

March 11, 2021

The Honorable Christopher Wray
Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20535

Dear Director Wray,

We write to you at the precipice of a time period when threats and attacks against mosques and synagogues have surged in recent years to strongly urge that you prioritize the safety of our communities as we approach the date of the Christchurch Massacre on March 15 and the upcoming holidays of Passover and Ramadan.

This concern stems from:

- The now-thwarted Christchurch copycat attack on Muslims in Singapore,¹ as well as past attempted and executed attacks on mosques and synagogues inspired by Christchurch in California,² Germany,³ Norway,⁴ and the United Kingdom.⁵
- The January 6 attack on the United States Capitol by the same white supremacist and militia organizations that have threatened and attacked many of our houses of worship for years.
- The recent trends of vandalism, attacks and arson on houses of worship serving minority communities, including mosques during Ramadan, synagogues on Jewish holy days, Buddhist temples,⁶ Sikh gurdwaras⁷ and Black churches.⁸⁹

¹ Mayank Aggarwal. "Singapore boy detained over Christchurch mosque 'copycat' plot to kill Muslims." *Independent UK*, January 28, 2021, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/singapore-boy-christchurch-mosque-attack-b1793905.html>.

² Gianluca Mezzofiore and Paul P. Murphy. "The New Zealand mosques attack appeared to inspire California synagogue suspect." *CNN*, April 29, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/29/us/california-synagogue-8chan-new-zealand-mosque>.

³ "Halle synagogue attack: Germany far-right gunman jailed for life." *BBC*, December 21, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55395682>.

⁴ Jason Burke. "Norway mosque attack suspect 'inspired by Christchurch and El Paso shootings'." *The Guardian*, August 11, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/11/norway-mosque-attack-suspect-may-have-been-inspired-by-christchurch-and-el-paso-shootings>.

⁵ "Pair jailed for inciting copycat terror attacks." *BBC*, October 23, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-tyne-50161137>.

⁶ Randall. "6 Buddhist temples vandalized in Orange County." *AsAm News*, November 29, 2020, <https://asamnews.com/2020/11/29/latest-incident-ruled-a-hate-crime-by-police/>.

⁷ Leah Asmelash and Stella Chan. "Newly-opened Sikh temple property is vandalized with swastikas and graffiti." *CNN*, January 14, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/14/us/sikh-temple-vandalism-trnd/index.html>.

⁸ "Louisiana man gets 25 years for torching 3 Black churches." *AP*, November 2, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/holden-matthews-25-years-sentence-4c25b60217cdeacb289290c7fe626089>

⁹ Margaret Barthel and Nathan Diller. "Proud Boys Leader takes credit for burning D.C. church's Black Lives Matter banner." *NPR*, December 21, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/local/305/2020/12/21/948794990/proud-boys-leader-takes-credit-for-burning-d-c-church-s-black-lives-matter-banner>.

In March of 2019, many of us wrote to you raising concerns about the very real threat of violence at our houses of worship.¹⁰ We urged you to prioritize enforcement to protect our communities. While we didn't hear back from that request after multiple follow ups to your staff, we take seriously your repeated testimony that white nationalist violence poses one of the greatest threats to our country. We look forward to meeting with you now to discuss what the FBI is doing to address these grave threats to our communities. As you recently testified to the Senate, the attack on the United States Capitol was "not an isolated event" and the threat of this type of violence is "not going away anytime soon."

We write to renew our request for a meeting on these issues and to request that you closely monitor all threats to the safety and security of mosques and synagogues -- and all houses of worship -- as your office continues to refocus its efforts on the real threats posed by white supremacist, anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic individuals and militias.

Please contact Muslim Advocates deputy director Naheed Qureshi at 202-897-2622 or naheed@muslimadvocates.org to discuss details for scheduling this meeting. We look forward to meeting with you to discuss our concerns further.

Sincerely,

Muslim Advocates
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC
Japanese American Citizens League
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF)
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
The Sikh Coalition

¹⁰ Leila Fadel. "Civil Rights and Faith Leaders to FBI: Take white nationalist violence seriously." *NPR*, March 20, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/20/705123229/civil-rights-and-faith-leaders-to-fbi-take-white-nationalist-violence-seriously>.