

NEWS

from
**Paul
Tsongas**

U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

SENATOR TSONGAS COMMENTS ON JERUSALEM CONFERENCE ON SOVIET JEWRY

U.S. Senator Paul Tsongas today made the following remarks on the occasion of the final day of the Conference on Soviet Jewry being held in Jerusalem, and on the occasion of his assistance in distributing Matzoh from the American Jewish Congress to his fellow Senators:

"Today in Jerusalem, the World Conference on Soviet Jewry concluded its meetings, convened to call attention to the continued repression of religious practice in the U.S.S.R.

The Soviet Union signed the Helsinki Accords, yet it has flagrantly violated all the human rights provisions in that agreement. All members of the Helsinki Monitoring Committee have been arrested. Jews in the Soviet Union are systematically deprived of religious freedom:

- of the right to observe their religion
- of the right to study their religion, language, history, philosophy and literature.
- of the right to an open trial
- of the right to express their thoughts without risking imprisonment or commitment to a psychiatric ward
- of the right to emigrate
- of the right to join their families

In the last decade, as many as 50,000 Jews each year fled the repression they faced in the Soviet Union. Now this tide has slowed to a trickle. This January only 81 were permitted to leave.

In a few days, Jews around the world will celebrate the holiday of Passover, commemorating the release of an enslaved people from an oppressive ruler.

On Passover, Jews eat matzoh -- a flat, unleavened bread symbolizing the rush to freedom of the forbears who, in their haste to escape did not stop to let their bread rise.

Matzoh has become the symbol of freedom for the oppressed Soviet Jews and for other ethnic and religious minorities within the Soviet Union.

This Matzoh, eaten during the upcoming holiday of Passover, beginning Monday evening, March 28, is a symbol of our hope for Soviet Jews. It is meant to sustain the memory of those like Anatoly Shcharansky who have been imprisoned because of their loud voices calling for human rights.

On behalf of the American Jewish Congress, I am pleased to speed delivery of these boxes of matzoh to each of my colleagues in the Senate. Others will bring similar boxes to members of the House, and still more will be delivered to each of the nation's governors and to the President and the Vice-President.

We ask that each of these freely-elected officials place the matzoh in his or her office during the holidays of Easter and Passover to call attention to Soviet Jews and all those in the Soviet Union who are prevented from celebrating their religious festivals.

Our tradition of religious freedom makes us a beacon among the nations. Soviet Jews look to us as their sole source of support. Conscience demands that we keep their cause before the eyes of the world while we work together to ease their road to freedom.

Please direct further inquiries on this issue to Bob Arsenault at 4-2742.