

SPEECH

Attorney General Merrick B. Garland Delivers Remarks to Faith Leaders to Provide Update on Security Resources and Training

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Remarks as Delivered

Thank you, Secretary Mayorkas.

And thank you to everyone for attending today's training.

We are meeting today at a time when the fear so many communities are facing is palpable.

Many Jews are living in fear that any sign of their Jewish identity could make them the target of a hate crime.

Many Muslims are living in fear that they will be the victim of an Islamophobic attack.

Synagogues and mosques across the country are on high alert.

And many people of Arab and Palestinian descent are fearful of the threat of hate-fueled violence in their everyday lives.

I know that your communities are looking to you for guidance and protection at this difficult time. That is not an easy burden to shoulder. We are working every day to make sure that you do not have to shoulder it alone.

As always, but especially right now, the Justice Department is remaining vigilant in the face of threats of hate-fueled violence and terrorism.

We are closely monitoring the impact that the conflict in the Middle East may have in inspiring foreign terrorist organizations, homegrown violent extremists, and domestic violent extremists both here in the United States and abroad.

In this elevated threat environment, efforts to ensure that all people in this country are safe in their places of worship are particularly urgent.

We have all seen the sharp increase in the volume and frequency of threats against Jewish, Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian communities across our country since October 7th.

Last month, the Justice Department arrested a defendant in Utah for threatening a Palestinian rights organization. And we arrested a man in Arizona who had threatened to execute a rabbi and other members of the Jewish community.

These examples represent barely a fraction of the threats we know that communities across the country are facing.

First and foremost, I want to make clear to everyone participating today that the Justice Department is committed to protecting you and your communities, now and always.

The Justice Department has no tolerance for illegal threats fueled by bias of any kind. No person and no community in this country should have to live in fear of hate-fueled violence.

That is why, in the week following the October 7 terrorist attack, I directed all of our U.S. Attorney and FBI field offices to meet with law enforcement and community leaders to discuss what they are seeing on the ground and how we can best support them with regard to threats of hate-fueled violence.

Senior leadership at the Justice Department and I have done the same. In my conversations with law enforcement, community, and religious leaders, I have

reiterated that the Justice Department has no higher priority than protecting the safety and civil rights of everyone in our country.

Protecting all people and all communities from hate-fueled violence was the Justice Department's founding purpose in 1870, and it remains our urgent responsibility today.

And that is why, in addition to our investigative and prosecutorial efforts, the Department's Community Relations Service (CRS) is working directly with community leaders, law enforcement, and civil rights organizations to provide support. CRS works in communities across the country to prevent and respond to hate crimes and facilitate dialogue, training, and mediation services.

This Department's concern about illegal acts of hate is not new.

Over the past two years, every one of our 94 U.S. Attorneys' Offices has brought together community groups, community leaders, and law enforcement at every level to build trust and strengthen coordination to combat unlawful acts of hate. To date, these offices have held over 300 events, bringing together more than 10,000 participants.

We launched this nation-wide program, called United Against Hate, because we know that combating hate crimes requires a coordinated, united effort.

We also know that effectively combating hate crimes requires building and strengthening trust with vulnerable communities before an incident occurs.

We will continue to expand on these efforts in the days ahead.

Thank you all for joining today's training.

We all have different reasons why we are engaged in this work.

For me, I wanted to give back to the country — and to the system of laws — that took my grandmother in and protected her from religious persecution when she had nowhere else to go.

That protection is what distinguishes America from so many other countries. The protection of law, the Rule of Law, is the foundation of our system of government.

Ensuring that all people in our country are afforded that protection is the purpose that motivates me every single day.

To fulfill that promise, we must be vigilant, and we must act as partners.

Your presence at this training shows that each of you is committed to doing your part. I am committed to ensuring that the Justice Department is with you every step of the way.

Thank you.

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