

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 3, 2018

The Honorable James P. O'Neill
Commissioner, New York Police Department
1 Police Plaza
New York, NY 10038

Dear Commissioner O'Neill:

As Members of Congress, we write to express our concern over the spike in anti-Semitism in New York City. Our City's Jewish community, unfortunately, is increasingly the target of hate crimes. Just last week, the faculty offices at Columbia University's Teachers College were vandalized with anti-Semitic slurs and graffiti. This crime follows an overall trend that, in the past two years, has consistently targeted the community at large¹.

In November 2016, for example, swastikas were accompanied by political graffiti indicating support for President Trump in a children's playground.² During that year, hate crimes increased in New York City over 30 percent.³ In May of this year, a rabbinical student was assaulted in Crown Heights for speaking Hebrew on his cell phone.⁴ Earlier this month, James Polite was arrested for allegedly desecrating the Union Temple of Brooklyn—a historic landmark that is on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. Shortly following Polite's arrest, a number of teenagers were arrested for drawing swastikas on steps and garage doors in Brooklyn Heights.⁵ Local police reports note that anti-Semitic crimes are increasing even though the City continues to experience a drop in other crimes.⁶ This year, anti-Semitic incidents have increased by 22 percent year to date from November 4, 2018 through November 4, 2017.⁷ **More alarmingly the Police Department reports that anti-Semitic incidents have “constituted half of all hate crimes in New York this year.”**⁸

We applaud the New York Police Department's (NYPD) efforts to respond appropriately to the needs of our City's Jewish communities and combating anti-Semitism.

¹ Venugopal, A. Jewish professor finds swastikas outside her office at Columbia Teachers College. November 28, 2018. Gothamist. http://gothamist.com/2018/11/28/jewish_columbia_professor_swastika.php

² Nir, S.M. and Southall, A. Rally in Brooklyn Park Condemns Swastikas and 'Go Trump' Graffiti. November 20, 2018. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/21/nyregion/rally-in-brooklyn-park-condemns-swastikas-and-go-trump-graffiti.html?module=inline>

³ *Id.*

⁴ Stremple, P. Two Men Charged With Assault in Hate Crime Attack on Rabbinical Student. June 20, 2018. Bklyner. <https://bklyner.com/crown-heights-attack-hate-crime/>

⁵ Moore, T. Teens Busted for Scrawling swastikas on Brooklyn Buildings. November 5, 2018. The New York Post. <https://nypost.com/2018/11/05/teens-busted-for-scrawling-swastikas-on-brooklyn-buildings/>

⁶ Attanasio, C. Anti-Semitic attacks on the rise as other crime declines: NYPD. November 7, 2018. The New York Post. <https://nypost.com/2018/11/07/anti-semitic-attacks-on-the-rise-as-other-crime-declines-nypd/>

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Bellafante, G. Is it safe to be Jewish in New York? Big City. October 31, 2018. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/31/nyregion/jewish-bias-safety-nyc.html>

We commend your individual attitude, leadership, and commitment to ensure that such crime will not be tolerated in our City. **Yet, we remain gravely concerned over the possibility of additional local hate crimes targeting New Yorkers because of their ethnicity or religious background.** Furthermore, we remain concerned that there may be other hate crime victims in our communities who may be afraid to speak out against these crimes out of fear.

To ensure that NYPD's current efforts are providing all appropriate resources and identifying any future areas of improvement for current and future policy, we ask that you respond to the following questions:

1. This past October, NYPD deployed heavy weapons teams, counterterrorism officers and special operations units to help patrol houses of worship across the City. The goal of this operation was to prevent any further hate crimes.
 - a. How does the Department evaluate risk when assigning patrols to houses of worship?
 - b. How does this assessment of risk determine placement or frequency of patrols?
 - c. Does such assessment of risk also lead to additional changes to the immediate vicinity or neighborhood surrounding a house of worship?

