

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Statement on the Fifth Anniversary of the Shooting at the Tree of Life-Or L'Simcha Congregation Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
October 27, 2023

Today marks 5 years since the deadly shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, the deadliest act of anti-Semitism in our Nation's history. A gunman opened fire on Sabbath worshippers as they prayed, murdering 11 precious souls, wounding many more, including first responders. The hearts of Jewish communities were shattered, leaving behind survivors and families who will never be the same.

Deepening the wound, today's remembrance comes on the heels of the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust. On October 7, a sacred Jewish holiday, the terrorist group Hamas unleashed pure evil against the people of Israel, slaughtering 1,400 Jews and taking hostage hundreds more. This devastating atrocity has brought to the surface painful memories left by millennia of anti-Semitism and the genocide of the Jewish people. The fear is amplified by the alarming rise of anti-Semitism abroad and at home.

Under my Presidency, we will continue to condemn anti-Semitism at every turn. We are increasing security around centers of Jewish life across the country. The Justice Department has made combating hate crimes a top priority. We passed the most significant gun safety law in nearly 30 years. And we are implementing the first-ever national strategy to counter anti-Semitism. Because hate never goes away, it only hides until it is given just a little oxygen. And as a nation, we must ensure hate is never given any oxygen.

During these difficult times, we must never lose hope or give up on a better tomorrow. We must recommit to speaking out against bigotry and hate in all its forms, whether it is racism, anti-Semitism, or Islamophobia. And we must come together as fellow Americans to heal the soul of our Nation.

NOTE: The statement referred to Robert D. Bowers, who was sentenced to death on August 2, 2023, for the shooting at the Tree of Life-Or L'Simcha Congregation synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA, on October 27, 2018; and Pittsburgh police officers Timothy Matson, Daniel Mead, Anthony Burke, and Michael Smidga, who were wounded in the shooting.

Categories: Statements by the President : Tree of Life-Or L'Simcha Congregation synagogue in Pittsburgh, PA, fifth anniversary of shooting.

Names: Bowers, Robert G.; Burke, Anthony; Matson, Timothy; Mead, Daniel; Smidga, Michael.

Subjects: Anti-Semitism; Gun violence, prevention efforts; Hamas political-paramilitary organization; Hate-based violence, efforts to combat; Islamophobia and other religious discrimination, efforts to combat; Israel, attacks by Hamas; Pennsylvania, 2018 shooting in Pittsburgh.

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