

Congressional Testimony

Confronting the Rise in Anti-Semitic Domestic Terrorism

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*Working to stop the defamation of the
Jewish people and to secure justice and
fair treatment to all since 1913*

Chairman Rose, Ranking Member Walker and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee: On behalf of ADL, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Anti-Semitic attacks, harassment, and online hate have each hit historically high rates in the last few years, and they are all interconnected. They are occurring in a polarized political and cultural environment in which hate, domestic terror, and specifically white supremacist violent extremism – which is responsible for the vast majority of extremist-related murders in the United States in recent years – are increasingly threatening all Americans. Anti-Semitism is an age-old form of hatred that plays on slanderous tropes about the Jewish people and finds its voice in every era. Yet, as Jews across the world know all too well, hate might begin with the targeting of one group of people, but it rarely stops with them.

Addressing anti-Semitism requires a whole-of-nation approach. ADL’s 25 regional offices stand on the front lines of Jewish communities, offering services, support, and expertise to anyone who experiences anti-Semitism. We also stand with our allies in other communities of faith and with those in all communities who have been targeted by hate. We must all speak out against such hate at every opportunity. We must also look at our education systems, at our law enforcement capacity and training, at our online social media platforms, and at changes to our laws to immediately and effectively combat anti-Semitic violence.

ADL’S ROLE IN COMBATING ANTI-SEMITISM

Since 1913, the mission of ADL has been “to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” ADL fights against anti-Semitism and bigotry in many ways, beginning with monitoring and exposing extremist groups, individuals, and movements who spread hate and commit acts of violence. Today, ADL is the foremost non-governmental authority on domestic terrorism, extremism, hate groups, and hate crimes.

Through our Center on Extremism, whose experts monitor a variety of extremist and terrorist movements and individuals, ADL plays a leading role in identifying, exposing and disrupting extremist movements and activities, while helping communities and government agencies alike in combating them. ADL’s team of experts – analysts, investigators, researchers, and linguists – use cutting-edge technologies and investigative techniques to track and disrupt extremists and extremist movements worldwide. And today our technology and tech policy experts are developing path-breaking tools to identify and measure online hate.

Indeed, ADL has worked to address hateful abuses of digital platforms since the 1980s, when extremists were using early electronic bulletin boards to organize and spread their repugnant ideology. In 2017, ADL formed the Center for Technology and Society, based in Silicon Valley. Through it, we work on unique ways to measure anti-Semitism and other forms of hate, leveraging the deep expertise of our researchers, working on tools to measure hate across platforms, and evaluating the effectiveness of the policies, tools and enforcement efforts of tech platforms.

ADL is developing new tools to measure the incidence of hate online and off because it is not possible to effectively counter something unless it is identified and measured. Among the tools we

are developing or continue to update: the Online Hate Index, to measure anti-Semitism online;¹ the ADL Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents;² ADL's Tracker of Anti-Semitic Incidents, a daily compilation of recent cases of anti-Jewish vandalism, harassment, and assaults reported to or detected by ADL;³ and our proprietary, interactive, and customizable H.E.A.T. Map™,⁴ which provides details on extremist and anti-Semitic incidents nationwide that can be filtered by region and type.

ADL is also the country's largest non-governmental provider of training for law enforcement on hate crimes, extremism and terrorism. ADL provides law enforcement with information, expertise, and actionable intelligence to prevent, disrupt, and respond to those extremists who cross the line from espousing hateful ideologies to committing or inciting violent, criminal acts, thus protecting the Jewish community and all Americans. We also deliver training geared to building trust between police and the people and communities they serve. Each year, ADL experts deliver customized, in-depth training to more than 15,000 federal, state, and local law enforcement personnel at a wide range of agencies.⁵

ADL's Education Department provides educational programs, training and resources for grades PreK-12 and college/university settings. Our anti-bias and bullying prevention programs assist educators and students in understanding and challenging bias and building ally behaviors. Our work in confronting anti-Semitism empowers young people with constructive responses to combat anti-Semitism. We support mandatory Holocaust education and also have programs, resources and award-winning curricula that can be used to train educators and enable students to explore and critically reflect on the lessons of the Holocaust and of other genocides.

ADL's Civil Rights and Government Relations, Advocacy and Community Engagement (GRACE) Departments help draft and promote federal and state legislation to address hate violence and domestic terrorism. ADL drafted an anti-paramilitary training statute adopted by more than a dozen states, the first model state hate crime legislation in 1981⁶, and a model bullying prevention statute in 2009.⁷ ADL has filed amicus briefs in the Supreme Court and many lower courts defending the constitutionality of a number of hate crime and anti-terrorism laws.⁸

TRENDS IN ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENTS

In recent years we have watched in horror as anti-Semitic incidents, and, in particular violent attacks, have been on the rise. Many of these have their most devastating impact on individual

¹ ADL, *The Online Hate Index* (<https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/the-online-hate-index>)

² ADL, *Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents: Year in Review 2018* (<https://www.adl.org/audit2018>)

³ ADL, *Tracker of Anti-Semitic Incidents* (<https://www.adl.org/adl-tracker-of-anti-semitic-incidents>)

⁴ ADL, *ADL H.E.A.T. Map: Hate, Extremism, Anti-Semitism, Terrorism* (<https://www.adl.org/heat-map>)

⁵ ADL, *Law Enforcement Trainings* (<https://www.adl.org/who-we-are/our-organization/signature-programs/law-enforcement-training>)

⁶ ADL, *Hate Crime Laws: The ADL Approach* (<https://www.adl.org/media/2143/download>)

⁷ ADL, *Chart of Bullying Prevention Laws* (<https://www.adl.org/media/12580/download>)

⁸ ADL, *Amicus Brief Database*, (<https://www.adl.org/education-and-resources/resource-knowledge-base/amicus-brief-database>)

victims and those closest to them. Often these incidents also send shockwaves and even terror through the Jewish community and our allies. They reverberate through the media and are shared widely across the Internet. They have come to shape the narrative of Jewish American self-perception.

