



In Aftermath Of Recent Attacks, Durbin Again Calls For Trump Admin To Step Up Efforts To Combat Domestic Terrorism & Hate Crimes

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CHICAGO—Given the disturbing increase in domestic terrorism and hate crime incidents targeting religious minorities and communities of color, U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) today wrote to Attorney General William Barr and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray calling on them to take the initiative in leading a coordinated nationwide effort by federal, state, and local law enforcement and intelligence to disrupt and prevent these violent domestic terrorism and hate crime incidents before they take place. Today, Durbin met with local community and faith leaders in Chicago to hear about how they have been impacted by domestic extremism.

“Far too many communities across the nation have been touched by domestic terrorism and hate crimes. The Federal government must step up to address these threats and ensure that more Americans are not violently attacked because of what they believe or who they are,” Durbin wrote.

In May, Durbin along with Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Chris Coons (D-DE), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Kamala Harris (D-CA), sent a [letter](#) to the Trump Administration and called out its shifting approach to tracking domestic terrorism incidents to obfuscate the white supremacist threat. More than three months later, Durbin and Booker sent a follow-up [letter](#) to the DOJ and FBI about what they are doing to combat white supremacist violence. Both letters have gone unanswered.

During a Senate Judiciary Committee [hearing](#) with Director Wray in July, Durbin pressed Director Wray on the Trump Administration’s shifting approach to tracking

domestic terrorism incidents, which has obfuscated the white supremacist threat. At that hearing, Director Wray admitted to Durbin that the majority of domestic terrorism arrests last year involved white supremacists.

In March, Durbin reintroduced the [Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act](#) with Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Chris Coons (D-DE), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Ed Markey (D-MA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Brian Schatz (D-HI), and Jack Reed (D-RI); Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Patty Murray (D-WA), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) also have cosponsored the bill. This bill would enhance the federal government's efforts to prevent domestic terrorism by requiring federal law enforcement agencies to regularly assess this threat, focus their resources on the most significant domestic terrorism threats, and provide training and resources to assist state, local, and tribal law enforcement in addressing these threats.

Full text of today's letter is available [here](#) and below:

January 10, 2020

Dear Attorney General Barr and Director Wray:

Eight months ago, I sent a letter with several of my colleagues asking what the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) are doing to combat the growing domestic terrorism threat. Senator Booker and I sent a follow-up letter three months after that. We have not received responses to either of these letters.

Unfortunately, the threat of domestic terrorism and hate crimes continues to loom over communities across the United States. In the midst of Hanukkah celebrations last month, a man who had expressed anti-Semitic views allegedly entered a rabbi's home with a machete and attacked and stabbed several Hasidic Jews who had gathered for the holiday.

Earlier in December, three people were killed in an attack at a Kosher supermarket in Jersey City, New Jersey by two men with anti-Semitic views who had also killed a law enforcement officer in an earlier encounter. These attacks followed the devastating shootings at the Chabad of Poway synagogue in California in April 2019 and the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in October 2018, along with countless other incidents of anti-Semitism around the country and the world.

In addition to these horrifying attacks, we have seen a disturbing increase in domestic terrorism and hate crimes targeting other religious minorities and communities of color. Many of these incidents have been committed by violent white supremacists, who represent the most significant domestic terrorism threat facing the country today. After attacks like those at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, and the Sikh gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, far too many Americans worry whether their community will be the next devastated by such a tragedy.

It is imperative that DOJ and the FBI lead a coordinated nationwide effort by federal, state, and local law enforcement and intelligence to disrupt and prevent these domestic terrorist attacks and hate crimes before they take place. Clearly, specific and precise data on these threats will be necessary to track these incidents and better understand the threat. Unfortunately, we learned last year that the Trump Administration made the inexplicable and irresponsible decision to stop tracking violent white supremacist incidents as a separate category of domestic terrorism, instead of creating a new category for “racially-motivated violent extremism.” This reclassification downplays the significance of the violent white supremacist threat, ultimately preventing us from understanding the scope of the problem and effectively addressing it.

Members of Congress have repeatedly asked for specific, precise data on domestic terrorism threats and have been rebuffed. We have also requested that DOJ and the FBI provide insight into what Congress can do to help your agencies more effectively combat these threats. Specifically, we have asked you for your views on the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act, which I introduced last year to address the violent white supremacist threat. This bill would establish offices to combat domestic terrorism at DOJ, the FBI, and the Department of Homeland Security. The bill also would require federal law enforcement to regularly assess domestic terrorism threats, focus limited resources on the most significant threats, and provide training and resources to assist state, local, and tribal law enforcement in addressing these threats.

Far too many communities across the nation have been touched by domestic terrorism and hate crimes. The Federal government must step up to address these threats and ensure that more Americans are not violently attacked because of what they believe or who they are.

I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,