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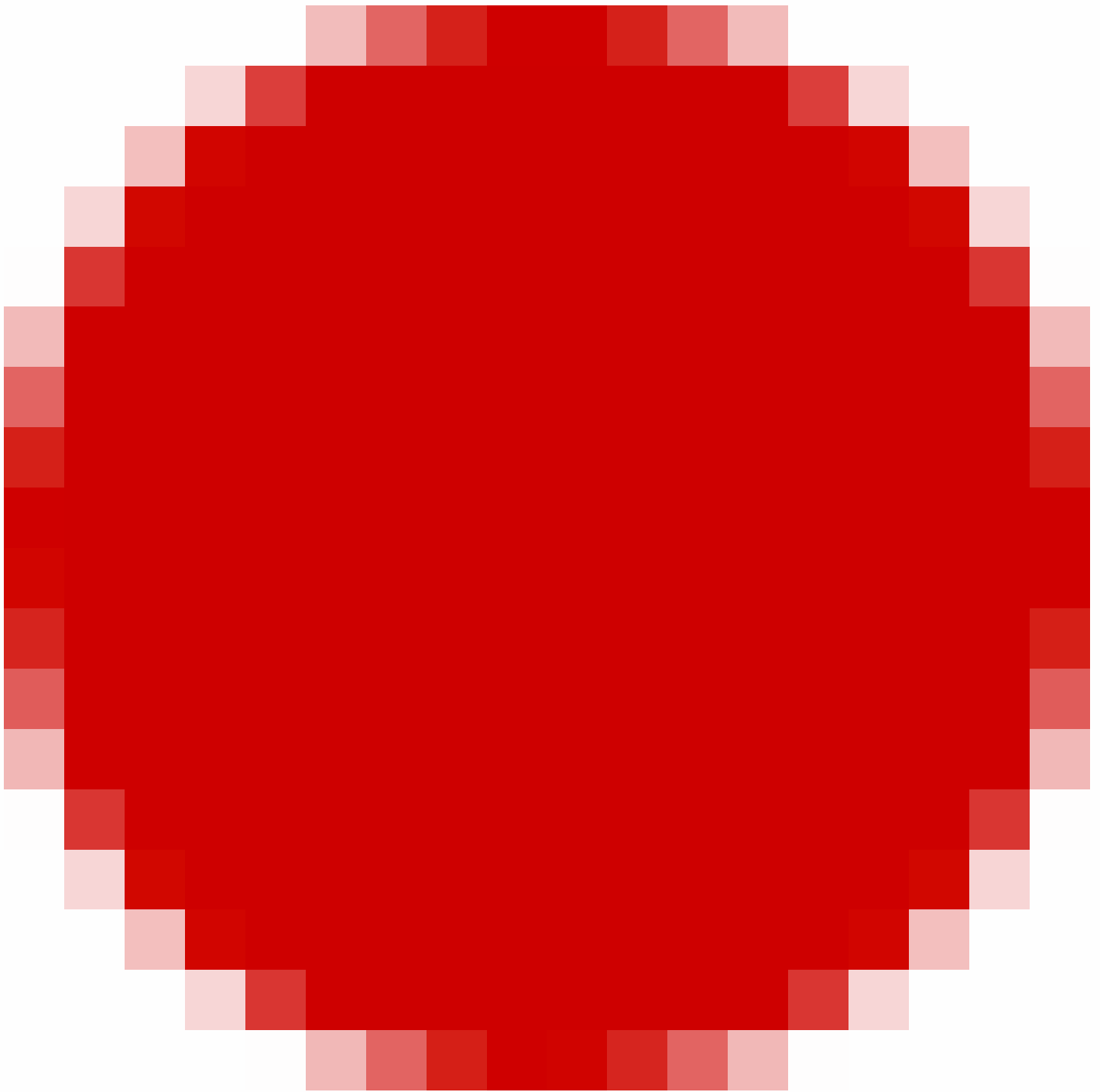
# Barr says Justice Department will get more involved in fighting anti-Semitic attacks



By [David Shortell](#), CNN

Updated 3:46 PM ET, Tue January 28, 2020





said he would lower the threshold for federal involvement in cases of violence against Jews.

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He also said he had directed all federal prosecutors in a memo to strengthen their relationships with local Jewish communities by building public outreach programs and setting internal protocols for handling complaints of hate crimes.

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"I'm extremely distressed by the upsurge in violence, hate crimes committed against the Jewish

community," Barr said. "This administration is going to have zero tolerance for this kind of violence."

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A spate of bloody attacks against Jews last month brought renewed attention to growing levels of anti-Semitism in the country and heightened fears among Jewish communities.

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While the most recent federal data shows anti-Semitic hate crimes dropping slightly in 2018 from a record high the year before, in New York, last year saw a new high for crimes against Jews in the city, according to the New York Police Department. In 2019, there were

234 anti-Semitic incidents reported to the NYPD -- an increase of 26 percent from the year before.

Last month, Jews reported being punched, struck and slapped, in a string of separate incidents in Brooklyn. Just outside New York, three people were killed in a shooting at a Jewish market in Jersey City, New

Jersey, by a couple who authorities said had been fueled by anti-Semitism. In Monsey, New York, five Jews were stabbed after a man allegedly invaded a Hanukkah party.

Allen Fagin, an official with a Jewish group that attended the meeting with Barr on Tuesday, said he was comforted by the attorney general's message.

"I certainly feel heard. When the attorney general takes a couple hours out of his day to come to a neighborhood that's been subject to the kinds of attacks that we've seen over the past number of months, that certainly conveys a clear impression that this is being taken with the utmost seriousness at the highest levels of government," Fagin, the executive vice president of the Orthodox Union, told CNN.

At the meeting, Barr told the Jewish leaders that he would explore steering federal grants toward protecting houses of worship.

He also said he had spent time trying to determine why anti-Semitic violence was increasing, and that he planned to speak with the director of the FBI to find ways to combat it.

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The Justice Department has made thwarting hate crimes and domestic terrorism attacks before they happen a priority in recent years as a number of racially motivated mass shootings have shaken the country.

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Last year, the Justice Department launched a national initiative aimed at encouraging investigators to work with psychologists and intervene early in cases where suspects could be steered away from violence.

On Tuesday, Barr said he wanted the new procedures around federal involvement in lower-level hate crimes to act as a deterrent, noting a recent set of charges filed in Brooklyn against a woman accused of slapping three Orthodox women last month.

"These are the kinds of cases that maybe in the past would have been treated locally, but I think it's important for the federal government to plant its flag and to show zero tolerance, and this will not be an isolated case," Barr said. "We will move aggressively when we see this kind of activity."

CNN's Evan Smith and Sara Sotomayor contributed to this report.

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