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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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March 21, 2017

The Honorable Ron Johnson
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs
U.S. Senate
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to request that the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hold hearings on the rising incidences of threats and attacks against Jewish institutions and other faith based entities.

In recent months, Jewish and other communities of faith have experienced an alarming rise in attacks and bomb threats. My home state of Missouri has been deeply affected by these crimes; in February, over one hundred headstones in an historic Jewish cemetery were vandalized¹, and Jewish Community Centers in Missouri have received repeated bomb threats.² The Anti-Defamation League has documented more than 165 bomb threats targeting Jewish institutions since January.³ But the spate of threats against Jewish entities appears to be part of a rising trend in religious-based crime. In November 2016, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) released its annual Hate Crimes Statistics report, which found a 6% increase in hate crimes from 2014 to 2015. Hate crimes against Muslim Americans increased 67% from 2014 to 2015.⁴

¹ St. Louis Post-Dispatch, *Vandalism at University City Jewish cemetery draws widespread condemnation*, February 22, 2017.

² St. Louis Public Radio, *St. Louis Jewish Community Center receives another bomb threat*, March 15, 2017.

³ Anti-Defamation League, *6th Wave of Bomb Threats Targeting the Jewish Community*, March 7, 2017

⁴ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *FBI Releases 2015 Hate Crime Statistics*, November 2016; New York Times, *U.S. Hate Crimes Surge 6%, Fueled by Attacks on Muslims*, November 14, 2016.

It is imperative that this Committee fulfill its oversight obligations and hold hearings on this troubling increase in faith-based crimes. The Committee is charged with investigating “aspects of crime and lawlessness within the United states, which have an impact upon or affect the national health, welfare, and safety.”⁵ Furthermore, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in partnership with other agencies, plays an essential role in protecting our communities and the Committee has an oversight obligation to ensure that the Department is fulfilling its functions efficiently and effectively.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill
Ranking Member

⁵ S. Res. 34 (115th Cong.)