2. The NYPD's Hate Crimes/Bias Incidents webpage provides valuable information for the public.⁹ It describes the definition of a hate crime, a brief analysis of how to identify such crime versus freedom of speech, and mechanisms to report a hate crime. The brochures are currently available in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, English and Spanish. **As of the time of this letter's writing, current materials are not available in Hebrew or Yiddish.** This is particularly shocking given the rise in anti-Semitic crimes.
 - a. The City of New York's Executive Order No. 120 requires that city agencies take "reasonable steps to develop and implement agency-specific language assistance plans regarding limited-English proficiency (LEP) persons['']" access.¹⁰ Yet despite this Executive Order, a number of languages that appear on the American Community Survey Microdata¹¹ do not appear on the current NYPD's hate crime information webpage.
 - i. What can be done to ensure that appropriate translations of current NYPD materials available online are made available to speakers of languages that are commonly requested for translation and that do not currently have an appropriate translation?

⁹ See NYPD Hate Crimes/Bias Incidents webpage at: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/services/law-enforcement/hate-crimes.page>

¹⁰ The City of New York. Office of the Mayor. Executive Order No. 120. July 22, 2008. http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/pdf/2008/pr282-08_eo_120.pdf

¹¹ Top Languages Spoken at Home

Universe: Population 5 years and over

2011-2015 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata 5-Year Sample

New York City and Boroughs. https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/data-maps/nyc-population/acs/top_lang_2015pums5yr_nyc.pdf

- ii. Does the NYPD intend to provide such materials in the immediate future for Hebrew and/or Yiddish speakers?
 - iii. When should such materials be available on the referenced website for public review and download?
 - iv. How does your agency intend to roll out public awareness of the availability of such material should Hebrew and/or Yiddish translations be made available?
3. How often are officers from the Hate Crime Task Force meeting with community-based organizations? Are these meetings organized in a coordinated matter by the task force or are such meetings held at the discretion or request of the individual precincts?
 - a. Is the NYPD partnering with local community organizations and appropriate local educational officials (i.e. principals, assistant principals, deans), or institutions of higher learning in the immediate area of reported hate crimes to discuss the impact and consequences of such hate crimes with community youth or students?
 - i. If so, how often do these meetings occur? How are current resources prioritized to meet current needs?
4. What outreach tools does the NYPD employ to inform community-based organizations and specifically, those from the Jewish community, to encourage hate crime reporting?
 - a. Do your current efforts focus on in-person interactions or depend primarily on social media platforms?
5. Current NYPD Complaint and Bias Motivation Statistics provide an initial view of incidents during the past year and a half divided quarterly. The Police Department also provides these data in an annual report at the end of the calendar year. While the data provide information about the frequency of such incidents at each of the Department's precincts, current presentation of data may be overwhelming for the public.
 - a. Does the NYPD have any future plans to consolidate the three (3) current quarterly excel spreadsheets¹² into a format or single spreadsheet that allows the general public to review and assess complaint statistics, complaint statistics by bias motivation and arrest statistics by bias motivation?
 - b. Is there any future plan to provide graphs or other appropriate interactive interface mechanisms so that the general public will be able to filter by precinct, borough, or zipcode?
 - c. The 2017 report entitled *Crime and Enforcement Activity in New York City*¹³ provides statistics on race and ethnicity along with complaint and arrest data. While the report provides valuable data on felony and misdemeanor crimes, it does not have any specific section related to hate crimes.
 - i. Is there any plan to include such section in future reports?

¹² See quarterly reports on: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/reports-analysis/hate-crimes.page>

¹³ New York Police Department. *Crime and Enforcement Activity in New York City*. January 1 through December 31, 2017. https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/nypd/downloads/pdf/analysis_and_planning/year-end-2017-enforcement-report.pdf

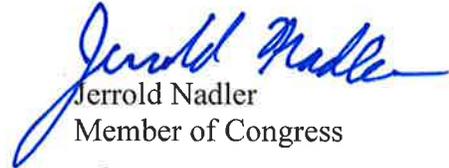
6. How much funding is currently allocated by the Department to prevent, solve, and mitigate hate crimes?
- What funding sources (federal, state, or city) does the NYPD depend on to address and prevent bias and hate crimes?
 - Based on your answers to 6a., and given the recent rise in hate crime incidents, does the NYPD intend to change its budget proposals, projections, or estimates to increase funding to address, prevent, and solve hate crimes?

We would like to reiterate our sincerest thanks to the NYPD as we continue to work together to reduce hate crimes and bias incidents in our communities. **We respectfully request a response within 60 calendar days of this letter.** Your response will be crucial in determining appropriate next steps and, based on available data, provide critical insight as we examine the need for additional assistance under the legislative process.

Sincerely,



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Eliot Engel
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
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