I am looking to see if there’s any grade worse than F, then we might change it.” But Twitter has changed. You know realities kind of overcame and I think some of you may have something to do with it.

Back in 2016, at congressional hearings, there was a witness who provided the following information. In October of that year, in one month alone, ISIS was sending out 200,000 tweets a day, A DAY. And some of those threats, I think, came back at the head of the company. Today, Twitter is far from perfect, but I think they are in a much better place.

So the Monday morning after the massacre in Christchurch, New Zealand, I received a phone call from Facebook, and the gentleman said, “Rabbi Cooper, I just want to you know, and be the first to know, that Facebook has taken down 1.5 million postings of the live streaming of the New Zealand murders.” That is Facebook alone through many other platforms. My reaction was, “Well, Peter, I thought you were calling me first for another reason. I thought you were calling to tell me that as the result of what happened in Christchurch, Facebook was going to lead the way in getting rid of live streaming.”

You know, in case you haven’t noticed, in television, there’s no such thing as live broadcast. There’s always a time delay. I don’t know if they have increased the time delay under the current administration now, but there’s no such thing as truly live television. What would be so terrible if the companies got together, and people got to wait a little 30 seconds, or even a minute, before something went live? I don’t know what else the companies are waiting for, because we can see form the lone wolves and also from the terrorists themselves. Whatever we give them in terms of the bells and the whistles, will and have become part and parcel of their game plan. The idea is, in fact, to broadcast crimes live, and for those who are doing these heinous actions, for them, it is a validation. For the groups, it is a source of recruitment and even fundraising. This is something that we cannot deal with unless we got the companies on our side.

Over the 27 years of our Digital Terrorism and Hate project, I have come to learn two things about the internet companies. Number one, when they tell you “Rabbi, that is impossible. We cannot do it,” what they are really saying is, “It is going to cost a few dollars and may be a couple of our brightest young people. And if don’t have to do it, we don’t want to do it.” There’s no such thing as “CAN’T.” They CAN. And again, the only word that they are really concerned
about, and only to be cynical, is the R word, Regulation. Personally, I am actually not in favor of regulation because I don’t think the folks in congress understand the technologies involved anymore than I do. It is the young people in this room. And in my case, my grand children in Jerusalem can help. I don’t understand any of the technologies, but I can only see what the impact is.

And we need the companies to be on this side of the issue, and this, by the way, is not about speech. This is about marketing. Social media is mostly about marketing - marketing itself or marketing your product. How many of you have ever read, you know, when you push the light or green button that says “I agree.” Okay, now I am a Rabbi, so be honest. How many people here ever read that contract that you sign when you push “I agree.” Okay, I see, we must have some lawyers here because most of us do not. When you push that button, you’ve entered into that contract with the company. There are many different ways to approach this. The shooter in Halle was lucky, we were lucky, that he wasn’t able to penetrate the synagogue on Yom Kippur. The 52 plus Muslims who were murdered in Christchurch were not lucky. And their murders were broadcast live. That is simply not acceptable. We need the collective genius of the companies to pay attention and take some real action. And, believe it or not, I think that some of the people in this room, and the folks that they make look good between Tuesday and Thursday generally. We need the help. This is not to go to war with the companies. This is to get some behavior modification to make us all a little bit safer.

Insofar as the American Jewish Community is concerned, while we have, obviously, the Neo-Nazi white supremacists who target the two main targets of hate crimes of America since the early 90s, since the FBI has been taking statistics. African Americans, every single year, are the number one target of race-based hate crimes with the exception of Muslims after 9/11. American Jewish communities are the number one target of religion-based hate crimes in our country. Some of you may not know this. But for the Jewish community, those of us involved as parents of Jewish schools or the houses of worship in the Jewish community centers, the whole idea of having security around our facilities when we are at prayer or when our kids are studying goes back thirty years, since the time the Palestinian terrorists were attacking Jewish sites in Europe. So, in that sense, it may not be widely known by our neighbors, but the idea of having to have security even when you go into your place of worship is not something new.

