

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

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

October 27, 2024

Six years ago, as congregants prayed at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh on a quiet Shabbat morning, a gunman armed with an AR-15, multiple handguns, and hate in his heart opened fire and killed 11 Jewish worshippers and wounded six more, in the deadliest act of anti-Semitism in our history. It shattered families, pierced the heart of the Jewish community, and struck the soul of our Nation.

For the families of the victims and the survivors, this difficult day of remembrance brings it all back like it just happened, and our country holds them and their loved ones close in our hearts. As we grieve the precious lives stolen on that day, we draw strength from the memory of the beautiful lives they lived and from the hope of the Pittsburgh community that came together from all faiths to support their Jewish neighbors. In the years since, the Jewish community has also shown the country how to courageously turn pain into purpose. They have launched a global initiative to counter hate and hate-fueled violence. This summer, at the site of the synagogue, the Nation's first museum and education center on the history of anti-Semitism in America broke ground. It is a symbol of the enduring spirit of Jewish resilience despite centuries of suffering, persecution, and pain.

Of course, this year's remembrance of the Tree of Life attack falls just days after Jews observe the sacred holiday of Simchat Torah and the first Hebrew calendar anniversary of the October 7 attack in Israel, during which Hamas killed more than 1,200 people, took another 250 hostage, and committed horrific acts of sexual assault. One year later, the trauma and losses from that day and its aftermath are not only raw, but exacerbated by the appalling surge of anti-Semitism against Jews in America and around the world.

Even before October 7, I launched the first National Strategy To Counter Antisemitism in American history, and together with Vice President Harris, the Second Gentleman, and our entire administration, we are aggressively implementing it. Since I have taken office, we have secured a record of \$1.2 billion for the physical security of nonprofits, including synagogues, Jewish community centers and Jewish day schools. We have put colleges on notice that anti-Semitism is discrimination and is prohibited under title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Department of Justice is investigating and prosecuting anti-Semitic hate crimes. Globally, we have mobilized over 40 countries and international organizations to support our new guidelines for countering anti-Semitism. And to take on the scourge of gun violence, I signed the most significant gun safety law in nearly 30 years and created the first-ever White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention.

There is more to do, but my administration will continue to condemn and combat anti-Semitism at every turn. As the Talmud says, "It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it." On this solemn day of remembrance for the attack in the Tree of Life Synagogue, let us come together as Americans to ensure anti-Semitism and hate in all its forms have no safe harbor in America: for all the lives we have lost and all those we can still save.

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; Pittsburgh, PA, residents Andrea Wedner and Daniel Leger and police

officers Timothy Matson, Daniel Mead, Anthony Burke, and Michael Smidga, survivors of the shooting; and Douglas C. Emhoff, husband of Vice President Kamala D. Harris.

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

Names: Bowers, Robert D.; Burke, Anthony; Emhoff, Douglas C.; Harris, Kamala D.; Leger, Daniel; Matson, Timothy; Mead, Daniel; Smidga, Michael; Wedner, Andrea.

Subjects: Anti-Semitism; Gun violence, prevention efforts; Hamas political-paramilitary organization; Hate-based violence, efforts to combat; Israel, attacks by Hamas of October 7, 2023; Pennsylvania, 2018 shooting in Pittsburgh; Vice President; White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention.

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