Since 1979, ADL has published an annual Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents — a tally and analysis of incidents of anti-Semitic harassment, vandalism and assault in the United States which we have identified over the course of each year. These incidents include criminal and non-criminal expressions of anti-Semitism. The vast majority of the incidents in our Audit are reported to our regional offices by individuals or groups in the Jewish community; they are supplemented by media reports, information shared with us by law enforcement agencies, and reports on extremist activity by ADL experts working in the Center on Extremism. In addition to our annual audit, we just launched ADL's Tracker of Anti-Semitic Incidents this year in the face of increased daily incidents of anti-Jewish vandalism, harassment and assault reported to or detected by ADL.⁹

ADL records anti-Semitic incidents in three major categories: Harassment (in which a Jewish person or group of people feel harassed by the perceived anti-Semitic words or images, spoken or written, or actions of another person or group); Vandalism (in which property is damaged in a manner that indicates the presence of anti-Semitic animus or in a manner that attacks Jews for their religious affiliation); and Assault (in which people's bodies are targeted with violence accompanied by evidence of anti-Semitic animus).

In 2018, the last year for which we have complete numbers, we recorded 1,066 cases of harassment nationally, an increase of five percent from 2017; 774 cases of vandalism, a decrease of 19 percent from 2017; and 39 cases of assault, an increase of 105 percent from 2017.

The ADL Audit's subcategory of physical assault on Jewish individuals is particularly concerning, because it is the one subcategory which we project will increase in 2019, from a total of 39 in 2018 to more than 50 incidents in 2019. Not only did the number of incidents increase, but the number of victims of these assaults also continues to climb: from a total of 21 victims in 2017, to 59 in 2018, and rising to an estimated 80 in 2019. *That would be nearly a fourfold estimated increase in the number of victims of anti-Semitic assaults in the United States in over just two years.*

Anti-Semitic Domestic Terrorism

We have witnessed some particularly shocking high-profile deadly assaults on Jewish Americans, which have targeted Jews within Jewish institutions over the last two years. These incidents are part of a broader trend in the United States of mass-casualty attacks perpetrated by ideologically-inspired violent extremists. This trend requires a more concerted federal response to combat the epidemic of domestic terrorism.

The October 27, 2018 assault against the three congregations that meet in the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh was the deadliest known attack specifically targeting the Jewish community in the history of the United States. During this attack, an alleged white supremacist entered the synagogue and opened fire with semi-automatic weapons, killing 11 worshippers and

⁹ ADL, *Tracker of Anti-Semitic Incidents* (<https://www.adl.org/adl-tracker-of-anti-semitic-incidents>)

injuring two others. An additional four law enforcement officers were injured while responding to the shooting. The perpetrator is reported to have yelled, “All Jews must die” during the assault, and subsequent investigations revealed that he had held strong white supremacist and anti-Semitic beliefs for years. The purported motivation for the attack in Pittsburgh was the alleged perpetrator’s belief, widely shared by white supremacists and set forth in some of his online posts on Gab, that Jews are behind efforts to impose mass immigration on the United States, with the goal of harming or destroying the white race.

High-profile violent attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions continued in 2019. During this period, our community suffered a deadly assault on a synagogue in Poway, CA; a mass shooting at a kosher marketplace in Jersey City; and a violent stabbing attack at the home of a rabbi in Monsey, NY, during a Hanukkah celebration.

In Poway, on Saturday April 27, 2019, a 19-year old individual allegedly opened fire inside the Chabad congregation, leaving one dead and three injured. The assault, which took place on the last day of Passover, occurred exactly six months after the deadly shooting rampage at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. According to reports, the gunman entered the synagogue armed with an AR-style rifle and a handgun and called 911 on himself as he drove away from the attack.

ADL's immediate research, within hours of the incident, determined that the alleged gunman may have posted a white supremacist letter/manifesto to the document-sharing site PasteBin on the morning of the attack.¹⁰ The post, in which a user identifies himself with the same name as the alleged gunman, details his hatred for Jews and all non-Christians, and refers admiringly to the alleged Pittsburgh shooter as well as the gunman who murdered over 50 people who were praying at two mosques in March 2019 in Christchurch, New Zealand. The letter includes a laundry list of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, among them the longstanding white supremacist assertion that Jews are orchestrating non-white immigration which “threatens” the white race. “Every Jew is responsible for the meticulously planned genocide of the European race,” the letter states, adding “for these crimes they deserve nothing but hell.”

