

Muslim-Jewish Group Applauds Bicameral Introduction of Bill to Combat Hate Crimes

June 28, 2019 – New York – The Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council (MJAC) welcomes the bicameral introduction of a legislative measure to improve hate crimes reporting and governmental responses. The bill was introduced in the Senate as the Khalid Jabara and Heather Heyer National Opposition to Hate, Assaults, and Threats to Equality (NO HATE) Act by Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and its companion legislation in the House by Representatives Don Beyer (D-VA) and Pete Olson (R-TX).

The FBI is required by law to gather data on hate crimes every year, but the information is undeniably inaccurate. Victims inconsistently report hate crimes, and law enforcement is not always equipped to identify crimes as motivated by bias. Reporting by state and local law enforcement is also voluntary, and 87 percent of law enforcement agencies in the latest FBI report did not submit any information. For example, over 90 cities with populations of over 100,000 report zero incidents or do not report at all, including Miami, Newark, Indianapolis, Birmingham, and Las Vegas.

“Too many victims of hate crimes like Heather Heyer and Khalid Jabara go unreported,” said MJAC Co-Chair Farooq Kathwari. “We are grateful to Senator Blumenthal for his leadership in taking on the issue of hate crimes underreporting. If we want to stop the rise in hate crimes, all victims must count and be counted.”

“We thank Representatives Beyer and Olson for their bipartisan co-sponsorship of the House bill,” said MJAC Co-Chair Stanley Bergman. “Combating hate crimes and protecting our freedom of religious expression is the responsibility of all Americans.”

The bill aims to support state and local governments with grants to improve hate crimes reporting through law enforcement trainings, the creation of reporting hotlines, additional resources to liaise with affected communities, and other measures. It also amends the penalties for hate crimes to allow courts to require that offenders engage in education about or service to the affected communities as a condition of supervised release from prison. MJAC believes that these measures will significantly improve the assessment of the threat posed by hate crimes and help law enforcement respond more effectively.

MJAC is a civil society coalition co-convened by American Jewish Committee (AJC) and Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). Founded nearly three years ago, MJAC brings together 45 civil society, religious, and business leaders from across the United States to advocate for domestic policy issues of common concern. The eight regional councils in Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Jersey, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., represent a network of hundreds of Muslim and Jewish leaders committed to working together for the good of both communities and the country. MJAC stands at the forefront of those confronting hatred against religious minorities and has made stemming the rise in hate crimes a key advocacy issue.