

## Dear Friends and Supporters of the Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council,

On behalf of AJC and the Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council, we extend our best wishes to you and yours for a happy holiday season and New Year.

The Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council has decided it is time to reverse the rise of hate crimes in our country. The bill in Congress we are supporting, the *Protecting Religiously Affiliated Institutions Act*, passed the House by an overwhelming majority, and is poised to pass the Senate. We formed six regional councils to serve as platforms for community-level engagement.

Because of friends like you, AJC and the Council is able to be an effective advocate for domestic policy issues of common concern to the American Jewish and American Muslim communities, and the entire country. With our deep appreciation of your friendship and support, we wish you a happy holiday season.

Bob Silverman,  
U.S. Director of Muslim-Jewish Relations, AJC

Natalia Mahmud,  
Assistant Director, U.S. Muslim-Jewish Relations, AJC

## Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council Urges Congress to Strengthen the Response to Hate Crimes across the United States

In February, the Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council visited Capitol Hill and met with dozens of Republican and Democratic members of the House and Senate to raise awareness about the Council and mission. We urged lawmakers to strengthen the country's response to the increase in hate crimes across the U.S., especially those targeting Muslim and Jewish communities.

Following these meetings, the Council drafted and circulated a sign-on letter to Senators calling them to urge the U.S.

Department of Justice to reaffirm its role in enforcing hate crimes laws. The bipartisan leadership of the Senate Judiciary

Committee, led by Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA) signed the letter. It called on Attorney General Sessions to reaffirm the Justice Department's role in enforcing hate crimes laws. This led to a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on hate crimes in April.



## Support Legislation to Expand Coverage of Federal Hate Crime Laws

In June, the Council issued a "Call to Action" to urge elected representatives to support the bipartisan *Protecting Religiously Affiliated Institutions Act* of 2017. The bill amends the *Church Arson Prevention Act* of 1996, which makes attacks on houses of worship a federal crime. The amendment encompasses threats against — in addition to intentional damage to — those institutions, as well bring into its scope all religiously affiliated institutions. Supporters of the Council sent over 2,000 letters to their members of Congress and we met with members of Congress to urge passage. On December 11, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the bill with an overwhelming bipartisan majority of 402-2. The Council is now working with Senators from both parties to pass the companion bill.

The latest *Hate Crimes Statistics* report released by the FBI in November shows an increase of 4.6 percent in hate crime incidents in 2016 compared to 2015. Anti-Jewish incidents remain the majority of all religious-based hate crimes, while anti-Muslim incidents rose nearly 20 percent over 2015. Passing this legislation sends a signal of zero tolerance for hate crimes against people of faith.

## Interacting with Jewish and Muslim Communities to Further the Council's Mission



The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. hosted the Council in June for a public program highlighting recent trips of U.S.

Imams to Auschwitz, together with an inspiring talk by Council Member Senator Joe Lieberman.

In October, the Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council came to Detroit, Michigan for our sixth face-to-face meeting. Senior officials from the U.S. Attorney's Office of the Eastern District of Michigan briefed the Council on hate crimes prosecution in Michigan. Council members visited the Arab American National Museum, celebrated the



completion of a mosaic project by a diverse group of students at the Northwest Activities Center (formerly the site of a Jewish Community Center). The Council hosted

an evening town hall for the Michigan Muslim Community Council (MMCC) and the Jewish Community Relations Council/AJC of Detroit.

A 2014 public opinion survey, *Building a Shared Future: Understanding the Muslim and Jewish Communities of Southeast Michigan*, revealed high levels of interest in learning more about the other, finding ways to experience each community's practices and customs, and engaging in joint activities. The survey, co-sponsored by AJC, MMCC, and the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, was carried out by the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

### Launched Six Local Muslim-Jewish Advisory Councils



The Council now has six regional branches. The planned expansion of the Council locally comes amidst a marked rise in incidences of hate speech and crimes, notably the neo-Nazi, white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, the bombing of a Minneapolis mosque, and threats to Jewish synagogues. Each regional Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council brings together business, professional, civil society and religious leaders from the two communities.

AJC has partnered with other organizations, in addition to ISNA, to form regional Muslim-Jewish Councils in:

- » Los Angeles
- » Philadelphia
- » Dallas
- » South Florida
- » New York
- » Washington, D.C.

### Media Highlights

**Bloomberg Government** highlighted the Council as the only group actively supporting the House bill, *Protecting Religiously Affiliated Institutions Act of 2017*.

#### Bloomberg GOVERNMENT

BGOV Bill Summary: H.R. 1730, Destroying Religious Property (1)

#### Group Positions

The Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council SUPPORTED the committee-approved version of the bill.

"Burning down a mosque or vandalizing a Jewish cemetery is intolerable," the group said in a statement. "Now is the time to take action against hate crimes in our country."

The **Detroit Free Press** featured the Council's trip to Detroit, MI in October:

Leaders with the National Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council visited Detroit and Dearborn, meeting with Arab Americans, African Americans, and other communities to find out how to better forge connections.



"The objective is to get the two communities together with one voice," said Farooq Kathwari, CEO of Ethan Allen Furniture and co-chair of the Muslim-Jewish council along with Stanley Bergman, CEO of Henry Schein. "The issue of hate crimes is something that really is an issue that affects both the Muslim communities and the Jewish communities. It's important we get the message across."

Kathwari and Bergman have met with members of Congress and Justice Dept. officials urging them to address hate crimes and strengthen laws against them.

"There is anxiety," Bergman said. "You can't possibly avoid being anxious if you're Jewish and you go to a synagogue and you see policemen guarding the synagogue. This was not the case in America not so long ago. In Manhattan where I live, there are policemen outside the synagogue on Jewish holidays. And if you're Muslim, you and your kids get threats at schools and mosques. It's getting scary. There is a heightened concern among people in those communities."