



Strengthening South Asian
Communities in America

PRESS RELEASE:

Diverse Community Organizations Applaud Senate Hearing on Hate Violence Next Week

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(New York, New York) September 12, 2012 - In the wake of the tragic, hate-motivated shootings in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, a United States Senate Subcommittee announced that it will hold a hearing on the threat posed by hate and extremist groups in the United States.

The hearing, entitled "Hate Crimes & the Threat of Domestic Extremism," will be held before the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights, chaired by Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), on Wednesday, September 19, 2012 in Dirksen Senate Office Building Room 226 starting at 2:30 p.m. Following the briefing, leading civil rights and interfaith organizations that have spent the past decade working on community and policy challenges pertaining to hate crimes, will hold a brief press conference highlighting reactions to the hearing and outlining next steps.

On August 21, a diverse group of more than 150 organizations, led by the Sikh Coalition, requested a Senate hearing on hate crimes and domestic extremism. The immediate response by the Senate to this request indicates the severity of this problem and the importance of political leadership partnering with communities of all faiths and races to identify policy solutions that will make our country safer.

"We commend Senator Durbin's leadership in calling for this unprecedented hearing," said Amardeep Singh, Co-founder and Program Director for the Sikh Coalition, the nation's largest Sikh civil rights organization. "As the tragedy in Oak Creek reminded us, the threat of domestic extremist hate violence is real, ever-present, and growing. The topic of domestic extremist hate violence certainly needs a Senate platform. We expect that the hearing will bring this problem to light and explore the solutions needed to prevent another Oak Creek from happening." Reach Mr. Singh at amar@sikhcoalition.org.

"SAALT welcomes next week's hearing and commends Senator Durbin's leadership in addressing hate violence and bias against all Americans. We join our partner organizations in bringing light to the issue of hate violence which is on the rise, and in providing policy solutions that can make our country a safer place," said Deepa Iyer, Executive Director of South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT). Reach Ms. Iyer at deepa@saalt.org.

"The Anti-Defamation League welcomes Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on response to hate crimes and the implementation of the Matthew Shepard James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes



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Prevention Act (HCPA)," said Michael Lieberman, ADL Washington Counsel. The ADL was the leading organization that fought for passage of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act. "The horrible bias-motivated murders of Sikhs in their house of worship in Oak Creek, Wisconsin last month demonstrate, once again, the tragic impact of hate violence - and the critical importance of partnerships between government and community groups to prevent these crimes and respond effectively." Reach Mr. Lieberman at MLieberman@adl.org.

"No one should live in fear of worshipping freely, expressing affection with one's partner or spouse, or simply leading their day-to-day lives," said Wade Henderson, President and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the largest civil and human rights coalition in the United States. "Passing the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act was a historic step toward ending bias crimes, and this hearing marks an important opportunity to revisit the law's impact on protecting diverse communities, ensure its full and effective enforcement, and refine our techniques for preventing these crimes from occurring in the first place." Reach Mr. Henderson at Simpson@civilrights.org.

"The National Urban League commends Sen. Dick Durbin for holding hearings to shine a light on the threat of domestic extremism and hate crimes," said Marc Morial, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Urban League. "Radical, violent rhetoric and behavior in the pursuit of any ideology, political philosophy or social agenda cannot be tolerated in a free and civil society. Indeed, a hate crime against even one citizen is a threat to all Americans, and we stand in solidarity with SAALT and the Oak Creek Community as they look for answers and a peaceful path forward." Reach Mr. Morial at pruckersprings@nul.org.

"We join with people from all backgrounds who stand united against hate crimes and domestic extremism. No one should live in fear while going about their daily business, whether it be attending a worship service, holding the hand of the person they love, or simply being who they are. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, especially those of color, understand all too well what it's like to be targeted for being who they are," says Rea Carey, Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. The Task Force has led national advocacy on gay civil rights issues. "The Senate is doing the right thing by shining a light on the continuing scourge of hate violence. One of America's greatest assets is its rich diversity, and intimidation and violence against anyone should not be tolerated." Reach Ms. Carey at rcarey@theTaskForce.org.

"We commend the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights & Human Rights for its timely hearing to examine hate crimes," said Jose Perez, LatinoJustice Associate General Counsel and Legal Director. LatinoJustice has led advocacy on behalf of Latino hate crime victims. "We join with our fellow civil rights colleagues and hope the hearing will identify the causes for such extremist behavior, and develop potential solutions to again make the U.S.A. the welcoming haven it has historically been for all immigrants." Reach Mr. Perez at jperez@latinojustice.org.



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"The attack on the Sikh temple in Wisconsin marked a deeply disturbing escalation of hate violence against Sikh, Muslim, South Asian and Arab Americans," said Farhana Khera, Executive Director of Muslim Advocates, a leading Muslim civil rights organization. "Hate violence has now reached a crisis point in our nation requiring the attention and leadership of the President and congressional leaders, and we commend Senator Durbin for holding a hearing that sheds light on the hate and discrimination that is fueling the violence against innocent Americans." Reach Ms. Khera at Fatima@muslimadvocates.org.

"The tragedy in Oak Creek calls upon us to have a national conversation about how to combat hate in America," said Valarie Kaur, Director of Groundswell at Auburn Seminary. Ms. Kaur has spent considerable time with victims of the Oak Creek massacre. "As people from many faith traditions - Christian, Jew, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu and Humanist - we believe that an attack on one of us is an attack on all of us. We welcome this congressional hearing as an opportunity to catalyze introspection and action not only in our halls of power but also in our schools, workplaces, houses of worship, and communities." Reach Ms. Kaur at vkaur@auburnseminary.org.

"Since the events of 9/11 there has been a fixation on extremism and radicalization in the Muslim American community which has blinded us to real and imminent domestic threats of violence from other groups including white supremacists," said Linda Sarsour, National Advocacy Director, National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC). "This hearing is an opportunity to look at hate crimes and extremism through a broader lens. We commend Senator Durbin on his leadership once again." Ms. Sarsour has led the community response to spying by the New York City Police Department on Muslim communities in New York City. Reach Ms. Sarsour at lsarsour@accesscommunity.org.

"The Japanese American Citizens League commends the Senate Judiciary Committee for holding this vital hearing on hate crimes and domestic extremism. Our organization has always stood steadfast against attacks and violence fueled by hatred and looks forward to the public discussion on strong measures that the government, community stakeholders, and the public can take to end bigotry in this country," said Priscilla Ouchida, National Executive Director of the Japanese American Citizens League.

The Sikh Coalition has set up an RSVP link for people to indicate whether they can attend the hearing.

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