

Jewish Federation launches new online form for reporting threats

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SOUTH RIVER - With antisemitic incidents and threats on the rise throughout the country, the Jewish Federation in the Heart of New Jersey (JFHNJ) announced Thursday it has partnered with more than 40 other Jewish Federations and the Secure Community Network (SCN), to launch an online form to report threats, incidents and suspicious activity related to Jewish organizations, facilities or community members at jewishheartnj.org/report.

In 2022, 408 antisemitic incidents were reported in New Jersey – the highest number ever recorded by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in the state – and the third-highest number recorded in any state across the country last year, according to an annual ADL survey released in March.

On Nov. 10, 2022, a Sayreville man was charged by the U.S. Attorney's Office with posting a manifesto with threats to attack a synagogue and Jewish people on the internet.

Just days before, the Jewish Community Center (JCC) on Oak Tree Road in Edison had received a bomb threat.

This came after the FBI's warning of "a broad credible threat" on Nov. 3 to various Jewish synagogues and institutions in the state.

In April 2022, a string of antisemitic incidents, investigated by Rutgers University police, targeted a Jewish fraternity at Rutgers University.

In total, ADL recorded 244 incidents of harassment, 155 incidents of vandalism and nine incidents of assault. Of the reported antisemitic incidents, there were 41 in Middlesex County, 22 in Union County, seven in Hunterdon County and six in Somerset County.

"Protecting safety and security in Jewish life is an ever-increasing Federation priority," said Susan Antman, JFHNJ executive director. "Partnership among Federations across North America and SCN on tactics such as this new reporting form enables our highly connected communities to speed and strengthen individual and coordinated approaches to security threats, including communications with law enforcement, advocacy with elected officials, and the everyday practices of community members."

JFHNJ Security Initiatives support security needs at Jewish institutions in Monmouth and Greater Middlesex counties through assessments and training, grant application and implementation support, communications and reporting resources, public advocacy, and incident intervention. SCN is a safety and security organization for the Jewish community in North America.

"It is one of the many ways Jewish Federation in the Heart of New Jersey is continually improving and expanding on resources to protect the Jewish community," said Amy Keller, director of security initiatives. "Together with the Secure Community Network, we urge everyone to report anything suspicious or concerning so the appropriate action can be taken."

Information acquired through the new incident reporting form is sent immediately to Federation security professionals and the 24-hour Duty Desk in SCN's National Jewish Security Operations Command Center. There, SCN's intelligence analysts work with local Federation Security Initiatives using intelligence and information-sharing best practices to determine what people or facilities may be at risk, as well as what next steps to take. Credible threats are referred to local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies and Jewish facility leaders as needed.

The initiative is the first nationally standardized incident reporting effort that ties together local Federation Security Initiatives and SCN as a national partner, said SCN National Director and CEO Michael Masters.

"(It) ensures that wherever someone is, there can be timely, consistent, and accurate reporting of threats, incidents, and suspicious activity," Masters said. "This is critical to keeping the Jewish community safe. In a world where threats travel at the speed of social media, this effort enhances our ability to identify trends and incidents across communities and work with security professionals and law enforcement to address them. Through a coordinated, best practice approach to information sharing, this initiative will help us more effectively and efficiently address threats and issues before they turn to action."

The Garden State is home to nearly 600,000 Jewish residents.

Nationwide, the ADL said there were 3,697 antisemitic incidents throughout the U.S. in 2022 – a 36% increase over the number of such incidents in 2021. Since the ADL began tracking antisemitic incidents in 1979, the increase marks the third time in the past five years that reported incidents hit new records for crimes directed at Jews in the U.S.

The new form can be used to report in-person assaults or threats, suspicious persons or activity, property damage or vandalism, threatening or suspicious phone calls, text messages, or social media, suspicious packages or letters, spam and phishing emails, anti-Semitic or threatening flyers, or other similar incidents of concern to the Jewish community.

Reports may be made anonymously.

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