

American Jewry mourns along with Pittsburgh

By Jackson Richman
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PITTSBURGH – Days after a gunman killed 11 people and injured six others during a baby naming at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Squirrel Hill, the Jewish community continued to mourn the tragedy.

“My heart is broken, and I offer my condolences to the friends and family of those killed,” said Jeff Finkelstein, chief executive officer of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh.

“We are truly all family in the Pittsburgh Jewish community, so these deaths have affected me and all of us as would a death in the family.”

A Jewish resident of Squirrel Hill, who requested anonymity, said, “I was about a mile from the synagogue, so all I can say is that I’ve never heard ambulance sirens like that in all my life, nonstop for probably an hour, but what felt like more. The community here is devastated, and has historically been an extremely peaceful and warm place.”

“We are devastated. Jews targeted on Shabbat morning at synagogue, a holy place of worship, is unconscionable,” Anti-Defamation League Chief Executive Officer Jonathan Greenblatt wrote on Twitter. “Our hearts break for the victims, their families, and the entire Jewish community.”

“It is simply unconscionable for Jews to be targeted during worship on a Sabbath morning, and unthinkable that it would happen in the United States of America in this day and age,” said Greenblatt in a statement. “Unfortunately, this violent attack — the deadliest anti-Semitic attack in the United States since 2014 — occurs at time when ADL has reported an increase in both anti-Semitic incidents



Mourners gathered outside the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh.

and anti-Semitic online harassment.”

Stosh Cotler, chief executive officer of Bend the Arc: Jewish Action, a progressive Jewish group, said “we are overcome with grief and heartbreak at the unconscionable act of terror during morning prayers at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh today. We are sending our condolences, our love, our strength and our support to the victims, their families, the entire Pittsburgh Jewish community, and all who are in tears. May the memories of those murdered be a blessing.”

“No words are adequate,” added David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee. “A demented, bigoted mind that would destroy lives in a house of worship should leave us all speechless, united, and angry as hell.”

“Our hearts go out to our brothers and sisters at Tree of Life, and throughout the Squirrel Hill community,” said Ari Berman, president of Yeshiva University. “That this cowardly anti-Semitic assault was perpetrated during a *brit milah*, a celebration of new life, only highlights the twisted nature of the evil that has threatened the Jewish people over the ages and against which all people of good conscience must fight.

“May God grant our people both the strength to help each other during this time of mourning and the fortitude to rebuild together. And may decent people the world over join together with us in eradicating this most ancient of all hatreds.”

Jack Rosen, president of the American

Jewish Congress, said the shooting is a reminder of the hatred that persists against Jews.

“The American Jewish Congress strongly condemns the acts of terrorism and hate against our community,” said Rosen. “Attacking innocent civilians in their place of worship, when they are congregating to practice their faith, is a cowardly and dreadful crime of hate. During these terrible times, we stand even stronger against anti-Semitism, white supremacy and intimidation.”

“This horrific attack is yet another example of the danger of anti-Semitism. “This baseless hatred is the mother of the violence we saw today and have witnessed throughout Jewish history,” said David Brog, executive director of the Maccabee Task Force, a pro-Israel campus group.

“We must have zero tolerance for anti-Semitic speech and anti-Semitic acts, whether they target individual Jews or the Jewish state,” he continued. “We must respond to every anti-Semitic outburst in our communities and on our campuses as if lives are at stake. They clearly are.”

President Donald Trump also decried the hatred behind the shooting.

“This evil anti-Semitic attack is an assault on humanity,” Trump wrote on Twitter. “It will take all of us working together to extract the poison of anti-Semitism from our world. We must unite to conquer hate.”

The president’s daughter Ivanka Trump, who is Jewish, also posted on Twitter: “America is stronger than the acts of a depraved bigot and anti-Semite. All good Americans stand with the Jewish people to oppose acts of terror & share the horror, disgust & outrage over the massacre in Pittsburgh. We must unite against hatred & evil.”

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