On the other hand, the degree of concern, and the fact that the Jewish houses of prayer are targets, means that we’ve had to step it up. And this is a good time to say thank you to both congress and the administration for putting more money on the table and helping out with the physical security of houses of worship. The Simon Wiesenthal Center’s approach on this issue is, globally, really straightforward. When we were with the Pope, Rabbi Heir, who is the Dean and Founder of our institution, spoke about our concern for the beheading of Christians in Nigeria and Kenya. We are deeply concerned for the fate of Christians, Muslims, and Jews in Southern Lebanon and Northern Israel. If, and when, that flash point ever goes into a war, it will be a disaster for all of the people’s faith in the region.

We have a very simplistic view. People should be able to go with their families on Friday, Saturday, or Sunday, from their homes to their house of worship, pray, and return safely. I assume you guys have Kiddush or repast. If you don’t, you should start it, after services and
come home to peace. It doesn’t sound like such a difficult thing to achieve, but we live in a time when Christians today world-wide are the number one targets of religious-hatred violence, hate crimes, and terrorism. So much so that I am actually planning to go with a small interfaith group later this month for a few days to Nigeria. We take this issue very seriously.

Speaking as an American, you have an obligation to show concern for all people of faith if you want to ask their help when you have a time of need. Let me recall the testimony that I gave about three weeks ago, at hearings for the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). The first time I was invited to testify, probably the last time I will be invited to testify. It was the first time that the USCIRF actually had hearings exclusively devoted to anti-Semitism. My understanding, the way the USCIRF works, is that they have Tier I and Tier II lists of nations. They have a watch list that advises congress, and hopefully the administration, about what’s going on with religious freedom. It should not be a great surprise if we are talking about China and North Korea. We know a lot of the usual suspects, not to diminish it. When I testified, I told the commissioners that I had four countries that I wanted to put in the Tier II as watch list candidates. I found out, later on, that it was the first time anyone had ever suggested any western European countries to be on the watch list. And those countries are France, Sweden, Germany, and the United Kingdom. I want to take a minute or two just to explain why.

In the case of France, and again, I don’t want to go over the obvious of what people know that’s been going on with hate crimes against Jews, including some horrific murders of Jewish citizens of France. One, in particular that was so shocking, a wonderful kindergarten teacher was attacked in her apartment by her neighbor who was screaming by his own admission, quotations from Islamic sources. He beat her and threw her over the balcony to her death. That man is now free. He was released by the judicial system of France, because apparently he smoked pot before he launched the attack. He is not the first person in France to be released after the most heinous, anti-Semitic, anti-Jewish hate crimes. And it is these kinds of actions that are informing the French Jewish community, the largest Jewish community in Western Europe, the vibrant one, that they have no future in the country.

Back in 2014, when we first had the synagogues attacked, the issue was getting the police to do their job. We had multiple attacks on the same synagogues within a few weeks, and the new Minister of Interior came in and, I think, did a good job at that point, of instructing the people underneath him to take it seriously. And the French Police have, but the French Judiciary refuses to deal seriously with the issue of violent anti-Semitism. It doesn’t bode well for any future for our co-religionists there.

Germany, probably, has a separate conversation about religious freedom on the Jewish community and other minorities there. But, I would say that what we have with Germany right now is a very sophisticated structure in which German authorities can now track anti-Semitic hate crimes. To put it another way, they are good counters. And Felix Klein, who I know and I respect, he is the number one tsar on anti-Semitism in Germany. His basic job is to make sure they know what happens, and who does it. But, to the deeper, more fundamental issue, of how do we stop the hate? I don’t see any real progress at this point in Germany. So, when I met, a few months ago, with Mayor Müller of Berlin, who just announced that he is not running for reelection - I don’t think I had anything to do with that decision - but, on the evening of our
meeting, he had just met, four days before, with a mayor from Iran who is a member of the Revolutionary Guard. Not a good thing to do four days before you see a Rabbi from the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

So, we urged him to do two things. Number one, to meet with expat Iranians living in Berlin. I am happy to report to you that he did so last week, a few months late, but, nonetheless, he did have that meeting. The second request we made, and as the mayor of Berlin, he had the right to do so, was to declare Hezbollah a terrorist organization, something that he has not done and Chancellor Merkel refuses to do.

