

Jonathan Greenblatt
CEO and National Director



August 17, 2023

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham
Ranking Member
Senate Judiciary Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Graham,

For the fourth weekend in a row, religious communities around the country were prevented from practicing their faith without fear. In particular, many congregations of the Jewish faith were targets of ongoing disruption to prayer services by a group of online trolls who swatted houses of worship by making a range of hoax calls, including bomb threats. These trolls, who employ highly antisemitic language during their swatting calls, have targeted over two dozen synagogues and two Anti-Defamation League (ADL) offices. The perpetrators also appear to have expanded their targets, including several African-American churches and a news organization. In recent days the group has increasingly used bomb threats in order to provoke the maximum response from law enforcement. In some cases, the callers watch in real time as police interrupt frightened worshipers. Later, clips of the incidents are posted online. This has created panic and fear within many communities.

We write to sincerely request that your Committee hold a public hearing on this pressing and potentially dangerous issue. Bringing together experts from federal, state, and local law enforcement, victims of swatting, and counterextremism experts would be a welcome first step in identifying further legislative options to stem swatting incidents.

These most recent incidents are not isolated events. Last year, Historically Black Colleges and Universities experienced dozens of threats in a span of three weeks. This year alone, the Educator's School Safety Network has documented more than 400 false threat reports against schools. And Congress is not immune to this scourge, as it is reported that numerous U.S.

¹ [Synagogues in 12 States Targeted in Hoax Calls to Police - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com)

² [FBI 'aggressively' investigating spate of bomb threats at HBCUS \(usatoday.com\)](https://www.usatoday.com)

³ [School hoax calls rise as shootings increase \(axios.com\)](https://www.axios.com)

⁴ [Police say all Senate buildings cleared, no active shooter found | The Hill](https://www.thehill.com)

Senate offices have been the recent target of swatting calls. Last month, in the face of these growing numbers, the Federal Bureau of Investigation announced the creation of a national database on swatting. We welcome that action, but strongly believe Congress should take a leadership role in addressing this threat.

ADL data shows us these incidents are taking place in an atmosphere of heightened concerns over antisemitic incidents targeting Jewish institutions, which rose to 589 in 2022, up 12% from 2021. Out of these 589 incidents last year, 50% were synagogues as the intended target. Antisemitic incidents more broadly are at the highest levels they have been since tracking of these incidents began. ADL recorded 3,697 incidents in 2022, up 36% from 2,717 incidents in 2021.

In addition to the clear need for a Committee hearing, we look forward to working with your offices on legislative measures to address this imminent threat in the near future. Thank you for your partnership during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Greenblatt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jonathan" and last name "Greenblatt" clearly distinguishable.

Jonathan Greenblatt
CEO and National Director