

November 30th, 2017

Testimony of Rabbi Abraham Cooper before the House Committee on Homeland Security

World wide Threats: Keeping America Secure in the New Age of Terror

Thank you for the opportunity to represent the 400,000 constituent families of the Simon Wiesenthal Center at today's House Homeland Security Committee hearings. Now in our 40th year, our Center is named in honor of and inspired by the legacy of Simon Wiesenthal, the late Nazi hunter. He lost 89 members of his family during the Nazi Holocaust. When US forces entered Mauthausen Concentration Camp, Simon weighed under 90 pounds and was too weak to even stand to embrace the liberating American GIs.

He dedicated the rest of his life seeking justice, not vengeance and succeeded in bringing Nazi War Criminals before the bar of justice, helping to bring 1,100 to trial and ensuring a largely uncaring world would not be allowed to forget the victims or the perpetrators of the Nazi Genocide. And when he bestowed his good name on our institution he warned; "I know that hate did not die with Hitler in the Berlin Bunker."

How right he proved to be. The threats of extreme anti-Semitism in the United States in our time trace back to the 1980s. The small but extremely violent Order assassinated Denver talk show host Allen Berg in 1984, and planned to foment a race war in America. Assorted Neo-Nazi, skinhead, and Militia movements of the late 1980s and 1990s often combined white separatist doctrine with anti-Jewish theory and practice.

Decades ago, anti-Jewish hate crimes forced many Jewish institutions across the nation to undertake costly security measures to protect people at prayer and kids in school. For a generation, Jews attending synagogue services or dropping their children off at a Jewish School, have accepted the necessity of having guards—often armed—security cameras and other paraphernalia. Annual FBI stats prove that it's not paranoia—Jews—every year are the number one target of religion-based hate crimes.

Indeed, in 1999, Buford O. Furrow, trained in William L. Pierce's and Tom Metzger's doctrine of "leaderless resistance" to the ZOG or so-called "Zionist Organized Government, journeyed from the white separatist Aryan Nations Compound in Idaho to Los Angeles. There, he intended to assault the Simon Wiesenthal Center Museum of Tolerance, to "send a message to the Jews," but settled for a softer target at a Jewish Community Center day camp where he shot children as young as six before murdering a Filipino-American U.S. postal Service employee.

Two years later, 9/11 changed our world forever.

Against this background, earlier this year there were over 100 bomb threats made against Jewish Community Centers, home to many pre-schools and kindergartens. These threats evoked painful memories of earlier deadly attacks at JCC's, including in Granada Hills, California (1999) Seattle, Washington (2006), and Overland, Kansas (2014). Thousands of families—including a young colleague of mine at the Simon Wiesenthal Center were deeply traumatized as their 5 year-olds were suddenly and hurriedly evacuated from their classrooms. Despite strenuous efforts of federal and local law enforcement— for which we are incredibly grateful-- it took months to identify the main culprit of these “threats of domestic terrorism.” The majority of the threats emanated from overseas, eventually traced to one young suspect in Israel.

Coupled with attacks against Jewish cemeteries in Missouri, Pennsylvania and elsewhere, many of our communities further expanded their security measures.

But 2017 witnessed more than bomb threats. It was a year where history's oldest hate manifested on our too many of our nation's campuses, were delivered to our personal emails, and spouted from pulpits of religious leaders.

The sources? Extremist elements of the new alt-right, self-proclaimed white nationalists and outright Nazis; Theologically- fueled and validated Islamist hate rhetoric; Extreme anti-Israel campaigns on campuses that demonize the Jewish state and her Zionist supporters.

What has changed in 2017?

The Internet—It's used to incubate and validate hate; to inspire, empower, and even train lone wolf attackers; it creates new global relationships among extremists unimaginable twenty years ago. It offers anonymity and encryption for evil doers and largely renders the targets of hate virtually helpless from a tsunami of personalized screeds and threats.

Gone are the days when neo-Nazis were relegated to leafleting car windshields. No need to hide mailing of hate propaganda in non-descript brown paper. The new generation of extreme far-right racists are tech-savvy. Perhaps inspired by the success of European xenophobes and bigots, they have succeeded in penetrating the mainstream of culture, adopting new vocabularies, and project a sleek and sophisticated online presence. They market everything from T-shirts to hate music to impressionable young people.

Recently they have dropped the still-taboo swastika for sunwheel or runes—symbols deployed by racists across Europe. Other times their sophisticated online skills are on horrific display when Jewish reporters are pummeled with hundreds of personalized anti-Semitic attacks delivered to the victim via email or Twitter for the “crime” of reporting the news or writing op-eds.

The new generation of Nazis also showed in Charlottesville that they can capture national and global attention by staging Nazi-like torchlight parades—and uploading video in real time, via

Social media, with little or no consequence to the perpetrators.

*Campuses have changed

In the past several years, Jewish students on a large number of college campuses have been subjected to unprecedented levels of anti-Jewish sentiment, leading many to feel uncomfortable participating in Jewish campus life or other campus activities whose participants are especially hostile to Jewish students.

Jewish students can't table for their organizations at student events fairs without being physically surrounded and shouted down by extremist anti-Semitic campus organizations.

They can't bring speakers to school like every other students group and gender, racial, and ethnic group can, because the speakers will be heckled into silence.

They're often reluctant to run for student government at some schools because they've seen the numerous times in just the past few years that Jewish students have been called out because they are Jews and often excluded from student government expressly due to their involvement in Jewish life on campus.

These incidents of hate and intimidation are widespread and impact on campuses with large and small Jewish constituencies. They impact on Jewish support groups like Hillel and Jewish fraternity members of Aepi.

These problems are too often compounded by University administrators who have been tolerating a level of harassment and intimidation of Jewish students that they would *never dream of allowing* against other demographic groups, because they know there are no consequences.

The failure of schools and the federal government to protect Jewish students on campus from harassment has become a longstanding scandal and one of the most pressing issues in the American Jewish community.

That is why the Simon Wiesenthal Center and *every mainstream, credible Jewish organization* in the nation came together last year to demand equal protection under the law for Jewish students. And that is why the US Senate passed our bill unanimously, but unfortunately your distinguished colleague, Congressman Goodlatte, Chair of the House Judiciary Committee, has refused to allow the bill to be voted on.

In my home state of California:

A rock hurled at a student wearing a T-shirt saying "Everybody loves a Jewish boy" as he passed by an anti-Israel display; A female Jewish student stalked by anti-Israel activists and taunted with the words "slut" and "whore," and other Jewish students called "dirty Jew," "f***ing Jew" and told to "go back to Russia" and "burn in Hell"; Three Jewish female students assaulted and

injured when a mob of anti-Israel activists stormed through a pro-Israel event.

These are just a few of the anti-Semitic incidents reported at the University of California, but they are not unique to that school. Jewish students on many campuses from coast to coast report severe, persistent and pervasive harms at the hands of anti-Israel activists. The harassment includes physical and verbal assaults, destruction of property, bullying and intimidation, denigration, discrimination and suppression of speech and often takes place regardless of the victim's personal feelings on Israel. Jewish students report fearing displaying their Jewish star necklaces, wearing their Jewish sorority or fraternity letters and walking to Hillel for Sabbath dinner.

The problem had become so severe that at the University of California, for example, in 2011, then President Mark Yudof, commissioned a fact-finding team to interview Jewish students on seven UC campuses in order to objectively assess the campus climate for them. According to the team's report, Jewish students were indeed "confronting significant and difficult climate issues as a result of activities on campus which focused on Israel, its right to exist and its treatment of Palestinians." The team found that on every UC campus they visited Jewish students "described an environment in which they feel isolated and many times harassed and intimidated by students, faculty and outsiders."

As the University of California Board of Regents explained in its landmark *Statement of Principles Against Intolerance*, historic manifestations of anti-Semitism have changed over time and "expression of anti-Semitism are more coded and difficult to identify. In particular, opposition to Zionism often is expressed in ways that are not simply statements of disagreement over politics and policy, but also assertions of prejudice and intolerance toward Jewish people and culture."