Now, what does it have to with the issue today? It is quite simple. That night when I was still in Berlin, an Israeli student was beaten because he was speaking Hebrew on the streets of Berlin. If you’ve ever been to Berlin, I think it is the most cosmopolitan city on the planet. At any particular time, you can probably hear 30 languages being spoken on the streets, and the Israeli student gets beaten up because he was speaking Hebrew. Hezbollah is allowed to come and fundraise in Germany. And it sends its people to inject hatred for America, Jews, democracy, and we know what their views are on women etc. Here you are sitting with the mayor of Berlin, and he is bemoaning the fact that there are anti-Semitic violent incidents in his city, and wondering how can we ever stop it.

When you get specific, you don’t always get good responses, although this would be a good time to give a shout out to our Ambassador Richard Grenell in Berlin, who is an absolutely amazing American and the only person that I think who uses twitter as effectively - or maybe more so - than our President. He is like a sergeant using lasers on the German establishment. All I know is that the day he leaves will be a German national holiday. Truly, a great American and patriot, and one of the key people blowing the whistle on this kind of behavior.

With the United Kingdom, it is very straight forward. Corbyn and his Labour Party lost historically, but his opening the doors to the anti-Semitism in the mainstream of the political culture of the United Kingdom doesn’t get turned around automatically just because he’s lost the day, and unfortunately not a block to some nasty anti-Semitic incidents on the ground in London, and elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

In so far as Sweden in concerned, I am actually going to see the Swedish ambassador later today. Sweden has announced that it is going to host, or wants to host, a major international conference against anti-Semitism in October of 2020 in their third largest city in Malmö. We’ve always announced that we are opposed to that meeting for a few reasons. Number one, I was there nine years ago and placed a travel advisory for Jews on that city. I’ve met with a mayor, the prosecutors, the police, Rabbi Castleman, nice guy from Detroit. The rabbi there has suffered hundreds of cases of intimidation just going to and from synagogue. There has never been a single arrest or prosecution for anti-Semitism in the city of Malmö in the last decade. So, I am not quite sure why they would hold the meeting other than to talk about anti-Semitism in theory.

I am originally born in Brooklyn so I am more interested in anti-Semitism in reality. The other part of it is, some of you may have heard of a wonderful and amazing place called Karolinska Hospital and Institute, and those are the folks who every year announce the Nobel Prize for
There is a wonderful fellow there whose name that I cannot give, a Jewish guy from Argentina originally. He is a genius of a neurosurgeon. I went there and took a look at some of his work, life-saving work, helping little kids who never walked before, stand up, just implanting devices, unbelievable. So, he made one mistake in his career. He had acted to put in a complaint against his supervisor for putting on Facebook, comparing today’s Israeli teenagers with the Hitler Youth of the 30s and 40s. So, instead of just dealing with it, in a matter of a day or a week, the Karolinska Hospital and Institute decided to protect the perpetrator and go after the victim. And this is something that is still not yet resolved, but I think we have to be really careful in the world we live in today. It is not enough to talk about racism or hatred of blacks or other minorities in theory. But, what we really have to do is be able to have systems in place that we can deal with and stand up for the victims of hate racisms and anti-Semitism in practice.

That really should be the most important litmus test for where we are as a democracy. Finally, although, I’ve already mentioned it, just a couple of points that I bring up when I speak to Jewish leadership in our country, kids in Jewish high schools that are under threat, or anyone else that is ready to listen. For the Jewish community, first of all, we have to take care of our own. We have to secure our institutions, but we also have to do a better job of being good neighbors. And that includes others. I happen to be an orthodox rabbi, although some of the more orthodox people would question my credentials right now, but it is okay. We have to be better neighbors. We have to reach out to our neighbors and explain to them what our concerns and fears are. America is still the greatest country in the world, but it is only as good as its citizens.

And let me just say it, I don’t know how you guys feel about it. You actually work to try to strengthen things out on Capitol Hill. Our political discussions right now are broken. I think that more and more we need to look to leadership from the community up, rebuild old coalitions and forge nuance. That is the American way. And I am still very hopeful that we can turn the tide, but it is not going to happen automatically, and it is not going to be someone else who is going to deal with it. Thank you very much for this opportunity, and I will be happy to take some questions.

Question 1: How can those of us who are people of faith pray, for a spiritual response, for miracles?