In Jersey City, on December 10, a kosher market was sprayed with gunfire, resulting in the death of three people: the store’s co-owner, an employee, and a customer. On December 12, New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir Grewal held a press conference in which he stated that the shooting was being investigated as an act of domestic terrorism motivated by anti-Semitic and anti-law enforcement sentiments. One alleged shooter, who is also reported to have killed a police officer in an earlier incident, appears to have been an adherent of Black Hebrew Israelite ideology. Many proponents of this particular ideology harbor intense anti-Semitism and assert that Jews have stolen the mantle of the biblical tribes of Israel from indigenous peoples of Africa and the Americas.

In the days following the shooting, ADL’s Center on Extremism uncovered more disturbing details of the alleged shooter’s ideology through various social media accounts he appears to have used.¹¹ Numerous posts in a Facebook account illustrate his hatred for Jews, whom he sometimes refers

¹⁰ ADL, *Deadly Shooting at California Chabad Highlights Threat to Jewish Houses of Worship* (<https://www.adl.org/blog/deadly-shooting-at-california-chabad-highlights-threat-to-jewish-houses-of-worship>)

¹¹ ADL, *Center on Extremism Uncovers More Disturbing Details of Jersey City Shooter’s Extremist Ideology* (<https://www.adl.org/blog/center-on-extremism-uncovers-more-disturbing-details-of-jersey-city-shooters-extremist>)

to as Khazars – a reference to an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory that modern Jews are descendants of an Eastern European tribe from the eleventh century. In July 2015, he wrote, “Brooklyn is full of NAZIS – ASHKE-NAZIS (KHAZARS).” (“Ashkenazi” is the name of a Jewish ethnic group, which includes many Hassidic and ultra-Orthodox Jews.) He went on to allege that Jews were responsible for murdering black men because “the police are their hand now.”

This Jersey City suspect’s potential for violence was presaged in a July 2015 post in which he wrote that he could not wait for “Yahawah” (God) to have “his angel blow that shufar [sic] and give the order to dash little edomites against the stones” because he had a “**RIGHTEOUS** vengefulness within” him waiting to be released and that he could use “all of his edomite military anti-terrorist [sic] training” against his enemies. In Black Hebrew Israelite theology, “Edomites” refer to the enemies of God, including white people, whom they believe to be descended from the biblical patriarch Jacob’s brother Esau, who was also known as Edom. It is clear from his writing that this Jersey City suspect used this term to refer disparagingly to Jewish people.

In Monsey, NY, on December 28, 2019, a Hanukkah gathering was shattered when a man entered a local rabbi’s home armed with a large knife and began stabbing people.¹² The attack left five injured, one critically. The following day, police in Ramapo, New York, charged the alleged assailant with five counts of attempted murder and one count of burglary. He pled not guilty at his December 29 arraignment. The next day, federal prosecutors filed hate crimes charges against him, and authorities released a criminal complaint that may provide insight into the motivation for his Saturday night attack. While searching his home, police found handwritten anti-Semitic messages, a cryptic mention of Black Hebrew Israelites, references to Hitler and “Nazi Culture” and sketches of a swastika and a Star of David. He also reportedly used his phone to search for local “Zionist temples” and “German Jewish temples near me.”

While the terrorist incidents listed above were the most destructive to their victims, Jews in the New York metropolitan area are also still reeling from at least 30 incidents of harassment, vandalism, and assault in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. Moreover, during the six-week period from December 1, 2019 through January 10, 2020, ADL has confirmed at least 46 anti-Semitic incidents across New York State, up from 32 during the same six-week period a year ago.

Anti-Semitism by White Supremacists

This growing anti-Semitic violence is happening at a time when domestic terrorism across the board is also disturbingly high and is primarily the result of white supremacist violent extremism. Three of the five deadliest years for murders by domestic extremists in the period between 1970 and 2018 were between 2013 and 2018. Of the 50 murders committed in the United States by extremists in 2018, 78 percent were tied to white supremacy. Between 2009 and 2018, domestic extremists of all kinds killed at least 427 people in the United States. Of those deaths, approximately 73 percent were at the hands of right-wing extremists such as white supremacists, sovereign citizens and militia adherents.

¹² ADL, *Stabbing Attack at Monsey Hanukkah Party Leaves Five Injured* (<https://www.adl.org/blog/stabbing-attack-at-monsey-hanukkah-party-leaves-five-injured>)

Regarding violent anti-Semitism by white supremacists, since the deadly rampage at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue, at least 13 white supremacists were arrested for their alleged roles in terrorist plots, attacks or threats against the Jewish community specifically. Many of the arrested individuals cited – and apparently sought to mimic – previous anti-Semitic murderers.¹³

In our 2018 report, *“New Hate and Old: The Changing Face of White Supremacy in the U.S.”* we noted that the white supremacist “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017 that tragically killed Heather Heyer attracted some 600 extremists from around the country.¹⁴ The movement is not as open about its true objectives as it was in the 1980s and early 1990s, when racist skinheads dominated white supremacists' ranks. Today, many white supremacists seek to dress discreetly and use coded language. Within the white supremacist community, there is some disagreement on strategy. Some factions feel the need to consider “optics” and purposefully obfuscate their views in order to infiltrate mainstream politics, whereas others, arguing that “white genocide” could be imminent, seek “accelerationism,” hoping to purposefully spark a race war. With one approach involving secrecy and coded language, and the other sometimes including seemingly random acts of violence, both approaches are alarming in their potential to result in tragedy.

