

Open Letter to the Biden Administration and the 117th Congress Priorities for Action Against Antisemitism

As organizations committed to ensuring a forceful U.S. response to rising antisemitism, we are gratified by the bipartisan commitment of allies in Congress and the Administration to make the struggle against antisemitism a national priority. As a result of that long standing support, the U.S. government has a rich arsenal of tools at its disposal to prevent and respond to it.

We have come together to elevate key principles and priorities that are essential elements of a robust, comprehensive, whole-of-government approach to address antisemitism. The Jewish community is not a monolith, and our groups have diverse areas of expertise and emphasis. But we are united in a call for the rigorous, proactive use of existing laws and tools to enhance monitoring, prevention and response. We also urge leaders to reject efforts to politicize the antisemitism issue and to work in a bipartisan way to advance these priority requests.

1. **Exert moral leadership at home and abroad.** Civic leaders must speak out against antisemitism in timely, specific, and direct ways. The President, Cabinet officials, and Members of Congress must use their voices, relationships and convening power to reject antisemitism and bigotry at home and abroad.
2. **Improve Reporting.** We cannot address a problem that we are not measuring. And, the US government data consistently show a staggering gap in reporting.
3. **Enhance Jewish Community Security.** Support Non-Profit Security Grants for at-risk houses of worship, schools, community centers.
4. **Education.** Both Holocaust education and anti-bias education should be fundamental elements of civic education in our country.
5. **Urge social media platforms to curb antisemitism,** Holocaust denial and harassment.
6. **Use the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism** as an education, monitoring, and training tool.

We have attached more detailed recommendations related to these priorities. We believe that implementing them - without delay - will enhance both the safety and dignity of Jews and all groups targeted by hate. Whether promoting Jewish equality and civil rights at home, or working to protect religious freedom and human rights abroad, our experience and our history have demonstrated that fighting antisemitism strengthens the fight against hate and discrimination and helps uphold democracy's highest principles.

Signatories List:

American Jewish Congress

Anti-Defamation League

Central Conference of American Rabbis

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

National Council of Jewish Women

Rabbinical Assembly

Union for Reform Judaism

World Jewish Congress

Recommendations to Enhance the U.S. Response to Antisemitism

I. Improve Reporting. According to the FBI's annual Hate Crime Statistics Act (HCSA) report, there are 80 cities with a population of over 100,000 that either did not report any hate crimes to the FBI or affirmatively reported zero hate crimes in 2019, the most recent year on record. These include cities like, Baltimore, Hartford, St. Petersburg, FL, Hollywood, FL, Plano, TX, and West Palm Beach, FL. Below are recommendations to address the reporting gap.

- A. **Support legislation to require mandatory hate crime reporting** by our country's 18,000 federal, state, municipal, and tribal law enforcement agencies.
- B. **Encourage and incentivize state and local law enforcement agencies to participate** in the FBI's HCSA program. Fund training and prevention programs, and tie federal funding for departments to credible HCSA reports. Better hate crime reporting can deter antisemitic and other hate violence.
- C. **Enact the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE ACT.** The bill would provide state and local governments with grants to improve hate crime data collection and reporting and develop new hate crime prevention and reduction programs.

II. U.S. Global Leadership. Addressing antisemitism should be a U.S. foreign policy priority, not just for the sake of Jews, but because antisemitism threatens the core principles upon which peaceful and stable societies are built.

- A. **Urge governments to appoint high-level officials** to coordinate efforts to combat anti-Semitism and give them the political backing and resources they need.
- B. **Leverage U.S. monitoring.** The State Department annual country reports on Human Rights and International Religious Freedom Reports include reporting on antisemitism. Our diplomats abroad must be trained on the definition of antisemitism to ensure that reporting is accurate and comprehensive. The report findings must be used by diplomats and by Congress to spotlight problems and to urge action by foreign governments.
- C. **Engage international organizations** like the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations to ensure that their anti-discrimination efforts also include protecting Jews.

III. Counter online antisemitism, hate and harassment. Antisemitic hate groups and neo-Nazis are flourishing online and promoting their ideology to vast audiences.

- A. Congress should expand federal hate crime laws to include bias-motivated online criminal harassment like doxing and swatting.
- B. Press social media platforms to find and remove public and private groups focused on antisemitism, Holocaust denial, white supremacy, militia, or other violent conspiracies.
- C. Urge platforms to get to the root of the problem and to detoxify their algorithms, so that they stop recommending and amplifying content from groups associated with antisemitism, conspiracies, and other dangerous disinformation to users.

IV. Non-Profit Security Grants

Jewish institutions have been the target of antisemitic threats and deadly violent attacks. Congress and the administration should support robust funding for security enhancements,

training and outreach for houses of worship, schools, community centers, and other non-profit institutions that are objectively determined to be at increased risk. Several Jewish groups have focused on ensuring that these grants also include adequate church-state separation and anti-discrimination safeguards.

V. Anti-Bias and Holocaust Education as core parts of civic education and literacy.

- A. Implement the Never Again Education Act by allocating the \$2 million annual appropriation to expand the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum education programming, and provide incentives for state and local education officials to teach the universal lessons of the Holocaust.
- B. The Department of Education should designate a focal point on Holocaust education.
- C. The focal point should convene a Summit on the role of Holocaust education in civics.
- D. Congress should fund anti-bias education in schools to equip students to understand and to actively challenge antisemitism and all forms of discrimination.

VI. Use the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Definition of Antisemitism as Training and Education Guidance

- A. Adhere to IHRA's adoption of the definition as a distinctly "[non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism.](#)" It was developed to help better understand modern manifestations of antisemitism, including when Jews are targeted based on an actual or perceived support for or connection to Israel.
- B. We support using the working definition to build awareness and train law enforcement, educators, and other leaders. The IHRA definition and its examples are informative. Using the definition itself to trigger federal or state anti-discrimination laws, though, could be abused to punish Constitutionally protected, if objectionable, speech. The examples also provide context to distinguish protected speech – including disagreement and even harsh criticism of the government of Israel – from unlawful, harassing, intimidating, and discriminatory anti-Semitism.

VII. Enforce Existing Education Anti-Discrimination and Hate Crime Laws Effectively

- A. Since 2010, the Department of Education has interpreted its anti-discrimination enforcement authority under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for schools and universities to include "groups that face discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics" -- including Jews, Muslim, Sikhs, and others. The Department has resolved several cases involving discrimination against Jews under this authority. The Biden administration must reaffirm a commitment to this longstanding Department of Justice interpretation.
- B. In addition, existing federal law and hate crime laws in 46 states and the District of Columbia already criminalize crimes in which Jews and Jewish institutions are intentionally targeted because of their religion. Use the IHRA definition to support effective implementation of those laws, where appropriate.

VIII. Research. The government must study antisemitism and all forms of bias and hate that lead to criminal activity. These include white nationalism and white supremacy - with antisemitism at their core - which have led to deadly attacks and threats.

IX. Promote Inter-Agency Cooperation. The Obama administration's interagency working group on hate crimes is one example of a useful mechanism to address antisemitic hate crimes.

X. Work in partnership with Jewish Communities. From policing and security to effectively leveraging America's leadership abroad, the best policy and practices result from close consultation and partnership between officials and affected communities. Congress, the administration, and state and local officials should actively engage with communities through regular working groups to spot trends, identify challenges and explore countermeasures.

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