Cooper: It’s a good question. It is a fair question for any person who is a person of faith. So, the one thing our rabbis told us, they said three words (words in Hebrew) which means we believe in miracles, but you are not supposed to rely on them. When Rabbi Heir spoke to the Pope ten days ago, he quoted the verse in Exodus. In Hebrew, it (words in Hebrew), God saw the suffering of his people and God knew.

Quoting or paraphrasing the great 20th century Jewish thinker Rabbi Soloveichik, Rabbi Heir was teaching some Torah to the Pope. He asked a question “Well, if God saw that his people are suffering in Egypt and that it said God knew, what did he know? What he knew was that they were suffering. If he knew they were suffering, then why didn’t God just take them out right then and there? Why didn’t he redeem the Israelites right then?”

The answer was because the person who he chose to be his junior partner in that effort wasn’t
ready yet. In the biblical narrative, Moses just checked out right away from Egypt, went to Midian, met a beautiful young lady, married, and had two kids. And for a lot of years, just stayed as far away from Egypt as he could get. It was only at the Burning Bush that Moses reconnected to what his job was. So, from the point of view of at least the way I was raised, is that we are all junior partners to the Good Lord. Whatever we do or don’t do, whatever outcomes that God wants, will happen anyway. Nonetheless, each of us can, and should, be an agent or junior partner, if you will, to the Good Lord.

Second point, which I think is a big difference theologically between Judaism and some points of Christianity, of which I am not an expert, is that we learn the hard way. Culminating in the Holocaust, that you don’t turn the cheek. If someone is coming at you to destroy, take it seriously and deal with it. So, the idea of self-defense is actually embedded in Judaism and Jewish Law. In some ways, it might be more challenging than having a theology that says - you never raise your hand in anger, you don’t raise your army, and etc.

It is true that our prophets, often quoted by Martin Luther King Jr, the rabbis, Christian leaders, King David Psalm, Isaiah, and others, talk about the “end of days,” when the Messiah will come and we will have peace. And that time we won’t have to worry about raising military budgets, or training young men and women to go to war, and maybe, God forbid, losing their lives. Right now, we are not there yet. So, our approach, and I think, if you look at Israel, I don’t know how many of you have been to Israel, but I know that my friends go there for the first time, they see an ATM machine and they say, “I need to go to the ATM machine”. So, I say “okay, I will stay in the line with you”. And you don’t notice it, but I have grandchildren in Jerusalem, and I was a student there 50 years ago. You don’t notice, but for the first time visitors, you are waiting in a line for ATM or in a bank, and the six people in front of you have machine guns or side arms. You don’t even see it because the society is not based on violence. It is just based on defending yourself so there’s no sort of like, jingo attitude. It is not the Wild West. It is just what it is. So, I think in that sense, Judeo-Christian value system is not to hold up violence as the answer to life problems, but from the Jewish people’s point of view, for what it has suffered for 2000 years, they will be very happy to greet the Messiah at the gates of Jerusalem when he shows up. Until then, we are going to make sure we can defend ourselves, and especially having the greatest friend of all the United States of America.

Question 2. Is Germany doing enough? Are they still educating their youth? Simon Wiesenthal invested a lot in young people, young Germans.

Cooper: You know, Simon Wiesenthal is our name sake. I work at the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Simon Wiesenthal was an architect who married his childhood sweetheart. By the time WWII was over, he had been through 5 or 6 camps. When the Americans saved him, he was too weak to stand. He weighed 80 pounds, and he and his wife lost 89 members of their family. What was amazing about Simon is that he heavily invested in young Germans. I remember the few times I was with him in Europe. I would see at the airports young Germans come over to him with folded pieces of paper. They would say, “I don’t know what my father did in the war. Here is his date of birth and his full name or my uncle, or older brother.” Mr. Wiesenthal definitely, from the very beginning, it is easy for us born after WWII to say that you don’t hold your children culpable for the sins of their parents. But, for someone who went through it to take that position.
was absolutely amazing. Generally, we give Germany high grades for films, education, taking youngsters to the sights of concentration camps in the course of many decades. They were sort of the price of reentry into the civilization, making sure the younger generations understand what was going on.