Of the 249 anti-Semitic incidents in our 2018 Audit attributable to hate groups or extremists, most of these were perpetrated by white supremacists. For example, 142 of them took the form of anti-Semitic fliers and/or banners, which are categorized as harassment. The flier distributions are designed not only to spread and normalize anti-Semitism, but also to recruit new members, draw media attention and, in the words of the Daily Stormer website, to “trigger the living hell out of Jews and their leftist acolytes.” The vast majority of these distributions were part of coordinated campaigns by white supremacist groups, particularly Daily Stormer Book Clubs and Loyal White Knights.

The Daily Stormer Book Clubs' 2018 fliering campaigns blamed Jews for: Justice Brett Kavanaugh's fraught confirmation process and the allegations of misconduct that he faced; the de-platforming of right-wing conspiracy theorist Alex Jones on social media and other platforms; and the debate in Congress over gun control laws in the wake of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School mass shooting in Parkland, Florida.

The Loyal White Knights' 2018 anti-Semitic fliers blamed Jews for orchestrating an “open border policy” and accused Jews of controlling the government, the media and the criminal justice system. Loyal White Knights is one of the country's largest and most active Klan groups and is best known for distributing racist, anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, homophobic and Islamophobic propaganda.

Anti-Zionist Anti-Semitism

¹³ ADL, *Latest ADL Data: At Least 12 White Supremacists Arrested for Plots, Attacks & Threats Against Jewish Community Since the Deadly Pittsburgh Shooting* (<https://www.adl.org/news/press-releases/latest-adl-data-at-least-12-white-supremacists-arrested-for-plots-attacks>)

¹⁴ ADL, *New Hate and Old: The Changing Face of American White Supremacy* (<https://www.adl.org/new-hate-and-old>)

Anti-Semitism in the guise of anti-Israel sentiments spans the ideological spectrum. A number of anti-Semitic incidents in the 2018 Audit included references to Israel or otherwise targeted Jews for their purported connection to Israel.¹⁵ Israeli policies – like any other government’s policies, including those of our own country – can and should be robustly and publicly debated. Certainly, Israel’s policies are the subject of much debate and differing views among the Jewish community in the United States.

But at times this ostensible debate about Israeli policies crosses the line into anti-Semitism. ADL includes anti-Israel incidents in the Audit if they invoke or are accompanied by classic anti-Semitic stereotypes and tropes (such as alleging that Jews/Zionists control the government), if they target Jewish religious or cultural institutions, or if they are expressed by groups or individuals who consistently express anti-Semitic ideas. The Audit found 140 anti-Semitic incidents in 2018 that referenced Israel or Zionism. Ninety-five of those incidents related to white supremacist activity, including 80 robocalls in California from Scott Rhodes in support of neo-Nazi and former California Republican Senate candidate Patrick Little, in which Rhodes left individuals and synagogues alleging that, “nation-wrecking Jews,” including Senator Dianne Feinstein, are drawing the U.S. into “Middle East wars based on lies so that Israel can eventually expand its borders like it always planned.”

In addition, the steady drumbeat of extreme anti-Zionist sentiments which may be heard in some segments of the progressive left can have the effect of stigmatizing and traumatizing American Jews, the majority of whom feel that Israel and Zionism play an important role in their Jewish religious or cultural identities.¹⁶ Many Jews, including those who are critical of Israeli government policies, consider Zionism to be a positive movement of Jewish self-determination, borne out of millennia of diaspora and of persecution in nearly every land in which they settled. Increasingly, rejection of Zionism and the Jewish state is imposed as a litmus test to determine whether individual Jews – or Jewish groups – exhibit sufficient progressive bona fides to warrant inclusion in progressive circles or initiatives. This singles out Jews and can exclude and discriminate against them in ways to which no other religious group faces. Although the rhetoric that moves from criticism of Israeli policies to wholesale rejection of the legitimacy of a Jewish state and those who support its right to exist is hard to quantify, its impact on some parts of the Jewish American community cannot be overstated.

When anti-Israel activity on campus specifically crosses the line and students are intentionally harassed or discriminated against and deprived of an equal educational opportunity because they are Jewish, ADL believes that it is first and foremost the responsibility of university leadership at the highest levels to address it. If the university is slow to respond or its response falls short of what is necessary to protect its Jewish students and faculty, the president’s Executive Order on Combating Anti-Semitism issued in December 2019 confirms that federal agencies can investigate, which we believe to be an important backstop.

The Executive Order, as written, goes no further than the practice of the Department of Education under President Obama. It does not, and should not, give universities a license to silence voices on

¹⁵ ADL, *Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents: Year in Review 2018* (<https://www.adl.org/audit2018>)

¹⁶ American Jewish Committee, *AJC 2019 Survey of American Jewish Opinion* (<https://www.ajc.org/news/survey2019>)

campus, including those that criticize the policies of the Israeli government. But by referencing the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism, it does provide important guidance to help universities determine when advocacy crosses the line to targeted, discriminatory, unlawful anti-Semitic conduct, and it gives the Department of Education further recourse to protect Jewish American students and ensure a harassment-free education environment. The Executive Order is clear that the IHRA definition – established in 2016 by an organization made up of 34 member countries, including the United States – should be taken into consideration as evidence of anti-Semitic discriminatory intent.

