

February 22, 2017

The Honorable John F. Kelly
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016

The Honorable Jeff Sessions
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable James B. Comey
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20535

Dear Secretary Kelly, Attorney General Sessions, and Director Comey,

We write to express our deep concern regarding the recent spate of anonymous bomb threats made via telephone against Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) across the nation. We urge the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice to swiftly assess the situation and to advise Congress on what specific steps are being taken, or will be taken, to deter such threats from being made, to identify and prosecute the perpetrators for violations of federal criminal laws, and to enable JCCs to enhance security measures such as physical barriers and guards, in the event that an individual seeks to act upon these threats.

This is not an idle concern, given that there have been at least three casualty-causing attacks at JCCs or other Jewish institutions in the last two decades—in 2014 at a Kansas JCC, in 2006 at the Jewish Federation of Seattle, and in 1999 at a California JCC. This is a national problem and, as such, it requires a national solution.

In the first two months of 2017 alone, there have been 68 incidents targeting 53 JCCs in 26 states, according to JCC Association of North America. A number of JCCs, such as the Roth Family Jewish Community Center of Greater Orlando, have received multiple threats.

These phone calls have an immediate emotional impact, of course, but they also have an economic impact. JCCs provide a range of educational and community services for Jewish and non-Jewish individuals and families, with a particular focus on children and youth. The individuals who make these calls no doubt recognize that bomb threats, particularly when repeated, can compromise and even destroy a JCC's financial future.

We urge you to approach this issue with a sense of urgency, and to work in partnership with state and territory governments, local law enforcement officials, JCC Association of North America, individual JCCs, and Jewish community institutions and leaders to address the threat in a holistic manner. We look forward to your response regarding the specific steps being taken to prevent and respond to this threat.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Murphy
Member of Congress

Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress

Val Butler Demings
Member of Congress

Daniel M. Donovan, Jr.
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan
Member of Congress

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Rosa DeLauro
Member of Congress

Leonard Lance
Member of Congress

John Lewis
Member of Congress

John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

Paul Tonko
Member of Congress

Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress

John A. Yarmuth
Member of Congress

Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Brian K. Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Charlie Crist
Member of Congress

Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

John K. Delaney
Member of Congress

David P. Joyce
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

William R. Keating
Member of Congress

Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress

Charles W. Dent
Member of Congress

Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress

Claudia Tenney
Member of Congress

Alan S. Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress

Sander M. Levin
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

Bradley S. Schneider
Member of Congress

Jacky Rosen
Member of Congress

José E. Serrano
Member of Congress

Dina Titus
Member of Congress

Thomas MacArthur
Member of Congress

Carolyn Maloney
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

David Scott
Member of Congress

John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress

Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Blake Farenthold
Member of Congress

Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress

Patrick Meehan
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Robin Kelly
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer, Jr.
Member of Congress

Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress

Donald Norcross
Member of Congress

Bill Johnson
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

C. A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress

Ryan A. Costello
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Elizabeth H. Esty
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

Daniel W. Lipinski
Member of Congress

Sean Patrick Maloney
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

Ted Lieu
Member of Congress

John B. Larson
Member of Congress

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

Jim Himes
Member of Congress

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Keith Ellison
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

Peter J. Visclosky
Member of Congress

Henry C. “Hank” Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress

Salud O. Carbajal
Member of Congress

Joyce Beatty
Member of Congress

David A. Trott
Member of Congress

John J. Faso
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Robert A. Brady
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Gregory W. Meeks
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Mike Thompson
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Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
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Doris Matsui
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Julia Brownley
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Frank Pallone, Jr.
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Bill Posey
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Gene Green
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Adam B. Schiff
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Adriano Espallat
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Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Bobby Scott
Member of Congress

Vern Buchanan
Member of Congress

Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress

Jared Polis
Member of Congress

Carol Shea-Porter
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress

John Katko
Member of Congress

Hakeem S. Jeffries
Member of Congress

Carlos Curbelo
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Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
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Frank A. LoBiondo
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Marcia L. Fudge
Member of Congress

Chris H. Smith
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Ruben Gallego
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Peter J. Roskam
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Jared Huffman
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Raul Ruiz
Member of Congress

James Renacci
Member of Congress

Richard E. Neal
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Patrick J. Tiberi
Member of Congress

Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress