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Massacre at Pittsburgh Synagogue Tied to Anti-Refugee Sentiment

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In a world of instantaneous news, the nation learned of the attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue on Saturday in Pittsburgh almost in real time. As the details emerged, we discovered that 11 Jewish worshippers had been murdered by Robert Bowers, a self-described anti-Semite with a [hatred for Jews, refugees, and immigrants.](#)

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[caravan](#) into the United States, repeatedly referring to the caravan as “invaders” who want to “kill us.”

Bowers was also agitated when HIAS organized refugee welcoming events at Jewish congregations around the country. He shared a list of these congregations on his social media accounts, thanking HIAS for [providing a list](#) of targets.

This attack on Jewish worshippers in a place of sanctuary is gut-wrenching and the most recent of many [mass killings this year](#) alone. His act was fueled by a toxic mix of hate speech, creeping anti-Semitism, and a growing intolerance of the foreign-born.

Unfortunately, these dark ideas have always been lurking in the hearts of some, but people are becoming bolder in their hatred, encouraged by a president who [repeatedly crosses the lines](#) of decency when it suits his political ambitions.

Refugees and immigrants are cast as dangers and national security threats, not because it is the truth, but because they are convenient scapegoats. They are easy to blame for political problems that have deep economic and social causes but have little to do with immigration.

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America is becoming a breeding ground for extremist acts.

This must stop. A return to honest, candid, but respectful political discourse is a necessity. Policies that encourage diversity and trust should be the norm.

In that spirit, we must open our country again to refugees—people who are fleeing hate and violence—because it is in that act of love that we lose our fear.

Each of us must pledge to do more to ensure that there will never be another worship service that ends in tragedy. As [Mark Hetfield](#), president and CEO of HIAS noted, “Everybody has to be engaged in calling out hate.”

Department of Homeland Security

Donald Trump

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