Anti-Semitism Online

The Internet allows all types of anti-Semitism to spread faster than it ever has before. A meme that is generated by a dedicated anti-Semite on a toxic platform like Gab or Telegram can be disseminated almost instantly on more mainstream social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, or Reddit, where it may spread faster than content moderators can catch. Podcasting and video sharing sites like YouTube allow anti-Semites to broadcast their hateful ideology and speak directly to watchers—some of whom may have been “served” the hateful content by an algorithm that is trained to increase user engagement, which in some cases might mean recommending extremist content. Social media also offers community with like-minded individuals and groups: online forums allow isolated anti-Semites to become more active and involved in virtual campaigns of ideological recruitment and radicalization. Individuals can easily find sanction, support, and reinforcement online for their extreme beliefs or actions, and the Internet offers a reading and viewing library of tens of thousands of anti-Semitic pieces of content. White supremacists, for example, can easily access sites and content that serve the role of a 24/7 neo-Nazi rally.

Quantifying online anti-Semitism is a major challenge which academics, activists, and watchdog organizations like ADL have been working on for years. Sometimes it appears as if anti-Semitism is an endemic part of the background environment of online spaces.

For example, we released a report which found that approximately 4.2 million tweets from 3 million accounts expressed anti-Semitic sentiment during 2017.¹⁷ The report, *Quantifying Hate: A Year of Anti-Semitism on Twitter*, included week-by-week breakdowns of how anti-Semitism percolated through the platform and provided qualitative assessments of eight anti-Semitic themes. Of course, a dataset of 4.2 million tweets is a very small number compared to the trillions of tweets sent on the platform each year. But that does not negate the impact this has on the lived experience of Jews, many of whom have found Twitter to be a toxic environment.

Further study of anti-Semitism on Twitter found that, in the lead up to the 2018 midterm elections, tactics of disinformation were being used to spread anti-Semitism on the platform.¹⁸ In November 2018, we released a report from one of ADL’s Belfer Fellows and University of Texas Professor

¹⁷ ADL, *Quantifying Hate: A Year of Anti-Semitism on Twitter* (<https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/quantifying-hate-a-year-of-anti-Semitism-on-twitter>)

¹⁸ ADL, *Computational Propaganda, Jewish-Americans and the 2018 Midterms: The Amplification of Anti-Semitic Harassment Online* (<https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/computational-propaganda-jewish-americans-and-the-2018-midterms-the-amplification>)

Samuel Woolley, who studies how automation and algorithms are used over social media and other digital technologies to enable both democracy and civic control. The report, entitled “Computational Propaganda, Jewish-Americans and the 2018 Midterms: The Amplification of Anti-Semitic Harassment Online,” found that nearly 30% of accounts engaging in anti-Semitic behavior were in fact bots, and that those bots made up over 40% of the anti-Semitic content in that time period. The qualitative results found that for the Jewish public figures who participated in the study experiencing threats of violence and deluges of anti-Semitism had become part of their internal calculus for engaging in public life.

More recently, we conducted a study of anti-Semitism on YouTube.¹⁹ For years, YouTube has officially prohibited content which promotes or condones violence or incites hatred against individuals or groups based on core characteristics such as ethnicity, gender and sexual identity, and religion. In June 2019, it updated that policy with specific prohibitions against ideologies like white supremacy, which asserts the superiority of one group in order to justify discriminating against or persecuting other groups. For the first time it also prohibited content which denied the existence of violent events like the Holocaust or certain mass shootings like that at the Sandy Hook elementary school.²⁰

Despite these policies, ADL’s August 2019 study of YouTube identified a significant number of channels on YouTube’s platform that continued to disseminate anti-Semitic and white supremacist content. We conducted more focused analyses of five overtly anti-Semitic channels, which promulgated a variety of slanderous allegations and tropes that have been used for generations to stoke fear and hatred of Jews. Altogether, the videos on these five anti-Semitic channels had been viewed more than 81 million times as of July 2019. To date, four of the five channels remain active on YouTube. These and many more channels that have not been closely studied continue to pump anti-Semitic poison into our online ecosystem.

Anti-Semitism festers in other, less well-known online spaces. ADL’s Center on Extremism has performed deep dives into such platforms, among them Gab,²¹ 8chan,²² Telegram,²³ VK,²⁴ and Fascist Forge.²⁵

This anti-Semitism online can have major impacts on Jews who must navigate those spaces for work or recreation. The experience of being attacked on the Internet for being Jewish has repercussions far beyond the online environment. Its effects can spill over into the real world in

¹⁹ ADL, *Despite YouTube Policy Update, Anti-Semitic, White Supremacist Channels Remain*

(<https://www.adl.org/blog/despite-youtube-policy-update-anti-Semitic-white-supremacist-channels-remain>)

²⁰ Donie O’Sullivan, “YouTube says it’ll ban accounts that promote Nazism or deny Sandy Hook massacre,” *CNN*, June 5, 2019. (<https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/05/tech/youtube-nazi-ban/index.html>)