The turning point for the German society, 75 years after WWII, is that the Chancellor decided that she was going to take in a huge number of people from the Arab and Muslim world. Probably about a million in total, which is very laudable. But, when we asked questions of the Justice Minister and the Foreign Minister, what are you going to do about the anti-Semitic baggage that so many of these young people were raised on in their native countries, Germany did not think through that issue. They would answer, “Well, we are going to teach them about democracy, and that is part of the overall package.” But actually, what has happened now more and more is that you have parents saying, they don’t want their children going on the field trip to Dachau. They don’t want their children to watch films about what happened during WWII. You’ve got Jewish kids being bullied in school and you’ve got a lot of things happening that for a lot of years never happened. The German leadership and society simply have not prepared appropriately and have not responded strongly enough to those challenges. It remains to be seen whether or not Germany will be responsive enough or if, God forbid, it goes to the way of a place like France.

Right now, there are well over 100,000 Jewish people in Germany. Germany wanted to reconstitute a Jewish presence. They encouraged people to come. They build synagogues in mid-size cities all over the country, like Halle would have a synagogue and a couple of hundred Jews. But, right now, today’s leadership has not yet figured out how they are going to deal with this challenge to what they dealt with appropriately for many decades. On top of that, there is another issue. I mentioned Hezbollah. There is another part to that and that is Iran. My view about Germany today is you don’t hold people, 75 years later, culpable for their crimes of their grandparents, but Germany does have a historic responsibility to do no harm to Jews that I do hold without apology. And insofar as Iran is concerned, I notice one thing about dealing with German leaders. The one thing they cannot really stand, probably more than meeting with a guy like me, is ever being told that the Austrians did something better than they did. So, two years ago, I think he was 32 years old, the Austrian Chancellor, president of Iran was on a state visit - never mind that we weren’t happy about that. But, the Austrian Chancellor did something quite remarkable. You know, now, they have these things all over the world - the two podiums, the two flags, the media is there, and they talk. This 32-year-old Austrian Chancellor called out the president of Iran over the denial of the Holocaust by the Iranian regime. That is something that no German leader has ever done. When you combine the great speeches on Holocaust Memorial Day, and on the other hand, their refusal to take down anti-Semites who are coming from the Arab Muslim world, and to denounce Iran for its state-sponsored denial of the Shoah. The people living in Germany take note of that. Of course, we’ve got Neo-Nazis and the far right. And that is, as we were saying - that’s half the problem. But, the other half is something that we find that many German leaders are still not
prepared to really address and talk to. That has to do with the anti-Semitism that continues within the Muslim communities. My view is that if the German State educational system, and all the rest, could’ve put full weight on their social services to make sure that people understood that, if you are going to be a German, we are going to take good care of you in that State. But, there’s red lines in terms of your behavior. I don’t see that happening yet. That still remains an open question.

Question 3. An Ambassador recently called out Iran for its denial of the holocaust. How about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

Cooper: If I am not mistaken, who wrote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Was it Lampkin? Right, so Lampkin and Roosevelt. Lampkin was Jewish and an escapee from the Nazis. My answer to you is going to be in the following way. I was one of the spokesmen for the Jewish groups at the United Nations World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, just before 9/11. It was at that event that we sort of witnessed the high-jacking of human rights, the whole vocabulary of human rights, and the whole normal creature of human rights by people who don’t believe in human rights for all. Unfortunately, there were about 3,600 NGOs at that event and 6 NGOs voted with beleaguered Jewish Groups, all six were from Germany. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty, and others either stood on the sidelines or were complicit with it.

Let’s take a look right now and maybe let’s just sideline the issue of anti-Semitism for a second. Take a look at what’s going on in Western China right now. You can point to many different human rights flash points around the world and it seems we’ve never had more NGOs, but never had less action or less attention to frontline real human rights issues. Near the top would be North Korea. What we find is a very sad that the Jews are the canary in the coal mine. It starts with Jews never ends with Jews. Frankly, I’d like to graduate from that whole area if possible, but the fact is that right now the oxygen has been sucked out of the human rights movement by very sophisticated forces and many of them are State players. Not that they carry all about anti-Semitism, but they just don’t want the light shining on them. Especially, at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva where it’s most on display. You get Cuba as a frontline participant, Iran, or Yemen. You know, if it wasn’t so horrific, it would be funny.

