

JOINT STATEMENT BY ACADEMIC CENTERS FOR THE STUDY OF HATE IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE TERROR ATTACK IN NEW ZEALAND

March 16, 2019

Kenneth Stern, [Bard Center for the Study of Hate](#)

Kristine Hoover, [Gonzaga Institute for Hate Studies](#)

Brian Levin, [The Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino](#)

Barbara Perry, [UIOT Center for the Study of Hate, Bias and Extremism](#)

The horrific acts of terror perpetrated upon worshipers at the Al Noor and Linwood mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand are a hideous affront to the civilized values that ground our pluralistic democracy. We not only condemn the killers of our peaceful Muslim neighbors, but the attack on our shared values of religious liberty and association. According to media reports, fifty people were killed in this mass shooting, which occurred during the weekly Congregational Prayer. The shock of this incident is unprecedented in New Zealand, but it is not isolated in our recent history. These murders are blatant hate crimes, vile and violent acts motivated by white supremacists. These lives that were taken so recently join others killed by hate – including the lives of eleven worshipers taken at the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Tree of Life Synagogue in 2018 and nine worshipers' lives stolen in the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015. We mourn with people of all faiths from around the world over such tragic losses.

This atrocity is no less than an assault upon the very essence of humanity. It is an attack on fundamental human rights, including the right to worship freely, and without fear of violence based on religion. There are no sidelines here, silence is not an option. We will continue to work to end hateful violence and to eradicate racism, xenophobia, islamophobia, and all bias and bigotry that lead to terror. We must respond but the response to hate cannot be hate. The response to violence must not be violence. We will not respond with silence when the voices of others have been silenced by hateful massacre.

We stand with our Muslim sisters and brothers, as human beings inherently worthy of our respect, our love and the right to life and liberty and the freedom to worship. George Washington, over and one quarter centuries ago, told the Touro Synagogue in Newport Rhode, Island:

(F)or, happily, the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support... May the children of the stock of Abraham who dwell in this land continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants – while everyone shall sit in the safety under his own vine and fig tree and there shall be none to make him afraid.

Hateful ideologies extoll violence as heroic action to purge society of those who are believed to be inferior. White nationalists, such as the New Zealand shooter, cling to an ideology that sees people who are not white as inferior. In the face of hate, we the many, can stand together for human dignity and care for one another. We must remember that we are members of the same human family, and that we are called to treat others as we would want to be treated with no skin color superior to another's.

Our hearts are heavy with the loss of human life at the mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. If one suffers, we all suffer. We will speak out for a better world. We are together in body and action for the common good. We are strong and we will build a more peaceful and safer community for us all. Now and forever, we stand in solidarity with our neighbors of the Muslim faith, our colleagues, our co-workers, and members of our communities. We care deeply and remain committed to peace and justice for people of all faiths and traditions around the world. And we pledge, together, as institutions focused on studying hate, to help find new and better ways to oppose it.