²¹ ADL, *When Twitter Bans Extremists, Gab Puts Out the Welcome Mat* (<https://www.adl.org/blog/when-twitter-bans-extremists-gab-puts-out-the-welcome-mat>)

²² ADL, *Gab and 8chan: Home to Terrorist Plots Hiding in Plain Sight* (<https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/gab-and-8chan-home-to-terrorist-plots-hiding-in-plain-sight>)

²³ ADL, *Telegram: The Latest Safe Haven for White Supremacists* (<https://www.adl.org/blog/telegram-the-latest-safe-haven-for-white-supremacists>)

²⁴ ADL, *VK.com: Linking American White Supremacists to International Counterparts*

(<https://www.adl.org/blog/vkcom-linking-american-white-supremacists-to-international-counterparts>)

²⁵ ADL, *Fascist Forge: A New Forum for Hate* (<https://www.adl.org/blog/fascist-forge-a-new-forum-for-hate>)

the form of social anxiety and exclusion, financial loss, depression and thoughts of self-harm, and these effects can last for months, if not years.

In 2019, we published a collection of in-depth qualitative interviews that revealed the emotional pain and financial loss experienced by victims of online abuse. In one incident, a Jewish business owner was targeted through anti-Semitic posts in an attempt to drive away business and that campaign resulted in months of lost potential income. In another study that was based on a nationally-representative survey of video gamers, ADL's Center on Technology and Society found that 19 percent of Jewish respondents experienced hate and harassment based on their identity as a Jew. More worrisome is that between eight and 23 percent of respondents across the spectrum of identities confessed to adjusting how they socialize, considering self-harm, or taking precautions to ensure physical safety because of their experience with online hate and harassment. Alarming, nearly 23 percent of online gamers were exposed to white supremacist ideology through in-game social interactions. Anti-Semitic rhetoric seems to exist in every category of online social space.

In the past several months, new anti-Semitic trolling efforts by white supremacists have weaponized lists of Jews by variously posting their images, personal information such as names, places of employment, and schools they attend, as well as links to the targets' social media accounts. Lists of Jews in any form on white supremacist platforms are alarming, especially given the ongoing threats of anti-Semitic violence and the targeting of synagogues and Jewish organizations. While some trolling tactics do not explicitly call for violence against Jews, it is impossible to know who might interpret the lists and photographs as a call to action.²⁶

Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes

Hate crimes are another element of the anti-Semitic incidents that we track, and they underline the rise in hate in our country. The most recent data about hate crimes made available by the FBI is for 2018.²⁷ The FBI has been tracking and documenting hate crimes reported from federal, state, and local law enforcement officials since 1991 under the Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990 (HCSA). Though clearly incomplete, the Bureau's annual HCSA reports provide the best single national snapshot of bias-motivated criminal activity in the United States. The Act has also proven to be a powerful mechanism to confront violent bigotry, increasing public awareness of the problem and sparking improvements in the local response of the criminal justice system to hate violence – since in order to effectively report hate crimes, police officials must be trained to identify and respond to them.

The FBI found that, including the 11 murders at the three congregations in the Tree of Life Synagogue building in Pittsburgh, 2018 saw the highest number of hate crime murders on record, with 24 victims. The FBI documented a slight decrease in overall reported hate crimes – from 7,175 in 2017 to 7,120 in 2018 – after three consecutive years of increases. But the FBI HCSA

²⁶ ADL, *New Trolling Efforts Target Jews' Appearance, Attempt to Sow Political Division* (<https://www.adl.org/blog/new-trolling-efforts-target-jews-appearance-attempt-to-sow-political-division>)

²⁷ FBI, *2018 Hate Crime Statistics*, 2018 (<https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2018>)

report also documented the highest number of personal attacks in the past 15 years, and the largest number of incidents involving personal attacks since 2001. Further:

- While religion-based hate crimes decreased by eight percent from 2017, nearly 60 percent of reported religion-based hate crime attacks were targeted against Jews or Jewish institutions in 2018.
- Race-based hate crimes were once again the most common type of hate crime, as in every previous year. Nearly 50 percent of race-based hate crimes were directed against African-Americans.
- Anti-Hispanic hate crimes increased 14 percent, the third straight year of increased reporting.
- Crimes directed against LGBTQ people increased 5.7 percent, from 1,130 in 2017 to 1,196 in 2018.
- 2018 also saw a significant 42 percent increase in crimes directed against transgender individuals, up from 119 in 2017 to 168 in 2018.

The FBI data is based on voluntary local law enforcement reporting to the Bureau, and a serious reporting gap remains. One hundred and ten fewer law enforcement agencies participated in the HCSA program in 2018, meaning that they failed to report any data, following record-high participation in 2017. In addition, at least 85 cities with populations exceeding 100,000 residents either did not report any data to the FBI or affirmatively reported zero hate crimes. Alabama and Wyoming reported zero hate crimes for 2018. Based on our experience, these reports of zero hate crimes are not credible.

Moreover, we need to remember that these are only the crimes reported to authorities. For a variety of reasons, many communities and individuals do not feel comfortable going to law enforcement in the first place, leading ADL's experts and other experts to conclude that there is certainly an undercount of hate crimes resulting from unwillingness to report.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONFRONT THE RISE OF ANTI-SEMITIC DOMESTIC TERRORISM

Effectively confronting the rise in anti-Semitic domestic terrorism requires us to combat anti-Semitism in all of its forms and wherever it emerges. It also requires us to combat all forms of bigotry and bias-motivated criminal conduct, since the demonization of Jewish people thrives when vulnerable groups are being unfairly singled out as scapegoats. Anti-Semitism thrives during times of economic, social or political upheaval, when scapegoats are sought. And, as noted in the beginning of this testimony, that may start with the Jews, but it never ends with the Jews.

The following are measures that, taken together, can help combat the rise in anti-Semitic domestic terrorist incidents as well as anti-Semitic attitudes and incidents in general:

1. Use the Bully Pulpit

- a. The President, Cabinet officials, and Members of Congress must call out anti-Semitism and bigotry *at every opportunity*. The right to free speech is a core value, but the promotion of hate should be vehemently and consistently rejected. Simply put, you cannot say it enough: America is no place for hate.
- b. In this environment, the importance of ensuring that the fight against anti-Semitism not be politicized, all the more so during an election year, cannot be overstated. To try to weaponize the fight against anti-Semitism to divide the Jewish community or to divide it from its allies in other vulnerable communities is destructive and morally indefensible. For example, tacking on legislation to combat anti-Semitism with the intent to kill other, unrelated legislation, must be identified and rejected by legislators on both sides of the aisle. Attempts by the executive branch to politicize the fight against anti-Semitism should be identified and rejected by legislators on both sides of the aisle. Necessary hearings about the threat of white supremacy in the United States should not be derailed because “left-wing” anti-Semitism isn’t being given equal time. And the fact that right-wing extremism has posed the most violent threat against Jews and other vulnerable communities in the United States in recent years should not be allowed to obfuscate the fact that anti-Semitism can also be expressed as anti-Zionism and anti-Israel activity when it seeks to single out and delegitimize the Jewish state and all those who support its existence. To be aware and to fight these manifestations of hate, divisiveness and bigotry not just when they appear in their most egregiously hateful form, but when they appear coded or obfuscated or in disingenuous form, must be a priority for all in Congress.

That is why I sent a [letter](#) to Congressional leadership in March 2019 urging them to work together to stop the growing partisan weaponization of anti-Semitism, and instead work together to combat this scourge. The House and Senate Bipartisan Task Forces for Combating Anti-Semitism are good models for working across the aisle and I urge you all to join the House task force.

2. Improve Federal Hate Crime Data Collection, Transparency and Support

- a. The Department of Justice should incentivize and encourage state and local law enforcement agencies to more comprehensively collect and report hate crimes to the FBI, with special attention devoted to large underreporting law enforcement agencies that either have not participated in the FBI Hate Crime Statistics Act program at all or have affirmatively and not credibly reported zero hate crimes. More comprehensive, complete hate crime reporting can deter hate violence – including anti-Semitic hate crimes – and advance police-community relations.
- b. The federal government should provide funding for criminal investigations and prosecutions by state, local and tribal law enforcement officials, as authorized by Section 4704 of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009.

3. Fully Fund Programs Supporting Community Security

- a. ADL supports the right of non-profit religious institutions objectively deemed to be at high risk of attack to participate in federal, state and local government programs providing funding for security, provided adequate church-state separation and anti-discrimination safeguards are in place. These grants should fully fund the actual need. While ADL remains deeply committed to our longstanding position in support of the separation of church and state, we also believe that religious freedom requires Americans to feel free and safe to pray in our houses of worship and to gather in our schools and cultural centers without fear of violent attacks.

Narrowly-tailored government grants to nonprofits for security enhancements should be permitted as part of a broader, more holistic education and community engagement program to prevent these attacks.

4. Pass Legislation to Address Anti-Semitism, White Supremacy and Domestic Terrorism

- a. **Pass the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act**

This legislation would enhance the federal government's efforts to prevent domestic terrorism by authorizing into law the offices addressing domestic terrorism, and requiring federal law enforcement agencies to regularly assess those threats and then resource to the threats. The bill would also provide training and resources to assist non-federal law enforcement, requiring DOJ, DHS, and the FBI to provide training and resources to assist state, local, and tribal law enforcement in understanding, detecting, investigating, and deterring acts of domestic terrorism.

- b. **Pass the Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer National Opposition to Hate, Assault, and Threats to Equality (NO HATE) Act of 2019 (H.R. 3545/S. 2043)**

This legislation would authorize incentive grants to spark improved local and state hate crime training, prevention, best practices, and data collection initiatives – including grants for state hate crime reporting hotlines to direct individuals to local law enforcement and support services.

- c. **Pass the Never Again Education Act (H.R. 943/S. 2085)**

This bill would create a new grant program at the U.S. Department of Education to provide teachers across the country with the necessary resources to teach about the Holocaust in their classrooms. ADL supports this bipartisan legislation because we believe strongly that learning about the Holocaust and lessons of unchecked anti-Semitism and racism is one of the best ways to fight prejudice and discrimination, and to help ensure that genocide and such atrocities never happen again.

