



PRESS RELEASE
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U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Mourns the Loss of Life in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Jeffersontown, Kentucky

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, by unanimous vote, issued the following statement:

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights joins the nation in mourning the loss of thirteen lives in the last several days at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on Saturday October 27, 2018 and in Jeffersontown, Kentucky on Wednesday, October 24, 2018. These tragic losses follow what appear to be bias-motivated shootings.¹ We remember and honor those killed or injured in the attacks including the first responders who responded heroically to stop the shooter from taking additional lives.

For more than sixty years the Commission has stood for the American ideals of diversity, tolerance, and unity against hate. Hatred on the basis of religious or racial animus offends this country's principle of equality. As we said last year in the wake of the tragic violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, white supremacy and religious intolerance demean national commitments we have forged over time. These heartbreaking losses are a sad reminder that we must be ever vigilant against hate however it is displayed, but particularly where it manifests in those who use violent means to express that hatred.

It was because of this imperative that the Commission earlier this year took up the essential question of federal responsibility regarding hate crimes and bias-motivated incidents in our communities and schools. We look forward to reporting our findings and recommendations next year.

We urge the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the appropriate state and local law enforcement officials to work to ensure that those

¹ According to news reports, the shooter in Pennsylvania shouted anti-Semitic statements while shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue. Kellie B. Gormly, Avi Selk, Joel Achenbach, Mark Berman, and Alex Horton, *Suspect in Pittsburgh synagogue shooting charged with 29 counts in deaths of 11 people*, Washington Post, Oct. 27, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2018/10/27/pittsburgh-police-responding-active-shooting-squirrel-hill-area/?utm_term=.9c2f12e879fe. Also according to news reports, the shooter in Kentucky attempted to go to a predominately black church prior to opening fire at Kroger; the church was locked and the alleged shooter was unable to gain entrance. Karen Zraick and Matt Stevens, *Kroger Shooting Suspect Tried to Enter Black Church Before Killing 2, Police Say*, N.Y. Times, Oct. 25, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/us/louisville-kroger-shooting.html>.

responsible for this unacceptable loss of life are brought to justice. We urge our nation's leadership to use their platforms to fight against forces that would seek to divide us on the basis of differences, whether it is on the basis of how we pray, whom we love, or what we look like.

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Our 51 state Advisory Committees offer a broad perspective on civil rights concerns at state and local levels. The Commission: in our 7th decade, a continuing legacy of influence in civil rights. For information about the Commission, please visit www.usccr.gov and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).