

COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON
FOREIGN RELATIONS

COMMITTEE ON
THE BUDGET

COMMITTEE ON
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR,
AND PENSIONS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4607

October 26, 2023

The Honorable Alejandro N. Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20528

The Honorable Christopher Wray
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20535

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Director Wray:

I write out of deep concern regarding the rise in instances of antisemitism and Islamophobia in our country. These trends have been worsening over the years, and they appear to be accelerating in the aftermath of the recent Hamas terrorist attacks against Israel.

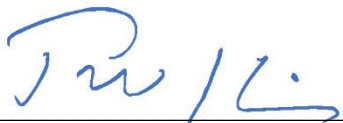
A pillar of American values, expressed in the First Amendment to the Constitution, is the right of all Americans to worship, or not, as they please without punishment or preference. We've never been perfect in living up to this principle, but we have been generally able to abide by it and create a society where people of different faiths can live in the same neighborhoods, attend the same schools, work together and engage in civic life without hiding their religious beliefs. This has not only led to a better quality of life for Americans—it also shows the world that it's possible for a society to allow religious freedom and find in that a path toward mutual respect and understanding. That lesson offers hope to people living in countries where religious freedom is distant or non-existent.

Recent weeks have seen tragic examples of people being targeted because of their religious beliefs. Jewish and Muslim students on college campuses report hostility at a level they've never seen. Jewish and Muslim institutions report an escalating level of threats. American Jews, Muslims, and other religious minorities experience harassment. Antisemitic instances have spiked by almost 400% since October 7, including public physical assaults. The recent murder of 6-year-old Wadea al-Fayoume by a neighbor expressing Islamophobic views shocked the nation.

At a volatile time in the Middle East, too many are taking out their understandable frustrations with events abroad on their neighbors here at home. This causes people to live in fear and also weakens the example we send to the world that religious pluralism works.

I join in the request by my Senate colleagues to enhance funding to the Nonprofit Security Grant Program to make sure that we protect non-profit institutions from violence. I also join in their request that you provide an unclassified briefing to members regarding the current threat assessment, interagency coordination efforts, and preparedness measures that your agencies have put in place to respond to any acts of violence.

Sincerely,



Tim Kaine
United States Senator