



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

## UNITED AGAINST HATE: LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS JOIN MUSLIM AND JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERS TO RALLY AGAINST RECENT WAVE OF HATE CRIMES

JEFFREY D. KLEIN March 3, 2017

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### *Senator Klein Highlights the IDC's Religious Freedom Package*

**Bronx, NY** - With Muslims across the country facing intolerance in light of bad national immigration policy, along with Jewish communities being bombarded by bomb threats and cemetery vandalism, **Senator Jeff Klein, Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj** and **Councilman Ritchie Torres** joined local Muslim and Jewish community leaders to rally against hate at the Bronx Muslim Center on Friday.

After the Trump administration issued a since-blocked immigration executive order, local Muslims have expressed fear and uncertainty over their future in America. Jewish communities centers, meanwhile, have faced roughly 100 bomb threats in 2017, including four this week in the New York City metropolitan area. The elected officials, along with Muslim and Jewish community leaders, spoke against these reprehensible acts and called for unity.

“As elected officials, as community leaders, as religious leaders, as ordinary citizens, we must stand together to condemn these acts of hate against our Muslim and Jewish communities.

Such cowardly actions are acts against humanity, and acts against America. We, as Americans, believe acceptance and freedom of religion define us, not hate-filled cowards who aim to spread fear through called-in threats, abhorrent emblems or malicious words of hate, **said Senator Klein.**

“These acts of hate against the Muslim and Jewish communities are deplorable and contradict what we stand for as Americans. The United States is an inclusive society; a society that must be accepting of more than one idea. We must all come together to condemn these cowardice acts of prejudice and send a message that this will not be tolerated,” **said Assemblyman Gjonaj.**

“We will stand together against hate and use our positions to denounce acts of violence against Muslims, immigrants, the Jewish community and all communities that face discrimination. Together, we will overcome hate and ensure that perpetrators of hate crimes are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law,” **said Councilman Torres.**

“We, the Muslim leaders and community, condemn all hate crimes and call for human beings to unite under peace and tranquility. We have to stand for justice, freedom, and equality for all, regardless of belief, color, and social status. A great nation prospers by having values and morals that keep the people protected and safe. Hatred and racism fuel violence and corruption. This is a country of diversity and prosperity. Until we come to accept our differences, we will forever live in darkness,” **said Dr. Hamud Al-Silwi, Imam of the Bronx Muslim Center.**

“As Americans of all faiths, we stand united to condemn the acts of hate and bigotry that has plagued the Jewish and Muslim communities. The hateful few that seek to divide us have betrayed the fundamental values that make America great. Americans are like one body, when one part of the body is in pain, the entire body is in pain,” **said Captain Jamiel S. Altaheri, Highest ranking Yemeni American in the NYPD & Founder of Building Bridges Through Positive**

## **Dialogue.**

“The recent string of threats against Jewish organizations and vandalizing of Jewish cemeteries - including here in the New York Metropolitan area - has been deeply unsettling and worrisome for America’s Jewish community. And, indeed, it should be of deep concern to all Americans, irrespective of faith or creed. We must be exceedingly vigilant in stomping out all forms of bigotry, discrimination and hatred, if we are to live up to the ideals and values that this great country represents. The response of America’s Muslim community to this string of anti-Semitic threats has been nothing short of inspiring, and it sends a loud and clear message to those who would divide us: no matter how hard you try to pull us apart, you will not succeed,” **said Rabbi Elliot Schrier of The Albert Einstein Synagogue.**

“I am honored and grateful to have this opportunity to join with my Muslim neighbors to speak out against the hate and intolerance that are epitomized by broad based immigration ‘bans’ and heinous threats of harm against nursery and pre-school programs at Jewish Community Centers. The United States has proven itself to be a haven for religious freedom and for people of all faiths and there is no room in our nation for bigotry or intolerance,” **said David Edelstein, Executive Director of the Jewish Community Council of Pelham Parkway.**

Senator Klein highlighted the Independent Democratic Conference’s Religious Freedom Package, a collection of legislation to combat hate crimes. Some of the measures deter hateful graffiti, vandalism in houses of worship, cemetery desecration and discrimination against religious attire.

The United Against Hate rally precedes a Friday night Know Your Rights forum, which will be hosted by the same elected officials, also at the Bronx Muslim Center. The forum will provide hands-on legal advice and assistance to Muslim community members concerned about their immigration rights.