

October 4, 2019

## Statement in Support of International Police Exchanges

In the past five years extremists and terrorists have carried out attacks in El Paso, Pittsburgh, Orlando, Charleston, San Bernardino, and New York City targeting innocent people and singling out Latinx, immigrants, Jews, LGBTQ, African-Americans as they worshipped, walked, shopped and gathered, claiming at least 115 lives. In the last 10 years, 427 people have been murdered by extremists with 73% of those deaths at the hands of far-right extremists. The Tree of Life Synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, which took place less than a year ago, was the deadliest attack on Jews in American history. The El Paso mall shooting in August was the most lethal white supremacist attack in fifty years. Three of the five most lethal extremist attacks in the last half century have taken place in the past five years. This grim data testifies to the very real and growing threat we face from extremist violence and domestic terrorism as well as the continuing threat of international terror. The question is not *if* another extremist or terrorist tragedy will take innocent lives in America, but *when*.

Law enforcement plays a critical role in protecting people and communities from extremist violence and terrorism. For law enforcement to be able to prevent and respond effectively, they need to have access to the most up-to-date information and expertise, best practices and training from leading authorities and practitioners. Cooperation between law enforcement agencies within the United States is a vital source of expertise and knowledge, but it is not by itself enough. Extremism and terrorism today are international in nature and those who perpetrate such acts are often inspired and informed by the extremist violence in other countries. We saw that tragically demonstrated earlier this year by the murder of 50 people at two mosques in Christchurch, NZ and killing of 253 people at churches and hotels in Sri Lanka.

Restricting law enforcement's ability to participate in exchange programs with their counterparts in other countries limits access to potentially critical information and expertise and makes us more vulnerable. The importance of international police exchanges was recognized by the United States Conference of Mayors, which represents more than 1,400 cities, when it adopted a resolution strongly supporting such exchange programs in July. In August, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, which represents the largest local police departments in the US, also adopted a resolution strongly affirming the need for international police exchanges programs.

Police-community engagement is a key component of efforts to prevent and respond to extremist violence and terrorism. International police exchanges enable American police to examine best practices and successful strategies for safeguarding people, protecting civil rights and individual liberties and building community trust.

The Israel National Police has been dealing with active shooter attacks, explosive devices, suicide bombings, the use of vehicles as weapons and other terrorist tactics since the 1970s and is widely recognized as among the world's most experienced law enforcement agencies at preventing and responding to terrorism. American law enforcement began visiting Israel in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks to gain information and first-hand knowledge which would enable them to better protect people in the US. Hundreds of law enforcement executives have participated in exchange programs with the Israel National Police. It is regarded by many law enforcement executives as playing an important part in preparing them to protect their communities from the very real threat of extremist violence and terrorism.

We, the undersigned organizations of the Atlanta Jewish community, strongly support international exchanges for law enforcement, including to Israel, so that we can all live in a safer community.

ADL (Anti-Defamation League)

AJC (American Jewish Committee)

Atlanta JCRC (Jewish Community Relations Council)

Atlanta Rabbinical Association

Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta

