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December 9, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

I write to express my deep concern about the surge in public antisemitic rhetoric and hate speech across the United States and what it could mean for the safety of Jewish communities and the wellbeing of our nation. As researchers report a dramatic increase in antisemitic content on Twitter, while Ye West is receiving widespread coverage for his recent antisemitic comments, and former President Donald Trump recently hosted a dinner with West and avowed Holocaust denier Nick Fuentes, it is imperative that our nation addresses the risks posed by this dangerous increase in public bigotry as well as the means to combat it.

Earlier this year, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported that antisemitic incidents in the United States were at an all-time high in 2021 with a total of 2,717 incidents of assault, harassment, and vandalism against Jewish people.¹ The audit found that antisemitic vandalism increased by 14 percent since the previous year, that acts of harassment increased by 43 percent compared to 2020, and that antisemitic assaults surged by 167 percent over the previous year. Despite these data for 2021, there are unfortunate indications that 2022 could be even worse.

A November study by the ADL's Center on Extremism analyzed more than 529,000 tweets referring to "Jews" or "Judaism" before and after Elon Musk's takeover of Twitter in later October, finding a 61.3 percent increase in the volume of such tweets in the two weeks after Musk's takeover than in the fortnight before it.² This trend aligns in part with the social network's reduced moderation, as noted by the ADL and other organizations which flag tweets in violation of Twitter's terms of service for removal have noted that the rate at which such posts are deleted has fallen by half.

¹ "ADL Audit Finds Antisemitic Incidents in United States Reached All-Time High in 2021." Anti-Defamation League (ADL). 25 Apr. 2022. Online at <https://www.adl.org/news/press-releases/adl-audit-finds-antisemitic-incidents-in-united-states-reached-all-time-high-in>.

² <https://twitter.com/ADL/status/1593714819932332034>

Since the change in its leadership, Twitter is no longer automatically removing accounts associated with white supremacist and terrorist organizations. It has even allowed accounts controlled by groups associated with the QAnon conspiracy theory to become verified.³ Imran Ahmed, the chief executive of the Center for Countering Digital Hate recently told *The New York Times*, “Elon Musk sent up the Bat Signal to every kind of racist, misogynist and homophobe that Twitter was open for business. They have reacted accordingly.” Fundamentally, the shifts at Twitter suggest that the platform’s increasingly prevalent antisemitic and hate-driven content is not only a reflection of the growth of such extremist movements, but also an amplifier of them. Regardless of the precise mechanism, one of the nation’s leading social media platforms is experiencing a dramatic increase in the prevalence of antisemitism a year after the ADL reported record highs in such harassment.

Notably, the cultural visibility and mainstreaming of antisemitic ideas and figures has occurred both on and off of Twitter as Ye West drew national attention through a series of virulently bigoted interviews and Tweets to his 32 million followers, including an image of a Swastika inside a Star of David, which ultimately led to his being banned from Twitter once again.⁴ For the last two months, West, once one of the most highly-regarded producers and rappers in music, has been using his public platform to launch antisemitic attacks including tweeting “Death Con 3 on Jewish people,” defending Nazism, and even shocking far-right conspiracy theorist Alex Jones by stating, “There’s a lot of things that I love about Hitler.”⁵

Beyond the conspiratorial, hateful nature of West’s own antisemitic comments reaching his audience lies the risk of it normalizing such ideas, in part by bringing more exposure to fringe extremists who further encourage bigotry against the Jewish community. As Joel Finkelstein of the nonprofit Network Contagion Research Institute recently noted, “[Ye] is using antisemitism to popularize a list of actors who have been censored for a long time.”⁶

One of those figures is Nick Fuentes who has not only seen his profile elevated into the mainstream by West, but also by former President Trump who hosted the two for dinner at his Mar-a-Lago estate. Despite a limited mainstream profile until recently, Fuentes has been an influential voice on the extreme right since his participation in the 2017 “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, even hosting a sitting Member of Congress at his America First Political Action Conference despite his vocal white supremacy and antisemitism.⁷ An advocate of the Great Replacement theory whom Alex Jones has criticized as a “Nazi Lover,” Fuentes denied the Holocaust at length in 2019, later claiming it was a “lampoon” despite comparing Jewish people killed in concentration camps to cookies in an oven, stating “Six million cookies? I don’t buy it.”⁸

While the impact of the enormous amounts of attention West and Fuentes have received in recent weeks should not be overstated, this news coverage, even though overwhelmingly negative, has brought unprecedented mainstream attention to antisemitic conspiracy theories and ideology at a time when Twitter is increasingly an amplifier and venue for such ideas. Though online hate speech and the harassment which invariably follows it are pestilences on their own, this current surge in

³ [Hate Speech’s Rise on Twitter Under Elon Musk Is Unprecedented, Researchers Find - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/08/technology/twitter-hate-speech.html)

⁴ Ibid

⁵ [Surging Twitter antisemitism unites fringe, encourages violence, officials say – Washington Post \(washingtonpost.com\)](https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/07/08/surging-twitter-antisemitism-unites-fringe-encourages-violence-officials-say/)

⁶ Ibid

⁷ “Nicholas J. Fuentes: Five Things to Know.” ADL. 8 July 2021. Online at <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/nicholas-j-fuentes-five-things-know>.

⁸ Ibid.

such activity raises serious questions about how such speech translates into potential physical attacks, and how to prevent it.

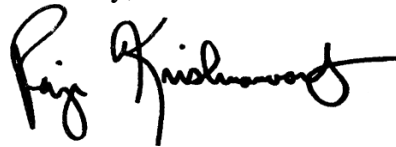
Your agency recently acknowledged this relationship as well as the growing antisemitism our nation faces in your November 30th National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin, also noting the arrest of an individual in New Jersey who made antisemitic social media posts and threatened to attack several synagogues in early November.⁹ Although this individual was thankfully apprehended by authorities, this incident embodies the growing real world threats posed by online extremism, especially when antisemitic messages gain more prominent celebrity platforms and greater social media access.

To address these issues, I request answers to the following questions by December 23rd, 2022:

1. What measures currently exist at DHS to monitor the prevalence of online and media hate speech based on religion, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and other target categories?
2. Has DHS observed any increase in such activities since October, when Ye West began making his antisemitic public declarations and Elon Musk began to change Twitter's account and content policies?
3. Has DHS discerned any shifts in recent years in the connections between online antisemitism, extremism, and hate speech, preceding violent crimes?
4. Has DHS identified any distinct causes for surges in online antisemitism, vandalism, and assault reported by the ADL over the last several years?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raja Krishnamoorthi", with a stylized, flowing script.

Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

⁹ [New Jersey Man Arrested in Connection with Threat to Synagogues. – NY Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/11/30/us/politics/new-jersey-man-arrested-synagogues.html)