

# Rabbinical Assembly Condemns Attack on Pittsburgh Synagogue

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*Conservative/Masorti rabbis mourn the loss of 11 shot dead at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life Congregation*

The peace and sanctity of the Jewish sabbath was shattered today when a gunman burst into Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue and shot 11 people dead

As rabbis and Jewish leaders, we are reeling in the wake of this tragedy, believed to be the worst attack ever on the Jewish community on American soil. We pray that the families of the deceased may be comforted among the mourners of Zion and that the wounded will recover. We pledge our support to the Tree of Life Congregation and its spiritual leader, our dear friend and colleague Rabbi Jeffrey Myers, who is a member of the Cantors' Assembly, and to our RA past president Rabbi Alvin Berkun, who is Rabbi Emeritus of the congregation. Our thoughts are also with fellow RA member Jonathan Perlman, whose community, New Life Congregation, meets in the building and suffered tragic losses. We pray that the many people affected, including neighbors, first responders, and the people of Pittsburgh and all the United States will be able to heal spiritually and emotionally from the wounds that such an attack inflicts on all of us.

One of the most important lessons that the Jewish people can teach the world is that an act of hate against one community is an act of hate against us all. This mass murder is a reminder that anti-Semitism is on the rise in America at a rate unprecedented in decades. This vicious hate crime, perpetrated against innocent people at prayer is but the latest in an escalating scourge of hate-based violence in America.

Tragically, this hatred becomes exponentially more lethal when combined with the epidemic of gun violence that continues to terrorize our nation. Mass shootings have become a far too common occurrence in the United States. Calls for extra security can only accomplish so much when so little is being done to screen gun purchasers and limit the lethality of weapons for sale.

The Jewish community, proud descendants of refugees who, like all of America's diverse communities, found safety and happiness on America's shores, remain steadfast in our commitment that these tragic losses will be given meaning by our worthy and courageous actions, and that the memories of the fallen will be a blessing to the living. It is not lost on us that Tree of Life appears to have been singled out for celebrating HIAS Refugee Shabbat, an event in which hundreds of synagogues led by our rabbis have participated.

To quote the words of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, "The world is a very narrow bridge and so the most essential thing is not to be afraid."