



MUSLIM PUBLIC
AFFAIRS COUNCIL

**MUSLIM PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL
STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD**

Hearing on “Hate Crimes and the Rise of White Nationalism”

HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 9, 2019

Chairman Nadler, Ranking Member Collins, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee: We, at the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), appreciate the opportunity to submit this statement for the record regarding the hearing entitled, “Hate Crimes and Rise of White Nationalism.” Since 1988, MPAC has been committed to promoting and strengthening American pluralism by increasing understanding and improving policies that impact American Muslims. We thank the Committee for holding such an important hearing, particularly because hate crimes against American Muslimshave increased and the fear in our community is palpable.

Hate crimes have been on the rise in the United States. Between November 2016 (the day after Election Day) and February 2017, over 1,370 hate crime and bias incidents were reported, but the Muslim community bore the brunt of the violence¹ While those four months generated an extraordinary number of hate crime and bias incidents, the Muslim community in the United States has suffered the greatest increase in reported hate crimes. The Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) statistics on total hate crimes in the U.S. in 2016 show a near 200%

¹ Hatewatch Staff, *Post-Election Bias Incidents Up to 1,372; New Collaboration with ProPublica*, Southern Poverty Law Center: Hatewatch (February 10, 2017), <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/02/10/post-election-bias-incidents-1372-new-collaborations-pro-publica>.



increase in hate crime incidents toward Muslims since 2001.² Further, the number of anti-Muslim hate groups nearly tripled—from 34 in 2015 to 101 in 2016—fueling a 67% increase in hate crimes since 2015 alone.³

Negative rhetoric from politicians and other public figures further drive hate and bias-related attacks on Muslim communities.⁴ In fact, a recent study conducted by University of North Texas professors Regina Branton and Valerie Martinez-Ebers, and PhD candidate Ayal Feinberg, found that hate crimes increased by 226% in places candidate-Donald Trump held campaign rallies in 2016.⁵ Even more disturbing is the insistence by President Trump that the rise of white nationalism, and subsequently white nationalist violence, does not exist despite evidence proving the contrary.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, white supremacist murders more than doubled in 2017.⁶ In Portland, OR, we saw two brave men lose their lives and a third critically wounded while defending women of color—one of whom was Muslim and wore a headscarf—from a vicious attack by a white nationalist.⁷ In his court appearance, the alleged killer shouted

² Hatewatch Staff, *Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes Surged Last Year, Fueled by Hateful Campaign*, Southern Poverty Law Center: Hatewatch (November 14, 2016), <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/11/14/anti-muslim-hate-crimes-surged-last-year-fueled-hateful-campaign>.

³ Phil McCausland, *Huge Growth in Anti-Muslim Hate Groups During 2016: SPLC Report*, NBC News (February 16, 2017, 6:07 AM), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/huge-growth-anti-muslim-hategroups-during-2016-spcl-report-n721586>.

⁴ Brian Levin, *Special Status Report: Hate Crime in The United States, 20 State Compilation of Official Data*, Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism, California State University, San Bernardino (2016), <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3110202-SPECIAL-STATUS-REPORT-v5-9-16-16.html>.

⁵ David Choi, *Hate crimes increased 226% in places Trump held a campaign rally in 2016, study claims*, <https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-campaign-rally-hate-crimes-study-maga-2019-3>.

⁶ ADL Report: White Supremacist Murders More Than Doubled in 2017, <https://www.adl.org/news/press-releases/adl-report-white-supremacist-murders-more-than-doubled-in-2017>.

⁷ Haag, Matthew, and Jacey Fortin. "Two Killed in Portland While Trying to Stop Anti-Muslim Rant, Police Say." The New York Times. The New York Times, 27 May 2017.



defiantly, “you call it terrorism; I call it patriotism!”⁸ We must call it what it really is: white nationalism and it is a threat to our nation’s security. Shortly after this horrific attack, our nation witnessed a white nationalist “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, VA, where white nationalists, self-avowed Nazis, gathered violently to spew hate and violence.⁹

In October of 2016, a terrorist group called The Crusaders planned to bomb an apartment complex in Kansas—home to 120 Somali immigrants—with the rabid ideological desire to “wake people up.”¹⁰ If their plot had not been thwarted by FBI agents who recognized and took the threat seriously, it could have resulted in one of the deadliest bombings in recent history.

