



December 5, 2016

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Statement on Hate Crimes in the United States

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights expresses deep concern about the rise in reported hate crimes cited in the FBI's November 2016 report, "Hate Crime Statistics, 2015"¹. Since last month's election, there have also been an alarming number of hate crimes and incidents reported.

The FBI's recent Hate Crime Report revealed that, after years of declining hate crime incidents, there has been a 6.7% increase in reported hate crimes since the prior year – one of the largest one-year increases since after the 9/11 attacks. Alarming, that number includes a 67% increase in anti-Muslim hate crimes reported to the FBI. Anti-Muslim hate crimes were more numerous in 2015 than in any other year since September 11, 2001.²

Hundreds of cases of harassment based upon immigrant status, race, ethnicity, religion, LGBTQ status, and gender have been reported since Election Day.³ Prejudice has reared its ugly head in public elementary and secondary schools, universities, businesses, in public, on our streets as well as private property. Hate groups appear to be increasing their recruiting efforts.

The Commission has long been focused on hate crimes and the experience of prejudice in our communities. In recent years, we published the report "Peer-to-Peer Violence + Bullying: Examining the Federal Response"⁴ as well as "Federal Civil Rights Engagement with Arab and Muslim American Communities Post 9/11."⁵

¹ Criminal Justice Information Services Division, "2015 Hate Crimes Statistics," U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, Nov. 2016, available at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/hate-crime/2015>.

² See, e.g., Lichtblau, Eric, "U.S. Hate Crimes Surge 6%, Fueled by Attacks on Muslims," The New York Times, Nov. 14, 2016.

³ "Update: Incidents of Hateful Harassment Since Election Day Now Number 701," Southern Poverty Law Center, Nov. 18, 2016, available at <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/11/18/update-incidents-hateful-harassment-election-day-now-number-701>.

⁴ "Peer-to-Peer Violence and Bullying: Examining the Federal Response," U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2011, available at <http://usccr.gov/pubs/2011statutory.pdf>.

⁵ "Federal Civil Rights Engagement with Arab and Muslim American Communities Post 9/11," U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2014, available at http://usccr.gov/pubs/ARAB_MUSLIM_9-30-14.pdf.

Intimidation, bullying, assault, murder, destruction of property, crimes motivated by animus and bigotry due to race, ethnicity, gender, immigration status, religion, LGBT identity, disability status have no place in our nation. They are insidious and cowardly attacks upon any free society and run counter to the goals of our democracy.

We call on law enforcement officials at every level to remain vigilant, promptly and thoroughly investigate all hate crime reports, and pursue criminal charges when appropriate. The active collection and reporting of hate crime data remain critical in fighting the scourge of hate crimes, and our law enforcement agencies need sufficient funding to carry out their responsibilities. The Department of Justice must also maintain sufficient staffing levels to fulfill its mission to investigate and prosecute these crimes and provide technical assistance and training to local law enforcement. As a country, we cannot yield to bigotry or be daunted in the face of a wave of attacks.

Chairman Martin R. Castro stated, “Crimes motivated in whole or in part by animus, bias or hate towards another should not be tolerated in our nation. Hate injures the victim, but it also injures the perpetrator and the community. As such these are not isolated, individual harms, but harms to us all, and we must respond to them with the force of law but also with the strength of community and come together to find solutions to intolerance that are lasting.”

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights matters and issuing an annual federal civil rights enforcement report. For information about the Commission, please visit <http://www.usccr.gov> and follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/usccrgov>