Despite the undeniably hostile environment that many Jewish students were experiencing at the University of California, complaints filed under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act on behalf of Jewish students on three UC campuses – Irvine, Santa Cruz and Berkeley -- were unceremoniously dismissed on the same day in August 2013.

And UC's Jewish students are not alone. In the dozen years since the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) committed to investigating anti-Semitism under Title VI, OCR has not found a single civil rights violation in any claim filed on behalf of Jewish students on college or university campuses.

Bottom line—again, little or no consequences for anti-Semitism on campus.

Islamist attacks

Tragically, some of the most vile and threatening anti-Jewish rhetoric in 2017 has been delivered from within the American Muslim community, that itself has suffered an increase in

hate crimes in 2016. From campuses in Tennessee to pulpits in our nation's most populist state, California. Such "sermons" failed to elicit much protest from within the Muslim community, nor to the best of our knowledge, have generated any serious action by authorities—local, state, or Federal, despite the explicit calls for violence and worse, made against Jews by such individuals.

Is there a role for DHS?

Mr. Chairman, I am aware that the DHS' role in combating domestic terrorism and anti-Semitism is secondary to that of the DOJ and FBI.

I am also aware that DHS is not in a position to dictate policies that would hold extremists accountable for their anti-Semitic acts.

None the less, the DHS was born in wake of the brutal lessons wrought from ashes and agony of 9/11. We learned as a nation that America had to move to correct serious flaws in our fundamental approach to securing our nation from ever- morphing, multiple threats.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center, through its *Digital Terrorism and Hate Project* and *Tools for Tolerance* law enforcement training is keenly aware of the continuing important contributions that fusion centers are playing in ensuring that relevant intelligence and other information, reaches in a timely fashion, the appropriate agency or agencies dedicated to keeping the Homeland and our citizens safe.

As we look at the growing threats from extremists across the full spectrum of our society, it is clear that in a world increasingly dominated by the Internet and especially Social Media, national borders mean less and less in the transmission of the viruses of hate and terrorism.

It is our view that local hate crimes units, State Homeland Security and relevant federal agencies must be able to quickly update expand their understanding of extremist ideologies—from the far right to the extreme left. This includes identifying the new generation of extremist leaders overseas and the increasing interaction between US-based extremists and like-minded individuals and groups beyond our shores. Looking for who or what motivates or "trains" a US-based "lone wolf" seeking to target fellow Americans, could often lead to individuals or groups beyond our borders.

The DHS, through the already-established fusion centers could provide effective platforms to educate all relevant agencies on the changing nature of, and threats, from extremist groups.

Mr. Chairman we still await the appointment of a new State Department Special Envoy on anti-Semitism. Assuming that US Secretary of State Tillerson finally appoints someone for that task and fully funds that office, the State Department could produce valuable real-time updates as well overviews of anti-Semitic activities around the world that often inspire anti-Semitic activity in the US.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center and other Jewish NGOs are willing and able to offer real-time information and perspective, but we need a serious address. It is our hope that this Committee under your guidance Mr. Chairman, could provide the leadership to make it happen.

Additional Selected articles on recent Anti-Semitic incidents on major US Campuses:

1) **Rutgers** (<http://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/2017/10/26/rutgers-michael-chikindas-anti-semitic/801989001/>)

2) **Cornell**

(<http://cornellsun.com/2017/10/23/anti-semitic-posters-appear-on-campus-advertising-apparently-fake-hate-group/>)

3) **Colorado State**

(<https://collegian.com/2017/10/csu-jewish-community-marches-against-anti-semitism-incidents-on-campus/>)

4) **UC Berkeley**

(<http://www.dailycal.org/2017/10/25/editors-note-regarding-editorial-cartoon-depicting-alan-dershowitz/>)

5) **University of Houston** (<https://www.algemeiner.com/2017/09/17/antisemitic-fliers-found-at-university-of-houston-as-neo-nazis-continue-college-recruitment-efforts/>)

6) Others

(<http://www.thejewishstar.com/stories/fresh-wave-of-anti-semitism-hits-campuses,14506>)

7) https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/04/24/the-hotbed-of-anti-semitism-isnt-a-foreign-country-but-u-s-college-campuses-report-says/?utm_term=.68c222c7d8dc