So having said all of that, I applaud you for what you are doing. It just means that you are going to have to work even harder to take back the vocabulary of human rights and the nomenclature of human rights and put it to replay the way which Eleanor Roosevelt and Lampkin meant it to be. It is easy to tear them down, but I think the single biggest challenge for your generation is not to tear down those institutions but to take them back.

Question 4. What about the pressure by the South Korean government two universities to close down their Jewish studies and the rise of antisemitism there especially by pro North Korean groups operating there who support the Kim Jong Un regime and hate Israel?

Cooper: I am only smiling because I am here for two or may be three reasons this week. If I end up going, I am not sure, Thursday morning, to the Prayer Breakfast, THIS wonderful event, and then this Wednesday night, the government, actually it is the NGO called “This is Bahrain” and the Bahrain Global Tolerance Center is signing a MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with
the State Department and their person Elan Carr who is in charge of anti-Semitism. Why? Because we are holding up Bahrain as an example of best practices when it comes to religious freedom. So, while the guys in South Korea may be playing off of the script that is pretty dusty, the truth is that courtesy of primarily of the Ayotollahs and actually President Obama, The Gulf Arabs, the Israelis, and many Jewish Groups, ourselves included, are actually on the way to what I would call more than normalization, actually just trying to create a normal context between the Jewish people and the Arab world, at this point primarily through the Gulf nations.

I would just say that as the OPEC has less and less clout globally, it might be a good idea for the Korean universities to take another look, because as they say, “Maybe they are more religious than the Pope,” Many Arab countries, scholars, business people, and others basically come to the conclusion, “Why wouldn’t I have relations with Israel?” I, myself, hosted 24 faith leaders in Bahrain and Jerusalem two years ago, and some folks from the United Arab Emirates. A few months back, I even took four people from Kuwait through Israel. I will just tell you one story because I generally don’t like millennials. Yes, I am jealous. I am old and they are not. I can’t stand it. So, let me tell you one good story about millennials that someone has involved like you are. Take heart from it. My friend from Bahrain and he was on his third visit. He brought along a 25 years old musician, Muhammad. His father is Saudi Arabian and his mother is Bahraini. We check in to the hotel in Jerusalem. The kid disappears. I am like a Jewish mother. “What happened to this guy? He’s never been in Israel before. Where can he possibly be?” At a quarter to ten, our musician friend walks in to the King David hotel. I asked, “Muhammad, where the Hell were you?” He said, “Well, you know, when I got off the plane, I gave you my CD that certain kind of music that I like. So, I checked my iPhone: who in Israel likes my kind of music. I hooked up with some people in Tel Aviv, we had a jam session over there, had dinner, and I just got back.”

So, score two points for the millennials, meaning I don’t want to be Pollyannaish about this. But, the one great thing that you can build on all over the world is, with a very few exceptions, it is impossible to control information. And I think, especially in the Middle East, millions and millions of young people who have had it up to here. They just want to be able to have a good life. They can see it online. They don’t know why they can’t get it. So, it is a kind of a race between the evildoers and the people who just want to have a good life which means tens of millions of millennials all over the world - God bless them. I think that rather than sort of playing it old school such as university blocking and etc. That is like so 20th century. With a little creativity, you will find that you can get around those kinds of roadblocks and build some really important relationships.

Suzanne Scholte: Thank you, Rabbi Cooper, that was outstanding. I just want to make sure everybody knows, when is the release of the report that you mentioned, next week? Okay, March 5th. We will send out a notice. You give us details. We will get that notice out to everybody. Our next forum, by the way, we’ve confirmed Katlyn Thomas who just published the book “The Stealing of the Sahara.” This is not an issue that is well-known to folks, but I can tell you these are absolutely amazing people and they suffer greatly because of the United Nations’ failure to follow through on their long-promising referendum on their nation. It is the only country in Africa that still has not been colonized. We are going to have a program on that and we are working on details. You guys DO NOT want to miss the program. It is going to be really
fascinating. Thank you again, thank you Rabbi Cooper. We will send out the notice about the press conference next week and again thanks for being here.