We know that Muslims are not the only target of hate by white nationalists. In 2015, our nation reeled from an attack on an African American church in Charleston, South Carolina by white supremacist Dylan Roof, who snarled at his victims that they were “taking over the country,” before brutally and mercilessly shooting them.¹¹

This kind of hatred and violence knows no borders or religion. In fact, just last month, in Christchurch, New Zealand, a self-proclaimed white nationalist killed 50 Muslim worshippers during Friday prayers at two mosques. After the massacre in New Zealand, President Trump still made it a point to announce that he did not believe white nationalism was a rising threat.

In fact, his administration has a history of cavorting with white nationalists, and working against the movement trying to combat white nationalism.¹² For example, White House Senior Advisor

⁸ Press, Associated, and Nahal Toosi. "Portland Stabbing Suspect: 'You Call It Terrorism, I Call It Patriotism!'" Politico. Politico.com, 30 May 2017.

⁹ Joe Heim, *Recounting a day of rage, hate, violence and death*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/local/charlottesville-timeline/?utm_term=.eaa4ef5db931

¹⁰ Potter, Tim, and Amy Renee Leiker. "Three Charged in Kansas Plot to Bomb Homes, Worship Center for Somalis." Kansas City Star. Kansascity.com, 14 Oct. 2016.

¹¹ "Charleston Shooting." NPR. NPR.org

¹² Jessica Schulberg, *Trump Homeland Security Official Suggested Antifascists Were ‘The Actual Threats’*,



Stephen Miller¹³ is linked to notorious white supremacist Richard Spencer, who sees Miller as an ally of the movement. Former White House Chief Strategist Stephen Bannon,¹⁴ who came from the white nationalist Breitbart News. Both of these individuals are the architects of the Muslim travel ban. And then there's former Deputy Assistant to the President Sebastian Gorka¹⁵, who is associated with the Hungarian Nazi-tied group Vitézi Rend.¹⁶ And when it came time for Trump to disperse a grant through the Department of Homeland Security that focused on combating various types of violent extremism, Katie Gorka, a Trump administration political appointee in DHS and wife to Sebastian Gorka, made it a point to rescind the grant from a group called Life After Hate. Life After Hate is an organization that works to de-radicalize neo-Nazis and white supremacists. Their grant was revoked weeks before the Unite the Right Rally in Charlottesville, VA.

The staggering dearth of hate crime arrests and prosecutions reflects a larger challenge in fully vindicating the rights of victims. Despite hate crimes laws sending a message that as a society, the U.S. does not tolerate hate-motivated attacks, the lack of both federal and state hate crime enforcement sends the wrong message to perpetrators. As a community advocacy organization, we should not be tasked with the responsibility of repeating the warnings from intelligence and law enforcement agencies about the rising threat of white nationalism. This should come from

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/dhs-violent-extremism-katie-gorka-life-after-hate-mpac-antifa_n_5ca787d7e4b0a00f6d3f2e73

¹³ Josh Harkinson, *Trump's Newest Senior Adviser Seen as a White Nationalist Ally*, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/12/trumps-newest-senior-adviser-seen-ally-white-nationalists/>

¹⁴ Reilly, Steve and Brad Heath, *Steve Bannon's own words show sharp break on security issues*, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/01/31/bannon-odds-islam-china-decades-us-foreign-policy-doctrine/97292068/>

¹⁵ Allegra Kirkland, *How Did Sebastian Gorka Go From The Anti-Muslim Fringe To White House Aide?*, <https://talkingpointsmemo.com/dc/sebastian-gorka-washington-experts-dc-anti-islam-ties>

¹⁶ Larry Cohler-Esses, *Sebastian Gorka's Ties to Nazi-Allied Group Stretch Back Decades*, <https://forward.com/news/369683/exclusive-sebastian-gorkas-ties-to-nazi-allied-group-stretch-back-decades/>



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the President and sadly, his silence on this matter is deafening. He has abdicated this very critical responsibility.

The threat of white nationalism lives in the real world as much as it thrives in the digital world. For years, MPAC has raised the red flag to technology companies regarding the threat of white nationalism in the digital space. White nationalists gather online and share their hatred and bigotry. They also use digital platforms to organize their activities, often times resulting in death. The Christchurch, NZ mosque shooter used online platforms to live-stream his murderous rampage.

For American Muslims living in a climate of increasing anti-Muslim rhetoric, the perceived and real threats of hate-motivated violence are an everyday reality. When a hate crime occurs, there is a significant impact on not just the victim, but the entire community, engendering feelings of vulnerability and isolation. Effective enforcement of hate crimes laws can serve as a deterrent to future offenders. Everyone in society has a role to play in countering white nationalism. MPAC is committed to working with members of Congress, law enforcement, advocacy organizations, victims, and public policy professionals, and many more, to ensure that this hate is mitigated and that minority and marginalized communities are protected.