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BROAD COALITION OF MAINSTREAM JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS RELEASE STATEMENT REJECTING FALSE CHOICE BETWEEN JEWISH SAFETY & DEMOCRACY

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4–5 minutes

Today, a coalition of ten organizations representing a broad swath of mainstream American Jewry – including three of the four denominations – issued a joint statement rejecting the false choice between confronting antisemitism and upholding democracy.

The organizations, which were brought together by the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and include the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, National Council of Jewish Women, American Conference of Cantors, Central Conference of American Rabbis, HIAS, Rabbinical Assembly, Reconstructing Judaism, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, and the Union for Reform Judaism, released the following statement:

“The rule of law, freedom of inquiry, access to vibrant places of higher education, and strong democratic norms and institutions have allowed American Jewry to thrive for hundreds of years.

“There should be no doubt that antisemitism is rising—visible, chilling, and increasingly normalized in our public discourse, politics, and institutions. It requires urgent and consistent action by our nation’s political, academic, religious, and civic leaders. At the same time, we firmly reject the false choice between confronting antisemitism and upholding democracy. Our safety as Jews has always been tied to the rule of law, to the safety of others, to the strength of civil society, and to the protection of rights and liberties for all.

“At this moment, Jews are being targeted and held collectively accountable for the actions of a foreign government. Jews are being pushed out of certain movements, classrooms, and communities for expressing a connection to their heritage or to the Jewish homeland. And, horrifically, some voices in the public square are justifying or celebrating the murder of Jews. Dangerous antisemitic tropes and conspiracy theories that over the past decade have already fueled a cycle of hate crimes and violence — including the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in U.S. history in Pittsburgh — have been mainstreamed by too many political leaders, civil society influencers, social media platforms, and others.

“In recent weeks, escalating federal actions have used the guise of fighting antisemitism to justify stripping students of due process rights when they face arrest and/or deportation, as well as to threaten billions in academic research and education funding. Students have been arrested at home and on the street with no transparency as to why they are being held or deported, and in certain cases with the implication that they are being punished for their constitutionally-protected speech. Universities have an obligation to protect Jewish students, and the federal government has an important role to play in that effort; however, sweeping draconian funding cuts will weaken the free academic inquiry

that strengthens democracy and society, rather than productively counter antisemitism on campus.

“These actions do not make Jews—or any community—safer. Rather, they only make us *less* safe.

“We reject any policies or actions that foment or take advantage of antisemitism and pit communities against one another; and we unequivocally condemn the exploitation of our community’s real concerns about antisemitism to undermine democratic norms and rights, including the rule of law, the right of due process, and/or the freedoms of speech, press, and peaceful protest.

“It is both possible and necessary to fight antisemitism—on campus, in our communities, and across the country—without abandoning the democratic values that have allowed Jews, and so many other vulnerable minorities, to thrive.

“We appreciate the civil society, academic, and local, state, and national leaders who are committed to seriously and thoughtfully addressing the threat of antisemitism. We remain committed to working alongside university leadership and public officials at every level to ensure policies and practices that protect the Jewish community as well as other marginalized communities and uphold for all people the principles of justice, fairness, and equal protection under the law. That is the only path to true safety.”

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