A RESPONSE TO ANTI-SEMITISM AND MURDER IN PITTSBURGH

Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights joins our allies in the Jewish community in mourning the eleven people murdered at the Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh this Saturday. What began as a baby naming ceremony ended in a mass hate crime as a gunman shouting “All Jews must die” perpetrated the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in US history.

Just days before this massacre, a man shot two Black people to death in a Kentucky grocery store after trying and failing to enter a predominantly Black church nearby. At the same time, over a dozen pipe bombs were mailed to media and to Democratic political targets by a man who reportedly disturbed his co-workers with threats to “blacks, Jews, and gays.”

It would be a mistake to see these as disconnected, random incidents. Anti-Semitism is a cyclical form of discrimination with deep roots whose public expression has flourished with the rise of dog whistling, conspiracy-peddling elected leaders. It should not be forgotten that all three of these attackers were inspired by white supremacist ideology, or that the Pittsburgh gunman targeted a synagogue for participating in a recent campaign for refugees.

As always, these acts of hate have two targets: the victims themselves, and the larger communities they comprise. Where anti-Semitism takes hold, all “othered” communities are threatened: Black people, women, LGBTQ people, Latinxs, Muslims, immigrants, refugees, people with disabilities, and all those who work to dismantle their interconnected forms of oppression.

In this new moment of heightened danger, we are all meant to feel scared. We
are all meant to be silenced. Yet what we hear is a heartbroken, furious chorus of voices saying “enough.” We see interfaith clergy speaking at vigils across the country. We see Muslim groups raising enough money to cover the funeral costs for all the Pittsburgh victims. We see Chicagoans of all stripes stepping forward to comfort and aid one another.

We urge every neighbor to confront this difficult reality with courage. Learn about anti-Semitism, racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, and homophobia. Reach out to members of targeted communities and ask how you can support them. Speak out loudly and forcefully against hate speech. Donate to organizations that teach tolerance and peace. In the fight against hatred, we are all partners and allies, and unity is our greatest asset.