

White House Unveils First National Strategy for Fighting Antisemitism

May 26, 2023 **by Dan McCue**



Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism, speaks to reporters outside the White House after the unveiling of the first national strategy for fighting antisemitism.
(Photo by Dan McCue)

WASHINGTON — The White House on Thursday released the country's first national strategy for fighting antisemitism, outlining more than 100 specific steps federal agencies have committed to completing before the end of the year.

The plan also includes over 100 recommendations for Congress, state and local governments, religious organizations and community groups to take to combat the escalating problem of antisemitic violence in communities across the United States.

At their core, the recommendations rest on four main **pillars**: increasing awareness and understanding of both antisemitism and Jewish American heritage; improving safety and security for Jewish communities; reversing the normalization of antisemitism; and building coalitions across communities to fight hate.

Speaking at the virtual launch of the strategy livestreamed from the South Court Auditorium of the Old Executive Office Building, President Joe Biden hailed the plan as the “most ambitious and comprehensive” government-led effort to fight antisemitism in the nation’s 247-year history.

“It sends a clear and forceful message,” Biden said. “In America, evil will not win. Hate will not prevail. The venom and violence of antisemitism will not be the story of our time.”

Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff has made fighting antisemitism one of his core activities at the White House and was the host of the launch event.

He was joined onstage in the South Court Auditorium by Ambassador Susan Rice, White House domestic policy advisor; Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, special envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism; and Dr. Liz Sherwood-Randall, Homeland Security advisor.

“At its core, antisemitism divides us, erodes our trust in government, institutions and one another,” Emhoff said during his opening remarks. “It threatens our democracy while undermining our American values of freedom, community and decency.

“Antisemitism delivers simplistic, false and dangerous narratives that have led to extremists perpetrating deadly

violence against Jews. I know the fear, the pain, the anger that Jews are living with because of this epidemic of hate. We've all heard the stories."

Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff at the White House, May 25, 2023. (Photo by Dan McCue)

Antisemitic incidents in the U.S. rose 36% in 2022, according to a recently released annual audit by the Anti-Defamation League.

In all, the ADL tracked 3,697 incidents of harassment, vandalism and assault against Jews — a 36% increase from the previous year and the third time in the past five years that the number of incidents reached a new record high.

Further, the audit, which the ADL has been compiling since 1979, found that just five states — New York, New Jersey, California,

Florida and Texas — accounted for a combined 54% of the total incidents.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, while Jews account for only 2.4% of the U.S. population, they are the victims of 63% of the reported religiously-motivated hate crimes.

“As the first Jewish spouse of a United States president or vice president, let me say this: We cannot stay silent,” Emhoff said. “I will not remain silent. I will not stand idly by and allow antisemitism to poison our society.”

Last December, Emhoff hosted a roundtable at the White House with Jewish community leaders to discuss the rise of antisemitism across the nation and what we can do to counteract it.

A few days later, Biden established an all-of-government group to combat hate and develop a national strategy to counter antisemitism.

In January, Emhoff traveled to Poland with Lipstadt to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day. They also traveled to Germany to meet with special envoys from across Europe to learn about their plans to safeguard Jewish heritage and combat hatred of Jews.

For Emhoff, the trip was personal. As he recounted on Thursday, his great-grandparents escaped persecution from what is now Poland around 120 years ago.

“I got to see the home where my family once resided before fleeing to the United States,” he said. “And while they were lucky to escape, there were so many others who weren’t.”

He said the strength of the administration's strategy is that it is premised on "a whole-of-society approach."

"We will build coalitions and work with key partners — Congress, state and local governments, civil society, schools and academic institutions, the private sector and diverse religious communities — to prevent and combat antisemitism at every level of society. In sum, this plan will save lives," he said.

"Our work to counter antisemitism will not stop with the release of this national strategy. We are dedicated to its implementation," Emhoff continued. "Antisemitism is a threat to Jewish communities and all Americans. And it can only be combated with united efforts.

"We are committed to making sure that everyone can live openly, proudly and safely in their own communities. It is on all of us to put an end to the visceral hate that we are seeing across our nation. We cannot normalize this," he added.

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