5. Address Online Hate and Harassment Through Legislation and Training

- a. **Strengthen Laws Against Perpetrators of Online Hate**

Hate and harassment translate from online spaces to the real world, but our laws have not kept up. Many forms of severe online misconduct are not consistently covered by cybercrime, harassment, stalking and hate crimes law. Congress has an opportunity to lead the fight against cyberhate by increasing protections for targets as well as penalties for perpetrators of online misconduct. Congress should pass legislation addressing cybercrimes such as doxing, swatting, and non-consensual pornography with legislation along the lines of the Online Safety Modernization Act, which was introduced in the 115th Congress.

b. Improve Training of Law Enforcement

Law enforcement is a key responder to online hate, especially in cases when users feel they are in imminent danger. Increasing resources and training for these departments is critical to ensure they can effectively investigate and prosecute cyber cases and that targets know they will be supported if they contact law enforcement. This includes ongoing anti-bias training, hate crimes training, and training regarding technology and the Internet landscape, as all of these issues are perpetually changing.

6. Urge Social Media Platforms to Institute Stronger Measures to Address Online Hate and Harassment

- a. Government officials have an important role to play in encouraging social media platforms to institute robust and verifiable industry-wide self-governance. This could take many forms, including Congressional oversight or passing laws that require certain levels of transparency and auditing. The Internet plays a vital role in allowing for innovation and democratizing trends, and that should be preserved. At the same time, the widespread exploitation of social media platforms for hateful and severely harmful conduct needs to be effectively addressed.

Some of these measures should include:

1. Strong Terms of Service

Every social media and online game platform must have clear terms of service that address hateful content and harassing behavior, and clearly define consequences for violations. These policies should state that the platform will not tolerate hateful content or behavior based on protected characteristics. They should prohibit abusive tactics such as harassment, doxing and swatting. Platforms should also note what the process of appeal is for users who feel their content was flagged as hateful or abusive in error.

2. Responsibility and Accountability

Social media and online game platforms should assume greater responsibility to enforce their policies and to do so accurately at scale. They should improve the complaint and flagging process so it is as user-friendly as possible and provides a more consistent and speedy resolution for targets. They should lessen their reliance on the user complaint

process, and instead proactively, swiftly, and continuously address hateful content using a mix of artificial intelligence and human monitors who are fluent in the relevant language and knowledgeable in the social and cultural context of the relevant community. Additionally, given the prevalence of online hate and harassment, platforms should offer far more services and tools for individuals facing or fearing online attack. They should provide greater filtering options that allow individuals to decide for themselves how much they want to see likely hateful comments. They should consider the experience of individuals who are being harassed in a coordinated way and be able to provide aid to these individuals in meaningful ways. They should allow users to speak to a person as part of the complaint process in certain, clearly defined cases. And they should provide user-friendly tools to help targets preserve evidence and report problems to law enforcement and companies.

3. Governance and Transparency

Perhaps most importantly, social media and online game platforms should adopt robust governance. This should include regularly scheduled external, independent audits so that the public knows the extent of hate and harassment on a given platform. Audits should also allow the public to verify that the company followed through on its stated actions and assess the effectiveness of company efforts over time. Companies should provide information from the audit and elsewhere through more robust transparency reports. Finally, companies should create independent groups of experts from relevant stakeholders, including civil society, academia and journalism, to help provide guidance and oversight of platform policies. Beyond their own community guidelines, transparency efforts and content moderation policies, features available on social media and online gaming platforms need to be designed with anti-hate principles in mind. Companies need to conduct a thoughtful design process that puts their users first, and incorporates risk and radicalization factors before, and not after, tragedy strikes.

7. Consider the Appropriateness of Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) Designations for White Supremacist Organizations Abroad

- a. The State Department should examine whether certain white supremacist groups operating abroad meet the specific criteria to be subject to sanctions under its designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) authority. It is possible that a white supremacist terrorist group might meet these criteria, and the State Department should determine whether the evidence is there to do so. None of the current 69 organizations on the FTO list is a white supremacist organization. However, while the possibility of designating white supremacist organizations under the State Department's FTO authority holds promise, there are some critical constitutional considerations that Congress should consider. Civil liberties and civil rights consequences must be carefully considered.

8. Consider the Necessity and Feasibility of a Criminal Domestic Terrorism Statute

- a. Our federal legal system currently lacks the means to prosecute a white supremacist terrorist as a terrorist. Perpetrators can be prosecuted for weapons charges, acts of violence (including murder), racketeering, hate crimes, or other criminal violations. But we cannot legally prosecute them for what they are: terrorists. Many experts have argued that, without being so empowered, there is a danger that would-be domestic terrorists are more likely to be charged with lesser crimes and subsequently receive lesser sentences. Others have argued that there are a sufficient number of criminal provisions already on the books that can be used to cover this gap. Congress should immediately consult with legal and policy experts, marginalized communities, and law enforcement professionals on whether a rights-protecting domestic terrorism criminal charge is needed – and whether it is possible to craft such a statute.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for calling this important hearing. ADL data clearly indicates that anti-Semitism and hate are rising across America and that domestic terrorism poses a significant threat to our communities.

This is a time for leaders to lead. We urge everyone with a bully pulpit to speak out against anti-Semitism and hate. We also must also look at our education systems, at our law enforcement capacity and training, and at our laws to ensure we are addressing today's threats holistically.

On behalf of the ADL, we look forward to working with you as you continue to devote your urgent attention to this and related issues.